

## **Yoga Training Notes: Asana Details (2005)**

What follows are notes from my Yoga Teacher Training Program that I completed a few years ago...

### **Open Gate**

- Depending on what is most comfortable to you place your feet together or place them hips distance apart.
- Gradually place your feet down spreading your toes.
- The inner sides of your feet should be parallel, make sure your feet are not pointing inwards or outwards.
- Your three centers, your head heart and pelvis should be stacked.
- Center of forehead and chin are in a straight line with your treasure chest, bhaga marma.
- Your chin should be parallel to the floor.
- Tuck your sacrum under so there is a bit of open space between the lumbar and sacrum.
- Roll your shoulders up to your ears and spread them down and outwards and make sure your shoulder blades are spread.
- Your fingers should be gently touching each other, don't separate them and don't strain them together to hard.
- Lift up through your sternum...(demonstrate by using hand to pull) you should be lifting from the crown as if being pulled up by a string.
- At the same time create a space between each vertebrae as you elongate your spine, try and take the arch out of your spine.
- Your heels should be connected to the earth.
- Make sure there is a space between your inner arm and the sides of your body to allow for radial breathing.
- Your gaze should be soft and straight ahead.
- Breathe deeply through your nostrils and feel the sensations in your body.
- (After a few minutes) Check your palms to see if there are purple blotches, this signals that your channels are open and oxygen is flowing through your body.

### **Tiryaka Tadasana (Swaying Palm Tree Pose)**

- Stand in Open Gate
- Your feet can either be together or apart. If you want more balance keep them apart.
- Clasp your hand in front of you interlocking your fingers, make sure your thumbs don't stick.
- Look down at your palms.
- Inhale and move your hands up with your breath, keeping your gaze focused on your hands.
- At eye level flip your hands and then your gaze should be forward.
- Drop your shoulders into your sockets.
- Make sure your pinky's are still interlocked and push your hands toward the ceiling.
- Your arms should be straight.
- As you pull up and reach towards the ceiling make sure your tailbone and feet reach towards the ground.
- You want to feel an upwards and downward stretch.
- Check your three centers to make sure they are aligned.

- Inhale deeply and exhale to your right.
  - You want to feel your left side channel open.
  - As you turn to the right push the weight down into your left foot and feel the stretch from your fingers to your toes including your armpit and hip.
  - REACH for the wall, don't bend.
  - Do not arch your back as if you are in between two panes of glass.
  - Your right side should be supporting your left. You are not collapsing into your right.
  - Be careful to keep your head back and in between your shoulders.
  - Keep your arms straight and work on keeping them in line with your ears.
  - Inhale deeply. Don't forget to breathe.
  - A subtle rotation of your hip and torso will allow you to go further into the pose but do not push yourself.
  - Inhale up slowly
  - Your right leg should be active as you come up.
  - Come back to your center and exhale as you bring your hands down.
  - Check your sensations.
  - \*For beginners try this posture against the wall and keep BOTH shoulders against the wall to bring awareness to spine rotation.
- BENEFITS: massages and loosens and exercises sides of the waist. It balances the left and right groups of postural muscles.

### **Virabhadrasana II (auspicious hero pose)**

- From open gate spread your legs about a legs length apart.
- Inhale, lift your toe and pivot your right foot.
- Exhale, bring your foot down spreading your toes.
- Pick up your back foot and turn it slightly inward.
- Make sure you roll your back foot in to make sure you do not strain your knee.
- Align your three centers.
- Inhale your arms up.
- Make sure your fingers are together and straight. (effort not exertion)
- Drop your shoulders down or away from your ears.
- Make sure your shoulders are spread, don't pinch back.
- You should feel a sensation from the tips of your fingers through your heart all the way across.
- Align your centers
- Exhale and turn your head to the right.
- The weight in your back foot needs to be on the outer edge of that foot so you do not collapse into your ankle.
- Your back leg is strong from your hip to your toe as if a spear has been placed in the earth. Make sure it is not locked it should be a few degrees off lock.
- Engage your thighs, legs should be active as if you could pull apart your mat with your feet.
- Exhale as you slide your pelvis down (sink pelvis down from the crown) and your knee glides towards the wall.
- Tuck your tailbone.

- If your back foot starts lifting up then you need to shorten your stance.
- Your knee should be in line with your foot and reaching for the wall.
- Look down at your feet. You should only see your big toe, if you see your other toes then you are putting stress on your knee.
- You should feel a weight pulling down from the pelvis like a sack of potatoes.
- Your core should stay upright, don't slant forward or back.
- Invoke a 6 way stretch. Feel as though pressing against resistance which is coming from the front, back, sides, top and bottom.
- Breathe deeply and feel the sensations. Feel the prana in your body.
- Inhale up from the crown, not from the knee. Pull yourself up from your crown.
- Exhale as you bring your hands down and place your right foot forward.
- Check your sensations.

**EFFECTS:** though this pose the leg muscles become shapely and stronger. It relieves cramps in the calf and thigh muscles, brings elasticity to the leg and back muscles and also tones the abdominal organs. Mastery of the standing poses prepares the pupil for the advanced poses in forward bending which can be acquired with ease.

### **Virabhadrasana I (auspicious hero pose)**

- From open gate spread your legs about a legs length apart.
- Inhale, lift your toe and pivot your right foot.
- Exhale, bring your foot down spreading your toes.
- Pick up your back leg and spiral your hips forward.
- The hips should be even and if not move your back foot so that it turns more towards the front.
- Your hips and shoulders should be squared and your three centers should be aligned.
- Inhale as you lift your arms up, palms facing up.
- Lift elbows to the ceiling feeling the sensations from your fingertips through your heart all the way across. This opens up the heart nadi which can relieve stress and helps prevent heart attacks.
- Inhale your arms up alongside your ears. Keep your arms straight but drop your shoulders and make sure they are relaxed.
- If there is strength in your arms to keep them up and straight then you can bring your palms together without any pressure.
- Your hands can be together or apart in this posture as long as there is no arch in your lower back.
- Your gaze should be at the joined palms or at the ceiling if your hands are not joined.
- Sink your pelvis down as your knee glides towards the wall.
- Don't let your back knee collapse and do not lock your knees either.
- Inhale up from the crown, not from the knee. Pull yourself up from your crown.
- Exhale as you bring your hands down and place your right foot forward.
- Check your sensations.

**EFFECTS:** In this pose the chest is fully expanded and this helps deep breathing. It relieves stiffness in the shoulders and back, tones up the ankles and knees and cures stiffness of the neck. It also reduces fat around the hips.

### **Samokanasana (Same angle asana)**

- Stand in Open Gate (reminder that your centers should be aligned) with your feet together or keep feet apart if your back and hamstrings are weak.
- Inhale and raise your hands straight above the head with your palms facing each other.
- Drop your shoulders down and spread your shoulder blades.
- Arch your back slightly pushing your buttocks out a little.
- Exhale and slowly bend forward at the hips until your torso is parallel to the floor.
- As you bend forward rotate your groin area back in order to open your sit bones to avoid lower back pain. Feel your sitbones opening as you come down and spread them open so that you can let the pelvis sink down.
- Keep your legs and buttocks active/engaged. Don't lock your knees, engage your thighs.
- Push weight into backs of heels
- Make sure your head, neck and spine are in a straight line.
- Elongate your neck
- Don't kick your elbows out, make sure your arms are straight.
- Your head should be lifted up a bit.
- When your torso is completely parallel to the earth and your legs are engaged drop your hands at the wrists (limp)
- Your gaze should be on the ground, breathe between your ribs.
- Stay connected to the earth
- Inhale, slowly return to the upright position with your arms, head and back in a straight line.
- Exhale, lower your arms and bring your hands into your heart center in anjali mudra.
- Check for sensations.

AWARENESS: Physical, on the movement, keeping the spine straight and maintaining balance. Spiritual on anahata chakra. BENEFITS: This asana works specifically on the upper back directly behind the chest. It rectifies spinal curvature tension and poor posture.

- To help student experience the asana place your hand underneath their forehead.

### **Uttanasana (Deliberate intense stretch, lengthening in pose, Ut is a particle indicating deliberation, intensity. The verb tan means to stretch, extend, lengthen out. In this asana the spine is given a deliberate and intense stretch.)**

- Stand in Open Gate (reminder that your centers should be aligned) with your feet together
- Inhale and raise your hands straight above the head with your palms facing each other.
- Arch your back slightly pushing your buttocks out a little.
- Tuck your tailbone
- Exhale and slowly bend forward at the hips until your torso is parallel to the floor.
- Keep your legs and buttocks active/engaged.
- Push weight forward into your toes.
- Make sure your head, neck and spine are in a straight line.
- Elongate your neck
- Don't kick your elbows out, make sure your arms are straight.
- Your head should be lifted up a bit.

