

Over twenty years ago my husband, son and I lived in a tiny house in the middle of a six hundred acre farm. In a way it was a simile for our individual lives in the universe. This was a time of transition in my life. Having resigned as an art teacher of emotionally disturbed children, I was teaching Yoga part time. Many things were shifting in my universe. Daily I would take long walks through wooded fields. The walks emptied me of expectations and fed me with the sounds, patterns and rhythms of nature. The deep silence punctuated by the rhythmic sounds of the woods sometimes brought a state of abiding in a presence beyond the boundaries of my skin, a sublime quietness of spirit. One day while walking far into the woods, I felt a presence. To my left and slightly ahead a red fox was sauntering along, undisturbed, neither stopping to examine me, nor fleeing.

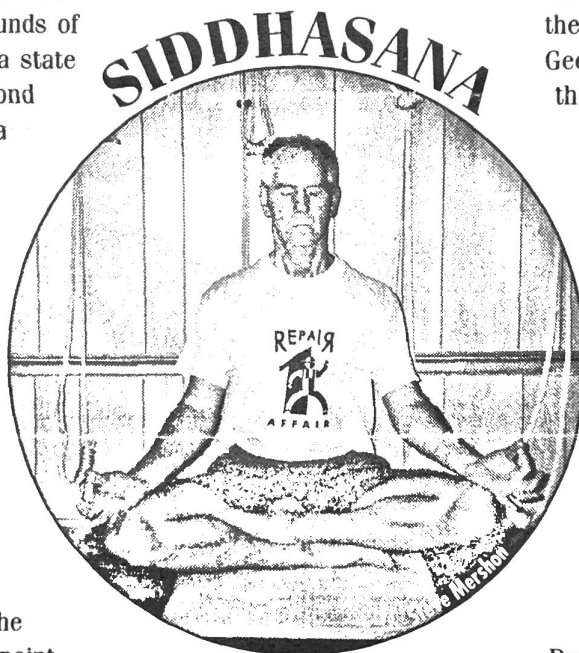
Today that small encounter remains with me, at once as profound and tender as any big dramas in my life. I recall the peace and tranquility of that point in time. Simpler and less grandiose than any accomplishment achieved or acknowledgement received, this whisper of a moment resides in my memory. These times nourish us spiritually when the artificial boundaries of our body momentarily dissolve and we abide in the presence of something greater than ourselves. Asanas offer this kind of moment.

John Schumacher likens each challenge we meet in our daily lives to challenges we meet in asana practice. "We learn

Sutra II. 47 prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam

Perfection in an asana is achieved when the effort to perform becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached.

— "Light on Yoga", B.K.S. Iyengar



— By Judi Rice

The benevolent perfection in asana comes only when efforts cease and the body and mind become one with the infinite seer.

— "Yoga Sutra of Patanjali",
B.K.S. Iyengar

to create order within the framework of a pose and thus find silence there. Details of instruction lead the mind inward to penetrate deeply and help us create order in the body so we may touch that silence. This process leads us toward the Source where there is space and light. Order equals silence. Can we create order in our home life and find silence there?"

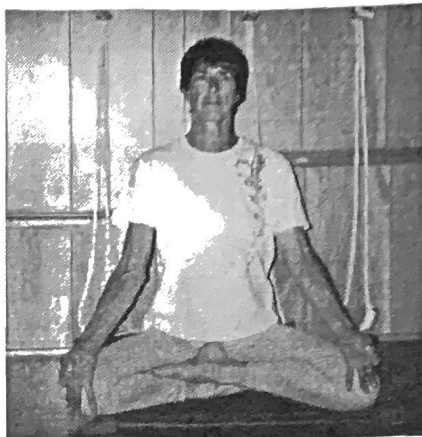
Siddhasana is designated the perfect pose. Early in our practice this pose promotes freedom in the hip, knee and ankle joints and enhances circulation in the lower spine and abdominal region. Geeta Iyengar notes Siddhasana as one of the most important asanas as it purifies the 72,000 nadis (energy channels originating in the navel plexus). For intermediate students, Siddhasana offers a solid seat for discipline of the senses, concentration and meditation. The broad base of this asana offers stability, space, steadiness and stillness throughout the body, which translates to a sense of space, steadiness, and stillness within the mind. From this stillness one may glimpse a deep level of inner silence.

Perfection in any asana is not achieved by attaining perfection in form, for form is ever changing. In the midst of diligent practice with disciplined awareness, the effort to perform the pose can become effortless. This place of effortless effort is the perfection in asana. Occasionally through many years of practice we receive glimpses of this effortless effort. Momentarily we abide in that quiet presence that dissolves our contracted self interest. These rare moments are not achievements, but gifts that appear in the midst of a steadfast, devoted, life long practice.



