

Parvritta Revolving Trikonasana Triangle pose

With an attitude of childlike curiosity, explore this asana remembering the joy is in the journey. **by Adam Bornstein**



Parvritta Trikonasana is a standing pose, a forward bend pose, and a rotation pose. At times it can also feel like a balance pose. This article will look at different alignment points, how to use props, how to maximize the use of the breath, and the importance of attitude.

By approaching asanas with a receptive mind, our practice will continue to evolve. Each time we come to the yoga mat, we have the opportunity to be fully present and to unify the body and mind through the vehicle of the breath.

Even while working intensely in the asana, feel that you are an interested observer.

This state of detachment, *Vairagya* in Sanskrit, is one of the keys to success in yoga practice. By staying slightly detached you can be in a wonderful state of inner freedom. Not grasping or clinging to the outward form of the asana, but ever-opening to the freshness of each breath, each movement, and each sensation.

Another key to success is consistent, enduring practise. In Sanskrit it is called *Abhyasa*.

Yoga practice is a journey and requires that we apply ourselves wholeheartedly with reverence and courage. Find the balance of a steady application of yoga in your life both on and off the mat combined with the sense of freedom of offering the practice to the Source of all life.

[preparatory poses]

Adho Mukha Svanasana – Downward facing dog pose



Practise the heel-press warm-up first. Come into Downward Facing Dog with knees bent. Inhale and lift the heels high; exhale, bend the left knee and straighten the right knee, pressing the heel towards the floor. Inhale, lift both heels again; exhale, bend the right knee as you press the left heel towards the floor. Repeat a few times, alternating the heel press on right and left heels. As the leg straightens and the heel moves down actively, engage the front shin and thigh muscles. This will help the lengthening through the back of the leg. After a few cycles, press both heels towards the floor and breathe. Rest in Child's pose when you come down.

Parsvottanasana – Intense side stretch pose



This is basically the same leg and pelvis position as for Parvritta Trikonasana. The legs are closer together than in Trikonasana. The right foot turns forward 90 degrees while the left foot turns in

45-60 degrees. The heels will either be in line, or the back foot can be stepped further out to the side. The back foot and hip will turn forward so the chest and pelvis will face towards the front leg. Place