- When your torso is completely parallel to the earth inhale.
- Make sure your legs are engaged check your alignment, your 3 centers should be stacked upon each other
- After you are aligned well inhale as you keep reaching forward while you bend from the pelvis
- The crown of your head should move towards the floor as your tailbone reaches up towards the sky.
- Bring your stomach over your thigh. Exhale.
- Lift your ribs, you should feel as if you are lessening the space between your belly button and spine.
- Place your hands close to your feet, whatever feels most comfortable for you. Do not push yourself. Breathe
- Your gaze should be on the ground.
- Stay connected to the earth
- Inhale, slowly return to the upright position with your arms, head and back in a straight line. (Easier option, hands on sit bones as you come up).
- Exhale, lower your arms and bring your hands into your heart center in anjali mudra.
- Check for sensations.

**EFFECTS:** This asana cures stomach pains and tones the liver, the spleen and the kidneys. It also relieves stomach pain during menstrual periods. The heart beats are slowed down and the spinal nerves rejuvenated. Any depression felt in the mind is removed if one holds this pose for more than two minutes. The posture is a boon to people who get excited quickly as it soothes the brain cells. After finishing the asana one feels calm and cool, the eyes start to glow and the mind feels at peace.

**Uttihita Trikonasana (Uttihita means extended, stretched. Trikona, tri = three; kona = angle)**

- Stand in Open Gate
- Inhale deeply as you spread apart your legs sideways about a leg's length. Do what feels comfortable for you. Exhale.
- Inhale raise your arms sideways in line with your shoulders, palms facing down. Keep the arms parallel to the floor.
- Turn the right foot sideways about 90 degrees to the right.
- Pick up your left foot slightly inward
- Check your alignment, make sure your three centers, head, heart and pelvis are stacked on top of each other.
- Turn your head to right and gaze at your middle finger. Feel the connection through your heart from hand to hand.
- Push your hip out towards the left
- Exhale and bend your torso sideways to the right, bringing the right palm near the right ankle.
- Bring the back arm towards the ceiling and reach up.
- Reach arms away from each other, spread the shoulder blades.
- Imagine you are one-dimensional as if you are stuck in between two panes of glass.
- The left arm should be in line with the right shoulder as you extend your torso.
- The back of the legs, the back of the chest and the hips should be in a line.

- The left side of your torso should be flat. Do not collapse into the pose.
  - Make sure your legs active, press into the outer edge of the back foot.
  - Gaze at the thumb of the outstretched left hand.
  - Exhale, slowly come up.
  - Lower your hands, bring your feet together into open gate, check for sensations.
- EFFECTS: This asana tones up the leg muscles, removed stiffness in the legs and hips, and corrects any minor deformity in the legs and allows them to develop evenly. It relieves backaches and neck sprains strengthens the ankles and develops the chest.

### **Utkatasana (Fierce Pose)**

- Stand in Open Gate. Move your feet together or sit bone with apart, depending on balance.
- The inside of your feet should be parallel to each other, weight should be evenly distributed on both feet. If feet are apart put weight on outer edges of feet to engage inner thighs
- Inhale bring your arms up.
- Exhale, bend your knees and tilt forward.
- Push your butt back, then bring your butt under and tuck your tailbone down further.
- Lift your upper torso from the middle of your spine.
- The inside of your legs are parallel and your feet are pressing into the ground. Your legs are active.
- Do not shrug your shoulders.
- Lift up the ribs, breathe
- Your tailbone should drop down, sit bones are spread wide
- Lift up your heart
- Your gaze should be straight ahead as if you are burning a hole in the wall.
- Invoke the feeling of a warrior. Your face should be concentrated.
- Inhale as you slowly come up, do not lose your connection.
- Raise your arms and bring them back to anjali mudra.

EFFECTS: The pose removes stiffness in the shoulders and corrects any minor deformities in the legs. The ankles become strong and the leg muscles develop evenly. The diaphragm is lifted up and this gives a gentle massage to the heart. The abdominal organs

### **Padangusthasana (pada means foot, angustha is the big toe)**

- Stand in Open Gate. Spread your feet sit bone width apart. The inside of your feet should be parallel to each other. Check your alignment.
- Inhale and raise your hands straight above the head with your palms facing each other.
- Arch your back slightly pushing your buttocks out a little.
- Tuck your tailbone
- Consciously bring your upper body down. Keep reaching the crown of your head toward the floor.
- Elongate your spine, tuck your chin.
- Stomach should be hollow.
- Your shoulders should be away from your ear.
- Hold the big toes in between the thumbs and the first two fingers, making a mudra, so

that the palms face each other.

- Knees can be bent in order to grab toes.
- Hold them tight. Inhale and look up with your gaze towards the tip of your nose.
- Keep your head up and stretch the diaphragm towards the chest and make the back as concave as possible.
- Lift from the heart, pull the heart forward.
- Your elbows should be spread out as you hands pull on your toes.
- As the same time your feet is pressing into the ground. Feel these opposing forces.
- Make sure your head, neck and spine are in a straight line.
- Elongate your neck. Breathe and feel your sit bones spreading.
- Lift up your ribs as if the space in between your belly button and spine is lessening.
- Stay connected to the earth
- Inhale, slowly return to the upright position with your arms, head and back in a straight line. (Easier option, hands on sit bone)
- Exhale, lower your arms and bring your hands into your heart center in anjali mudra.
- Check for sensations.

EFFECTS: abdominal organs are toned and digestive juices increase while the liver and spleen are activated. Persons suffering from a bloating sensation in the abdomen or from gastric troubles will benefit by practicing these two asanas. (padahasthasana, hand variation)

### **Prasarita Padottanasana (Prasarita means expanded, spread, extended. Pada means foot)**

- Inhale, place hands on waist and spread the legs apart.
- Your legs should be at least a leg length apart or wider if you have a shorter torso.
- Check your alignment.
- Activate your legs but do not put pressure on your knees. Bring inner thighs up, engage the front of your thighs.
- The insides of your feet should be parallel or slightly pigeon toed.
- Inhale, bring your arms up or hands on your hips, or arms out to the sides.
- Exhale, bring your torso forward your head reaching to the front of the room.
- Come down with a flat back.
- Kick your but out as you extend forward.
- When your torso is parallel to the floor check your alignment, do not lose your connection.
- Pause when you are parallel to the floor for a few breaths.
- Bring your hands in between your feet.
- Elbows should be parallel with shoulders and wrists
- Your wrists should be directly underneath your shoulder.
- Inhale and raise the head up, keeping the back concave.
- Exhale, bend the elbows and reach the crown of your head to the floor. Do not put stress on any part of your body.
- Both feet and both palms should be in a straight line.
- Breathe deeply and evenly.
- Inhale, raise the head from the floor put your hands on your waist.
- Exhale and slowly come up. Check for sensations.

### **Eka Pada Pranamasana (Eka = 1, Pranam – salutation)**

- Stand in Open gate
- Shift your weight slightly off the left foot, keeping the right foot very firm to the floor.
- Bend your right knee and slowly raise your foot with the assistance of your right hand.
- Your right heel should be placed close to your groin.
- The right sole of your foot is pressing firmly into the left thigh and toes should be pointing downwards.
- The right knee should be to the side and your hips should be squared.
- Your foot should be pressing into your inner thigh and your knee should be pointing outwards simultaneously in order to open the hips.
- Your spine in straight.
- Once you maintain balance place your hands in Anjali Mudra. Breathe.
- Fix your gaze straight ahead, not very intense. This is a peaceful posture.
- Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor. Breathe
- Slowly release your leg and check for sensations.

### **Vrkshasana (Tree Pose)**

- Stand in Open gate
- Shift your weight slightly off the left foot, keeping the right foot very firm to the floor.
- Bend your right knee and slowly raise your foot with the assistance of your right hand.
- Your right heel should be placed close to your groin.
- The right sole of your foot is pressing firmly into the left thigh and toes should be pointing downwards.
- The right knee should be to the side and your hips should be squared.
- Your foot should be pressing into your inner thigh and your knee should be pointing outwards simultaneously in order to open the hips.
- Your spine in straight.
- Once you maintain balance place your hands in Anjali Mudra. Breathe.
- Slowly raise your hands up over your head. Do not lose your connection. Breathe deeply
- Fix your gaze straight ahead, not very intense. This is a peaceful posture.
- Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor. Breathe
- Lower your arms and slowly release your leg and check for sensations.

### **Tadasana (Palm Tree)**

- Stand in Open Gate
- Your feet can either be together or apart. If you want more balance keep them apart.
- If you are balance challenged you may stagger your feet, one in front of the other or try this pose against a wall
- Clasp your hand in front of you interlocking your fingers, make sure your thumbs don't stick.
- Look down at your palms.
- Inhale and move your hands up with your breath, keeping your gaze focused on your hands.
- Once your hands pass your navel start to shift the weight onto your toes.
- At eye level flip your hands and raise them as high as you can without letting go of the

clasp.

