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Geeta S. Iyengar's Guide to
a woman's yoga practice

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Geeta S. Iyengar's Guide to a Woman's Yoga Practice

Volume I
Lois Steinberg, Ph.D.
foreword by Geeta S. Iyengar

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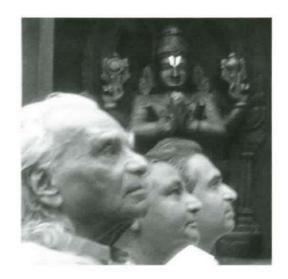
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Yogena cittasya padena vacam Malam sarirasya ca vaidyakena Yopa karottam pravaram muninam Patanjalim Pranjaliranato'smi Abahu purusakaram Sankha cakrasi dharinam Sahasra sirasam svetam Pranamami Patanjalim

> Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu Guru Devo Maheshwara Guru Sakshat Parambrahma Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah Hari Om



To my revered teachers Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, Geeta S. Iyengar, and Prashant S. Iyengar for shedding the light on my path of yoga.



Foreword by Geeta S. Iyengar

Yoga, being a universal subject, can be adopted by one and all. One thing is certain, yoga cannot be practised mechanically and, at the same time, one should know that it is not a blind practice. It is actually a practical subject, and the practitioner has to adopt it with caution and thoughtfulness. Though the subject is universal, each one has to practice at her/his own individual level with intellectual application and discernment. Individuals differ from one another and, therefore, the practice of yoga becomes subjectively individual. However, an objective view on the subject matter is essential knowledge that acts as a base for a thoughtful approach. This book is mainly concentrated on the factual aspect; how an individual has to approach practicing yoga.

From childhood, I had a natural inclination towards yoga. The first step of learning for children is imitation of parents and teachers, and I was no exception to this psychology. I imitated my father, and started doing asanas during my childhood, though sickness and illness were always my companions. Practicing yoga was fun in childhood, however, as a teenager, I started noticing the ups and downs in my practice, not knowing the exact reason behind it. This varying turbulence gave me a great clue to my practice and, at that stage, my mother was a guru to me. Having had an acute attack of nephritis at the age of seven, my menstruation began when I was fourteen, and the doctor had a sigh of relief. The doctor told my parents that I might suffer from amenorrhoea, or mental disturbances, or severe arthritis. Fortunately, the first two problems remained away from me, though the third one attacked me (with less intensity) and up until now is under control, thanks to yoga.

In my school days, I had an opportunity to teach asanas to my classmates. My teacher was in charge of the interschool asana competitions, and requested that I give a helping hand to train the girls of my school from simple to complicated asanas in three months time. I made full use of this opportunity, which gave me tremendous experience. During their menstruation, the girls used to question me regarding their problems and possible solutions. Their queries were challenging. My journey of experience started then. My mother had told me to practice inversions along with variations very regularly. She gave certain clues while practicing asanas during menstruation, which proved a boon to me, and also helped me to consider, with compassion, the serious problems of women. As a practitioner of yoga for the last fifty years, and a teacher for forty-five years, I have observed the upheavals in the physical, emotional and mental health of my lady students. From these observations, I have given thought not only to the daily, routine practice, but also the frequent changes required for the occasional problems of girls and women.

A woman undergoes internal changes at different phases of life that affect her body and mind, sometimes causing her to suffer. She may be in agony and fail to share her problems with others, thinking that there might be no solution. Often women with on-going aches and pains lose tolerance to make any efforts. Both the sufferings and doubts agitate us, yet they ignite us to seek the solution.

After that early experience teaching in school, I started instructing in 1961. My female students were of different age groups, from seven to eighty, also including a few male students. Undoubtedly this opportunity enriched my experience, and during the intensive course conducted in 1997, I shared my experiential knowledge with maturity and certainty. The outcome of that experience has been put neatly and thoughtfully, with a scientific base, by Lois Steinberg in her book "Geeta S. Iyengar's Guide to a Woman's Yoga Practice."

Lois Steinberg, a practitioner of yoga who is subject to women's problems, could present the whole practical approach with a scientific frame of mind and understanding, to bring out this book from which teachers and students will benefit immensely.



The focus of this book will help both male and female teachers when they deal with women's problems. Therefore, I suggest that both should essentially read, study and grasp the points that are in the book, which contains vast practical ideas. It has been divided into two parts. The first part covers five chapters on menstruation and the second volume will deal with pregnancy, post-partum and menopause, and advising yogic practice before and after surgery. Lois also presents the questions and answers from the Q & A session during the women's intensive course.

This book contains 550 photographs, which guide the practitioner to do the asanas properly using the props. The various props are arranged and used in such a manner that placement of each part of the body on the props leads towards the correct asana. These props lessen stress, tension and wrong pressures. I would like to caution readers and practitioners not to compromise proper practices for comfortability. Strive to do the asana accurately, effectively, and with comfort.

One cannot measure one's own capacity. Stiffness of the body, fear complexes of the mind, unfamiliarity with the movements of the body, and ignorance of skilful actions or adjustments all hinder students from improvement and cure. Teachers have to enlighten them in the use of props, as they create confidence and courage. Asana variations performed with props help with minute, subtle and essential adjustments which increase the effectiveness and liveliness of an asana. Teachers, readers, practitioners and those who have remedial problems have to go through these techniques, contents and photographs very carefully, skilfully, and adjust sensitively while practicing.

I am glad that Lois Steinberg has brought out this book full of information, which is educational and constructive for those who are "Iyengar Yoga" practitioners in particular, and for others in general, who love yoga and look for guidance. The book shows direction, for women practitioners on the path of yoga, towards health, harmony, and happiness.

I am sure that this book will serve purpose for girls and women in the journey of life.

Geeta S. Iyengar
 July 2006, Pune, India



Preface

Originally, this book was to be inclusive of yoga practices covering menarche to menopause and beyond. As it developed, this work had to be divided into volumes; otherwise, it would not be easily lifted! Prashant Iyengar has accurately stated that yoga for women is a department of its own.

Herewith is Volume I, on menstruation and its monthly cycle. It is specifically written for the female student of Iyengar Yoga, as well as for both female and male teachers, as a method for practicing, and/or guiding others wisely with respect to menses. These contents are not meant for novices. Those who are new to Iyengar Yoga would best be served undergoing a minimum of 12 weeks in an introductory course with a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher before availing of this book. Ongoing study under a teacher's guidance would be prudent.

Many women are unfamiliar with how to synchronize their yoga practices with ovulation, menstruation, and the preand post-menstrual phases. Some know that when menstruation begins, inversions should be avoided and forward extensions and supine poses ought to be practiced. However, a woman's approach to her yoga practice should be more thorough than that. Hormonal changes occur throughout the cycle, and a healthy endocrine system is maintained when a woman practices attentively during her pre- and post-menstrual phases. The time period after the post-menstrual phase and before the pre-menstrual phase (which varies among women) is available for the practice of all categories of poses; still, the organic body needs attention and care. I have come to love practicing yoga in this way and enjoy my cycle, even with the changes I notice as I get closer to the climax of menopause.

Writing this book is the result of one of my extended study sessions with the Iyengar family at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune, India, in 1993. I had just completed a doctoral degree in Nutritional Sciences at the University of Illinois—a challenging program that lasted nine years. During that time, my cramped office was in a basement without windows. I practiced pranayama and asana at home, very early in the mornings, and then worked in the "dungeon" all day. In the early evenings and on weekends I taught yoga, then returned to the dungeon for marathon work sessions. The combination of my environment, overworking, and poor sleep habits, was not conducive to my health. As well, near the end of my academic endeavor, a relationship broke up, my beloved grandmother died, and I put my aged cat and dog to sleep.

When I arrived in Pune, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar (Guruji), and his daughter, Geeta S. Iyengar (Geetaji), recognized the changes in body, mind, and spirit that were wreaking havoc upon me. I had chronic pain from fibroids, feeling as if a knife were jabbing and dragging across my abdomen. My problematic thyroid, formerly controlled with yoga and homeopathic remedies, was no longer able to fully function. My spirit was destroyed! Fortunately, I recovered under their guidance.

Geetaji took me under her wing. Within weeks the fibroids became quiescent, and my thyroid started functioning on its own again. Most importantly, my spirit soared. Geetaji taught me how to practice yoga as a woman, and I wanted to share this knowledge.

In 1994, I proposed to Geetaji an intensive course on asana and pranayama for women. I saw my dream come to fruition in 1997, when Geetaji, with Guruji in attendance, conducted a three-week International Women's Intensive Course at RIMYI. One session during the course included Geetaji's responses to our numerous questions concerning yoga for the woman practitioner. I later answered on paper those questions that were not covered during the session, under Geetaji's guidance. These will be presented in Volume II along with practices for pregnancy, post-partum, menopause, and recovery after surgery involving the reproductive organs.

The present volume contains sequences for the monthly cycles of women in their reproductive years. I find that when



I practice with my cycle, that is, following pre-menstrual, menstrual, and post-menstrual practices, I remain healthy. When I stray, my period becomes uncomfortable and my fibroids increase in size. I rarely stray; it's not worth it.

The first chapter contains a sequence for those who have normal menstruation. The second chapter contains sequences for those who have problematic menses. A post-menstrual sequence is offered in Chapter Three, including ideas on how to incorporate your regularly practiced asanas into the sequence. Suggestions for modifying poses during the phase before menstruation are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five presents a case study of a woman with complex problems involving her cycle. In this final chapter, with reference to the information from previous chapters, the sequences presented demonstrate how to construct suitable practice programs to address multiple problems.

In *Yoga: A Gem for Women*, Geetaji states that yoga differs from exercise in that it brings health to the vital organs. This book will educate you on practice with respect to the female reproductive organs and related systems. I hope your practice deepens and your understanding develops. Thus, for those of you who teach, you will be able to guide students to maintain health and, for those with special needs, to lessen their discomfort, that they may progress to a state of optimal well-being.

- Lois Steinberg



Important Notes:

Yoga practitioners using this book should have a foundation in Iyengar Yoga and study under a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher (www.IYNAUS.org). Refer to *Light on Yoga* (Iyengar, BKS, 1966, Unwin and Hyman), *Yoga: A Gem for Women* (Iyengar, GSI, 1983, Allied), *Light on Pranayama* (Iyengar, BKS, 1981, Crossroad Publishing Co.), and *Preliminary Course Book* (Iyengar, GSI, 2002, YOG) for complete instructions on the method of Iyengar Yoga.

This book reveals some parts of Iyengar Yoga methodology, not only how to practice with respect to the monthly cycle, but also how to support poses for a specific purpose. The majority of the photos are shown with Iyengar Yoga props, making this a technical book and reference guide. See the appendix that codifies the Iyengar Yoga props. While it is not expected that everyone start making or purchasing props, a reference in the appendix is provided for ordering the pamphlet *Iyengar Yoga Props* (Lozier, 1994), which has specifications for their construction. However, it is not simply a matter of using specialized props. A few poses amongst the chapters of this volume show examples of how to use typical household furniture as props to achieve the desired shape and effect of an asana or for pranayama practice.



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Chapter 1 **Asana Sequence for** Menstruation

Asana Sequence for Menstruation

The sequence of asanas contained in this chapter may help to alleviate the discomforts associated with menstruation. Cramps, fluid retention, heaviness and/or bloating in the abdomen and legs, irregular digestion, ache or spasm of the lower back, up and down emotions, and fatigue in both the body and mind, are some of the characteristics associated with menses. This recommended program assumes that the reader has an understanding of Iyengar Yoga, so detailed descriptions of poses are not provided. For complete descriptions of the asanas and pranayamas, refer to the classic texts Light on Yoga (Iyengar, BKS, George Allen & Unwin, 1966), Light on Pranayama (Iyengar, BKS, Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981) Yoga: A Gem for Women (Iyengar, GSI, Allied Publishers, 1986), and Preliminary Course Book (Iyengar, GSI, YOG, 2002).

The length of time that the poses should be held depends upon the practitioner's experience and capacity. If the mind becomes agitated, the body becomes restless, or numbness occurs, the pose is over. Beginner students, as well as young women in their teens and twenties, should hold each pose for the shorter time frame suggested, and should not attempt poses that prove too difficult for them. The intermediate practitioner may also hold for a short time, but add a second repetition. An advanced practitioner may hold for the longer time, uninterrupted. A primary point is that the facial muscles, neck, and abdomen are to be soft throughout this practice. This is key to the inner exploration, discovery, and joy inherent in practicing this sequence as a whole, resulting in tremendous beneficial effects that are described in the text.

Contraindications for practicing this sequence are: headache, large clots/heavy bleeding, menses extended beyond ten days, or severe abdominal cramping. Chapter 2 provides remedial sequences for these discomforts. However, it is best to study regularly with an experienced certified Iyengar Yoga teacher who can help you adapt your practice.

All ages may do the sequence. However, women in their forties and beyond have periods that become different. For some women, periods become lighter, for others heavier. The days between cycles may lengthen or shorten. Both are normal as menopause progresses towards its end. Chapter 2 contains sequences for light and heavy flows, as well as other sequences for common problems that may occur.

If you are a teacher, remember to instruct your students to tell you before class if they have their periods. Your students may not always disclose this information, so ask women who have their periods not to do inversions when the class is about to do them. You may teach the menstrual sequence to your students; however, introductory level students do not have enough knowledge or skill and find it too difficult. They may join the regular class; modify the poses for them by giving more support. For example, have them, or the whole class, do the standing poses with the back foot at the wall and the hand supported on a block. Later, while the rest of the class is doing salamba sarvangasana, they could do supta baddha konasana, supta swastikasana, supta virasana, cross bolsters, or setubandha sarvangasana supported. If an introductory level student tells you before class that her cramping and/or other discomforts are serious, have her do ardha chandrasana (fig 1.4a page 9) and supta padanghustasana II (fig 1.6a page 12). Discomfort is usually alleviated after these poses. If this is the case, then she may join the class and do the poses supported.

The first five poses of the sequence are optional. In general, these poses are good to practice when there is cold weather or if cramps are present.



1. Adho Mukha Svanasana - downward facing dog pose

PROPS: Lower rope if available (1.1a), or doorknob and belt (1.1b and 1.1c). A blanket may be used on the rope if it cuts into the thighs uncomfortably. Alternatively, the hands may be placed on the height of two blocks against a wall with the thumb and index fingers up to the wall (1.1d). A block, blanket, and/or bolster to support the head.

POSITION NOTES: For safety, always place and remove the rope from the head side, not stepping in or out of the rope. Feet are hip-width or slightly wider if the legs are stiff. The hands are shoulder-width. Heels are up on the wall approximately one to two inches and the balls of the feet are on the floor. If backache is present, turn the heels out more and the toes in. The rope is placed at the crease of the top of the thighs, well below the abdomen. To support the head, adjust the height of the support to reach the head, not to force the head down. Keep the nasal passage unobstructed by placing the support only under the forehead.

TIME: One to five minutes according to capacity.



fig 1.1a



fig 1.1b

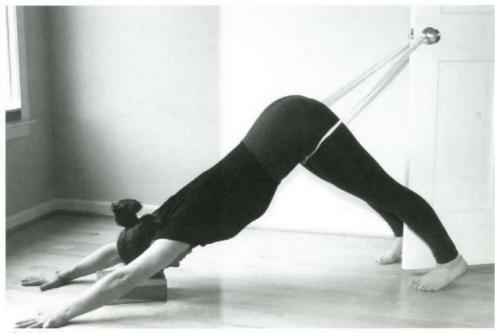


fig 1.1c

ACTIONS: Lift the kneecaps and tighten the thighs. Straighten the elbows and extend the arms forward. Lengthen the sides of the torso. Release the abdominal muscles. Rest the head and neck.

BENEFITS: Although this may be considered an inversion, the relaxation of the lower abdomen may reduce cramping and enhance the uterine action to discharge the flow. The mind becomes quiet and mental tensions are reduced. In cold weather this pose is warming.

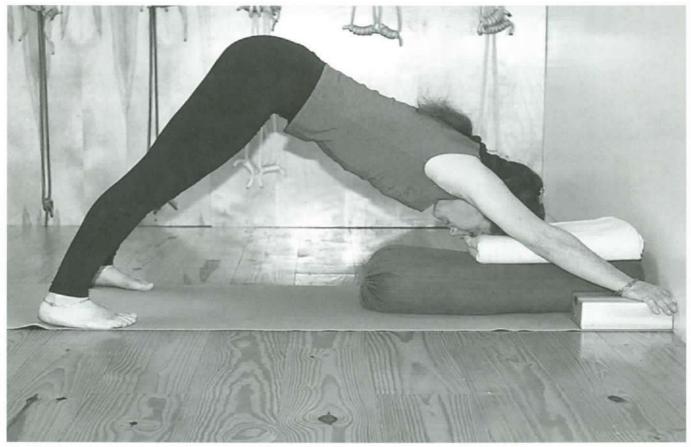


fig 1.1d



2. Uttanasana - intense pose

PROPS: Lower rope if available, halasana box or chair, and a bolster. Three blankets. One blanket is placed on the rope to keep it from cutting into the thighs, one for the forehead, and if the abdomen is supported a blanket may be folded under the abdomen. Place a block under the chin for depression. If a lower rope is not available, use the wall to support the buttocks.

POSITION NOTES: The rope is placed at the top of the thighs and the feet slightly wider than hip-width. Use either a halasana box or chair with a bolster to support the arms and head (1.2a). If the spine is not extending, if it is rounded or convex, add more height on top of the box or chair. If depression is present, support the chin on top of a block and gaze upward (1.2b). This variation is also for hypo- and hyperthyroid conditions. However, do not do this variation if a headache is present. A second halasana box and a rolled blanket may support the abdomen if pressure is desired, to reduce cramps or backache (shown in 1.2b). If a rope is not available, touch the buttocks to the wall and step the feet about one foot from the wall (1.2c).

TIME: Two to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 1.2a



ACTIONS: Without hardening the abdomen, tighten the kneecaps, and lift the thighs up from the knees toward the hips. Turn the front of the thighs from the outer thighs to the inner thighs. Spread the backs of the thighs from inner thighs to the outer thighs. Lift and separate the buttock bones apart. Release any gripping of the abdominal region. Lengthen the anterior spine forward. Allow the muscles and skin of the trapezium to move toward the waist. Rest the head. Soften the facial muscles.

BENEFITS: The length of the anterior spine encourages the body to become toned to its natural state, thereby reducing bloating. The extension of the back encourages warmth in the body. Cramps and headache may be relieved in this position.



fig 1.2b



fig 1.2c



3. Utthita Hasta Parsva Padangusthasana - upright side hand big toe pose, bent knee and/or straight leg variations

PROPS: Halasana box (1.3a and b), chair (1.3c), trestle (1.3d), or window ledge to support the raised leg. If a rope wall is available, use it to support the back, and the ropes for the hands to hold (1.3a). A quarter round or square block may be used under the standing leg heel to increase the lift of that hip (as shown in 1.3a and b). If doing independent of a rope wall have a strap to hold the foot (1.3d). When placing the raised leg foot on a wall rope hook, the hands can hold the upper rope as depicted in 1.3e.

POSITION NOTES: There are several variations: if the hips are very tight, bent knee is best. If the sacrum/low back is having pain, the back body supported by the wall is best. If cramping is present, see that you manage to get the greatest opening of the hip joint of the leg extended to the side. This may relieve the spasming. Open the groin, but do not allow the bent knee buttock to go up. Descend it away from the waist. Otherwise, there will be an adverse effect. Practice the variation that is appropriate for your area of concern or capability. In all the variations the standing leg is perpendicular to the floor with the hip aligned over the ankle. The raised leg foot and knee are aligned with the hip/torso, or placed slightly forward if hip or sacral pain is present. When supporting the back with the rope wall, first lengthen the torso by holding the upper ropes with arms straight (1.3a). Then, maintaining the height, hold the lower hooks to widen the chest and abdomen to the sides (1.3b).

TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each side. Two to three repetitions increase the benefits of the pose.

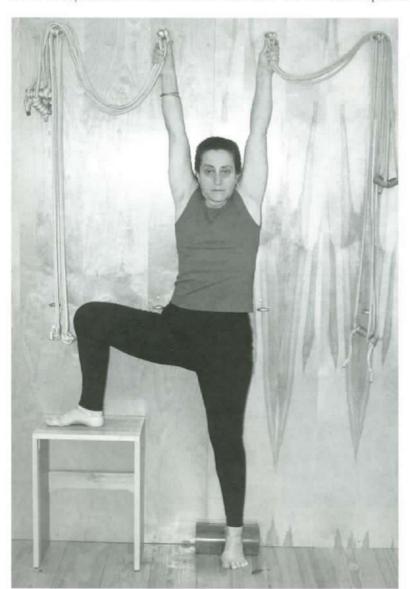




fig 1.3b



fig 1.3a



fig 1.3c

ACTIONS: Descend the heel of the standing leg, tighten the knee, and firm the thigh. Move the front of the thigh muscles to the bone. Turn the front of the thigh from the outer thigh to the inner thigh. Lengthen the inner groin. If the raised leg is bent at the knee, extend the inner thigh from the groin towards the knee and roll the thigh from the inside out. If the leg is straight, continue the extension of the inner leg towards the inner foot. Extend the outer side of the foot toward the knee and the outer thigh toward the hip. In both variations, move the buttock of the raised leg down, away from the waist, and the bottom of the buttock and buttock bone forward. As the raised leg hip descends, ascend the standing leg to equalize the pelvis as if it were in tadasana. Lift the chest, and revolve the side of the chest closest to the raised leg towards the opposite side. Raise the anterior spine. Maintain the chin level with the floor and gaze softly forward.

BENEFITS: The hips and inner thighs are opened, and circulation to the pelvis is increased. Cramps may lessen. In the case of a sluggish flow, to discharge may become more consistent. Backache, if present, is alleviated. This pose also improves alignment of the sacrum, knees, ankles, and feet.

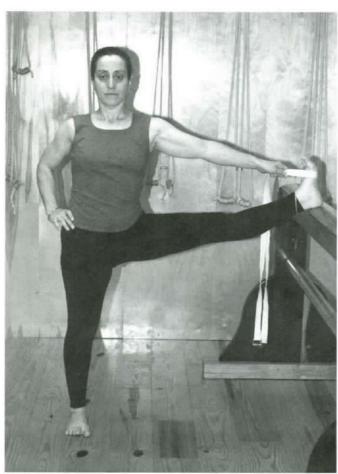






fig 1.3e



4. Ardha Chandrasana - half moon pose

PROPS: Trestle (1.4a), kitchen countertop, plain wall, or rope wall (1.4b), and a block.

POSITION NOTES: Support the back with one of the above options and the lower hand with a block. Align the standing leg hip over the ankle and the hand under the shoulder. Align the chin with the sternum to keep the head centered.

TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each side, starting first with the right foot on the floor and the left leg raised up on the support.

ACTIONS: Extend the inner heel of the raised leg with the support of the trestle or wall. Lengthen the leg out from the pelvis. At the same time, move the outer upper thigh in towards the bone. Lift the kneecap and thigh of the standing leg. Lift the back of the knee so as not to "sit" on that joint. Extend the inner edge of the standing leg heel from the arch to the back of the heel. Lengthen the sides of the hips evenly away from the sides of the waist. Open the chest from the center of the sternum bone to the sides and from the bottom sternum to the top. Create more space in the chest by extending the sides of the ribs towards the arms. Turn the bottom chest up to the ceiling. Maintain a focus of releasing all the layers of the abdomen, softening it completely. Soften the eyes and gaze forward. Extend the sides of the neck and let go any tension there. The front of the neck should not protrude forward. Rest the tongue on the lower palate.

BENEFITS: The basin of the pelvis will begin to open and soften. Heaviness and cramping begin to recede and a feeling of lightness in the pelvis begins. The action of the raised leg outer thigh is good for osteoporosis.



fig 1.4a

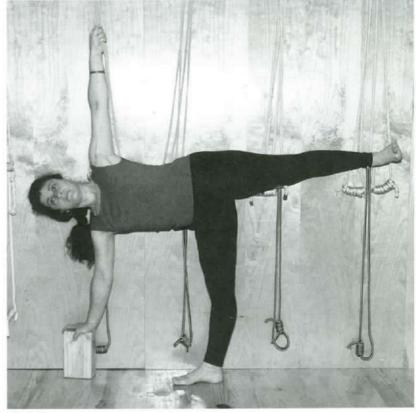


fig 1.4b



5. Prasarita Padottanasana - Spread foot intense pose

PROPS: Pavana muktasana bench, one to two bolsters to support the torso, one to two blankets to support the abdomen and head, or platform, bolster, blanket, block, or two chairs, two bolsters, and a blanket.

POSITION NOTES: Stand in utthita padasana with the pubis touching the end of the bolster. Press the hands down on the bolster to extend up before bending over (1.5a). Once in the pose, the feet may have to step wider apart to spread the sacrum. The feet may also have to step forward to be aligned with the hips (1.5b). In the case of depression, the chin should be supported up on a block (1.5c). Figure 1.5d shows how two chairs may be used and 1.5e shows how a platform may be used.



fig 1.5a



fig 1.5b

ACTIONS: Tighten the knees and thighs enough for the legs to be firm, but not to exert yourself. Completely relax the torso over the bolster, keeping the sternum bone lengthening to the chin. Allow the sacrum to spread and a slight pressure to come on the abdomen from the bolster.

BENEFITS: The spreading of the sacrum and slight pressure on the abdomen help to relieve low back pain and cramping. The supported concave back position is cooling to the central nervous system and reduces heat and physical tension. The mind becomes completely relaxed and quiet.







fig 1.5d



fig 1.5c



6. Supta Parsva Padangusthasana – supine side big toe pose

PROPS: Support the raised leg, bent knee or straight, either on a trestle (1.6a, 1.6b), wall and block (1.6c), or bolster (1.6d). A weight may be placed on the extended leg hip/top thigh (1.6c). The head may be supported on a blanket. In all variations support the foot of the leg extended on the floor into the wall.

POSITION NOTES: The raised leg should not overextend. The muscles and ligaments should not have a sensation of pulling. If that is the case, do the bent knee variation of the pose (1.6a). The leg that is on the floor should have the outer heel aligned with the outer hip and the baby toe aligned with the outer heel. To further release congestion you may take the leg, extended on the floor, approximately two inches further out to the side. Weighting that hip/leg will help release tightness of the abdomen.

TIME: Two to five minutes each side. Start with the right foot raised to the side, then change to the left foot raised.





fig 1.6a

fig 1.6b



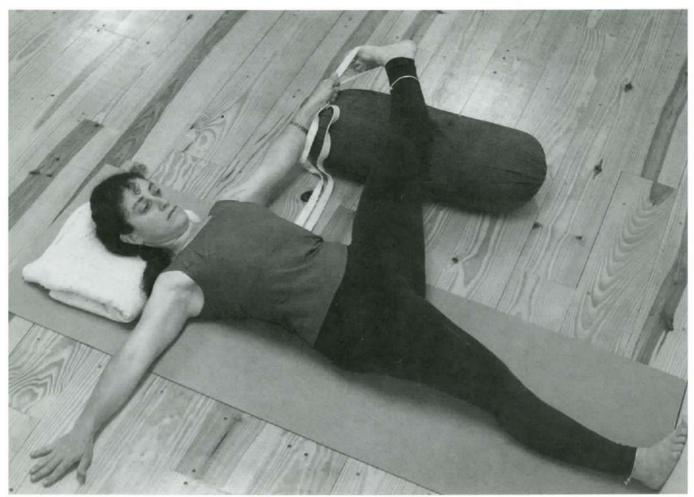
fig 1.6c



ACTIONS: With the left leg on the floor and the heel and sole of the foot on the wall, extend the inner edge of the heel firmly into the wall. The top of the left thigh turns from the outer side of the leg to the inner edge of the groin. Descend the front of the thigh to the back of the thigh, the skin to the muscle, and the muscle to the bone. Reach and extend the back of the thigh toward the floor, the bone to the muscle, and muscle to the skin. Descend the left side of the sacrum to the floor without hardening the abdomen. Bring focus and extension to the points of the side of the body, which will develop alignment. Connect and extend along the line of the left inner heel, inner knee, inner groin, left pubis and side of the navel, and left breast. Finally, release the eyes to the back of the head and connect the left side of the optic nerve center to the aforementioned points. Energetically, connect these points and lengthen the distance between them. Extend the left groin/inner thigh more than the groin of the raised right leg. Broaden the pelvic floor, the basin, from side to side. Lift the right side of the chest up towards the ceiling and over to the left side of the chest.

The right leg raised out to the side should extend from the inner groin to the inner edge of the knee if it is bent, or the inner foot if it is extended straight. At the same time, extend the outer knee to the hip in the case of the bent knee or from the outer side of the foot back towards the buttock/hip in the straight leg variation. Although one leg is raised out to the side, the hips and buttocks should remain balanced. Move the outer side of the raised leg hip away from the waist. Further align the pelvis by focusing inward on the uterus that resides behind the pubic bone, the size of a fist, and the almond sized ovaries on each side of the uterus. Adjust the ovaries so that they are aligned evenly on each side of the uterus: with the left leg on the floor, raise the left ovary up to the head side and down to the buttock side of the body and the right overy to the wall and up towards the ceiling.

BENEFITS: The decongesting action of ardha chandrasana is continued in this pose. The whole basin of the pelvis is opened and the uterus contracts less to expel the menstrual flow. Dysfunctional peristaltic activity of the intestines is brought into balance. Heaviness and cramping dissipates and a sense of lightness develops. Awareness of the reproductive organs is enhanced.







7. Adho Mukha Virasana - downward facing hero pose

PROPS: Arrange the bolster(s) so that the abdomen is supported and the sternum is elongated. If the upper back is rounded, add an additional bolster or blanket. Have a blanket to support the folded arms and another to support the buttocks (1.7a). For headache, have a setubandha bench to extend the arms out to the sides, with the forehead supported on a bolster and blanket. Place a bolster under the abdomen, and blanket under the buttocks (1.7b). In the case of a depressed mental state, place the chin up on a block or folded blanket (see 1.7c). Do this throughout all the forward bends. Do not do this variation of the chin supported if a headache is present.

