



Sequence created and modeled by Susan Marcus, Intermediate Junior II CIYT, Sarasota, FL
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Tricia Amheiser has been practicing yoga since the mid-nineties. She began her practice of Iyengar Yoga in 2002 and became a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher (CIYT) in 2010 in the UK. After establishing her home in the USA, she has continued the vigorous process of training and assessment and has passed the Intermediate Junior level of certification in August 2016. She has also been fortunate to have attained certification by International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT).

Susan Marcus, PhD, CIYT, C-IAYT has been studying Iyengar yoga since 1989 and is currently certified at the Intermediate Junior II level. She has completed more than 2000 hours of Iyengar Continuing Education. Her teachers include Suzie Muchnick, Lois Steinberg, Manouso Manos, Linda DiCarlo, and Sri H.S. Arun. Sue has studied with the Iyengars in Pune at RIMYI, and in Bangalore with Sri Arun. Sue participated as an instructor and co-author of a pilot study of Iyengar yoga for Aromatase Inhibitor-associated Joint Pain in Women recovering from breast cancer, conducted at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL. Sue brings dedication, enthusiasm, and humor to her teaching, which encourages students to develop their skills and enhance their understanding of yoga as a path for self-understanding, self-improvement, and spiritual development. According to Sue, “Your yoga mat is your laboratory for observing who you are in the moment, without judgment or distraction.”

Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana (Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose)

The final stage of *Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana* [Light on Yoga (LOY), plate 23] is a standing pose that requires balance, strength, and stamina.

Elements of the pose are:

Tadāsana (Mountain Pose) legs, abdominal strength, compact hips, extension of the trunk, and arm strength to bring and hold your leg up while you bring your head beyond the knee while balancing on one leg.

The following sequence is designed to awaken the correct actions and energetic experiences associated with each aspect of the pose. And, at the end, everything is brought together in working towards achieving the final pose.

The process of moving towards the final pose is framed by Guruji's teachings about the practice of asana as meditation in action, integrating concentration, meditation, and absorption (*samayama*).

Approximate Time: 60 to 75 minutes

Props required: 2 blocks; 1 blanket; 1 strap; Wall Ropes, if available

Ūrdhva Prasarīta Padāsana

Upward Extended Feet Pose

LOY, plate 279

Repeat both sides at least 3 time, Holding for 60 seconds

Place a blanket under the hips.

For experienced practitioners:

- Lie flat and extend the arms as in *Urdhva Hastasana* (Arms Overhead), shoulder width apart, with backs of hands on the floor.
- Lengthen the back of the body from the kidneys towards the hands, recede the abdomen towards the spine, press the quadriceps to the thigh bones and tighten the knee caps into the knees, and keep the inner feet lengthening away from the pelvis as in *Supta Tadāsana* (Reclining Mountain Pose).
- Bring both straight legs into the pose, with the legs perpendicular to floor, retaining the *Supta Tadāsana* actions.



Fig(i)

- Breathe evenly.

For those with lower back issues (as in Fig (iii))

- Bend the knees, put a belt on the feet and straighten the legs, using the arms and belt to support the legs.
- Lower the right leg down, retaining the evenness of the hips, the vertical alignment of the up leg, and the actions of *Supta Tadāsana* in the supine leg. Repeat for left side.



Fig(iii)



Fig(ii)

Supta Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana

Reclined Hand to Big Toe Pose



Fig (i)

Place a blanket under the lumbar, shoulders and head, and place foot of the supine leg at the wall.

From *Supta Tadāsana* with the heels at the wall:

For the experienced:

- Maintain the supine leg at the wall, bend the right knee, hold the big toe as you draw the thigh toward the side of the chest keep the waist long and straighten the knee. Keep the *Tadāsana* action of the supine leg, as the front thigh of the raised leg moves away from the arm. (LOY, plate 284). See *Fig(i)*.
- Pull the upper arm bone into the shoulder socket to bring the foot closer and keep the chest broad. See *Fig(ii)*



Fig(ii)



Fig(iii)

For the less experienced:

- Put a belt on the sole of the raised leg foot, hold the belt in both hands and keep the elbows bent, shoulders towards the mat. See *Fig(iii)*.

Supta Pādāngusthāsana,

Bent knee variation



For the experienced:

- Maintain the supine leg.
- Bend the knee of the raised leg and bring the elbow out wide.
- Use the elbow crease of the other arm on the outer ankle to bring the shin parallel to the chest and breath. (LOY, plate 286).
- If possible, interlock the fingers outside of the bent knee shin and hug the shin to the chest, softening the abdomen back and lengthening the back waist towards the head.

