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Intermediate Level Practice

June 2017



Sequence created and modeled by:

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Photography:

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Suzie Muchnick holds an Intermediate Jr. III Iyengar Yoga teaching certificate since 1997. Originally from Far Rockaway, NY, Suzie moved to Coconut Grove, Florida in 1981 and then to Naples, Florida in 1985 where she opened her third school, Postures (The B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Center of Southwest FL, Inc.). Her primary American teachers are Manouso Manos, Joan White, and Patricia Walden. Since 1985, she has returned to India annually to study with the Iyengars. Recently, she is studying with Arun H.S. in Bangalore and the United States. For more information about Suzie and her classes, go to her website www.postures.com

At the beginning of every year I chose a theme. This year it is *VIRYA*. I consider so many different things before I choose the theme and this year I was struck by the issues of students in my community. They, we, are all aging. For some the process is harder than for others. I have my unproven theories, and as I use myself as the beneficiary of my practice, I think my demographic sample is affected by the lack of *Virya*.

There are several definitions of *Virya*, but as you all know, translating Sanskrit to English is not exact. Still we can see the root of this word: *vir*. In Latin, it means “man” or “hero” and is translated that way in Vedic texts too. I’m practical though, so for me it means: virility, strength, energy and I see these attributes being lost in the aging population. There is more of a laziness, a giving up, resigning to defeat or failure. It’s not only a physical laziness. It’s mental laziness too.

Things we missed in our early practice years we refuse to learn. For example, learning where you are in Space is as elusive as the element of Ether, especially in back extensions and inversions. What goes up and what comes down? What is in and what is out? Those are the questions that I put to myself as I practice.

When I was younger, dropping back from Sarvangasana was easy, but as the arthritis in my thumb and wrist weakened me, dropping back was not so much fun anymore. As I learned though in teaching this asana to much younger students, it turns out that even younger practitioners were having trouble. Why can’t I support myself in the thoracic back as Guruji did? Finally, I was given a route, by Arun H.S., to ultimately practice this pose with ease and comfort. After all isn’t our motto: *sthira sukham asanam*?

Here is the sequence I’ve composed based on Arun’s help. I’ve learned a lot about myself and instead of feeling defeated or frustrated for any diminished ability I feel hopeful and excited.

Approximate Time: 1.5 – 2 hours

Props required: mat, belt, 2 blocks, chair, 3-4 blankets

Prasārita Pādottānāsana,
arms in *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*



- Maintain the legs perpendicular to the floor
- From *Prasārita Pādottānāsana I*, walk the hands forward
- Extend the sides of the chest
- Straighten the elbows as the side ribs move to the armpits as the head comes to the folded blanket(s).

Śirsāsana



- Come into the pose with the knees bent.
- Maintain the actions of the arms, shoulders and shoulder blades to expand and extend the chest.
- Bring the thighs to the chest & heels to the buttocks
- Exhale and take the knees toward the ceiling; keep the heels as close to the buttocks as possible
- Extend the knees and open the soles of the feet to the ceiling to extend the ball mound of the big toes.

Adho Mukha Virāsana



- Extend the shin on the floor.
- Stretch the elbows, separate the collarbones, and turn the upper arms so that the biceps move up toward ceiling and the triceps move toward the floor.

Bharadvājāsana I



- Hold the foot with the back hand
- Hold the outer thigh with the forward hand and bend the elbows in opposite directions to further open and lift the chest cavity
- Keep the shoulders on the same plane as you lift the sides of the trunk
- Maintain the base by keeping the navel in the center of the trunk.
- Repeat on the other side.

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana



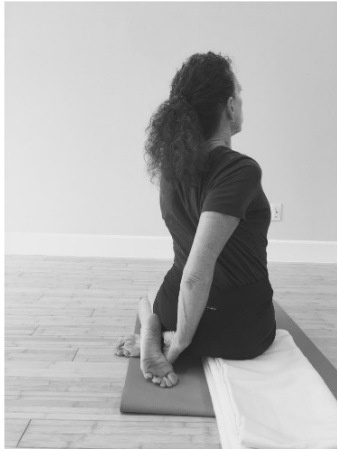
1.

