



# TEACHING THE ASANAS

A Guide to the Essential Asanas  
for Yoga Teacher Training

CREATED BY: Kelly Golden E-RYT and Valerie Midgett E-RYT

EDITED BY: Hillari Dowdle

ILLUSTRATIONS BY: Lara Marshall

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# INTRODUCTION

This book began as an idea that has unfolded, grown, and matured just as we have. It is a culmination of eight years of experiential work for us as teachers of teachers. From the start, we knew we needed a resource to express the most important, and sometimes esoteric, aspects of yoga asana. So year after year, we sought to capture the essence of each asana to offer to our students. What has resulted is the text that you now hold in your hands. It has been a continual process of refinement, which no doubt will carry on even after this edition.

The exploration and discovery of asana and its instruction is an ever-evolving practice. As we mature as teachers and as students, our knowledge of the intricacies and subtleties of each asana grows hand in hand with our practice. This is the first of what we know will be many editions to follow, each one reflecting our present moment understanding of each pose. This expression of yoga, much like our own practice, will always be growing, expanding, refining and hopefully inspiring further exploration.

This text is not definitive. It is a resource to support your own understanding of each asana. It is not a script, but merely suggestions from which burgeoning teachers can discover their own voices and expressions. Our desire isn't to give asana guidelines, but rather to provide an opportunity to ask more and more questions about the power of each asana, and discover the answers for yourselves.

This text is intended to be used by teachers in training and teachers new to the teaching environment. Some of the information is incomplete, and intended to be elaborated upon by a teacher.

Finally, it is with the deepest gratitude that we'd like to thank all the students who trained with us over those years, even when no such text existed, and most of all we thank our teachers, our teacher's teachers, and all who have supported and encouraged the learning and living of this practice of yoga.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Golden E-RYT 500 & Valerie Midgett E-RYT



*These asanas are the essential building blocks of a strong physical practice. They provide much of the foundational instruction that we build upon as we explore a wider variety of asana. These foundational poses teach us symmetry, and help us to become more aware of patterns of habitual asymmetry in our bodies. In addition, they are profoundly effective strengthening and stabilizing our bodies, and are effective preparatory and counter poses to many other asanas.*

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## NOTES

# TADASANA

MOUNTAIN POSE (LOY 61-62; MIS 94-102)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Step feet sitting bone distance apart. Ground through the four corners of the feet. You can lift the toes to engage more muscle energy in the calves.
- Give equal attention to the energy of rooting and lifting. Engage the muscles of the legs and anchor into the feet strongly.
- The inner thighs rotate back, spreading the sitting bones apart. The tailbone follows the line of the lumbar spine down toward the backs of the heels, maintaining the natural curves of the spine.
- The lowest part of the abdomen lifts and engages as the tailbone roots (Mula Bandha), and the space behind the navel draws back toward the spine and up toward the lowest ribs (Uddiyana Bandha) creating a strong central core of support.
- The ribs draw away from the waist and the sternum lifts as the spine lengthens. The collar bones broaden and the shoulders release down the back body.
- The crown of the head lifts and the chin is drawn back toward the base of the skull (Jalandhara Bandha).
- In full expression of pose, palms are turned forward, externally rotating the arms.

## ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

- Pelvis is neutral and balanced. The psoas and glutes engage to stabilize, while the hamstrings lengthen.
- Quadriceps contract to straighten the knees and the calf muscles (gastrocnemius, soleus, and tibialis anterior) work to balance the ankles and the feet which are in dorsiflexion. Tibialis Anterior & Posterior Stabilize Arch.
- Core should be strong and engaged the whole time in addition to the activation of the legs and grounded feet. Lower Abdominals are engaged.
- Erector spinae and abdominals work to balance the torso.
- Crown aligns over line of spine to tailbone which is centered over the center of heels.
- Trapezius and rhomboids draw shoulder blades together and down the back. Pectoralis muscles open and lift the chest. Spine is neutral, maintaining natural curves.



*Tadasana - "Mountain Pose"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, APANA, UDANA, VYANA)

- Alleviates fatigue, revitalizing.
- Creates balance, strength, and body awareness.
- Improves posture, strengthens legs and feet.
- Restores natural alignment and adaptability to feet.
- Promotes safe, healthy alignment of the body and its flow of energy.
- Is grounding, lengthening, and stabilizing.
- Regenerative—stills mind and renews energy.
- Assimilative—provides alignment and stability in which to integrate and digest information.
- Centering—pulls in scattered energy.
- Chakras 1-7.

# TADASANA

MOUNTAIN POSE (LOY 61-62; MIS 94-102)

## ■ RISKS AND COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Hyperextension of knees.
- | Lifted tailbone and thrust of chest or overtucked tailbone and collapsed chest.
- | Compression at lumbar curve.
- | Rounded shoulders (kyphosis).
- | External rotation of upper thighs (feet turned outward).

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Though they can benefit greatly from the practice of Tadasana, those suffering with balance and stability issues as a result of neurological disorders like stroke, MS, etc., should do so with care and support.
- | People suffering from headache, insomnia and low blood pressure should use caution when practicing static standing poses for an extended length of time.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Against wall to find center and ability to root.
- | Block to teach internal thigh rotation and release of tailbone to a neutral pelvis.
- | Strap for chest opening.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Parallel feet without stressing knee joints.
- | Internal rotation of inner thighs.
- | Lengthen lumbar spine which guides sacral spine down.
- | Touch to bring awareness of core engagement.
- | Ground low body and hip bones.
- | Awareness touch at knees.
- | Shoulder loop; lengthen side bodies, draw head of humerus into back body.
- | External rotation of upper arms to open chest (in Classical Form).

## NOTES

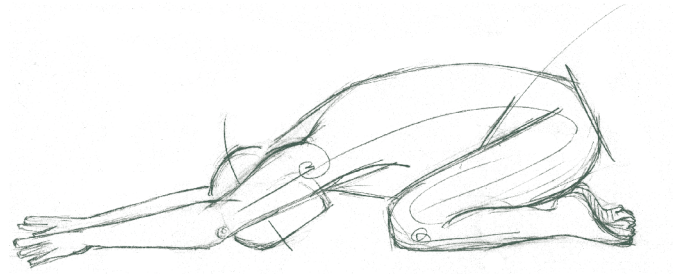
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# BALASANA

## CHILD'S POSE

### ■ TEACHING POINTS

- From all fours, bring your feet and knees together and draw your sitting bones down to your heels.
- Feel the tailbone drop and the pelvis spread.
- Lower the forehead to connect with the earth, arms tucked into sides (or extended variation shown).
- Gravity draws the yielding body deeper into the pose “release in to gravity.”



*Balasana - “Child’s Pose”*

### ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- A gentle or restorative forward fold that involves spinal flexion, hip flexion, and knee flexion.
- Spinal extensors and glutes are all lengthening.
- Tibialis anterior (shin), peroneus, and dorsi flexors of the feet are lengthening.

### ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS

- Focus on the space between the brows (third eye), or eyes closed.
- Grounding energy, internal, reflective, calming, restorative.
- Balancing.
- Root (1) and sacral (2) chakra stimulating.

### ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- Knee injury which prevents deep knee flexion.
- Tight hip flexors or lack of foot extension.

### ■ MODIFICATIONS

- Limited knee flexion, rolled blanket behind knees or sit on block.
- Limited foot extension, roll towel at ankles.
- Prenatal or obesity or difficulty breathing, spread knees, bring toes together.

### ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- Gently press two hands on sacrum and spread.
- Modifier’s pelvis aligned above (standing) the modifiee.
- One hand on lower back, other on upper back.
- Have them grasp your ankles, step back, press sacrum away.

# BALASANA

## NOTES

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# ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

DOWNWARD FACING DOG (LOY 110; MIS 118-121)

## TEACHING POINTS

Hands are shoulder width apart and grounded through all four corners of the palms.

Pay special attention to rooting the space between the thumb and first finger. This begins the line of strength from the foundation through the shoulder girdle.

Creases of wrists are parallel to the front edge of the mat.

Broaden the collar bones and across the shoulder blades. Draw the shoulders deeply into the back body.

The neck is long and the crown of the head reaches toward the floor (with caution not to thrust the chest forward).

Forearms are lifted and engaged.

Elongate the spine, creating space between the top of the waist and the armpits.

Draw the lowest front ribs toward the back body to broaden the diaphragm and lengthen the intercostals.

Draw the sacral spine toward the heels to create more length in the lumbar spine as sitting bones lift and spread to lengthen the hamstrings. Keep Pelvis Neutral.

Reach the heels toward the floor without hyperextending the knees.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Classified as an inversion as well as an arm balance and a standing pose.

Deltoids lift shoulders onto back body, teres minor helps to externally rotate shoulders. Serratus anterior lengthen to broaden the collar bones. Triceps are activated to resist hyperextension in the shoulders.

Latissimus dorsi help to depress the scapula. Wrist flexors engaged and lift out of wrist.

Hip flexion through the work of the psoas, adductors, and rectus femoris.

Psoas, obliques, and deep spinal extensors work to keep spine neutral.

Intercostal muscles lengthen.

Serratus anterior and Pectoralis major engage to support weight of body.



Adho Mukha Svanasana - "Downward Facing Dog"

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

Hamstrings, gastrocnemius, soleus, and glutes all lengthening and quadriceps contract, adductor magnus moves femur bone back.

Feet in dorsiflexion.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, APANA)

Neutralizing, stimulating, balancing, and regenerative.

Alleviates fatigue, revitalizing.

Heart rate slows as a result of slight inversion, making it calming and balancing.

Can be grounding and eliminative when focus is in grounding.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

Carpel tunnel syndrome.

Third trimester pregnancy (all inversions are contraindicated in late pregnancy).

Caution with shoulder injuries.

# ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

DOWNWARD FACING DOG (LOY 110; MIS 118-121)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Bend the knees slightly to release the hamstring attachments and keep pelvis neutral.
- | Wedge, blanket, or block for wrist pain.
- | Widen stance.
- | Place block at head for restorative modification.
- | Half Down Dog with knees lowered to floor.
- | Use the wall or a chair to place the hands on.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Hyperextension of knees, shoulders, and/or elbows.
- | Compression at lumbar and cervical curves.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground heels.
- | Encourage relaxation in cervical spine.
- | Pull up and back on hips to lengthen spine or press hand on sacrum pushing up and back.
- | Use strap at hips to encourage elongation of spine. Rotate inner thighs with hands or strap.
- | Take student slightly out of pose and externally rotate upper arms.
- | Directive touch at arm pits to encourage lift out of hyperextension of shoulders.

## NOTES

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# SAVASANA

CORPSE (LOY 422-424; MIS 295-301)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

- | Whole body is fully supine and relaxed on floor.
- | Release the shoulders and turn palms toward the sky.
- | Release the hips and turn the toes out and the heels in.
- | Arms and legs are placed gently away from midline to slowly cool the body. Lowest ribs relax toward the floor.
- | Neck is long and back of head rests gently on the floor.
- | Jaw is relaxed, lips and teeth slightly part, and the tongue relaxes at the base of the mouth.
- | Eyes are closed.
- | Breath is effortless.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Arms externally rotate.
- | Legs externally rotate.
- | Calcaneus, gastrocnemius, hamstrings, gluteus maximus, sacrum, thoracic spine, scapulae, and occiput all make contact with the floor.
- | Body is completely at rest and metabolic function is relieved of the demands of gravity.

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (YYANA, SAMANA, APANA, PRAN, UDANA)

- | Predominance of theta brain wave patterns which engage the unconscious mind and awaken intuition and deep memory.
- | Resistance in the muscles of respiration is released so free observation of the breath is attainable.
- | Deeply relaxing physically, mentally and emotionally.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Habitual asymmetry.
- | Retention of muscular tension.
- | Cervical compression.
- | Lumbar compression.



*Savasana - "Corpse"*

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Lying on back during pregnancy.
- | Back Injury.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Elevate head on blanket to reduce cervical compression.
- | Elevate torso on bolster to open chest and take pressure off vena cava in pregnancy, or practice side-lying variation.
- | Rest knees on blanket or bolster for low back compression.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Traction cervical spine.
- | Gentle pressure on shoulders/chest.
- | Traction low back by pulling legs.
- | Gentle pressure on hip bones to root low back/sacrum.
- | Set shoulder blades onto back body allowing chest to expand and tension to release.



# SAVASANA

CORPSE (LOY 422-424; MIS 295-301)

## NOTES

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# VIRABHADRASANA II

WARRIOR II (LOY 72; MIS 139)

## TEACHING POINTS

With a wide stance, turn front foot forward with toes facing the top of the mat or front of the room, externally rotating front thigh, back foot turns out, internally rotate back leg to open the back hip.

Front knee is flexed to point directly above front heel with front inner thigh in external rotation.

Front thigh works toward parallel to the floor.

Back leg remains straight with the back inner thigh in internal rotation.

With powerful internal rotation on back leg, drop the tailbone to bring the pelvic floor parallel to the floor.

Pelvic girdle should not be tipped or angled in any direction, neutral pelvis.

Stabilize the pelvis by engaging the low belly (Uddiyana Bandha).

Root the lateral edge of the back foot to the ground.

Extend arms, shoulders hug into back body and the collar bones broaden. The chest expands.

Shoulders anchor on back body and neck lengthens.

Gaze is focused toward the fingers of the front hand, though the chest is turned in the direction that the hips are opening, keeping neck neutral and rotating from ears.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Considered a lateral pose because of its movement on the lateral plane. Also an asymmetrical pose.

The arms abduct and the scapula retract.

Trapezius and rhomboids work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body and the pectoralis minor lengthens to expand the chest.

Deltoids lift arms, elbows are extended by the triceps.

On front leg: deep hip flexion, knee flexion. Iliopsoas supports the lengthening of the lumbar spine and stabilizes the pelvis. The sartorius muscles of the hip work to flex and externally rotate the leg. Quadriceps eccentrically contract.