POSITION NOTES: The arms are bent with the hands holding the elbows and the forearms are placed on top of the blanket. The forehead should be up on the forearms so the back of the head and the neck are extended away from the shoulders. The eyes are parallel to the floor. Do not hang the arms down as it may create dullness in the mind and heaviness in the chest and abdomen. When the chin is supported, the back of the neck should not compress, nor should the front of the throat become hard. In the case of headache, widen the collarbones to the sides. Move the trapezius, softening the muscle and moving the skin, towards the waist. Repeat this pose after parivrtta adho mukha virasana, number 8.



fig 1.7a

TIME: Two to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Allow the brain to rest towards the forehead and the forehead to rest on the forearms. With the chin up, allow the lobes of the brain to descend to the brain stem. Relax the muscles of the face, soften the eyes, and release the neck completely. Move the trapezius away from the neck. Broaden the shoulders by widening the collarbones. Lengthen the sides of the torso, navel, and pubis. Release the inner groins. Observe the energetic points learned in supta parsva padangusthasana: inner heels, inner knees, inner upper thighs, sides of the pubis, navel, line of the breasts, and the optic nerve center of the eyes. Connect the extension and alignment between these points. Focus on these points and allow the abdomen to spread to the sides and rest completely.

BENEFITS: Relaxation deepens as the lower back lengthens and broadens. The abdomen rests, the mind becomes quiet, and the inward focus becomes more profound.



fig 1.7b



fig 1.7c



8. Parivrtta Adho Mukha Virasana - revolved downward facing hero pose

PROPS: One to two folded blankets under the buttocks, one to two bolsters to support the torso, and a small folded blanket to support the side of the head (1.8a). Alternatively, a chair and blanket may be used to support the torso (1.8b). This pose may be effective for headache and migraine. In the case of headache, extend the arms to the side on a setubandha bench (1.8c) or stacked bolsters (1.8d). For otitis media, ringing in the ear, place only the affected ear on the bolster when turning to the left or right. For example, if the left ear is affected, the left ear is placed down on the bolster despite turning to the left (1.8e). Parivrtta adho mukha swastikasana also has these variations, which will only be depicted here.



fig 1.8a



fig 1.8b



POSITION NOTES: In the case of severe backache, this pose may not be comfortable. In that case, eliminate it and proceed to the next pose. Touch the big toes together. Separate the knees to the distance of the outer sides of the torso. The front of the torso should not be caved in, nor the back rounded. If that is the case, add another blanket or bolster. Rest the side of the head so that the ear is parallel to the floor. If the ears are not parallel to the blanket, add another blanket. Repeat the previous pose, adho mukha virasana, number 7, after this pose.

TIME: One to two minutes per side, turning to the left side first, followed by turning to the right side.

ACTIONS: On the left side, extend and elongate the right side of the torso with the extension of the right arm. Use the leverage of the left arm, bent at the elbow, to raise the left side of the torso up to revolve the front chest from right to left. Release the right side of the spinal muscles away from the spine, down to the side of the torso. Re-establish the focus on the uterus and ovaries gained from the previous poses. Along with the action of the torso, lengthen the right side of the uterus and energetically revolve it from right to left.

BENEFITS: Lower backache is reduced. Tension on the ligaments supporting the uterus in the pelvis is released. Tightness of the neck and shoulders is lessened. Pressure is reduced in the head, especially the ears and jaw.





fig 1.8c

fig 1.8d



fig 1.8c



9. Adho Mukha Swastikasana - downward facing well-being pose

PROPS: Two folded blankets under the buttocks. One to two bolsters to support the torso, small folded blanket to support the forearms/forehead.

POSITION NOTES: Cross the right leg in first, then the left under the right. Move the bolster close in to the legs so that it is fully supporting the abdomen and chest. If the back is rounded, add another bolster for the torso or another blanket under the buttocks. Go to pose number 10 without changing the cross of the legs. This pose is repeated after parivrtta adho mukha swastikasana, with the left leg crossed first, then, without changing the cross, do parivrtta adho mukha swastikasana, number 10, again.

TIME: Two to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Once again, allow the back of the head/brain to rest towards the forehead. Soften the facial and neck muscles. If depression is a concern, support the chin as in adho mukha virasana. Relax the muscles of the face and neck completely. Move the trapezium away from the neck and broaden the collarbones. Turn the inner upper arms to the outer upper arms to broaden the shoulders and chest more completely. Lengthen the sides of the torso, navel, and pubis. Relax the legs downward, especially the inner groins. Remain quiet inside.

BENEFITS: The lower back lengthens, allowing the body and mind to rest completely.



fig 1.9



10. Parivrtta Adho Mukha Swastikasana - revolved downward facing well-being pose

PROPS: Two folded blankets under the buttocks. One to two bolsters to support the torso, small folded blanket to support the side of the head.

POSITION NOTES: After bending forward in adho mukha swastikasana, with the right leg crossed in first and the left crossed under the right, without changing the cross of the legs, do the revolved variation of this pose. First move the bolsters at an angle outside the left leg. Sit tall, turn to the left, and reach the right arm to catch the hand on the end of the bolster. The left hand may be placed on the floor with the elbow bent to assist in the rotation of the torso. After repeating to the right side, sit up, release the legs to dandasana, then cross the left leg in first and the right under the left. Repeat adho mukha swastikasana (9) bending forward on the bolster. Then go to the left, then the right in parivrtta adho mukha swastikasana once again.

TIME: One to two minutes each side.

ACTIONS: See parivrtta adho mukha virasana, number 8.

BENEFITS: Release of any residual backache occurs, as the side extension of this variation is deeper than in parivrtta adho mukha virasana because of greater resistance from the opposite side.

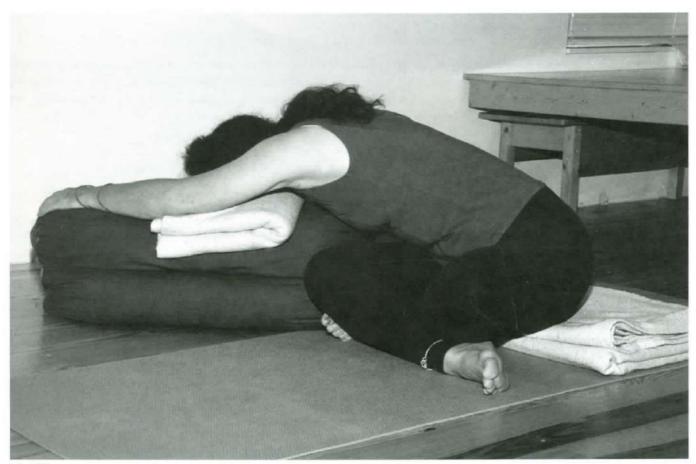


fig 1.10



11. Parvatasana – mountain pose

PROPS: One small-folded blanket on top of a double-folded blanket placed at a wall.

POSITION NOTES: If padmasana legs are not possible, skip to number 12, with swastikasana legs. First cross the right leg over the left, then the left leg over the right. Once the legs are in padmasana, if the knees are higher than the pelvis, add more height under the buttocks. Once the legs are in position and before extending the arms, bend forward and place both hands on the floor with straight arms and concave back (1.11a). Then, scoot the buttocks closer to the wall. Maintain the concave back position by taking one hand at a time under the buttock flesh to widen it, as it gets closer to the wall (1.11b). Slowly sit upright without stooping the chest, bringing the outer corners of the shoulders to touch the wall (1.11c). The sacrum should be wedged into the wall (1.11d). Interlock the fingers with the right index finger over the left first. Repeat this procedure on the other side with the left leg crossed over the right first and the left index finger interlocked on top of the right. Touch the tips of the thumbs together, Maintain the interlock, especially on the little finger side of the hand (1.11e).

TIME: Twenty to thirty seconds each side.

ACTIONS: Press the feet firmly on the thighs. Extend the inner heels. Desend the thighs, but lift the outer shins up to the ceiling. Strongly raise the sides of the chest and the outer line of the breast upward. Pacify the head, neck, abdomen, and inner upper thighs. If the arms do not straighten fully at the elbows, it is better to lower the arms away from the wall to straighten the elbows, then work the straight arms toward the wall, not necessarily touching the wall if the elbows are bending again. Move the trapezius down. Lift the biceps up and armpits up. Move the triceps and shoulders down. Bring the tops of the shoulder blades into the body. Lift the sides of the chest.

BENEFITS: After doing adho mukha virasana, swastikasana, and their parivrtta variations, and before continuing with the forward extensions, this pose creates more space in the whole of the abdominal region. With abdominal tension released by the effects of the previous poses, the organs are now lifted inward towards the spine. A nice, toned feeling is experienced that can be maintained throughout the rest of the forward bending actions. If padmasana legs were done, skip to number 13.







fig 1.11b





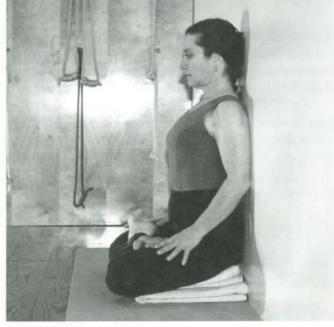


fig 1.11c



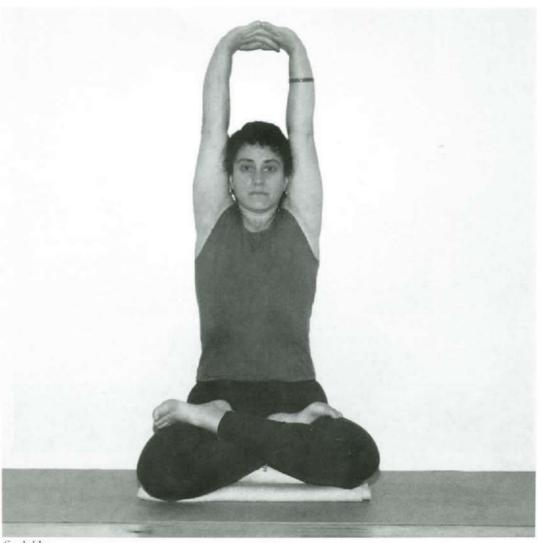


fig 1.11c



12. Parvatasana - mountain pose variation

PROPS: As in the previous pose.

POSITION NOTES: As in the previous pose, but the legs are crossed in swastikasana. First cross the right leg in, and then place the left under the right.

TIME, ACTION, BENEFITS: As for number 11.

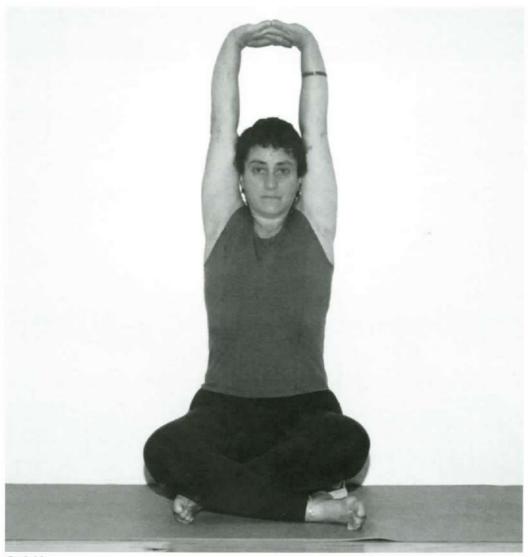


fig 1.12



13. Janu Sirsasana - head of the knee pose

PROPS: Two folded blankets under the buttocks, bolster across the straight leg shin to support the head (1.13a). For a greater broadening of the shoulders and chest hold the hands to a slanting plank beyond the foot (1.13b). For those unable to maintain a concave back position, or women in the stage of perimenopause, use the support of a chair and bolster (1.13c). In the case of stiffness, a second bolster vertical to the torso may be added along with a blanket for the head (1.13d). For those with depression, raise the head by supporting the chin with a block (1.13e) and look forward. If knee pain is present in the bent leg, place a block between the foot and the straight leg thigh, a rope behind the back of the bent knee, and/or support the knee with a block or blanket (1.13f). Follow the appropriate option for the entire sequence of forward bend poses (through number 17).

POSITION NOTES: Even if the head easily rests on the bolster with the back extended, try the support of the chair as well and observe which variation you find more restful.

TIME: One to two minutes each side, starting with the left leg straight.



fig 1.13a



fig 1.13b



fig 1.13c



ACTIONS: Rest the back of the head towards the forehead. Soften the mouth cavity by dropping the lower jaw away from the ears and resting the tongue away from the upper palate. Soften the facial muscles and release the neck and throat. Lengthen and widen the chest by moving the sternum forward towards the chin; descend the back chest at the dorsal region towards the floor. Widen the clavicles and release the trapezius away from the back of the head. Let go any remaining tension in the abdomen. Extend the inner leg of the straight leg from the inner groin to the inner heel. Descend the outer thigh of the bent knee leg and then revolve the lower abdomen and navel from that side to the straight leg side.

BENEFITS: The previous poses release abdominal cramping and other menstrual tensions allowing the flow to be less uncomfortable. Forward bends generally increase circulation into the pelvis and lower extremities. Thus, any cramping of the legs and/or swelling of the shins, ankles, or feet, may be reduced. The bent knee in janu sirsasana opens the hips. The uterus discharges the menstrual flow optimally, with little or no cramping. Abdominal organs are toned, passively, without tension, and the balance of the intestinal system is restored. The downward nature of the head rests the mind completely. Those with a problem of scanty flow may find the forward bends release and improve the flow.



fig 1.13d



fig 1.13e



fig 1.13f



14. Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana - three limbs facing one foot western side of the body intense pose

PROPS: Two or three folded blankets under the straight leg buttock (1.14a), or a bolster for the buttocks and a chair and bolster on top if the legs and hips are very stiff (1.14b). Support the head and torso as described in janu sirsasana.

POSITION NOTES: Add more height, such as a bolster under the straight leg buttock, if the virasana leg knee or foot is uncomfortable, and/or to centralize the torso. Use a chair with a bolster on the seat to support the head for the back to lengthen. Both thighs are aligned parallel to each other and the knees are even from the hips.

TIME: One to two minutes each side, starting with the left leg straight.

ACTIONS: Spread the center of the chest to the sides. Widen the navel from the center to the sides. Center the extended leg heel, and descend it to the floor. Lengthen and spread the toes. Extend the inner leg to the foot. Continue the extension of the inner leg by extending the inner heel and big toe mound away from you. Pull the kneecap up to the thigh and descend the knee and thigh to the floor. Descend the bent leg foot, knee, and thigh to the floor. Lengthen the front of the bent leg thigh to the knee and move the shin to the ankle. Descend the inner shin bone to the floor and the outer shin into the inner shin. Continue to focus on the quietness and softness inside.

BENEFITS: After the revolving action of the abdomen in janu sirsasana, the widening of the abdomen here tones the organs in a centralized position. The virasana position of the leg improves circulation and relieves swelling or cramping in the legs and feet.



fig 1.14a



fig 1.14b



15. Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana - balf bound lotus western intense pose

PROPS: Two folded blankets under both buttocks. Support the head and torso as in number 13. If the legs cannot do padmasana, repeat janu sirsasana (13).

POSITION NOTES: The chest should extend over the foot so that the foot is not pressing the ribs (1.15a). The foot should not go beyond the outside of the straight leg. If pain is present in the knee of the padmasana leg, add more height under the buttocks and support the knee with a block or blanket. Additionally, a rope may be placed at the back of the padmasana knee as in janu sirsasana (1.15b).

TIME: One to two minutes per side, starting with the left leg straight and the right leg in padamasana, then the right leg straight and the left leg in padmasana.

ACTIONS: Extend the straight leg from the inner thigh to the inner heel. Tighten the kneecap and firm the thigh towards the bone. Open the back of the inner knee towards the floor. Extend the heel of the padmasana foot into the abdomen. Descend the padmasana leg towards the floor. At the same time, lift the outer shin of the padmasana leg away from the floor, and extend the outer thigh to the knee. All the actions are to be done with a soft abdomen. Soften the facial muscles and neck. Widen the collarbones and release the trapezius away from the ears.

BENEFITS: This posture deeply tones the abdominal organs and may further balance the digestive system.



fig 1.15a



fig 1.15b



16. Marichyasana I – sage Marichi pose

PROPS: Two folded blankets under both buttocks; head and torso support as in number 13.

POSITION NOTES: If the hands are not able to clasp together behind the back (1.16a), either hold the foot (1.16b), or use a slanting plank or chair as described in janu sirsasana, number 13. Align the heel of the bent knee foot with the center of the same thigh to allow more space for the abdomen.

TIME: One to two minutes per side, starting with the left leg straight, then the right leg.

ACTIONS: In this posture, a tendency to use the abdominal muscles to bend forward should be avoided by softening the abdomen, and instead, press the heel of the bent leg and move the knee forward. Lift the outer thigh of the bent leg. Release the side of the torso that faces the bent leg. Continue to lengthen the extended leg.

BENEFITS: The intestines, especially the ascending, descending, and transverse colon, are massaged and toned.



fig 1.16a



fig 1.16b



17. Paschimottanasana – western intense pose

PROPS: As in number 16.

POSITION NOTES: If necessary, use more support under the buttocks and/or the head, as both legs are straight and bending forward may be more difficult. This pose may also be done with legs hip-width.

TIME: One to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Center the heels down as you tighten the kneecaps and thighs towards the floor. Extend the inner legs from the inner groins towards the inner feet. Extend the outer feet towards the hips. Press the inner shinbones firm to the floor. Move the outer ankles and shinbones in towards the center line between the legs. Open the backs of the inner knees to the outer knees. Descend the skin of the back of the knees to the floor. Move the inner upper thighs to the outer thighs, resisting this action at the outer heads of the femurs. They should not move out. Extend the skin of the outer thighs back. Lengthen the sides of the torso from the hips to the armpits. Move the outer armpit forward. Spread the chest from the center to the sides by bending the elbows up and out to the sides and widen the collarbones. Move the sternum forward to the chin and the chin away from the sternum. Soften the abdominal region. Allow the abdomen to spread from the center to the sides. Lengthen the sides of the pubis forward. Soften the facial and neck muscles. Allow your thoughts to penetrate inward. Observe the energetic lines on both sides of the body from the inner edges of the heels to the optic nerve of the eyes. Skillfully, make any adjustment necessary to enhance their alignment and balance. Observe the balance of the ovaries around the uterus. Move the tailbone inward without disturbing the buttock bones, and then extend the anterior spine up towards the head. The posterior spine extends from the head back down towards the tailbone.

BENEFITS: The legs placed evenly together with the head resting promotes a balance and quietness to body and mind. In addition to the anatomical and physiological benefits described above in the forward extension poses, paschimottanasana brings about a deep inner awareness, quietness, and penetration to the consciousness, intellect, and bliss sheaths (layers of the body and mind).



fig 1.17



18. Parsva Upavistha Konasana - side seated angle pose

PROPS: Two blankets under the buttocks, bolster horizontal on the shin to support the forehead or a chair as in previous poses.

POSITION NOTES: Flexible women should use caution in how wide the legs spread apart. The hormone relaxin increases during menses and flexibility is enhanced. Women are more susceptible to pulling a muscle or ligament during this time. Place the legs somewhere between 90-160°, a comfortable distance apart.

TIME: One to three minutes per side, bending over the left leg first, then the right leg.

ACTIONS: The leg you are not bending over, extend more. Maintain the back of the thigh and buttock on the floor. Do not allow it to lift up as you revolve the pelvis, lower abdomen, and shoulders toward the leg over which you are bending. Centralize the torso over the leg. Extend the sides of the torso evenly by moving the side of the rib cage that tends to move away from the spine back into the spine. Move the ribs that tend to come into the spine, away from the spine.

BENEFITS: The open angle of the legs increases circulation into the region of the pelvis and the reproductive organs are nourished. Circulation of the legs and feet is improved.



fig 1.18



19. Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana (with vertical support) - downward facing seated angle pose

PROPS: Blankets under the buttocks, one to two bolsters to support the torso, a folded blanket to support the forehead. A chair and bolster may be used (see 1.13c, page 23).

POSITION NOTES: Support the abdomen and chest completely on the bolster. Go to the next pose with the bolster horizontal. Continue through baddha konasana then dandasana to come out.

TIME: One to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Center the heels down and extend the toes up. Extend the inner legs. Widen the buttock bones and extend them towards the heels. Move the outer sides of the feet towards the outer femur heads, the whole outer sides of the legs should move to the inner legs. Keep the chest completely open by making sure that the base of the sternum bone is extended towards the top of the sternum and spread the sternum from the center to the sides. Rest the brain cells towards the forehead. Observe how the whole of the abdomen rests.

BENEFITS: As in the previous postures, circulation is increased in the pelvis, legs, and feet. The abdomen softens completely as it rests on the bolster.



fig 1.19



20. Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana (with horizontal support) - downward facing seated angle pose

PROPS: After completing the previous pose, practitioners who are able to bend forward easily may go deeper into the pose by placing the bolster horizontally, between the legs, as high up as possible towards the pubis. Those who do not bend easily may skip to the next pose.

POSITION NOTES: Do not do this variation if the bolster does not come all the way in to support the abdomen. Go through baddha konasana then dandasana to come out.

TIME: One to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Extend the legs as described in number 19. Allow the abdomen and chest to round over the bolster without creating any tension. Maintain the inward focus. With the bolster horizontal, observe how the organs inside the pelvis go back towards the spine.

BENEFITS: In the previous variation with the bolster vertical, you are able to rest the abdomen completely. The abdomen has rested and now the organs get toned into place.

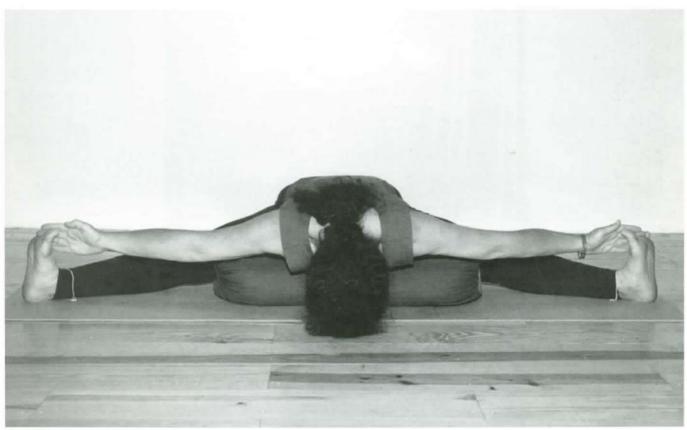


fig 1.20



21. Upavistha Konasana – seated angle pose

PROPS: Bolster under the buttocks, inner edges of feet touching a wall or platform, lower rope around thoracic (1.21a), or arms supported up on platform or chair (1.21b). You may also hold a chair, pulling it into the thighs to keep the legs open (1.21c).

POSITION NOTES: Sit exactly on the center of the perineum, neither leaning backwards toward the anal mouth, nor forwards toward the vaginal mouth. Avoid tilting the pelvis forward and hardening the lower back at the region of the kidneys. The pubis should be perpendicular to the floor, not tilting forward. The four corners of the top of the pelvis should be aligned with the four corners of the bottom of the rib cage. If backache is present, sit against a wall on a bolster, holding belts to the feet (1.21d).

TIME: One to five minutes.



fig 1.21a



fig 1.21b



ACTIONS: Center the heels down and the toes up. Lengthen the inner legs towards the feet, the inner edges of the feet away from the inner legs. Extend the outer edges of the feet and legs towards the hips. Move the outer shins inward to the bone and the inner shins move downward to the floor. Spread the buttock bones towards the heels. Without disturbing the seat, balance on the front of the buttock bones and the center of the perineum. Move the tailbone in to the pubis, then lift the anterior spine. As the front of the sacrum bone lifts, lift the skin on the front of the pelvis up and release the skin of the sacrum down. Move the top of the buttocks down and spread them away from the sacrum. Then, maintaining the direction of the buttocks, tighten the outer upper thighs inward to the head of the femur bones and, at the same time, move the skin of the outer thighs down. Move the inner upper thighs inward and downward: at the same time, lift the skin of the inner thighs up. Lift the thoracic/dorsal spine. To open the chest, use the resistance created by the hands holding the rope, or the arms pressurizing down on the platform or chair, without creating tension. Move the biceps back to the triceps. Lift the sides of the chest. Observe the quietness of the abdominal cavity. Bring your consciousness to focus inside, to the basin of the pelvis. Spread it; open it, from side to side, and from front to back. Centralize yourself. Exist everywhere, illuminating the interior space.

BENEFITS: The inner and outer thighs, perpendicular from the floor, creates a "standing" support for the body. the frame of the torso is opened and space for the organs is created. Working from the external layers to the internal layers, the mind becomes focused and concentrated inward; the practitioner may experience a peaceful state.



fig 1.21c



fig 1.21d



22. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: Sit on the bolster, as in 1.21.

POSITION NOTES: From upavistha konasana hold the hands on the inside of the knees and bend them at the same time to bring the soles of the feet together and the toes curled back on the wall. You may need to adjust the bolster closer to the wall than it was in upavistha konasana. This position may be done at a rope wall (1.22a), platform (1.22b), or chair (1.22c). You may place two bricks between the shins and the wall for a greater pelvic opening (1.22d). If backache is present, sit against a wall on a bolster, holding a belt around the feet (1.22e).

TIME: One to five minutes.



fig 1.22a



Actions: Spread the buttock bones. Press the heels together, evenly; lengthen the inner groins to the inner knees. At the same time, move the outer thighs in towards the pelvis and the outer femur bones up towards the ceiling. The outer shins lift towards the ceiling, into the bones. The outer ankles also work inward to the bones (away from the floor). Roll the inner thighs and shins from the inner leg to the outer leg. Move the inner knees to the outer knees. Work from the periphery to the core as in upavistha konasana and, once again, illuminate the space inside.

BENEFITS: Opposite to upavistha konasana, the inner and outer thighs are parallel to the floor, the basin of the pelvis is opened and the organic body lifts.



fig 1.22b

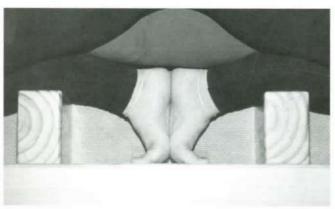


fig 1.22d



fig 1.22c



fig 1.22e



23. Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana - two-feet reverse staff pose

PROPS: Viparita dandasana bench to support the body and a bolster and rolled blanket to support the head and neck (1.23a). Have a folded sticky mat under the area of the thighs to be ready to move into dwi pada viparita dandasana with baddha konasana legs (described below in number 24). If a bench is not available, skip to number 26, page 49 to do the pose on a chair. Read through number 25 as the poses flow from this one.

position notes: The overhead arm position may cause numbness in stiff shoulders, in which case, interlock the fingers and rest the hands onthe abdomen (1.23b). The apex of the pose is the chest, not the pelvis. If the back aches, support the feet with a bolster (1.23c). You may also belt the tops of the thighs. If backache continues with the added bolster and belt, see that the chest is open and at the apex of the pose. The pelvis should gravitate more towards the feet than the head. If opening the chest does not correct the backache, then do the pose with bent knees. The head is to be supported on a bolster and blanket for those with unmedicated high blood pressure or a tendency towards hot flashes. Those who do not have these concerns and those who have depression may have the head back, unsupported (1.23d). If the neck aches or a thyroid condition is present, place a rolled blanket behind the neck (1.23e). In the case of depression the eyes are open. Otherwise, the eyes may be closed. For anxiety and/or tension, a headwrap may be used (see Chapter 2, under headwrap). This applies to all the supine poses.

TIME: Three to ten minutes.



fig 1.23a



fig 1.23b



ACTIONS: As normal exhalation occurs, allow the sides of the navel to recede, lengthen, and broaden. Let loose the head and neck to lengthen them away from the shoulders. Soften the lower jaw away from the ear.

BENEFITS: This pose demarcates the beginning of the back extensions. The forward bending spreads the consciousness internally. While in this pose, tensions are completely rolled away by the lengthening and releasing that occurs. The abdominal and pelvic organs are decompressed, and toxins are expunged. The diaphragm releases its grip on the abdomen. The front body rests to the back body. The chest remains fully opened and benefits the heart, liver, stomach, spleen, gall bladder, and pancreas. Optimal breathing also occurs with the opening of the chest. Toxins expelled through the respiratory system are exchanged for fresh nutrition to the lungs. This pose is excellent for those suffering from depression, especially when the head is back.



fig 1.23c



fig 1.23d



fig 1.23c



24. Dwi Pada Viparita Baddha Konasana - two feet reverse bound angle pose

PROPS: Viparita dandasana bench with a sticky mat on the bench to keep the feet from slipping. If the hip/thigh region is uncomfortable, support the outer thighs with blankets.

TIME: Two to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Allow the basin of the pelvis to open from side to side and the abdomen to recede completely to the back of the body. Recede the abdomen to further with each exhalation, as in the previous pose with straight legs.

BENEFITS: The area of the lower abdomen becomes very soft in this pose. Lengthening of the torso and abdomen, as in the previous pose, is enhanced.



fig 1.24



25. Dwi Pada Viparita Padmasana - two feet reverse lotus pose

PROPS: As in number 24. Have a bolster within reach to place under the thighs if they don't reach the bench. A belt, for looping around the thighs above the knees, to keep the legs from slipping apart.

POSITION NOTES: A regular practice of full padmasana is necessary in order to do this pose. A sharp pain in the knee, groin, or hip is not appropriate. If it is not possible to place the legs in padmasana comfortably, skip this variation and proceed to 27. A bolster may be placed under the padmasana legs if they do not rest on the bench (1.25a). Adjust the belt encircling the knees so that the strap pulls the knee that is on top, towards the center. Also, have the end of the belt accessible to pull the legs up and release them when coming out of the pose (1.25b). To come down from the bench, bend the knees, and slide down to the head, onto the floor, landing on the buttocks (1.25c, d, and e). Continue to number 27 after completing this pose.

TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each side.

ACTIONS: Release the inner groins. Horizontally and longitudinally, widen and elongate the navel. Soften the abdomen, head, and neck. Relax the facial muscles, completely.

