

Courtesy of:



*Sequence created & modeled by: Ruth Ann Bradley, Intermediate Junior II CIYT, founder and owner of the Yoga Institute of Broward in Cooper City, Florida*

*Photos by Jim Bunce*

“Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.” - B.K.S. Iyengar



Ruth Ann Bradley is an Intermediate Junior II Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher. She is the founder and owner of the Yoga Institute of Broward in Cooper City, Florida, established in 1998. ([www.yogabroward.com](http://www.yogabroward.com))

Ruth falls in the ranks of countless others that have turned to Iyengar yoga to find relief and healing after a life-changing event. A horse racing accident in 1985 left her with numerous broken bones in her leg, ankle and foot. With the help of Iyengar yoga, she feels she was better equipped to deal with the 28 years of chronic pain that eventually led her to a Total Ankle Replacement in 2013.

Ruth says: “My attraction to yoga started at a young age when I spotted one of those ‘pocket books’ sold at the grocery store checkout lines. At the time, the book cost *maybe* 25 cents and the photo on the front was a woman standing on her head. I convinced my mother to buy it for me and that is what started my yoga practice. It was the greatest gift she gave me, just as it is said that the inverted poses are the greatest gift to humanity.”

In addition to her travels to India to study with the Iyengar family, she continues her studies with Colleen Gallagher, Mary Reilly and Manouso Manos.

## Sequence for Inversions and Variations

This sequence is for those that have a solid foundation in a yoga practice. Some of the inversions and variations should not be attempted without guidance from a certified Iyengar teacher.

Contraindications: One should avoid *Sirsasana*, *Sarvangasana*, and other inversions during menstruation. The inversions are also contraindicated for glaucoma.

Approximate Time: 60 to 75 minutes

Props: mat, belt, 3 blankets and bolster

### *Uttanasana*

(Intense Stretch Pose)



- Bring the feet hip width apart, fold forward, hands out to sides.
- Bend the elbows to the sides and spread the collarbones. Spread the area around the base of the neck and release the sides of the chest down over the lift of the legs.
- Stay for a long hold and open the back of the knees and thighs, lengthening the sides of the chest down.

*Adho Mukha Svanasana*  
Downward Facing Dog



- Press your whole palm down and straighten your arms.
- Roll the upper arms from inside out and spread the area around the base of the neck while holding the outer upper arms in.
- From the stretch of the arms, elongate the outer armpits, the armpit chest and the sides of the chest upward toward the outer hips.
- Lift the thighs up and press them back.
- Stretch the calf muscles and take the heels towards the floor.

(Wedge prop is used due to joint mobility restrictions due to Ruth Ann's Total Ankle Replacement.)

*Eka Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana*  
One Legged Downward Facing Dog



- From *Adho Mukha Svanasana* with the feet together, maintain the stretch of the arms and extend the right leg up angularly from outer wrist to toes.
- Lift outer left hip up and keep thigh moving from front to back.
- Lower right leg and repeat on left side.
- Then come up to *Tadasana* (Mountain pose)

*Urdhva Hastasana*  
Arms Overhead



- Maintain the actions of legs in *Tadasana*.
- Roll your outer upper arms in and extend the extreme outer corner of the armpit up to elbow and elbow up towards the little finger.
- Move the inner shoulder blade down while extending the sides of the trunk up.

*Urdhva Baddangullyasana*  
Fingers Interlaced Overhead



- Interlace the fingers, turn the palms out and stretch the arms up to the ceiling.
- Press the outer upper arms in and extend the sides of the trunk upward.
- Change to second interlace and repeat.

### *Parsvottanasana*

#### Intense Stretch of the Side Body



- From *Tadasana*, do *Paschima Namaskarasana* (Prayer pose with hands behind the back)
- Take the legs wide apart and turn your feet, hips and shoulder towards the right leg.
- Roll the shoulders back and lift your sternum as you descend the shoulder blades and lengthen your anterior spine upward.
- Extend the sides of the trunk forward over front leg.
- Maintain the back heel down and compact the hips for stability as you extend your trunk and chest forward towards the right thigh, head to shinbone.
- Return to *Tadasana* and repeat on other side.

