

ASANA

ARDHA SARVANGASANA Half Supported Shoulder Stand

This can be taught as an asana but it is more properly practiced as a Mudra known as Viparitakaranimudra.

Refer to the Hatha Yoga Pradipika 3.77-79.

The first description of method will be appropriate for people learning the physical position.



Note the vertical position of the legs

METHOD 1

1. Lie on the back with the knees bent and the feet flat, lengthen the neck back.
2. Breathe in, breathing out as the knees come to the forehead, using the tips of the fingers pressed on the floor to aid the movement.
3. Support the hips, breathing lightly, raise the legs up to the ceiling. Keeping the hips cupped in the hands, straighten the legs to vertical.
4. Align the feet, make sure the knee caps are pointing towards you, hold the position firmly with the face and the feet relaxed.
5. Keep the abdomen controlled, in order to maintain the legs vertically.
6. Check that there is **not** a chin lock and that the head can move easily from side to side.
7. Finally check that the trunk of the body is not vertical but is supported at an angle of 45°.
8. To come out of the position, keep the knees bent as you lower slowly down.

When the legs cannot be held vertical (probably because the abdominal muscles are not strong enough) then allow the legs to come forwards towards the face a little.

PREPARATION

A general loosening particularly for the neck and shoulders.

COUNTERPOSE

Matsyasana is probably a little strong but a simple movement of lying on the back and pushing up the chin and lips to the ceiling would give an adequate counterpose.

BENEFITS AND EFFECTS

1. Stretches the back of the neck increasing the blood flow to the posterior third of the brain. Many of the benefits are the same as for Sarvangasana.
2. Strengthens the abdominal muscles as they work to support the legs.
3. It is a useful alternative for those students who cannot do Sarvangasana.

PRECAUTIONS

As for Sarvangasana but there is not as much flexion on the cervical spine.

PROHIBITIONS

As for Sarvangasana.

TEACHING AIDS

Using a wall in the following way:

1. Lie in a 'L' shape with the legs up against the wall.
2. Have the buttocks firmly pressed against the wall.
3. Bend the knees, put the feet flat on the wall and lift the body up a little, supporting the hips with the hands.
4. Getting used to this position, bring one leg away and then the other.
5. Finally, take up one of the positions as described in 'method'.
6. Alternatively, the position can be practiced by lying with the top of the head facing the wall and coming up into the position, then allowing the feet to rest back against the wall.
7. Some people enjoy doing the Pose of Tranquility where the body is folded over, as though going to do Halasana, but supporting the shins on the hands with straightened arms instead.

PROBLEMS

People with short arms or heavy legs have problems with the excessive weight on the elbows, this can be alleviated by:

- a. plenty of padding
- b. making a pile of three or four blocks and manoeuvring the body over the blocks so that the weight from the hips is resting on the blocks. The legs can then be made vertical.

MUSCLES AND JOINTS

1. There is flexion of the cervical spine.
2. Load bearing down into the wrists and elbow.

3. The muscles of the abdomen are strengthened.

This is very similar to Sarvangasana, the differences being that there is less flexion on the cervical spine, and more strength needed in the abdomen, with greater demands made on the wrists and arms.

VIPARITAKARANIMUDRA

HYP 3.77-79

‘There is an excellent practice whereby the sun is deceived.
But this we can learn only from the guru’

METHOD 2

As for Method 1, plus:

1. Concentrate on the throat, using Ujjayi, thinking that energy is being drawn from the lower body down to the throat on the in breath.
2. On the out breath, think the energy to the bindu point towards the top and back of the head.
3. The body needs to be strong and healthy to practice this posture.
4. Observe the abdomen expand as you breathe in and then breathe out through the mouth with the sound ahh and observe the abdomen contracting. This again will draw the energy towards the throat and the head. Not more than 6 breaths.

The theory behind this practice which supports its claim that the ‘sun’, which is in the solar plexus area, is capable of devouring the ‘moon’ and its ambrosial fluid, said to flow from the head, is that by reversing the position of the body ‘whereby the attributes of the moon and those of the sun are exchanged’, we can reduce the ageing process.

Even without this esoteric theory it is obvious that the pull of gravity on the body is reversed.

This practice is also mentioned in The Gheranda Samhita at 3.9 with the same attributes attached to it.

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