BENEFITS: Elongation from the inner groins to the inner walls of the pelvis, through the upper abdomen, is a nice strong sensation, and results in complete abatement of any residual cramps. This deep extension is also very good for women suffering from endometriosis, ovarian cysts, or scar tissue from surgical procedures or past infections of the region of the pelvis as well as the kidneys.



fig 1.25a



fig 1.25c



fig 1.25d



fig 1.25b



fig 1.25e



26. Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana - on the chair

PROPS: A chair to support the torso, block to support the feet, belt to tie the top of the thighs together, bolster, and one to two blankets for supporting the top of the head.

POSITION NOTES: The thoracic/dorsal region of the upper back, at the bottom of the shoulder blades, is curved around the front edge of the seat of the chair, not the waist or lower back (1.26a). If the back aches, place the feet on the floor and do with bent knees (1.26b). The hands may hold the sides of the back rest of the chair, with the elbows bent below the seat of the chair. As in the variations on the bench, the fingers may interlock and rest on the abdomen, or extend over the head holding the elbows. Do not do the latter variation until some time has been spent in the pose to open the chest fully.

TIME, ACTION, AND BENEFITS: See number 23.



fig 1.26a



fig 1.26b



27. Supta Virasana - supine hero pose

PROPS: Place one to two bolsters for the length of the spine. A small folded blanket for supporting the back of the head and neck. If the supine position is irritating to the back, use a simhasana box with a bolster, with the buttocks supported by the bottom slant of the box. If a box is not available, add more height to the bolsters with folded blankets. Add support such as blocks, bolsters or blankets under the hands and/or arms if more height is used so that the arms don't hang down. If the knees are uncomfortable, place ropes at the back of each knee, and/or support the buttock and torso higher (1.27a).

POSITION NOTES: Before lying back, while sitting in virasana, place the hands, cup-shaped, behind you on the bolster with the fingertips pointing forward and the elbows bending back. Lift the chest. Without throwing the head back, lie down with a lifted chest. The thighs point forward. In the case of depression, do not support the back of the head with a blanket in this pose and the following supine poses.

TIME: Two to ten minutes.



fig 1.27a





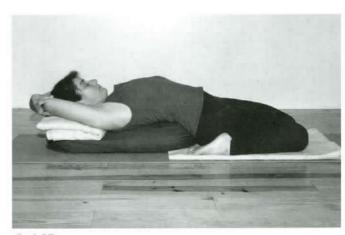


fig 1.27c



ACTIONS: For the first minute extend the arms over the head to lengthen the sides of the torso (1.27b). During the second minute hold the elbows, close the eyes and rest (1.27c). For those who can hold the pose longer, during the third minute bring the arms to the floor approximately 45 degrees away from the torso. Turn the backs of the hands on the floor (1.27d) Rotate the inner upper arms to the outer upper arms to lift the inner shoulder blades up into the body and release the outer shoulder blades down, along the sides of the bolster, to the floor. With the eyes remaining closed, gaze deeper inward to the center of the chest. The last minute you may rest your hands on the abdomen with the fingers interlocked (1.27e). Now, look deeper inward to the navel. Allow the sacrum to release away from the waist. Spread the bottom of the buttocks to the outer thighs. Don't grip the legs unnecessarily. Allow the inner groins to lengthen towards the inner knees. Let go all tensions. Maintain these actions, then lift the tailbone to the pubis without gripping anywhere. Let the sides of the pubis elongate. Allow the abdomen to soften. The places that tend to become hard, make them soft.

BENEFITS: The abdomen and mind completely rest. Blood pressure is normalized. The openness of the chest improves breathing. Abdominal cramps are alleviated with this pose. The release of the diaphragm helps those with asthma. The arms overhead lengthen the body. The arms to the side widens the torso.





fig 1.27d

fig 1.27c



28. Matsyasana - fish pose

PROPS: Bolster and blanket support as above. A belt for looping around the thighs, above the knees, to keep the legs from slipping apart (1.28a). If full padmasana is not possible, do bhadrasana (auspicious pose), with one leg in padmasana and one leg under the padmasana leg in swastikasana. In this case, loop the belt around the thighs in a figure 8 (1.28b). If neither variation is possible, skip this pose and do number 29.

POSITION NOTES: Cross the right leg first. Orient the tail of the belt to pull the top knee in to the centerline. If the lower back aches, add a blanket under the buttocks to reduce the curvature of the lumbar spine or place only the thoracic chest on the bolster (1.28c). Repeat the arm positions shown in supta virasana. Skip the next pose, supta swastikasana, if you were able to do this pose, and go to number 30.

TIME: Two to ten minutes each side.

ACTIONS: Bring your attention to the inner upper thighs. Observe the breath that may exist there. Allow the exhalations to release and lengthen the groins completely.

BENEFITS: The opening of the hips increases circulation into the pelvis. The opening of the pelvis by the deep clongation of the groins allows a profound release of the abdomen. When the abdomen releases at a deep level, the mind becomes very quiet.

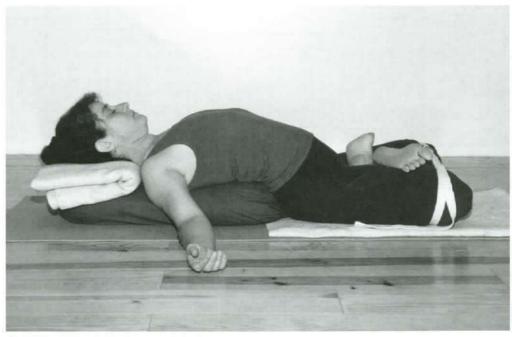


fig 1.28a

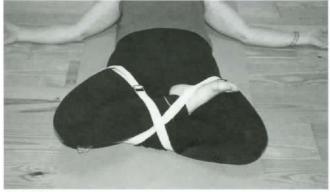


fig 1.28b



fig 1.28c



29. Supta Swastikasana – supine well-being pose

PROPS: Bolster and blanket support as in number 28. A belt will not be necessary.

POSITION NOTES: If matsyasana was practiced, skip this pose and go to number 30. Have the legs simply crossed. Add a blanket under the buttocks if the lower back is arching too much on the bolster and/or lift the tailbone up. Repeat the arm positions shown in supta virasana, number 27.

TIME: Two to ten minutes each side.

ACTIONS: As in number 28.

BENEFITS: The cross of the legs in swastikasana is less intense than in matsyasana. However, the thighs relax and the abdomen is released from the inner grip of muscles so the mind rests.

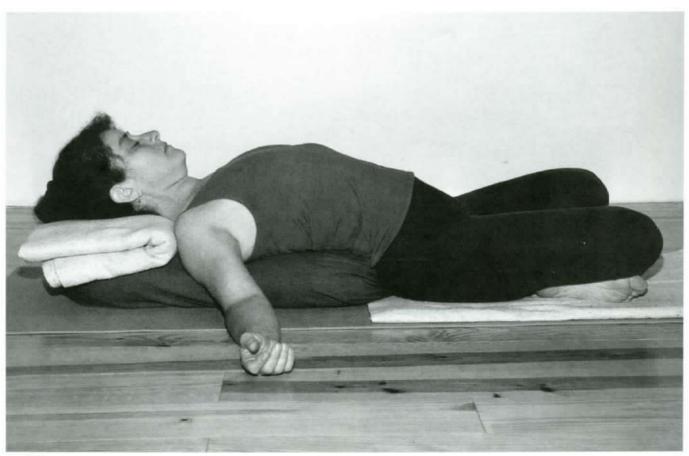


fig 1.29



30. Supta Baddha Konasana – supine bound angle pose

PROPS: Bolster and blanket support as in number 28, with a belt for the legs (1.30a). Use blankets under the thighs if the legs/hips are uncomfortable (1.30b).

POSITION NOTES: Make sure the belt is low on the back at the tailbone and low on the sides of the hips so that it holds the thighs down. Strongly pull the strap of the belt so it is tight. The sacrum is not to climb up on the bolster; specifically the sacral skin should release down, with the tailbone up towards the pubis. Repeat the arm positions shown in supta virasana, number 27.

TIME: Two to ten minutes.

ACTIONS: In the beginning, when extending the arms overhead, as described in 27, supta virasana, press the heels and lengthen the inner thighs to the inner knees to achieve a good opening of the pelvis. Then change arm positions and rest; soften the abdomen, neck, and head. Deepen the eye sockets and release the eyes to the back of the head. With eyes closed, look inward to the center of the chest. Observe the inner stability of the body.

BENEFITS: The basin of the pelvis is really opened, and increased circulation to the reproductive organs occurs. When the body and mind rest, an inner stability and quietness is achieved.



fig 1.30a



fig 1.30b



31. Setubandha Sarvangasana – bridge formation all limbs pose

props: Setubandha sarvangasana bench with a viparita karani box, a sticky mat and blanket on top, bolster for the shoulders, belt for the tops of the thighs (1.31a). Add blankets under the shoulders and head if the shoulders don't reach the bolster. Support the feet higher with a bolster or blankets if the lower back is uncomfortable. Alternatively, four bolsters stacked two by two in a train (1.31b), or any combination of bolster and blanket support to the middle back, lower back, legs, and feet, including feet supported at the wall. In case of depression, roll a blanket behind the back of the neck and allow the forehead to be lower than the chin (1.31c). Belt the upper thighs. Read through number 34 as the poses flow from this one.

POSITION NOTES: The chest has to be fully supported and open. Do not sink off the bench; this is not block setubandha. Do not make the sacrum the apex or fulcrum of the pose. The chest is the apex and is to fully round over the end of the support. The clavicles should remain broad, from the center to the sides. Either have the back of the hands to the sides on the floor, or resting, one on top of the other, overhead on the bolsters. Do not hold the elbows as that arm position will shorten the clavicles and sink the center of the chest. The back of the head should lie parallel to the floor on the blanket. Make sure the chin is not lifting up.

TIME: Two to five minutes.

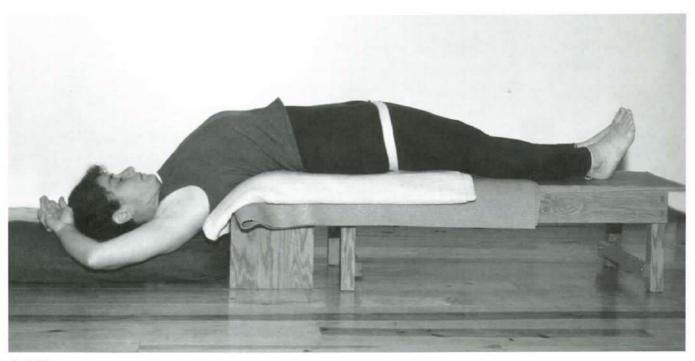


fig 1.31a



ACTIONS: With eyes closed, soften the facial muscles and look inward to the center of the chest. Observe the area inside the chest, how the breath moves. Gently guide the breath to the side rib region, widening the sternum bone. Soften the neck and release the abdomen completely. Allow the body and mind to completely surrender to the quietness within.

BENEFITS: B.K.S. Iyengar has stated in the film "Ultimate Freedom" (Roberts, 1996) that this pose is a boon to mankind. I'd like to add that it is a boon to womankind! All the systems (cardiovascular, endocrine, musculoskeletal, nervous, respiratory, and digestive) are supported and balanced in this pose. The expansion of the chest creates space and an optimal environment for the heart, spleen, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, lungs, and diaphragm. The kidneys and adrenal glands are massaged. Abdominal organs rest to the back body. The sacrum is aligned and the legs are resting. Toxins are removed from the muscles and tissues through the bloodstream to the liver and metabolized further to the kidneys to be excreted later as urine. The position of the head with the eyes looking inward cools the brain, brings the consciousness to rest in the heart, and supports a thoughtful silence. Emotional instability, depression, low energy, low morale, and loss of confidence are abated.



fig 1.31b



fig 1.31c



32. Setubandha Baddha Konasana – bridge formation bound angle pose

PROPS: As in number 31, with belted baddha konasana legs. You may place blankets under the thighs (1.32f).

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, bend the knees and loosen the belt buckle to make a big loop. Slide the belt up to the tailbone. Bring the soles of the feet together and the kness out to the side. Take the feet inside the belt, and knees out to the side. Tighten the belt to the desired position for holding the legs in baddha konasana as depicted in figures 1.3a-e.

TIME: One to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Allow the sacrum to extend towards the heels and the pelvis to broaden. Close the eyes and look inward.

BENEFITS: The opening of the pelvis increases circulation to nourish the region of the reproductive organs.



fig 1.32a

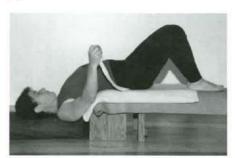


fig 1.32b



fig 1.32c



fig 1.32d



fig 1.32e

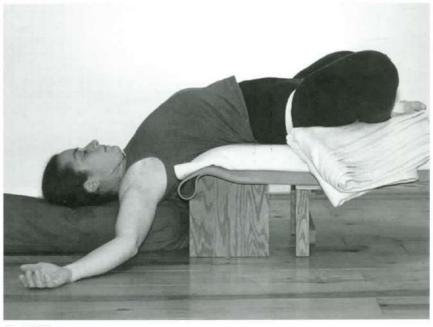


fig 1.32f



33. Setubandha Padmasana – bridge formation lotus pose

PROPS: As in number 32. Release the legs from baddha konasana, and use the belt around the lower thighs above the knees to hold the legs in padmasana. You may add a bolster under the knees so the legs don't hang in the air.

POSITION NOTES: First cross the right leg over the left, then the left over the right. Then change the sides, crossing the left leg first. If padmasana legs are not possible, skip this pose and go to number 34.

TIME: One to two minutes each side.

ACTIONS: Extend the hips, buttocks, sacrum, and anus towards the legs, the vagina towards the torso.

BENEFITS: In addition to the beneficial effects listed under the previous setubandha sarvangasana poses, this one massages the kidneys and adrenal glands deeply. Scar tissue and ovarian cysts may be eradicated.



fig 1.33



34. Pavana muktasana – wind release pose

PROPS: Setubandha bench set-up as in number 31. Add a blanket on the bolster if more height is needed.

POSITION NOTES: For those who are flexible in the pelvis and hamstring muscles, sit on the end of the bench where the chest was in the previous pose. Facing the bolster, step the feet apart on the floor on each side of the bolster, slightly wider than hip-width. Align the outer sides of the feet parallel to each other and position the knees over the feet. Bend forward and fold the arms, holding the elbows with the hands. Rest the forearms on the bolster/blanket. Rest the head on the forearms (1.34a). For those who are less flexible, sit on the bench turned in the other direction. Place the bolster on the bench and bend forward over the bolster (1.34b).

TIME: Three to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Release the lower back, elongate the inner groins, and rest the head down.

BENEFITS: After doing the back extensions, this position lengthens the lower back, kidneys, and adrenal glands. Lower backache, headache, inner groin pain are relieved.



fig 1.34a



fig 1.34b



35. Savasana – corpse pose

PROPS: A small folded blanket to support the back of the head and neck. Place a bolster across the thighs with a sandbag or plate weight on top of the bolster. Have someone else place the weight if it is more than ten pounds.

POSITION NOTES: Align yourself evenly from the centerline of the body. Spread the legs and feet apart. In the case of backache, spread them a little wider, to the outer edges of your mat. Adjust the arms approximately 45 degrees away from the hips. Turn the inner upper arms to the outer upper arms so that the thumb side of the hand is closer to the floor. Lift the inner edges of the shoulder blades up into the body. Widen the clavicle bones from the center to the sides. Release the outer shoulders down. Lengthen the back of the head and neck away from the shoulders.

TIME: Five to ten minutes.

ACTIONS: Allow the weight to release the thighs, and, in turn, to relax the abdomen. When the abdomen releases, the region of the face may further soften. Release the jaw by softening the chin, the base of the ears, the cheek bones, and the area below the nasal passage. Unclench the teeth, relax the tongue to the lower palette, and allow the mouth cavity to soften completely. Deepen the eye sockets, soften the eyelids, recede the eyes. Look inward and remain thoughtfully silent.

BENEFITS: Lightness, stability, and quietness were created by the series of poses. The sequence of poses has come to an end. The body and mind have been replenished. The time of menstruation has been fully embraced.



fig 1.35



Pictorial Summary of Sequence for Menstruation



1. Adho Mukha Svanasana



2. Uttanasana



3. Utthita Parsva Hasta Padangusthasana



4. Ardha Chandrasana



5. Prasarita Padottanasana



6. Supta Parsva Padangusthasana



7. Adho Mukha Virasana



8. ParivrttaAdho Mukha Virasana



9. Adho Mukha Swastikasana



10. Parivrtta Adho Mukha Swastikasana



11. Parvatasana



12. Parvatasana arms with Swastikasana legs



13. Janu Sirsasana



14. Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana



15. Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana



16. Marichyasana I



17. Paschimottanasana



18. Parsva Upavistha Konasana



19. Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana - with vertical support



20. Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana - with horizontal support





21. Upavistha Konasana



22. Baddha Konasana



23. Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana



24. Dwi Pada Viparita Baddha Konasana



25. Dwi Pada Viparita Padmasana



or 26. Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana



27. Supta Virasana



28. Matsyasana



29. Supta Swastikasana



30. Supta Baddha Konasana



31. Setubandha Sarvangasana



32. Setubandha Baddha Konasana



33. Setubandha Padmasana



34. Pavana Muktasana



35. Savasana



Pranayama Guidelines for Menstruation

Pranayama is best done early in the morning when the sun is rising. The energy of the day is changing from darkness to light. The body rhythm is also changing with the rhythm of the earth. Pranayamic breathing exercises coordinate the body's rhythm to that of the earth. Practicing even five minutes of lying down, balancing the body, quieting the mind, and observing the breath, helps to achieve a feeling of well-being. If practiced for longer periods, inner layers of the consciousness are penetrated and higher states of consciousness may be explored. Have a 30-minute break before asana. Pranayama may also be practiced after the menstrual sequence. However, be sure to have a ten-minute savasana before starting the breathing exercises. Bahya ujjayi (extended exhalations) and/or bahya viloma (interupted extended exhalations) in the supine position shown here are recommended pranayama practices during menses. They are cooling and soothing.



Salamba Savasana - supported corpse pose

PROPS: The base set-up is a bolster for the length of the torso, a blanket under the head, and, if the bolster is very chubby, a blanket under the buttocks (1.36). A slanting plank may be placed under the shoulder blades to open the upper chest more (1.37). A foam square may be placed under the back ribs to lift the chest up higher, and recede the abdomen further down (1.38). The bolster may be moved away from the buttocks and only support the ribs, not the lumbar, to release the abdomen completely away from the chest and to the back body (1.39, page 113). If the eyes are tense, use a head wrap as shown in Chapter 2 under headache (page 113). Eye bags are inappropriate as they put too much pressure on the eyes.

POSITION NOTES: Release the feet apart, with the big toes dropping to the baby toes. If necessary, use the hands to adjust the buttocks away from the waist. Turn the inner upper arms to the outer upper arms. Turn and release the arms in such a way that thumbs are closer to the floor than the small fingers. Move the back chest to the waist. Release the back of the neck and head. Don't harden the chin down, nor lift it up. Look inward to the center of the chest and focus the mind there.

TIME: Five minutes to one hour, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Let loose the inner upper thighs to further relax the legs and feet. Release the muscles of the calves and thighs and allow the bones to rest near to the floor. Rest the pelvis and pubis downward. Soften the abdomen completely to the back body on the normal exhalations. On the normal inhalations, allow the sternum to lift up to the ceiling. Lengthen it from the bottom to the top, and spread it from the center to the sides of the chest. The skin of the front chest should move to the face, while the skin of the back chest moves toward the waist. Release all sides of the neck and relax the throat. Let go the jaw completely by allowing the chin to move toward the neck. Release the lower ears, the cheekbones, and the base of the nasal passage. Soften the mouth cavity completely by relaxing the tongue away from the upper palate to the lower palate. Unclench the teeth, and soften the lower, upper, and outer corners of the lips. Soften the forehead skin from the hairline to the eyebrows. Un-knit the brow and soften the temples. Relax the upper and lower eyelids. Center the eyes, keep them still, and let them recede to the back of the head. Observe if the brain is touching one side of the skull or the other. If that is the case, adjust the head so it is not tilting and the back of the head is resting evenly on the blanket. Release the skin on the back of the head by softening it and broadening it toward each ear. Soften the crease behind the ears and let loose the ears to the floor. Increase the diameter of the ear canal and soften the eardrum inside. Once again, center and recede the eyes to the back of the head and look inward to the center of the chest. Observe the space inside and let your consciousness reside there. Go inside the vastness, remaining silent and watchful. Observe the breath completely, checking everywhere for unnecessary tensions and letting them go.

BENEFITS: Peace and well-being. During menstruation, the supine position is best for quieting the body and mind that may be throbbing inside. The nervous system is soothed. Fear complex is abated.

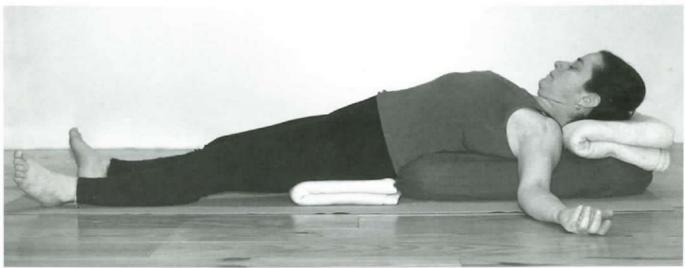


fig 1.36

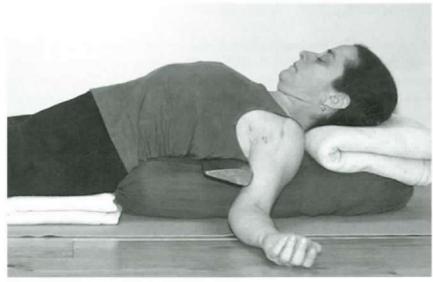


fig 1.37

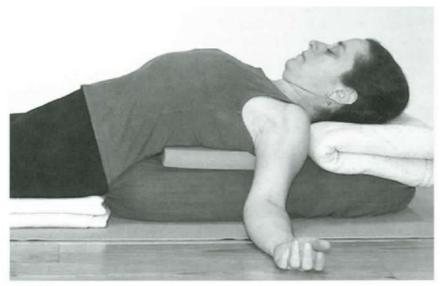


fig 1.38

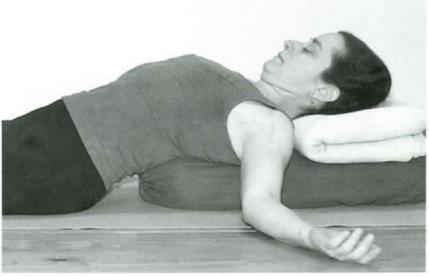


fig 1.39



Chapter 2

Asana Sequences for Irregular Menses

Asana Sequences for Irregular Menses

Women, at any age, may have irregular menstrual periods. The monthly cycle and menstrual flow change from the onset of menarche, through the 20s, 30s, 40s, and beyond. In general, problems with menstruation may be prevented with regular yoga practice. Anecdotally, many students of yoga have reported to their teachers that they no longer cramp or that periods have become more regular in duration and amount of flow. Ideally, if yoga is learned during the teen years, including monthly practice of the menstrual sequence, non-problematic cycles may occur throughout the childbearing years.

During the mid-thirties, production of the hormone progesterone starts to decline. In a sense, this heralds the many gradual changes that progress to the complete cessation of monthly periods, or menopause. In the 40s, these changes may be significantly different as a woman reaches her climacteric period; follicle stimulating, luteinizing, and estrogen hormones gradually shift towards the discontinuance of ovulation and menses. Women who have always had regular periods may find that their cycle and flow undergo significant alteration at this time. Though this may cause some alarm, it is normal.

During the 40s, menstrual flow usually changes in either of two directions—getting lighter or becoming heavier. The time between cycles may get longer, shorter, or even more regular. Periods may become painful, when previously, discomfort was non-existent. Women need to adjust their yoga practices to accommodate these changes. The sequence of asanas for menses, as described in Chapter 1, may no longer be appropriate for women in their 40s.

This chapter provides sequences for menses outside the normal parameters, as well as for normal menstrual changes that occur prior to menopause as described above. Terminology for irregular menses is reviewed as follows. Read through the definitions to determine the appropriate sequence to practice when difficulties are present. Additionally, Volume II of this guide contains further instruction.



Amenorrhea - absence of menstruation. If primary onset is due to a hormone abnormality and menstruation has never occurred, refer to Chapter 4, C, Practice for Balancing Hormones (page 237) and the inversion practice of Chapter 3, page 120. Secondary onset is associated with pregnancy, lactation, strenuous exercise, extreme tension, and/or weight loss/lack of adipose tissue (body fat). Women with this condition may practice the menstrual sequence in Chapter 1 for three to four days once a month, as if they were having a period. The practice may best be coordinated with the phase of the moon when it starts to wax (new moon). The rhythm of this practice and the resulting rested, peaceful feeling would be of great benefit. Additionally, under the guidance of a knowledgeable and experienced teacher, they may focus their yoga practices on circumstances underlying the hormonal imbalance.

Dysmenorrhea - difficult, painful menstruation that may be due to endometriosis, ovarian cysts, uterine fibroids, hormonal imbalance, infection, scar tissue, or anatomical factors. If the discomfort is characterized by diarrhea, cramps, and/or intense, sharp pain in the abdomen, and the sequence in Chapter 1 does not help, practice the sequence for heavy menstruation given in this chapter. Specifically, for nausea, practice the seated postures upavistha konasana, baddha konasana, and dandasana supported in the upright and reclining positions (known as samaashrayi and upaashrayi, respectively; also known as L-shape poses) described under heavy menstruation. As well, a headache sequence follows in this chapter. Often the discomfort occurs before the onset of menses. Chapter 4 includes sequences for moderate to extreme pre-menstrual pain.

Menorrhaggia or hypermenorrhea - heavy, profuse, and/or prolonged bleeding characterized by changing a pad frequently (hourly), passing large clots, or shedding the lining of the uterus for more than eight days. This might be due to natural hormonal changes associated with menopause, the presence of fibroids, or fibroid "seedlings." Due to the excess loss of blood, anemia may develop and may become serious if unchecked and untreated, as the tissues of the body will be compromised by the lack of iron (consult a health care practitioner). However, avoid iron supplementation during menses, as that may increase bleeding. A yoga practice for heavy flow, described in this chapter, effectively alleviates and lessens the discharge of large clots. When menses exceeds ten days, inversions are included in the practice.

Polymenorrhea - cycles less than 26 days, which low progesterone levels may cause. Women in their early childbearing years should practice asanas during menses that may lengthen the next cycle beyond 26 days, described in this chapter. Unless other problems are present, women approaching menopause may practice the sequence in Chapter 1, as shorter cycles are a natural progression to the cessation of menses.

Oligomenorrhea - light, scanty menses—may be due to a dysfunction of the uterus, hormone production, or natural menopausal changes. Refer to the practice below.

Practice for a Light Menstrual Flow

A woman with light, scanty menses should focus her practice on forward bends to encourage and expel the flow. This practice may also be helpful for vaginal dryness at times other than the period. Follow the practice described in Chapter 1 up to, and including, all forward extensions and seated postures. Do not do numbers 23-33. End with paschimottanasana, then savasana.



Practice for a Heavy Menstrual Flow

Supported back extensions are the essence of practice for women with heavy bleeding. These postures generally soften the abdominal area and ease discomfort from the passage of large clots, lighten the heaviness of the abdomen, and may correct the excessive flow to a more manageable level. Most of the poses are specific to aligning the coccyx and base of the pubis parallel to each other. When this is achieved in the supine positions, the sacrum is like a bed upon which the uterus may rest. In the seated postures, the spine supports the uterus instead of the uterus "hanging" heavy from the spine. The large clots are dislodged from the uterine wall with less cramping and pain. Over time, with regular practice of this sequence, working on correctly aligning the coccyx and pubis during the non-menstrual practice, the uterus may acquire a more balanced position, and the flow may become normal. If the flow returns to normal for a few cycles, the sequence described in Chapter 1 may be practiced again.

These same poses are also helpful for a variety of other conditions. Dysfunction of the intestinal system, such as diarrhea, hemorrhoids, colitis (inflammation of the large intestine), irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's, and diverticulitis may also benefit from this practice, especially when acute. For men, prostate enlargement and testicular infection may be improved with the poses described below, although inversions should be added to the sequence (refer to Chapter 3). The poses in this practice would enhance preparation for, and recovery from, the trauma of surgical procedures in the region of the pelvis. Refer to Volume II for further information on this topic.

The sequence that follows consists of four poses, each with two leg positions, upavistha konasana and baddha konasana. According to Geeta Iyengar, they are sister poses. In upavistha konasana, the leg bones are extended and separated. The muscle fibers lengthen to the inner extension of the legs and come in contact with the bone. The buttocks release towards the legs, the right to the right, and the left to the left. You come to be aware of your legs and are able to sense your torso and the extension of the spine. The inner groins open, become free in the pelvis, which benefits circulation. Joining the feet to baddha konasana, the groins open further and are more flat than in upavistha konasana, resulting in an organic sensation of lifting from the lower body.

Though these poses are prop intensive, most props are used throughout, so it should not be cumbersome after the initial set-up. The props are beneficial to support the pelvis in such a way that the reproductive organs and the area around them are rested. The stress of the heavy bleeding and the discharge of large clots is reduced. The props also open the chest without effort. Anxiety and fear are lessened. The tension of the abdominal region is often so great that the spine drops inward to the body. The props curve the spine, allowing it to do its job of supporting the body. The central nervous system is brought to balance and any emotional disturbances can be overcome.

All the poses in this sequence, with the support of the props, benefit the condition of heavy bleeding, and the body, mind, and spirit are uplifted.



Setubandha Sarvangasana/Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana –

bridge all limbs two-feet reverse staff pose, also known as cross-bolsters

PROPS: Four bolsters, two crossed to support the torso, and two to support the outer thighs. Two belts for holding the thighs in baddha konasana. One long belt (or two belted together) to hold the feet upright in upavistha konasana. Two sandbags or plate weights (optional) for supporting the inner heels and a slanting plank wrapped in a sticky mat for supporting the coccvx (2.heavy-1d.).