On the back leg: Glutes extend the hip and the adductors work to internally rotate the upper thigh.



Virabhadrasana II - "Warrior II"

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

The quadriceps straighten the back knee. Iliopsoas is lengthened.

Erector spinae are working to lengthen and stabilize the spine, and abdominals work to keep pelvis neutral.

Both feet in dorsiflexion.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS

(PRAN, APANA, VYANA)

Grounding, vitalizing, integrating.

Hip and chest opening.

Strengthens arms and shoulders and builds stamina.

Balancing.

Eliminative.

Increases respiration and circulation.

Preparatory for deeper lateral poses.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

Uncontrolled hypertension.

Caution with knee and ankle instability or shoulder injury.

# VIRABHADRASANA II

WARRIOR II (LOY 72; MIS 139)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyper flexion and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Overarching in lumbar spine.
- | Diminished natural lumbar curve due to posterior pelvic tilt (over tucking tailbone), or overarching lumbar spine due to anterior pelvic tilt (lifting sitting bones too high).
- | Compression of SI joints due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Torso tipping forward or backward of center.
- | Neck & Shoulder tension.
- | Hyper extension of elbows causing strain on shoulders and fatigue.
- | Kyphosis.
- | Torque on knee because of limited external rotation in front inner thigh.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Decrease knee flexion.
- | Wall for support (can use a block to teach external rotation of front thigh).
- | Wall at lateral edge of back foot to create more grounding.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground outer edge of back foot.
- | Manually place front knee in alignment with front ankle, then assist in external rotation of front inner thigh and internal rotation of back inner thigh. \*use caution\*
- | Directive touch at sacrum to suggest dropping tailbone.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | Manually neutralize the placement of the pelvis at hip bones.
- | Lengthen arms, draw shoulder blades down back.

## NOTES

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*Lateral poses stretch and open the side bodies. Their movement is primarily asymmetrical and expressed on the lateral plane. Laterals are good preparations for back bends and are energetically stimulating and elevating to Prana Vayu. They strengthen and open the breath.*

*Lateral poses stretch and open the side bodies. Their movement is primarily asymmetrical and expressed on the lateral plane. Laterals are good preparations for back bends and are energetically stimulating and elevating to Prana Vayu. They strengthen and open the breath.*

[illegible]

NOTES

# TRIKONASANA

TRIANGLE (LOY 65; MIS 124)

## TEACHING POINTS

- | Same stance as Virabhadrasana II—wide with front foot turned forward with toes facing the top of the mat, back foot turned out to open the back hip.
- | Front knee is straight but not locked with front inner thigh in external rotation and front sitting bone drawing down.
- | Back leg is straight with the back inner thigh in internal rotation.
- | With powerful internal rotation on back leg, drop the tailbone to bring the pelvic floor parallel to the floor (Mula Bandha).
- | Legs are on the same plane as the shoulders.
- | Movement is initiated by extending the bottom waist off the hip with deep lateral stretch on the side body.
- | Stabilize the pelvis by engaging the low belly (Uddiyana Bandha), powerfully engaging the core.
- | Root the lateral edge of the back foot to the ground.
- | Side bodies lengthen, drawing ribs away from the waist.
- | Spiral shoulder girdle and thoracic spine/sternum up to the sky. Top arm lifts overhead, staying in line with chest and bottom shoulder.
- | Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- | Turn gaze to lifted palm while tailbone follows the line of the spine toward rear heel.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Considered a lateral pose because body occupies the lateral plane. Also an asymmetrical pose.
- | Ideally, spine is in neutral extension and thoracic and cervical rotation.
- | Hip flexion in front leg. Hamstrings lengthening (esp. in front leg). Pelvis remains neutral.
- | Trapezius and rhomboids work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body and the pectoralis minor expands the chest.
- | Deltoids lift arms, elbows are extended by the triceps.



*Trikonasana - "Triangle"*

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- | Iliopsoas flexes the trunk into lateral extension and
- | Quadratus Lumborum stabilizes the lumbar spine and pelvis.
- | In the back leg, the glutes extend the hip and the adductors work to internally rotate the upper thigh. The quadriceps straighten the back knee. Psoas is lengthened. The tensor fascia lata is eccentrically contracting.
- | Erector spinae are working to lengthen and stabilize the spine. Both feet in dorsiflexion.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS

### (PRAN, SAMANA, VYANA)

- | Grounding, vitalizing, stabilizing, and strengthening.
- | Hip and chest opening.
- | Strengthens arms and shoulders and builds stamina.
- | Balancing.
- | Integrative.
- | Addresses chakras 2, 3, 4, and 5.
- | Prepares and supports backbends.
- | All asymmetrical poses work to bring greater awareness to habitual patterns of misalignment.

# TRIKONASANA

TRIANGLE (LOY 65; MIS 124)

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Uncontrolled hypertension or hypotension.
- | Caution with neck injury or pain and knee problems.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyperextension and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Overstretching of hamstrings at origins (sitting bones) and attachments (back of knee).
- | Compression of SI joints due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Shoulder tension and strain on front deltoid from extended shoulder overextending.
- | Hyperextension of elbows causing strain on shoulders and fatigue.
- | Cervical compression.
- | Pelvic tilt causing hip flexion in back leg.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Block for hand or hand to shin or thigh.
- | Wall for support (can use a block to teach external rotation of front thigh and appropriate movement on lateral plane).

- | Adjust the length and width of stance.

Look forward to floor.

- Bend front knee gently.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground outer edge of back foot.
- | Support inner thigh rotation (front/external; back/internal).
- | Directive touch at sacrum to suggest dropping tailbone.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | Manual elongation of side bodies at ribcage and rotation of thoracic spine. Assist in positioning lifted arm.
- | Root head of femur bone into hip socket while deepening the lateral extension of the spine.

Manually lengthen cervical spine and assist rotation with directive touch at clavicle.

Lengthen arms and adjust position, draw shoulder blades down back.

## NOTES

# PARSVAKONASANA

EXTENDED SIDE-ANGLE (LOY 67; MIS 132)

## TEACHING POINTS

- | Same stance as Virabhadrasana II with front foot forward, toes facing the top of the mat or front of the room, back foot turning out to open the back hip.
- | Front knee is flexed to point directly above front heel with front inner thigh in external rotation. Back leg remains straight with the back inner thigh in internal rotation.
- | With powerful internal rotation on back leg, drop the tailbone in the direction of the rear heel, engaging Mula Bandha.
- | Deep hip flexion on front leg with spine in slight lateral flexion.
- | Stabilize the pelvis by engaging the low belly (Uddiyana Bandha).
- | Root the lateral edge of the back foot to the ground.
- | Hip flexion is deep enough to allow a continuous line from the spine through the tail to the outer edge of the back foot.
- | Bottom arm can sit on front bent knee or finger tips root to the floor on lateral edge of front foot.
- | Lengthen side bodies and draw shoulders toward spine. Neck lengthens and rotates.
- | Top arm is extended overhead with upper arm parallel to the ear and shoulder wraps around the back.
- | Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- | Gaze is focused toward the fingers of the front hand, and the chest and sternum rotate open (Jalandhara Bandha).

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Lateral, asymmetrical standing asana.
- | Deep hip and knee flexion on front leg causing powerful contraction of quadriceps. Hip and knee extension on back leg supported by the quadriceps lengthening.
- | Trapezius and rhomboids work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body while the deltoids lift arm overhead, elbow is extended by the triceps.
- | Iliopsoas and sartorius muscles flex and externally rotate the front hip.
- | Tensor fascia lata and glutes lengthen and adductors contract and internally rotate.



*Parsvakonasana - "Extended Side-Angle"*

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- | Abdominal obliques, serratus anterior, erector spinae and quadratus lumborum are working to lengthen, slightly laterally flex and rotate the torso.
- | Both feet in dorsiflexion.
- | Iliopsoas flexes front hip.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, VYANA)

- | Grounding, vitalizing, stabilizing and strengthening.
- | Hip and chest opening.
- | Balances and stabilizes during practice. Energizes at completion.
- | Integrative.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Uncontrolled hypertension/hypotension.
- | Caution with knee and ankle instability or shoulder or cervical spine injury.
- | Be aware of the depth of hip flexion...lessen flexion if hips are compromised.



# PARSVAKONASANA

EXTENDED SIDE-ANGLE (LOY 67; MIS 132)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyper flexion and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Compression of SI joints and/or lumbar spine due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support (too much weight in arm on leg).
- | Shoulder tension and rounded shoulders.
- | Hip flexion on back leg.
- | Compression of cervical spine.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Decrease knee flexion.
- | Bring hand to a block.
- | Lower top arm.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Directive touch to guide front knee in alignment with front ankle, then assist in external rotation of front inner thigh and flexion at hip.
- | Manually assist internal rotation of back inner thigh.
- | Directive touch at sacrum to suggest dropping tailbone.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | Ground outer edge of back foot.
- | Manually assist in rotation of thoracic spine at ribcage, drawing sternum toward the sky.
- | Draw shoulders away from ears and lengthen cervical vertebrae.

## NOTES

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# ARDHA CHANDRASANA

HALF MOON BALANCE (LOY 74-76; MIS 141-144)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Set a strong foundation in the balancing foot. Easiest to approach from Vira II or Trikonasana where the pelvis is already set and the foundation is strong.
- Ground strongly the front foot and reach the same hand to the outside, forward, diagonal of the front foot.
- Back leg is straight with the back inner thigh in powerful internal rotation and tailbone tracking the line of the lifted back leg to bring the SI joints into balance and the pelvis stabilized.
- Draw head of standing leg femur into hip socket and lengthen side bodies.
- Both feet are in dorsi flexion.
- Spiral shoulder girdle and thoracic spine/sternum up to the sky (hips stack).
- Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- Back of the neck is long whether lifted to gaze at the hand or lowered to look at the toes while tailbone moves into the body and down toward the rear heel.
- Ideally the whole body would occupy the same plane from heel to head.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Considered a lateral pose because body occupies the lateral plane. Also an asymmetrical pose.
- Ideally, spine is in neutral extension and thoracic and cervical rotation.
- Spinal muscles and obliques work to rotate the torso and provide core strength.
- Deep flexion of iliopsoas in standing leg. Hip extension and external rotation of hip of lifted leg while working to powerfully internally rotate inner thigh to create sacral stability.
- Standing leg in powerful external rotation and rooting of standing leg femur bone into hip socket. Gluteus Medius stabilizes.
- Hamstrings lengthening (esp. in front leg) and strong engagement of quadriceps to extend the legs and stabilize the knees.
- Glutes engage to lift back leg while the psoas works to stabilize it.



*Ardha Chandrasana - "Half Moon Balance"*

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- Strong deep core engagement (psoas, abdominals, deep external rotators of the hip).
- Trapezius and rhomboids work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body and the pectoralis minor lengthens to expand the chest.
- Deltoids lift upper arm, elbow extended by the triceps.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, APANA, VYANA)

- Asymmetrical, lateral movement increases vitalizing force.
- Rooted, balanced front foot increases grounding and eliminative force.
- Hip and heart opening.
- Spinal lengthening and rotation assists in the stretching and rotating of internal organs (esp. kidneys and adrenals).
- Integrative. Pulls scattered energy in.
- Brings equilibrium/homeostasis to system upon completion (assists in assimilation).
- Energizing and revitalizing.

# ARDHA CHANDRASANA

HALF MOON BALANCE (LOY 74-76; MIS 141-144)

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Uncontrolled hypertension or hypotension.
- | Caution with neck injury or pain.
- | Caution with history of hip dislocation.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyperextension and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Overstretching of hamstrings of front leg.
- | Compression of SI joints due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Shoulder tension.
- | Hyperextension of elbows causing strain on shoulders and fatigue.
- | Cervical compression.
- | Chest forward of hips or lifted leg behind the hip.
- | Hip flexion in lifted leg.
- | Rounded thoracic spine.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Hand on block (for tight hamstrings, limited hip flexion, and/or to bring body into same plane).
- | Wall for support (can use a block to teach external rotation of front thigh and appropriate movement on lateral plane).
- | Drop lifted hand to hip. Microbend standing leg knee

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Face in the same direction of and stand behind student.
- | Ground yourself first, then assist.
- | Help to create a strong a stable foundation using the hip or thigh as an anchor then use your thigh to internally rotate the standing leg.
- | Use hands at ribs to assist in sidebody lengthening and thoracic rotation (continue to anchor them with your body).
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | Internally rotate muscles of lifted leg and verbally direct the drawing of the tailbone in the line of the lifted leg.
- | Help to create more stability and core strength by stabilizing at foot of lifted leg (and at hip) and verbally instructing them to push into your hand, helping to root head of femur, hip socket, and mitiale core engagement.

## NOTES

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*Back Bends are poses that extend the spine. Usually symmetrical, but sometimes practiced in asymmetrical poses. Back bends are energetically stimulating. They increase Pran and Udana Vayus. They uplift, invigorate, and stimulate the immune system.*

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NOTES

# VIRABHADRASANA I

WARRIOR I (LOY 69-71; MIS 136-138)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Stance is long with hips facing forward. Front knee is bent and aligned with the second or third toe of the front foot. Back toes angle toward the front corner of the mat, back heel is grounded.
- Hips face forward and tailbone tracks the line of the back leg to the heel.
- Front inner thigh in powerful external rotation, rear inner thigh in powerful internal rotation, navel turns toward the front thigh.
- Engage the deep core between the navel and the pubic bone.
- Side bodies lengthen away from waist as shoulders descend down the back.
- From an space of strength, work to lift the sternum by initiating thoracic extension and expanding the chest. Neck follows line of the spine.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Front thigh in powerful external rotation. Hip and knee in deep flexion.
- Rear thigh in powerful internal rotation and hip and knee in extension.
- Quadriceps on the front leg stabilize the knee and on the back leg straighten the knee. Psoas on the front leg contracts to create hip flexion and on the back leg lengthens to create leg extension. Glutes contract to extend thigh.
- Spinal extension supported by the spinal extensors, erector spinae and trapezius.
- Rhomboids, lower trapezius, and serratus work to adduct and depress the scapulae.
- Deltoids and pectoralis major lift arms overhead, elbows are extended by the triceps.
- Quadratus lumborum works to provide pelvic stability and support the lumbar curve.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, UDANA)

- Energizing, balancing, expansive, expressive.
- Strengthens thighs, abs and back (large muscle groups).
- Increases fortitude and steadfastness.