- Your weight should be on the balls of your feet, and put more pressure onto your big toes, don't roll onto outer toes.
- Push into the ground. Use inner thighs to help balance, bring inner thighs into each other
- Drop your shoulders into your sockets.
- Make sure your pinky's are still interlocked and push your hands toward the ceiling.
- Your arms should be straight.
- Check your three centers to make sure they are aligned.
- Stretch the whole body from top to bottom without losing balance or moving your feet.
- You should be looking at your hands as you breathe. The eyes should remain fixed on your hands throughout the asana.
- Exhale and slowly lower your hands as you shift the weight back onto your feet. Try and look at your hands as you release from the pose.
- Check your sensations.

### **Utthita Hasta Padangustasana (Utthita = extended, Hasta = Hands, Padangustha – big toes)**

- Stand in Open Gate
- Root your left leg into the ground
- Place your left hand on your hip
- Bend your right leg up
- Try not to tilt forward, keep your alignment as you slide your right foot up.
- Use your index finger, middle finger and thumb to grab your big toe. If this is difficult grab the outside of the right foot
- Straighten the leg as best you can
- Put your shoulders back and to assist in pushing your shoulders back lift your leg higher, this will help you straighten your torso
- Make sure your pelvis is squared.
- (For beginners, just bring the knee up, hug your knee next to your chest, next step take hands away)
- Bring your leg back and gently bring it down
- Check sensations

### **Virabhadrasana III (Eka Padasana)**

- Come to Open Gate Posture
- Inhale and raise your arms
- Drop your shoulders
- Shift the weight to your left leg, your inner foot is pressing firmly to the floor.
- Slowly brush your right leg off the floor as your torso comes forward, reaching for the wall.
- Teeter-totter (See-saw) down
- You should aim to have your entire torso and right leg in one straight line.
- Your hips should be parallel to the floor
- Toes should point downwards
- Stay in this posture long enough to be able to use your strength to come back up

**Gaurudasana (Eagle Pose) Gauruda is a vehicle for Vishnu. Imitation of Pingala and Ida nadis merging at the third eye point.**

- Open Gate
- Sit down
- Bend your right leg and twist it around your left leg.
- Do not force the twist at the cost of your knees.
- The right thigh should be in front of the left thigh and the top of the right foot should rest on the calf of the left leg.
- Bend the elbows and bring them in front of the chest.
- Twist the forearms around each other with the left elbow remaining below.
- Place the palms together to resemble an eagle's beak.
- Slowly bend the left knee and lower the body until the tip of the right big toe touches the floor.
- Make sure you lift your torso up. And lift your elbows up
- Keep the eyes focused on a fixed point.
- Hold the final position for as long as possible.
- Raise the body and release the legs and arms.
- Look at the junction of the hands.
- Lift elbows off the heart, arms should not collapse into the chest.
- Concentrate on opening your shoulder blades.
- Gaze at your palms holding shambavi mudra
- Straighten up to release arms and legs from the pose

**BENEFITS:** strengthens muscles, tones the nerves and loosens the joints of the legs and arms. It relieves rheumatism.

**Natarajasana (Lord Shiva's dance)**

- Stand upright with the feet slightly apart.
- Pivot your right foot at a 45 degree angle
- Lift up your left leg and bring it over so your left knee is facing right
- Bring your left hand across your chest leaving your hand loose with the palm and fingers facing down
- Your elbow should be just behind your left wrist and place your right hand into gynana mudra.
- Release out of the pose

**Santolasana**

- Sit in Vajrasana
- Stand up on the knees and place the palms of the hand on the floor beneath the shoulders
- Raise the buttocks and straighten the knees
- Move the shoulders forward and drop the buttocks until the body is straight, the arms should be vertical
- Focus the gaze on a fixed point in front at eye level
- Bring your right hand into the center
- Roll onto the right side so your chest is facing forward and you really want to squeeze your legs together

- Lift your pelvis up and bring your shoulders back
- You should be balancing on the outer edge of your right leg
- Either leave your hand on the side of your body or raise it up and gaze at your left fingertips

### **Vajrasana (Thunderbolt)**

- Make sure you should Kneel on the floor.
- Bring your big toes together and separate the heels.
- Lower the buttocks onto the inside surface of the feet with the heels touching the sides of the hips.
- Make sure to place your both hands on the knees, palms facing down.
- Your back and head should be straight but not tense.
- Avoid excessive backward arching of the spine.
- Close the eyes, relax the arms and the whole body and make sure that you are breathing normally.

Practice Vajrasana as much as possible, especially directly after meals, for at least five to ten minutes to enhance the digestive function. To really help with digestion, roll shoulders back, bring arms back, wrap right hand middle finger and thumb of right hand wrapping around left wrist.

Benefits: Vajrasana alters the flow of blood and nervous impulses in the pelvic region and strengthens the pelvic muscles. It is a preventative measure against Hernia and also helps to relieve piles. It increases the efficiency of the entire digestive system, relieving stomach ailments such as hyperacidity and peptic ulcer. It reduces the blood flow to the genitals and massages the nerve fibers which feed them, making it useful in the treatment of dilated testicles and hydrocele in men. It assists women in labor and helps alleviate menstrual disorders. Vajrasana is a very important meditation posture because the body becomes upright and straight with no effort. It is the best meditation Asana for people suffering from Sciatica and Sacral infections. It stimulates the Vajra Nadi, activates Prana in Sushumna and redirects sexual energy to the brain for spiritual purposes.

If there is pain in the thighs, the knees may be separated slightly while maintaining the posture. Beginners may find that their ankles ache after a short time in Vajrasana. To remedy this, release the posture, sit with the legs stretched forward and shake the feet vigorously one after the other until the stiffness disappears. Then resume the posture. A folded blanket or small cushion may be placed between the buttocks and the heels for added comfort.

Note: Vajrasana is used by other religious people like Muslims and Zen Buddhists as a position for prayer a meditation.

Check the flow of breath through the nostrils. If the air flow through the left nostril is predominant, then place the left big toe on top of the right big toe; if the right flow is predominant, place the right big toe on top. Sit in Vajrasana as described, This will help to balance the flow of the breath in the left and right nostrils. Separate the feet (not the knees) so that the big toes are about 30cm apart. Sit in Vajrasana with the buttocks flat on

the floor. This stimulates Mooladhara chakra. Place a rolled up blanket on the floor between the legs. Separate the feet about Thirty centimeters.

### **Shashankasana (Moon Pose or Rabbit Pose)**

- Sit in Vajrasana, placing the palms on the thighs just above the knees.
- Close the eyes and relax, keeping the spine and head straight.
- While inhaling, raise the arms above the head, keeping them straight and your shoulder width should apart.
- Exhale while bending the torso forward from the hips, keeping the arms and head straight and in line with the torso.
- Once sit bones come off your feet, engage your abdominals and soften your ribs and keep coming down and pushing your sit bones down to your heels and feet
- At the end of the movement, the hands and forehead should rest on the floor in front of the knees.
- Motion should come from the hip

This asana opens up the channels so if possible it should be done at the start of the practice. If possible, the arms and forehead should touch the floor at the same time. Bend the arms slightly so that they are fully relaxed and let the elbows rest on the floor. Hold the breath for up to seven seconds in the final position. Then, simultaneously inhale and slowly raise the arms and trunk to the vertical position. Keep the arms and head in line with the trunk. Breathe out while lowering the arms to the knees. This completes the round one of practice five to seven rounds more.

Beginners should slowly increase the length of time in the final position until they are able to hold it comfortably for at least four minutes. Those who wish to calm anger and frayed nerves should further increase the time to twelve minutes, breathing normally.

Not to be performed by people with very high blood pressure and slipped disc. This asana stretches the back muscles and separates the individual vertebrae from each other, releasing pressure on the discs. Often nerve connections emanating from the spinal cord are squeezed by these discs, giving rise to various forms of backache.

This posture helps to relieve this problem and encourages the discs to resume their correct position. It also regulates the functioning of the adrenal glands. It tones the pelvic muscles and the sciatic nerves and is beneficial for women who have an underdeveloped pelvis. It helps to alleviate disorders of both the male and female reproductive organs. Regular practice relieves constipation. When practiced with Ujjayi Pranayama in the final position, it helps to eliminate anger and is very cooling for the brain.

Note: The Sanskrit word Shashank means 'Moon'. It is derived from two words: Shash meaning 'Hare' and Ank also meaning 'Lap'. Furthermore, the moon symbolizes peace and calm, it emits soothing and tranquillizing vibrations. More simply, it is the position frequently adopted by hares and rabbits.