Practice

1. Sit in Dandasana. Allow the left thigh to roll out. With the left hand roll the left inner knee toward the outer knee and manually bring the left heel toward the pubic bone with the toes touching your right thigh. Roll the shinbone out and turn the palm of the foot toward the ceiling. Likewise, roll the right thigh and knee out and manually scoop your right foot onto the left ankle with the heel close to the pubic bone. Rest the right ankle in the hollow behind the left ankle.
2. Tuck the sole and toes of the right foot between the thigh and calf of your left leg. Sit evenly on the ball point of each buttock bone.
3. Maintain softness in the groin and extend from the inner thighs through the inner knees. Take a moment to experience the broad, stable foundation this pose provides. Be firm and alert in the parts of your body that connect you to the earth.
4. Place cupped fingertips beside the buttocks. Simultaneously descend the buttock bones and legs as you press cupped fingertips to the floor. From these grounding actions, extend up through the sides of the waist, side ribs and chest. Observe how growing taller with this upward vertical lift in the pose energizes the bones, muscles and organs of your body.
5. Keep the sides of your chest lifting, and descend the trapezius (upper back muscles) toward the waist.



6. Roll the shoulder bones back and firm the shoulder blades into the body to further lift and expand the chest. Create freedom in the diaphragm by lifting and broadening the side ribs.
7. Keep that openness in the chest as you lift the breastbone toward the collarbones. Broaden the collarbones. Relax the jaw and soften the throat. Observe how the horizontal expansion in the side ribs, chest and collarbones steadies your body and invites mental quietude. Balance the vertical elongation and the horizontal breadth of the pose to make the asana both vitally alive and heart felt.
8. Fully stretch your arms and place the hands palms up on the knees. Spread the palms and extend the fingers. Now join the index finger and thumb in Jnana Mudra. Fully stretch the other three fingers. Press the hands into the knees to again re-energize the lift and expansion of the chest.
9. Draw up from the pelvic floor. Lift the abdomen and recede the navel toward your spine. Continue to lift and expand the chest. Experience the long line of extension from the tailbone through the crown of the head.

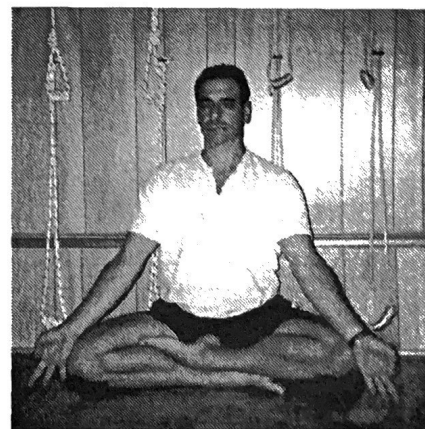
SIDDHASANA

10. Close your eyes and release the energy of your eyes toward the center of your heart. Breathe evenly and naturally.
11. To exit the pose, manually support and release the right foot, then the left and return to Dandasana. In like manner, repeat to the opposite side.

Considerations in the Pose:

Initially, Siddhasana can be a challenging pose if the hips are tight. Tightness in the hips can contribute to difficulties in the knees. Practice other seated poses such as Dandasana, Sukhasana, Baddha Konasana and Upavista Konasana to bring mobility to the hip area.

To prepare the ankles and feet for Siddhasana consider sitting in Vajrasana (you can belt the ankles together to aid foot and ankle alignment) or Virasana. Attend to the alignment of the ankles and metatarsals. More intermediate students can practice Eka Pada Bhikasana and Bhikasana for further preparation of the ankles and feet.





Ways to Work

For tightness in the hip area, sit on folded blankets.

- To warm up in the pose, practice one leg at a time. Focus on the rotation of the hips, knees, shinbones and feet as you bring the heel toward the pubic bone.
- To keep the pelvis upright and help maintain the natural curve in the lumbar spine, place a wedge or folded blanket partially under the base of the buttocks.
- To help maintain the upright position in the pelvis place a block between the wall and the sacrum.
- To create length from the knee to the groin and open the knees from the inside out, use 2 belts. Place one behind each knee so that the tail of the belt is available to roll the thighs and knees into external rotation. Pull out and down with the belt to lengthen the inner thighs and roll the knees from the inside out.

For knee challenges, place a folded belt behind the knee to create space. Focus on the alignment and rotation of the thigh, knee and shinbone.

- Another way to enter the pose for knee challenges is to stabilize the knee joint. From Dandasana bend that knee to your chest and draw the calf down from the pit of the knee to create space. To supply stability to the joint, wrap the belt firmly around the shin and thigh close to the knee. Shift the heel toward the pubic bone, and roll the thigh out as you lower the knee toward the floor.
- If the knees do not reach the floor, first sit higher on a folded blanket. If needed, place a support under the knees.
- Place a small roll of cloth under the bottom ankle for sensitivity and to alleviate strain in the ankle joint.
- Although the classic entry is from Dandasana, practice entering the pose from Upavista Konasana or Sukhasana.

Benefits

Siddhasana improves mobility in the hips and alleviates stiffness in the knees and ankles. It improves circulation in the abdominal region and tones the lower spine and abdominal organs. This asana prepares the practitioner for Padmasana. Siddhasana's broad, stable base gives a spacious foundation. The broad base and erect spine invite attentiveness and alertness in the mind, preparing one for pratyahara (drawing the senses inward) dharana (concentration) and dhyana (meditation).

Judi Rice teaches in Louisville, Kentucky. She is the creator of the DVD "Yoga for Inflexible People". Judi serves on the national board and edits the national newsletter. Her most influential teachers are Geeta Iyengar, Patricia Walden, John Schumacher. ■