



Marichiyasana A

Description

In marichyasana i we rotate the upper body away from the lower body. This is the main story of the pose.

MARICHASANA A (20 MOVEMENTS)

7	SAPTA	Inhale, jump through, right knee up
8	ASTAU	Exhale, fold
9	NAVA	Inhale, look up Exhale
10	DASA	Inhale, lift up
11	EKĀDASA	Exhale, jump back, Chaturanga
12	DUADASA	Inhale, Upward-Facing Dog
13	TRAYODASA	Exhale, Downward-Facing Dog
14	CATURDASA	Inhale, jump through, left knee up
15	PANCADASA	Exhale, fold
16	SODASA	Inhale, look up Exhale
17	SAPTADASA	Inhale, lift up
18	ASTAUDASA	Exhale, jump back, Chaturanga
19	EKUNAVIMŚATI	Inhale, Upward-Facing Dog
20	VIMSATIH	Exhale, Downward-Facing Dog

Anatomy

In marichyasana i we rotate the upper body away from the lower body. This is the main story of the pose. There are, however, a variety of smaller twists or subplots that contribute to the main story. For

example, if we think of the lower body turning away from the upper body, then we can augment the twist of the lower body by turning the bent leg in a direction that synergizes the pose. To do this, we externally rotate the bent leg as a unit and internally rotate the straight leg. In this way, both lower extremities combine to turn the lower half of the body away from the upper. Similarly, we can rotate the shoulder on the bent-leg side down and toward the opposite leg while bringing the other shoulder up and back to turn the torso. This combination of actions twists the shoulders and pelvis in opposite directions, moving the energy of nerve conduction upward through the susumna nadi in the torso. The key to this pose is seeking out all parts in the body that have the capacity to rotate and then combining them to deepen the twist.

BASIC JOINT POSITIONS

- The hips flex.
- The straight-leg knee extends.
- The held-leg knee flexes.
- The trunk flexes and rotates.
- The shoulders internally rotate and extend.
- The elbows extend and the forearms pronate.
- The held wrist extends

Synergizing/Activating

- The pectoralis major of the chest and subscapularis muscle under the shoulder blade turn the shoulders inward and stretch the infraspinatus and teres minor.
- The triceps muscles work to straighten the elbows, thus deepening the torso flexing forward.
- The deep external rotators of the bent-leg hip turn the thigh bone outward, while the gluteus medius and tensor fascia lata press the knee into the arm.
- The inner hamstrings of the bent leg rotate the tibia inward. The net effect of this action turns the hip outward, in a direction opposite to the torso.
- The psoas, pectineus, rectus femoris, and sartorius of the straight leg flex the hip.
- On the straight leg, the quadriceps contract to straighten the knee.
- The peroneus longus and brevis muscles turn the ankle of the straight leg slightly outward.
- The obliques (located toward the side of the abdomen) are activated to increase the turn.
- The quadratus lumborum and erector spinae arch the back slightly.

Preparation

Begin in Dandasana. Take the general form of Marichyasana I by flexing the hip and bending the knee. Contract the hamstrings to squeeze the lower leg against the thigh and accentuate this bend. Activate the quadriceps of the straight leg to extend the knee. Bend forward and grasp the outstretched foot with the opposite hand; press the other hand into the floor beside the hip. Bend the elbow of the hand gripping the foot and attempt to straighten the other arm. Notice how this turns the body. Next, reach behind the body and link the hands, either directly or with a belt. Initially, turn the shoulder on the bent knee side forward while rolling the shoulder of the straight-leg side back. Flex the trunk over the straight leg. Once you are deep within the pose, draw the shoulders away from the ears. Ease out of the stretch



by releasing the hands and turning the body toward the bent knee; sit up and straighten the leg, coming back to Dandasana. To prepare for Marichyasana I, use poses such as the supine lunge illustrated here to gain flexibility in the bent-leg hip extensors.

STEP 1 Extend the straight-leg knee by activating the quadriceps, and contract the peroneus longus and brevis muscles to turn the foot out slightly at the ankle and open the sole. Engage the tensor fascia lata. This synergizes the quadriceps in extending the knee and aids in flexing the hip. The tensor fascia lata also contributes to the important function of internally rotating the hip and femur of the straight leg. Bear in mind that the gluteus maximus stretches here because we are flexing forward. This creates a pull on the femur toward external rotation, turning the kneecap outward. The tensor fascia lata counteracts this, bringing the kneecap back to neutral.

STEP 2 Draw the trunk forward by contracting the abdominals. Both psoas muscles contribute to this action by flexing the hips. A cue for engaging the straight-leg psoas is to attempt to lift the leg off the floor; on the bent-leg side, squeeze the trunk against the leg. These actions tilt the pelvis forward and augment the stretch of the straight-leg hamstrings. Activate mula bandha to draw the coccyx forward and nutate the sacrum. This creates a counterbalance to the flexing trunk and stabilizes the pelvis.

STEP 3 Contract the hamstrings to bend the knee. Remember that the inner-side hamstrings (the semimembranosus and semitendinosus) also internally rotate the tibia. Press the ball of the foot into the floor and gently rotate the foot inwards to engage these muscles. Note that when the lower leg is flexing against the upper, the two parts of the legs can be considered a single unit, like a log. This means that internally rotating the bent-leg tibia externally rotates the hip. Synergize this by tucking the tailbone under to engage the deep external rotators. This culminates in rolling the bent-leg side of the lower body away from the rotation of the upper body.

STEP 4 Both shoulders internally rotate, although the shoulder closer to the bent knee rotates inward slightly more to turn the upper body toward the straight leg. Get a feel for the muscles that produce this action before you do the pose. The cue for this is to put the hand behind the back at the level of the lumbar, and then lift it off. Use the other hand to feel how this activates the lower part of the pectoralis major and the deltoids. The latissimus dorsi, teres major, and subscapularis muscles work synergistically to internally rotate the shoulder.

STEP 5 To finish the pose, try to straighten the arms by contracting the triceps and draw the shoulders away from the neck by engaging the lower third of the trapezius. This levers the body forward. Use the posterior portion of the deltoids to lift the arms away from the back.

SUMMARY All of these actions culminate in a particular type of forward bend combined with a twist. In the lower body, the gluteus maximus of both legs and the hamstrings of the straight leg stretch. The back muscles, including the erector spinae, the spinal rotators, and the quadratus lumborum, all stretch. Internally rotating the shoulders stretches the infraspinatus and teres minor muscles, as well as parts of the deltoids.

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