### **Supta Vajrasana (Sleeping Thunderbolt Pose)**

- Sit in Vajrasana and close the eyes.
- Hold the right wrist with the left hand behind the back.
- Relax the whole body and close the eyes.
- Inhale and then, while exhaling, slowly bend the trunk forward from the hips so that the forehead rests on the floor.
- Remain in the final position for a comfortable length of time while breathing normally or deeply or in Ujjayi.
- Return to the starting position while inhaling.
- Sit in Vajrasana. Place the fists in front of the lower abdomen.
- Inhale and then, while exhaling, slowly bend forward until the forehead touches the floor.
- The fists will exert pressure on the lower abdominal organs.
- Retain the breath in the final position for as long as is comfortable. Inhale while raising the trunk and head.
- Practice three to four rounds.
- This variation massages and improves the efficiency of the intestines and digestive organs, relieving ailments such as constipation and excessive wind in addition to the benefits derived from the basic form of the practice.
- Sit in Vajrasana.
- Interlock the fingers of both hands behind the back.
- Breathe in deeply.
- Then, breathing out, move the head and trunk forward and rest the head on the floor.
- Simultaneously, raise the arms up and bring them as far forward as possible.
- Hold the breath out and slowly move the arms from side to side four times.
- Do not strain.
- Breathe in, raising the head and trunk and lowering the arms.
- This completes round one, practice three to six rounds.
- This variation releases tension in the upper back and neck muscles, bringing great relief to those who experience stiffness in this area.
- It also gives the benefits of the basic practice.

### **BADDHAKONASANA (FULL BUTTERFLY)**

- Sit in the Base position.
- Bend the knees and bring the soles of the feet together, keeping the heels as close to the body as possible.
- Make sure to relax the inner thigh muscles completely.
- Engage your butt muscle to bring your knees down.

#### **Stage 1:**

Clasp the feet with both hands. Gently bounce the knees up and down, using the elbows as levers to press the legs down. Try to touch the knees to the ground on the downward stroke. Please do not use any force. Practice up and down movements for forty to fifty times.

#### **Stage 2:**

Keep the soles of the feet together. Place the hands on the knees. Using the palms, gently

push the knees down towards the floor, allowing them to spring up or coming back again. Please do not force this movement. Repeat this process forty to fifty times. Straighten the legs and relax.

Normal breathing, unrelated to the practice. On mental counting, movement and relaxation. People with sciatica and sacral conditions should avoid this asana.

Both stages prepare the legs for mastery of Padmasana and other meditative Asanas. The inner thigh muscles hold a lot of tension which is relieved by these Asanas. They also remove tiredness from long hours of standing and walking.

#### **VARIATION FOR PEOPLE WITH TIGHT HIPS, OR BEGINNERS**

- Sit against the wall (place whole back against the wall)
  - Place a block in between your feet (change the placement of the block from narrow to widest) and push the soles of your feet together
  - Once you place the block in between your feet push back against the wall and make sure your but is as close to the wall as possible. Straighten your spine.
  - Lift pelvis, you may need a blanket under your but if your knees are too high but your hips do not want to be higher than your knees.
- (If you want to assist in this asana push down on their hips)

#### **EASY POSE (SUKHASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the foot under the left thigh.
- Bend the left leg and place the foot under the right thigh.
- Place the hands on the knees and make sure that the head, neck and back upright and straight, but without strain.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
- The arms should be relaxed and not held straight.
- Sukhasana is the easiest and most comfortable of the meditation postures and it can be utilized without ill effect by persons who are unable to sit in the more difficult meditation postures.
- It facilitates mental and physical balance without causing strain or pain.
- Sukhasana is a relaxing posture which may be used after extended periods of sitting in Siddhasana or Padmasana.
- Although Sukhasana is said to be the simplest meditation posture, it is difficult to sustain for long periods of time unless the knees are close to the ground or on the ground.
- Otherwise most of the body weight is supported by the buttocks and backache develops.

For those who are extremely stiff, Sukhasana may be performed sitting cross-legged with a belt or around the knees and lower back. Hold the spine upright. Concentrate on the physical balance and equal weight on the right and left side of the body spacey feeling may be experienced.

#### **HALF LOTUS POSE (ARDHA PADMASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.

- Bend one leg and place the sole of the foot on the inside of the opposite thigh.
- Bend the other leg and place the foot on top of the opposite thigh.
- Without straining, try to place the upper heel as near as possible to the abdomen.
- Adjust the position so that it is comfortable.
- Place the hands on the knees in either Chin mudra.
- Keep the back, neck and head upright and straight.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Those who suffer from Sciatica or Sacral ailments should not perform this Asana. Benefits of this Asana is same as for PadmAsana but at a reduced level.

### **LOTUS POSE (PADMASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Slowly and carefully bend one leg and place the foot on the top of the opposite thigh.
- The sole of the foot should face upward and the heel should be close to the pubic bone.
- When this feels comfortable, bend the other leg and place the other foot on top of the opposite thigh.
- Both knees should ideally touch the ground in the final position.
- The head and spine should be held upright and your shoulders relaxed.
- Place the hands on the knees in chin and relax the arms with the elbows slightly bent and check that the shoulders are not raised or hunched.
- Close the eyes and relax your whole body and observe the total posture of the body.
- Make the necessary adjustments by moving forward or backward until balance and alignment are experienced.
- Perfect alignment indicates the correct posture of Padmasana.

Those who suffer from sciatica infections or weak or injured knees should not perform this asana. This asana should not be attempted until flexibility of the knees has been developed through practice of the pre-meditation Asanas. Padmasana allows the body to be held completely steady for long periods of time. It holds the trunk and head like a pillar with the legs as the firm foundation the body is steadied the mind becomes calm. This steadiness and calmness is the first step towards real meditation.

Padmasana directs the flow of prana from Mooladhara chakra in the perineum, to Sahasrara chakra in the head heightening the experience of meditation.

This posture applies pressure to the lower spine which has a relaxing effect on the nervous system. The breath becomes slow, muscular tension is decreased and blood pressure is reduced. This activity stimulates the digestive process.

### **ACCOMPLISH POSE FOR MEN (SIDDHASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the sole of the foot flat against the inner left thigh with the heel pressing the area midway between the genitals and the anus, sitting on top of the right heel.
- This is an important aspect of Siddhasana, Adjust the body until it is comfortable and the pressure of the heel is firmly applied.

- Bend the left leg and place the left ankle directly over the right ankle so that the ankle bones are touching and the heels are one above the other,
- Press the pubis with the left heel directly above the genitals, the genitals will, therefore, lie between the two heels.
- If this last position is too difficult, simply place the left heel as near as possible to the pubis,
- Push the toes and the outer edge of the left foot into the space between the right calf and thigh muscles.
- If necessary, this space may be enlarged slightly by using the hands or temporarily adjusting the position of the right leg.
- Grasp the right toes and pull them up into the between the left calf and thigh.
- Again adjust the body so that it is comfortable.
- The legs should now be locked, with the knees touching the ground and the left heel directly above the right heel.
- Make the spine erect and feel as though the body is fixed on the floor. Place the hands on the knees in Gyana or Chinmaya Mudra.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

SiddhAsana should not be practiced by those with sciatica or sacral infections.

SiddhAsana directs the energy from the lower psychic centers upward through the spine, stimulating the brain and calming the entire nervous system. The position of the lower foot at the perineum presses Mooladhara chakara, stimulating Moolabandha, and the pressure applied the pubic bone presses the trigger point for Swadhisthana automatically activating Vajroli/Sahajoli Mudra. These two, psycho-muscular locks redirect sexual nervous impulses back up the spinal cord to the brain, establishing control over the reproductive hormones which is necessary in order to maintain Brahmacharya for spiritual purposes.

Prolonged periods in Siddhasana result in noticeable tingling sensations in the Mooladhara region which may last for fifteen to twenty minutes. This is caused by a reduction in the blood supply to the area and by a rebalancing of the pranic flow in the lower Chakras. This posture redirects blood circulation to the lower spine and abdomen, toning the lumbar region of the spine the, pelvis and the abdominal organs, and balancing the reproductive system and the blood pressure.

Siddhasana may be performed with either leg uppermost. Many people experience discomfort due to the pressure applied where the ankles cross each other. If necessary, place a folded cloth or piece of sponge between the legs at this point. At first the pressure at the perineum may be uncomfortable to maintain but with practice this will be eased.

Note: The Sanskrit word Siddha means “Power” and “perfection”. The word Siddhi is derived from Siddha and refers to a Psychic Power or faculty developed through Yogic practice.

### **ACCOMPLISH POSE FOR WOMEN (SIDDHA YONI ASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the sole of the foot flat against the inner left thigh.