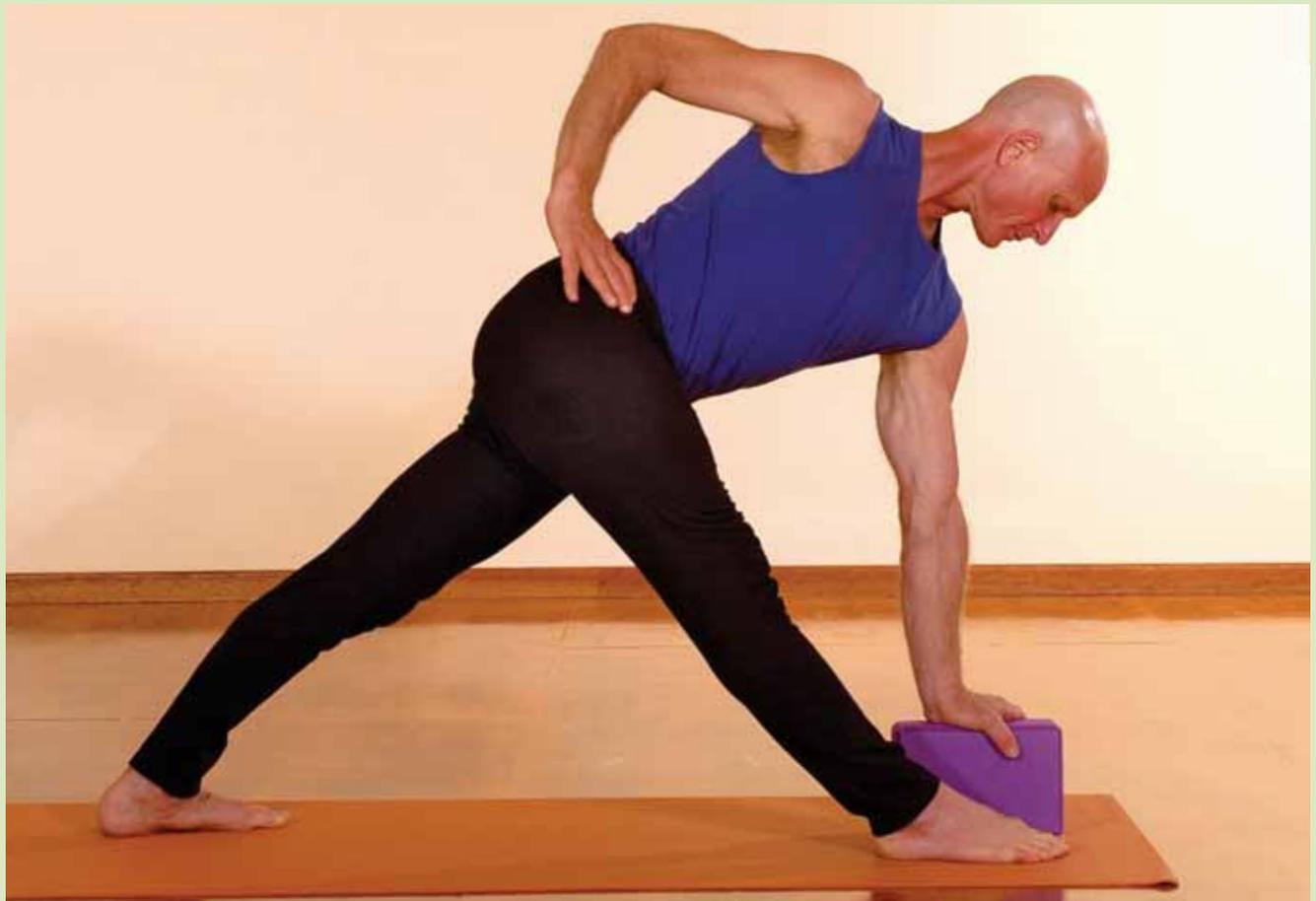
the hands on the pelvic rim. Inhaling, lengthen upwards through the spine; exhaling, begin to press back through the sitting bones, tilting the pelvic rim forwards and lengthening forward through the spine. Draw back through the right thighbone as you come forward. Resist the tendency to sway the hips to the right or left. Emphasise the length from the tailbone to the crown of head. Clasp the wrists or elbows behind the back. Continue to breathe: inhaling and lengthening, exhaling and folding down over the front leg. Maintain an anchor through the back foot. After a few breaths, rise up reversing through the steps and repeat on the other side.

Jathara Parvrittasana variation – Revolving belly pose



This pose resembles Revolving Triangle except the body is supported by the floor. Lying flat on your back, lift the right leg up. Use a strap or take hold of the foot with the left hand. The right arm is along the floor, straight out from the right shoulder. On an exhalation, begin to take the right leg across the body towards floor on the left. As the leg lowers, create more space through the right ribcage, waist, and lumbar spine by drawing the right thigh and hip down away from the shoulders. Rest the inner aspect of the right foot on a bolster or the floor. Continue to draw down through the right thigh. Take a smooth inhalation, feeling the heart fill and expand. On a long, deep exhalation, turn the belly and ribcage towards the sky and simultaneously lengthen out through the right arm. Explore turning the head towards the right. Breathe here. Then inhale up with the right leg; exhale and hug the knee into the chest before repeating on the other side.

[important alignment details for revolving triangle pose]



The foundation

The placement of the feet, legs, and pelvis are especially important in all the variations of Revolving Triangle.

Step the feet apart. The distance between the feet is the same as Parsvottanasana (Intense side stretch pose). This is closer together than Trikonasana (Triangle). If you step the feet too close together, the spine may round when you come into the pose. Too far apart and stability may be compromised and the back heel will lift up thereby reducing the stable base of the asana. Follow the instructions for Parsvottanasana (under preparatory poses) to align the lower body. See that the right (front) knee faces towards the top of the foot and is not collapsed inward. Engage the front thigh muscles (quadriceps) to stabilize the knee. If you tend to roll onto the outer foot, be sure to plant the ball of the big toe into the floor.

