

Asana Enhancer



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ARDHA CHANDRASANA

As you all know yoga is not about the postures we practice.

It is about the awareness we have in our practice and in our life.

This is why I love going back to “basic” poses and practicing them again and again, may be in slightly different ways, so that I can understand their subtleties. The basic postures give me new insights and understandings about my body, my tendencies – both outer and inner, my emotions and my thoughts - and about the principles. All those insights are helping me to become more AWARE!

I have been practicing hatha yoga for more than 45 years, and Anusara Yoga since 2002.

I always loved practicing all the poses. Of course, some asanas were easier than others, and some were only a dream.... I thought I had a good understanding and experience of the Principles, even if I was fully aware that there was much more to learn.

But life is always surprising and always gives you new ways to grow. Two years ago, I discovered that I had two bad herniated discs between L3 and L5 (as many people in the world), and the physiotherapist told me that they would always be a challenge for me. Of course, I didn't want to stop my practice. And of course, not moving would not have been a good solution as the body can only get worse with no movement. The only way out was becoming more mindful and aware! And I was lucky: I am an Anusara Yoga practitioner with its wonderful Universal Principles of Alignment!

So, I started again from the beginning in my practice. I had to look at every Principle, observe what I was really doing and be very mindful and aware of how I was moving. My back is a very good friend: As soon as I am mis-

aligned, it lets me know by hurting. I had to try to understand which Principle I was not doing enough, which muscles of my body had to become stronger, which ones had to be elongated more, and many other things about myself.

A fantastic new travel of discovery began. Life gave me the opportunity to listen more, to be more sensitive to my body, to learn more....to become more aware. Outside and inside.

One of the poses I loved practicing and that I used to practice almost every day was Ardha Chandrasana. This asana, the Half Moon pose, is a fantastic way to feel strong stability while at the same time it allows you to experience freedom and opening. In this asana we can experience the stability and strength of Shiva and the dynamic intense opening of Shakti, but only if you apply all the Anusara Universal Principles of Alignment™ that we all know well.

So, here is the way I recently love to practice this asana: I practice it with my back foot at the wall. Having more stability allowed me to become more aware of my tendencies and helped me in applying Inner and Outer Spiral in a balanced way.

It is a good way if you are a beginning student and you are experiencing a challenge in balancing, but also if you are an experienced student because the wall gives you the support you need to mindfully apply the Principles and to be present with what is happening in your body.

Go to the wall and stand with the wall at your left. Widen your feet as you would for Trikonasana, and then slightly reduce the distance between your two feet as if you were going into Trikonasana with a shorter distance between your feet.

Turn out your right foot and leg 90°. Align the front heel with the center of the back foot arch. Then bend your front knee and bring your right hand in front of your right foot on your fingertips at a distance of about 20 cm from the right foot and in line with the outer edge of it. Put your left hand at your left hip.

Now inhale and lift your back leg and put your left foot at the wall in line with your left hip and turn your toes to face your left. Both legs are straight.



Figure 1

When you lift your left leg, keep your right foot rooted, pressing all 4 corners of the foot. Be aware that the tendency of the standing foot is to turn in so keep it turned out away from the wall.

Use a block under your right hand if it is difficult to reach the floor or if your upper chest is too rounded toward the floor and you are not able to open the left shoulder.

Now check the position of your left foot in relationship to your left hip. Your left heel should be in line with your inner right thigh. In this way your hips should be vertical, left hip over right hip.

If your foot is too far back, you will experience a closing in the sacroiliac area. If it is too forward, you will not have enough stability.

This is the outer form of the pose.

Now, it is time for the Principles.

First breathe, remember the space inside and feel your right foot at the floor and your left foot at the wall. Press the four corners of the feet, and then bend slightly both knees. Bending the knees will help you with Muscular Energy and the Inner Spiral of the legs.



Figure 2

Inhale and arch your feet by spreading the toes and firming the muscles in the legs.

Keeping the knees slightly bent, roll the upper thighs in and back. Now breathe into your back, especially into the kidneys. When you exhale, tone your whole abdomen gently but firmly. Exhale and draw the right hip back toward the left heel and down toward the right heel while you straighten your legs and lift your low belly in and up. Extend your left hand to the sky.

Feel the stability in your lower leg. This stability now allows you to open and extend more.

Once again inhale, then exhale and press from your pelvis into your right foot and into your left foot on the wall, then from your pelvis extend up into the crown of your head. Keep widening your left thigh to the sky and feel freedom in your hips, stability in your legs and lightness in your upper body.

If you feel stable and safe, express the power of the union between Shiva and Shakti by looking to your left and opening your heart to the sky.



Figure 3

Breathe freely and enjoy your posture! One advantage of doing Ardha Chandrasana with a foot at the wall is that you can hold the pose for a longer time and fully enjoy its benefits.

To release your posture, exhale and lower your left arm to the floor in line with your right hand. Turn your left hip and leg and foot down so that your hips are now parallel to the floor and your left toes face the floor. Then lower your left leg to the floor and come into Uttanasana. Hands to your hips, inhale and come up to Tadasana.

This is the easy way to come out of the pose. And sometimes it is good to do easy things, as life gives us many opportunities to enjoy challenges! This way out of the pose also offers more space in the lower back as you come out of the pose.

Of course, as we have two legs, now repeat everything on the other side.

Practice this pose and notice your own tendencies and habits. Listen carefully to your body and have the courage to enjoy simple poses and actions to become more skillful in your practice and life. As the Bhagavad Gita says, Yoga is skill in action.