For those who cannot hold the foot:

- Use a belt around the foot to extend the range of the arm.
- Come back to the straight leg position. Then, still holding the big toe, lift the back body up, and bring the forehead to the shin

Experienced practitioners:

- Extend the knee once more, keep hold of the big toe, pressurize the front thigh to the back thigh, bend the elbow out wide and lift up the back body or hold either side of the foot, widen the elbows.

For those who cannot hold the foot:

- Hold the belt in both hands, pressurize from the front thigh to the back and on an exhalation, lift up the back body from the mat.

For those who cannot hold the foot:

- Exhale to lift the back body from the mat.

Ubhaya Pādāṅgusthāsana

Pose holding both Big Toes
LOY, plates 167, 168

Hold for 30 seconds
Repeat 2-3 times



- Observe the concentration it takes to maintain the length of the spine, and softness of the abdomen through the strong actions of the arms and legs (*karmendriyas*).
- From *Dandasana*, bend the knees, hook the big toes with the two fingers and thumb, and balance on the buttock bones.
- Pull the arms into the shoulder sockets and turn them out to open the chest and create lift in the side body.
- Exhale to allow the abdomen to recede and lift the sacrum up back to front. Use the inhalation, arms turning out, to lift the side of the chest up and straighten and lift the legs. Press the thighs back and turn the thighs in with kneecaps tight like *Tadāsana*.
- Look past your toes.
- As you breathe, observe the work of the arms to lift the trunk and legs. Observe the opposing actions of arms and legs that create balance and mental stability.
- Repeating the pose strengthens the abdominals.

Akarna Dhanurāsana

Toward the Ear Bow/ Archer's Pose
LOY, plates 173, 175

Hold each side 10 seconds

Repeat 2 or 3 times



Fig (i)

Use of a belt around the feet to extend the arms is optional. The intermediate pose can be done from *Urdhva Mukha Dandāsana* (Upward Facing Staff Pose) or begin with one leg in *Dandāsana* (Staff Pose) and one knee bent, heel close to the buttocks.

- Pull the foot from the ground and bend the knee deeply back as the trunk turns towards the bent leg, keeping the gaze on the *Dandasana* big toe.
- Pull the elbow back strongly, forearm parallel to the floor.
- To straighten the up leg: pull the arm back hard and extend the inner foot pushing the big toe into the fingers, straighten the knee, bring the sole of the foot toward the ceiling.



Fig (i)

For those with sacral instability:

Only do the bent knee variation of the pose, using a rolled mat at the hip crease of the raised leg, to create space. See *Fig(ii)*.

The strong actions of the arms to lift and hold the leg are essential to the pose.

Breathe and observe the steadiness of your gaze, and the steadiness of the mind.

Tadāsana

Mountain Pose



- To transition to standing poses, come into *Tadāsana* with a brick between the feet.
- Hold for a minute, and then raise the arms into *Ūrdhva Hastāsana*, holding for a minute as well.
- The directional actions of *Supta Tadāsana* and *Urdhva Hastasana* that were practiced at the beginning are now invoked in the vertical plan.
- Repeat for a minute again.

Vrksāsana

Tree Pose

LOY plate 2

Hold the pose for 30 to 45 seconds, each side.

Repeat 2x on each side



From *Tadāsana*, shift the weight onto the left foot, bend the right knee and bring the sole of the foot securely into the upper inner left thigh. Get the heel right up to the groin.

- To balance with steadiness, press the left inner foot down to bring the outer left hip in. Strongly press the left thigh back, knee cap tight.
- Roll the right thigh out and lengthen the right thigh to the inner knee (downward). This plants the right foot firmly in the left inner thigh.
- Level and even the hips, then extend the arms up in *Urdhva Hastasana*.
- The action of moving the right hip forward, and the right buttock towards the back of the knee helps to align and stabilize the hips.
- For the experienced practitioner, extend the inner thigh skin to the inner knee, and rotate the head of the femur from inner to outer, maintaining the alignment of the hips.
- Steady and soften the eyes to cultivate a quiet mind.

Utthita Parśva Hasta Pādāngusthāsana

Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose to the Side

Hold each side for 30-40 seconds

Repeat twice



The experienced practitioner can balance in the middle of the room to bring the right leg up and to the side holding the big toe.

If balance is a challenge, practice with the hand of the standing leg side to the wall or with the raised leg foot to the wall. Use a belt or a rope to extend the arm.

- Maintain the Tadāsana side of the body left inner foot down and open the inner groin of the raised leg as the buttock bone moves forward and towards the heel, the outer hip descends to keep both sides of the waist long.
- Again, steady and soften the eyes.

