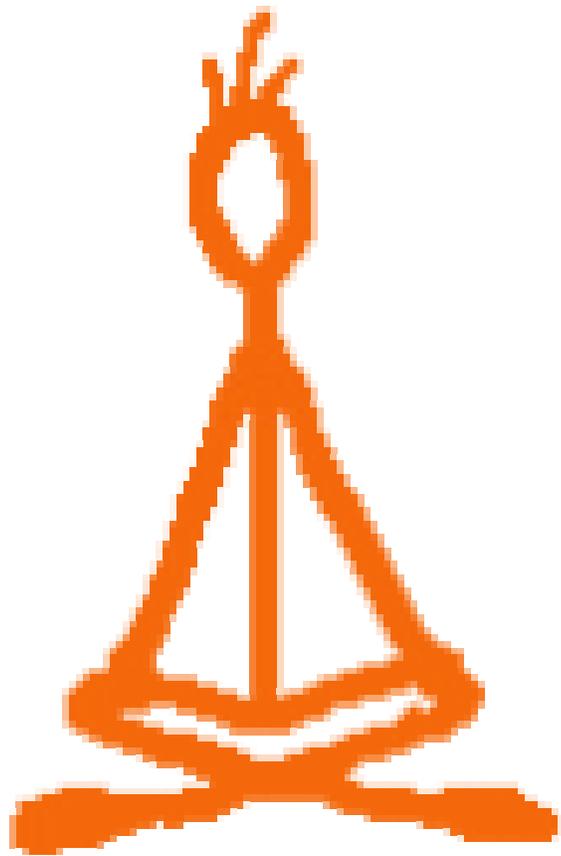


## CHAPTER FOUR



# YOGA

**Please note:** Be kind to yourself when you practice yoga. Go slowly, especially in the beginning, and listen to your body. It knows what it can do. If it says, "stop", stop. Don't push it. Yoga is not a competitive sport. You don't win points for matching a picture in the book. If you push too hard, you probably won't enjoy it, and you may hurt yourself. Always do it within your limit.

It is suggested to do mild stretching exercises from neck to feet before doing any of the asanas and Suryanamaskar. ■

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## Mountain Pose - Tadasana



Stand, with feet hip width apart. Knees maybe slightly bent. Shoulders relaxed and arms rest at sides. Eyes look straight ahead with chin aligned along with the notch in neck. Back is straight and long. Breathe normally. Inhale while raising arms up by the sides to rest above head, shoulder width apart but not touching each other. Exhale and slowly bring them back down to sides.

***Tadasana builds good posture and confidence, aids back alignment, strengthens legs and ankles.*** ■

## Child's Pose - Balasana



Kneel on the floor. On a long exhalation, gently lower the back onto the heels and bring the forehead to the ground with the arms extended forward. Breathe normally.

***Child's pose is a calming and cooling pose. It stretches back, arms and ankles; relieves back and neck strain; relieves stress and strain from other postures so it is a counter pose for almost all the yoga postures. The counter pose for this Balasana is Tadasana. ■***

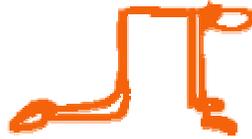
## Little Boat Pose - Navasana



Lie down on your back as in Savasana. Exhale and gently bring the knees to your chest, wrapping the arms around them. Gently rock from side to side keeping the spine straight. Include the neck in this motion, from side to side along with your spine. Repeat few more times. Then return to center. Release your arms, and come back to Savasana. Gently roll over to one side for a few breaths before coming back up to a seated position.

***Navasana is calming and relieves stress with a gentle rocking motion. It stretches spine. The counter pose for Navasana is Tadasana. ■***

## Table Pose - Svanasana



Come onto your hands and knees so that the spine and legs as well as the spine and arms are at 90\* angle. Bent legs behind are also at 90\*angle. Make sure every angle is a right angle like in a square. Spine and neck are in a straight line with eyes looking down. Arms are shoulder width apart. Legs and feet are hip width apart. Hands and fingers are spread wide to support your weight. Breathe normally. Breathing maybe more shallow here because of the angle of the back and because the chest isn't as open as when the arms are at sides. Try to breathe down the spine to elongate it. Keep the shoulders, neck, and throat relaxed.

***Svanasana strengthens arms and shoulders and aids spine alignment. ■***

## Square Lunge



From table pose, raise one foot between hands, but still in alignment with hips. Rest your hands on your knee or your waist. Spine is straight with eyes looking forward. Breathe normally. Then place your hands back on the floor and bring the leg back down to table pose. Repeat with the other side.

