

long you will be in the various phases of *Karandavasana* initially (unless you are already proficient).

4. Hold *Urdhva Dandasana* (headstand variation) for ten to fifteen breaths. On the way in and out of *Karandavasana*, you will transit through a forearm balance with your hips extended over or even beyond the back of your head. At this point, many students fall out of the posture due to lack of strength. Holding *Urdhva Dandasana* for ten to fifteen breaths will prepare you.

As usual, you should practice variations outside of the *vinyasa* practice or, if you need to introduce them into the practice, then include them for only as long as necessary.

## Vinyasa Count

### Vinyasa Eight

Inhaling, move up into *Pincha Mayurasana* as described.

### Vinyasa Nine

As with all complex postures, the key is to completely break the posture down into its constituents and isolate the respective phases of the movement. We use six phases here.

#### PHASE 1 — PLACING THE RIGHT LEG CORRECTLY

Exhaling, while balancing on your forearms, place first your right leg into half-lotus. You will need sufficiently flexible hip joints, which we acquired through the practice of such postures as *Baddhakonasana* and *Garbha Pindasana*, and strong lateral (external) rotators of the hip, which we acquired in *Janushirshasana B* and *Triang Mukha Ekapada Pashimottanasana*, all part of the Primary Series. Also, performing the prescribed femur rotations in *Supta Vajrasana* while holding on to your toes with fervor will have prepared you for this moment.

You need to strongly externally rotate your femur to get into lotus without the aid of your hands. If you cannot get your right foot in far enough toward your left groin, you may use

momentum to sweep your right foot over the left thigh.

Once your right leg is in half-lotus, bend your left leg and draw the left knee toward your chest and abdomen. This will bring your legs into a similar position as they are when performing *Marichyasana D*, only here you are upside down. The bent left leg will help to draw the right leg deeper into half-lotus. When you cannot get any further, alternately abduct and adduct the right thigh (which means to move the knee away from the center line of your body and again back toward the midline), while continuing to flex the right knee. This will make the right foot slide over the left thigh, and since you continue to flex the left thigh, the right leg will now slip deeper toward the left groin. Continue to flex the left hip to draw the left knee further toward your chest, until your right foot is firmly placed into the left groin.

If your right foot does not slide up into the half-lotus position, consider the same situation as in *Garbha Pindasana* regarding traction. The solution that worked for you there is likely to work for you here. To repeat, if you have a papery skin type (*vata* skin) you may find the wearing of long tights beneficial. If you have thick, watery skin (*kapha* skin type), you will be better off wearing shorts and sprinkling water on your thighs and feet before you perform the posture. If your skin is oily (*pitta* skin type), you might consider an oil-based lubricant or emulsion. However, if you use this option, make sure not to use too much lubricant or make your skin too slippery. You will need a certain amount of traction to safely perform the subsequent phases of *Karandavasana*.

#### PHASE 2 — PLACING THE LEFT LEG CORRECTLY

Proceed with the next phase only if your right leg is in a stable position, deeply in half-lotus. Remember that when you sit on the floor to perform *Padmasana*, you never place the second leg into position before the first one is properly secured, so we will not resort to this while balancing on our arms either. Doing otherwise might endanger the knee joint of the leg that is on top.



Forearm Balance with right leg in Half-Lotus

Place the left leg into lotus by strongly externally rotating the left femur. For most students, it will be helpful to sweep the leg into position using momentum, especially if you have strong, bulging thighs. Once your left leg is in position, alternately adduct and abduct both thighs. Every time you move your knees together, strongly internally rotate your thighbones (this is similar to the femur movement performed in *Supta Vajrasana* in *vinyasa* nine). This will annul the previous external rotation and move your legs deeply into lotus. Both feet will need to be high up in the groin with the heels close together and the femurs almost parallel to move through the next phase of *Karandavasana*.

If you are new to this posture, I suggest that you stay here for five breaths, then extend your legs



Forearm Balance with both legs in Lotus

slowly back up into *Pincha Mayurasana* and then exit as described under *vinyasa* nine of that posture. Do this for some time before you go on to the next phase.

These first two phases deal only with movements of the hip joints.

### PHASE 3 — LOWERING THE LEGS TO THE HORIZONTAL PLANE

If you are a seasoned practitioner, then slowly flex your hip joints until your folded legs are parallel to the floor and your knees are at the same height as your sit bones. To do so, you need to extend your low back into the same position that you hold in *Urdhva Dandasana*, the variation of headstand wherein your legs are parallel to the floor. Holding