Virabhadrasana I - "Warrior I"

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

- Cultivates growth and expansion on an energetic level.
- Increases heart rate and rate of respiration by expanding lungs and diaphragm.
- Stimulates chakras 2, 3, 4, 5.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Uncontrolled hyper/hypotension (lower arms).
- Cartilage or tendon injuries in knee joints.
- Heart problems.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- Improper alignment of feet resulting in unstable foundation (tight rope) and hip and pelvic misalignment.
- Compression, misalignment of SI joints.
- Over arching in lumbar spine (anterior pelvic tilt).
- Rounding of low back (posterior pelvic tilt).

# VIRABHADRASANA I

WARRIOR I (LOY 69-71; MIS 136-138)

## Risks and Common Misalignments (cont'd)

- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae.
- ⌋ Knee pain if knee flexion is too great or if there is excessive rotation in knees.
- ⌋ Hyperextension or rotation of back knee.
- ⌋ Lack of core support.

## MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ Shorten and widen the stance to provide a more open and stable foundation.
- ⌋ Decrease knee flexion.
- ⌋ Wall for support with back heel.
- ⌋ Decrease spinal extension.
- ⌋ Strap around arms to encourage shoulder placement and arm rotation.

## ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Ground through outer arch of back foot.
- ⌋ Manually assist thigh rotation and deepen hip flexion in front leg.
- ⌋ Draw front knee into deeper flexion.
- ⌋ Draw torso forward (out of spinal extension) then align sacrum with hands on hips.
- ⌋ Elongate side bodies at low ribs.
- ⌋ Directive touch at core.
- ⌋ Draw shoulders into back body, externally rotating the arms (watch for compensatory response at lumbar spine and low ribs).

## NOTES

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# SALABHASANA

LOCUST (LOY 99-100; MIS 202-204)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

From a prone position, activate core by lifting the lowest part of the abdomen toward the sacrum, press tops of the feet into the floor, internally rotate inner upper thighs, draw ankles isometrically toward the midline, and elongate waist drawing the ribcage forward.

Lifting only the sternum, chest, head and shoulders off the floor (Ardha Salabhasana), draw the crown of the head forward and shoulders draw into the back body. Neck lengthens.

Once the foundation of strength has been established, deeply root the tailbone in the direction of the heels and lift legs away from the floor, extending back and away through the soles of the feet.

There are a variety of arm variations in this asana.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Spinal extensors are contracting while abdominal muscles and hip flexors are lengthening and stabilizing.

Deep core muscles are engaged. Iliopsoas is lengthened.

Powerful internal rotation on the inner upper thighs.

Glutes are engaged but not gripping to extend thighs.

Quadratus Lumborum works to provide pelvic stability and support the lumbar curve.

Adductors are engaged.

Rhomboids and trapezius work to adduct and depress the scapulae. Lats engage to extend arms.

Pectorals are lengthening, broadening the chest. Neck follows the line of the spine.

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (SAMANA, PRAN)

Balancing, assimilative, revitalizing.

Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.

Healing and regenerating to lumbar, sacral and SI joint areas.

Aids in digestion and elimination.



Salabhasana - "Locust"

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

Can be utilized to activate thoracic breathing in support of deeper back bending, twisting, or laterals practice.

Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.

Rehabilitating to chronically rounded upper spine.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs.

Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve).

Over engagement of glutes.

Rounded shoulders.

Lack of core support can cause discomfort on the pubic symphysis and iliacus and pain in low back.

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

Recent lumbar or cervical injury.

Pregnancy.

Breast reconstructive surgery.



# SALABHASANA

LOCUST (LOY 99-100; MIS 202-204)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Blanket beneath the pelvis.
- | Block under forehead for neck support.
- | Block between thighs or heels.
- | Strap for a variety of arm variations.
- | Multiple arm/leg variations.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground the feet or shin bones to the floor in the Ardha Salabhasana variation to decrease glute grip.
- | Manually assist thigh rotation.
- | Pull legs straight back to traction spine (don't lift, which can compress lumbar).
- | Draw torso forward by lengthening and lifting ribcage.
- | Elongate side bodies at low ribs.
- | Ground pelvis and sacrum.
- | Draw shoulders into back body, externally rotating upper arms (watch for compensatory response at lumbar spine and low ribs).
- | Directive touch at cervical spine to encourage lengthening.

## NOTES

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# BHUJANGASANA

COBRA (LOY 107-108; MIS 205-208)

## TEACHING POINTS

- From a prone position, activate core by lifting the lowest part of the abdomen toward the sacrum, press tops of the feet into the floor, and elongate waist drawing the ribcage forward.
- Lifting only the sternum, chest, head and shoulders off the floor, draw the crown of the head forward and shoulders draw into the back body. Neck lengthens.
- Powerful leg and front body engagement supports the extension of the spine.
- Strong internal rotation of the inner thighs to widen the sacrum and allow space for rooting of the tailbone.
- Forearms are parallel to each other. Shoulders lift to assist in extending the rib cage. Then top of the arm bones draw into the back body allowing the shoulder blades to support the lift of the chest and sternum.
- The intent of the pose is a deep thoracic back bend, which is best supported by drawing the ribs away from the waist while pelvis is stabilized.
- Strong energy through the arms and hands to draw chest forward and lift sternum.
- Hands sit in front of shoulders and arms can work to straighten elbows once strength and extension are firmly established.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Thoracic spinal extension, lumbar lengthening.
- Deeper intrinsic back muscles create the spinal extension in order to maximize movement of the ribs.
- Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs with hamstrings working to lengthen and extend the hips and maintain adduction.
- Glutes are stabilizing but not overly contracting, and engage to extend hips.
- Obliques, rectus abdominis, and external intercostals are lengthening to support the lift and expansion of the sternum. Pelvic floor engage to support low back.
- Triceps are strong and supporting the lift from the arms. Elbows are soft and the forearms are engaged. Weakness in the pronators of the forearms or tightness in the supinators will cause elbows to open to the sides.
- Pectorals are lengthening, broadening the chest. Latissimus Dorsi engage to extend arms.



*Bhujangasana - "Cobra"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

- Balancing, revitalizing, assimilative, expansive.
- Energizing when held and calming to the nervous system upon completion.
- Opens chest and shoulders, strengthens the spinal muscles especially the deep intrinsic muscles of the spine.
- Counters kyphosis.
- Expands chest, lungs and diaphragm to support more full breath.
- Expansive and opening to whole front body.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- Pregnancy.
- Breast reconstructive surgery.

# BHUJANGASANA

COBRA (LOY 107-108; MIS 205-208)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Hyperextension of lumbar spine.
- | Compression of SI joints.
- | Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve).
- | Over engagement of glutes.
- | Rounded shoulders.
- | Lack of core support can cause discomfort on the pubic symphysis and iliacus, and pain in low back.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Blanket beneath the pelvis.
- | Lifting into the pose in a way that is lengthening to the low back instead of compressive (rounding, grounding).
- | Block between thighs or heels.
- | Supported with bolster underneath upper thighs.
- | Vary the amount of lift in the pose.
- | Sphinx or Ardha Salabhasana.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground the feet to the floor to decrease glute grip.
- | Manually assist thigh rotation.
- | Draw torso forward by lengthening and lifting ribcage.
- | Elongate side bodies at low ribs.
- | Ground pelvis and sacrum.
- | Allow front of shoulder to release into hands and heart to soften, then lift and extend the arm bones creating the support to lift sternum (watch for compensatory response at lumbar spine and low ribs).
- | Directive touch at cervical spine to encourage lengthening.

## NOTES

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# URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA

UPWARD FACING DOG (LOY 109)

## TEACHING POINTS

- | Can be approached from a prone position or from a flow (i.e. Chaturanga Dandasana).
- | The foundation of this pose is the hands and the tops of the feet. Spread through all four corners of the palms and actively press into the tops of the feet and toes.
- | Powerful leg and front body engagement supports the extension of the spine. Knees and pelvis are lifted away from the floor, upper thighs are inwardly rotated and tailbone is tracking the line of the spine toward the feet.
- | Core of the body (especially the low abdomen) is powerfully engaged. The navel draws toward the sacrum.
- | Wrists sit directly beneath shoulders and the sternum is lifting through the upper arms.
- | The entire front line of the body expands as the whole spine is in extension.
- | The momentum and sustainability in this asana is the core of the body.
- | The back bend is expressed in the thoracic spine as you lift the ribs, draw the shoulders deeply onto the back, lift the sternum and root the tailbone and tops of the feet.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Creates flexibility of the whole spine.
- | Lumbar, thoracic, and cervical spine all in spinal extension.
- | Deeper intrinsic back muscles create the spinal extension in order to maximize movement of the ribs.
- | Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs with hamstrings working to lengthen and extend the hips and maintain adduction.
- | Glutes are stabilizing but not overly contracting. Psoas works to stabilize the pelvis and support the lumbar spine.
- | Obliques, rectus abdominis, and external intercostals are lengthening to support the lift and expansion of the sternum.
- | Triceps are strong and supporting the lift from the arms. Elbows are lengthened and the forearms are engaged. Weakness in the pronators of the forearms or tightness in the supinators will cause elbows to open to the sides.



*Urdhva Mukha Svanasana - "Upward Facing Dog"*

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- | The posterior deltoids draw the shoulders back and the lower trapezius draw the shoulder blades down. The stretching of the pectoralis major expands the chest.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

- | Balancing, revitalizing, assimilative, expansive.
- | Energizing when held and calming to the nervous system upon completion.
- | Opens chest and shoulders, strengthens the spinal muscles especially the deep intrinsic muscles of the spine.
- | Counters kyphosis.
- | Expands chest, lungs and diaphragm to support more full breath.
- | Expansive and opening to whole front body.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- | Pregnancy.
- | Carpel tunnel syndrome.

# URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA

UPWARD FACING DOG (LOY 109)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Over engagement of glutes.
- | Rounded shoulders and collapsed chest.
- | Pressure in ankles or knees. Lack of plantar flexion can be limiting.
- | Hyperextension of elbows. Hyperextension of Lumbar spine.
- | Wrist discomfort.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Blocks for hands.
- | Blanket under tops of feet for limited plantar flexion.
- | Supported with bolster underneath upper thighs.
- | Vary the amount of lift in the pose.
- | Alternative asanas: Bhujangasana, Sphinx, Salabhasana.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground the feet to the floor to decrease glute grip and encourage rooting through the tailbone.
- | Draw torso forward by lengthening and lifting ribcage.
- | Elongate side bodies at low ribs.
- | Align pelvis and sacrum.
- | Allow front of shoulder to release into hands and heart to soften, then lift and extend the arm bones creating the support to lift sternum (watch for compensatory response at lumbar spine and low ribs).
- | Squat drawing knees into upper back as you draw shoulders into back body and broaden chest.

## NOTES

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# DHANURASANA

BOW (LOY 102; MIS 130)

## TEACHING POINTS

From a prone position, activate core by lifting the lowest part of the abdomen toward the sacrum, bend knees, and grasp ankles with hands.

Inhale as the chest and sternum lift, expanding through the heart and drawing the shoulders onto the back body. As you exhale, press ankles back into the hands, lifting the thighs and knees off the floor. Draw knees and ankles toward the midline of the body as you powerfully internally rotate the upper thighs.

Once the foundation of strength at the core has been established, deeply root the tailbone in the direction of the heels. Draw the legs back first and then up, working on lengthening the spine continuously as you lift.

Point of balance should be the abdomen as opposed to the chest or pelvis. The cervical and lumbar vertebrae should remain lengthened and the thoracic vertebrae extending.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Front of the body is lengthened: quadriceps, hip flexors, abdominal muscles, pectorals, intercostals, anterior deltoids.

Back of the body is shortened and contracted: hamstrings, glutes, spinal extensors.

Deep core muscles are engaged. Iliopsoas is lengthened.

Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs, isometric contraction between the shins. Adduction and internal rotation on upper thighs.

Glutes are stabilizing but not overly contracting.

Quadratus lumborum, psoas and abdominals work to provide pelvic stability and support the lumbar curve

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

Balancing, Revitalizing, Assimilative.

Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.

Energizing when held, balancing upon completion.

Increases strength and flexibility of whole spine.

Aids in digestion and assimilation.



*Dhanurasana - "Bow"*

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

Stimulates the kidneys and adrenals, and can stimulate the thyroid.

Strengthens lung capacity.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

Recent lumbar or cervical injury.

Pregnancy.

Breast reconstructive surgery.

Chronic kyphosis.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs.

Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve), and/or lumbar vertebrae from lack of proper front body and deep core support.

Can cause excess pressure on the knee joint by pulling the feet in with the arms.

Lack of core support can cause discomfort on the pubic symphysis and iliacus.

Tight shoulders can create limitation.

# DHANURASANA

BOW (LOY 102; MIS 130)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Blanket beneath the pelvis
- | Block under forehead for neck support.
- | Block between thighs or heels.
- | Strap for feet.
- | Ardha Dhanurasana.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Manually assist thigh rotation.
- | Pull legs straight back to traction spine and lift heels to create more spinal extension.
- | Draw torso forward by lengthening and lifting ribcage.
- | Elongate side bodies at low ribs.
- | Assist in greater thoracic extension by supporting the melt of the heart at shoulders and rooting through the knees.
- | Assist in stabilizing pelvis and rooting sacrum.