Two blocks (2.heavy-1a) or two quarter round blocks (2. heavy-1b) are placed on each side of the bottom bolster to support the bolster that will cross it on top. Have one block for placing between the feet in baddha konasana. Two blankets for supporting the head and neck, a setubandha bench for the feet, and a slanting plank for supporting the coccyx. Two sticky mats, one on the floor and one on the bench for the feet. The total set-up is depicted in figure 2.heavy-1c. If a setubandha bench is not available, use two viparita karani boxes for this pose (2.heavy-1d) and one box for the baddha konasana variation (2.heavy-1e).



fig 2.beavy-la



fig 2.heavy-1c

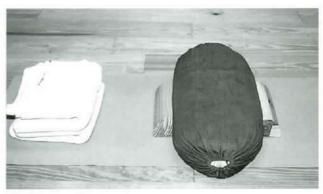


fig 2.heavy-1b



fig 2.beavy-1d



fig 2.heavy-le



Alternatively, step stools, or stacked bolsters (2.heavy-1f and g) may be used to support the feet. Depending on the capacity of the woman, and what works best to align the coccyx and pubis parallel, a slanting plank with a short sticky mat wrapped around it (2.heavy-1h) a rolled head wrap (2.heavy-1i), a combination of a plank and wrap (2.heavy-1j), a cone shape roll of a sticky mat (2.heavy-1k-o), or a sticky piece rolled and tied with a belt (2.heavy-1p), may be used to be placed under the sacrum/coccyx.



fig 2.heavy-1f



fig 2.heavy-1g



fig 2.heavy-1h



fig 2.heavy-1i



fig 2.heavy-1j





fig 2.heavy-1k



fig 2.beavy-11



fig 2.heavy-1m



fig 2.heavy-1n



fig 2.heavy-10



fig 2.heavy-1p



A. Upavistha Konasana - seated angle pose

POSITION NOTES: A novice practitioner should first attempt without a prop under the sacrum/coccyx, to avoid undue tension if it is too strong a support. Otherwise, practice with the various props as described and observe which set-up is most appropriate for aligning the coccyx and base of the pubis parallel to each other. The props should not irritate the area. To get into the pose correctly, sit on the end of the bolster facing the support for the feet. If one of the props listed for the coccyx is used, sit on that support (2.heavy-1Aa). Place the feet, one by one, on the bench to loop the long belt around the outer sides of the feet near the toes, the distance of your regular upavistha konasana (2.heavy-1Ab). Center the block, to be used later, on the bench evenly between the feet (2.heavy-1Ac). If your feet tend to turn out despite the aid of the belt, place sandbags or small weights on the bench to support the inner heels (2.heavy-1Ad).



fig 2.heavy-1Aa



fig 2.heavy-1Ac



fig 2.heavy-1Ab

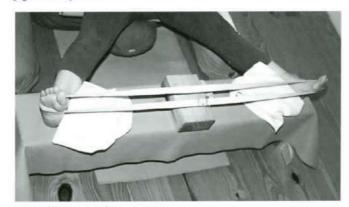


fig 2.heavy-1Ad



Place your hands behind you on the bolster to lift the chest. If a prop for the coccyx is used, scoot the buttocks slowly forward on that prop to avoid slipping off of it and to drag the buttocks down from the waist (2.heavy-1Ae). Keep the head upright to lift the chest as you slowly lie back on the bolster (2.heavy-1Af). The end of the bolster, toward the head side, should support the upper back at the dorsal region of the spine. The head and neck are supported on the blanket (2.heavy-1Ag).

At first, several attempts may have to be made in order to achieve the appropriate position for the props to do their work. Once you are lying completely on the bolster, adjust the blanket(s) under the head and neck so that the back of the head is parallel to the floor and the chin is slightly lower than the forehead. The eyes are closed. This head position is similar to that in setubandha sarvangasana. When heat in the body is a concern, either from hot flashes or high blood pressure, support the head even higher (2.heavy-1Ah). In the case of depression, or untreated/unresolved thyroid dysfunction, the head should be back, similar to the viparita dandasana position. Place a rolled blanket at the back of the neck to support it and keep it soft (2.heavy-1Ai). The eyes are to be kept open in this case. The front of the neck should not protrude; learn to release the tension. If both depression and hot flashes are present, decide which is more overwhelming and support the head accordingly.



fig 2.heavy-1Ac



fig 2.beavy-1Ag



fig 2.heavy-1Af



fig 2.heavy-1Ah



fig 2.beavy-1Ai



Observe the region of the pelvis. The hips/buttocks should not sink. The thighs should not puff up or roll outwards. The feet may be lowered on an alternate support if the thighs puff up. If necessary, add the support of a rolled sticky mat or a slanting plank under each side of the pelvis to achieve the correct orientation of the outer thighs rolling inward to the centerline of the torso. It is possible to place the planks or mats on your own; however, if an assistant is available, s/he may place the planks for you (2.heavy-1 Aj), likely for better effect (2.heavy-1Ak). If the buttocks are sinking, the bolster may be too soft. In this case, place the higher side of the block under the bolster to raise it for extra support. Most importantly the coccyx is lifted up, parallel to the pubis.

The chest should lift—the block under the end of the bolster that supports the chest may also have to be turned higher to keep from collapsing. If the chest is opened properly, the abdomen will begin to get very soft (2.heavy-1Ak). If the lower back feels irritated, it is usually that the chest is not positioned and opened in the correct manner. The chest may be adjusted and opened further by an assistant placing a rope or belt on the dorsal and lifting the chest up. If another assistant is available, s/he may adjust the deltoids down and widen the clavicles (2.heavy-1Al). This adjustment may be done for up to one minute, until it "fixes" the chest in a better position where it is not compressing into the lower back. Extend the arms to the sides with the palms facing the ceiling. If neck and/or shoulder problems are a concern, the arms may also be supported with bolsters (2.heavy-1Am), or blankets may be sufficient (2.heavy-1An). Remain in the pose, doing the baddha konasana leg position described next.



fig 2.heavy-1Aj



fig 2.beavy-1Ak



fig 2.beavy-1Al



TIME: Five to ten minutes, according to capacity. Do not overstay in the pose or the buttocks may become numb.

ACTIONS: Release the top of the front chest toward the floor. Lift the trapezius up into the back, then, let the effort go and allow the lift to be maintained by the bolster. With the belt holding the feet in place, relax the legs. Let go all the unnecessary tensions, especially of the thighs, abdomen, neck, head, facial muscles, and eyes. Close the eyes, soften the eyelids, and look inward to the center of the chest. In the case of depression, remain with the eyes open and soft, but still focus inwards and exist in the pose. Observe the region of the lower abdomen. During normal exhalations, release the abdomen to the back body to continue to calm this area. Maintain this effect on normal inhalations.

BENEFITS: Expansion and opening of the chest "ventilates" the organic body. The positioning of the pubis and coccyx allows the uterus to soften to the sacrum. Tension, bloating, and hardness of the abdominal region subside and lightness predominates. Relief of abdominal heaviness also helps the mental state. The head up position is especially good for reducing heat in the body, hot flashes, hypertension, and high blood pressure, and may also alleviate headache. The head back position uplifts a depressed state and benefits the thyroid glands. The whole of the body and mind completely rest, the organic body becomes quiet, and anxiety is dissipated.



fig 2.heavy-1Am



fig 2.heavy-1An



B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: The props are ready for adjusting the legs to baddha konasana.

POSITION NOTES: Bend the knees, releasing the feet from the belt, and use the feet to slide the bench or boxes closer to the buttocks (2.heavy-1Ba). To avoid slipping down while adjusting the legs, use the leverage of your hands to carefully shift the body slightly toward the foot side. Place one foot on each side of the block, bending the knees out to the side. If using a slanting plank, it is helpful to hold it while repositioning the legs so that the coccyx stays lifted (2.heavy-1Bb). Position the bolsters under the thighs to support the legs (2.heavy-1Bc). Bend the knees completely and place a belt on each leg with the buckle of the strap positioned to pull towards you so that the legs can be bound tightly (2.heavy-1Bd). Check again that the buttocks are on the props for maximum effect of bringing the coccyx up, parallel, toward the pubis. Reposition the chest so that it is open, with the back chest lifted up to the ceiling side and the front chest releasing down, toward the floor. Arms are to the side (2.heavy-1Be). Any conditions of the head, neck, and shoulders are to be supported as in upavistha konasana (2.heavy-1Ag-i).



fig 2.heavy-1Ba



fig 2.heavy-1Bb



TIME: Five to ten minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Similar to the description for upavistha konasana, allow the support to release the legs, especially the inner thighs. Allow the abdomen to release completely to the back of the body. Relax the facial muscles, head, and neck.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits described above, this leg position releases the inner groins. The space between the feet, created by the block, opens the basin of the pelvis and, combined with the alignment of the pubis and coccyx, increases circulation to the pelvis for optimal health of the organic body.



fig 2.heavy-1Bc



fig 2.beavy-1Bd



fig 2.heavy-1Be



2. Samaashrayi Upavistha Konasana – upright seated angle pose

PROPS: A viparita dandasana bench with two to three bolsters horizontally on top of the bench. If a bench is not available, use a folding chair against a wall with the seat facing out and a sticky mat folded on top of it. Another sticky mat is placed horizontally in front of the chair on the floor for the legs. With the support of the chair, place one end of the bolster on the floor, slightly under the chair, to curve the bolster. Place a second bolster on the seat of the chair with a block between it and the wall to prevent it from slipping back (2.heavy-2a). Regardless of support, have two blocks for the hands beside the bench or chair, two blankets folded small for supporting the buttocks, two rolled blankets (optional) for under the knees in upavistha konasana, or under the thighs in baddha konasana, and a rope or strap, for the hands. Loop the rope or strap onto a rung of the bench (2.heavy-2b) or on the backrest of the chair. Extra blankets for supporting the head and neck may be necessary, especially for the reclining variation to follow. A slanting plank, foam square, or a foam roller may be placed behind the back at the shoulders to facilitate opening the chest. If the feet tend to turn out, place small weights at the inner heels to keep them upright.



fig 2.heavy-2a



fig 2.heavy-2b



fig 2.heavy-2c



fig 2.heavy-2d



fig 2.heavy-2e



POSITION NOTES: Sit on the folded blankets and step the legs apart to a wide angle. Support the backs of the knees with rolled blankets if the knees have pain. Bend forward and place the hands on the floor (2.heavy-2c). One hand at a time, adjust the bottom of the buttocks back to the support (2.heavy-2d). Scoot the buttocks back so that the sacrum is firmly and completely touching the bench or, in the case of the chair, the bolster. Adjust the backs of the thighs from inside out. Be seated on the inner edges of the buttock bones and the backs of the inner thighs, centered on the perineum. Hook the upper arms around the bolsters placing the hands on the blocks (2.heavy-2e). To facilitate the opening of the chest a slanting plank (2.heavy-2f), foam square (2.heavy-2g), or roller (2.heavy-2h) may be added behind the thoracic/dorsal. If the shoulders are tight, it may be enough to simply press the hands on the blocks to lift the chest (2.heavy-2i, shown with rolled blankets under the knees).



fig 2.heavy-2f



fig 2.heavy-2h



fig 2.heavy-2g



fig 2.heavy-2i



Open and lift the chest more by catching the hands to the rope and extending the arms overhead (2.heavy-2j). If the hips and inner thighs are very tight, you may use weights on the inner thighs to open them (2.heavy-2k). Figure 2.heavy-2l shows the pose with the chair support. At home, a couch may be used with the cushions removed and rounding the back on the frame of the couch (2.heavy-2m). Maintain the leg position to go to the next pose.

TIME: If fatigue is moderate or severe, thirty seconds may be sufficient to open and lift the chest with the rope. Otherwise, hold three to five minutes according to capacity.

ACTION: Extend the toes up with the heels centered on, and descending to, the floor. Firmly tighten the knees and thighs toward the floor. Lengthen the inner heels, arches, and big toe mounds away from the inner legs. Extend the whole of the inner legs toward the inner feet. Move the outer sides of the feet towards the outer hips. Widen the buttock bones and extend them toward the heels. Lift the front and sides of the chest. Observe the space created width-wise across the pelvis and chest. Soften the neck, head, and facial muscles.



fig 2.heavy-2j



fig 2.heavy-21



fig 2.heavy-2k



fig 2.heavy-2m



3. Upaashrayi Upavistha Konasana – reclining seated angle pose

PROPS: Continue with the same set-up listed in number 2. The blankets and bolsters may need to be adjusted for the torso and head to recline. The blanket is folded and placed behind the head and neck (2.heavy-3a). If the neck is hard or puffing to the front, place a rolled blanket behind the neck to support it. Additionally, the rope may be used to lift the chest (2.heavy-3b). Any additional support used previously, slanting plank, foam square, or roller, may be used here as well. Remain with these props to continue to the next position.

POSITION NOTES: The chest should be propped up and opened, even though the torso is reclining back. The sacrum should touch the bench or bolster so the torso doesn't slide down.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: At first, continue with the actions described in samaashrayi, the upright position of upavistha konasana. Then gradually lessen the influence of the muscles and allow the body's own energy to maintain the shape and lift of the chest. Observe when the body is able to maintain the opening and lift of the chest without the assistance of the rope. Gradually release the rope and place the hands on the blocks. Close the eyes and relax.

BENEFITS: Seated, observe the vertical nature of the pose. The backs of the legs are touching the floor, and the inner and outer thighs are lifting. Though you are sitting, you feel the legs are standing. In this manner, you are able to lift the spine. Decompression of the organs occurs, and lightness and coolness are experienced inside the body. In addition to the beneficial effects on the female reproductive system, this pose is also very good for hiatal hernia, nausea, morning sickness, headache, respiratory conditions, general health of the prostate, testicles, bladder, kidneys, adrenal glands, thyroid, gall bladder, and pancreas; and excessive heat in the body.



fig 2.heavy-3a



fig 2.heavy-3b



4. Samaashrayi Baddha Konasana - upright bound angle pose

PROPS: The props are ready for adjusting the legs to a bound angle.

POSITION NOTES: From upavistha konasana, place the hands on the inner knees, bend the knees at the same time to bring the soles of the feet to touch each other, and move the feet as close as possible toward the perineum. Release the knees out to the sides. Place rolled blankets under the thighs and shins. If the knees are significantly above the level of the hips, add more support under the buttocks. Bend forward slightly to move the buttocks back so that the sacrum will be firm against the support. Repeat this step, if necessary, until the sacrum is absolutely firm to the support. If possible, place a weight in front of the feet with the toes curled back from each other or have an assistant place it. Position the arms as in the upavistha konasana variation, using additional support for the chest if necessary (2.heavy-4). The rope may be held as in the previous leg position to extend and lengthen the torso, and then the hands may rest on the blocks. Continue sitting in baddha konasana for the next position.

TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute if fatigue is present. If not, three to five minutes according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Press the heels together and lengthen the inner thighs to the knees. Lift the sides and front of the chest. Soften the neck, head, and facial muscles.



fig 2.heavy-4



5. Upaashrayi Baddha Konasana - reclining bound angle pose

PROPS: As for number 4.

POSITION NOTES: Recline the torso, repositioning the bolsters and blankets as necessary. The rope may be held to initiate the elongation and opening of the torso and chest (2.heavy-5a), then the hands rest on the blocks (2.heavy-5b).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Allow the body to completely rest. Close the eyes and relax.

BENEFITS: In the beginning, the blood clots are discharged; then the flow is controlled. The opening of the inner groins and pelvis increases circulation to the uterus, ovaries, and bladder. In upavistha konasana, the pubis is downward and the perineum between the anus and vagina is not easy to observe. In baddha konasana the pubis is lifted and you can trace the lift of the vagina. An elemental change occurs. The pelvis is aerated, which lessens heaviness and any burning sensation of the vaginal area.



fig 2.heavy-5a



fig 2.heavy-5b



6. Dwi Pada Viparita - two-feet reverse A. Upavistha Konasana – seated angle pose

PROPS: Use a viparita dandasana bench, stool, or chair to support the torso. A pavana muktasana bench or two stools or chairs to support the feet. Have a sticky mat on the bench (stool or chair) for traction, two small weights or sandbags to stabilize the inner heels (optional), and one long belt (or two belted together) to hold the outer sides of the feet upright. A slanting plank rolled into a sticky mat or a folded sticky mat if no plank is available. Additionally, a rolled sticky piece held together with a strap or a head wrap may be placed vertically on the plank. These additional props may be necessary to lift the pelvis so that the area of the reproductive organs gets relieved from the stress of the excessive bleeding and clots. A third bolster and blanket if the neck and shoulders are stiff. Also gather all the props needed for the leg position of the next pose: one bolster on each side of the bench or chair on the floor, two belts on top of each bolster, and a block on the center of the pavana muktanasana (or viparita dandasana) bench for placing between the soles of the feet.

POSITION NOTES: Sit on the plank or folded mat. The depiction shows the additional roll placed vertical (2.heavy-6Aa). Place the feet on the bench (or stool or chair) and place the belt around the outer sides of the feet (2.heavy-6Ab, c). Adjust the belt so that the feet are wide apart, the width of upavistha konasana (2.heavy-6Ad). When lying back, simultaneously scoot the buttocks slightly forward to correctly position the buttocks on the plank (2.heavy-6Ae). The coccyx should be lifted into the body. The arms may be up and overhead with hands catching the elbows (2.heavy-6Af). If the head and neck are stiff, use the support of a bolster for the head and blanket rolled under the neck. The arms may be bent out to the sides, with the hands resting on the bolster; the collarbones are spread to create space between the



fig 2.beavy-6Aa



fig 2.beavy-6Ac



fig 2.heavy-6Ab



fig 2.heavy-6Ad



shoulders for the head and neck to release. A blanket may be rolled behind the neck to release it further (2.heavy-6Ag). In the case of hot flashes, heat in the body, or high blood pressure, support the head higher with an extra blanket, and rest the hands on the abdomen (2.heavy-6Ah). When the shoulders are stiff, the arms may tend to fall asleep. In that case, simply rest the hands on the abdomen regardless of the head position. The chest not the abdomen should be the apex, the highest point of the pose. Most importantly, the pelvis should not sink. You may want to have an assistant look at your pose from the side to see that the pelvis is in line with the curve of the body position and that the thighs are resting down. Figure 2.heavy-6Ai shows the pose using chairs.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 2.heavy-6Ae

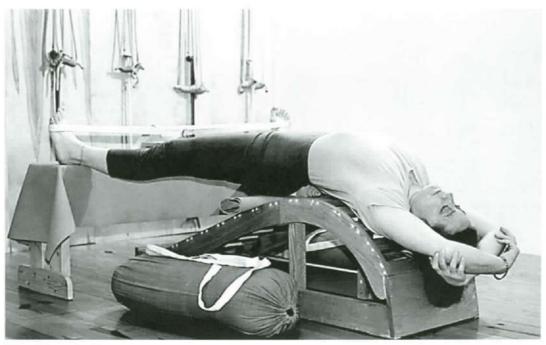


fig 2.heavy-6Af



ACTIONS: Completely surrender and rest in this pose. Allow the abdomen to recede to the back body. Release all unnecessary tension in the pelvis, abdomen, neck, head, and facial muscles. Look inward, observe the space inside, and continue to soften from within. Use the exhalations to release the abdomen further to the back body. Observe the area of the uterus as it rests on the "bed" of the sacrum.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits of the previous poses, the opening of the chest and release of the abdomen create a deeper relaxation of the organs of the pelvis. Again, the coccyx and pubis, if properly positioned, align the organs to their natural place, and the uterus relaxes. Uterine contraction to expel large clots is relieved. The flow will be less painful. Large clots and heavy flow may lessen. Additionally, the opening of the chest and the head back creates an alert, uplifted, but peaceful state of mind.



fig 2.heavy-6Ag



fig 2.heavy-6Ah



fig 2.heavy-6Ai



B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: The props are ready from the previous pose to adjust the legs.

POSITION NOTES: Remove the feet from the long belt. Use your feet to pull the bench or chairs toward you to support the feet, with the block between them, for baddha konasana. You may have to hold the viparita dandasana bench or slanting plank and scoot the buttocks toward the feet to prevent slipping down to the head side (2.heavy-6Ba). Without too much disturbance, reach for the belts and buckle each leg individually (2.heavy-6Bb). Orient the belt so the strap pulls toward you in order to get the correct tightness (2.heavy-6Bc). Then reach for the bolsters to place along the sides of the hips to support the outer thighs and shins. The plank and/or bench will support the bolsters. Alternatively, blankets may be placed under the thighs (2.heavy-6Bd). Repeat the arm position held in the previous variation. Figure 2.heavy-6Be shows the pose using chairs.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 2.heavy-6Ba



fig 2.heavy-6Bb



fig 2.heavy-6Bc



ACTION: Release the groins and let the pelvis further open.

BENEFITS: The softness of the abdomen, developed in the previous poses, is maintained. A "steady state" of softness is established and spreads throughout the body and mind.



fig 2.heavy-6Bd



fig 2.heavy-6Be



7. Setubandha – bridge

A. Upavistha Konasana - seated angle pose

PROPS: Setubandha bench and viparita karani box, sticky mat and blanket on top of the bench, two short halasana benches for the feet and a long belt for supporting the feet. Two weights if needed for the inner heels, one bolster for the shoulders and head, an extra blanket for the head if needed. A slanting plank or rolled sticky mat for placement under the region of the coccyx. Additionally have two bolsters, two belts, and a block (for between the feet) for baddha konasana (2.heavy-7Aa).



fig 2.heavy-7Aa



POSITION NOTES: Similar to the previous pose, sit on the bench, place the feet on the stools and adjust the belt around the feet (2.heavy-7Ab). Place the hands behind the buttocks on the bench and lift the chest to lie back (2.heavy-7Ac). As you lie back, slide the buttocks slightly forward in order to correctly position the sacrum/coccyx on the plank or sticky roll (2.heavy-7Ad). Once in position, you may hold the plank and, with that resistance, extend the back chest away from the waist in order for the buttocks to also slide away from the waist (2.heavy-7Ae).



fig 2.beavy-7Ab



fig 2.heavy-7Ac



fig 2.beavy-7Ad



fig 2.heavy-7Ae



The upper back should round on the edge of the support. The shoulders should touch the bolster with the collarbones wide and back of the head resting on the bolster (2.heavy-7Af). If the back of the head and shoulders are floating, add more blankets as necessary. Especially if heat or hot flashes are present, the forehead should be slightly higher than the chin (2.heavy-7Ag). The hands may rest on the floor, or if the shoulders are stiff, rest them on a height of blocks or blankets. In the case of depression or thyroid dysfunction, the bolster may be turned horizontally on its side to support the head back (2.heavy-7Ah) and the eyes should remain open.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Release the abdomen to the back body with each exhalation. Allow the support to lift the back chest up into the body and release the front chest down to the floor. Draw your vision inward, release the facial muscles, and rest.

BENEFITS: As stated in the first chapter, this pose is a gift as all systems of the body come to a pleasant equilibrium. Additionally, the leg positions release and open the region of the pelvis, and the uterus may rest in a balanced state.

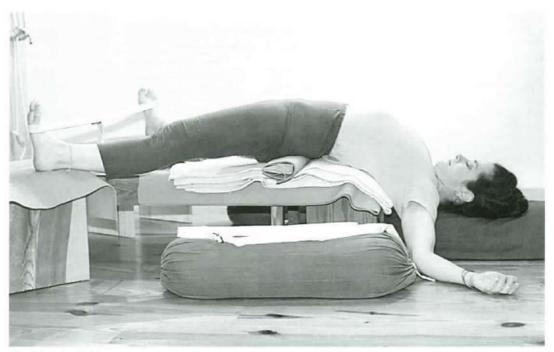


fig 2.heavy-7Af



fig 2.heavy-7Ag



fig 2.beavy-7Ah



B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: The props are ready from the previous pose.

POSITION NOTES: Release the feet from the strap, bend the knees, and place the soles of the feet on the sides of the block. Place the straps around each leg to tighten them to baddha konasana. Place the bolsters under the thighs (2.heavy-7B).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Close the eyes and rest. Allow the groins to release and the pelvis to open. Relax the abdomen completely.

BENEFITS: The benefits of upavistha konasana legs are further enhanced with the opening of the pelvis.



fig 2.heavy-7B



8. Savasana - corpse pose

PROPS: A sticky mat with one blanket for the back and another for the head. Two chairs for the lower legs and a sticky mat rolled into a cone-shape for the sacrum/coccyx.

POSITION NOTES: The sticky mat and blanket are placed on the floor to cushion the supine position of the body. Place the sticky mat rolled into a cone on the blanket where the buttocks will lie. Have the seats of the chairs facing out and slightly turned out. Have a small folded blanket for the head and neck (2.heavy-8a). Sit on the cone with the hands behind the buttocks lifting the chest, the knees bent and feet on the floor (2.heavy-8b). Lie back, resting the head and neck on the blanket, the shoulders and back on the floor. Place the lower legs on the chairs, slightly wider apart than the hips (2.heavy-8c). The sacrum is on the cone such that the coccyx is lifting up to the pubis and is parallel to it. The ultimate adjustment is done by an assistant. If available, s/he can pull the end of the cone, an inch or two, to lengthen the sacrum and position the coccyx and pubis parallel. Do not lift the buttocks; they should remain heavy on the cone as it is pulled (2.heavy-8d). Center the nose, sternum, navel and pubis on the same plane.



fig 2.heavy-8a



fig 2.beavy-8b



fig 2.heavy-8c



TIME: Five to ten minutes.

ACTIONS: Allow the back of the head to rest evenly on the blanket, and gently lengthen the skin on the back of the head and neck away from the shoulders. Soften the facial muscles completely. Rest the tongue to the lower palate, unclench the teeth, and release the lower jaw. Soften the eyelids, center the eyes, keep them still, and allow them to recede to the back of the head. Deepen the eye sockets. Soften all sides of the neck and, inside, release the throat. Allow the back and abdomen to rest completely toward the floor without any tensions.

BENEFITS: Relief from the adjustment of the sacrum is felt immediately. The abdomen thoroughly rests to the back body. Tension and anxiety from the heavy bleeding are released. The mind and body become quiet. All the layers of the body come to a quiet state and a peaceful feeling predominates.



fig 2.heavy-8d



Practice for When the Flow Exceeds Ten Days

Menstruation surpassing ten days is an unhealthy condition, both physically and mentally. The recommended practice includes inverted poses to stop the bleeding. Many of the poses described under "Practice for a Heavy Menstrual Flow" are performed with some additional variations and inversions. Even if the flow is scanty, follow this sequence starting on day ten.

1. Setubandha Sarvangasana/Dwi Pada Viparita

bridge all limbs/two-feet reverse pose (cross-bolsters)

A. Upavistha Konasana – seated angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, AND TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 61, and continue on to the next variation.

B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, AND TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 68, and continue on to the next variation.

C. Dandasana - staff pose

PROPS: As above, including a block and two belts.

POSITION NOTES: After baddha konasana, remove the belts and bolsters. Push the support for the feet away and extend the legs straight with the heels supported on it. It may be necessary to slide down off the bench, in the direction of the head, and start again. With practice you can learn to move from one pose to the next, or have an assistant help you. Place the brick vertically, upright, between the legs, all the way up to the perineum. Tie one belt around the legs below the block. The second one is placed around the sides of the feet to keep the toes pointed up. As an option, you may try a third belt around the middle of the buttocks, along the top of the pubis. If you know which side of the hip tends to turn out from the center, buckle the belt from that side to the other. (2.exceeds-1C). The front thighs should completely roll inwards.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.



ACTIONS: For approximately 20 seconds extend the inner heels and lengthen the back inner groins. Then release the legs and allow the inner thighs to descend toward the floor. Allow the chest to expand on the normal inhalations. Upon feeling an indentation of the abdomen on exhalations, relax it even further to the back body.

BENEFITS: After the groins open and release in upavistha konasana and baddha konasana, and the relaxation progresses, the organic body is free and unrestricted. The organs are decompressed. In dandasana, they are aligned and maintained in their place with the legs tied together. Large, hard fibroids may soften. For those who have water retention, bloating, a general lightness may predominate. Fear and anxiety of the mind also recede.

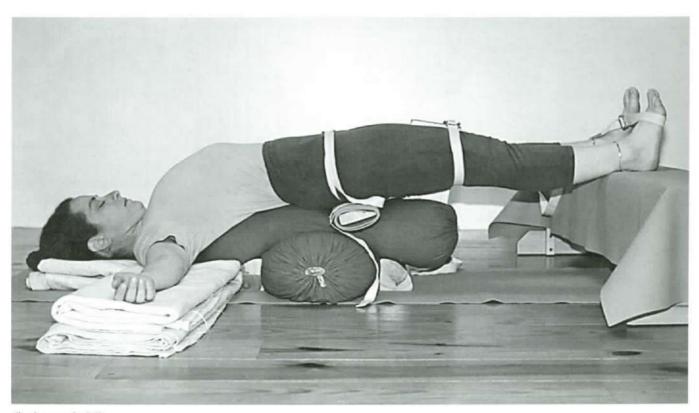


fig 2.exceeds-IC



2. Dwi Pada Viparita - two-feet reverse pose A. Upavistha Konasana - seated angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, AND TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 76, and continue on to the next variation.

B. Baddha Konasana – bound angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, AND TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 79, and continue on to the next variation.

C. Dandasana - staff pose

PROPS: As for 1.C.

POSITION NOTES: Following the preceding variations, extend the legs straight, pushing the bench back to support the heels. Place a block and belt as in cross-bolsters with dandasana legs with the arms overhead (2.exceeds-2Ca). The chest should be at the apex of the bench. The pose is also depicted on chairs with the arms resting overhead (2.exceeds-2Cb), as well as with the hands holding the sides of the chair if the shoulders are stiff (2.exceeds-2Cc). The dorsal region of the upper back, and not the waist, is positioned at the edge of the chair. To come down, bend the knees and slide the head, shoulders, then buttocks to the floor (2.exceeds-2Cd).