### *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*

#### Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose



- Stand in *Tadasana* facing a wall. Use wall ropes if available or use a belt.
- Maintain the left leg firm and extend your right leg to the wall. Press the inner thigh back on the standing leg.
- Move the right thigh into the hip and down away from the waist and compact the hips.
- Roll the inner upper arms up and spread around the base of your neck as you lift the sides of the trunk up.
- Repeat on other side

*Parsva Hasta Padangusthasana*

Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose to the Side



- Stand in *Tadasana* with the right side facing the wall. Use wall ropes if available or use a belt.
- Press the inner and outer heel down and keep the standing leg firm.
- Bend the right leg and lift it up on the wall to the side.
- Draw the outer hip in and outer quadrant of the buttock down and compact the hips.
- Keep the trunk and buttocks in one line, spread the shoulders and broaden the chest.

*Urdhva Prasarita Ekapadasana*

One Foot Extending Upward Pose



- Be in *Uttanasana* and extend the sides of the trunk down.
- Catch the back of the left ankle with the right hand and place the left hand on the floor as in *Uttanasana*.
- Lift the right leg up and extend from the inner groin to the inner knee and to the inner heel upward.
- Repeat on other side.

*Adho Mukha Vrksasana*  
Downward Facing Tree/Handstand



- From *Tadasana*, bend forward and place hands 6-8 inches from wall.
- Keep arms straight. Shift weight from legs to arms and swing legs up against the wall and balance.
- Press the palms down, keep the elbows straight and the shoulders lifted.
- Extend the armpits and lift the sides of the trunk up.
- Roll the thighs in and extend the buttocks to the heels and heels toward the ceiling.

*Prasarita Padottanasana*  
Expanded Feet Intense Stretch



- Bring the hands in *Paschima Namaskarasana* and spread the feet apart wide.
- Press the outer edges of the heels down, tighten knees and take the tailbone to pubis bone and lift the anterior spine to look up.
- Extend forward and take the head to floor.
- Press the forearms to palms and lift the shoulders up.
- Lift and spread abdomen to spine to come back up, and come back to *Tadasana*.

*Sirsasana*  
Headstand



- Press the forearms down and lift the shoulders up. Keep the shoulders both moving upward and widening away from the base of the neck.
- Stretch up the outer armpits to the sides of the pelvis and to the outer heels.
- Take the tailbone in and lift the buttocks up toward heels.
- Take the outer shins in and spread the sole of the foot from inside out.

*Parsva Sirsasana*  
Headstand Rotated to the Side



- From *Sirsasana*, extend the inner legs up and stabilize the outer thighs and shins in.
- Turn the pelvis and the legs to the right. Maintain the outer right armpit forward and extend the inner legs up vertically.
- Lift the left inner thigh from its root and turn it from outside in.
- Keep the legs vertical and extend them up.
- Come back to *Sirsasana* and do the pose to the left.



## *Ekapada Sirsasana*

### One Footed Headstand Pose



- Without disturbing your *Sirsasana* base, keep the left leg extending up and do not let it turn out.
- Lower the right leg until it is parallel to the floor. Stretch the leg forward and extend the heel and keep the femur bone back in the hip socket.
- Extend the inner right leg from the groin to the inner heel and open the sole of the foot.
- While maintaining these actions, keep both buttocks at the same height and level.
- When moving the leg down further, stretch the leg to the heel, and at the same time, keep the foot close to the body. The femur bone should be moving toward the hip socket.
- Return to *Sirsasana* and repeat on the other side.
- After coming down from *Sirsasana*, rest in *Adho Mukha Virasana* (Downward Facing Hero pose)

*Halasana*  
Plow pose



- Establish your foundation for *Salamba Sarvangasana* (Shoulderstand pose) and use a belt for the elbows. Take the legs back to *Halasana*.
- Lift the hips up vertically and move the thighbones into the pelvis, as you move the buttocks toward the heels. Lift the front thighs and keep the back of the knees open. Maintain the lift in the sides of the chest from armpits to outer hips.
- Lift the thighs from front to back and maintain the height of the sides of the chest to the hips.
- Interlace the hands, as in *Baddangullyasana*. Turn the thumb side of the hands down, and extend the arms back, keeping the back thick ribs in and up. This is the position of arms in *Sarvangasana II*.
- Change the interlace of the fingers and repeat.
- Replace the hands on the back and return to *Halasana*.

*Salamba Sarvangasana I*  
Shoulderstand/Whole Body Supported Pose



- Press your upper arms down and lift the armpit chest up and away from the arms.
- Press your shoulder blades into your back ribs and bring your chest toward your chin.
- Take your tailbone in and stretch your legs upward.
- Be in *Salamba Sarvangasana I* for five minutes before starting the variations.