## NOTES

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# SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

BRIDGE (LOY 227-230; MIS 268)

## TEACHING POINTS

- From a supine position, bend knees and place heels in line with the sitting bones, feet parallel, knees stacked directly over the heels.
- Feet and legs are strong and actively engaged to support the stability of the pelvis, the lengthening of the spine and the safety of the knees.
- Engage the strength of the core by drawing muscular energy deep into the low abdomen and drawing the sacrum toward the naval with powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs.
- With powerful core strength engaged, begin to elevate the hips and spine away from the floor, drawing the tailbone in the direction of the backs of the knees.
- At the fullest expression of the pose, draw the shoulder blades underneath the body, and lift lowest part of cervical spine (C7) off the ground. Slight rooting through the back of the head.
- The sternum lifts and the chest expands as the throat opens.
- If accessible hands can clasp underneath the body.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Front of the body is lengthened: quadriceps, hip flexors, abdominal muscles, pectorals, intercostals, anterior deltoids.
- Back of the body is shortened and contracted: hamstrings, glutes, spinal extensors.
- Sacrospinalis concentrically contracting.
- Deep core muscles are engaged. Iliopsoas and rectus femoris are lengthened.
- Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs, isometric contraction between the shins.
- Gluteus maximus working to lift and extend the hips.
- Rhomboids activated to adduct the shoulder blades, and levator scapulae working to lift shoulder blades.



*Setu Bandha Sarvangasana - "Bridge"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, UDANA)

- Can effect all Prana Vayus when practiced with specific intent.
- Vitalizing, balancing, expressive, centering.
- Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.
- Energizing during the practice, balancing and grounding at completion.
- Increases strength and flexibility of whole spine.
- Expansive to entire front body.
- Lungs and diaphragm are expanded, solar plexus energetically activated.
- Can stimulate the thyroid and parathyroid.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- Pregnancy (esp. 3rd trimester).
- Chronic Kyphosis.



# SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

BRIDGE (LOY 227-230; MIS 268)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs (feet turning outward).
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve), lumbar vertebrae from lack of proper front body and deep core support.
- ⌋ Hyperflexion of knees.
- ⌋ Limited range of mobility in shoulders.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ Block or bolster beneath the sacrum.
- ⌋ Strap between hands.
- ⌋ Block between knees.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Manually assist thigh rotation and correct abduction.
- ⌋ Press down on knees to root the feet.
- ⌋ Elongate spine at hip joints, tilt pelvis to root tailbone.
- ⌋ Lift and open chest, root shoulders.
- ⌋ Encourage lift of C7 (directive touch).
- ⌋ Root back of head from light pressure at forehead.

## NOTES

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# URDHVA DHANURASANA

UPWARD FACING BOW (LOY 357-359; MIS 223)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

- From a supine position, bend knees and place heels in line with the sitting bones, feet parallel, knees stacked directly over the heels.
- Feet and legs are strong and actively engaged to support the stability of the pelvis, the lengthening of the spine and the safety of the knees.
- Bring hands alongside ears with elbows bent. Palms work to flat on the floor with fingers facing shoulders and forearms parallel.
- Engage the strength of the core by drawing muscular energy deep into the low abdomen and drawing the sacrum toward the naval with powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs.
- With powerful core strength engaged, begin to elevate the hips and spine away from the floor, drawing the tailbone in the direction of the backs of the knees.
- Press hands into the floor and lift to the crown of the head. Draw upper arm bones back toward legs, keeping the spine lengthened then press powerfully through the feet and hands and begin straightening the arms lifting the head away from the floor.
- The sternum lifts and the chest expands forward through the upper arms, but the upper arm bones stay rooted into the shoulder sockets and the shoulders remain powerfully placed on the back body providing support for the lifting chest.
- The cervical spine lengthens and the head is drawn down to the earth by gravity.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Powerful internal rotation of the upper thighs. Legs and hips are in adduction. Gluteus maximus and hamstrings contract working to extend and lift the hips, while tensor fascia lata, gluteus medius, and adductors work to stabilize. Gastrocnemius and soleus help to support grounding in the pose. Shins draw isometrically toward the midline.
- The quadriceps, hip flexors, abdominal muscles on the front body are all lengthening.
- Deep core muscles are engaged. The erector spinae and quadratus lumborum contract while the iliopsoas and rectus femoris are lengthened.



*Urdhva Dhanurasana - "Upward Facing Bow"*

## *Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)*

- Arms externally rotate supported by the posterior deltoids. The serratus anterior and rhomboids abducts the scapulae.
- The deltoids flex the arms at the shoulders while the triceps extend the elbows.
- The pronators of the forearms turn the palms toward the floor.
- The pectoralis and latissimus dorsi lengthen.

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

- Highly energizing. Stimulating, balancing, expressive.
- Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.
- Elevates enthusiasm.
- Increases strength and flexibility of whole spine.
- Expansive to entire front body.
- Can stimulate the thyroid and pituitary. Can counteract depression and lethargy.

# URDHVA DHANURASANA

UPWARD FACING BOW (LOY 357-359; MIS 223)

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- ⌋ Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- ⌋ Pregnancy (esp. 3rd trimester).
- ⌋ Chronic kyphosis.
- ⌋ Carpal tunnel syndrome.
- ⌋ Headache.

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs (feet turning outward) or lack of abdominal support.
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve), lumbar vertebrae from lack of proper front body and deep core support.
- ⌋ Hyperflexion of knees.
- ⌋ Limited range of mobility in shoulders.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ At wall or on blocks.
- ⌋ With chair.
- ⌋ Block between upper thighs.
- ⌋ Alternative asana: Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Manually assist thigh rotation and correct abduction.
- ⌋ Press down on knees to root the feet.
- ⌋ Elongate spine at hip joints (can use strap).
- ⌋ Lift and open chest, root shoulders.
- ⌋ Assist in drawing upper arms parallel and placing the hands safely.

## NOTES

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# EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA

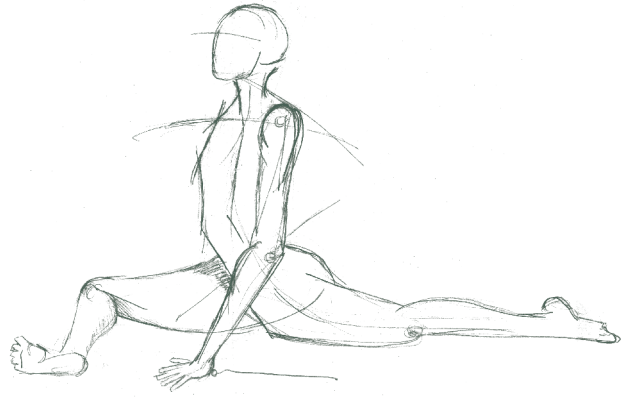
ONE LEGGED KING PIGEON POSE (LOY 389; MIS 211)

## TEACHING POINTS

- From Adho Muka Svanasana, bend knee and place it on the floor behind same side wrist (this is now front leg). Draw foot under opposite frontal hipbone or behind opposite wrist in 45 degree angle (90 degree angle advanced).
- Extend back leg heel straight back, aligned with sitting bone. Lower hips toward floor.
- Bent leg is in powerful external rotation and foot is in dorsiflexion. Extended leg is in powerful internal rotation and is fully engaged to protect the low back. Pelvis is balanced and stabilized. SI joints aligned.
- Draw low belly in towards the spine and lift ribcage away from the waist. Strong core engagement and rooting of tailbone in direction of greatest spinal length.
- With the pelvis stabilized, draw sternum up and shoulders down the back for a back bend.
- For the full expression of the asana, flex your back leg, retract scapulas and reach arms up and overhead to clasp foot. Maintaining stabilization in pelvis and spinal extension.
- For more restorative pose, walk hands forward and release upper body towards floor.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Spinal Extension: Erector Spinae concentrically contract to extend the spine, while rectus abdominus eccentrically contract to help lengthen lumbar spine.
- Psoas, sartorius, deep hip rotators, and hamstrings work to flex, abduct, and, externally rotate front leg.
- Adductors and quadriceps contract to extend and internally rotate back leg. Psoas lengthens.
- Deep hip flexion with front leg and deep hip extension with back leg.
- Front foot in dorsiflexion, back foot in plantar flexion.
- Deep core engagement (Mula Bandha).
- Shoulders and arms in flexion. Rhomboids retract scapula and pectoralis muscles lengthen and lift sternum.
- Activation of the back is much like Bhujangasana in the intermediate back bend stage.



*Eka Pada Rajakapotasana - "One Legged King Pigeon Pose"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS

APANA, SAMANA, PRAN (with backbend)

- Energizing, assimilative and vitalizing in backbend version.
- Eliminative and balancing in forward fold version.
- Chest and hip opener, back strengthener.
- Improves flexibility in hips, thighs, legs, and shoulder (full expression).
- Relieves sciatic nerve discomfort.
- Pelvic stabilizer when done correctly.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Recent or chronic back, knee, or hip injury.
- Compromised lumbar discs.
- Sacroiliac injury.

# EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA

ONE LEGGED KING PIGEON POSE (LOY 389; MIS 211)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ Hyperextension of lumbar spine in backbend.
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae in backbend.
- ⌋ Lack of mobility in hips can put extreme pressure on bent knee.
- ⌋ Overstretching for deep hip rotators or hamstrings at attachment points on front leg and hip flexors of back leg.
- ⌋ Lack of core engagement.
- ⌋ SI joint imbalance.
- ⌋ Lack of engagement in front foot compromised safety of knee.
- ⌋ Rounded shoulders.
- ⌋ Rocking off of pelvic balance and resting on one hip.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ Blanket, block, or bolster under hip of bent knee to bring pelvis into balance.
- ⌋ Blocks under hands.
- ⌋ Draw foot of bent knee closer to the body.
- ⌋ Curl back toes under to support knee.
- ⌋ Strap with full expression.
- ⌋ Block under forehead in forward fold version.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Manually internally rotate back thigh and externally rotate front thigh.
- ⌋ Root pelvis gently, pressing a little more on lifted hip.
- ⌋ Elongate spine and/or ribcage.
- ⌋ Manually assist with collar bones broadening and shoulders releasing into back body.
- ⌋ Gentle variations on Bhujangasana adjustments in back bending version.

## NOTES

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# FORWARD FOLDS

*Forward Folds are poses that flex the hips and sometimes the spine. Can be symmetrical or asymmetrical in nature. They strengthen the function of the parasympathetic nervous system. They are energetically pacifying, and build Apana Vayu. They encourage elimination and introspection. They are supportive of eliminating waste on all levels.*

## NOTES

## NOTES

# UTTANASANA

STANDING FORWARD FOLD (LOY 92-93; MIS 107)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Set a strong foundation in Tadasana balancing the weight evenly, with awareness, between both feet.
- Initiate fold from the hips, careful not to lock the knees. Engage core strength during fold to create stabilization and safety.
- Spine lengthens and extends, ribs draw away from the waist creating space in the side bodies.
- Stay grounded through the soles of the feet. Sitting bones align over the heels as the back of the legs straighten.
- Internal rotation of the upper thighs. Continue to powerfully root the tailbone even as the sitting bones lift and spread to elongate the base of the spine.
- Shoulders remain on the back body to support the lengthening of the spine.
- Neck and head soften. Gaze is toward the knees or thighs with the crown of the head releasing with gravity.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Works with flexibility and lengthening in hamstrings, glutes, spinal flexors, gastrocnemius. Initiate flexion from hips not waist.
- Deep hip flexion and very mild spinal flexion.
- Gastrocnemius, gracilis, piriformis, and all three muscles of the hamstrings are lengthening.
- Internal rotation on upper thighs. Quadriceps engage to support the knee joints.
- Gravity should do most of the work in this pose.
- Deep core of the body engages to support the safety of the low back and sacrum.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (APANA, SAMANA)

- Grounding energy, deepens exhalation.
- Internalizing and reflective.
- Moves stagnant energy out. Eliminative.



Uttanasana - "Standing Forward Fold"

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

- Balances anxious or distracted energy.
- Brings equilibrium/homeostasis to system upon completion (assists in assimilation).

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Uncontrolled hypertension or hypotension.
- Lumbar injury (esp. herniated disks).
- Osteoporosis.
- Glaucoma or serious eye issues.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- Hyperextension of knees.
- Tight hamstrings cause excessive rounding in lumbar spine.
- Overstretching of hamstrings at origins and attachments.
- Neck and shoulder compression.
- Flexion at waist instead of hips.
- External rotation of legs (feet turned out).



# UTTANASANA

STANDING FORWARD FOLD (LOY 92-93; MIS

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Bend knees or increase the angle of the fold, to
- | address tight hamstrings, and low back issues.
- | At wall with hands at shoulder height.
- | Blocks beneath hands.
- |

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground yourself first, then assist.
- | Ground and stabilize by pressing firmly on sacrum
- | sending the energy down through the soles of the feet.
- |
- | Manually elongate spine while maintaining grounded hand.
- |
- | Create more space and length by drawing ribs away
- | from waist.
- |
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and
- | relieve lumbar compression.
- |
- | Directive touch at neck and shoulders to encourage
- | release and length.

## NOTES

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# PASCHIMOTTANASANA

EXTREME WEST FACING STRETCH (LOY 166; MIS 229)

## TEACHING POINTS

Initiate fold from the hips, engaging core as you fold. Root through the sitting bones and tail bone with the legs stretched straight out.

Both inner thighs are in powerful internal rotation.

Feet in dorsi flexion with heels reaching forward and toes lifted.

The lowest part of the abdomen lifts and engages as the tailbone and sitting bones root (Mula Bandha), and the space behind the navel draws back toward the spine and up toward the lowest ribs (Uddyana Bandha) creating a strong central core of support.

The ribs draw away from the waist and the sternum lifts as the spine lengthens. The collar bones broaden and the shoulders release down the back body.