TIME: Three to five minutes.



fig 2.exceeds-2Ca



ACTION: Gently extend the legs from the inner groins to the inner heels while relaxing the abdomen.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits described in the previous pose, the back extension and opening of the chest lengthens and extends the organs. This extension is a relief from the strain of the lengthy flow. The kidneys and advenal glands are massaged.



fig 2.exceeds-2Cb



fig 2.exceeds-2Cc



fig 2.exceeds-2Cd



3. Samaashrayi Dandasana - upright staff pose

PROPS: Refer to the set-up described for samaashrayi upavistha konasana under heavy menstrual flow, page 73. However, only do dandasana.

POSITION NOTES: Sit in dandasana against the viparita dandasana bench or chair set-up, placing the heels apart hip-width. A rolled blanket may be placed under the knees to support them if they tend to be unstable. Adjust the buttocks back so that the sacrum touches the support firmly. A weight may be placed at the heels to keep the buttocks from slipping. Use the rope to lift the chest, and then place the hands on the blocks (2.exceeds-3). Continue with the legs in dandasana for the next position.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Center the heels on, and press them down to, the floor. Extend the toes up. Tighten the kneecaps and firm the thighs to the floor. Extend the inner legs to the inner edges of the feet. Move the outer edges of the feet to the hips. Move the outer shin bones in toward the inner shins. Move the inner shins to the floor. Press the inner and outer ligaments of the knees evenly to the floor. Maintain the lift of the chest by raising the sternum up, lifting the sides of the chest, and releasing the trapezius down. Soften the abdomen.



fig 2.exceeds-3



4. Upaashrayi Dandasana - reclining staff pose

PROPS: As for number 3.

POSITION NOTES: Adjust the bolsters so the torso can recline. If necessary, reposition the buttocks back to the bench. Use the rope to relift the chest (2.exceeds-4a), then rest the hands on the blocks (2.exceeds-4b).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Keep the legs extended straight and relax back on the support with the chest lifted.

BENEFITS: Circulation is improved through the legs and feet, and any cramping of the legs is alleviated. This pose is beneficial when recovering from surgery in the pelvis or abdomen. The torso is gently lifted up and circulation increases to the organs. They are toned, nourished, and revitalized. The opening of the chest with the spine coming inward as a supported structure, alleviates asthma, colds, coughs, breathlessness, and fatigue.



fig 2.exceeds-4a



fig 2.exceeds-4b



5. Prasarita Padottanasana - spread foot intense pose

Refer to the description in Chapter 1, page 10.

6. Adho Mukha Svanasana - downward facing dog pose

PROPS: A set of upper ropes, a lower rope slung through the end of one upper rope and its opposite end knotted to the other upper rope. A blanket placed over the rope to soften the support. A simhasana box for the feet, a halasana box with a bolster on top for the head to rest. An additional support is to have two long belts, or four short belts buckled together in twos, each slung through the hooks adjacent to the upper ropes to adjust the pelvis. If inexperienced, you may need an assistant to adjust the belts. The pose may be done without belts, but using them gives a better effect to dry up the menses.

POSITION NOTES: Step up on the simhasana box facing away from the wall. Attach the belts from the upper hooks to the leg opposite the hook (2.exceeds-6a). Figure 2.exceeds-6b depicts the belts looped around the legs and how they cross over. The end of the belt should pull the buckle towards the wall. Once buckled in tight, place the hands on the rope to lift the torso up and over the rope so that the abdomen is completely free. The rope should be at the top of the thighs. Step the feet back. The backs of the heels should touch the wall; the bottoms of the heels may either be on the simhasana box or slightly up on the wall if the legs are stiff (2.exceeds-6c, shown without belts). Extend the arms forward and catch the end of the bolster or the halasana box with the hands. Rest the forehead on the bolster, keeping the nose free to breathe (2.exceeds-6d). If an assistant is available, s/he can loop the long belts from the hooks to the opposite leg at the top of the thighs once you are in the pose. Figure 2.exceeds-6e shows how the belts are crossed from the hooks to the legs. You may tighten or loosen the belt to achieve the correct lift of the vagina, uterus, and bladder.



fig 2.exceeds-6a



fig 2.exceeds-6b



Alternatively, do adho mukha svanasana from a lower rope or a belt on a doorknob as shown in chapter 1, page 3.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Grip the kneecaps tightly and firm the thighs. Lift the back inner thighs. At the same time, release the abdomen completely. Soften the head, neck, and facial muscles.

BENEFITS: This variation tones the uterus and will discharge any remaining flow. It also benefits prolapsed uterus and incontinence of the bladder. For those who are inflexible, this variation makes adho mukha svanasana accessible and is great for low back pain.



fig 2.exceeds-6c



fig 2.exceed s-6d

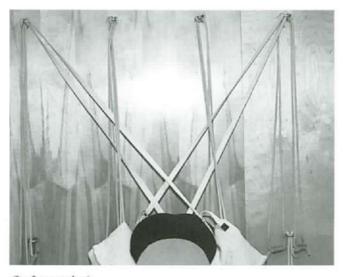


fig 2.exceeds-6e



7. Salamba Sirsasana (rope) - supported head balance pose A. Upavistha Konasana - seated angle pose

PROPS: A set of upper ropes with a rope tying the ends of the upper ropes together. A blanket over the rope to soften it, a long belt, or two short ones buckled together to hold the feet, and a block to support the coccyx into the body.

POSITION NOTES: An experienced practitioner may do this pose without help. Novices will need an assistant to help come into and out of the pose, as well as for placing the belt around the feet, and the block behind the coccyx. To get into the pose, stand inside the ropes, holding the hands up on the ropes. If the groins are tight you may hold a threefold blanket to place on the fronts of the thighs to ease discomfort (2.exceeds-7Aa, photos are depicted without the blanket to see the various positions). Have the block on the floor within reach for later use. Step one foot on the wall (2.exceeds-7Ab), lean back on the rope and get leverage to place the opposite ball of the foot on the hook (2.exceeds-7Ac). Place the first foot on a hook as well. Now you may place the blanket across the thighs if needed (2.exceeds-7Ad). Use the hands on the ropes to lift the torso and place the rope to the level of the coccyx (2.exceeds-7Ae). The rope will not drop there if you press the feet. Place the belt around the feet and take the legs up on the wall to upavistha konasana. An assistant may place the block from the waist side to drag the buttocks towards the legs and adjust the coccyx into the body as well as lengthen it (2.exceeds-7Af).



fig 2.exceeds-7Aa



fig 2.exceeds-7Ab



fig 2.exceeds-7Ac



fig 2.exceeds-7Ad



fig 2.exceeds-7Ae



fig 2.exceeds-7Af



An experienced practitioner may be able to place the block properly on her own (2.exceeds-7Ag). However, if neither is possible, the wall ropes and wall support, without the block and belt, is effective. In either case, center the heels on the wall with the toes pointed forward, away from the wall. Extend the arms to the sides, elbows straight, and hands turned out on the floor (2.exceeds-7Ah). If the arms do not reach the floor, bolsters, blankets, or blocks may be used under the hands. Towards the end of the pose you may hold the elbows (2.exceeds-7Ai). A bolster may be placed under the head and arms for complete relaxation (2.exceeds-7Aj). If hot flashes or excessive heat are present, support the torso, neck, and head away from the wall on a simhasana box, with two crossed bolsters and blanket, or similar support. The back of the head should be facing more to the floor with the hands resting on top of the support (2.exceeds-7Ak).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity. As the legs will be taken to baddha konasana after this, adjust the timing accordingly so both leg positions are done. Five to ten minutes, total, for both poses is possible.

ACTIONS: The tailbone should move into the body. If not, lift the buttocks slightly up and move the coccyx in. Let gravity release the torso completely. Release any grip of the abdomen and pelvis and allow the organs to "hang." Let the head also hang, like ripe fruit. With the arms to the sides, broaden the clavicles, release the head and neck further, and allow the ribcage to expand horizontally. With the arms held below the head, allow the ribcage to lengthen vertically.

BENEFITS: Opening the groins, pelvis, and chest allows the organic body to relax. The adjustment of the coccyx in this inversion brings the uterus into its proper position and may dry up the menstrual flow. The sideways arm position creates width in the torso; the other arm position creates length. The support on the back angling the torso from the wall reduces excessive heat in the body. This pose is also effective for prolapse of the uterus.



fig 2.exceeds-7Ag



fig 2.exceeds-7Ah





fig 2.exceeds-7Aj



fig 2.exceeds-7Ai



fig 2.exceeds-7Ak



B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: Continue Salamba Sirsasana. This is where the tri-folded blanket may be necessary if the inner thighs do not open easily. Another block to position between the feet may be used.

POSITION NOTES: Bend the knees and take the soles of the feet together. You may have to readjust the block behind the sacrum/coccyx (2.exceeds-7Ba). A bolster may be used behind the buttocks instead of a block (2.exceeds-7Bb). Start with the arms to the side as above, then hold the elbows (2.exceeds-7Bc). If an assistant is available, have him/her place the block between the feet. It is possible to place the block unaided (2.exceeds-7Bd). A simhasana box with a bolster on top of it lengthwise and a second bolster across may be used to reduce excess body heat (2.exceeds-7Be). Figure 2.exceeds-7Bf shows the support without the block, adding the blanket across the thighs. This variation may be best for those who are stiff. Bend the elbows to the side to keep the collarbones wide and the chest open.



fig 2.exceeds-7Ba





fig 2.exceeds-7Be



fig 2.exceeds-7Bc



fig 2.exceeds-7Bf



fig 2.exceeds-7Bd



To come out, climb the hands up the ropes (2.exceeds-7Bg) until you have enough leverage to press the feet into the wall (2.exceeds-7Bh), moving the hips away from the wall (2.exceeds-7Bi). Take a breath, climb down the wall, and step to the floor (2.exceeds-7Bj). Continue to hold the ropes and rest the forehead on the wall, for 15-30 seconds, until the blood pressure equilibrates (2.exceeds-7Bk). Less experienced practitioners may sometimes feel lightheaded or dizzy after coming down. In that case, bend over, place the hands on the hook, and rest the head on the hands (2.exceeds-7Bl).

ACTION: Continue as in upavistha konasana, allowing the groins to further release.

BENEFITS: As in upavistha konasana in salamba sirsasana, the groins are released, the pelvis is more open, and the organic body relaxes completely. Additionally, the baddha konasana position of the legs creates more length in the region of the sacrum and lumbar and tones the organs further into place. Prolapse of the uterus may be corrected by this posc. A heavy flow is regulated.



fig 2.exceeds-7Bg



fig 2.exceeds-7Bh



fig 2.exceeds-7Bi



fig 2.exceeds-7Bj



fig 2.exceeds-7Bk



fig 2.exceeds-7Bl



8. Salamba Sirsasana I - head balance pose

PROPS: Tri-folded blanket, block, and belt.

POSITION NOTES: Seasoned practitioners who have a regular inversion practice may do this pose unassisted. Novice practitioners may find it difficult to get into this variation. In that case, use the support of a wall and have an assistant help you up into the pose. See Chapter 3, page 132, for further details. The block is placed horizontally/flat between the upper thighs all the way up to the perineum. The belt is buckled around the thighs across the block (2.exceeds-8).

TIME: Five to ten minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Press the inner forearms down. Strongly lift the upper arms, deltoids, and shoulders. Widen the clavicles and spread the chest to the sides. Lift the sides of the chest. Raise the dorsal into the back. Move the head of the sacrum back. Tighten the kneecaps and firm the thighs up. Extend the calf muscles up to the heels to lift the thighs more. Lift the legs away from the pelvis; turn the fronts of the thighs in and backs of the thighs out. Maintain the back of the thighs open, lift the top buttocks to the ceiling and broaden the buttocks away from the sacrum. This will soften the abdominal region. At the same time, grip the outer thighs into the femurs, not to grip them from the inner thighs, move the back inner groins down into the pelvis and "hit" the brick into the coccyx from this action. Move the outer sides of the pelvis forward, and extend upwards the sides of the navel, pubis, inner thighs and front thighs. The abdomen should rest toward the sacrum inside. All the while maintain a soft face and neck. Soften the gaze, move the outer corners of the eyes back, soften the temples.

BENEFITS: The actions in this inversion will have a drying effect upon the uterus, which goes into its proper position. Prolapse of the uterus is corrected. The calming effect on the organic body centers the mind. All the body systems are brought to a homeostasis.

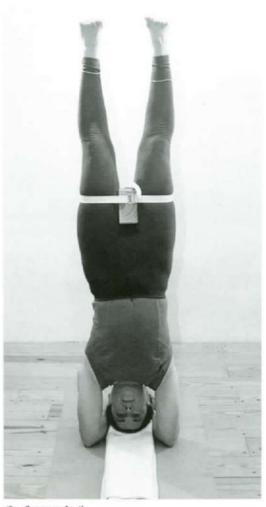


fig 2.exceeds-8



9. Ardha Supta Konasana – half supine angle pose

PROPS: A chair with a folded sticky mat on the seat and a belt buckled around the middle of the backrest. Place a bolster on the floor in front of the legs of the chair. Add additional blankets on top of the bolster if it is flat and/or the shoulders and neck are stiff. If this is the case, have an additional blanket to support the back of the head so that it will not be thrown back. Two more chairs, or halasana boxes, placed apart two feet from the chair for supporting the feet. Have a rolled sticky mat, or remnant, buckled together and within reach for the baddha konasana position next. Also, have a block, belt, and another bolster available for salamba sarvangasana on the chair described later.

POSITION NOTES: Sit backwards on the seat of the chair with the knees draped over its backrest and the hands holding the sides. Go through salamba sarvangasana on the chair to come to supta konasana. The toes are turned under on top of the chairs or boxes. Place the arms inside the front legs of the chair with the hands catching the back legs from the outside (2.exceeds-9). Later, when the chest and shoulders are open, the hands may be held outside the legs of the chair or by the sides of the head on the floor with the arms bent out to the sides. If the neck feels tight or if the breath is not free, come down and add more blankets on top of the bolster to increase the height of the shoulders from the floor and another blanket under the head so that it does not hang back. The poses listed under numbers 10 and 11 are to be followed in sequence after supta konasana.

TIME: Three to ten minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Move the outer upper arms down, towards the floor and lift the sides of the chest. Widen the clavicles to the sides. Observe the bottom of the ribcage and the pelvis as rectangles, each with outer corners. Open the bottom four corners of the ribcage, increasing the breadth and depth of it, and lift up from there. Adjust the top corners of the pelvis over the four corners of the bottom chest. Tighten the kneecaps and firm the thigh muscles up to the bones. Lift the inner groins up and extend the inner legs to the heels. Extend the inner edges of the heels further away from the legs. Broaden the buttock bones back, without extending the buttocks back, and extend them to the heels. Move the sacrum/coccyx into the body without disturbing the buttocks. Lift the sides of the pubis up and maintain the pubis perpendicular to the floor. Allow the abdomen to soften and recede into the back body.

BENEFITS: This inversion also has a drying effect and is very good for prolapsed uterus. The body systems are brought into balance. Constipation is alleviated by regular practice of this pose and it is very good for the health of the prostate in men.



fig 2.exceeds-9



10. Salamba Sarvangasana Baddha Konasna - supported all limbs pose with bound angle legs

PROPS: Same set-up as in the previous pose.

POSITION NOTES: After completing supta konasana, bend the knees and bring the buttocks to the seat of the chair. Place the feet on the strap, take the knees to the sides, and touch the soles of the feet together (2.exceeds-10a). If possible, the small rolled sticky mat may be placed at the sacrum in such a way that the tailbone is made parallel to the uterus, enabling the abdomen to recede (2.exceeds-10b, c).



fig 2.exceeds-10a



fig 2.exceeds-10b



fig 2.exceeds-10c



TIME: Five to ten minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Keep the chest open with the arms placed once again inside the legs of the chairs and the hands catching the back legs to facilitate drawing the shoulder blades into the body and opening the chest. Maintain a soft head and neck. As the chest becomes imprinted in an open state, the arms may rest to the sides with the elbows bent and hands on the floor. Allow the groins to elongate to the knees. Rest completely.

BENEFITS: As for ardha supta konasana, with a greater opening on the groins for increased circulation into the region. The vagina is elongated and prolapse of the uterus is corrected.



fig 2.exceeds-10d



11. Salmba Sarvangasana (chair) - supported all limbs pose

PROPS: Same set-up, with a block between the legs and a belt to buckle the legs together as described for number 8. The second bolster may be used for the legs.

POSITION NOTES: This pose may be practiced only if the abdomen has become rested. Especially for novice practitioners, the outer layers of the abdomen and pelvis may feel soft, however, the deeper layers may still be tense. Be sensitive to a complete softening of all the layers. If and when they are soft, then this pose may be practiced. If the abdomen becomes hard in this variation, come down from the pose. Otherwise the alignment of the reproductive organs will not come correctly. It is possible to adjust the brick and belt oneself with the knees bent and the feet on the backrest of the chair, but it is preferable to have an assistant help.



fig 2.exceeds-11a



fig 2.exceeds-11b



fig 2.exceeds-11c



TIME: Five to ten minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Allow the legs to rest on the back of the chair. If further support is needed to soften the legs so the abdomen can rest an assistant may place a bolster behind the legs (2.exceeds-11a). Additionally, the feet may rest on the wall. If a trestle or counter top is available the backs of the shins may rest on it (2.exceeds-11b). Soften the abdomen and pelvis completely. If the chest remains open, allow the hands to rest by the sides of the head (2.exceeds-11c, shown without the bolster). For whatever reason, if the arms don't reach the back legs of the chair, the hands may simply hold the outside legs of the chair (2.exceeds-11d).

BENEFITS: After the organs have been lifted in supta konasana and baddha konasana, they are held into their proper position. This pose is also good for endometriosis, ovarian cysts, and post-caesarian surgery (after a period of convalescence).



fig 2.exceeds-11d



12. Setubandha - bridge formation

A. Upavistha Konasana - seated angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 81.

B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS, POSITION NOTES, ACTIONS, TIME: Refer to the set-up described under heavy flow, page 84.

C. Dandasana - staff pose

POSITION NOTES: After baddha konasana, bend the knees to place the brick vertically, upright, between the legs all the way up to the perineum. Tie one belt around the legs below the brick. Then extend the legs straight with the heels supported on the bench. If an assistant is available, a second belt may be tied around the feet (2.exceeds-12c).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTION: Follow the instructions under heavy flow and relax completely.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits already described under crossbolsters, this pose soothes and quiets the mind and the brain, and benefits all the systems of the body.

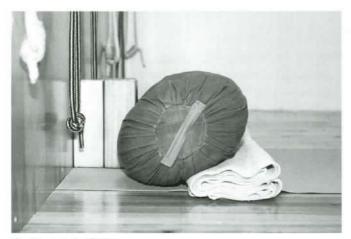


fig 2.exceeds-12c



13. Viparita Karani – going to reverse A. Upavistha Konasana – seated angle pose

props: A wall, with ropes if available. One to two blocks, sticky mat, bolster, and three blankets. A long belt or two short ones buckled together. To set the props up, have the short end of the sticky mat between a set of ropes. Place one block, or two if long in the torso, the long way up against the wall. Place a blanket, folded lengthwise twice, in three sections, accordion style, about six inches from the block. Slant a bolster lengthwise down into the block on one side and lifted on the other by the blanket (2.exceeds-13Aa). Have a blanket on the floor in front of the props and another on top of the bolster/block (2.exceeds-13Ab). Also, have a blanket, a long belt, and block within reach.



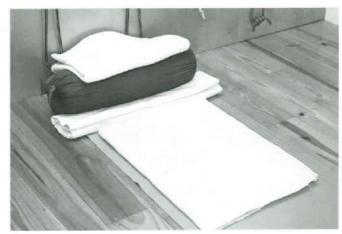


fig 2.exceeds-13Aa

fig 2.exceeds-13Ab

position notes: This pose is usually set up so that the tailbone is lower than the abdomen. However, for prolonged menses, the buttocks should be slightly up, so the block(s) are turned high. Several ways are used to get into the pose. A trained practitioner may use the wall ropes. Hold the handles of the upper ropes and place one foot on the wall (2.exceeds-13Ac), then the other. Bend the knees, and slowly bring the buttocks to the wall (2.exceeds-13Ad) and down to the bolster (2.exceeds-13Ae). One hand at a time, bring the hands to hold the lower ropes (2.exceeds-13Af). Bring the shoulders down to the floor while lifting the back chest up to the ceiling (2.exceeds-13Ag). Place the belt around the feet (2.exceeds-13Ah, i). A novice may require an assistant to loop the belt. Spread the legs apart to upavistha konasana (2.exceeds-13Aj). Adjust a folded blanket to support the back of the head and neck.



fig 2.exceeds-13Ac



fig 2.exceeds-13Ad



fig 2.exceeds-13Ae





fig 2.exceeds-13Af



fig 2.exceeds-13Ag



fig 2.exceeds-13Ah



fig 2.exceeds-13Ai



fig 2.exceeds-13Aj



For those who are novices, sit sideways on the end of the bolster, scooting the buttocks to the wall (2.exceeds-13Ak). Lower the shoulders to the floor, keeping the buttocks to the wall (2.exceeds-13Al). Roll onto the back (2.exceeds-13Am) and take the legs up the wall (2.exceeds-13An). If the chest is slipping off from the bolster, hold the edges of the mat, avoid pressing the feet on the wall, and scoot the buttocks to the wall, lifting the back chest up (2.exceeds-13Ao). If lower wall ropes are available, they may be held to adjust the torso towards the wall and the shoulders to lift into the body.



fig 2.exceeds-13Ak



fig 2.exceeds-13Al



fig 2.exceeds-13Am



fig 2.exceeds-13An



fig 2.exceeds-13Ao



A seasoned practitioner may also slowly roll forward into the pose. If forward rolling has never been done before, this is not the time to try it. Place hands near the props and the head on the floor in front of the bolster where it will end up once in the pose (2.exceeds-13Ap). Step the feet in, tuck the chin into the chest, round the back, press the hands to control the speed, and slowly roll the buttocks to the wall (2.exceeds-13Aq, r, s). Extend the legs up the wall and spread them apart to upavistha konasana.

It is important to use the belt to support the legs, especially for women who are flexible. You should not have the legs go too wide and allow them to hang. Regardless of the method of entry, the buttocks are to be slightly up, the dorsal chest open, and the back of the head resting on the floor with the chin lower than the forehead.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Gently lift the back chest up into the body and release the top chest to the floor. Soften the facial muscles, especially the eyes, and look inward toward the chest. Rest completely.

BENEFITS: The slight inversion of the buttocks dries the uterus. The pose is very relaxing and quieting.



fig 2.exceeds-13Ap



fig 2.exceeds-13Ag



fig 2.exceeds-13Ar



fig 2.exceeds-13As



B. Baddha Konasana - bound angle pose

PROPS: As for upavistha konasana. A block may be added between the feet.

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, slip the feet out of the belt and bend the knees to baddha konasana (2.exceeds-13Ba). If placing a brick between the feet, do not allow the chest to sink (2.exceeds-13Bb). Re-lift the back chest up into the body and move the top chest down towards the floor. To come down from the pose, slide the buttocks off the bolster onto the floor. Cross the legs loosely on the bolster and rest the hands on the front of the torso. Adjust the blanket under the head and neck (2.exceeds-13Bc).

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTION: Rest completely, looking inward with the eyes quiet.

BENEFITS: In addition to those described for the upavistha konasana variation, the inner groins release, the vagina and uterus lift up into the body in a balanced position, and the abdomen rests.



fig 2.exceeds-13Ba



fig 2.exceeds-13Bb



fig 2.exceeds-13Bc

14. Savasana - corpse pose

Follow the variation described under heavy flow, page 85.



Practice During Menses to Lengthen Short Cycles

When the menstrual flow occurs every 26 days or less, there may be no cause for concern. However, if this occurs on a regular basis, over time the body will be producing more estrogen hormones. Though estrogen may or may not initiate tumor development, it is known to promote tumor growth. Therefore, an excess of estrogen is not desirable. Also, the frequency of menstruation and concurrent blood loss may cause anemia, compromise other tissues and systems, and be unsettling to the mind.

Many of my students with short cycles have found that practicing the following sequence during menses, as well as the post-menstrual sequence described in Chapter 3, lengthened the next cycle. See Chapter 1 for a complete description of the poses, with the exception of parsva dandasana which appears on page 308



1. Supta Virasana



2a. Matsyasana



2b. Supta Swastikasana

07



3. Supta Baddha Konasana



4a. Dwi Pada Viparita Baddha Konasana - on the bench



4b. Dwi Pada Viparita Padmasana - on the bench



5. Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana - on the chair



6. Janu Sirsasana - concave back position



7. Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana - concave back position





8. Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana concave back position



9. Marichyasana I concave back position



10. Paschimottanasana concave back position



11. Parsva Dandanasana side stick pose



12. Baddha Konasana



13. Supta Baddha Konasana



14a. Matsyasana



14b. Supta Swastikasana



15. Supta Virasana



16. Setubandha Sarvangasana on the bench



17. Savasana



Practice for Headache During Menstruation

In general, when having a menstrual headache, it is best to include forward extensions and exclude back extensions. The orientation of the anterior spine facing the floor is soothing to the central nervous system. Normally, the headache is due to tension in the nerves. All the support given in the sequence is used to relax the muscles and the nerves.

In all the poses listed, use a bandage for the head. To apply the bandage, it should be in a roll so it can unravel easily. Start by unrolling approximately six inches of the bandage. Fold only that six-inch section (of the bandage) in half lengthwise, and place it across the forehead. At the same time, use the fingers to hold the outer corners of the forehead down (2.headache-a). Once that first section covers the forehead, use the full width of the bandage as it unravels around the head. The bandage should be snug. Do not pull it so tight that it is irritating (2.headache-b). Continuing, go down over the eye without covering the nose (2.headache-c). When passing the bandage around the forehead again, go up over the other eye, again without covering the nose (2.headache-d). If the specific point of the headache can be determined, give a twist to the bandage over that area for each remaining pass of the bandage (2.headache-e). Tuck in the end of the bandage (2.headache-f). The head wrap alone may provide great relief. However, for some, the bandage may become an irritation. In that case, it should be removed. Otherwise, wear the bandage for the duration of the practice. The flaps over the eyes may be lifted in order to see when transitioning between poses (2.headache-g, h) To remove the bandage, avoid lifting it off the head as that may irritate. Simply unravel the bandage (2.headache-i).



fig 2.headache-a



fig 2.headache-b



fig 2.headache-c



fig 2.headache-d



fig 2.headache-e



fig 2.beadache-f



fig 2.headache-g



fig 2.beadache-h



fig 2.headache-i



Start the sequence with the following pose:

1. Pavana Muktasana – wind release pose

A. General variation with folded arms

PROPS: If a pavana muktasana bench is available, have a sticky mat along the top of it. On top of that, place one to two folded blankets at the end of the bench and a bolster in front (2.headache-1Aa). For those who have a long torso another bolster may be needed at the end of the first one. For those who don't bend so easily, have a second bolster staggered on top of the first (2.headache-1Ab). Whichever set-up is used, have an additional two blankets for supporting the head and the abdomen. If a bench is not available, have two chairs on a sticky mat with the seats facing each other, sticky mats folded on the seats, two to three folded blankets on one seat, one to two bolsters to support the torso on the other seat, and two extra blankets to support the abdomen and head. Optionally, if available, have a plate weight or sandbag for the low back, as well as a sticky mat to traction the weight in place.

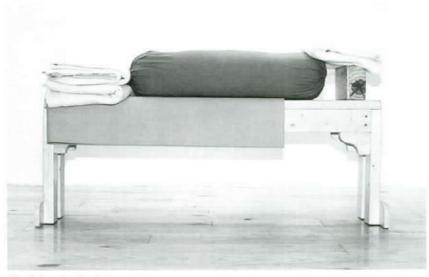


fig 2.headache-1Aa



fig 2.headache-1Ab



POSITION NOTES: Be seated on the blanket(s) facing the bolster(s). The feet should be turned forward. Press the hands down on the blanket and bolster to lift the torso and lengthen the anterior spine before bending over (2.headache-1Ac). Bend over and fold the arms over the head and rest the forehead on the folded arms (2.headache-1Ad). It may be necessary to bring the arms slightly in until the forehead rests and the back of the neck is long, not dipping down, getting compressed. The nose should be free to breathe normally (2.headache-1Ae). If the back is rounded, come up and add more support under the buttocks, torso, and/or head (2.headache-1Ae). Figure 2.headache-1Af shows the pose using chairs. Figure 2.headache-1Ag shows a weight on the low back for relieving discomfort there.



fig 2.beadache-1Ac



fig 2.headache-1Ad



fig 2.headache-1Ae



fig 2.beadache-1Af



fig 2.headache-1Ag



B. Adapted variation with arms to the sides

PROPS: In addition to the pavana muktasana general props, have two halasana boxes or chairs, with sticky mats placed on top. Place bolsters on top of the boxes or chairs, and two rolled blankets. If an assistant is available, have another blanket, sticky mat, and a plate weight.

POSITION NOTES: Follow the position notes from pavana muktasana with folded arms, but with the arms extended out to the sides on the bolsters with the palms facing down. If there is a gap between the upper arms and bolsters, fill that gap with rolled blankets (2.headache-1Ba). If an assistant is available, have her/him place a blanket rolled just enough to fill the dip of the neck so that the blanket is level with the back of the head (2.headache-1Bb). Place a sticky mat on top of the blanket, and over that, a plate weight on both the back of the head and top of the shoulders (2.headache-1Bc, d). The eyes should be parallel to the floor.

ACTIONS: Rest the abdomen completely on the support. Relax the back of the head and the front brain to the forehead. Soften the facial muscles completely. Let the mouth drop open and loosen the lower jaw, release the tongue, soften the lips, unclench the teeth, and maintaining the mouth cavity soft, close the mouth. Allow the back of the head and neck to extend away from the shoulders. Release the muscles of the upper back, let them soften, broaden, and widen to the sides as well as release towards the waist. Lengthen the sternum from the bottom to the top, towards the chin.

TIME: Five minutes.

