**Kriya - Lower Back and Hips**

(*The Art, Science & Application of Kundalini Yoga,* Nirvair Singh Khalsa, pp. 189-194)

Pelvic Grind Left. Place your hands on your knees and begin grinding yourself in a big, smooth circle going to the left. Lift the chest up high as you tilt the pelvis back, then lean to the left, then arch and lean forward, then lean to the right. Keep the chin level to the ground in both positions. Normal breath (90 seconds).

*Doing this exercise, by itself, for 31 minutes a day can maintain your youth.*

Pelvic Grind Right. Continue grinding yourself in a big, smooth circle going to the right. Lift the chest up high as you tilt the pelvis back, then lean to the right, then arch and lean forward, then lean to the left. Keep the chin level to the ground in both positions. Normal breath (90 seconds).

*Great for lower back and hips. Helps make elimination regular*.

Front Stretch Left. Stretch your left leg out in front of you straight; right foot against the inner thigh of the left leg. With both hands, stretch forward then down over the left leg. Hold on to your shin, ankle or foot with both hands. Think “belly to thighs” or “heart to knees.” Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Hold it steady, no bouncing. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).

Front Stretch Right. Stretch your right leg out in front of you straight; left foot against the inner thigh of the right leg. With both hands, stretch forward then down over the right leg. Hold on to your shin, ankle or foot with both hands. Think “belly to thighs” or “heart to knees.” Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Hold it steady, no bouncing. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).

*The above two exercises stretch the life nerve (sciatic). They are also good for the lower back, stretching the hamstrings and relaxing the quads.*

Basic Spine Flex. Place the hands on the shins right above the ankles. Grasp the shins firmly and inhale through the nose, keeping the chest up high and tilting the pelvis forward. Exhale through the nose, keeping the chest high and tilting the pelvis in the opposite way. Inhale, flexing the spine forward; exhale, flexing the spine backward (3 minutes.)

Wide Leg Stretch Left. Stretch both legs out in front of you straight and then separate the legs until they are wide apart. Bring the torso upright and turn it to the left and with both hands, stretch forward then down over the left leg. Hold on to your shin, ankle or foot with both hands. Think “belly to the thigh” or “heart to the knee.” Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Hold it steady, no bouncing. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).

Wide Leg Stretch Right. Bring the torso upright and turn it to the left and with both hands, stretch forward then down over the right leg. Hold on to your shin, ankle or foot with both hands. Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Hold it steady, no bouncing. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).

Wide Leg Stretch Lean Back. Keep the legs wide and bring the torso upright. Lean back on the hands keeping the pelvis tilted forward. Chest up high, shoulders rolled back and down. Place your weight on the hands and heels as though you are going to lift the body off the ground. Hold the position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

*Both of the above exercises stretches the life nerve (sciatic) and the sex nerve (inner thigh). They are also good for the lower back, stretching the hamstrings and relaxing the quads. Helpful with elimination as well.*

Wide Leg Stretch Center. Bring the torso upright. Bring both hands on the ground in the center with the palms flat on the ground shoulder width apart. Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Hold it steady, no bouncing. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

Legs Straight Flop Feet. Sit with the legs in front of you straight with the feet about shoulder width apart. Rest on the hands with the arms in back of you. Begin flopping the feet in and out towards and away from each other, rotating from the hips. Normal breath (2 minutes).

*This exercise is good for the hips and helps to adjust the sacrum area (very lower back).*

Pelvic Raises. Lie down on the back flat with the knees up and the feet flat. Feet are about shoulder-width apart. Reach out with the hands and catch the ankles (if you can). If you cannot catch the ankles, then keep the palms flat on the ground near your hips. Pull Root Lock. Place a block between your knees. Roll the tops of your thighs inward as you hold the block in place. Inhale and raise the pelvis up high, really arch up. Exhale and lower the body back to the ground. Inhale up and exhale down. 2 minutes.

Hip Leg Thrusts. Remain on the back and bring the soles of the feet together with the knees wide apart and the feet lifted off the ground. Arms are by the side palms up. Pull Root Lock. Inhale and thrust the left leg out to a 45-degree angle to the body with the toe pointed and about 18 inches off the ground. Exhale and bring the foot back to center, touching the sole of the right foot. Inhale and thrust the right leg out to a 45-degree angle to the body with the toe pointed and about 18 inches off the ground. Exhale and bring the foot back to center touching the sole of the left foot. Keep the knees wide. Continue with one side and then the other. Powerful, deep breaths (2 minutes).

*This is a hip adjusting exercise. It energizes the navel center. It helps regulate elimination.*

Leg Lift/Hold Left. Lying on the back, pull Root Lock, with the legs out straight and the arms and hands on the ground palms down. Raise the left leg up to 90 degrees with the knee straight and the toe pointed to the ceiling. Hold the position with the leg. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

Leg Lift/Hold Right. Lying on the back, pull Root Lock, with the legs out straight and the arms and hands on the ground palms down. Raise the right leg up to 90 degrees with the knee straight and the toe pointed to the ceiling. Hold the position with the leg. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

*The above two exercises energize the navel center and life nerves. They are also good for the hips and lower back.*

Leg Lift/Hold. Lying on the back, have the legs out straight and the arms and hands on the ground palms down. Pull Root Lock. Raise both legs up to 90 degrees with the knees straight and the toes pointed toward the ceiling. Hold the position with the legs. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

Bow Pose. Roll over onto your stomach. Apply Root Lock to rotate your pelvis. Roll the tops of the thighs towards each other to protect the sacrum. This will help you to keep your feet touching. Press strongly through the Root Line (pushing directly down from the navel point) into the ground. Pull the shoulder blades down the back to leverage the lifting of the chest. Use the legs to pull against the arms to raise the body up into the position (90 seconds).