Folding forward from the hips, continue to extend from the ribs, drawing the head of the sacrum forward and keeping the sternum lifted until the greatest stretch is reached.

After lengthening the spine, the upper body can round as you release into the fold while maintaining the work of strength and stability. Keep neck in line with spine.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Muscles of the back body lengthen: hamstrings, gastrocnemius, soleus, erector spinae, and latissimus dorsi.

Quadriceps contract to straighten the knees and the hip flexion, slight spinal flexion, dorsi flexion of the feet.

Psoas and rectus abdominis work to flex at the hips, while the quadratus lumborum eccentrically lengthens and stabilizes the pelvis.

Adductors contract to internally rotate the thighs.

Rhomboids and traps work to keep shoulders on back body

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (SAMANA, APANA)

Very internalizing, grounding, eliminative, integrative.

Regenerative and centering.

Calming to the nervous system.

Simulates digestion.



*Paschimottasana - "Extreme West Facing Stretch"*

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

- Opens the back body allowing for greater receptivity at the completion of the asana.
- Improves circulation in hips, legs and spine.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Herniated disks.
- Diarrhea.
- Use cautiously in cases of severe depression.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- Hyperextension of knees.
- Collapsed chest and/or rounded shoulders.
- Compression at lumbar curve.
- External rotation of upper thighs (feet turned outward).
- Compression of cervical vertebrae caused by shoulder tension.

# PASCHIMOTTANASANA

EXTREME WEST FACING STRETCH (LOY 166; MIS 229)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Elevate hips to relieve restriction in hips and legs.
- | Bend knees or support with blanket under knees.
- | Increase the angle of the fold.
- | Use a strap or block.
- | Multiple hand positions (anchoring the hands allows the scapula to depress and protract).

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Press against feet to encourage leg engagement.
- | Manual Internal rotation of inner thighs.
- | Root the sacrum. Lengthen side bodies. Cautiously assist in deepening the fold.
- | Touch to bring awareness of core engagement and neck length.
- | Awareness touch at knees.
- | Shoulder loop.

## NOTES

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# JANU SIRSASANA

HEAD TO KNEE POSE (LOY 148; MIS 233)

## TEACHING POINTS

From Dandasana root powerfully through the sitting bones and tail bone and feel the pelvis aligned, both legs internally rotate, and feet are engaged in dorsiflexion.

Bend one knee and draw the heel of that foot to the inner groins, externally rotating the inner thigh of the bent knee leg. Draw the sole of the foot actively into the inner thigh of the straight leg and resist with the straight leg into the sole of the foot.

Draw into the core to find strength and expansion of the torso. Fold forward by drawing the head of the sacrum forward, slightly turning the navel toward the straight leg, and leading with the heart.

As you fold, continue to anchor the straight leg powerfully into the earth, and engage the strength of the core.

Keep the shoulders drawing down the back and the chest open and expanded.

Keep the neck following the line of the spine.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Spinal extension and subtle rotation.

Hip flexion and pelvic stabilization. Eccentric lengthening of the quadratus lorum.

Powerful muscle engagement of straight leg with slight internal rotation, adduction, and knee extension (not locked). Powerful lengthening of hamstrings, glutes, piriformis, gastrocnemius, and soleus of straight leg. Bent leg in abduction and external rotation with adductors extending and rotators working.

Both feet in dorsiflexion, actively engaged into the resistance of the leg or foot.

Latissimus dorsi lengthen bilaterally and spinal extensors lengthen and work to deepen into the pose.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (APANA, SAMANA)

Grounding, balancing. Powerfully eliminative.

Asymmetrical nature of the pose brings awareness to habitual misalignments especially in pelvis and spine.

Aids digestions, activates kidneys and adrenals.

Calming to the nervous system.



*Prep for Janu Sirsasana*



*Janu Sirsasana - "Head to Knee Pose"*

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

Overly mobilizing the SI joints.

Hyperextension of the knee.

Over abducting the bent leg taking the pelvis of balance and compressing the SI joint.

Compression of bent knee.

Tight hamstrings and/or spinal extensors lead to excessively rounded spine.

Collapsed chest which results from flexing from the spine rather than the hip joints.

## MODIFICATIONS

Elevate hips to liberate tight hamstrings, knees to relieve hyperextension and compression.

Use a strap or a block.

# JANU SIRSASANA

HEAD TO KNEE POSE (LOY 148; MIS 233)

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Root and align the pelvis.
- | Manually externally rotate bent knee hip and internally rotate straight leg.
- | Lift at ribs to lengthen spine and cautiously increase depth of fold.

## NOTES

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# NAVASANA

BOAT POSE (LOY 111-114)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

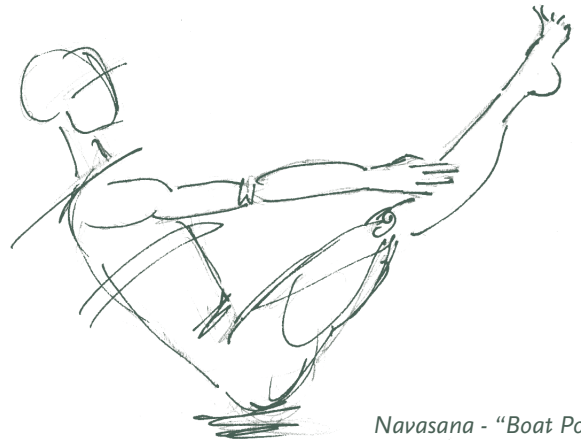
- Begin in Dandasana. Lift through the top of the sternum and lengthen the spine.
- Bend your knees, lifting your thighs to bring knees in alignment with chest. Lengthen your tailbone, root powerfully through sitting bones. Draw the top of sacrum toward your navel to engage the core and stabilize the pelvis.
- Root femur bones deep into hip sockets. Powerfully internal rotate upper thighs and draw both lower legs isometrically toward the midline supporting the strong engagement of the core.
- If possible, slowly extend your legs, raising the tips of your toes above the level of your eyes. If knees remain bent, bring heels onto same plane as knees.
- Stretch the arms parallel to the floor and close to the thighs. Palms facing towards each other and keep sternum lifted and collar bones broadening.
- Keep whole spine lengthened and chin drawn toward the base of skull.
- Engage all the bandhas.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Psoas, adductors, sartorius and rectus femoris contract for hip flexion and internal rotation of upper thighs.
- Rectus abdominus, transverse abdominus, and obliques are all strongly engaged.
- Quadriceps and tensor fascia lata contract to extend and stabilize knees.
- Erector spinae lifts spine and quadratus lumborum stabilizes pelvis.
- Trapezius and rhomboids retract and depress scapula.
- Pectoralis minor lifts ribcage and sternum. Collar bones expand.
- Triceps extend elbows.

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA)

- Vitalizing, balancing, centering.
- Powerfully ignites and strengthens internal fire (agni).



Navasana - "Boat Pose"

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

- Draws energy from the periphery to the core.
- Tones kidneys and intestines, stimulates thyroid and prostate glands.
- Strengthens abdomen, hip flexors, and spine.
- Improves digestion and assimilation.
- Relieves stress upon completion.
- Relates to Manipura Chakra.

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Diarrhea.
- Asthma.
- Headache.
- Heart problems.
- Insomnia.
- Low blood pressure.
- Pregnancy.
- Neck injury.

# NAVASANA

## BOAT POSE (LOY 111-114)

### ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Rounded low back causing compression (posterior pelvic tilt) in lumbar spine usually a result of short hamstring muscles.
- | Lack of core strength.
- | Kyphosis in thoracic spine.
- | Overworking shoulders and upper back causing fatigue in lifted arms.
- | Break in cervical curve.

### ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Bent knees.
- | Feet on floor.
- | Block between inner thighs.
- | Strap around feet.
- | Hands behind knees with bent legs.
- | Hands behind back.

### ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Manually encourage rooting of femur bones by offering resistance at feet with hands.
- | Assist with internal rotation of upper thighs.
- | Ground hips and support the anterior tilt of pelvis.
- | Lengthen ribs away from waist.
- | Manually draw shoulder blades into back body and lift sternum.

## NOTES

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# TWISTS

*Twists are poses that create spinal rotation. They are balancing and supportive to the viscera and glandular systems, especially the kidneys and adrenals. They strengthen the function of the parasympathetic nervous system. They are energetically balancing and assimilative and powerfully activate Samana Vayu. Twists help to calm the whole system and create a quality of ease (Sattvic).*

## NOTES



NOTES

# PARVRITTA TRIKONASANA

REVOLVED TRIANGLE (LOY 65-66; MIS 147-150)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Most effective if approached from the feet and hip stance of Parsvotthanasana with pelvis square, front foot facing forward, and back foot turned out slightly.
- Front knee is straight but not locked with front inner thigh in external rotation, back leg is straight with the back inner thigh in internal rotation. Both feet are firmly grounded.
- With powerful internal rotation on back leg, reach out through tailbone to bring the pelvis neutral.
- Initiate movement from the hips, lengthening both side bodies, engaging the core, legs are drawing into the core while feet are rooting powerfully.
- Begin to rotate the mid and upper torso as you extend out over the front leg and release hand to top of leg or outside of the foot.
- Stabilize the pelvis by engaging the low belly (Uddiyana Bandha), powerfully engaging the core.
- Root the lateral edge of the back foot to the ground.
- Spiral shoulder girdle and thoracic spine/sternum in the direction of the twist.
- Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- Turn gaze to lifted palm while tailbone moves into the body and down toward the rear heel.
- In order to receive the greatest amount of rotation, the pelvis and hips must remain fixed and the rotation happen in the thoracic and cervical spine.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Spinal rotation and lengthening, pelvic stabilizing. Hip flexion in front leg. Hamstrings lengthening (eccentric contraction).
- Trapezius and Rhomboids work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body and the pectoralis minor expands the chest.
- Spinalis muscles work to elongate and rotate the spine.
- Quadratus lumborum stabilizes the lumbar spine and pelvis.
- In the back leg, the glutes extend the hip and the adductors work to internally rotate the upper thigh.



Parvritta Trikonasana - "Revolved Triangle"

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- The quadriceps straighten the back knee. Psoas is lengthened. The tensor fascia lata is eccentrically contracting.
  - Gastrocnemius, soleus and peroneus work to stabilize and balance in both legs.
- ## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, APANA)
- Balancing, eliminative, revitalizing, energizing.
  - Addresses toxicity at the organ level (esp. kidneys and adrenals) in the twist.
  - Detoxifying and rejuvenating.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Uncontrolled hypertension or hypotension.
- Back or SI injury or instability.
- Migraine, diarrhea, insomnia.

# PARVRITTA TRIKONASANA

REVOLVED TRIANGLE (LOY 65-66; MIS 147-150)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyperextension and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Overstretching of hamstrings at origins (sitting bones) and attachments (back of knee).
- | Compression of SI joints due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Shoulder tension, cervical compression.
- | Excessive spinal flexion.
- | Too narrow or too long a stance can lead to lack of balance and misalignment.
- | Twist happening at the lumbar spine and SI joints rather than the thoracic spine.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Block for hand.
- | Wall for support.
- | Adjust the length and width of stance.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Support rooting through the feet, inner thigh rotation (front/external; back/internal), and balance in the pelvis.
- | Bring out of rotation to manually elongate side bodies and support the rotation of the thoracic spine.
- | Root head of femur bone into hip socket while deepening the rotation of the thoracic spine.
- | Manually lengthen cervical spine and assist rotation with directive touch at clavicle to initiate chest expansion and rotation.

## NOTES

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# PARVRITTA PARSVAKONASANA

REVOLVED SIDE-ANGLE (LOY 68-69)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Begin from the feet and hip placement of Virabhadrasana I, root through the feet and powerfully engage the core.
- Root the lateral edge of the back foot to the ground.
- Front knee is flexed to point directly above front heel with front inner thigh in external rotation. Back leg remains straight with the back inner thigh in internal rotation.
- With powerful internal rotation on back leg, drop the tailbone in the direction of the rear heel and lengthen the side bodies.
- As you fold, stabilize the pelvis and lumbar spine and initiate rotation in the thoracic spine.
- Either bend elbows and bring arms to outside of front leg into a twist or bring opposite hand to floor on the outside of leg.
- Hip flexion is deep enough to allow a continuous line from the spine through the tail to the outer edge of the back foot.
- Keep back thigh lifted and pelvis balanced.
- Top arm is extended overhead with upper arm parallel to the ear.
- Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- Gaze is focused toward the fingers of the front hand, and the chest and sternum rotate open.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Deep hip and knee flexion on front leg causing powerful contraction of quadricep, hip and knee extension on back leg supported by the quadricep lengthening.
- Spinal rotation: Erector spinae and internal obliques on side of torso closest to the sky; transversopinalis and rotators and external obliques on side of torso closest to leg.
- Illiopsoas and sartoris muscles flex and externally rotate the front hip.
- Tensor fascia lata and glutes internally rotate the back hip.
- Abdominal obliques, serratus anterior, erector spinae and quadratus lumborum are working to lengthen, rotate the torso. All spinal extensors are active.



Parvritta Parsvakonasana - "Revolved Side-Angle"

## Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- Subsacupularis, teres major, latissimus dorsi and rhomboids work to root the head of the bottom arm bone into the socket while the teres minor, anterior deltoid, and serratus anterior lengthen.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, APANA)

- Grounding, eliminative, strengthening.
- Balancing upon completion.
- Powerful detoxifying, stimulates digestion and elimination.
- Restricts the movement of the breath during practice so as to release deep toxins in chest and lungs, then supports a fuller breath upon completion.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Uncontrolled hypertension/hypotension.
- Pregnancy.
- Diarrhea.
- Insomnia.