***This posture gives balance, strengthens quadriceps in legs, strengthens and elongates spine. ■***

## Warrior Pose I – Virabhadrasana I



Stand, with feet hip width apart as in Tadasana. Take a large step forward, keeping it still aligned with your hips. Bend your knee, lunging forward, so the knee will be aligned with your heel and not past it. Inhale and slowly raise your arms up above head. Stand and breathe normally in this pose to feel the power and strength it connotes. Then slowly release your arms and step back into tadasana. Repeat with the other side.

***Virabhadrasana strengthens legs, improves posture and increases confidence and might. ■***

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## Chair Pose – Utkatasana



Stand in Tadasana. Inhale and slowly raise your arms above your head. Exhale as you slowly bend the knees, as if sitting on a chair, keeping the spine long and looking forward. Breathe normally. Then slowly lower your legs and straighten knees on an inhale and return to upright position. Repeat few more times.

***Utkatasana strengthens thighs, back and legs. It stretches shoulders, opens chest and improves posture. ■***

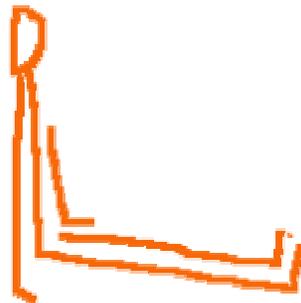
## Standing knee to chest



Stand in Tadasana. Shift your weight to one leg and lift the other knee to the chest, wrapping the arms around it for support. If needed, you can place a hand on the wall for balance and support. Breathe normally. Keep the eyes fixed forward and the spine long and straight. Then slowly lower the leg back to tadasana. Repeat with the other side.

***This posture improves balance, stimulates kidneys and stretches legs. ■***

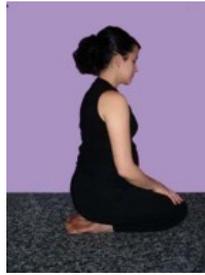
## Sitting pose - Dandasana



Sit and gently rock side to side to find your sitting bones. They are your anchor to the ground. Sit evenly on them with legs extended out, feet aligned with hips, shoulders relaxed, head and spine straight and arms rest either on legs or on sides for support. Legs and back are at a 90\* angle. Breathe normally.

***Dandasana improves posture while sitting. ■***

## Thunderbolt pose - Vajrasana



Kneel on the floor. Bring big toes together and separate the heels. Lower the upper body onto the inside surface of the feet with heels touching the side of the hips. Place hands on knees with palms down, abdomen drawn in, chest up, back straight, shoulders squared, and head erect but not tense. Breathe normally. Hold for 30 seconds to one minute.

***Vajrasana aids digestion and can be practiced directly after meals; Relieves stomach ailments like hyperacidity. ■***

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## Hero pose – Virasana



Kneel on the floor as in Vajrasana. Gently try to move the calves of your legs to the sides making space to sit back on the floor. Spine is straight with eyes looking forward. Breathe normally. Then gently raise your self back to Vajrasana and rest in child's pose.

***Virasana promotes posture while sitting; stretches thighs, knees and ankles; improves digestion. It is a comfort for tired legs at the end of the day, as well as an alternative to Padmasana, the Lotus Pose for seated meditation. ■***

## Seated twist – Bharadvajasana I



Sit in Sukhasana, the easy pose with back straight (as in the front page of this Chapter 4). Exhale and slowly turn from the waist to the left so right hand rests on your left knee and your left hand rests on the floor beside you. Slowly turn your head to the left to complete the twist. Breathe normally. Then slowly return to sukhasana. Repeat on the other side.

***Bharadvajasana invigorates spine and improves digestion. ■***

## Half Spinal Twist/Half Lord of the Fish pose - Ardha Matsyendrasana



Sit in Sukhasana, the easy pose (as in the front page of this Chapter 4) and evenly on the sitting bones. Keep your back straight. Bring your right knee in close to your chest, and gently lift it over your left leg; place the right foot flat on the floor by your left knee. Keeping your body straight and upright, turn your body to the right and place your right hand flat on the floor. Twist your body to the right and look over your shoulder. Raise your left arm, stretch it up above your head and carry it around your right knee, clasping your right ankle. Hold the pose for few seconds. Breathe normally. Then slowly return to sukhasana. Repeat on the other side.

***This exercise strengthens abdominal muscles that support the colon, helping the colon to function better. ■***