BENEFITS: From the sacrum to the cranium, the spine rests to the front body. Anxieties and fears are relieved, unnecessary tensions are released, and the headache reduces or completely abates. The adrenal glands are also rested. Even those with migraine headaches will find great relief from this pose, especially if it can be adapted fully. This is also a very good pose for hot flashes.



fig 2.headache-1Ba



fig 2.headache-1Bb



fig 2.beadache-1Bc



fig 2.headache-1Bd



Continue the sequence with the following poses:



2. Adho Mukha Svanasana



3. Uttanasana



4. Adho Mukha Virasana



5. Parivrtta Adho Mukha Virasana



6. Janu Sirsasana



7. Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana



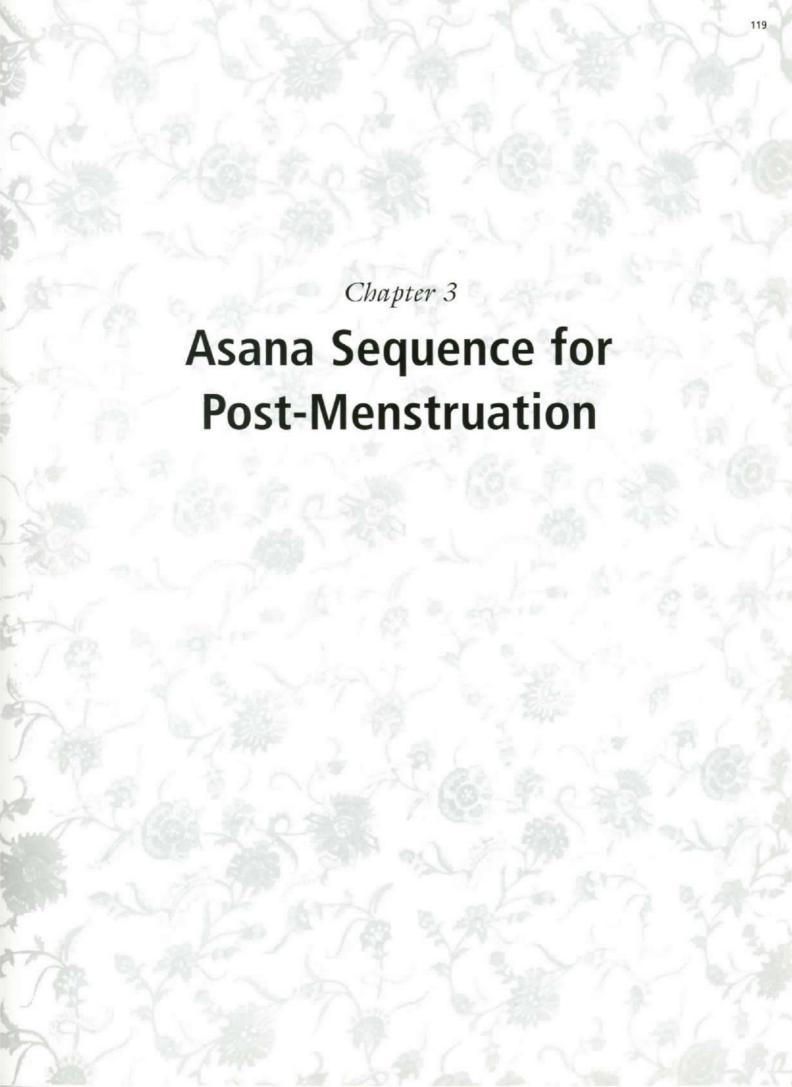
8. Paschimottanasana



9. Savasana







Asana Sequence for Post-Menstruation

Either you are or you are not menstruating. The period is finished only when the flow has ceased for eight hours without a drop. Once the period is over, women may feel eager to resume their regular pranayama and asana practices. However, the uterus needs time to restore for the sustenance of the reproductive system.

Post-menstrual practice concentrates upon inversions. The benefits of sirsasana and sarvangasana cannot be overemphasized. Practitioners of inverted postures experience the effects daily. If circumstances truncate their time for practice, they know to do sirsasana and sarvangasana, as their benefits would be missed. In his commentary in Light on Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar states, "Regular and precise practice of sirsasana develops the body, disciplines the mind and widens the horizons of the spirit." A cautionary note is given that those who have high or low blood pressure avoid practicing inverted poses unless under the guidance of a certified Iyengar Yoga instructor knowledgeable in addressing and ameliorating these conditions. In general, it is better to do halasana before sarvangasana in such cases.

Sirsasana and sarvangasana differ in many respects. In sirsasana the body is firm on the inside and soft on the outside; in sarvangasana it is firm on the outside and soft on the inside. The spine has to be firm in sirsasana; it becomes energized and strong as the focus is on the dorsal spine lifting and going into the body. Conversely, the peripheral body supports sarvangasana. It is lifted to support the spine, making it supple and quieting the central nervous system. The whole back has to lift, with added focus on bringing the sacrum/coccyx into the body in sarvangasana.

The inverted poses tone and balance the uterus after it has been heavy with the menstrual flow, having worked to discharge its lining. In addition to the reproductive effects, inversions also benefit the endocrine, lymphatic, circulatory, digestive, respiratory, urinary, excretory, and central nervous systems. The pituitary, pineal, thyroid, and adrenal glands receive a proper blood supply. Inversions are the greatest poses for balancing hormones which are also connected to maintaining bone density. Constipation, flatulence, and hemorrhoids are alleviated. The urinary tract, urethra, kidneys, and bladder benefit from the relief given by the anti-gravitational force. Again, mineral loss from the bones is checked when the muscles and bones are going against gravity. The resilience of the lungs is improved, and the body is kept warm. Retention of fluid, edema, of the lower legs is reduced. The brain receives a healthy current of blood, is rejuvenated, and clarity of thoughts predominates. Sleep problems may improve. A state of equilibrium, balance, and health is established with regular practice of inversions.

The sequence presented in this chapter is beneficial not only after the period ends but also when the seasons change. Viruses seem to spread when weather is erratic, and immune and respiratory defenses may be compromised. Following this sequence will help a cough or sore throat, and it is also beneficial when fasting. Energy is conserved while the abdominal region relaxes and tones. When tired and/or depressed, going "topsy-turvy" revitalizes and uplifts, especially after not having practiced inversions for some days.

The actions (in the asanas) involve softening and moving the abdomen to the back body, so it is not loose, but toned. The abdomen should neither be held hard nor puffed forward. In the latter case, the abdominal organs are pressured to be a supportive structure, rather than the spine supporting the organs. Working with a soft abdomen as you align and balance the pelvis and leg bones should imprint throughout the monthly cycle. The abdominal organs should never be held tight by tensing the muscles there and holding in the stomach. This is particularly true for women with endometriosis, uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts, or painful periods. If any of these conditions are present, it is best to adhere to this sequence up to five days post-menses. For women with healthy periods, one day's practice of the postmenstrual sequence may be sufficient.



Women who practice the sequence more than one day may use the program as a base to build up to the regular asana practice. For example, on the second day, supported adho mukha virasana could be preceded by supta virasana, with or without support, according to your needs or capacities. Over the five days add the lateral standing poses: utthita trikonasana, utthita parsvakonasana, ardha chandrasana, and virabhadrasana II. Practice them facing and touching the abdomen to the trestle or a kitchen counter (refer to Chapter 4 for these variations). Each day you can modify, add to, or subtract from the sequence until it is completely evolved from the base and no longer recognizable. Continue the thread of inverted postures throughout the cycle, doing them as described here if periods are problematic. All inverted postures may be practiced classically if the systems are healthy, aligning and adjusting the pose so that the abdomen is soft and toned to the back body.

As the practice of this sequence becomes more familiar, you will be able to set up the props, having them handy, in order to string the poses together. The rhythm of the sequence, along with the focus on softening the abdomen, quiets the mind. A state of equipoise and grace is developed that helps you to accept the day-to-day stresses of life.



1. Adho Mukha Virasana – downward facing hero pose

PROPS: Sticky mat, bolster, and one to three blankets. Optional props are two metal rods and a block.

POSITION NOTES: Touch the big toes together. Evenly spread the knees apart just outside the torso. You may roll a blanket to place at the top of the thighs/lower abdomen to bend over. Support the abdomen and chest with the bolster vertical. Fold the arms, catching the elbows, and rest the forehead on the forearms. If the shoulders are stiff, you may add a blanket under the forearms. Another blanket may be placed under the buttocks if they are not touching the heels (3.1a). To descend the thighs further, place two metal rods, one on top of each thigh, crossing them in front (3.1b), and bend over on the bolster (3.1c). In the case of depression, place a block with a blanket on top to support the chin and look forward (3.1d).

TIME: Five minutes.

ACTIONS: Move the outer shinbones laterally to the inner shins and descend the inner shinbones. Press the heads of the thighbones down. Energetically move the outer knees forward. Descend the buttocks to the heels. Without disturbing the downward action of the buttocks, lengthen the sides of the torso forward. Move the bottom of the sternum bone to the top. Widen the clavicles. Lengthen the back of the head and neck away from the shoulders. Soften the facial muscles.

BENEFITS: The spine is elongated. The abdomen opens and softens. If a rolled blanket is used at the abdomen, the sacrum and lumbar spine are significantly elongated. The mind becomes quiet, cool, in preparation for the inversion practice.







fig 3.1b



fig 3.1c



fig 3.1d



2. Adho Mukha Svanasana - downward facing dog pose

A. Variation with feet on the floor

PROPS: Sticky mat and a bolster or block to support the head.

POSITION NOTES: Move into this pose from the previous pose without lifting up the head. Step the hands and feet to the outer edges of the sticky mat, wider apart than the classic position of hip- and shoulder-width. Adjust the height of the support under the head so that the head rests without forcing it down. You may also hold the outer edges of the mat to further open the shoulders (3.2A).

TIME: Two to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Press the roots of the thumbs and big toe mounds firmly, to stabilize the pose. Spread the ball mounds of the feet and broaden the palms of the hands. Extend the heels back and the fingers forward. Lock the elbows straight by raising the forearms upward to the ceiling and lengthening the triceps. Lengthen the inner arms up to the shoulders. Lift the inner deltoids up and, at the same time, broaden the armpits from the inner armpit to the outer. Lock the knees straight by moving the inner shinbones back, outer shinbones inward to the center, and move the top of the shinbones back. Tighten the fronts of the thighs to the backs of the thighs. Grip the outer femur heads inward. Open the backs of the calves, knees, and thighs from inside out. Move the inner upper thighs, at the groins, into the bone, up to the buttocks, and back. Without using the abdominal muscles, simultaneously set in motion the sides of the hips to energetically move the center of the pelvis to the outer hips. Lift the outer sides of the thighs up to the pelvis, and keep the pelvis level. Maintain the alignment of the bottom circumference of the ribcage with the top circumference of the pelvis on the same plane. Elongate the sides of the torso to the hips. Work the skin of the thoracic/dorsal spine into the body. Lift the front chest up to the legs. Release the occiput towards the back crown of the head. Soften the neck, especially the front portion. Let go the facial muscles and quiet the eyes. Observe that the abdomen is on the back body.

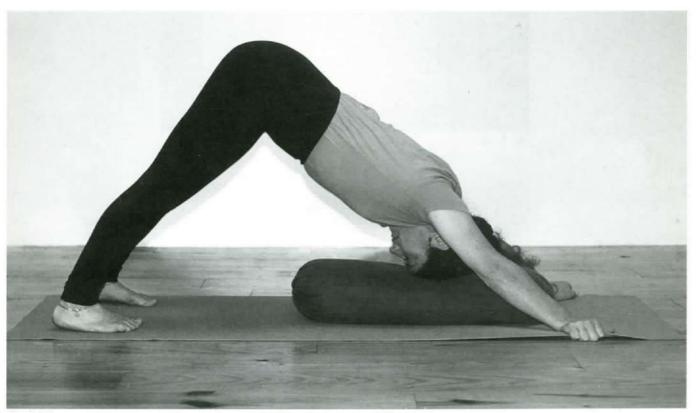


fig 3.2A



B. Variation with feet together on support

PROPS: Viparita dandasana bench or step stool against the wall with a sticky mat lengthwise away from it.

POSITION NOTES: Place the hands shoulder-width on the sticky mat approximately three feet from the bench or step stool. Step up on the support, placing the feet evenly together (3.2Ba, 3.2Bb).

ACTIONS: Follow the actions listed in Variation A.

TIME: One to three minutes, according to capacity.

BENEFITS: The body and mind are rejuvenated and energized. The wider stance of the hands and feet extends the legs and arms more easily and opens the pelvis, shoulders, and torso. The intestinal and reproductive organs are toned towards the back body. This pose begins the process of inversion. The leg-up position automatically creates a great lift of the vagina and uterus and deepens the toning of all the organs of the lower abdomen toward the spine. This variation is excellent for prolapsed uterus, incontinence, and post-partum.



fig 3.2Ba

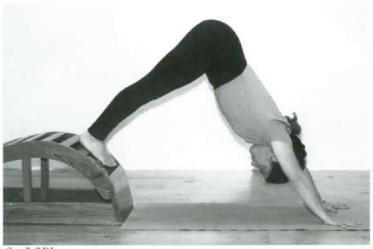


fig 3.2Bb

3. Uttanasana - intense pose

PROPS: Block and/or bolster to support the head. For those who cannot bend very far, have a chair with a bolster or blanket on the seat for the head to rest upon. For those with depression, add a block to the chair/bolster set-up to support the chin.

POSITION NOTES: After adho mukha svanasana, step the heels to the outer edges of the sticky mat, and turn the toes slightly in. Hold the ankles with the hands, and bend the arms at the elbows to the sides (3.3a). Rest the top of the head on a block; the crown is parallel to the floor. The nostrils are also parallel to the floor. To further adjust the head, gently move the bottom creases of the ears to the wall behind you. The back of the head should release down to the floor. For those who are unable to reach the hands to the ankles, don't force the head down. Instead, rest the head on a chair support, adding more height on the seat, such as a bolster, if necessary (3.3b). The chin may be supported on a block on top of a chair support for those with depression (3.3c). If bending forward is uncomfortable to the lower back, try rolling a blanket to the pit of the abdomen and bend over that (3.3d).

TIME: Two to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 3.3a



fig 3.3b

ACTIONS: The softening of the abdomen is the first and primary focus. Spread the ball mounds of the feet and lengthen the toes forward. Lengthen the inner and outer edges of the feet. Lift the inner ankles up to the knees, and resist this action by moving the outer ankles to the inner ankles. Maintain the length of the inner edges of the feet while descending the big-toe mounds and inner heels. Move the inner shinbones back and the outer shinbones laterally into the inner shins. Tighten the kneecaps and thighs and lift them up. Lifting the thigh muscles, turn the fronts of the thighs in and open the backs of the thighs out. Lift the buttock bones up and out. Lift and open the back inner groins. Don't continue opening there without a resistance of the legs. Do this by moving the outer thighs strongly into the bone from the outer knees up to the hips. From there, mentally draw a line over the buttocks to the tailbone. Energetically extend the action of the outer thighs to the tailbone along that line. Without disturbing the actions of the legs and buttock bones, bring the tailbone inside, and lengthen the anterior spine. For those catching the ankles, hold them firmly, move the upper arms forward, and widen the clavicles. Descend the inner armpits, and lift the inner shoulder blades up to the ceiling. Allow the top of the head to rest on the support. Move the skin from the occiput down to the floor. Soften the facial muscles, eyes, and neck. Continuously repeat the actions with the abdomen soft.

BENEFITS: The legs are toned and stretched; circulation is enhanced by the work of the legs. The more the legs work with the abdomen in a soft state and with the help of gravity, the further the spine elongates, creating space between the vertebrae. The mind remains quiet. The composure of the mind and awareness of the head and neck position is preparatory for salamba sirsasana.



fig 3.3c



fig 3.3d



4. Parsvottanasana - side intense pose

PROPS: Sticky mat, two blocks, or a chair for those who cannot yet bend forward very well.

POSITION NOTES: After stepping the left leg back from tadasana, align the inner edges of the heels so that they don't cross over the centerline between the legs. This is wider than the classical stance of heel in line with arch. Place the hands on the blocks directly under the shoulders (3.4a). Make the back more concave by coming up on the fingertips (3.4b). If the back is not concave, add more blocks or place the hands on the seat of a chair in front of the forward leg (3.4c). Change the sides by keeping the hands on the block, stepping the left foot forward to meet the right, and moving the blocks forward under the shoulders. You are in ardha uttanasana (3.4d). Then step the right foot back, and align the inner edges of the heels. Return to ardha uttanasana and then tadasana before going to the next pose.

TIME: One to three minutes each side, according to capacity.



fig 3.4a

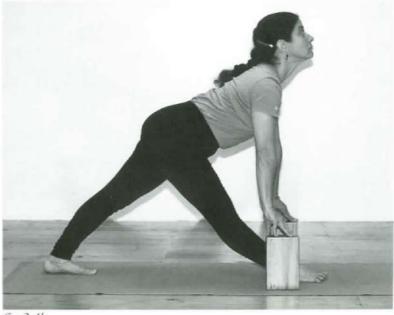


fig 3.4b



ACTIONS: Press the outer edge of the back foot and inner edge of the forward foot. Coordinate the action of the feet with lengthening the outer legs up and moving the outer thighs in to the bone. Move the inner groins back, and lengthen them up so they are working equally. Elongate the sides of the torso evenly. Broaden the collarbones, and turn the biceps from inside out to widen the chest. Move the sides of the chest forward, trying to reach them beyond the arms. Looking up, move the bottom of the sternum bone to the top of the sternum. Lift the chin further away from the sternum. Move the trapezius down, away from the shoulders, towards the waist. Move the dorsal spine deep into the back body.

BENEFITS: The feet are wider than in the classical position to create more openness and space for the hips, especially for larger bodies. In addition to making the legs more elastic and improving their circulation, the spine is drawn inward to lengthen and arch the back. This variation corrects stooping of the chest and prepares the dorsal region of the spine for salamba sirsasana. The concave back may relieve backache and brings heat into the body. The throat and thyroid glands are stretched, and circulation improves in the region of the neck and shoulders.



fig 3.4c



fig 3.4d



5. Prasarita Padottanasana - spread foot intense pose

A. Variation with concave back/head up

PROPS: Sticky mat and a block, bolster, or blanket to support the head if it does not reach the floor.

POSITION NOTES: From tadasana, step the legs to the side. Widen the stance to approximately four feet. Concave the back with the hands on the blocks (3.5Aa). For those with prolapsed uterus, step the legs back to the support of the wall (3.5Ab).

TIME: One to three minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Broaden and lengthen the soles of the feet. Press down the outer edges and elongate the inner edges of the feet. Strongly press the ball mounds of the big toes to support the legs and pelvis. Tighten the kneecaps and firm the fronts of the thighs up and out. Lift the whole of the inner leg to the outer leg. Lift the outer sides of the legs up. Observe the creases at the top front of the thighs. Maintain the upward and outward lift of the thighs, but turn the top creases of the thighs from outside in. Bring your attention to the backs of the legs. Turn the back of the thighs from inside out and spread the groins. Lift the buttock bones up and out. Maintaining the actions of the feet and legs, move the coccyx inside and up the anterior spine. At the same time, move the posterior spine toward the coccyx. Widen the clavicles, and roll the upper arms from inside out. Move the trapezius to the waist, and bring the bottom of the shoulder blades into the body. Look up, and lengthen the sternum up the chin.



fig 3.5Aa

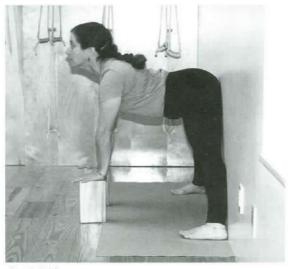


fig 3.5Ab



B. Variation with convex back/head down

PROPS: Bend over and place the hands on the floor in line with the feet. Adjust the position of the hands shoulder-width, moving them forward or back until the forearms are perpendicular to the floor. Adjust the head in the correct sirsasana position. As a frame of reference, the crown of the head and nostrils should be parallel to the floor; the eyes and the back of the ears should be parallel to the wall. The occiput, the base of the skull, should release to the floor (3.5Ba). If the legs are tight and the head does not reach the floor, do not force the position by widening the legs. Instead, place props such as blocks or blankets to support the head where it reaches, and lengthen the arms for the hands to contact the floor. Different heights are possible (3.5Bb, c). You may also catch the hands to the outer ankles (3.5Bd) or the outer shins (3.5Be), to your ability, to broaden the shoulders.

TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 3.5Ba







fig 3.5Bc



ACTIONS: Spread the fingers and palms on the floor. Press on the inner edges of the hands and point the elbows straight back. Without moving the hands, bring the elbows closer to each other to engage the muscles of the upper arms and forearms on the bones, and strengthen them. Lift the outer upper arms to the ceiling. Widen the clavicles. Lift the shoulders up from the floor, specifically the inner edges of the scapulae. Allow the head to release down. Learn to completely release and soften the neck for sirsasana. Soften the facial muscles. Release the eyes to the back of the head and gaze softly forward. When catching the ankles or shins, widen the elbows to the sides as much as possible. Move the upper arms forward. Broaden the upper shoulders/chest region and lift the inner shoulder blades further up to the ceiling.

BENEFITS: The legs are strengthened. The backs of the thighs and inner groins are elongated for the action of the legs to lift up in salamba sirasana. In the concave back/head-up variation, the vagina and uterus are drawn up to the spine. In the convex back/head-down variation, the arms, shoulders, and dorsal are strengthened and positioned correctly to prepare for inverting. The neck muscles learn to relax and let go of tensions. The mind is also prepared for balancing on the head. Many of the beneficial effects of salamba sirsasana are also experienced in this pose.



fig 3.5Bd



fig 3.5Be



6. Salamba Sirsasana I – supported head balance pose

PROPS: Sticky mat, three-fold blanket, block, and belt. If necessary, use the support of a wall.

POSITION NOTES: Place the block, narrow, horizontally between the legs so that it holds the legs evenly, touching the perineum. Tighten the belt below the block with the buckle between the legs. The interlock of the fingers is placed touching the end of the three-fold blanket, with the outer edges of the hands on the floor and the forearms on the sticky mat along the sides of the blanket (3.6a). Place the head on top of the blanket at the edge. If the flexibility is there, you may step the feet on the blanket to enable lifting the legs up to sirsasana (3.6b). Or, place the feet on a step stool to lift the legs up (3.6c). Raise the legs up, either with knees bent (3.6d) or straight (3.6e). An assistant may help by standing behind you, supporting the hips, to help raise your legs (3.6f,g). Once in the pose the legs and feet are apart (3.6h). If it is not possible to balance, use the support of the wall. To get into the pose at the wall, the assistant lifts the legs (3.6i).

TIME: Three to ten minutes, according to capacity.



fig 3.6a



fig 3.6b



fig 3.6c



fig 3.6d

ACTIONS: Everything that lifts goes towards the ceiling; what presses descends to the floor. Lift the feet, spreading and elongating the soles. Powerfully lift the whole of the legs, inner, outer, front, and back. Keep the elbows pointing forward, and press the inner forearms and outer wrists down. Lift the upper arm bones, armpits, and shoulders. Widen the clavicles. Spread the chest from the center to the sides. Raise the side ribs up. Lift and move the thoracic/dorsal into the body. Observe the abdomen and soften it completely. The abdomen should rest to the lumbar spine, not puff forward to the navel. Tighten the kneecaps and firm the thighs. Turn the fronts of the thighs from outside in and the backs of the thighs from inside out. Firm the thighs further to the bone by lifting the calf muscles up from the backs of the knees to the heels. Spread the calves and open the backs of the knees from inside out. Bring the shinbones closer to each other. Bring the thighbones closer and, at the same time, widen the buttock bones apart. Spread the buttocks away from the sacrum and raise them up. As you adjust, observe that the inner thighs are gripping the block. Release this grip and move the inner thighs back. Instead, grip the block from the outer heads of the femurs moving inward. This will firm the buttocks in a correct manner, but only when they are "organized" and the legs are working properly. The buttocks shouldn't squeeze in on the sacrum. Further adjust by moving the middle buttocks (horizontally) into the body and





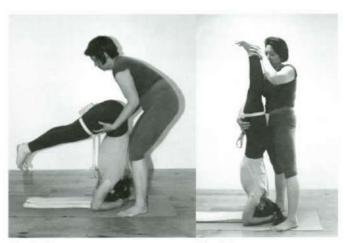


fig 3.6f

fig 3.6g



fig 3.6h



fig 3.6i

BENEFITS: Especially after the period, hormonal balance is restored and prevention of bone density depletion is checked. All the systems of the body are optimized by practice of this pose. The variation with the block at the perineum brings intelligence to the work of the buttocks and the region of the pelvis and teaches the correct actions for the organs to go to their place. Geeta S. Iyengar states, "The organic body becomes sober inside." Do not be alarmed if you notice a discharge after this pose, as correct action may release any residue that may have been stuck to the uterine wall. Often, women find vaginal air passes after coming down from inverted poses, especially after the period. This is checked here by the correct positioning of the organs and softening the abdomen to the back body. The head supported higher than the classic position works the shoulders to lift more, expands the chest further, and moves the dorsal more into the body. This expansion of the chest creates a greater space for the abdominal organs to suspend nicely in their balanced state. The alignment of the spine, upside-down, strengthens a weak central nervous system and prevents loss of calcium and other minerals from the spine.

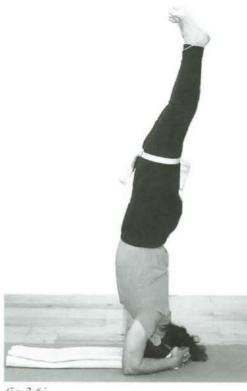






fig 3.6k



7. Uttanasana - intense pose

PROPS: As an option, you may need a block.

POSITION NOTES: Go directly to uttanasana after coming out of sirsasana. Do not jump up from the floor; move gracefully, and avoid standing upright or lifting the head when moving into the pose. Remove the block and belt, keeping the head down (3.7a). Step the feet hip-width. Clasp the elbows with the hands. You may keep the block between the upper thighs as an aid to work the inner thighs back (3.7b).

TIME: One to three minutes.

ACTIONS: Spread the ball mounds of the feet. Lengthen the toes forward. Tighten the kneecaps. Lift the thighs. Shift the weight forward to the ball mounds so that the hips are aligned over the ankles. Maintain the hips forward, the weight on the ball mounds, then press the heels down. Spread the backs of the calves. Elongate the backs of the legs from the heels up to the buttock bones. Turn the fronts of the thighs from outside in. Open the backs of the legs from inside out. Lift the buttock bones up and out. Move the whole of the inner legs to the outer legs while resisting from the outer sides of the legs inwards. Move the inner upper thighs back without gripping the abdomen. (You may use the block between the upper thighs to deepen and understand the actions of the legs. Hold the block from the outer thighs, releasing the grip on the inner thighs, and move the inner thighs back.) Allow the torso to release down. Elongate the sides of the chest. Create space for the abdomen. Release the grip of the bottom ribs away from the upper abdomen. Lengthen the sternum from the bottom to the top. Let go any tension of the head and neck completely.

BENEFITS: The position of the head down allows the circulation to equilibrate after inverting. The action of the legs allows the spine to clongate. The work of sirsasana is released.







fig 3.7b



8. Salamba Adho Mukha Vajrasana - supported downward facing lightning bolt pose

PROPS: Tie a lower rope to two upper ropes as you would for rope sirsasana. Place a blanket(s) over the rope. Place the high end of a simhasana box at the wall under the rope set-up. Have a halasana box in front of the simhasana box (3.8a).

position notes: Stand on the simhasana box with your body between the wall and the rope, and press the hands down on the rope to keep it at the top of the thighs. The stomach should come up and over the rope (see Chapter 2, figure 2.exceeds-6c, page 94). To support yourself coming into the pose, place the hands on the halasana box. Position the front of the shins and tops of the feet on the wall. Avoid raising the knees up. Rest the head on the forearms, which are folded on the support, so that the back of the head and neck extend (3.8b). You may also suspend completely from the rope (3.8c). Do not come down from the pose. Go directly to the next pose, salamba uttanasana.



fig 3.8a



TIME: Two to five minutes on the simhasana support and/or one minute suspended.

ACTIONS: Rest, without sinking the lumbar and bottom rib region. Allow the back of the head to rest to the forehead and the forehead to the forearms. Lengthen the back of the head and neck away from the shoulders. Widen the collarbones. Lengthen the sides of the torso. Descend the knees down. Release the abdomen so that it is completely soft.

BENEFITS: The suspension of the body from the rope allows gravity to release the spine completely and soothes the central nervous system. The abdomen softens, and the mind becomes quiet.



fig 3.8b



fig 3.8c



9. Salamba Uttanasana - supported intense pose

PROPS: As for salamba adho mukha yajrasana.

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, step the heels down to the outer edges of the simhasana box. If the heels do not reach the box, take the heels up on the wall and the balls of the feet on the box. For those who are able, reach the hands to the back end of the box (3.9). Otherwise, either catch the shins or fold the arms and hold the hands to the elbows.

TIME: One to two minutes.

ACTIONS: Grip the hands strongly on the box to extend the sides of the torso further, without using the abdominal muscles. Allow the intercostal muscles to extend. Lengthen the back of the head and neck, bringing the head slightly inside towards the legs. Soften the front of the neck.

BENEFITS: Traction and gravity aid the extension of the spine. The outer sides of the torso open, and the spine is completely lengthened without hardness inside. Calcification of spinal tissue is lessened.

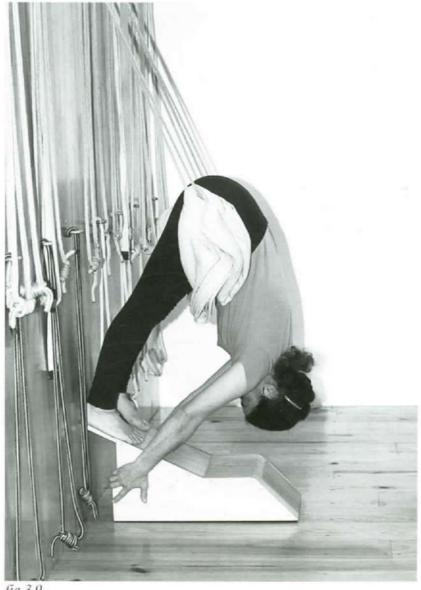


fig 3.9



10. Prasarita Padottanasana - spread foot intense pose

PROPS: Block and/or bolster to support the head. Alternatively, for those who are less flexible, have two blocks or a chair.