- Place this heel firmly against or inside the Labia Majora of the vagina.
- Adjust the body position so that it is comfortable while simultaneously feeling the pressure of the right heel.
- Bend the left leg and place the left heel directly on top of the right heel so it presses the clitoris, and wedge the left toes down into the space between the calf and thigh so they touch, or almost touch, the floor.
- Grasp the toes of the right foot and pull them up into space between the left calf and thigh.
- Again, adjust the position so that it is comfortable.
- Ensure that the knees are firmly on the ground and Make the spine fully erect and straight as though it were planted solidly in the earth.
- Place both the hands on the knees.

Note: The sanskrit word Yoni means ‘Womb’ or ‘Source’

### **AUSPICIOUS POSE (SWASTIKASANA)**

- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the left knee and place the sole of the left foot against the inside of the right thigh, so there is no contact between the heel and the perineum.
- Bend the right knee and place the right foot in the space between the left thigh and calf muscle, so there is no contact between the heel and the pubis.
- Grasp the toes of the left foot and pull them up into the space between the right calf and thigh.
- Adjust the position so that it is comfortable.
- The knees should be firmly on the floor.
- Straighten the spine. Place the hands on the knees in chin.
- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the left leg, place the sole against the inside of right thigh.
- Similarly bend the right leg and place the heel of the right foot on the floor in front of the left foot with the sole resting against the left shin.
- The heels will now be one in front of the other.
- The hands may be placed on the knees or they may be placed on the lap.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

SwastikAsana should not be performed by people with sciatica or sacral infections. SwastikAsana is a healthy position to sit in especially for those suffering from varicose veins, tired and aching muscles or fluid retention in the legs. This is the easiest classical meditation Asana and is a simplified version of Siddhasana.

Note: Here the symbol of the Swastika represents the different corners of the earth and universe, the spokes, and their meeting point and common center of consciousness. This asana may be regarded as the one most favorable for realizing the unity of existence.

### **TWISTING COBRA POSE (TIRYAKA BHUJANGASANA)**

- First assume the final position of Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana) with the legs separated about little.

- The toes should be tucked under and the heels raised, so that the foot rests on the ball of the foot.
- The head should be facing forward instead of bending backward as in Bhujangasana.
- Twist the head and upper portion of the trunk, and look over the left shoulder and try to see your heel of the right foot.
- Make sure that in the final position, the arms remain straight or slightly bent as the shoulders and trunk are twisted.
- In this position you will try to feel a diagonal stretch of the abdomen.
- Relax the back and keep the navel as close to the floor as possible and stay in the final position for a few seconds.
- Face forward again and repeat the twist on the other side without lowering the trunk.
- Return to the center and lower the body to the floor and this completes the practice round one.
- Make sure to inhale while raising your body.
- Retain the breath inside while twisting to both sides.
- Exhale while lowering to the floor.
- Make sure to at least complete four to five rounds at a stretch.
- As for Bhujangasana, with increased influence on the intestines.

The word Tiryaka means ‘Diagonal’ or ‘Triangular’ and is used because the gaze is directed over the shoulder diagonally across the back of the body to the opposite heel. The direction of the gaze also forms two sides of a triangle, while the width between the shoulders forms the base or third side. In this asana, when performed the breath is exhaled when twisting to the side.

### **FULL COBRA POSE (POORNA BHUJANGASANA))**

- You should assume Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana).
- Holding the position, breathe in and out normally a few times.
- Bend the knees and raise the feet. Stretch the head, neck and shoulders back a little further and try to touch the back of the head with the toes or with the soles of your feet.
- This is the final position in which you have to be for some time.
- Hold yourself in this final position for as long as is comfortable.
- To return to the starting position, lower the feet and relax in Bhujangasana for a few moments.
- Release the pose and relax with the arms by the side of the body and the head turned to one side.
- Inhale while assuming Bhujangasana and Exhale while raising the feet to touch the head with the toes.
- Breathe normally in the final position.
- Exhale while returning to Bhujangasana and while returning to the prone position.
- One should at least do three to four rounds, gradually extending the duration in the pose.
- After completing each round, allow the respiration and heart beat to return to normal.
- This asana gives maximum benefits if preceded or followed by a forward bending asana.
- This variation is only suitable for adepts or children over the age of 12 with very supple

backs.

- Benefits of this Asana are similar to Bhujangasana with increased levels.

### **SNAKE POSE (SARPASANA)**

- You need to lie flat on the stomach with the legs straight and the feet together.
- Interlock the fingers and place the hands on top the buttocks and then place your chin on the floor, this is the starting position.
- Using the lower back muscles, raise the chest as far as possible from the floor.
- Push both of your hands further back and raise the arms as high as possible and
- Imagine that the arms are being pulled from behind.
- Try to raise the body as high as possible without straining.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together and look forward, hold yourself in this position as long as is comfortable and then slowly return to the starting position and relax the whole body.
- Release the hands and relax the arms by the sides of the body and then turn your head to one side.
- Inhale deeply and slowly in the starting position prior to raising your body and then Exhale while lowering your body.

One needs to practice at least five to six rounds. People with heart conditions and high blood pressure should take care not to strain while performing this asana. Benefits of this Asana are basically the same as for Bhujangasana with increased influence on the chest.

In the final position the body weight is supported on the abdomen, pushing the diaphragm towards the chest. This, in turn, pressurizes the air within the lungs and helps to open out inactive alveoli, improving both the removal of carbon dioxide and the intake of oxygen. The heart is toned and strengthened by the massage it receives due to the increased pressure within the chest cavity. Snake pose is very useful for asthmatics. It also helps to release blocked emotions.

### **VARIATION**

- Arms out in front like Superman, lift up
- Elbows come to the side in a right angle, arms are parallel to the ground with palms facing down
- Straighten arms back to the sides of the body
- Roll shoulders back and clasp hands, reach hands back and up

### **HALF LOCUST POSE (ARDHA SHALABHASANA)**

- You should Lie flat on the stomach with the hands under the thighs, palms downwards or hands clenched.
- Keep both the legs straight throughout the practice and place the chin on the floor, slightly stretched forward, to give the best possible stretch to the neck muscles and nerves.
- Using the back muscles, raise the left leg as high as possible, keeping the other leg straight, relaxed and in contact with the floor.
- Retain the position for as long as is possible without strain and make sure not tilt or

twist the pelvis. Lower the leg to the floor.

- Repeat the same movement with the right leg. This completes the first round process.
- Inhale in the starting position and retain the breath inside while raising the leg, and in the final position.
- Exhale while lowering the leg to the starting position.
- Make sure to do at least three to five rounds p to 5.
- This asana is recommended in yoga therapy for the management of sciatica and slipped disc if it can be performed without pain. It also alleviates constipation.

Now the left leg should be raised first so that pressure is applied on the right side of the abdomen to massage the ascending colon of the large intestine, following the direction of intestinal peristalsis. Lie on the stomach with the legs and feet together and the forehead touching the floor. Stretch both arms above the head in Advasana. Place the chin on the floor. Keep the arms and legs straight throughout the practice. Simultaneously, raise the left leg, the head and right arm as high as possible. The left leg should be stretched backwards and the right arm stretched forward as they are raised. Retain the position for as long as possible without straining. Lower the leg, head and arm to the starting position. Relax in Advasana, allowing the respiration to return to normal. Repeat the same movement with the right leg and left arm.

Inhale while raising the leg, arm and head. Retain while holding the position. Exhale while lowering the leg, arm and head to the starting position. Make sure to do at least four to five rounds. This asana is beneficial for beginners with weak and stiff backs as it helps to tone the back muscles and stimulate the nerves, particularly in the lower back, while simultaneously giving a strong diagonal stretch to the body. It develops concentration through awareness of coordination of movement with breath.

### **LOCUST POSE (SHALABHASANA)**

- You should lie flat on the stomach with the legs and feet together and the soles of the feet uppermost.
- The arms may be placed either under the body or by the sides, with the palms downward or the hands clenched (fingers interlaced with index finger and thumbs extended).
- Roll shoulders under, shoulders should stay on the ground
- Stretch your chin slightly forward and rest it on the floor throughout the practice.
- Close the eyes and relax the body.
- This is the starting position and now slowly raise the legs as high as possible, keeping them straight and together.
- The elevation of the legs is produced by applying pressure with the arms against the floor and contracting the lower back muscles.
- Reach the leg back to the wall, the other leg is still active
- Hold yourself in this final position for as long as is comfortable without strain and then slowly tower the legs to the floor.
- This is the completion of the first round process.
- Return to the starting position and relax the body with the head turned to one side. Allow the respiration and heart-beat to return to normal.