# PARVRITTA PARSVAKONASANA

REVOLVED SIDE-ANGLE (LOY 68-69)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Front knee in hyperflexion and/or collapsing to the medial side of the front knee.
- | Compression of SI joints and/or lumbar spine due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Over-rotating shoulder girdle to produce the appearance of greater spinal flexion.
- | Hip flexion on back leg or spinal flexion.
- | Compression of cervical spine.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Lift heel of the back leg, or release back knee to the floor (for poor balance or tight iliopsoas).
- | Decrease knee flexion on front leg.
- | Bring hand to a block on inside or outside of leg or hand to thigh.
- | Lower top arm to waist.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Be an anchor, stabilize hips with your thigh, elongate ribs away from hip, rotate shoulder open as you lengthen the spine.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | Help to balance sacrum, possibly reducing the amount of spinal rotation.
- | Lift and support back thighbone. Help them to “plug-in” to the core.
- | Draw shoulders together on back body and lengthen cervical vertebrae.

## NOTES

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# ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

HALF LORD OF THE FISHES POSE (LOY 259-262)

## TEACHING POINTS

- | From sitting in Dandasana, bend the right knee and place the sole of your right foot on the floor outside the left leg and knee. Bend the left knee and draw the left foot towards the outside of the right hip.
- | Anchor through the sitting bones, lift the pelvic floor, and draw the sacrum towards your navel, sitting up tall and lifting up through the crown of the head. Raise your right arm.
- | Exhale, Rotate the spine towards the right inner thigh. Release the right hand behind the right hip. Either hug the left elbow around the right knee, or place the upper left arm on the outside of your right leg, bending your left elbow. Do not force the twist by cranking into the left shoulder.
- | Keep both sitting bones grounded into the floor and the sacrum balanced. Keep shoulder blades broad and initiate the twist from the core, rotating the spine and rib-cage. Press powerfully through the right foot. Gaze over the right shoulder extending the twist into the cervical spine, maintaining the twist towards the right leg.
- | Lengthen the spine and create space with each inhale, explore deepening the twist on exhalation while engaging more fully the support and strength of the core.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Both knees are in flexion through contraction of hamstrings muscles.
- | Adductor muscles and psoas contract to internally rotate and flex the hip of the top leg, and the deep hip rotators and gluteus medius and minimus all contract to externally rotate and adduct hip of the bottom leg.
- | Internal obliques contract on the side of the twist, while external obliques contract on the other side.
- | Rectus Abdominus, Transversus abdominus, and Erector spinae engage to lengthen spine and stabilize pelvis.
- | Pectoralis muscles lengthen, rhomboids contract, and lower trapezius contracts to adduct and depress scapulas.
- | Infraspinatus and teres minor contract to externally rotate arms.



*Ardha Matsyendrasana - "Half Lord of the Fishes"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (SAMANA, APANA)

- | Grounding, assimilative, and eliminative.
- | Supports digestion on all levels.
- | Stimulates intestines and digestive fire.
- | Opens and releases shoulders, hips, and neck.
- | Stimulates liver and kidneys.
- | Can relieve menstrual discomfort, sciatica, backache, and fatigue.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Destabilization in pelvis and SI joints.
- | Forcing twist through cranking shoulder.
- | Rounding in low back and posterior tilt in pelvis.
- | Shoulders elevated and rounded.
- | Flexion or compression in cervical spine.
- | Discomfort in the bottom bent knee due to lack of muscular engagement.

# ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

HALF LORD OF THE FISHES POSE (LOY 259-262)

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Spine Injury.
- | Pregnancy.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Bottom leg extended.
- | Blanket under sitting bones.
- | Block under back hand.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Stabilize femur bones into hip joint.
- | Ground hips down.
- | Manually balance the pelvis and SI joints.
- | Encourage extension of spine by placing upper thigh bone on the side that is lengthening.
- | Manually lift ribcage away from hips and encourage rotation of spine.
- | Place hands on front of upper arm bones to broaden chest and encourage shoulder blades drawing towards spine.
- | Lengthen cervical spine.
- | Directive touch at core.

## NOTES

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## SPINAL EXTENSIONS/INVERSIONS

*Inversions are poses that lift the heart above the level of the hips or pelvis. These poses strengthen the function of the parasympathetic nervous system. They stimulate the endocrine system and promote a healthy immune system.*

## NOTES

[illegible]



## NOTES

# UTKATASANA

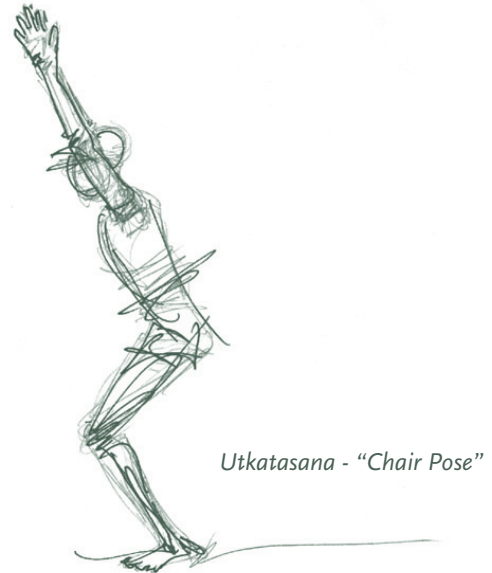
## CHAIR POSE (LOY 88-89)

### ■ TEACHING POINTS

- ⌋ Feet approximately sitting bone distance apart.
- ⌋ Four corners of the feet ground powerfully into the earth.
- ⌋ Knees bend into alignment over the toes, inner thighs rotate internally. Slight hip flexion as the body lowers as if lowering to sit in a chair.
- ⌋ Sitting bones spread as they root toward the ground and the pelvis stays neutral.
- ⌋ The line of the spine lengthens as the tailbone draws down.
- ⌋ The side bodies lengthen increasing the space between the waist and armpits.
- ⌋ Shoulders hug into back body and the collar bones broaden. The chest expands.
- ⌋ Powerfully engage the lowest space of the abdomen, just above the pubic bone (Uddyiana Bandha) and root the tailbone (Mula Bandha).
- ⌋ If the feet are powerfully rooted and the deep core is engaged, much effort in this pose will be alleviated.

### ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- ⌋ Primarily a pose of deep core strength.
- ⌋ Spinal extension, hip flexion.
- ⌋ Trapezius and serratus work to draw the scapula down and toward the midline of the body.
- ⌋ Deltoids and pectoralis lift arms overhead, elbows are extended by the triceps. Lats are stretching.
- ⌋ Quadratus lumborum works to provide pelvic stability and support the lumbar curve.
- ⌋ Erector spinae are working to lengthen the spine.
- ⌋ Iliopsoas flexes hip and deep abdominal muscles work to maintain spinal extension, support the lumbar spine, and stabilize pelvis.
- ⌋ Knees are in slight flexion, dorsiflexion of feet.
- ⌋ Internal rotation on upper thighs.



Utkatasana - "Chair Pose"

### ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, APANA)

- ⌋ Grounding, balancing, and vitalizing.
- ⌋ Strengthens thighs, abs, and back (large muscle groups).
- ⌋ Increases heart rate and rate of respiration.
- ⌋ Core strengthening and pelvic stabilizing.
- ⌋ Stimulates the first and third chakras.

### ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ External rotation in legs causing feet to turn out.
- ⌋ Hyperextension of lumbar spine leads to over arching (anterior pelvic tilt).
- ⌋ Rounding of low back causing strain on legs and shoulders (posterior pelvic tilt).
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae.
- ⌋ Knee pain if knee flexion is too great or if there is excessive rotation in knees.
- ⌋ Lack of core support.

# UTKATASANA

## CHAIR POSE (LOY 88-89)

### *Risks and Common Misalignments (cont'd)*

- Hyperflexion at hips causing excessive strain/contraction on quadriceps.
- Tightened hamstrings causing posterior pelvic tilt.
- Shoulder tightness causes rounding of thoracic spine.
- Compression of Cervical Vertebrae

### ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Uncontrolled high/low blood pressure (lower arms).
- Cartilage or tendon injuries in knee joints.
- Insomnia.

### ■ MODIFICATIONS

- Spread feet,
- Decrease knee flexion.
- Wall for support.
- Block at inner thighs.
- Strap around arms to encourage shoulder placement and arm rotation.

### ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- Align, root, and stabilize feet.
- Directive touch at sacrum to suggest dropping tailbone.
- Manually adjust the tilt of pelvis by tilting hips, providing support with your upper thighs.
- Manually elongate low back by holding at hips and drawing sacrum down.
- Directive touch at core.
- Manually assist inner thigh rotation.
- Directive touch to lengthen back of neck.

### NOTES

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# GOMUKHASANA

COW FACE (LOY 114-116)

## TEACHING POINTS

From Dandasana, bend one knee and place the heel of the bent knee outside of the opposite hip. Bend the other knee and place that foot to the outside of the other hip, stacking both knees. Sit evenly on the sitting bones

Spread sitting bones apart and draw tailbone down, hug inner thighs together, drawing toward the center-line of the body. Both feet in powerful dorsi flexion.

Take the arm on the same side of the top knee, and extend out to the side at shoulder height. Powerfully internally rotate shoulder, flex elbow, and sweep palm behind the torso and up the mid-back. Lengthen ribcage away from waist. Elbow draws into the side of the torso and shoulder rolls back and down.

Stretch the other arm (opposite side as top knee) out to the front and at shoulder height and externally rotate shoulder and arm. Flex elbow and reach palm down the mid-back. Clasp hands or fingers between shoulder blades.

Lift the top elbow up towards the ceiling, while reaching toward the floor with the bottom elbow. Draw shoulder blades together, and lift sternum. Keep neck extended.

From the strength of the foundation, draw low ribs toward spine to reduce the thrust of the chest, lift and expand sternum and lengthen neck. Rest head comfortably with-out pressure from arms.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

External rotation of both hips and adduction of legs.

Shoulder joint of upper arm externally rotates and flexes, scapula retracts from the contraction of the rhomboids.

Scapula of the lower arm retracts, depresses and adducts from contraction of lower trapezius and rhomboids.

Pectoralis muscles adduct the humerus in both arms and elevates the sternum.

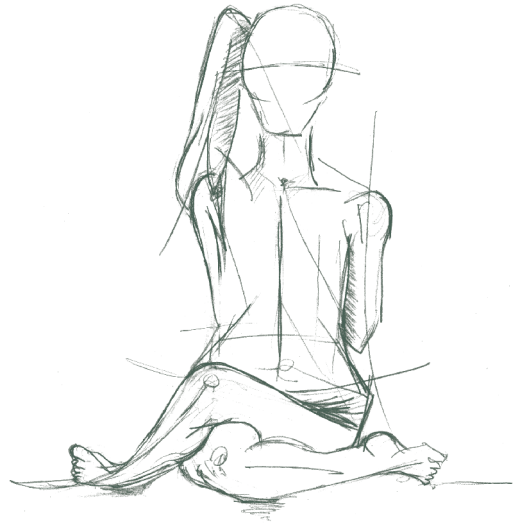
Triceps in both arms lengthen and deltoids strengthen.

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (APANA, PRAN, SAMANA)

Grounding, vitalizing, balancing.

Chest opener, enabling deeper breathing. Lifts prana into upper chest.

Supports assimilation.



Gomukhasana - "Cow Face"

## Principles/Benefits/Energetics (cont'd)

- Increases flexibility in the legs, hips, and shoulders.
- Strengthens and stretches back.
- Stabilizes shoulder girdle, release tension in shoulders and neck upon completion.
- Stimulates endocrine glands.
- Improves focus.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Recent or chronic neck, shoulder, ankle, knee or hip injury.
- Rotator cuff injury.

## COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- SI joint instability causing imbalance in hips.
- Overstretching shoulder joints.
- Abduction of bottom arm scapula.
- Lack of core support, causing the chest to thrust forward.
- Rounded upper back and neck.
- Too much pressure of arms into head.
- Knee instability.

# GOMUKHASANA

COW FACE (LOY 114-116)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Strap between hands.
- | Block or blanket between knees or between top knee and floor.
- | Place foot of upper leg on floor (Ardha Matsyendrasana legs) or straighten bottom leg.
- | Blanket or block under sitting bones.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Manually externally rotate femur bones.
- | Ground hips.
- | Lengthen ribcage away from waist.
- | Manually assist with upper arm rotation and anchor arm bones into shoulder joints.
- | Directive touch at base of head to encourage cervical lengthening.

## NOTES

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# VRKSASANA

TREE (LOY 62; MIS 104)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

- | Set a strong foundation in Tadasana balancing the weight evenly, with awareness, between both feet.
- | Focus your gaze on an unmovable point or object.
- | Shift the weight into one foot, then lift the opposite foot of the ground.
- | The foot can be as low as the toes on the ground with sole against ankle or as high as sole to inner groin of standing leg, careful to avoid direct pressure on knee.
- | Powerfully engage the muscles of the standing leg and root the femur deeply into the hip socket without hyper-extending the knee.
- | Press lifted foot into the standing leg and engage the standing leg just as strongly in opposition to the push of the foot.
- | Root the tailbone and lengthen the spine (Mula Bandha).
- | Draw into the core to find the strength and expansion of the torso.
- | Shoulders draw together on back body and neck lengthens.
- | From a place of balance and strength, lift the arms overhead. Hands can remain together if shoulders can relax down the back or palms can release and arms open to shoulder width.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Spine is neutral and pelvis is stable and level.
- | Standing leg is in powerful internal rotation adduction and knee extension. Glutes, piriformis, tensor fascia lata all working to maintain strength and balance.
- | Lifted leg is external rotation with both sitting bones rooted and tailbone dropped (neutral pelvis)
- | Standing leg foot engaged and working powerfully in combination with the tibialis anterior, soleus, and gastrocnemius to maintain balance.
- | Lifted leg in hip flexion and abduction and external rotation.
- | No hip flexion of standing leg. Quads engaged to support and straighten knee.
- | Quadratus lumborum work to stabilize pelvis and trapizius keep shoulders drawn down the back.
- | Deltoids lift upper arm, elbow extended by the triceps.



