

Courtesy of:

Intermediate Level Practice

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Sequence created & modeled by: Becky Lloyd, Intermediate Junior III CIYT, New Orleans, LA

Photography: Susanne Bulington, Introductory I-II CIYT, Meadville, MS

Becky Lloyd is the director and lead teacher at Audubon Yoga Studio in New Orleans, which she opened in 2000. She studies regularly with Patricia Walden, Rebecca and Dean Lerner, and Randy Just. Karin O'Bannon, who began the teacher training program at Audubon Yoga Studio, was her mentor for six years. Becky assists and mentors students in the teacher training program that Randy Just now conducts at Audubon Yoga Studio.

Becky received a BA in music and considers the sequencing of asana like a composition in which the body and mind are taken through stages of movement and stability with the goal of connecting with our Divine nature. For more information go to audubonyoga.com

Approximate Time: 1.5 – 2 Hours

Props required: belt, block, wall, blankets for *Sarvangasana*

This intermediate level sequence leads to *Urdhva Padmasana*. The support suggested in this sequence allows one to stay in the poses for longer periods of time and observe the changes taking place in the hips and groins. Hold each asana for approximately 1 minute each side. Starting with *Eka Pada Bhekasana*, repeat each asana twice. Repeat the standing poses the second time with or without support- if you decide to do without support, see if you can achieve the same stability, firmness, and extension that the support provided. Inversions 5-10 minutes as able.

ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA



Press the hands down to move groins and outer hips back and down.

Keep the hips grounded as you walk the hands forward to lengthen the sides of the waist, ribs and chest. Move the dorsal spine in.

If your head doesn't reach the floor, place a blanket or block under the forehead.

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA



Press down through palms and move the chest and ribs up toward the thighs.

Take the center of the thighs and the ankle hinges back to create more length in the trunk.

Spread the backs of the thighs and pin the outer hips in- feel the space this creates in the abdomen.

Elongate the arches by extending from the balls of the toes to the heels.

UTTANASANA



See that your heels and soles of the feet are broad on the floor- use your hands as needed.

Spread the backs of the thighs from the inside out as you press the inner heels down and pin the outer hips in.

Use your exhalations to spread the abdomen and extend the trunk down.

EKA PADA BHEKASANA



Before catching the foot, lift the right knee off the floor and lengthen the front of the right thigh to the knee.

Bring the left forearm in front of your chest and press the left forearm down to lift the chest up.

Bend the right leg and catch the inner edge of the foot. Turn the hand so the fingers face in the same direction as your toes (if this isn't possible it is ok to have your fingers facing back or facing the side wall).

Press the heel of the hand on the root (base) of the toes so that the front of the foot is well stretched.

Simultaneously take the tailbone into the body toward the floor and press the right foot down to the floor.

This pose opens the front of the thigh and provides a nice stretch for the ankle and top foot to prepare for *Padmasana*.

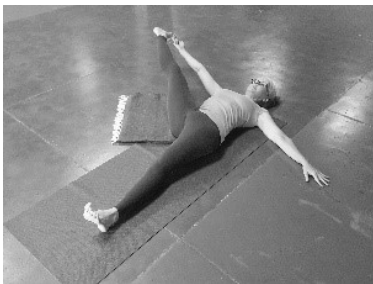
BADDHA KONASANA



Lean to the left and with your right hand roll the right thigh out and extend the right thigh and knee away from the right hip.

Repeat on the other side.

**SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA 2
(with blanket)**



Place a blanket (folded as you would for Sarvangasana) under the right buttock. Have the corner of the blanket angled in toward your tailbone.

Keep the left thigh pressing down as you draw the right femur in and take the right leg to the side. Feel how the blanket helps bring the right buttock into the body to open the right groin more.

Extend the heels away from one another. Circularize the right outer hip away from the waist.

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA



With the right hand in front of the ankle, press your right arm into your right knee to keep the knee back as you move the right outer hip and buttock into the body. Recall the imprint of the blanket under your right buttock in *Supta Padangusthasana*.

Maintain the lift of the left thigh as you press it back to fully open the right groin and lengthen the inner right thigh.

VRKSASANA



Placing your right knee at a wall can help bring more compactness to the hips and open the right groin more.

When placing the knee at the wall see that your hip bones are equidistant from the wall in front of you. If you take your knee too far back, your standing leg hip and thigh will be too far forward. Your right knee should be a little forward of your right hip, not in line with it.