- Inhale deeply in the starting position.
- Retain the breath inside while raising the legs and holding the position.
- Exhale while lowering the legs.
- Beginners may find it helpful to inhale while raising the legs.
- Advanced practitioners may exhale after returning to the starting position.
- Make sure to practice at least five to six rounds.
- This Asana requires a great deal of physical effort, so it should not be practiced by people with a weak heart, coronary thrombosis or high blood pressure.
- Those suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis and other such conditions are also advised not to practice this asana.
- The parasympathetic nerves are particularly prominent in the regions of the neck and pelvis.
- This Asana (Shalabhasana) stimulates the whole autonomic nervous system.
- It strengthens the lower back and pelvic organs, and tones the sciatic nerves, providing relief for those with conditions such as backache, mild sciatica and slipped disc as long as the condition is not serious.
- It tones and balances the functioning of the liver and other abdominal organs, alleviates diseases of the stomach and bowels, and stimulates the appetite.

### **Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Having the mouth upwards dog, resembles dog stretching itself with head up in the air)**

- From downward dog slide forward and roll your toes under so your hands and the tops of your feet are the only things touching the floor
- Make sure your legs are not collapsing on the floor, push your feet into the floor to help keep your legs up
- Lower the pelvis
- Tuck the tailbone down
- Roll shoulders up and down to bring them back in the sockets
- Bring awareness to the upper portion of the spine to alleviate lower back pressure
- Look up and lift up through your heart
- Push into the tops of your feet to help balance the pose and ensure that too much pressure is not being placed on your wrists
- The longer your arms are the more forward you can place them.
- To release slide back into downward dog

### **Bhujangasana**

- Lie flat on the stomach with the legs straight, feet and arms together, forehead on the floor
- Place the palms of the hand flat on the floor, below and slightly to the side of the shoulders, in line with your chest.
- Fingers should be together and pointing forward
- The arms should be positioned so the elbows point backwards and are close to the sides of the body
- Rest the forehead on the floor and close the eyes
- Relax the whole body especially the lower back
- Slowly raise the head, neck and shoulders straightening the elbows raise the torso as

high as possible, use your back muscles more than your arm muscles

- Be aware of using your back muscles first while starting to raise up then use your arm muscles to raise the torso further and arch the back
- Gently tilt the head backwards so that the chin points forward and the back of the neck is compressed
- Keep the pelvis on the floor and your naval should not raise higher than 2 inches (if you raise more than two inches then the bend is more in the knees than the back)
- The arms may or may not be straight, this will depend on the flexibility of your back
- Heart should reach forward, roll shoulders up, back and down
- Shambavi mudra
- Flare your ribs, breathe deeply, this helps tonify the kidneys
- To release slowly bring the head forward, release the upper back by bending the arms, lower the chest, shoulders and forehead to the floor, relax the lower back muscles

### **Bhujangasana (small muscle engagement)**

- Lay flat on the ground on your stomach with your heels flopping outwards and relaxed.
- Your forehead is on the floor and your arms are alongside your body with your palms facing up.
- Relax your butt
- Slowly begin to lift your nose of the ground, then your chin and then gradually lift upper body.
- When your shoulders begin to lift up bring your hands alongside your chest.
- Almost no weight in your hands.
- Focus on using the small muscles between your vertebraes to lift
- As soon as you feel your butt is getting tight consciously let it go

### **DHANURASANA (Bow Pose)**

- You need to Lie flat on the stomach, move ribs out of the way, with the legs and feet together, and the arms and hands beside the body.
- Bend the knees and bring the heels close to buttocks, grab your ankles with your hands keeping the thumb and fingers together
- Place your chin on the floor, push the pelvis into the ground and lengthen the knees back.
- Tense the leg muscles and push the feet away from the body and then arch the back, lifting the thighs, chest and head together, keep toes together as you go up to help keep your knees together.
- Roll your shoulders back and push your feet into your hands and up to the ceiling
- Make sure to keep your arms straight. In the final position the head is tilted back and the abdomen supports the entire body on the floor.
- The only muscular contraction is in the legs; the back and arms remain relaxed.
- Hold yourself in the final position for as long as is comfortable and then, slowly relaxing the leg muscles, lower the legs, chest and head to the starting position.
- Release the pose and relax in the prone position until the respiration returns to normal.
- This is the completion of the first round practice.
- Inhale deeply in the starting position.
- Retain the breath while raising the body.

- Retain the breath inside in the final position or practice slow, deep breathing so that the body rocks gently in unison with the breath.
- Exhale while returning to the prone position.
- Practice at least four to five rounds.

Dhanurasana is ideally practiced after Bhujangasana and Shalabhasana and should be followed by a forward bending posture. It should not be practiced until at least three or four hours after a meal. People who suffer from a weak heart, high blood pressure, hernia, colitis, peptic or duodenal ulcers should not attempt this practice. This asana should not be practiced before sleep at night as it stimulates the adrenal glands and the sympathetic nervous system.

The entire alimentary canal is reconditioned by this asana. The liver, abdominal organs and muscles are massaged. The pancreas and adrenal glands are toned, balancing their secretions. The kidneys are massaged and excess weight is reduced around the abdominal area. This leads to be improved functioning of the digestive, eliminative and reproductive organs and helps to remove gastrointestinal disorders, dyspepsia, chronic constipation and sluggishness of the liver. It is recommended in yoga therapy for the management of diabetes, incontinence, colitis, menstrual disorders and, under special guidance, cervical spondylitis. It improves blood circulation generally. The spinal column is realigned and the ligaments, muscles and nerves are given a good stretch, removing stiffness. It helps correct hunching of the thoracic area of the spine. Dhanurasana is useful for relieving various chest ailments, including asthma, and for freeing nervous energy in the cervical and thoracic sympathetic nerves, generally improving respiration.

### **HALF SPINAL TWIST POSE (ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA)**

- You should sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the right foot flat on the floor on the outside of the left knee.
- The toes of the right foot should face forward.
- Bend the left leg and bring the foot around to the right buttock.
- The outside edge of the foot should be in contact with the floor.
- Hug your right knee into your left armpit and move your belly out of the way. Now hold the right foot or ankle with the left hand, so that the right knee is close to the left armpit.
- Sit up as straight as possible. Raise the right arm in front of the body and gaze at the fingertips.
- Slowly twist to the right, simultaneously moving the arm, trunk and head.
- Take short breaths in the upper chest.
- Use the left arm as a lever against the right leg to twist the torso as far as possible without using the back muscles.
- Follow the tips of the fingers of the right hand with the gaze and look over the right shoulder and make sure not to strain the back.
- Bend the right elbow and place the arm around the back of the waist.
- The back of the right hand should wrap around the left side of the waist.
- Alternatively, it can be placed as high as possible between the shoulder blades with the fingers pointing up.

- This arm position enforces the straightness of the spine.
- Reverse the movements to come out of the posture and repeat on the other side.
- Inhale in the forward position.
- Exhale while twisting the torso.
- Breathe deeply and slowly without strain in the final position.
- Inhale while returning to the starting position.
- Practice once on each side, gradually increasing the holding time to one to two minutes on each side of the body or up to thirty five breaths.

This Asana should be performed after completing a series of forward and backward bending Asanas. It should be done towards the end of a practice because it can bring up the kundalini. Women more than two or three months pregnant should avoid this practice. People suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia or hyperthyroidism should only practice this pose under expert guidance. People with sciatica or slipped disc may benefit from this Asana, but great care should be taken.

This Asana simultaneously stretches the muscles on one side of the back and abdomen while contracting the muscles on the other side. It tones the nerves of the spine, makes the back muscles supple, relieves lumbago and muscular spasms, and reduces the tendency of adjoining vertebrae to develop Osteophytes. When practiced with care, it has proved beneficial for mild cases of slipped disc. Half Spinal Twist massages the abdominal organs, alleviating digestive ailments. It regulates the secretion of adrenaline and bile and is recommended in the yogic management of diabetes. Under special guidance it is used for the yogic management of sinusitis, hay fever, bronchitis, constipation, colitis, menstrual disorders, urinary tract disorders and cervical spondylitis, as long as it can be performed without any discomfort.

For beginners and those with stiff bodies the following adjustments to the position may be made. The leg that is placed by the side of the buttock should remain straight and the hand holding the ankle may be wrapped around the opposite thigh, hugging the knee to the chest.

Matsyendra Natha is the most famous and important of the gurus belonging to the sampradaya natha or Kamapata yoga, he was born in Bengal at the end dwapara yuga (the third of the four cosmic ages (eras)). The legend says that as soon as he was born, he was thrown into the sea by his parents, because he was born under the influence of an extremely unfortunate nakshatra. Matsyendra was swallowed by a big fish that, while swimming nearby the shore, came closer to the place where Siva was imparting the most secret teachings about yoga to Parvati. The child from the inside of the fish listened to the precious words of Siva, who, when noticed his presence, was very pleased by his devotion and initiated him to the mysteries of yoga.

