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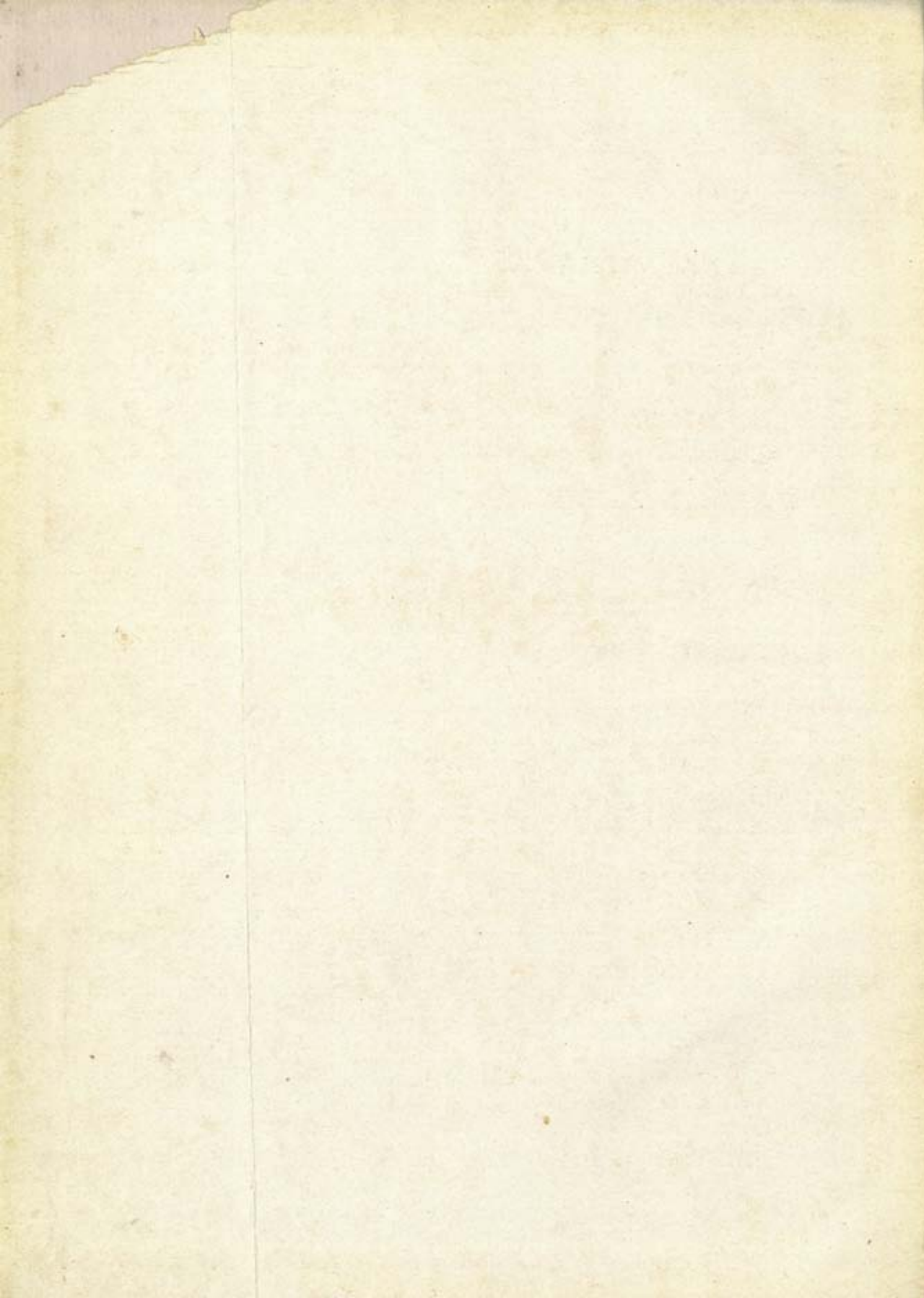
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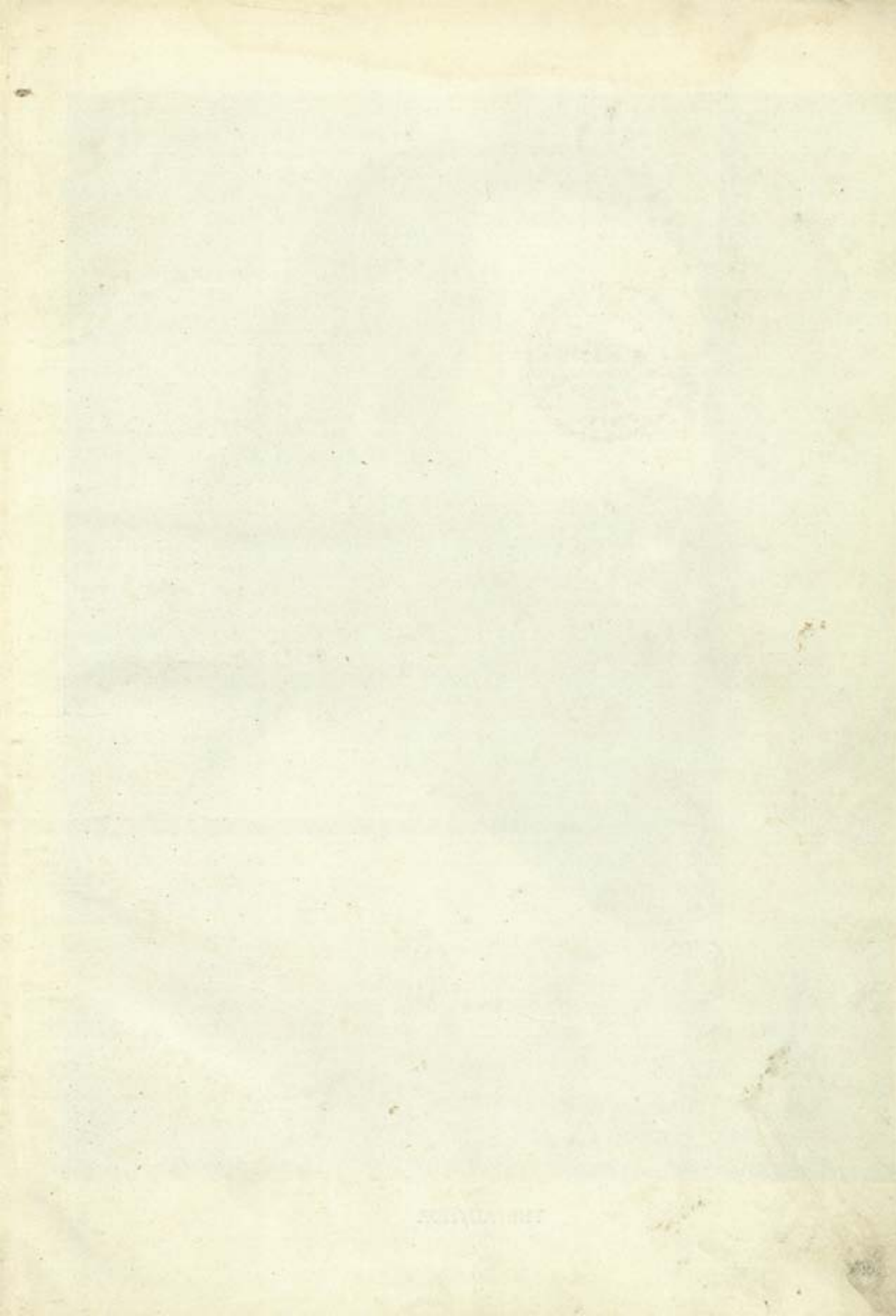
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YOGĀSANA VIJNĀNA

