

HOMAGE TO THE SOURCE 2006

Four classic Hatha Yoga manuals were consulted for this sequence: Gheranda Samhita (GS, late 17th century CE), Hatha Ratna Avali (HRE, mid-17th century CE), Shiva Samhita (SS, late 17th century CE), and Hatha Yoga Pradipika (HYP, mid-14th century CE).

Gheranda asserts there are eight hundred and forty thousand asanas, “as many as there are species of living beings.” Of these 84 are pre-eminent, and of these 32 are “useful in the world of mortals.” The following sequence is based on these 32 asanas. Twenty-three of the original 32 have been retained. The nine substitutions include: five asana-like seals (mudra) described by Gheranda, three postures from the HRA, and one posture adapted from the SS. Many of the postures also have preliminary practices or variations, mostly taken from the HRA and the Shri Tattva Nidhi (STN), a 19th century encyclopedia that illustrates about 120 asanas.

KEY:

* = posture also described by HYP

● = Kantha bandha (Throat Bond)

▼ = Nasa agra drishti (stare at nose tip)

▲ = Bhru madhya drishti (stare at mid-brow)

SANSKRIT English	Iyengar Equivalent	Comment	Method
1. TADAGI MUDRA Pond	None	Destroys old age and death	“Draw the belly backwards so as to make it look like a pond” (Gheranda).
VARIATIONS: -KANDUKA Ball			From supine, roll into “ball”
-DRISHADA Stone			In Kandukasana, roll side to side
-MARJARI UTTANA Extended Cat			Supine, clasp hands behind neck, elbows pressed by drawn up inner knees
2. VAJRA Diamond	None	Bestows powers	Sit on your heels with the tops of the feet on the floor.
VARIATIONS:			1. Lean back, press the hands to the floor slightly behind the feet, lift the chest
			2. Sit with the toes turned under

			3. In either (1) or (2), lift the buttocks off the heels
3. SIMHA* ▼● Lion	Similar	Destroys disease, facilitates the three major bandhas (mula, uddiyana, kantha)	In the Iyengar version, the knees are close together. Another version has the knees spread very wide.
4. MANDUKA Frog	Like wide-knee virasana		Toes together, heels apart, sit on the inner feet. Spread your knees at least as wide as, or wider than, the hips.
5. UTTANA MANDUKA Extended Frog	None		“Hold the head by the elbows, and stand up like a frog” (Gheranda). Sit in Mandukasana, raise the arms, bend the elbows, hands press scapulas. In one version the hands are placed on the same-side shoulder blades; in another the forearms are crossed and the hands placed on the opposite shoulder blades. VARIATION: Cross the forearms above the head, hold the elbows
6. BHADRA* ▼● Auspicious, Happy	Baddha konasana	Destroys disease, gets rid of fatigue	VARIATION: Lean forward and lay the torso between the inner thighs.
7. SVASTIKA* Fortunate, Prosperous	None		Usually a simple cross-shin posture. Gheranda says to sit “straight,” and keep both hands “under the thighs.” In this sequence perform it as a “loose” cross-leg stretch. Place the left heel to the outside the right hip, and cross the right leg on top, with the right ankle to the OUTSIDE of the left knee (so the right sole is perpendicular to the floor). If you want more stretch slide the left shin forward to bring both shins parallel. Then reverse. VARIATION: Lean forward and lay the torso on the inner thighs.
8. GOMUKHA* Cow Face	Similar	Gheranda doesn’t describe the customary arm position.	
SANKATA Critical			Like Gomukha, sit on heels
9. PADMA* ▼● Lotus	Same	Destroys disease, awakens Kundalini	Experienced beginners perform Half Lotus (ardha padmasana)

VARIATIONS: -BADDHA PADMA Bound Lotus	Same		
-YOGA ▼ Union	None		Lay the backs of open hands on the floor.
10. KUKKUTA* Cock	Same		Beginners can substitute either lolasana or tolasana.
11. VIRA* Hero	Similar to the leg position for bharadvajasana II.		Sit on your buttocks. Bend the left knee and draw the leg back into Half Hero (ardha virasana). Bring the right leg into Half Lotus (ardha padmasana). Beginners bring one leg into Half Hero and the other into Half Bound Angle (ardha baddha konasana). This version of Virasana is called the Bull Posture (vrishasana).
TRANSITION (dedicated to the Yoga Sutra)			
DANDA Staff	Same	Source: Vyasa, commentary on YS (2.46), 5-6 th century CE.	“Sitting down with the great toes place together and with the ankles placed together and stretching out upon the ground shins and thighs and feet placed together, let him practice staff-posture.”
12. UGRA Stern	Upavishtha konasana	Stimulates prana, destroys dullness	Source: SS; pose adapted, ugrasana is probably just another name for paschimottanasana.
13. MAHA MUDRA* ▲ ● Great Seal	Same	Cures all disease, destroys death, confers siddhis	Perform this posture like janu shirshasana. Press the left heel against the perineum, and keep the right leg straight. Then hold the sides of the right foot with your hands (or a strap). Reverse.
14. PASHCHIMOTTANA* Intense-Stretch-of-the-West (i.e. the back of the body)	Same	Directs breath through sushumna, increases appetite, reduces obesity, cures diseases	
VARIATION: -SHAYITA PASHCHIMOTTANA Reclining Intense-Stretch-of-the-West	Urdhva Mukha Pashchimottanasana II		