Vrksasana - "Tree"

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (APANA, SAMANA)

- | Calming and restorative.
- | Internalizing and reflective.
- | Brings equilibrium/homeostasis to system upon completion (assists in assimilation).
- | Rooted, balanced foot increases grounding and eliminative force.
- | Develops and refines balance, focus, and concentration.
- | Strengthens legs and feet.

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Uncontrolled Hypertension or Hypotension.
- | Headache.
- | Inner ear issues, vertigo.
- | Caution with pre-existing balance issues.

# VRKSASANA

TREE (LOY 62; MIS 104)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Standing leg knee in hyperextension and/or collapsing to the medial side.
- | Ankle instability. Turning out of the standing foot.
- | Hyper extension of standing knee (locking the knee).
- | Pelvic instability or hip flexion in standing leg.
- | Compression of SI joints due to imbalanced or improperly rotated pelvis.
- | Over abducting the lifted leg taking the pelvis out of balance.
- | Lack of core support.
- | Shoulder tension.
- | Cervical compression.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Draw foot closer to floor.
- | Wall for support.
- | Lower arms.
- | Reduce amount of external rotation on lifted leg.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Ground yourself first, then assist.
- | Be a root to the “tree” (anchor from behind).
- | Align pelvis (possibly reducing the abduction of lifted leg).
- | Manually assist the abduction of lifted leg and the internal rotation of the inner thigh in order to drop the tailbone safely.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.

## NOTES

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# CHATURANGA DANDASANA

FOUR LIMBED STAFF POSE (LOY 104; MIS 172)

## TEACHING POINTS

- Can be approached from a prone position or by lowering from plank pose.
- From prone, bring the hands in alignment with the chest line, shoulders lifted and set on back body, elbows bent with upper arms parallel to the floor and toes curled under.
- From plank pose, send chest and shoulders slightly forward as you lower the torso toward the floor working forearms toward parallel.
- In either approach, press powerfully back through the soles of the feet to lift knees and engage legs. Powerful inner rotation on the upper thighs, rooting tailbone toward the action of the soles of the feet.
- Engage strongly into the core of the body, emphasizing the lift of the low abdomen between the pubis and the navel. Draw the lowest ribs away from the waist to elongate the torso and cervical spine.
- Press into hands and activate the strength of the arms to support the work of the core.
- In this asana, the shoulders, hips, heels and head are all in alignment on a horizontal plane parallel to the floor.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Spine is neutral with the focus on lengthening from crown to tail.
- Pelvis is neutral. Rectus abdominus, obliques, psoas and spinal muscles all contracting isometrically.
- Scapula are placed on the back body in a neutral position. The Serratus anterior are eccentrically contracting to prevent winging and the rhomboids and triceps are working to keep the chest lifted.
- No hip flexion.
- The hamstrings, quadriceps, glutes, gastrocnemius, and rectus femoris are all working powerfully.
- Maintaining the body's position in relation to gravity requires muscular effort in all of muscles of respiration.



*Chaturanga Dandasana - "Four Limbed Staff Pose"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, VYANA)

- Energizing, balancing, stabilizing, vitalizing.
- Stabilizes the movement of the diaphragm due to the effort of the asana.
- Strengthens the core, arms, legs, and spine.
- Teaches students how to be efficient in the use of muscular energy and regulation of the breath.
- Neutralizes the spine (good counterpose and pelvic stabilizer).

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Carpel Tunnel syndrome.
- Pregnancy.

## RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- Hyper extension of the cervical spine (breaking the cervical curve).
- Lack of core support causing lumbar hyperextension and hip flexion (butt lifted).
- Splayed Elbows and winging scapula.
- Shoulders tipping forward.
- Shoulder tension.



# CHATURANGA DANDASANA

FOUR LIMBED STAFF POSE (LOY 104; MIS 172)

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

| Block or bolster beneath the low abdomen to teach  
| deep core support.

| Knees on floor (behind hips in high school girly  
| pushupasana).

| Strap upper arms to keep elbows from splaying.

Work at wall to engage serratus anterior.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

| Create support.

| Hold beneath the hips to help align the spine and  
| use a directive touch in low belly to encourage core  
| engagement.

| Fist between ankles or thighs to encourage core  
| engagement.

| Guide feet back to encourage strength and elongation  
| of the spine.

| Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and  
| relieve lumbar compression.

## NOTES

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# VIRABHADRASANA III

## WARRIOR III (LOY 74)

### TEACHING POINTS

- † Balanced leg is powerfully internally rotated and rooted with foot engaged and hip in deep flexion.
- † Back leg is lifted with heel extending directly in line with hip.
- † Power of back lifted leg comes from powerful internal rotation of the upper thigh, causing the toes to point straight down to the ground.
- † Hips are aligned and parallel to the ground.
- † Engage the deep core between the navel and the pubic bone, draw it toward the sacrum.
- † Side bodies lengthen away from waist as shoulders descend down the back.
- † Tailbone roots in the direction of the back heel.
- † Arms extend forward with shoulders on back body.
- † Whole spine is extended in two directions simultaneously (tractioning).

### ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- † Spine is neutral. Shoulders abduct and externally rotate, back hip is in extension, front hip in deep flexion. Pelvis is stabilized.
- † Rear thigh in powerful internal rotation and hip and knee extension, gluteus maximus lifts the leg, gluteus medius and adductors internally rotate.
- † Quadriceps on the front leg stabilize and extend the knee, hamstrings are lengthened.
- † Spinal extensors work against gravity.
- † Serratus Anterior and trapezius work to adduct and depress the scapulae.
- † Deltoids lift arms overhead, elbows are extended by the triceps.
- † Quadratus Lumborum, abdominals, and psoas all work to provide pelvic stability.



Virabhadrasana III - "Warrior III"

### PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, APANA)

- † Energizing, balancing, grounding.
- † Grounding and balancing during the asana, energizing upon completion.
- † Increases deep strength and pelvic stability when practiced correctly.
- † Supports the muscles of stability in spine and core.
- † Increases balance on all levels.

### CONTRAINDICATIONS

- † Uncontrolled hyper/hypotension.
- † Sciatica.
- † Issues that would compromise balance.

# VIRABHADRASANA III

## WARRIOR III (LOY 74)

### ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ Raised leg and spine should track the same line with no break at the hip.
- ⌋ Compression, misalignment of SI joints.
- ⌋ Over arching (compression) or rounding (due to limited hip flexion) in lumbar spine.
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae.
- ⌋ Hyper extension of standing leg knee.
- ⌋ External rotation in lifted leg.
- ⌋ Lack of core support.
- ⌋ Overuse of gluteus maximus and external rotation in lifted leg may cause gripping in hip or aggravate sciatica.

### ■ MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ Increase the angle of hip flexion.
- ⌋ Multiple arm variation (at hips, by sides, at low back).
- ⌋ Wall for support lifted heel or hands.
- ⌋ Strap around arms to encourage shoulder placement and arm rotation.

### ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Manually assist the grounding of standing leg foot.
- ⌋ Be an anchor at the hips rooting the standing leg, then encourage spinal lengthening through the back leg and foot. Holding a “wall” at the back foot.
- ⌋ Balance hips if uneven, then assist in internally rotating the lifted leg thigh.
- ⌋ Directive touch at core.
- ⌋ Elongate side bodies by drawing low ribs away from waist while stabilizing at hips.
- ⌋ Lengthen cervical vertebrae.

### NOTES

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# SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

SUPPORTED SHOULDER STAND (LOY 179-205; MIS 257-267)

## TEACHING POINTS

From a supine position, bend knees and lift pelvis and spine away from floor and bring hands to the low back for support. (Can also rock up for more beginner transition).

From Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (bridge pose), lift legs one at a time (or together for more intermediate practitioners) balancing the body over the shoulders, upper arms, elbows and head.

Engage the strength of the core by drawing muscular energy deep into the low abdomen and drawing the sacrum toward the naval with powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs.

The upper torso, shoulders, and head remain in the alignment of setu bandha savangasana. Work the shoulders underneath the body to lift the base of the cervical spine off the floor and anchor through the back of the head. The throat remains open and the cervical spine is working toward extension resisting the flexion that naturally occurs as a result of the weight of the body and the pull of gravity. The sternum lifts.

Powerfully engage deep core strength to support the lift of the legs and the stabilization of the low back and sacrum. At the highest point of hip elevation, draw the shoulder blades underneath the body, dropping the weight into the shoulders and lifting the base of the cervical spine (C7) off the ground. Slight rooting through the back of the head.

Balls of the feet reach toward the sky.

## ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

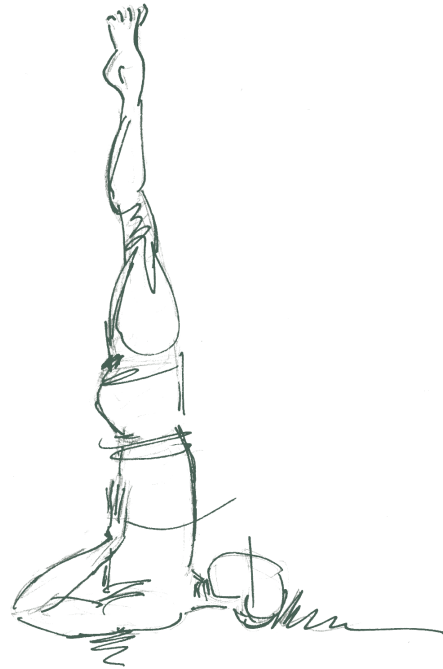
Shoulder girdle (shoulders, head, upper arms & upper back) provide the foundation of this asana.

Rhomboids, trapezius, latissimus dorsi (in the back body), serratus anterior (on side body), pectoralis minor and levator scapulae (in front body) all work to stabilize the shoulder girdle.

Whole spine is in flexion and working toward neutral extension. Deep intrinsic muscles of the spine and the Erector Spinae are all working to support the elevation and lift of the legs.

Deep core muscles are engaged. Psoas minor, obliques, rectus abdominus, and transverses all work to support and stabilize the inversion.

Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs, isometric contraction between the shins.



*Salamba Sarvangasana - "Supported Shoulder Stand"*

## PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

Can effect all Prana Vayus when practiced with specific intent.

Vitalizing, balancing, expressive, grounding, pacifying.

Balances expressive force and calms energetic effluence.

Draws distracted and scattered energy inward toward the center where it can be assimilated.

Energizing during the practice, balancing and grounding at completion.

Queen of the Asanas according to B.K.S. Iyengar, which nurtures the body while headstand (the king) unveils power and consciousness.

Promotes lymph drainage and detoxification of all the physical and subtle bodies.

Stimulates function of brain, thyroid, and parathyroid.

Can help with insomnia.

# SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

SUPPORTED SHOULDER STAND (LOY 179-205; MIS 257-267)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- ⌋ Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs (Feet turning outward).
- ⌋ Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve), lumbar vertebrae from lack of proper front body and deep core support.
- ⌋ Weakness and instability in shoulder girdle. Expressed as splayed elbows.
- ⌋ Limited range of mobility in shoulders.
- ⌋ Thoracic flexion instead of extension.
- ⌋ Limited range of mobility in the scapulae can compromise the breath in this position.

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- ⌋ Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- ⌋ Pregnancy (esp. 3rd trimester).
- ⌋ Chronic Kyphosis.
- ⌋ Glaucoma.
- ⌋ Hypertension.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- ⌋ Block or bolster beneath the sacrum.
- ⌋ Strap between hands.
- ⌋ Block between upper thighs or ankles.
- ⌋ Wall.
- ⌋ Restorative variation with multiple bolsters.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- ⌋ Manually assist thigh rotation and correct abduction and external rotation.
- ⌋ Encourage lift in the cervical spine with fingertip pressure.
- ⌋ Elongate spine at hip joints, lift and extend legs.
- ⌋ Walk elbow closer together as you elevate torso (\*\*high risk\*\*).
- ⌋ Fist between ankles or thighs to encourage core engagement, proper thigh rotation, and increase lift.
- ⌋ Gently create resistance at soles of feet so that student can press up with support to lengthen the spine and lift the cervical vertebrae.

## NOTES

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# SIRSASANA

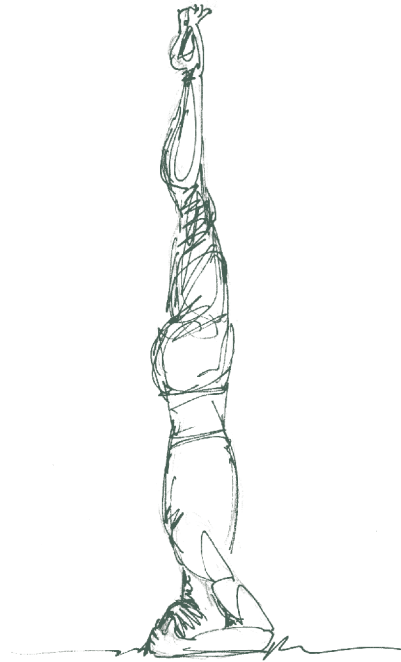
HEAD STAND (LOY 179-205; MIS 257-267)

## ■ TEACHING POINTS

- | From all fours, lower forearms to the floor with elbows directly beneath shoulders. Interlace fingers and bring forearms parallel.
- | Engage strength in shoulder girdle and arms by grounding the outer edge (lateral) of the wrist toward the floor.
- | Place crown of head on floor at the heel of the hands, and activate the strength of shoulder girdle and arms to keep most of the weight off the head.
- | Lift hips and torso into “dolphin” pose and walk feet toward head working pelvis over shoulders and spine extended.
- | With powerful core support, lift legs with one leg at a time or with bended knees.