As the knee is stabilized against the wall, draw the right buttock down and into the body. Make sure to keep the standing leg thigh up and back as you did in the previous 2 poses.

*UTTHITA PARSVA HASTA
PADANGUSTHASANA*



Keep the left thigh lifting and moving back as you take the right foot up on to the wall or ledge (photo shows opposite).

Press through the inner left heel to pin the left hip in.

Circularize the right buttock down toward the floor and move it forward to open the right groin.

Maintain the length of the top buttocks toward the floor as you lift the side ribs and chest

ARDHA CHANDRASANA



Come to *Ardha Chandrasana* with the left foot at the wall (photo shows opposite). See that the right ankle and hip is in line. Use a block for the hand as needed.

Bend the right leg slightly and simultaneously rotate the knee and thigh out, press the right buttock forward and drive the left foot into the wall. Maintain all of that and straighten your standing leg.

Keeping the left foot in place resist the inner left thigh up toward the ceiling to pin the outer left hip in. Keep the center buttocks moving into the body.

UTTANASANA



SIRSASANA



5-10 minutes as able. Be near a wall as needed.

Observe the effect of the standing poses in *Sirsasana*. You may feel lightness in the legs from the opening of the inner groins and thighs in the previous asanas.

ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA



ARDHA MATSYASANA



Lie on your back with the legs bent and feet flat on the floor.

Bring the right foot to the left thigh crease as you circularize the right thigh and knee out and away from the hip. Hold the right foot from underneath with your left hand.

Straighten the left leg on to the floor and continue to lengthen the right knee away from the hip. Use the loop of a belt to hold your foot if you are distorting the trunk to reach the foot.

If you are able to let go of the foot, hold the sides of the mat and push the mat away to draw your shoulder blades and buttocks down toward the left foot. If your knee is high, just continue to hold the foot with your hand and allow gravity to release the knee toward the floor.

Keep the right knee extending away from the hip and down. See that your front ribs don't poke toward the ceiling! Repeat on both sides.

MATSYASANA



Lie down with the legs bent and feet flat on the floor.

Follow the steps from the last pose and bring the right foot into the left thigh crease.

Extend the right knee away as you bring the left foot toward the right thigh crease. Use your hands as needed to help bring the left foot into *Padmasana*, but do not force! If your left foot cannot come into that position, take it under your right knee and use a belt as a figure 8 so that the loop of the belt binds the left foot to the right thigh and the other loop of the figure 8 goes around the left knee and thigh. Tighten the belt for compactness.

If *Padmasana* is coming easily, practice bringing the legs into *Padmasana* without the use of your hands! This plants the seeds for taking the legs into *Padmasana* in *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana*.

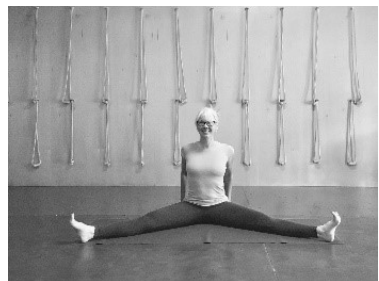
Hold the sides of the mat and extend the knees away from the hips as the buttocks move toward the knees and into the body. Roll the upper arms out so your dorsal spine moves in.

If you are in *Padmasana*, hold the feet from underneath and press the upper arms down as you extend the knees away from the hips. This helps to ground the femurs, so the knees come lower. Lift the chest by pressing the upper arms into the floor. Watch that you don't poke the front ribs to the ceiling.

Modification: *Ardha Padmasana* or *Swastikasana*. Use a belt as a figure 8 to bind the left foot to the right thigh and the right foot to the left thigh.

Then extend your arms over head as the knees reach in the opposite direction.

UPAVISTHA KONASANA



Spread the backs of the thighs so the mid-line of the thighs and knees face the ceiling.

Press the root of the thighs down as you lift the sides of the trunk up. Extend from the inner thighs to the inner heels.

As you keep the inner thighs descending, draw back from the outer heels to the hips to keep the outer hips grounded and pinned in. Feel how this spreads the abdomen.

PADMASANA PREP



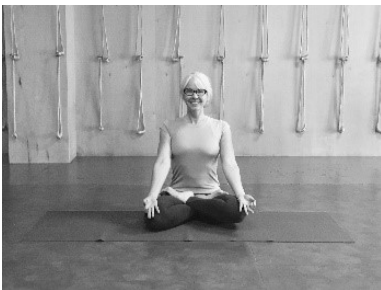
From *Upavistha Konasana*, hold the inside of your left knee with your hand, turn the knee and thigh out as you bend the knee and bring the left foot in front of the pubis.