### **MERU VAKRASANA**

- You should sit with both of your legs outstretched.
- Turn the torso slightly to the right and place the right hand behind the body, close to the left buttock, with the fingers pointing backward.

- Now place the left hand behind and slightly to the side of the right buttock, as close as possible to the right hand.
- Bend the left knee and place the foot outside the right knee.
- Twist the head and trunk as far to the right as is comfortable, using the arms as levers, while keeping the spine upright and straight.
- The buttocks should remain on the floor.
- The right elbow may bend a little.
- Hold yourself in the final position, relaxing the back.
- Look over the right shoulder as far as possible.
- Re-center the trunk, relax for a few seconds and then twist again.
- Practice up to six times and then repeat on the other side.
- Inhale before twisting. Retain the breath inside while twisting.
- Exhale while re-centering.

Use a folded blanket if your hands do not reach the floor. This is an isolated spinal twist, good for people with tight hips. Spinal Twist is a preparatory Asana for Ardha Matsyendrasana and may be practiced after forward and backward bending Asanas and before inverted Asanas. People with severe back conditions, ulcers, hernias or other complaints of this nature, should not perform this Asana. Spinal Twist stretches the spine, loosening the vertebrae and toning the nerves. It alleviates backache, neck pain, lumbago and mild forms of sciatica. It is a good Asana for beginners, preparing the back for the more difficult spinal twists.

### **Dandasana (Staff Pose)**

- Sit on the floor with legs stretched straight in front of you.
- Place palms on the floor by your hips with fingers pointing towards the feet
- Keep back erect
- Press your hands into the floor but do not lift up
- Push chest forward and roll your shoulders back

### **Navasana (Boat)**

- Sit in dandasana
- Bend your knees
- Recline your torso slightly back
- Lift heart up
- Stretch arms forward keeping them parallel to the floor and near the thighs
- Straighten legs
- Balance on your butt
- Engage inner thighs, squeeze them together
- Feet should be higher than your head

### **Navasana (variation, engages nadis appropriately)**

- Lie flat on your back, raise your arms back above your head
- Lift your arms and legs at the same time, and contract your abdominals

### **Janu Shirsasana (Head to Knee Pose)**

- Sit with legs stretched out in front of you

- Bend your left knee, move it to the left keeping your outer thigh and calf on the floor
- Have your left heel against your right inner thigh, try not to have both legs at a right angle push the bent leg back

#### Utthana Pristhasana (Lizard Pose)

- You need to lie on the stomach with the arms crossed under the chest and the hands holding the upper arms.
- Separate the legs slightly and keep the feet flat and make sure that your head faces forward. This is the starting position. You need to make sure that the elbows should not move during the practice.
- Raise the trunk and buttocks so that the body is supported by the knees and elbows.
- Stretch the torso back, placing the chin and chest on, or as close as possible to, the floor behind the forearms.
- Return to the raised position and then to the starting position. This is the completion of the first round process.
- Inhale while raising the buttocks (twice during each round). Exhale while lowering the buttocks (twice during each round).

One should do at least ten to twelve rounds every day. After you are done with this asana make sure to perform after a forward bending asana. This asana exercises and strengthens the diaphragm. It tones the entire back, and is excellent for relieving tightness between the shoulder blades.

#### Pranamasana (Bowling Pose)

- Sit in Vajrasana.
- Grasp the lower calves just above the ankles, keeping the thumbs uppermost. Slowly bend forward and place the crown of the head on the floor in front of the knees. In case you need, you can place a small folded blanket under the head.
- Raise the buttocks as high as possible, allowing the chin to press against the chest, until the thighs are as vertical as comfortable.
- Make sure to remain in this position for seven to twenty seconds.
- Lower the buttocks and come back into ShashankAsana for a short time before returning to Vajrasana. Practice this Asana seven times.
- Inhale in Vajrasana and while raising the buttocks.
- Exhale while lowering the head to the floor. Hold the breath in the final position or breathe normally if remaining in the position for more than a few seconds.

This Asana should not be performed by people with vertigo, weak neck or high blood pressure. This asana increases the blood supply to the head. As a preparatory practice for Sirshasana, the headstand pose, it allows the brain to gradually adapt to the extra blood flow and pressure in the head when the body is inverted. It gives many of the benefits of Sirshasana but to a lesser degree. PranamAsana is especially beneficial for the management of Asthma. It promotes drainage of the lungs and chest and helps to open the air passages. It also decompresses the lower cervical and upper thoracic vertebrae and nerve roots which are often the seat of psycho-emotional tension in an asthma attack. It should be performed at the immediate onset of an asthma attack to obtain full benefits.

### Matsyasana (Fish Pose)

- Lying on your back with the arms along side your body and the legs a few inches apart, slide the hands palms down under the tops of the thighs, just below the buttocks. Have the elbows slightly bent, next to the sides of your torso.
- Pressing into the elbows, use the arms to lift the chest up, arching the spine, and rolling on to the crown of the head. Do not use the head or neck to support the posture, use the arms, torso, buttocks and legs to continue to lift the chest towards the ceiling. Little or no weight should be on the head.
- Breathe and hold for 3-8 breaths.
- To release: slowly remove all of the weight off of the head and gently lower the back of the head, the neck and then the spine back down to the floor. Remove the hands from under the legs.

The fish deeply opens the chest and increases flexibility of the spine. Fish also stimulates the cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous systems.

Restorative fish: place 2-3 folded blankets under the upper back to support the posture without using any effort. Make sure the head is supported on the floor or the neck is resting on the blankets. Relax into the blankets and breathe deeply.

Recent or chronic arm, shoulder, neck or back injury or inflammation.

### Bhumi padaa mastakasana (Half Head Stand Pose)

- Assume yourself in Marjari Asana (Cat Stretch Pose).
- Turn the toes under.
- Place the crown of the head on the floor between the hands. Straighten the knees and raise the buttocks, balancing on the head and feet. Now bring the heels together and separate the toes.
- Raise your arms and clasp the hands or take hold of one wrist behind the back.
- Come up onto the toes as high as possible.
- Hold yourself in this final position as long as it is comfortable.
- Now lower the arms and place the hands beside the head.
- Slowly return to Marjari Asana and then lower into ShashankAsana for a few moments. After completing the practice, lie in ShavAsana before continuing. Make sure to breath normally. Practice up to two to four rounds, gradually extending the period in the asana. Tadasana should follow this Asana.

People with high blood pressure, heart conditions, inflammation of the ear, weak eye capillaries, severe near-sightedness, organically defective pituitary or thyroid glands, arteriosclerosis, cerebral or other thrombosis, severe asthma, tuberculosis, cold or sinusitis, excessively impure blood, slipped disc, weak spine or vertigo should not practice this Asana. This Asana helps in cases of low blood pressure. It balances the nervous system, strengthens the neck and head muscles and brings a rich supply of blood to the brain. As a preliminary pose to SirshAsana it accustoms the brain to the increased influx of blood and the crown to supporting the weight of the body.

### Vrischikasana (Scorpion Pose)

- Keep the hands and elbows on the ground.
- The entire weight of the body will fall on the hands.
- Raise the hips, slowly bend the legs at the knees and take the hips towards the back and

place the soles or toes on your head.

- Raise the head as high as possible when you place the soles on the head, the pose is complete.
- In the beginning practice this asana by the side of a wall or take help from someone.
- Before starting the practice of this asana, learn Shirshasana and Utthit Shirshasana properly.

The position of the body when this asana is performed resembles a scorpion, hence the name Vrischikasana. Benefits: Makes the muscles and bones of hands strong and capable of doing difficult jobs. Makes the hold of wrists and palms stronger. Beneficial for all disorders of the abdomen. Stops enlargement of liver and spleen, and makes them healthy and strong. Helps cure disorders of the urinary tract. Helps make the spine elastic, healthy and strong. Increases intellectual power and banishes all feeling of laziness. Makes the hips and chest well formed. This is also a difficult asana. Be patient and increase the duration gradually. Then you are bound to be successful. The practice of Chakrasana also helps perfect this asana. Perform for half a minute to begin with. Increase the duration to five minutes or so.

