



# Moon Salutation

Just as the moon, emitting no light of its own, reflects the light of the sun, the practice of the Moon Salutation reflects that of the Sun Salutation. The sequence of *asanas* is the same as the Sun Salutation, except that *ardha chandrasana* (Crescent Moon pose) is performed after *ashwa sanchalanasana* (Equestrian pose). This posture develops balance and concentration, adding another dimension to the practice.

Whereas the 12 positions of the Sun Salutation relate to the 12 zodiac or solar phases of the year, the 14 positions of the Moon Salutation relate to the 14 lunar phases. In the lunar calendar, the 14 days before the full moon are known as *sukla paksha*, the bright fortnight, and the 14 days after the full moon are known as *krishna paksha*, the dark fortnight. The name of each day introduces each *asana* and is used as a basis for learning the days of the lunar cycle. The lunar energy flows within *Ida nadi*, and

has cool, relaxing and creative qualities. *Ida* is the negative, introverted, feminine or mental force which is responsible for consciousness.

It is advisable to learn the Sun Salutation before attempting the Moon Salutation as the postures are the same for both, except for one extra pose. In the Moon Salutation the added pose is inserted in the sequence at positions five and 12. The Moon Salutation is best practiced late evening or at night – especially when the moon is visible – or at dawn during a full moon. When practiced at night, ensure the stomach is empty. Duration: For physical benefits practice three to 12 rounds quickly, and for spiritual benefits, slowly practice three to seven rounds.

**Contraindications:** People with back conditions should consult a medical expert before commencing this practice. Although some back conditions may be alleviated by this practice, problems such as a slipped disc and sciatica will be better managed through an alternative *asana* program. Com-

pletely avoid this practice if suffering from a hernia or intestinal tuberculosis.

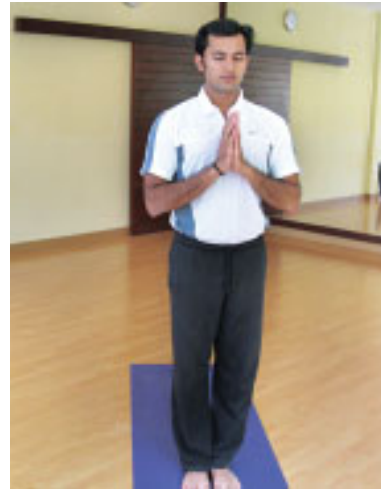
**Benefits:** The movements in this series widen and loosen all of the spaces around the pelvis, hips, knees and ankles, allowing the life force to enter into them, healing, stretching, strengthening and relaxing. A healing energy is felt from the blood circulating throughout the body. The possibility of eventually sitting in the Lotus position can be realized. The solar plexus and sexual organs get an inner massage.

The blood is cleansed of toxins and enriched with oxygen. The body and mind are relaxed. Not a drop of energy is wasted. Just the opposite in fact; there is a feeling of strength that fills the entire body. Before beginning the Moon Salutation, a few moments should be allowed to prepare the body and mind.

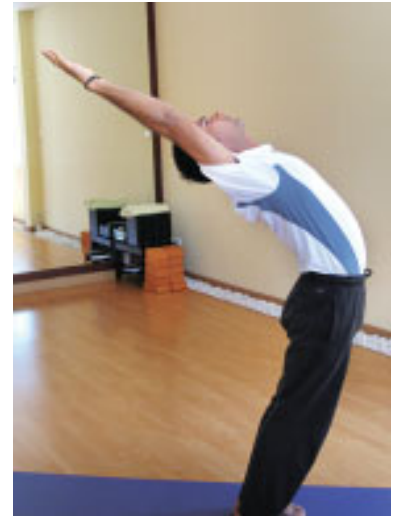
Stand upright with the feet together, the eyes closed and arms by your sides. The weight of the body should be evenly distributed on both the feet. Try to observe any spontaneous movement of

the body as it relaxes. Gradually become more aware of the natural flow of breathing with each inhalation and exhalation. Then include awareness of the move-

ment in the body with the rhythm of breathing. Retain this awareness for a few moments. Slowly become aware of the whole body in the standing position.



**Position 1: Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)** Stand upright with your feet together and eyes closed. Slowly bend the elbows and place the palms together in front of the chest in *namaskara mudra* (as shown in first picture), mentally offering homage to the sun, the source of all energy. Breathe normally and relax the whole body.



**Position 2: Hastha Utthanasana (Raised Arm Pose)** While inhaling, raise and stretch both arms above the head with arms separated, shoulder width apart. Bend the head, arms and trunk backward. **Benefits:** Tones the spinal nerves, opens the lungs and removes excess weight.



**Position 3: Padahasthasana (Hand to Foot Pose)** While exhaling, bend forward until the fingers or the palms of the hand touch the floor on either side of the feet, keeping your legs straight or bent at the knees. Try to touch your knees with the forehead without any strain to your back and neck. Do not be alarmed; it's very common to feel the deep stretch at the back of your legs (Stretching hamstring muscles). **Benefits:** Improves digestion and helps to remove constipation.

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