Engage the quadricep muscles of the left leg to firm up around the thigh and

knee. If you are tight in the calf muscles, you will be challenged to bring the foot to 60 degrees. Instead, the foot will be angled with toes more out to the side (rather than facing so far forward). This actually may help you be more balanced in the pose. It will be important to press down into the outer left foot and heel to anchor the pose. Instead of the front heel lining up with the back instep, which is common in other standing poses, the heels can either be in one line or the left (back) foot and leg can be adjusted towards the left for a broader side-to-side stance. This is a more user-friendly adaptation of the pose. It will be especially suitable for women with wider hips, for students with long legs and short torso, and for anyone who is challenged with balance.

Now, look at your right heel in relationship to your right sitting bone: these two points should be in one line. Draw an imaginary line on your mat from the right heel straight backwards. If you drew a line straight down from the right sitting bone, it should intersect the line on the mat. In

other words, avoid swaying your hips either to the right or to the left. Maintain this alignment throughout the entire pose. Your knees, hips, and sacroiliac joints will thank you for it.

The spine

As you rotate the spine into the pose, the belly and chest turn to face the right leg. Since the spine joins the pelvis at the sacroiliac joints, the pelvis turns with the spine. This means that as you rotate to the right, the right hip naturally will be higher than the left hip. This is a good sign as it means the pelvis and spine are moving together, which will minimize any torque through the sacroiliac joints. Use the inhalation to make space between the navel and breastbone, and the exhalation to engage the rotator muscles of the trunk into the twist. Using the exhalation to rotate will especially empower the oblique muscles of the abdomen to assist the turning of the torso. This feels like the sides of the waist are pulling in. This action will also serve to protect the lower back.

[progressive practise]

If you are new to Parvritta Trikonasana, begin with the first variation to gain an applied understanding of the pose. Those who are experienced may also want to practise the first

variation and move forward after having embodied the instructions. Note that the directions for variation 1 (besides the use of the wall) are to be applied to variation 2.



[Variation 1 – with a block and a wall]

Stand sideways, close to a wall on your right side. Place a yoga block on the floor next to the inner right foot. Step your left foot back and position yourself so the right hip is close to, but not touching the wall. Turn the left foot in 45–60 degrees and align the heels, or step the left foot to the left. Remember the alignment instructions shared earlier for the feet, knees, and hips.

Entering the pose

Place the hands on the pelvic rim, thumbs on upper buttocks, and fingers on frontal hipbones. Inhaling, draw up through the front hips, lift through the heart, and turn the hips and chest towards the right leg. Exhaling, begin to fold forward at the right hip. Keep the chest open and feel your lower belly lightly toned for lower back support as you press back through the sitting bones. At the same time, anchor the left heel and begin drawing back first through the inner right thigh, then the centre of the back

thigh, and then the outer thigh. Following this order of action in the right leg will inhibit the tendency to swing the right hip to the left (thereby twisting the knee and throwing the pose out of kilter).

Place the left hand on the block. Do your best to keep the alignment of feet, legs, and hips throughout the pose. Bring the right palm to the wall with the elbow bent. Inhaling, lengthen out the spine. Exhaling, begin pressing the hand into the wall and easing into your rotation. To refine the action of the hand on the wall without moving the hand, feel like you are drawing down and back on the wall. This will help you to lengthen as you twist. Various muscles are either contracting or releasing to encourage the rotation. Among them are some deep spinal muscles (rotators) and abdominal muscles (obliques).

Maintain the steadiness in the legs, ankles, and feet as you take a few breaths. Look toward the wall, keeping

[benefits]

- Strengthens ankles, legs, deep back muscles, arms, and the oblique muscles of the abdomen.
- Tones muscles above and below knee joints, improving stability.
- Improves flexibility in hips, spine, and shoulders.
- Squeezes out tension in spinal regions and toxins from the abdomen.
- Improves arches in feet.
- Improves respiration.
- Develops concentration.