POSITION NOTES: Reverse the sequence of concave back/head up and convex back/head down from number 5. First bring the head down (3.10a). Remember not to spread the legs wider apart or force the head down to touch the support. Instead, add height under the head. In the second variation with concave back, cup-shape the hands on the floor in line with the shoulders, or use two blocks or the chair for the hands if they do not reach the floor (3.10b).

TIME: One to three minutes for each position.

ACTIONS: First take the head down and repeat the actions as practiced earlier in the sequence. Lengthen the inner and outer edges of the feet. Press the outer edges of the feet, big-toe mounds, and inner heels. Lift the arches up. As you work the legs and arms, observe any tightness that remains in the backs of the knees, hips, and shoulders. Open the knees by spreading the calves, and move the backs of the inner knees to the outer knees. Spread and lift the buttock bones to open the hips. At the same time, move the outer femur heads in. Pressurize the hands down, widen the clavicles, and lift the shoulders to open the region of the shoulders and neck. Observe the space and length of the torso. Step the feet slightly closer, and through the action of the legs and arms, lengthen the sides of the torso. Coming up to concave-back position, see that you open those places that were tight in the previous position. Extend the arms straight, creating a resistance to take the dorsal into the body. Turn the biceps from inside out, and widen the clavicle bones from the center to the sides. Reach the side chest forward beyond the arms. Move the trapezius away from the ears. Dig the dorsal deep into the body and open the chest fully. Extend the sternum bone from the bottom to the top. Raise the chin up. Check that the legs are still firm and lifting and the buttock bones are spreading with the femur heads in. Spread the bottom of the pubis to the sides. Move the bottom of the buttocks from the sides up and over to the coccyx. Recycling all these points, take the coccyx in, then up the front of the spine towards the chin. Resist the front of the thighs back without shifting the hips or wavering on the feet.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits of being inverted, the uterus is toned inward and upward towards the spine. Those who suffer from prolapse of the uterus may find this pose corrective.

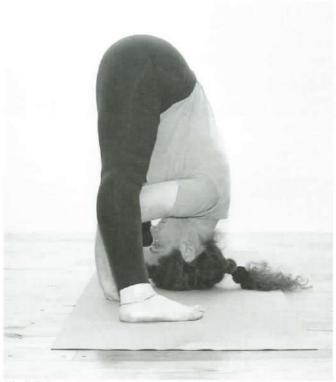






fig 3.10b



11. Uttanasana – intense pose

PROPS: Blocks or chair for the hands if they do not reach the floor.

POSITION NOTES: First, have the feet together, with the hands down by the sides of the feet (3.11a). You may place the hands flat on the floor, or flat on blocks (3.11b) if they do not reach the floor. Or, simply attempt to reach the hands to the floor. Then, come up to concave back with hands forward under the shoulders, either on the floor or on blocks if unable to achieve concavity with hands on the floor (3.11c). Come up on the fingertips to get the dorsal to go in deeper (3.11d). Remain in this pose to go directly to parsvottanasana, and come back to this pose between sides, as in number 4.





fig 3.11a

fig 3.11b



TIME: One minute, each position (convex and concave).

ACTIONS: Spread the ball mounds of the feet. Lengthen the toes forward. Elongate the inner and outer edges of the feet. Shift the hips over the ankles. Descend the heels. Lengthen and widen the backs of the legs. Move the outer shins in and the inner shins back. Raise the outer sides of the thighs beyond the hips. At the same time, move the outer thighs into the thighbones. The fronts of the thighs, femurs, have to go to the backs of the thighs, but do not go on moving the legs forward and backward. Keep them stable. Move the upper arm bones forward while pressing the hands firmly on the floor. Let loose the torso. Release the sides of the chest. Let go the grip of the front ribs from the abdomen. Lift the inner scapulae up, and descend the armpit down. Completely release the back of the neck without shaking the head. Let go the head completely. Release the ears downward in such a way that the backs of the ears are parallel to the wall. Then, walk the hands forward and raise the back to a concave position, with the dorsal in. Move the chest forward and the legs back. Soften the abdomen. Lengthen the skin on the front of the pelvis forward.

BENEFITS: The legs are toned. The spinal nerves are rejuvenated, and the dorsal region of the back is opened. The digestive organs are toned; the heart, liver, spleen, kidneys, pancreas, and gall bladder also benefit and are strengthened. The brain cells are soothed, depression is abated, and hyperactivity is quieted.







fig 3.11d



12. Parsvottanasana – side intense pose

PROPS: Two blocks or a chair if the hands do not reach the floor.

POSITION NOTES: From uttanasana, without disturbing the right foot, step the left leg back. As practiced earlier, align the inner edges of the heels so that they do not cross over the centerline of the body. Adjust the hands on the blocks, so that they are under the shoulders, for the back to go concave (see 3.4b). Alternatively, with the hands on the seat of the chair, slightly forward of the shoulders, keep them shoulder-width as well (3.12a). For going to the second phase of the pose, convex back/head down, reach the hands forward on the floor (3.12b). If the hands are on the chair, they may be placed to the rung of the chair if it is not possible to reach the floor (3.12c). Release the head down with the hands forward (3.12d). Take the hands back, with the torso, head, and neck releasing down the front of the forward leg (3.12e), to your capacity. To change the sides, move the hands forward until they are under the shoulders. Then step the left foot forward to meet the right foot. You will be in ardha uttanasana, concave-back position, again. Without disturbing the left foot, step the right leg back to parsvottanasana.





fig 3.12a

fig 3.12b



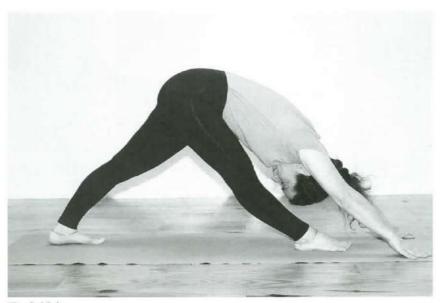
fig 3.12c



TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each side and each position of the back. However, if stiff, only hold the head down/hands back position for 10-15 seconds.

ACTIONS: Repeat the actions of parsvottanasana, number 4, page 128, for the concave back. Observe the hips and adjust them level to the floor by taking the back leg hip down and the forward leg hip up. Revolve the lower abdomen from the back leg to the front leg. Maintain the level of the hips and go to the convex position, first extending the arms forward and lengthening the torso. When taking the hands back, the side of the torso corresponding to the back leg has to extend more. Allow the sides of the torso to release evenly down the front leg. Release the back of the head and lengthen the back of the neck from the shoulders. Keep revolving the abdomen from the outer body, releasing any unnecessary gripping of the organs. Lengthen the skin on the front of the pelvis towards the chest.

BENEFITS: In addition to the legs being toned, the inner groins elongate, release, and become supple. The spine is elongated, and the back of the head and neck are released. In the concave position, the correct action and alignment of the legs hold the abdominal organs inward to the spine, which are then massaged and toned in the convex position. The head-down position is soothing to the nervous system, and the thoughts become quiet.



fin 3.12d



fig 3.12e



13. Janu Sirsasana - head of the knee pose

PROPS: Have sufficient folded blankets under the buttocks for the sacrum to move forward, into the body, and lift up. Have a belt in case of stiffness.

POSITION NOTES: Align the outer heel of the extended leg with the outer thigh (3.13a). Use the edge of the mat to see that the leg is parallel to it. The bent leg heel should ultimately touch the inner thigh of the same leg, with the sole of the foot facing the ceiling. If stiff, there may be a gap between the foot and the thigh (3.13b). Do not slide the foot under the straight leg. Adjust the back thigh of the extended leg from inside out (3.13c). Reach the arms up to lengthen the sides of the body (3.13d) and then revolve the torso in the direction of the extended leg. (3.13e). Catch the foot with the opposite hand, and place the other hand on the floor, cup-shaped, by the side of the hip, with the elbow bent back (3.13f). If stiff, use the strap to the foot (3.13g). Next, hold both hands to the strap or foot (3.13h) and take the head down to capacity (3.13i). Align the eyes parallel to the leg if unable to bend completely over it (3.13j). If the shoulders are tight, hold a slanting plank to the sole of the foot (3.13k).







fig 3.13b

fig 3.13c









fig 3.13e



TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute for each arm position. One to three minutes in the final pose.

ACTIONS: Reaching the arms up, lift the side ribs and chest. Lift the sacrum in and up. Extend the bent leg inner thigh to the knee; anchor the outer thigh to the floor. Revolve the edge of the inner shin and thigh from the inner to the outer sides, as well as the inner knee to the outer knee. In essence, the whole of the inner leg should revolve to the outer leg to work the fibers of the muscle and tissue, making them supple. The foot should remain soft while working the bent leg. Tighten the knee and firm the thigh of the straight leg. Extend from the inner groin to the inner heel. Press the inner edge of the knee towards the floor. Move the outer shinbone to the inner shin. Revolve the torso from the bent-knee side to the straight leg side.



fig 3.13f





fig 3.13h



Don't allow the outer thigh of the bent leg to come up, as you revolve the pelvis. Turn the lower abdomen and navel to the extended leg. Holding the opposite hand to the foot, press the other hand down on the floor to lift the side chest. Adjust the sacrum, lumbar, and thoracic spine in to create a concave back position, allowing the bent-knee side of the torso to elongate and revolve away from the leg. Raise the straight-leg side of the torso up further. Bend over according to capacity. Do not allow the back chest to go back while extending forward. Extend the center of the chest forward. Lift the elbows up to the ceiling and out to the sides. Widen the clavicles to the sides. Move the outer upper arms back in towards the sides of the torso. Reach the inner armpits to the elbows. Lengthen the sides of the chest forward.

BENEFITS: The outer heel of the extended leg aligned with the outer hip creates more of an opening of the basin of the pelvis, especially near the pubis. The organic body is rejuvenated.









fig 3.13k



14. Paschimottanasana - western intense pose

PROPS: Same as for janu sirsasana.

POSITION NOTES: Before going to the pose, be in dandasana with the seat on the front edges of the buttock bones and the backs of the thighs. Approximately a quarter of the backs of the upper thighs touch the blankets. Do not sit too far back on the support. Use the hands to spread the backs of the upper thighs and flesh of the buttocks to the sides (3.14a). Also, with the hands, widen the buttock bones further apart and move the buttocks back. If necessary, add more height under the buttocks if the sacrum is dropping back. Lift the arms to urdhva hasta dandasana (3.14b), and then catch the outer sides of the feet with the hands (3.14c). If catching the feet results in a pull on the backs of the thighs and/or the knees bend and the back rounds and hardens, then hold the feet with a belt at the ball mounds without constricting the toes (3.14d). Bend over the legs. Lift the elbows up to the ceiling and out to the sides. Keep the head in line with the spine if unable to bend all the way down (3.14e). If the head can go all the way down, maintain the face and eyes parallel to the legs so that the head is aligned with the spine and able to move forward (3.14f). If the shoulders are tight, hold a slanting plank to the soles of the feet as in janu sirsasana 3.13k.

TIME: Two to five minutes, according to capacity.



fig 3.14a



fig 3.14b



ACTIONS: Descend the centers of the heels down and lengthen the inner and outer heels. Lengthen the necks of the toes up. Extend the inner edges of the feet to elongate the inner legs. Move the outer ankles bones in. Move the outer shinbones to the inner shins and descend the inner shinbones to the floor. Broaden the backs of the calves and extend them to the heels. Tighten the kneecaps and evenly descend the inner and outer knee ligaments. Open the backs of the knees to the floor. Draw the front thighs to the bone, away from the knees and up to the hips. The skin of the front thighs has to move to the muscle and the muscle to the bone. Open the backs of the thighs from inside out and spread them to the floor. Move the inner upper femurs out, Resist the outer femurs in. Extend the outer upper thighs back to the wall behind you. Maintain the work of the legs to facilitate the lift of the sacrum and coccyx forward and up into the body. After the sacrum lifts, observe the space created for the lumbar to go in. Move the lumbar forward and up to create space for the dorsal, then move the dorsal up and into the body. Maximize the length of the anterior spine. Move the trapezius toward the waist. Spread the collarbones from the center to the sides. Widen and lift the sides of the chest as you extend forward. Lengthen and spread the sides of the navel. Move the sternum bone from the bottom to the top, towards the chin. Extend the head and chin forward without raising the head up. Instead, raise the elbows higher, and move the inner arms to the wrists



fig 3.14c



fig 3.14d



and the outer arms to the shoulders. Move the center of the chest forward. Move the kidneys forward to the head side. To go deeper into the pose, observe the back body at the four corners of the chest. Lift those edges higher than the middle of the back, which should embrace the legs. The skin of the back should be absorbed into itself. Allow the spine to go inwards. Elongate the sides of the pubis and navel further, and also spread the navel to the sides of the abdomen. Recycle and maintain these actions. Then bring your awareness to the basin of the pelvis. Let it be soft there. Release the bottom of the ribcage forward. Loosening any grip of the abdominal muscles, soften there. Quiet the facial muscles.

BENEFITS: In addition to the complete extension, the organic body and the mind become quiet and present. Circulation improves in the region of the pelvis. This is a good pose for women with vaginal dryness.



fin 3.14e



fig 3.14f



15. Ardha Halasana – balf plough pose (toppling)

PROPS: Set up the height of the blankets as you would for regular practice of salamba sarvangasana I. Additionally, place a bolster horizontally on top of that support. Add a second bolster behind it if you need help to get into the pose and/or have an assistant help you if s/he is available. Place a chair approximately two feet from the props for supporting the feet. Be prepared with additional chairs, if needed, to support the feet for the subsequent pose, ardha supta konasana. Read through to number 17, as the poses string together. These poses may not be possible for novices. In that case, proceed to number 18.

POSITION NOTES: Experienced practitioners may get into the pose by doing a variation of chakrasana, somersaulting into the pose. Position yourself between the chair and the bolster/blankets. Place the hands on the bolster (3.15a). Bend the knees, tuck the chin into the chest, and lower the shoulders fully on top of the bolster. Use the hands on top of the bolster to steady your position (3.15b). The head will be off the floor. One leg at a time, step your feet onto the seat of the chair (3.15c). At this point, allow the back of the head to come down to the floor. With the toes turned under, place the outer edges of the heels against the side arms of the chair for traction. Bend the elbows out to the sides and relax the hands to the floor (3.15d). If this method of entry is not possible, place a second bolster vertically to the first. Lie down on the bolsters with the shoulders about three inches from the edge so that the head is slightly off the floor. Bend the knees into the abdomen, press the hands by the sides of the hips, and swing the feet up to the seat of the chair. Alternatively, if an assistant is available, have him/her catch one leg and bring the foot to the chair with the other following (3.15e, f). The assistant may place one hand on the sacrum to guide and align the buttocks



fig 3.15a



fig 3.15c



fig 3.15b



fig 3.15d



over the shoulders (3.15g). If the shoulders are slipping off of the bolster, the assistant, from behind, may catch hold of the shoulders at the deltoid muscles and draw them back toward the hands (3.15h). Once in position, allow the back of the head to rest on the floor. Bend the elbows out to the sides, widen the clavicles, and relax the backs of the hands on the floor. Introductory-level practitioners may not be able to manage going directly from this to the next pose, niralamba sarvangasana. In that case, come out of the pose by reversing the steps of entry. Seasoned practitioners may go directly to the next pose.

TIME: Three to five minutes.



fig 3.15e



fig 3.15f



ACTIONS: Raise and broaden the sides of the chest. Lift and spread open the bottom rib region to align with the top circumference of the pelvis. Raise the front and sides of the pelvis. Tighten the kneecaps and lift them. Firm the thighs and strongly lift up the outer thighs, then the inner thighs. Open the backs of the thighs from inside out. Raise the inner groins. Press the sides of the feet firmly into the arms of the chair and use that resistance to work the legs more and open the pelvis. Spread the buttock bones from the center to the sides and move them back. At the same time, roll the buttock flesh in the direction of the backs of the thighs. Maintain the action of the buttock bones, move the sacrum into the body, and coil the tailbone to the anal mouth. Spread the buttock bones further, coordinated with the actions of the legs and feet. Lift the sides of the pubis. Observe how the abdominal organs are held inside the body without holding the abdomen. Don't press the head hard on the floor. After elongating the back of the neck, lift the chin slightly up to relax that area. Make the hands, arms, neck, head, face, and eyes soft. Gaze into the chest. Broaden the collarbones. Lengthen the back of the head and neck and release the ears to the floor.

BENEFITS: The effects of the classic pose are intensified in this variation. The height of the shoulders opens the chest more fully. The work of the legs using the chair opens the pelvis more completely. The abdominal organs move to the back body.



fig 3.15g



fig 3.15h



16. Niralamba Sarvangasana - without support all limbs pose

PROPS: As for ardha halasana.

POSITION NOTES: With the shoulders raised high on the bolster and blankets, even seasoned practitioners may initially have difficulty with this pose (3.16). Practice, and some mastery of the pose supported at the wall, will help in developing stability. If you find that the hands are pressing on the floor to hold the pose, discontinue until you are able to balance without the hands and arms involved. Otherwise the head, specifically the neck and throat inside, become hard, which will be counter-productive to beneficial effects. Keep the legs hip-width. If you are slipping off the bolster, return to ardha halasana, one leg at a time, and adjust the shoulders back so that you don't slide down. Make a second attempt. Seasoned practitioners may go directly to the next pose.

TIME: Two to eight minutes.

ACTION: As stated above, it is essential that the hands and arms are completely soft. Maintain softness of the neck, and inside, the throat. Widen the collarbones. Raise the sternum bone up to the ceiling. Spread the chest to the sides. Lift the sides of the chest up. Open the circumference of the bottom ribs. The legs have to be strong, lifting. Make the kneecaps very firm, moving them to the back of the knees. Raise the buttocks up. Move the head of the sacrum (the top, next to the lumbar) back, away from the body. Lift the back waistline up. Raise the legs up off the pelvis. Open the backs of the legs from inside out, and turn the fronts of the thighs from outside in. Extend the back inner groins down into the buttocks; at the same time, lift the front inner groins up. Increase the height of the inner knees and shins to the inner heels. Lengthen and spread the soles of the feet and necks of the toes. Maintain and recycle these actions. Move the tailbone forward to the pubis, lengthen the sides of the pubis and navel. Soften the abdomen completely.

BENEFITS: In addition to the benefits described in Light on Yoga and Yoga: A Gem for Women, this variation of sarvangasana powerfully tones the organs towards the spine. Space is created in the chest cavity for the heart, liver, lungs, stomach, spleen, pancreas, gall bladder, and transverse colon to receive purified, freshly oxygenated blood. Passing of vaginal air is lessened.



fig 3.16



17. Supta Konasana – supine angle pose

PROPS: If the legs are straight with the buttocks aligned over the hips, the feet can be on the floor (3.17a). If not, use chairs to support the feet (3.17b).

POSITION NOTES: For those who may be stiff in the backs of the legs and hips, neither force the legs down, nor float the feet, dangling them, in the air. This will cause strain and harden the abdomen, neck, and head. Use support of the chairs, and work the points of the pose properly. To exit the pose, round the back and roll the buttocks down the bolster. Those who somersaulted in may try coming out in the reverse direction. Press the hands on the bolster, bend the knees, and lower them to the floor (3.17d). Lift the head up and rest the forehead on the bolster, extending the arms forward in adho mukha virasana (3.17e).

TIME: One to five minutes.



fig 3.17a



fig 3.17b



17. Supta Konasana – supine angle pose

PROPS: If the legs are straight with the buttocks aligned over the hips, the feet can be on the floor (3.17a). If not, use chairs to support the feet (3.17b).

POSITION NOTES: For those who may be stiff in the backs of the legs and hips, neither force the legs down, nor float the feet, dangling them, in the air. This will cause strain and harden the abdomen, neck, and head. Use support of the chairs, and work the points of the pose properly. To exit the pose, round the back and roll the buttocks down the bolster. Those who somersaulted in may try coming out in the reverse direction. Press the hands on the bolster, bend the knees, and lower them to the floor (3.17d). Lift the head up and rest the forehead on the bolster, extending the arms forward in adho mukha virasana (3.17e).

TIME: One to five minutes.



fig 3.17a



fig 3.17b



ACTIONS: Tighten the kneecaps. Firm the thighs, lifting them up. Lift the skin of the thighs up to the muscle and the muscle up to the bone. Extend the arches of the feet away from the body. Lift the inner edges of the heels strongly up. Connect that action with invigorating the whole of the inner legs and inner groins up. Move the outer sides of the feet back in towards the hips so that the outer legs, the outer heads of the femurs, are going to the inside of the legs. Spread the buttock bones and move them back. Raise the outer hips up. Open the chest. Spread the center of the chest to the sides. Lift the side chest up. Align the circumference of the hips with that of the ribs. Center the buttocks over the shoulders. Press the ball mounds of the big toes into the floor (or the support) and energetically connect them to the reproductive organs and bladder to quiet that area.

BENEFITS: The legs tone, the pelvis opens, and a fresh supply of blood is brought to nourish the organic body in the lower abdominal region. This is a very good pose for drying the uterus, lifting a prolapsed uterus into its normal position, and lessening vaginal air. However, for the latter purpose it is best practiced with the feet at the height of the hips.





fig 3.17c





fig 3.17e



18. Halasana - plough pose

PROPS: Remove the bolster from the blanket support. You may use the bolster under the buttocks to help roll from the floor into halasana (3.18a). Have a block between the upper thighs and a belt buckled around the thighs as in sirsasana. Another belt can be used to keep the elbows from slipping to the sides. Adjust the loop of the belt so that when you place it around both arms, above the elbows, the arms are approximately shoulder-width (3.18b). If you are very stiff in the shoulders, adjust the belt slightly looser so as not to cut off circulation of the arms. Hold the belt in one hand as you press the palms by the sides of the hips. Press the outer arms down to lift the inner shoulder blades up, open the chest, and soften the abdomen. Wait a moment for the chest and abdomen to "imprint" the opening and softening (3.18c). Then roll the feet to the floor or support and slide the free hand into the loop of the strap you are holding (3.18d). Slip the belt above the elbows (3.18e, f). Interlock the fingers and press the hands to the floor to climb up high onto the tops of the shoulders (3.18g). Then unlock the hands and walk them down the back toward the shoulders (3.18h). Turn the toes under (3.18i, shown without support). You will be going to the next pose, salamba sarvangasana I, from here, so read through number 19.

POSITION NOTES: Bring into line the hips/buttocks over the shoulders. Do not come down when the pose is over. Go to the next position.



fig 3.18a



fig 3.18b



fig 3.18c



fig 3.18d



Time: Three to five minutes.

ACTION: Follow the description under ardha halasana (number 15, page 152). With the feet lower, and without the resistance of the sides of the chair, it will be more difficult to maintain the work of the legs. Lift the inner edges of the heels up and extend them away from you. Press down the top edges of the shoulder blades. Lift up the sides of the chest, the ribs. Keep the back of the head and neck elongating. Descend the bottom of the ear to the floor without making the head and neck hard.







fig 3.18f



fig 3.18g



BENEFITS: In the classical position, with the feet on the floor, the front of the torso will be slightly contracted. The abdominal organs are rejuvenated by this massaging effect. Circulation increases around the spine, bringing sustenance to the discs between the vertebrae. The extension of the spine makes it more elastic and improves the mobility of subsequent forward bends. The neck and shoulders become supple. The pose is quite soothing to the central nervous system. Blocked sinus cavities or congested ears may drain. Be aware that the blockage may increase a bit while in the pose. However, once out of the pose they will be more clear. The release of vaginal air is lessened.



fig 3.18h



fig 3.18i



19. Salamba Sarvangasana I - supported all limbs pose

PROPS: As above.

POSITION NOTES: Lengthen the back inner groins to raise the legs up from halasana. Practice sarvangasana with the block between the upper thighs (3.19). You may repeat halasana to your capacity to complete this pose.

TIME: Five to ten minutes.

ACTION: Walk the hands down the back towards the shoulders to lift and open the chest. Elongate the triceps and biceps towards the elbows. Be on the front edge of the shoulder bones. Lengthen the forearms up to the hands. Do not rest the back on the hands; the hands are there to remind the back to lift. Elevate the legs off the pelvis. Turn the fronts of the thighs from outside in and grip the outer femur heads inward. Open the backs of the legs from inside out and spread the buttock bones wide apart. Extend the inner legs from the back inner groins to the inner heels. Raise the inner knees and inner calves up. Spread the flesh of the buttocks away from the sacrum, and lift the top of the buttocks up from the waist. Maintain these actions as you firm the buttocks into the body, but not onto the sacrum. Move the tailbone toward the pubis. Lift the sternum up to the ceiling. Spread the collarbones from the center to the sides. Lift the armpit. Release the chin, upper and lower jawbones. Soften the mouth cavity so you are not clenching your teeth. Do not press the head onto the floor. Soften the abdomen.

BENEFITS: As well as benefiting all the body systems, particularly the uterus is toned and lifted into its proper position. This stops the pushing of the uterus down towards the legs.

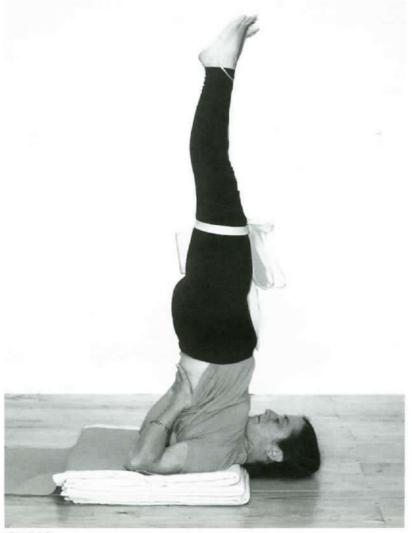


fig 3.19



20. Paschimottanasana (concave back) – western intense pose

PROPS: From the salamba sarvangasana I (number 19) set-up, unfold the sticky mat and arrange the blankets to have the thick, folded edges for supporting the seat of the pose. Refer to paschimottanasana (number 14) for the concave back set-up. Despite flexibility, hold a strap to the feet for a strong concave back.

POSITION NOTES: The buttocks, and approximately one-quarter of the thighs, should be on the blankets. Place the outer edges of the heels in line with the outer edges of the hips. Use your hands to turn the back thighs from inside out and to spread the buttocks back. Be on the front, inner edges of the buttock bones. Use the strap to create traction for the spine to go in (3.20), with the head up.

TIME: One to two minutes.

ACTIONS: Center the heels down and lengthen the sides of the feet and the toes upward. Extend the inner edges of the feet away from you and bring the outer sides of the feet towards you. Descend the inner shins. Move the outer shins to the inner shins. Broaden and elongate the backs of the calves to the heels. Tighten the knees, pressing the four corners and centers of the kneecaps strongly to the backs of the knees. Open the backs of the knees from inside out and descend them to the floor. Move the inner and outer knee ligaments to the floor so that the kneecaps are parallel. Move the inner heads of the femurs to the outer thighs; at the same time, create a resistance to that action with the outer thighs moving in. Lengthen the outer thighs back. Spread the buttock bones away from the anal mouth. Raise up, and into the body, the sacrum, lumbar, and thoracic/dorsal; the last should move in strongly to make the back more concave. Dig the bottom of the shoulder blades into the body. Turn the biceps inside out to face the ceiling, and widen the collarbones to the sides to broaden the shoulder girdle. Lift the sides of the ribcage. Raise the sternum from the bottom to the top. Extend the bottom rib region from the abdomen. Elevate the sides of the navel and pubis. Look up by lifting the bottom of the sternum more. Raise the chin up without compressing the back of the neck.

BENEFITS: The spine is lengthened, especially the dorsal, an area that tends to stoop. Posture is improved, and the vertebrae, as in inversions, retain their structure to prevent calcium loss. Discomfort of the neck is relieved. The abdominal organs, kidneys, and adrenal glands are lifted up.



fig 3.20



21. Janu Sirsasana (concave back) - head of the knee pose

PROPS: As for paschimottanasana (number 14), for concave back.

POSITION NOTES: Refer to janu sirsasana (number 13) for setting up the concave-back variation of this pose, using a strap for holding the foot.

TIME: One minute each side.

ACTIONS: Refer to the actions of the legs from janu sirsasana (number 13). Raise each section of the anterior spine from the base, the sacrum, through the lumbar, thoracic, up to the top, the cervical. As each part lifts up, observe how the space gained between the vertebrae gives space to that above it. Look up without compressing the back of the neck by lifting the base of the sternum bone up and the top of the sternum bone forward. Move the anterior thoracic vertebrae further up and forward, toward the top of the sternum. Extend the whole of the anterior spine up. Lift the sides of the torso and chest, keeping the shoulders and trapezius down. Soften the skin between and below the shoulder blades. Don't allow it to harden onto the back. Instead, move the skin inward.

BENEFITS: The outer heel of the extended leg aligned with the outer hip creates more of an opening of the basin of the pelvis, especially near the pubis. In addition to the benefits of paschimottanasana, this pose opens the pelvis further, and the organic body is rejuvenated.



fig 3.21



22. Niralamba Sarvangasana – without support all limbs pose

PROPS: Chair, with the seat facing a wall, and a sticky mat on the seat. Place a bolster on the floor between the chair and the wall. You may want to place the bolster on top of another sticky mat. Depending on the fullness of the bolster, add one or two oblong folded blankets in a step-wise fashion on top of the bolster. If the bolster is very plump you may not need extra blankets. Allow enough space between the bolster and the wall for the head, but not so far from the wall. The chair is about six inches from the bolster in order for the shoulders to come down to the middle of the bolster when getting into the pose.

POSITION NOTES: The poses listed from this one through viparita karani, number 26, are to be taken consecutively without interruption. To prepare, please read through the end of the series before beginning this pose. The whole cycle may be repeated, as a longer stay in it intensifies the favorable effects. To come out of the last pose, slide the seat of the chair away from you, turn to the right side immediately, so the neck doesn't jam backwards, and sit up. Then go to adho mukha swastikasana, number 27.