#### Shavasana (Corpse Pose)

- Lie flat on the back with the arms about twenty centimeters away from the body, palms facing upward. A thin pillow or folded cloth may be placed behind the head to prevent discomfort, Let the fingers of both hands curl up slightly.
- Move both the feet slightly apart to a comfortable position and close the eyes. Make sure that the head and spine should be in a straight line and also be sure the head does not fall to one side or the other.
- Relax the whole body and stop all physical movement. Breathe naturally and allow it to become rhythmic and relaxed. Begin to count the breaths from number thirty backward to zero.
- Inside your mind, Please repeat, “I am breathing in thirty, I am breathing out thirty, I am breathing in twenty nine, I am breathing out twenty nine”, and so on, until you have reached back to zero. If the mind wanders and the next number is forgotten, bring it back to the counting and start again at thirty. If the mind can be kept on the breath for a few minutes the body will relax.
- In general the Asana should be done for the longer time although a minute or two is sufficient between Asana practices. This Asana will help first on relaxing the whole body, then on the breath and counting. This Asana relaxes the whole psycho-physiological system. It should ideally be practiced before sleep. During and after asana practice, particularly after dynamic exercises such as Surya Namaskara, and when the practitioner feels physically and mentally tired. It develops body awareness.
- Try not to move the body at all during the practice as even the slightest movement will create muscular contraction. A personal mantra may be repeated with every inhalation and exhalation. While lying in ShavAsana, become aware of the right hand and relax it. Slowly become aware of the right wrist, elbow, armpit, right side of the waist, right buttock, right thigh, right knee, calf, heel, sole of the foot, and relax them one by one. Repeat this process with the left side of the body and all the parts of the head and trunk. Make sure that each part of the body is relaxed, feel each part merging into the floor. Repeat this process a few times and all the tensions will be removed.

For maximum benefit, this technique should be performed after a hard day's work or just before sleep. This Asana is also known as MritAsana, the dead Man's pose.

### Grivasana

- Lie flat on back
- Bend the knees and bring the heels up to touch the buttocks
- The knees and feet should be slightly separated
- Place the palms on the ground on either side of the head level with the temples
- Push down on the hands and feet and raise the trunk, placing the crown of the head on the floor
- Balance on the head and feet
- Raise the arms and cross them on the chest
- Inhale deeply in the starting position
- Retain the breathe inside while raising
- In the final position retain the breathe or breathe normally, exhale while lowering the trunk.
- Keep you awareness on the neck, thyroid gland or pelvic region and also on vishuddhi or manipura chakra

People with neck conditions, arthritis high blood pressure or absence of menstrual period should not practice this asana. Grivasana aligns the upper vertebrae, strengthens the neck and tones the cervical, dorsal, lumbar and sacral regions of the spine. It is used in yoga therapy for genealogical disorders and for thyroid problems.

### Yogamudra

Mudra is better understood as a reflection rather than seal. Keep a soft mulabhandha before you go down. Combine motion with movement of energy, breathe and consciousness. This should be performed after asana.

- Sit in Padmasana. Take hold of one wrist behind the back.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Bring the awareness to Mooladhara Chakra. Inhale slowly and feel the breath gradually rising from Mooladhara to Ajna Chakra. Retain the breath for a few seconds and concentrate on Ajna Chakra. Exhale slowly while bending forward, synchronizing the movement with the breath so that the forehead just touches the floor as the air is fully expelled from the lungs. Make sure you put yourself in the final position of Yogamudrasana.
- Simultaneously, feel the breath gradually move downward from Ajna to Mooladhara Chakra.
- Retain the breath outside for a few seconds while concentrating on Mooladhara Chakra. Inhale, raise the trunk to the vertical position and be aware of the breath moving upward from Mooladhara to Ajna Chakra.
- All these movements should be performed in a harmonious, smooth and synchronized manner.
- Remaining in the upright position, hold the breath for a few seconds while concentrating on Ajna Chakra.
- Exhale slowly, moving the awareness back down the spine with the breath to Mooladhara Chakra. This completes the round one.
- Immediately start another round performing slight Moola Bandha with the breath still

held out and the awareness at Mooladhara Chakra.

- Beginners may rest by taking a few normal breaths before starting another round. Make sure to perform four to ten rounds.
  - The respiration should be as slow as possible without the slightest strain. This practice may be followed by any backward, bending asana such as Bhujangasana or Ushtrasana. People suffering from sciatica, high blood pressure, pelvic inflammatory disease or any other serious abdominal ailment should avoid this practice. This practice gives all the benefits of Yogamudrasana. In addition it is an excellent preparatory practice for meditation. The pressure along the abdomen and chest created by the legs and heels calms the adrenal system, engendering a sense of relaxation. It relieves anger and tension, inducing tranquility, and develops awareness and control of psychic energy. The position of the hands may also be placed on the heels of the feet, with the elbows pointing out to the sides, Placed palms down on the soles of the feet, and Placed palm to palm with the fingers pointing upward in the middle of the back. People with stiff backs and those unable to sit in Padmasana comfortably may perform the practice from Sukhasana or Vajrasana. If adopting the latter, bend forward into Shashankasana with the hands clasped behind the back. If Vajrasana is still uncomfortable, the knees may be separated slightly, allowing the chest to come closer to the floor.
- Note: Yoga mudra is so called because it unites the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness, or the outer nature with the inner nature.

#### Pranamudra

Dharmanidhi's comments: This mudra is the most important mudra practice for harmonizing prana. Practicing it for 5 minutes if you connect to the pranayamic energy equals one hour of sleep rejuvenation. This mudra distributes prana through your entire being and it is a compassion practice. You inhale up and exhale down using full yogic breath. You should aim to spread your ribs radially. Your breathe should be full at the throat chakra and at the top of your head your energy comes out like a fountain. Your awareness should be in the spinal channel and the energy should come out at the top of your head like golden streaks of prana, rays shoot out like an aura. This energy goes to all beings in the universe (compassion aspect). You are cultivating energy but you don't define yourself by it. When your exhale is full you squeeze mulbandha fully. The bhava for this position is sweet. It is a good idea to check and stop at each chakra. Your tongue is on the roof of your mouth (just touching). Don't become dull and listless in this practice, if this happens do some vigorous twists.

- Sit in any comfortable meditation posture, preferably Padmasana with the hands in Bhairava Mudra. Close the eyes and relax the whole body especially the abdomen, arms and hands.
- Keeping the eyes closed, inhale and exhale as deeply as possible, contracting the abdominal muscles to expel the maximum amount of air from the lungs. With the breath held outside perform Moola Bandha while concentrating on Mooladhara chakra in the perineum. Retain the breath outside for as long as is comfortable.
- Release Moola Bandha. Inhale slowly and deeply, expanding the abdomen fully to draw as much air into the lungs as possible. Simultaneously, raise the hands until they are in front of the navel. The hands should be open with the fingers pointing

towards each other but not touching, and the palms facing the trunk of the body.

- The movement of the hands should be coordinated with the abdominal inhalation. The arms and hands should be relaxed. While inhaling from the abdomen, try to feel the Prana or vital energy being drawn from Mooladhara Chakra to Manipura Chakra in the spinal column.

- Continue the inhalation by expanding the chest and raising the hands until they are directly in front of the heart center. Try to feel the Pranic energy being drawn up from Manipura to Anahata Chakra while inhaling.

- Draw even more air into the lungs by slightly raising the shoulders, and feel the Prana being drawn up to vishuddhi. Raise the hands to the front of the throat in coordination with the breath.

- Retain the breath inside while spreading the arms out to the sides.

- In the final position the hands must be level with the ears, the arms outstretched but not straight, and the palms turned upward.

- Feel the Prana spreading like a wave to Ajna, Bindu and Sahasrara Chakras. Concentrate on Sahasrara Chakra and try to visualize an aura of pure light emanating from the head.

- Feel that the whole being is radiating vibrations of peace to all beings. Retain this position for as long as possible without straining the lungs in any way.

- Repeat Practices 4, 3, 2, 1, and slowly return to the starting position while exhaling. During exhalation, feel the Prana progressively descending through each of the Chakras until it reaches Mooladhara.

- At the end of exhalation perform Moola Badha and concentrate on Mooladhara Chakra. Then relax the whole body and breathe normally.

- When the practice has been perfected, visualize the breath as a stream of white light ascending and descending within Sushumna Nadi.

- Increase the duration of inhalation, retention and exhalation slowly. Be careful not to strain the lungs. The awareness should move in a smooth and continuous flow from Mooladhara to Sahasrara and back to Mooladhara, in coordination with the breath and the raising and lowering of the hands. Prana Mudra is best practiced after asana and Pranayama and before meditation, but it may also be performed at any time.

- Prana Mudra is ideally practiced at sunrise, while facing the sun. Prana mudra awakens the dormant Prana Shakti, vital energy, and distributes it throughout the body, increasing strength, health and confidence.

- It develops awareness of the Pranic system, the Nadis and Chakras, and the subtle flow of Prana in the body.

- It instills an inner attitude of peace and equanimity by adopting an external attitude of offering and receiving energy to and from the cosmic source. Prana Mudra is also considered to be a Pranayama practice which raises Prana by encouraging correct breathing.

- Remember to return the Prana to Mooladhara at the end of the practice.