With your right hand turn the bottom of the left foot toward the ceiling.

Now do the same with the right leg, using your left hand to turn the bottom of the right foot toward the ceiling and bring it in front of the left foot. Keep the feet soft and the knees low.

Then reach under the right foot and ankle with both hands and bring it on top of the arch of the left foot. The feet make the shape of an X with the soles of the feet facing the ceiling. The knees are wide, and the outer femurs move in. This is a wonderful prep for *Siddhasana* and *Padmasana*. (See Intermediate Course, pl 15.a.4)

PADMASANA



From a loose *Upavistha Konasana* (legs closer together), bring the right foot in front of the pubis as you did in the last pose. Reach under the right foot with the left hand and the right ankle with the right hand and lift the heel toward the navel as you keep the right knee low. Lean to the right a little to lower the knee. Keep the foot soft as you bring it on top of the left thigh. Then bring the left foot in front of the right knee. If the knee is low, reach under the left foot and ankle and bring it on to the right thigh into the right thigh crease. If the right knee is high, then place the left foot under the right knee and be in *Ardha Padmasana* (half lotus pose).

SETU BANDHA (BLOCK)



This pose helps prepare the body for *Urdhva Padmasana* by taking our sacrum into the body and opening the fronts of the thighs. These actions increase as we take the legs into *Padmasana* with our sacrum supported on the brick.

Stay 3-5 minutes.

Ardha Padmasana in Setu Bandha,
Stage 1 (leg bent)



Bend both legs taking the feet onto the floor. If able, bring the left foot into the right thigh crease and extend the left knee away from the hip.

If this is not available to you at this time, stay in *Setu Bandha* for 5 minutes.

If this is coming, but you don't want to go further, release the left leg and repeat taking the right leg into *Ardha Padmasana*. Keep in mind all of the actions you have been doing up to this point.

*UTTANA PADMA
MAYURASANA*
(with the support of a block under
the sacrum)



If you want to go further, bend both knees with the feet flat on the floor. Bring left foot into the right thigh crease by holding the foot from underneath with the right hand. Turn the sole of the foot toward the ceiling.

Bring the knees up toward the ceiling and as you extend the left knee away from the hip bring the right foot over the left knee into *Padmasana*. Use your left hand to help bring the foot up and turn the foot toward the ceiling.

Then, hold the sides of the mat (not shown), roll the shoulders under, and lower the knees by extending from the inner groins to the knees.

Stay for 30 seconds to a 1 minute, gradually build up to longer holds over time.

Repeat twice if you are able.

The breath might quicken until one has practiced this for a while.

Look at plate 267 in *Light on Yoga* to imprint Gururji's image in your mind as you practice this version! (You can see how far I have to go!)

Return to *Setu Bandha* and notice the increased freedom!

I was first introduced to this pose in India in several of Prashant's classes and it was a game changer for me as it has always been difficult for me to move my sacrum in. It is still a challenge, but a regular practice of this pose has helped a lot.

HALASANA



Press the outer upper arms down to lift the sides of the chest up.

Lift the inner thighs and knees toward the ceiling to lift the trunk up even further.

Lengthen from the inner thighs to the inner heels as you lift the outer hips up.

SARVANGASANA



Press the outer upper arms down as you move the back ribs in and up.

Keep the sacrum moving in to the body as you press the thighs back. Feel the imprint of the block from Setu Bandha.

Roll the fronts of the thighs in and extend from the inner thighs to the inner heels.

URDHVA PADMASANA



Roll the left thigh out and bring the left foot into the right thigh crease. To get the foot down, turn the right thigh out a little and saw the right leg and left foot back and forth working the left foot down into the right thigh crease. You can also use your right hand to reach up and draw the left foot down.

Then extend the left knee up and bring the right foot over toward the left top thigh. If you can't quite get the right foot over the left knee, then lower the knees toward your face and use your left hand to draw the foot over the knee. **DON'T FORCE!**

Modification: You can work on this one leg at a time if coming to full Padmasana isn't available yet. After doing one leg at a time, then take your legs into Baddha Konasana.

Press the outer feet into the root of the thighs as you lift the knees up and back.

Have the memory of the block under your sacrum in Setu Bandha and move the sacrum in and extend the knees up and back. Draw the hamstrings toward your buttocks to increase this action.

SAVASANA

