

Asana

Moon Salutation

Chandra Namaskar

Starting Position: move to the centre of the mat, erect, feet parallel on the outer edges; body relaxed and aligned, hands on the sides. Connect with lunar energies. Exhale completely.

1 - Direct gaze forward; then while inhaling, and with ample lateral movement, place tips of fingers on the shoulders and extend arms to the side so as to make a cross with upward facing palms; complete the movement by stretching arms upwards.



2 - While exhaling and sliding backwards with the pelvis, bend forward (Intense Pose); then slide the hands downwards until 30-40 cm from the feet; move glutei down and heels up until abdomen and thighs are completely adherent (keep the contact in both phase 2 and phase 3). During this movement, perform the Thunderbolt Gesture.



3 - While inhaling, take a step backwards, right foot slightly out to the external side and at a 45 degrees angle. During the final part of this phase the foot is completely adherent to the floor (focus on the contact of the big and little toes with the mat), thus helping to open the hips. The sliding movement brings the left foot downwards and the heel touches the floor completely. Abdomen is always in contact with left thigh, and the back foot strongly grasps the ground to facilitate opening of the hips. The anterior knee is aligned with the third toe of the corresponding foot.

Tuck coccyx inwards; spine is stretched thanks to the gentle forward push of the head: when entering the pose the feeling should be that the entire vertebral column and in particular the lumbar region is shelling. The push originates in the heel and passes through the sacrum to the back of the head.



4- While exhaling, bring right foot forward and assume the previous squatting position (2).

5 - While inhaling, take a step backwards, moving the left foot to the external side and place it on the mat with a 45 degrees opening. During the final part of this phase, the foot is completely adherent to the floor (focus on the contact of the big and little toes with the mat), thus helping open the hips.



The sliding movement brings the right foot downwards and the heel touches the floor completely. The forward knee is along the same axis as the third toe. Abdomen lies on right thigh, head pushes in the direction opposite to the movement of the left foot. Abdomen is always in contact with right thigh, and the back foot strongly grasps the ground to facilitate opening of the hips.



6 - While exhaling bring left foot forward and assume the previous squatting position (4).

7 - Move body forward and place knees on the ground.

While inhaling, move hands along the body and above the head, arching back in sync with the movement; move chin upwards in the end, weight is on the feet. Holding the breath a little, move back to the previous position with hands on the side of the knees.



8 - While exhaling, jump backwards and assume the Four Points Pose where tips of toes, knees, chest and chin or forehead are in contact with the floor. If suffering from cervical pain, place nose or forehead on the ground.



9 - While inhaling, push body backwards (backwards and not upwards) with the help of the hands and move to the sitting position with both legs lying on the right side. Raise arms and with sufficient abdominal control, bend trunk toward the same side as the legs; hold breath during this movement and then straighten trunk. From hip to shoulder, expand the side of the trunk opposite to the legs. Expand diaphragm before performing side bend.



Problems: difficulties in pushing body backwards due to weak arms or sometimes due to wrongly placed hands. Some find it difficult to perceive the sliding movement and just use arms to perform it. This is incorrect. The tip of the sacrum moves, always sliding along the central axis of the mat. Introductory exercise: Gliding like a Canoe.

Contraindications: when suffering from knee related pathologies, avoid this phase (move up into the Thunderbolt Pose).



10 - While exhaling, move into the Eight Points Pose. Slide forward; do not move upwards first and then forward.



11 - While inhaling, push body backwards (backwards and not upwards) with the help of hands and move to the sitting position with both legs on the left side. Raise arms and being careful to keep sufficient abdominal control, bend trunk toward the same side as the legs; hold breath during this movement and then straighten trunk. From hip to shoulder, expand the side of the trunk opposite to the legs and close up the other side. Expand diaphragm before performing side bend.

12 - While exhaling, move into the Eight Points Pose. Slide forward; do not move upwards first and then forward.



13 –Using the hands as levers, lift and align the body along a slightly inclined plane; keep abdominal control. While holding the breath, slide pelvis forward (contract glutei inwards completely and also the perineum) and perform the Suspended Cobra Pose. Back is arched; legs are straight, with heels joined if possible.



14 - While exhaling, move into the Meru Mountain Pose: push from hands, with arms and trunk along the same axis, chin slightly inwards, sacrum aligned with back, abdomen sucked inwards and upwards, heels on the floor.



15 - At the next inhalation, jump forward and bring feet 30-40 cm from the hands. Feet arrive to the centre of the mat.



16 - Exhale and straighten the legs (Intense Pose). Sliding pelvis as much as necessary, try to adhere abdomen, chest and face to the thighs and legs.

The movement is zip-like, from hips to abdomen; furthermore, the movement is performed in elongation, with head towards the feet.

17 - While inhaling, move up into the erect position open the arms to the sides, bringing them above the head; join fingertips. The face rotates slightly upwards while uniting the hands.

18 - At the next exhalation, lower arms and bring them back near the hips.

Perform a minimum of 4 repetitions and up to a maximum of 12 -24; perform the exercise with care because it is moderately tiring.



Contraindications: knee and lumbar region related troubles; slipped discs; cardiac and pulmonary troubles.

Benefits: Moon Salutation is not well known nowadays, but it remains effective nevertheless; it is very beneficial for the health and balance of the organs and mind. It has rounded gestures that enhance the lateral perception of the body, agility, lightness, and breath expansion. Strengthens the entire body, donates a progressive postural rebalance and its subsequent benefits gait and joint and spine wellbeing; favours drainage of stagnant and excessive liquids and thus body purification, weight loss and tissue tone. Moreover, it expands breath by teaching complete and aware inhalation and exhalation, expands the chest and develops thorax, shoulder and arm musculature; trains for aerobic exercise, increases mobility of the joints, favours mental concentration and generates a feeling of wellbeing and optimism.

The movements of this exercise are complementary to those of Sun Salutation; they look at the night, at the moon, that queen of waters, whose actions not only influences the tides but are also essential in regulating the vital rhythm of Nature. It is only thanks to the action of the moon that pure sunlight can become creative and generate form and substance.