PRELIMINARY: -HRI JANU SAMYOGA Heart-Knee Joined			Sitting, cradle foreleg in arms
15. DHANU (1)	Same, but called akarna dhanurasana	Source: HRA.	“The big toes are held with the hands and are pulled upto the ears (alternately). Thus one assumes the shape of a stretched bow.”
16. MATSYENDRA* ▲ Lord of Fish	Ardha matsyendrasana I	Increases appetite, destroys most deadly diseases, awakens Kundalini, stops nectar shedding from “moon” (at the base of the brain or the uvula)	
17. BHUJAN GA Serpent, usually called Cobra	Same	Increases body heat, destroys disease, awakens Kundalini	
18. SHALABHA Locust, Grasshopper	Similar leg position only		Place your hands below your chest, “touching the ground with the palms.” Raise your legs “one cubit [18-21 inches?] high” (Gheranda).
VARIATION:			Put the fists under the lower abdomen, just inside the hip points, and lift the legs.
19. MAKARA Sea Monster, Dolphin	Same	Increases body heat	
20. DHANU* (2) Bow	Same		
21. USHTRASANA Camel	Similar to dhanurasana (2)		From dhanurasana (2), cross the ankles and hold each with opposite hand, lift the head and upper torso, thighs stay on floor. Draw in the belly and the mouth (Gheranda).
22. MARKATA Monkey	Like uttanasana	Source: HRA	
VARIATIONS: KULALA CHAKRA Potter’s Wheel			Stretch out, rotate hands
MUSALA			Standing, repeatedly raise arms

Pestle			
USHTRA Camel			Stand on balls of feet, stretch arms up
BALALINGA Child Hug			Standing, hug one knee to chest
KAPOTA Pigeon			Standing, bring hands down backward to knees
PRELIMINARY to 23 and 24 (Source: HRA):			
PADAPIDA Foot Press			Stand on one leg, bend other knee, raise heel to buttock, hold ankle with both hands.
23. UTKATA Superior, Hazardous	Similar		Squat on the balls of the feet, buttocks supported on the raised heels. Stretch your arms straight forward, parallel to the floor, raise them perpendicular to the floor, or touch the palms in anjali mudra.
FOUR VARIATIONS (Source: HRA: a, b, d):			
SAURA Divine, Celestial			Extend one leg forward, sit on single heel. Reverse
DHUNA Shaking			From Saura, reach out for extended foot. Reverse.
VIMALA Pure			Squat on one raised heel, place free foot on bent knee
ANGUSHTHA Big Toe			Touch the knees to the ground.
24. VRIKSHA Tree	Same		
25. VIPARITA KARANI MUDRA (1) Inverse-Action Seal	Shirshasana	Destroys decay and death; the adept "does not perish," even at the dissolution of the universe	"Place the head on the ground, with hands spread, raise the legs up, and thus remain steady" (Gheranda). There are two interpretations of these instructions, one comparing the pose to shirshasana, the other to sarvangasana. So perform VKM (1) as Headstand, VKM (2) below as

			Shoulderstand.
26. MAYURA* Peacock	Same	Removes abdominal disorders, digests bad food, destroys poisons, all diseases	
27. VAJROLI MUDRA Diamond in the Womb	Like paripurna navasana	Awakens Shakti, extends life, gives perfection and emancipation; retention of seed is obtained	“Place the two palms on the ground, raise the legs in the air upward, the head not touching the earth” (Gheranda). There are different instructions for this mudra. In this sequence perform it like Full Boat, except with the palms pressed to the floor slightly behind the hips.
28. VIPARITA KARANI MUDRA (2)	Sarvangasana		
29. VICHITRA KARANI Wonderful (or Brilliant, Charming, Amusing) Action	Same, but called halasana	Source: HRA	
30. MATSYA Fish	Same	Destroys disease	The photo in <i>Light on Yoga</i> shows the legs in Lotus. In this sequence, perform the posture with the legs in a simple cross. Be sure to cross the legs both ways, and spend an equal length of time in each cross.
31. SIDDHA* ▲ Accomplished, Perfect	Same	Opens door to salvation, purifies nadis	
32. SHAVA* Corpse	Same	Destroys fatigue, calms mind	

Six excluded postures (from GS): MUKTA (Liberated), GUPTA (Hidden), GORAKSHA (Cow Herd), KURMA (Tortoise), UTTANA KURMA (Extended Tortoise), GARUDA (Devourer or Eagle); three included as variations: SANKATA, VRISHA, YOGA.