Do not throw the head back while coming down; this will cause an unnecessary strain to the lower back. The shoulders should be on the middle portion of the bolster, and the head should not touch the floor at this point. Hold the hands to the outside of the front legs of the chair (3.22a). Do not take the hands inside the legs to catch the back legs as you would for salamba sarvangasana on the chair. Swing and lift the legs up to the wall (3.22b), turn the toes under onto the wall, and keep the legs hip-width (3.22c). Now the back of the head will be on the floor. Straighten the knees (3.22d). If there is choking of the neck and/or throat, come down, and add more height on the bolster. If the head and neck are completely soft, and there is no fear complex, the backs of the hands may rest on the floor with the elbows bent out to the sides (3.22e). More experienced practitioners may also balance away from the wall (3.22f). Sit backwards on the chair, with the knees draped over the backrest and the hands holding the sides of the chair. Lower the shoulders to the bolster, looking at the chest so as not to drop the head back. Move the hands down to hold the front legs of the chair. Bring the shoulders and head onto the bolster support.







fig 3.22b



TIME: Three to five minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: The head and neck must remain absolutely soft. Do not press the back of the head into the floor. Strongly lift up the legs and torso. Specifically, lift the inner edges of the heels. Sharpen the feet further by moving the outer edges of the feet to the floor and the inner edges up to the ceiling. Turn the fronts of the thighs in and the backs of the thighs out. Widen the buttock bones more. Move the outer sides of the pelvis forward, to the wall. The head of the sacrum should move away from the wall, but the coccyx should go in to the pubis. Lift the chest and broaden it to the sides.

BENEFITS: With correct actions, the organic body should go completely to the back body and be toned there. When this occurs, a peaceful feeling pervades. You may not want to come down! This pose is very good for balancing all the physiological and emotional systems, particularly the endocrine (thyroid, adrenal glands), gastrointestinal, and central nervous systems. The reproductive organs get put into their places.







fig 3.22d



fig 3.22e



23. Ardha Supta Konasana - half supine angle pose

PROPS: As for niralamba sarvangasana (number 22).

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, slowly bring the legs apart to the sides, halfway down the wall. Observe that the feet and legs are equidistant from the centerline of the body, as well as from the floor. Center the buttocks over the shoulders. The pubis is perpendicular from the floor and parallel to the wall. Those who are very stiff may not be able to manage this variation and can skip to the next pose.

TIME: One to three minutes.

ACTIONS: Maintaining the feet on the wall, extend their inner edges to the wall and their outer sides away from it. Tighten the knees and thighs and lift them up. Extend the inner legs to the feet and the outer legs from the feet to the outer hips. Lift the inner heels up and connect that action to the lift of the inner groins. Soften the abdomen. Spread the buttock bones away from each other and move the sacrum/coccyx in. Lift the pelvis and the sides of the pubis. When you move the skin of the front pelvis to the floor, the bones there will lift further from the floor.

BENEFITS: A woman with a prolapsed uterus can feel it go back inside. With regular practice of this and other poses (see Volume II), as well as addressing the imbalances that have caused the uterus to prolapse, it may be possible to reposition the uterus correctly and permanently. (For men, this pose maintains the health of the prostate and testicles and alleviates any enlargement or infection in these areas.) The bladder is also given space, if the organic body has been misaligned from poor postural habits. The whole area gets toned, and incontinence can be relieved. The opening of the region of the anal mouth and colon helps to correct constipation.



fig 3.23



24. Akunchasana in Niralamba Sarvangasana - contracted to the face without support all limbs pose

PROPS: As for ardha supta konasana (number 23).

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, bend the knees and bring the legs together with the tops of the feet and front of the shins on the wall. Do not bring the knees so low that the shoulders start to slide away from the wall.

TIME: One to two minutes.

ACTIONS: Maintain the abdomen, head, neck, and facial muscles soft.

BENEFITS: This pose is restful and rejuvenating. The kidneys and adrenal glands are soothed and lengthened along the back of the body, and circulation is enhanced there.



fig 3.24



25. Salamba Sarvangasana (chair) – supported all limbs pose

PROPS: As for akunchasana in niralamba sarvangasana (number 24).

POSITION NOTES: From the previous pose, pull the chair in to touch the bolster, and bring the buttocks back to the seat of the chair and the feet to the backrest. Extend the legs one at a time over the back of the chair. You may relax the hands by the head with the elbows bent to the sides for a deeper rest (3.25a). Or, to facilitate opening the chest and shoulders, you may place the arms through the inside of the front legs of the chair and catch the hands to the outside of the back legs (3.25b). Sometimes backache occurs if the alignment of the legs and sacrum is incorrect. To relieve the backache and correct the alignment, bend the knees and place the feet on the backrest of the chair. Lift the buttocks up, roll the fronts of the thighs in, and align the outer ankles, knees, and hips. Move the inner groins back and lift the tops of the buttocks from the waist (3.25c). Maintain the actions of the legs and hips as you return the buttocks to the seat of the chair and extend the legs straight. Additionally, an 11 x 14 x 1/2-inch wood board may be placed across the sacrum to keep it evenly spread and elongated (3.25d). You may also bend the legs to baddha konasana with the feet resting on the backrest of the chair. See Chapter 2, page 102.



fig 3.25a



fig 3.25b



TIME: Three to five minutes.

ACTIONS: Extend the legs, but not with maximum effort. Without pressing the back of the head to the floor, move the outer deltoids down and lift the inner scapulae up to open the chest. Soften the head, facial muscles, and neck. Allow the abdomen to be soft by letting it release to the back body.

BENEFITS: The body and mind are brought to a balanced and restful state. In this variation, the chest and shoulders are opened more completely. A longer hold is possible, as this pose is fully supported. For those recovering from a prolonged illness, the energy and vigor of the body, the life force, will be recovered.



fig 3.25c



fig 3.25d



26. Viparita Karani Sarvangasana - going to reverse all limbs pose

PROPS: As for salamba sarvangasana I (number 25).

POSITION NOTES: The sacrum should rest completely on the seat of the chair, parallel to it, so that the buttocks aren't lifting. Increase the height under the shoulders if the sacrum does not rest on the seat of the chait. Extend the legs up perpendicular to the floor (3.26). If the backs of the thighs or groins are not supple enough for this, come down and go to the next pose. A variation of this pose is presented later. The hands may rest by the head or hold the legs or seat of the chair. This is the last pose of the cycle. You may repeat all the poses. To come down, hold the hands to the legs of the chair and slide it away from you. Slowly let the buttocks come to the floor, turn to the right side, and use your arms to sit up.

TIME: One to three minutes.

ACTIONS: Relift the back chest up into the body as in the shoulder work of salamba sarvangasana. Then, allow the physical effort to go, and mentally lift the back chest. Release the lower abdomen to the sacrum. Let it rest there. Allow the whole of the abdomen to rest completely to the back body. Completely let loose the head, facial muscles, and neck. Lift the inner legs up and extend the outer sides of the legs down, reducing the effort with time. Rest completely.

BENEFITS: A deep relaxation occurs in this pose. The mind becomes quiet. It is very helpful for aiding sleep.



fig 3.26



27. Adho Mukha Swastikasana - downward facing well-being pose

PROPS: The props are ready from the previous poses. If the ankles are uncomfortable on the floor, place one of the blankets under them.

POSITION NOTES: Sit on the bolster facing the chair and cross the right leg in first, then the left. Catch the hands, with the arms straight, to the top or sides of the chair, depending upon capacity, and rest the chin on the seat. Adjust the distance of the chair away from you until the dorsal and cervical are going inside, to the front body. Change sides by sitting up, releasing the legs, and crossing the left leg in first.

TIME: Thirty seconds each side.

ACTIONS: Move the sternum up. Allow the position of the pose to move the dorsal and cervical in.

BENEFITS: Discomfort of the neck is relieved by this pose.







28. Bharadvajasana – sage Bharadvaja pose

PROPS: Chair, folded sticky mat, and one to two folded blankets on the seat.

POSITION NOTES: Start on the right side first by sitting sideways in the chair with the ride side of the torso facing the back of the chair. Before turning into the pose, adjust the position of the body. The knees are slightly apart, the feet directly under them with the toes pointing forward. The knees should be slightly lower than the hips, so adjust the height of the blankets accordingly. If the feet do not reach the floor, place blocks or a bolster under them. With the hands, adjust the backs of the thighs from inside out. Work your way up the backs of the thighs to the flesh of the buttocks, spreading them to the sides. Be seated on the inner edges of the buttock bones. Observe if the back at the region of the kidneys (around the waist/bottom ribcage) is hard or not. If so, move the outer sides of the hips down and align the shoulders, bottom of the ribcage, and pelvis. Do not throw the bottom ribs of the chest forward. In the pose, see that the axis of the spine remains in the center. Don't tilt to one side or the other. The shoulders should be level, evenly away from the ears.

TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each side for two to three repetitions.







fig 3.28b



ACTIONS: Extend the arms in urdhva hastasana to lift the sides of the chest. Lift the base of the sternum up, the top of the sternum forward, and the trapezius down. Descend the backs of the thighs. Lift the sacrum up. Raise the dorsal in and up (3.28a). Turn towards the backrest (3.28b). Place the heel of the close hand on the front arm of the chair to push the shoulder back, away from the chair. Place the other heel of the hand behind the arm of the chair in order to pull the chest forward (3.28c, shown turning to the left). Raise the elbows slightly out to the sides so the side chest can open and lift. Don't turn the head straight away. Turn the head in the opposite direction to further the rotation of the chest (3.28d). Then, keep the chin in line with the sternum. Raise all four sides of the spine. Press on the inner edge of the left buttock bone so that the seat remains even as you turn. Descend the outer side of the left hip and femur head. Raise the sides of the chest. Move the right shoulder back and the left chest forward. Move the left side of the dorsal ribcage forward to the front chest. Lift the sides of the navel. Revolve the lower abdomen from the basin of the left pelvis to the right, the navel from left to right, the chest from left to right. Observe the basin of the pelvis, inside the body. Observe the ovaries, the area on each side of the pubis inside. Align them equidistant from the pelvic basin and uterus. Then mentally and energetically revolve them around the uterus from left to right. Repeat this action with the kidneys and lungs. You can also revolve the liver and stomach around the axis of the spine. Repeat these actions on the other side. On the last repetition, raise the cervical spine further, and slightly in, and turn from the back of the head and neck to look over the shoulder (3.28e). Do not harden the front of the neck.

BENEFITS: This pose is very good for the back, neck, and shoulders. Circulation is brought to the tissues around the spine and may ease backache. The opening of the shoulders may correct the posture and drain blocked sinus cavities. Headache caused by muscle tension may abate with practice of this pose. The twisting of the torso squeezes, massages, and tones the organs. The inward focus quiets the mind.







fig 3.28d



fig 3.28e



29. Adho Mukha Paschimottanasana – downward facing western intense pose

PROPS: A chair with a sticky mat on the seat facing the wall and a bolster between the wall and the legs of the chair. If upper wall ropes are available, set up the props between them.

POSITION NOTES: Sit on the edge of the chair seat, first with the feet on the floor, knees bent, and adjust the backs of the thighs and buttocks from inside out (3.29a). Extend the legs hip-width and place the heels on the floor and the toes on the wall with the bolster under the shins near the heels. Straighten the knees completely. The chair may move slightly back to get the correct position. First, climb the hands up on the wall until the arms are straight in urdhva hasta dandasana (3.29b). Alternatively, hold the upper ropes (3.29c). Then, bend forward over the legs by climbing the hands down the wall to your capacity, holding the feet if you can reach them (3.29d).



fig 3.29a



fig 3.29b



TIME: Thirty seconds to one minute each position.

ACTIONS: Holding the ropes or climbing the hands up the wall, extend the arms and lift the sides, front, and back of the chest. Soften the abdomen and allow it to go to the back body. Lift the sides of the navel to raise the spine further. Extend the buttock bones back. The chair may have to move further back; the sticky mat on the seat of the chair will keep the buttocks from slipping off. Descend the heels into the floor and press the shinbones into the bolster. Then climb the hands down the wall and bend over the legs, pressing the heels and shins more. Extend the buttock bones and backs of the inner groins further back. Broaden the backs of the calves and extend them to the heels. Broaden the backs of the thighs as well. Don't harden the abdomen as you release the torso down the legs. Lengthen the lower ribs away from the abdomen. Lengthen the sternum.

BENEFITS: This variation of paschimottanasana is more intense. The backs of the legs are fully opened and lengthened. The abdominal organs are exercised. The feet are stretched. This is a good variation for those with plantar fasciitis (calcification of tissue on the soles of the feet).



fig 3.29c



fig 3.29d



30. Paripurna Navasana - full boat pose

PROPS: Place the short end of a four-folded sticky mat at the wall. If the legs and hips are flexible, have the back of the chair facing the wall in front of the sticky. If the legs are not yet supple, have the seat of the chair facing the wall and two belts within arms reach. Additionally, have a rolled blanket or roller if the chest cannot lift in the pose.

POSITION NOTES: Sit on the sticky mat and support the upper back on the wall. Have approximately six inches between the buttocks and the wall. Place the backs of the legs on the seat of the chair (3.30a) or the heels on the backrest of the chair (3.30b). Hold the seat of the chair with the hands and extend the arms straight. If the legs are pushing the chair away because they are stiff, place one strap on the soles of the feet and a second one around the chair, and hold both straps firmly to keep the chair and legs in position. If the chest is sinking, place a rolled blanket or roller behind the dorsal (3.30c).



fig 3.30a



fig 3.30b



TIME: Thirty seconds to two minutes, according to capacity.

ACTIONS: Broaden the backs of the legs and strongly extend the feet up. Soften the abdomen completely. Mentally draw a line between the sacrum and sternum bones, and maximize the space between these two points. Lift the anterior sacrum up to the sternum and the posterior sternum up to the chin. Move the trapezius down. Soften the head, facial muscles, and neck completely, and focus your attention inward as you go on lifting the sacrum and chest up. Bring your awareness to the basin of the pelvis. Observe the ovaries. Soften that region as you strongly lift the sacrum and sternum. Then, release the ovaries to the basin of the pelvis. Repeat this process until the ovaries no longer feel like they are climbing up. Then lift the sides of the navel.

BENEFITS: This is a very good pose for correcting a prolapsed uterus. Awareness of the organs is enhanced. Circulation of the abdominal organs is increased.



fig 3.30c



31. Viparita Karani Upavistha Konasana - going to reverse scated angle pose

props: Sticky mat, three to four blankets, one to two blocks, one to two bolsters. A long belt, or two regular belts buckled together in one loop.

The prop set-up has many variations.

Lay a sticky mat lengthwise from the wall. Place a block, the second height, along the wall and a tri-folded blanket about six inches from the block, across the mat. Slant a bolster on the blanket, down into the block, and set a folded blanket on both. Lay another blanket in front of the bolster on the mat and a folded blanket for the head (3.31a). You may add more blankets to support the head and shoulders higher. This is the basic set-up.

If the arrangement described above does not elevate the dorsal chest, increase the height of the props. Stand two blocks side-by-side, their highest height, up against the wall. Stack two bolsters on top of the three-fold (3.31b). For those who have a long torso, the distance of the set-up from the wall is increased. Position a block, the lowest height, lengthwise away from the wall (3.31c, shown without the blanket on top). You may also have two blocks to add a second bolster for more height from the floor for this position (3.31d).

Those who are quite open from having practiced yoga regularly may want to have the bolster further from the wall and/or higher. If someone is stiff, add more height for the thoracic chest to lift and drape down, and increase the height under the shoulders and head so the head doesn't drop back. It is incorrect to reduce the height to accommodate a stiff body, as the chest will cave in and not get the proper opening. Many combinations of height from the floor and length from the wall are possible. Experiment to determine what works best.



fig 3.31a



fig 3.31b



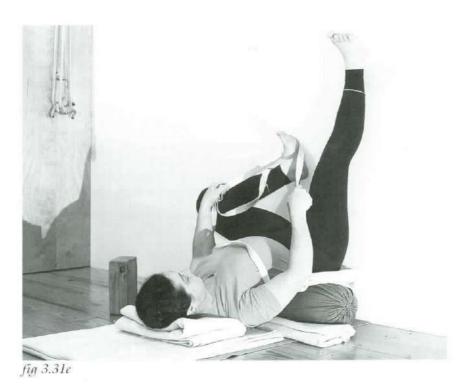
fig 3.31c



fig 3.31d



POSITION NOTES: This pose and the next two are to be practiced consecutively. To prepare, please read through swastikasana savasana, number 33, before beginning this pose. There are three possible entries into the pose. See Chapter 2, page 106 for a complete description. If ropes are available, place the props between a set. Hold the handles of the upper ropes. Step one foot up on the wall, then the other; bending the knees, bring the buttocks to the wall. One-by-one, bring the hands to the lower rope and the buttocks down the wall to the bolster. Lift the back chest up and tuck the shoulder blades in as you bring the shoulders to the blanket on the floor. If ropes are not available, an alternative entry is sitting sideways on the very end of the bolster with the left side of the body to the wall. Bring the right shoulder to the floor with the knees bent and the buttocks to the wall. Roll onto your back and take the legs up the wall.



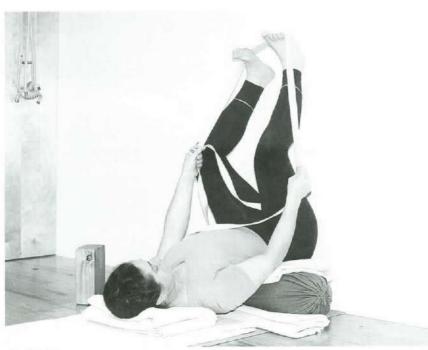


fig 3.31f



Another entry, for those who are experienced practitioners, is to roll forward into position. Place the hands on the blanket in front of the bolster and place the head where you know it should end up. Better to be close to the bolster to position yourself very snug with the buttocks to the wall. Then, lift the knees and buttocks up, round the back, tuck the chin to the chest, and slowly roll onto the back, lightly bringing the buttocks and feet on the wall. Control the movement with the hands and arms. Lower the buttocks down the wall to the final position (refer to Chapter 2, figures under 2.exceeds-13, page 108). Whichever way you come into position, once there, catch the belt onto the feet and separate the legs to upavistha konasana with the belt holding the feet (3.31e, f). For those who are flexible, don't go too far separating the legs. They should be held in somewhat by the belt. Then release the hands and arms to the sides (3.31g).

TIME: Three to ten minutes.

ACTIONS: Observe how the leg position opens the inner thighs and lengthens the sacrum. Close the eyes and rest completely.

BENEFITS: The uterus is dried. Irritation and itching are arrested, and the discharge after menses is controlled.



fig 3.31g



32. Viparita Karani Baddha Konasana - going to reverse bound angle pose

PROPS: As for viparita karani upavistha konasana.

POSITION NOTES: Let the belt release from the feet as you bend the knees out to the sides and bring the soles of the feet together (3.32a). You may also adjust the feet apart (3.32b) or place a block between them for a greater opening of the inner thighs and pelvis (3.32c, d). To come down from the pose, slide the buttocks off the bolster to the floor, using your hands on the bolster and feet on the wall with the knees bent to push yourself down.

TIME: Three to ten minutes.

ACTIONS: Observe how the leg position opens the hip bones and the organs are lengthened inside. Close the eyes and rest.

BENEFITS: In addition to the effects of viparita karani with upavistha konasana, the opening created by the leg position lessens any heat generated by the weight of the legs upward. The pose is deeply restful and quieting to the body and mind.



fig 3.32a





fig 3.32c



fig 3.32d



33. Swastikasana Savasana – well-being corpse pose

PROPS: As for viparita karnni sarvangasana/baddha konasana (number 32). You may fold a blanket under the neck and head if the head is falling back.

POSITION NOTES: After sliding down from the previous position, cross the legs on the bolster with the buttocks on the floor. Rest the hands on the abdomen or out to the sides.

TIME: Five minutes.

ACTIONS: Release the inner thighs and groins. Let go the legs completely. Release the back and buttocks, rest the abdomen, close the eyes, and soften the facial muscles completely. Look inwards, without hardening the eyes. Keep the mind present by focusing on the breath. When the mind remains fixed inward, release the attention to the breath and fully surrender to the silence within.

BENEFITS: Uterine prolapse, bulkiness, heaviness, and retroversion are avoided. The body and mind come to rest utterly and completely. Peace and well-being will stay with you from practice to practice.

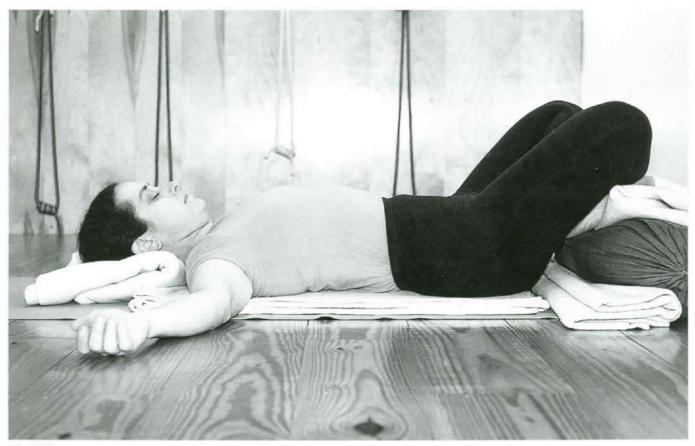


fig 3.33



Pictorial Summary of Sequence for Post-Menstruation



1. Adho Mukha Virasana



2. Adho Mukha Svanasana



3. Uttanasana



4. Parsvottanasana



5. Prasarita Padottanasana



6. Salamba Sirsasana I



7. Uttanasana



8. Salamba Adho Mukha Vajrasana



9. Salamba Uttanasana



10. Prasarita Padottanasana



11. Uttanasana



12. Parsvottanasana



13. Janu Sirsasana



14. Paschimottanasana



15. Ardha Halasana



16. Niralamba Sarvangasana



17. Supta Konasana



18. Halasana



19. Salamba Sarvangasana I



20. Paschimottanasana





21. Janu Sirsasana



22. Niralamba Sarvangasana



23. Ardha Supta Konasana



24. Akunchasana in Niralamba Sarvangasana



25. Salamba Sarvangasana



26. Viparita Karani Sarvangasana



27. Adho Mukha Swastikasana



28. Bharadvajasana



29. Adho Mukha Paschimottanasana



30. Paripurna Navasana



31. Viparita Karani Upavistha Konasana



32. Viparita Karani Baddha Konasana



33. Swastikasana Savasana



Pranayama Practices Post-Menstruation

You may resume your regular pranayama exercises. If you are a novice, repeat the practices suggested in Chapter 1, (page 54) lying in savasana on a bolster. Experienced practitioners, who regularly study with a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher, may add ujjayii and viloma inhalations as described in Light on Pranayama and Yoga: A Gem for Women. Seated variations of these practices may be done at the wall or independent. For women in their menopausal years who are experiencing hot flashes, take the support of the wall while sitting.

In the wintertime, the body, down to its very core, can get cold. The following practices may be attempted before seated pranayama.

1. Supta Baddha Konasana – supine bound angle pose

PROPS: A bolster to place horizontally for the back(s), a belt for the legs, a rolled blanket for behind the neck (3.pranayama-1a). To intensify the opening of the groins and pelvis, use a belt on each leg (3.pranayama-1b)

POSITION NOTES: The belt should be tight. The blanket is behind the neck, so the head is slightly tilted back but not hard. The arms extend out to the sides with the shoulder blades tucked into the back.

TIME: Five minutes.

ACTIONS: Release the inner thighs to the knees and allow the groins to open. Roll the inner upper arms out and allow the armpit chest to release. Soften the facial muscles. With the head slightly back, release the lower forehead to the upper forehead. Move the cheeks from the bottom to the top, toward the eyes, and allow the nasal membranes to move to the roof of the nose. Gently inhale so that the nostrils spread and open to the space outside. Feel the touch of the breath reaching the membranes. Observe the neck inside. The front of the throat should not drop to the back of the throat. Allow the breath to gently open the inner front wall of the throat towards the skin. Guide your attention to the chest. As you slowly inhale, with the back spread across the bolster, allow the chest and sternum to open and spread. Observe the demarcation of the thoracic chest from the abdomen. Let the abdomen spread to the sides on the gentle inhalations, and release to the back body on the exhalations. Then switch over to the normal breath and be calm and guiet.

BENEFITS: The nerve ends of the nasal membranes clear and become sensitive. Space opens in the throat and thoracic chest. The abdomen recedes and the mind becomes quiet and prepared for further exploration of the vast space inside.







3. pranayama-1b



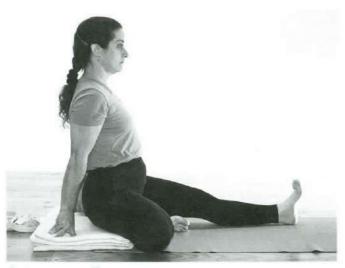
2. Maha Mudra - great seal

PROPS: Blanket or bolster for the seat. Belt for the foot.

POSITION NOTES: Some points are given here, but it is very important to learn maha mudra under the guidance of a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher before attempting on your own.

This is a cold-weather practice, as it heats the body. Start with the left leg straight and the right leg bent to the side. The sole of the right foot touches the inner left thigh: the contact of the foot has to be against the thigh, unlike janu sirsasana, in order for the pelvis and abdominal region to be balanced and level. The spine has to lift and come inwards, so sit on enough support that the sacrum lifts. Place the palms by the sides of the trunk on the blanket or bolster support. Lift the buttocks up and descend the bent knee (3.pranayama-2a), then place the buttocks back down. If the knee ascends after bringing the buttocks down, sit higher. Double the strap, so it is thick. Place it around the ball of the extended leg foot, and hold it with straight arms (3.pranayama-2b). Then, after completing the three cycles, change sides, right leg straight, left leg bent.

TIME: Not a timed pose. Do the three repetitions as described in the actions on one side. Repeat on the other side.



3. pranayama-2a



3. pranayama-2b



ACTIONS: Lengthen and extend the straight leg. The inner edge of the foot of the bent leg actively presses into the thigh, while the outer edge of the foot is curved away from the thigh. To create and maintain the concavity of the back, vigorously raise the sides of the trunk up and move the spinal column in. Lift the sternum. Maintain the height of the side chest as you take the head back (3.pranayama-2c). If the head drops back too much, compressing the back of the neck, you are not raising the sides of the chest, sternum, and spine strongly enough. Bring the head to the center and attempt taking the head back again, slowly, with the resistance of the side ribs lifting. Look up with open eyes. Lift the anterior spine. Turn the biceps from inside out and widen the clavicles. Open the chest further. Create maximum distance between the arms and legs. Close the eyes, slowly bring the head down to jalandhara bandha, chin lock, without dropping the spine. Soften the facial muscles; make the brain cells quiet. Observe the normal breath (3.pranayama-2d). Then, after an exhalation, exhale more completely without hardening the abdomen. Take a deep inhalation. At the end of the inhalation, retain the breath; raise the sides of the trunk strongly (3.pranayama-2e). Hold the breath only as long as you are able. Do not create hardness in the heart center or the head. Then slowly release the breath. Maintain the position with normal breathing before going for the next cycle. On the second repetition, move the sides of the navel in and up. Move the skin to the muscles, muscles to the organs, and organs to the back body. Then lift the thoracic chest more. On the third attempt, observe the bottom back rib region on the bent-knee side. Move that area inward, as that area tends to be loose. The straight-leg side of the body has firmness because you are holding that leg. Move that loose area slightly around to the front, and grip it in more. The abdomen has to come to the center and move upward; however, it shouldn't kick the thoracic chest. Differentiate between the abdomen and thoracic chest. Move the abdomen, from the anal mouth to the sides of the navel, to the back body and upward, then lift the thoracic chest more. Keep the head stable, quiet, and passive. Release the abdomen first, then the breath. Gently release the chest, return to the normal breath. Gently raise the head up, open the eyes, and remain quiet (3.pranayama-2f).

BENEFITS: Maha mudra heats the body. It tones the abdominal organs and may correct prolapsed uterus and an incontinent bladder. The lower spine gets lifted. This is good preparation for moving from the gross or causal body to the subtle body.



3. pranayama-2c



3. pranayama-2e



3. pranayama-2d



3. pranayama-2f

3. Adho Mukha Savasana - downward facing corpse pose

PROPS: Mat, bolster or blanket for the forehead.

POSITION NOTES: Lie on your abdomen. Rest the forehead on the bolster (3.pranayama-3a). If your shoulders are coming up, roll a blanket for the forehead instead of using the bolster (3.pranayama-3b); be sure that the cervical vertebrae are dipping downward to the floor. Then, release the shoulder blades apart. The hands are on the bolster beside the head with the elbows bent to the sides. Roll the front thighs inward, toes inward, and separate the legs until the heels are to the outer edges of the mat. There should be space between the inner upper thighs. See that the front body is not uneven, crumpled, on the floor. The left chest should go to the left and right chest to the right. The bottom chest moves toward the upper chest, not to the abdomen.

ACTIONS: Let go the whole of the posterior body to the anterior body. Allow the spinal muscles to release downward. Spread the ribs. Feel yourself resting on the fronts of the thighs. Let go the baby toe sides of the feet to the floor. Soften the buttocks downward. Observe the breath: it tends to lift the lumbar and buttocks. Breathe normally, but without disturbing the buttocks and lumbar. Let them also drop to the anterior body. Releasing all the tensions from the spine, both physical and mental, allow it to descend. Free the abdomen upward from the pubis and the anus downward toward the legs. Release the bottom ribs from the abdomen up towards the chest and sideways. Allow the anal mouth to aerate. Even though the breath is normal, observe that the exhalations are longer than the inhalations. As the pose progresses, watch how the back becomes soft.

BENEFITS: Having practiced savasana regularly, you have observed and learned how to release the front body to the back body. In this variation, it is reversed. With time in the pose, the posterior body will move from a rigid nature to a smooth one. This pose is helpful after maha mudra to release any hardness that was created, as well as to train the back to remain soft for seated practices of pranayama, as there may be a tendency to harden the lumbar and neck excessively. The kidneys and advenals get especially hard. The intelligence of the smoothness created in the back may be applied to swastikasana for further, seated, pranayama.



3. pranayama-3a



3. pranayama-3b