(Bow Pose is hard for many people, but it is important to get beyond the “bending where you are already bending” syndrome and open new territory in flexibility. If you really want to lengthen your spine out, particularly through the important pelvic muscles, you really have to keep the feet and knees close together and use the legs to pull against the arms. You may not come up as high, but it opens up the spine in a far more useful way.)

*Opens the diaphragm and the chest. It energizes the sex nerve. It is good for the pelvis, hips and entire spine.*

Half-Spinal Twist Left. Come out of position, sit down and stretch your legs out in front of you straight. Bring the left knee up. Cross the left foot over the right leg placing the foot flat on the floor. Take the left hand and bring it all the way back down and behind you on the left side. Take the right arm and wrap it around the left leg. Straighten up. Keep the chin in neck lock, level to the ground and turn the chin all the way to the left. Chest up high, left shoulder and chin all the way left. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

Half-Spinal Twist Right. Stretch your legs out in front of you straight. Bring the right knee up. Cross the right foot over the left leg placing the foot flat on the floor. Take the right hand and bring it all the way back down and behind you on the right side. Take the left arm and wrap it around the right leg. Straighten up. Keep the chin in neck lock, level to the ground and turn the chin all the way to the right. Chest up high, right shoulder and chin all the way right. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

*Both of the above exercises open up the hips and energize the spine.*

P-Stretch Left. Come up on the knees and bring the right knee up, placing the left foot on the ground. Leave the left knee on the ground, extending the left leg behind you. Scoot the right toes forward so you create as much angle as possible with the back (left) leg. Make sure the right shin is at a 90-degree angle to the ground and you are keeping the plane of the hips at a 90-degree angle to the left leg. Keep the torso upright. Have the hands in *Venus Lock*, invert the grip and bring the arms up overhead, straightening the elbows. If you feel unstable, have both hands on the right knee to support your upright position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

P-Stretch Right. Remain on the knees and bring the left knee up, placing the left foot on the ground. Leave the right knee on the ground, extending the right leg behind you. Scoot the left toes forward so you create as much angle as possible with the back (right) leg. Make sure the left shin is at a 90-degree angle to the ground and you keeping the plane of the hips at a 90-degree angle to the right leg. Keep the torso upright. Have the hands in *Venus Lock*, invert the grip and bring the arms up overhead, straightening the elbows. If you feel unstable, have both hands on the left knee to support your upright position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

*Stretches the psoas, strengthens the thighs and opens up the chest and shoulders*.

Standing Forward and Backward Bends. Stand with the feet shoulder width apart. Pull *Mulbandh* (Root Lock) and root yourself from your navel through your feet into the ground. Lift your chest up and come into *Jalandhar Bandh* (Neck Lock). (This consolidates your upper body and connects it to the root line.)

Imagine that the pull of the navel is so strong that it engages the muscles of the font and insides of your thighs, drawing the kneecaps upward. (Engaging these muscles on the front of the legs helps to release the hamstring muscles on the back of the legs and reduces the risk of hyperextension to the back of the knee.) Rotate your thighs slightly inward to avoid compressing the sacrum.

Have the palms together overhead with the thumbs crossed. Stretch up and back with a deep inhale, expanding your ribs. As you exhale, bend forward at the hinge line, revolving your upper body at the hip joint. Allow the hands to separate as you come forward. Bring the palms flat to the ground if possible. Only continue bending as far forward as you can without rounding your back or compressing your chest. The knees remain a little bent. Continue for 2 minutes.

Sat Kriya. Sit in Rock Pose on the heels and knees. (Sit in Easy Pose if needed.) Arms are held up overhead with the upper arms hugging the ears. Fingers are clasped together with the index fingers pointing straight up and the palms touching. The other fingers are interlaced. Chant the word, “Sat” as you sharply pull the navel point in, visualizing pulling in energy at the navel point. Chant the word, “Nam,” as you relax the navel, visualizing energy exiting at the brow point. Let the breath regulate itself. Eyes are closed and focused at the brow point. (Three minutes.)

*The rhythmic contraction and relaxation of the navel center in Sat Kriya produces waves of energy that circulate, energize and heal the body. While chanting, the spine stays still and straight. This is neither a spinal flex nor a pelvic thrust. You stay firmly seated on the heels through all the motions of the kriya. The abdominal contraction is focused at the navel point. There is an automatic contraction of the rectum and the sex organ areas as in the lower body lock called “root” lock or Mulbandh, but the lock is not forced and is pulled naturally from the navel.*

Deep Relaxation. Come out of position and rest on your back. Have the arms by the sides, palms facing up with the legs uncrossed. Allow the breath to return to normal. Have the knees up for comfort, if needed.

**Comments**: This is an excellent series for opening up the hips and stretching and strengthening the lower back. It is a good series for runners and skiers to practice on a regular basis during their respective seasons.

(Posture pointers in Bow Pose and Standing Forward and Back Bends are from Guru Prem Singh Khalsa’s book, “*Divine Alignment*.”)

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