## ■ ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- | Shoulder girdle (shoulders, head, upper arms, upper back) and forearms provide the foundation of this asana.
- | All of the deep intrinsic muscles of the spine work to lift and hold in headstand.
- | The extensors of the thoracic spine are especially active when entering the pose.
- | The abdominals: iliopsoas, obliques, and rectus abdominus stabilize the spine and pelvis, while the infraspinatus, serratus anterior and teres minor stabilize the shoulders.
- | Spine is in neutral axial extension.
- | Erector Spinae, adductors and hamstrings working to support the elevation and lift of the legs and create full extension in the hips.
- | Triceps are eccentrically contracted, stabilizing the forearm on the floor.
- | Anterior deltoids draw the shoulders overhead and lower traps retract the shoulder blades.
- | Powerful internal rotation on the upper thighs, isometric contraction between the shins.



*Sirsasana - “Head Stand”*

## ■ PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRAN, SAMANA, UDANA)

- | Vitalizing, balancing, expressive.
- | King of the Asanas according to B.K.S. Iyengar.
- | Improves circulation throughout the body.
- | Stimulates brain function and ensures proper blood supply to pituitary and pineal glands.
- | Balancing to Ajna and Sahasrara Chakra.
- | With regular practice, can help people suffering from loss of sleep, memory, and vitality.
- | Strengthens neck, shoulders, arms, spine, and lungs, while relieving tired legs.
- | Helps develop focus and concentration, conducive for meditation.
- | Calms the brain, helps relieve stress and mild depression.
- | Tones abdominal organs and improves digestion.

# SIRSASANA

HEAD STAND (LOY 179-205; MIS 257-267)

## ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Compression at lumbar spine/SI joints usually caused by abduction and external rotation of thighs (feet turning outward) and lack of proper core support. (Hyperextension)
- | Compression of cervical vertebrae (break of cervical curve), because of head misplacement.
- | Weakness and instability in shoulder girdle.
- | Expressed as splayed elbows and collapse in shoulders.
- | Asymmetrical arms, limited range of mobility in shoulders.
- | Thoracic flexion instead of extension. Too much weight on head.

## ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Recent lumbar or cervical injury.
- | Pregnancy (esp. 1st and 3rd trimester).
- | Glaucoma.
- | Hyper/hypotension.
- | Heart Conditions.
- | Headache.

## ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Blanket under head.
- | Block between upper thighs or ankles.
- | Wall.
- | Put most of the weight into arms and shoulder, gradually add more weight to the crown of your head as you neck strengthens.
- | Hold dolphin, lift only one leg.
- | Tri-pod headstand.

## ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Manually assist thigh rotation and correct abduction and external rotation.
- | Encourage lift in the shoulders.
- | Elongate spine at hip joints and sacrum, lift and extend legs.
- | Fist between ankles or thighs to encourage core engagement, proper thigh rotation.
- | To help get into asana, place hand on one of their shins. As they press shin into your hand, they lift one leg. Support one leg as they find balance.

## NOTES

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# ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA

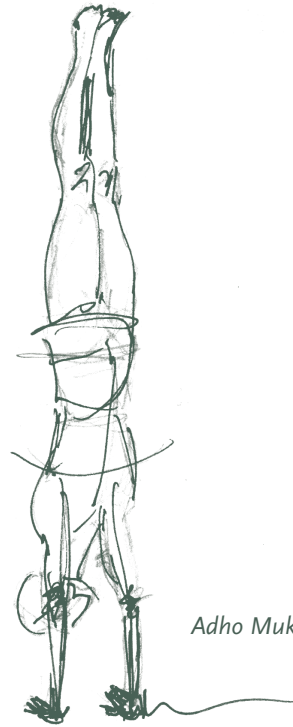
## HANDSTAND

### TEACHING POINTS

- From all fours, widen the fingers and press into the four corners of the palms, creating support for the wrists.
- Gazing at the space between the hands, keep the arms straight and soften the heart toward the floor.
- Curl toes under and walk feet toward the hands, moving the pelvis high over the hands.
- Lift one leg, extending it fully.
- Clarifying your efforts, pull up from the hands and plug into the heart.
- Bend the standing leg. Use the standing leg to create momentum while reaching the lifted leg fully upright.
- From the concentrated strength of the inner thighs and abdomen, follow momentum and lift supporting foot from the floor.
- Allow pelvis to shift backward while internally rotating the thighs to feel the weight of the body fully over the hands.
- Curl tailbone toward the heels to alleviate low back compression and maintain balance while you fully extend the legs.
- From the heart fully press down through the hands, then lengthen the side bodies as your toes spread and legs reach up through the balls of the feet.

### ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

- Fingers spread widely and flex firmly into the floor, raising the arches of the palms. Pronators of the forearms reground the inner edges of the hands, particularly the joint below the index finger continuously.
- Triceps straighten the arms while the deltoids and pectoralis muscles stabilize the shoulders.
- Upper trapezius muscles extend the cervical spine as the gaze turns down and slightly forward.
- Scapulae are retracted by the rhomboids and depressed by the lower trapezius, opening the pectoralis and abdominal muscles.
- Latissimus dorsi and intercostals assist the quadratus lumborum and abdominal muscles in keeping the pelvis balanced over the shoulders while the spine extends and lengthens.



*Adho Mukha Vrksasana - "Handstand"*

### Anatomy and Physiology (cont'd)

- Femurs are set fully in the hip sockets by the iliopsoas flexing and the tensor fascia lata creating internal rotation.
- Legs are powerfully adducted by the strength of the pectineus and adductor magnus.
- Quadriceps straighten the legs while the glutes extend the thighs and abductors anteriorly nutate the pelvis, engage deep abdominals and carefully balancing the whole body.
- Soleus and gastrocnemius work to bring the ankles into plantar flexion while the toes spread apart.

### PRINCIPLES/BENEFITS/ENERGETICS (PRANA, UDANA, SAMANA)

- Energizing, expansive and vitalizing.
- Promotes expression and openness.
- Balancing and integrative after completion.
- Requires strength, concentration, and balance.
- Strengthens the hands, arms, stabilizers of the shoulders, back and core.



# ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA

## HANDSTAND

### ■ CONTRAINDICATIONS

- | Uncontrolled hyper/hypotension.
- | Extreme sinus pressure.
- | Inner ear issues such as vertigo or other balance limitations.
- | Caution with Carpel Tunnel Syndrome.

### ■ RISKS & COMMON MISALIGNMENTS

- | Poor support for the wrists due to weak hands, arms, and shoulder stabilizers.
- | Bent arms due to weakness in triceps or deltoids, or limited flexibility in the side bodies and chest.
- | External rotation and forward movement of the thighs, as well as SI and/or lumbar compression resulting from poor core strength.
- | Bent knees due to insufficient engagement of the extensors of the legs.
- | Pronation of the feet when ankles not fully flexed.
- | Sinking into shoulders.

### ■ MODIFICATIONS

- | Practice with a wall for support. Or practice on leg at a time.

### ■ ADJUSTMENTS/ASSISTS

- | Verbally ensure straightening of the arms and settling of the heart and gaze.
- | Ground yourself first, then assist.
- | Stand on the side of the leg the student prefers to lift, turned to face toward the pelvis.
- | Once leg lifted, hold under the shin bone. Hold shin firmly as student presses into your hand, resulting in lifting of standing leg off the ground, and aid in the hips shifting vertically over the shoulders.
- | Directive touch at low belly to initiate core support and relieve lumbar compression.
- | If arms remain straight, lift supported leg over head.
- | Directive touch on the thigh bones to move pelvis backward to come in line over the shoulders.
- | Guide student down if they express completion of the pose or demonstrate inability to sustain straight arms.
- | Do not try to stop student if they fall.

## NOTES

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# GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

**Abyasa:** practice

**Adhikara:** qualification, studentship, progressive self discovery and deepening of practice

**Adho:** downward

**Ahimsa:** non-violence

**Agni:** fire, that which awakens and dissolves misunderstanding

**Asana:** to sit with

**Avidya:** ignorance

**Baddha:** bound

**Bandha:** lock/seal

**Bhavana:** becoming, feeling, sentiment

**Bhakti:** practice of devotion

**Chakra:** Chakras are circular vortexes of energy at the intersections of Ida and Pingala Nadis in Sushumna. In the yogic system, there are 7 main chakras that are discussed.

**Chitta:** mind

**Dharana:** concentration

**Dharma:** purpose

**Dhi:** knowingness

**Dosha:** the combination of the natural elements within an individual that constitute specific individual nature and that function best when in balance and harmony.

**Drishti:** focal point

**Dwi:** two

**Eka:** One

**Guna:** attribute or quality of nature

**Guru:** one who shines the light

**Hatha:** union of sun (energy) with moon (mind)

**Ida:** One of three main nadis, represents the moon/feminine aspect

**Japa:** repetition

**Kapha:** One of the 3 Doshas, represents the water element

**Karma:** action

**Kona:** angle

**Kumbhaka:** retention (of the breath)

**Kundalini:** shakti

**Krama:** process, intelligent approach, wisdom

**Mantra:** literally "to free the mind" repetition of sacred sound

**Moksha:** liberation

**Mukha:** mouth

**Mudra:** energetic seal in gesture or posture

**Nadi:** channels or pathways of energy in the body

**Ojas:** vital essence of Kapha

**Pada:** foot

**Para:** supreme

**Parsva:** side

**Parvritta:** revolved

**Pingala:** One of the three main nadis, represents the sun/masculine aspect

**Pitta:** One of the 3 Doshas, represents the fire element

**Prana:** life force energy

**Prasarita:** spread

**Pratikryia:** remedy, counterpose

**Rajas:** one of the three gunas, expresses activity

**Rishi:** seer, visionary

**Sadhana:** continuous practice and effort

**Samadhi:** complete absorption, merging with the object of meditation

**Samskara:** past impressions

**Sankalpa:** intention or resolve

**Satsang:** gathering of spiritual teaching

**Sattwa:** tranquility, harmony

**Seva:** act of service

**Shakti:** pure energy, action, potentiality

**Shiva:** pure consciousness, stillness, being

**Shanti:** peace

**Siddhi:** power

**Smarana:** remembrance (of the essential nature)

**Sraddha:** faith in those that have traveled the path

**Sthira:** steadiness

**Sukha:** ease

**Supta:** supine

**Sushumna:** one of three main nadis; central channel, pathway for Kundalini

**Sutra:** thread

**Tamas:** one of the three gunas, inertia

**Tantra:** to stretch us beyond our limitations and restrictions

**Tapas:** austerity, purification and reduction of impurity, heat

**Tejas:** the radiant splendor that results from the practice of tapas (courage)

**Trika:** Three

**Upavista:** seated

**Urdhva:** upward

**Utthita:** extended

**Vairagya:** non-attachment

**Vata:** One of the 3 Doshas, represents the wind element

**Vayu:** Wind, 5 subsets of vata dosha, energies that animate

**Vinyasa:** progression

**Viveka:** discrimination

**Viparita:** inverted

**Vritti:** fluctuations

## NOTES

# RESOURCES

## BOOKS

*Light on Yoga*, B.K.S. Iyengar

*Yoga: The Spirit and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, Erich Schiffmann

*The Key Muscles of Yoga*, Ray Long

*The Key Postures of Yoga*, Ray Long

*Yoga Anatomy*, Leslie Kaminoff

*Anatomy and Asana*, Susi Hatley Aldous

*The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga*, Swami Radha

*ParaYoga Training Manual*, Yogarupa Rod Stryker

*The Yoga of Breath*, Richard Rosen

*Moving Inward*, Rolf Sovik

*Heart of Yoga*, T.K.V. Desikachar

*Wheels of Life*, Anodea Judith

*Yoga Body*, Judith Hanson Lasater Ph. D., P.T.

*The Breathing Book*, Donna Farhi

*Yoga as Medicine*, Timothy McCall M.D.

*Path of Fire and Light*, Swami Rama

*Yoga and Ayurveda*, David Frawley

## WEBSITES

[yogajournal.com](http://yogajournal.com)

[yogabasics.com](http://yogabasics.com)

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## NOTES

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Kelly Golden (ERYT)** has been a student of yoga for over 18 years and teaching for 10. Through the exploration of the physical and philosophical practices, yoga has touched every aspect of her life in a positive way. She infuses her teaching with the passion that she has for the practice of yoga, both on off the mat. In asana practice, Kelly pays close attention to the expression of the body, as well

as the more subtle unfolding of the mind and spirit as embodied by the individual student. In her sharing of yoga, she strives to inspire in others the peace, well being, balance, harmony, and understanding that yoga has brought to her own life. She is a certified E-RYT with over a thousand hours of teaching experience and is currently completing her 500 hour certification with Yogarupa Rod Stryker in the ParaYoga style. She is a free-lance writer for Yoga Journal, the co-facilitator of a Teacher Training program in Boone NC, the director of two teacher trainings at The Glowing Body Yoga Studio in Knoxville, TN and lead retreats all over the world.



**Valerie DiSciullo Midgett (ERYT)** is a yoga teacher/practitioner, with over 30 years experience in the moving arts, including an MFA in dance/choreography, and an MS in Exercise Physiology. She is the owner of Neighborhood Yoga, and cofounder/director of Neighborhood Yoga Teacher Training. Her work integrates the foundations of physiology with the psychophysical principles of

yoga, while her classes fuse dynamic flow sequences, deep stretches, physical and mental balance, yogic philosophy, and mindful awareness. Valerie views yoga as a form of self-transformation, and a process that involves confronting your limits and transcending them. Her formal yoga training includes Yoga Certification from Integral Yoga in NYC, Pre/Postnatal Yoga Certification, and Thai Yoga Body Therapy, as well as many inspirational teachers and students along the way. Valerie continues to support her practice and teaching of yoga by leading retreats throughout the world, from South America to Northern India. She has been on the faculty at Lees McRae College, Caldwell Community College, UNC Greensboro, and Appalachian State University for the past 25 years teaching yoga, dance, anatomy and kinesiology.

To order additional copies of  
*Teaching the Asanas: A Guide to the Essential Asanas for Yoga Teacher Training*, visit  
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