- With belted thighs from *Virāsana* on an open blanket.
- With a chair at the far end of the mat.
- As you open the back of the knees, swing the hips forward and place the pubis on the blanket and the elbows on the chair seat.

2.

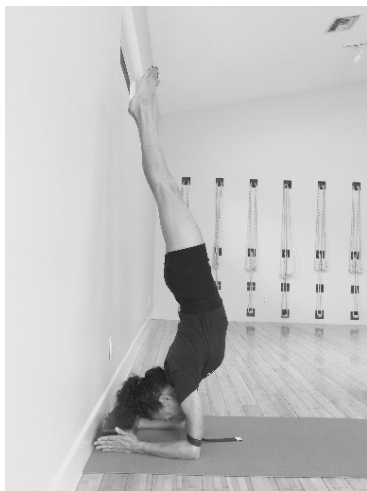
- Blankets under the base of the shin and the pubis.
- Palms in line with the waist.
- As the palms press down, as the pubis presses into the blanket, reach the inner feet back, lift the inner knees up.
- Straighten the elbows & lift the front chest & take the shoulders back.
- To move the chest through the arms, flex the elbows back, lift the bicep to the shoulder and take the outer shoulder back further.
- Do a few times to draw the front body forward and up.

Bharadvājāsana I



- Hold the foot with the back hand
- Hold the outer thigh with the forward hand and bend the elbows in opposite directions to further open and lift the chest cavity
- Keep the shoulders on the same plane as you lift the sides of the trunk
- Maintain the base by keeping the navel in the center of the trunk.
- Repeat on the other side.

Pincha Mayūrāsana



- Arms belted above the elbow.
- Palms on the side face of the brick.
- Move the triceps away from the wall.
- Lift the buttocks to the heels.

Kapotasana variation through to
Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana



1.

- Blanket open on the mat under the shins.
- Heels in line with the knees in line with the hips.
- Lean back on the front edge of the chair seat & lay the back of the ribcage on the chair seat in so far as is possible.
- Stretch the arms through the back of the chair.
- Lift the hamstrings toward the front thighs and toward the buttocks, move the buttocks toward the backs of the knees.
- Stay for a few breaths.



2.

- Lift the knees from the floor and stand on the feet.
- Slide over the chair until the tips of the shoulder blades are on the back edge of the chair and the sacrum is on the chair seat.
- Adjusting the arms for *Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana* is difficult. Use one arm to adjust the other to achieve the proper rotation.
- Reach to the horizontal bar between the back legs of the chair; hold.
- Lift the heels and slide until the elbows dip below the back bar.
- Release the hands from the bar and hold the sides of the chair. Slide the head toward the floor, allowing the shoulders to sink toward the floor.
- Bend the elbows and bring the hands back in line with the shoulders toward the chair legs.
- Interlace the fingers behind the head. Bring the crown of the head to the floor. Arms in *Sirsasana*. Legs extended.
- Bring the heels to the front edge of the chair seat.
- Release the hands and bring the hands to the legs of the chair as before.
- Feed the body to the ground through the back of the chair until it come to rest on the floor. Legs rest on the chair seat.

Setu Bandha (bent legs) through *Virparita Karani* to *Setu Bandha* (extended legs)



- Shoulders and head on 2-3 blankets.
- Supported on two bricks at the kidneys.
- Legs belted just above the knees.
- Side buttocks and hamstrings are actively lifting up.
- Arches of the feet press down.

Then:

- Bring knees to the chest; keep the feet active as if in *Tadāsana*.
- Extend the knees; feet open to the ceiling.
- Bend the legs and stomp the feet to the floor.
- After dropping back into bent knees, *Setu Bandhasana*, if you have the capacity, stretch the legs out.
- Bend legs. Extend legs back up toward the ceiling. Repeat 5 or 6 times.