Vinyasa: Ardha Chandrāsana to Virabhadrasana III to Parśvottanāsana

Half Moon Pose to Warrior III Pose to Extended Side Stretch Pose

Have 2 bricks in the tallest position at one end of the mat, about shoulder width apart.

- Come into *Ardha Chandrasana* with the right hand on the tall brick. Re-establish the actions of the *Vrksasana* bent leg on the standing leg to open the groin and allow the torso turn upwards. See *Fig(i)*.
- For the up leg, re-establish the actions of the *Vrksasana* standing leg - reach the inner foot away, and keep the knee cap tight.
- Firm the standing leg, roll the outer left hip to the towards the floor, inner left thigh towards the ceiling, and left hand to the second block to come into the *Virabhadrasana III* variation (with hands on bricks). See *Fig(ii)*
- Lengthen the back-floating ribs towards the head, the buttocks toward the heels as you did in *Supta Pādāngusthāsana*. Pull both upper arm bones into the shoulder sockets to concave the spine, using the same arm action as in *Supta Pādāngusthāsana*. See *Fig(iii)*.
- As you bring the left leg to the floor, toes facing forward move the blocks in line with the right foot to come into *Parśvottanāsana*, concave spine. See *Fig(iv)*.
- Rapidly switch the legs back and forth in quick succession several times, ending with the left leg back.
- Return to *Ardha Chandrāsana* through the *Virabhadrasana III* variation.
- Repeat, starting with the left hand on the block in *Ardha Chandrāsana*.

The supports in *Virabhadrasana* III lend stability to the pose to create extension and spread the consciousness from fingers to toes. The energetic movements enliven the body to prepare for the final pose.



Fig(i)



Fig(ii)



Fig(iii)



Fig(iv)

Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana

Rope Wall Variation

Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose

Repeat at least twice on each side

Hold for up to 1 minute



With the back to the wall, use the bottom rope and top rope to create a “pulley” and raise the leg so the foot is eye level, with the standing leg actions of Vrksāsana, up the leg actions of Supta Pādāngusthāsana.

With all of these supports, you can spend time observing and integrating the opposing actions of moving the skin of the standing leg towards the heel, and buttock of the up leg towards the heel, quadriceps moving to the bones, sides of the chest lifting.

Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana
Rope Wall Variation



Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana

Final pose

Practice the pose 2-3x, on each side

For the experienced:

- In the middle of the room, stand on the left leg, bring the right leg up into *Utthita Marichyāsana*. Hold the foot with both hands. See *Fig(i)*.
- Draw the right thigh close to the chest as you press the left thigh back.
- Press the inner right foot into the fingers, and the inner left foot into the floor.
- Lift the sides of the trunk.
- Straighten the leg, raise the foot to eye level with strong, up-lifting arms. Move the upper arm bones away from the right thigh, as in *Supta Pādāngusthāsana*. See *Fig(ii)*.
- Repeat the actions learned at the wall, moving the skin of the standing leg towards the heel, and buttock of the up leg towards the heel, quadriceps moving to the bones, sides of the chest lifting, with your arms as the levers to raise the leg higher and higher.
- With strongly lifting arms, lift the back body up, bend the elbows wide and exhale, and bring the forehead to the shin; maintaining the front thigh to the back thigh of the standing leg. Touch, breathe, release. See *Fig(iii)*.
- Come to *Tadāsana* to recover.
- Repeat on the other side.

For less experienced students:

Work with the back near the wall and use a doubled belt around the foot, held as closely to the foot as possible.

For all:

- Work with the breath to steady the pose and release all thoughts to the present moment. Do not be discouraged. Be absorbed in the pose.
- Come into *Tadāsana* after each side.

Utthita Hasta Pādāngusthāsana
Final pose



Fig(i)



Fig(ii)



Fig(iii)

Uttanāsana

Intense Stretch Pose

Stay for 1 minute



Come into *Uttanāsana* with the head resting on a brick (stack them, if need be).

- Soften the abdomen, legs in *Tadāsana*, about hip width apart.
- Observe the breath, recede the eyes, relax the lips, mouth and throat.

Dandasana to Paścimottanāsana

Staff Pose to Intense Stretch of the Back Body

Hold for 3 minutes

Come into *Dandasana* and extend forward to *Paścimottanāsana* with the head resting on shins or support.

- Keep the knees tight, backs of the thighs grounded, back chest moving to the front chest.
- Soften the abdomen.
- Observe the breath.
- Add a folded blanket or bolster to support the head or hamstrings and/or back body is tight.



Savāsana

Corpse Pose

Hold for 5 minutes