The Science of Yoga



THE AUTHOR

# YOGĀSANA VIJÑĀNA

The Science of Yoga



DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI

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Seeking a greater understanding of man and nature, modern science is constantly making new discoveries and coming to new conclusions. One of the most notable of these concerns the integration of mind and matter. This new discovery is also one of the oldest of human discoveries. At least in our country the ancient sages had a profound understanding of the subtle interdependence of the physical and the mental.

This wisdom is embodied in the Yoga-Shastras. Yoga-ASANAS are the discipline by which the seeker can secure bodily and mental health. The efficacy of Yoga-ASANAS is wellknown and does not require fresh enumeration.

My father attributed his fitness to a lifelong habit of beginning the day with Yoga-ASANAS. I myself was initiated at an early age. Later, when my father and I met Shri Dharendra Brahmachari, we learnt his system of Sukshma Vyayam (सूक्ष्म व्यायाम) which I found more convenient to follow as a keep-fit routine when one is rushed for time and constantly on the move.

My father and I were greatly interested in the six "cleansing processes" (षट्कर्माणि), but they seemed to be shrouded in mystery and so complicated as to be beyond the capacity of the average person. Shri Dharendra Brahmachari proved their simplicity by teaching three of these processes not only to us grown-ups but even to my two small sons.

I hope this authoritative work will be useful to students of Yoga and to all those who are interested in fitness.