*Ekapada Sarvangasana* from *Sarvangasana*  
One Footed Shoulderstand Pose



- Keep both knees tight and the left leg steady, with the thigh rolling in.
- Lower your right leg to the floor, or as near as possible. Maintain the right thigh up, right femur bone into the hip, and keep both sides of the trunk evenly lifted.
- Alert the back ribs to move in and up, as the leg comes down.
- Repeat to other side and return to *Sarvangasana*.

*Parsvaikapada Sarvangasana*

One Foot to the Side in Shoulderstand



- Keep both knees tight and take the right leg out to the side, as the left leg stays lifted. Roll the inner left thigh back and keep the outer right hip lifted.
- Repeat to the other side and return to *Sarvangasana*, then back to *Halasana*.

*Supta Konasana*

Reclined Wide Angle Pose



- From *Halasana*, take the legs out wide evenly from side to side and maintain the foundation of the shoulders.
- Lift the inner thighs up and bring the thighs up to the hips, as the hands support the back evenly.
- Return to *Halasana* and re-establish your base.

### *Parsva Halasana*

#### Plow Pose to the Side



- From *Supta Konasana*, walk the left leg over to meet the right without disturbing your base.
- Press down through your feet and keep the thighs and hips lifted.
- Bring the left leg back to *Supta Konasana* and walk the right leg over to the left.
- Walk the right leg back to *Supta Konasana*, then return both legs to *Halasana* and then back up to *Sarvangasana I*.

### *Sarvangasana II*

#### Shoulderstand II



- Start in *Sarvangasana I*
- Re-establish the lift of your shoulders and keep the shoulder blades moving into the back ribs.
- Release the hands from the back as you alert the back thick ribs to move in, where the hands have been supporting. Interlace the fingers, as practiced in *Halasana* earlier.
- Keep the front of the thighs and shins up and buttocks in.
- Replace your hands on your back and come back to *Sarvangasana I*.

*Setu Bhanda Sarvangasana*  
Bridge Pose



(i)



(ii)

- From *Sarvangasana* I, keep the buttocks lifted and bend your knees, pointing them straight up to the ceiling.
  - Move the tailbone in and roll your outer thighs in.
  - Extend your big toe mounds and bring your feet to the floor or the bolster. (Bolster can be placed either horizontal to the blankets, as in prior poses, or perpendicular, as pictured here.). See Fig(i).
- 
- To walk the feet out, roll the thighs in and extend the front of the foot to the toes. Take the backs of the thighs to the buttocks and keep tailbone in. Feet can be on a bolster or the floor. See Fig (ii).




(iii)

- Walk the feet back to bend the legs, then return to *Salamba Sarvangasana*, then bring the legs down to *Halasana*. See Fig (iii).

*Karnipidasana*  
Ear Pressure Pose



- From *Halasana*, bend the knees and lower them down to the floor on either side of the face.
- Point toes straight back away from the head and soles of the feet up. Keep the back lifted against the pressure of the thighs.
- Rest the hands either on the back of the ribs or interlock the fingers and stretch the arms as in *Halasana* (not shown). In this pose both ears are pressed by the bent legs. The outside noise is shut off which makes one turn inwards. Placing the hands over the ears with the pressure on the knees can further draw one in.
- Gently roll out and rest for a moment.

<p><i>Paschimottanasana</i> Intense Stretch of the Back Body Pose</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit in <i>Dandasana</i> (Staff Pose) stretch the arms up in <i>Urdhva Hasta Dandasana</i> (Hands Overhead In Staff Pose). Use the support of a blanket under the buttocks as needed.</li> <li>• Extend the trunk forward, bending the elbows up and out to the sides to further lengthen the sides of the trunk.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Savasana</i> Corpse Pose (no photo)</p>	<p>Relax completely and exhale slowly. If the mind wanders, pause without strain after each soft slow exhalation.</p>

Geeta Iyengar expresses the importance of these asanas in the following words:

“The asanas belonging to these groups will take care of general health such as postural and functional correction of the body. They will take care of circulation, digestion, excretion and keep hormonal balance. Just as we take a bath everyday, we eat food, drink water and sleep at night, similarly we have to practice these asanas every day. We have to make it a habit to see that in our practice program, even if nothing else is done, headstand, shoulder-stand and variation are always done.”

Guruji characterized the inverted asana as follows:

“One cannot do *Sirsasana* without using the head and one cannot do *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* without using the heart. Each asana has its own characteristic and as such we have to observe and study from where the source of action takes place... In *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* and *Halasana* the brain remains silent but the seat of the heart remains attentive, while in *Sirsasana* the brain is attentive while the seat of the heart remains pensive.”

**Document not for resale**