Contraindications

- Intervertebral disc problems
- Sacroiliac joint dysfunction
- 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy (unless you are experienced)

the back of the neck long. Feel the inhalation lengthening the spine and making space through the entire torso. Feel the exhalation stabilize and support the rotation. Challenge your endurance as long as there is no pain in the knees, sacroiliac joints, or lumbar spine.

Exiting the pose

To come out of the pose in a dynamic way, bring both hands to the floor, then place the hands back on the pelvis (as described above), and come up on the inhalation, pressing the front foot into the floor. If you need to bend the front knee either to enter or exit the pose, that is fine as long as the knee does not collapse in or out. A more gentle way to exit is to place the hands on the floor, step the left leg forward and release into a forward fold with knees bent. From here you can inhale, lift the chest, and come up to standing; or come down to the floor on your back and draw the knees into the chest for a few breaths, before practising on the other side.

[progressive practise continued]



[Variation 2 – Free standing with hand on block, foot, or floor]

If you can maintain smooth consistent breathing when practising variation 1, you may be ready for this variation.

Other options for placement of left hand

1. Place the finger pads on the floor on the inner side of the right foot.
2. Place the palm down with fingers facing forward on the floor on the inner side of the right foot.
3. Place the hand on top of the right foot.
4. Place the hand on the floor on the outside of the right foot so the inner (thumb side) side of the lower forearm presses against the outer right ankle. This arrangement can assist as a fulcrum to help you rotate deeper (more advanced).

Avoid collapsing into the lower arm and hand. Lift the chest away from the shoulder and gently turn your left biceps muscle towards the front (in the direction that your right toes are facing). This will help to take the shoulder away from the ear and open the chest area.

Bring in all the alignments for the pose while maintaining a smooth flow of breath. Carry the breath and its energy throughout the asana. Create space between the lower belly and chest as you inhale. Stabilize the asana on the exhalation and perhaps rotate deeper. Come out of the pose when you are ready and repeat on the other side.

Experiment with moving energy through the body

Try exhaling and directing energy down the legs through the feet into the earth. This feels like you are attempting to stretch the mat between the feet. The legs get very strong and stable. A way to initiate more length through the spine is to inhale and draw energy lines up from the feet and legs into the base of the pelvis and through the spinal axis to the crown of the head. Then exhale and send the current back down the legs into the feet again to get solid and grounded. As you exhale and anchor the legs and feet, encourage the rotation of the torso and lengthen out through the arms.

As you lift your arm in Parvritta Trikonasana embody the saying of the great master Sri Ramakrishna, “Raise the sail of your self-effort to catch the winds of grace.”

Importance of attitude

It is important to begin with self-acceptance. While this pose may be challenging for you in the beginning, avoid excess effort. Rather than muscle yourself into an outer shape resembling the asana, encourage the pose to express itself through you. This is a breath-by-breath unfolding process.

Don't limit yourself to a superficial practice. Go deep into the inner experience by linking your awareness with the pulsation of breath moving through you. Find the dynamic balance of using your self-effort to enter into the domain of the pose, with a sense of inner listening every step along the way.

Conclusion

As you continue your practice over many years the joy of new discoveries is never-ending. Stay awake to the transforming moments of insight and inspiration. When you align your body, mind, and breath in Parvritta Trikonasana a hidden dimension opens and the pose expresses itself through you. Through this expression feel a powerful, self-generating flow of prana throughout your entire being. Expand further and connect to the Source of life within and all around you in a sacred circle of giving and receiving. Become a conduit for heaven and earth to unite as you reach for the sky through your top arm and root down to the earth through your legs and lower arm. Absorb these qualities of earth-stability and heaven-expansion in your body, your mind, and in the very essence of who you are.

Adam and his partner Akash are the founders of Radiant Light Yoga. They have been teaching since 1982. This year marks their tenth year of training yoga teachers in Australia. Visit their website at www.radiantlightyoga.com for more information.