Indira Gandhi  
(Indira Gandhi)

New Delhi,  
December 29, 1966.

Received from M/s. Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, on 21/2/70 for Rs. 90/-



## PREFACE

I AM HAPPY that in response to requests from people all over the world, I have been able to bring out this volume on yogic asanas. I hope it will be useful and satisfy a long-felt need.

I owe thanks to many persons for assistance I received in different ways in the writing of this book, but I am especially indebted to Dr K D Bharadwaj, M.A., Ph.D., Vedantacharya, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Modern School, New Delhi; Dr T P Bharadwaj, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Head of the Department of Pathology & Bacteriology, S.M.S. Medical College, Jaipur; and Dr R K Caroli, M.D.

D. B.





# CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY MRS. INDIRA GANDHI	Page v
PREFACE	vii
TRANSLITERATION	xvii
INTRODUCTION	1

## *Āsana*

1 Siddhāsana (Perfect Posture)	11
2 Padmāsana (Lotus Posture)	18
3 Bhadrāsana (Blessed Posture)	29
4 Muktāsana (Liberated Posture)	30
5 Vajrāsana (Adamantine Posture)	35
6 Svāstikāsana (Svastika Posture)	36
7 Siṃhāsana (Lion Posture)	36
8 Gomukhāsana (Cow-Head Posture)	37
9 Virāsana (Hero's Posture)	38
10 Dhanurāsana (Bow Posture)	48
11 Śavāsana or Mṛtāsana (Corpse Posture)	49
12 Guptāsana (Concealed Posture)	53
13 Matsyāsana (Fish Posture)	54
14 Matsyendrāsana (Matsyendra Posture)	54
15 Gorakṣāsana (Gorakṣa Posture)	61
16 Paścimottānāsana (Posterior-Stretch Posture)	61
17 Utkatāsana (Squatting Posture)	63
18 Sankatāsana (Contracted or Chīnkā Posture)	64
19 Mayūrāsana (Peacock Posture)	64
20 Kukkuṭāsana (Cock Posture)	70
21 Kūrmāsana (Tortoise Posture)	71
22 Uttāna-Kūrmāsana (Stretched-Tortoise Posture)	72
23 Uttāna-Maṇḍūkāsana (Stretched-Frog Posture)	72
24 Vṛkṣāsana (Tree Posture)	81
25 Maṇḍūkāsana (Frog Posture)	82



26	Garuḍāsana (Eagle Posture)	83
27	Vṛṣabhāsana (Ox Posture)	83
28	Śalabhāsana (Locust Posture)	84
29	Makarāsana (Crocodile Posture)	93
30	Uṣṭrāsana (Camel Posture)	94
31	Bhujāṅgāsana (Cobra Posture)	95
32	Yogāsana (Yoga Posture)	95
33	Cakrāsana (Wheel Posture)	105
34	Suṭapavana muktāsana (Lying Wind- Release Posture)	106
35	Uttānapādāsana (Foot-Stretch Posture)	106
36	Hastapādāṅguṣṭhāsana (Hand-Toe Posture)	107
37	Baddha-padmasana (Bound-Lotus Posture)	108
38	Praṇavāsana (Praṇava Posture)	117
39	Naukāsana (Boat Posture)	118
40	Koṇāsana (Angle Posture)	118
41	Bhūnamanāsana (Bowing-Down Posture)	119
42	Sarvāṅgāsana (All-Limb Posture)	120
43	Ākarṇadhanurāsana (Pulled-Bow Posture)	125
44	Ūrdhvā-Hastottānāsana (Up-Stretched-Arms Posture)	126
45	Parvatāsana (Mountain Posture)	127
46	Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana (Big-Toe Posture)	127
47	Garbhāsana (Foetus Posture)	128
48	Brahmacaryāsana (Celibacy Posture)	133
49	Utthita Padmāsana (Uplifted-Lotus Posture)	134
50	Mṛgāsana (Deer Posture)	135
51	Pavanamuktāsana (Wind-Liberating Posture)	136
52	Ūrdhvasarvāṅgāsana (Shoulder-Stand Posture)	136
53	Vikāṭāsana (Formidable Posture)	145
54	Śīrṣacakrāsana (Cephalic-Wheel Posture)	146
55	Aśvatthāsana (Holy Fig-Tree Posture)	147
56	Kandapīdāsana (Root-Squeezing Posture)	148
57	Ardhā-Matsyendrāsana (Half-Matsyendra Spine-Twist Posture)	148
58	Bakāsana (Crane Posture)	153

59	Ṭiṭṭibhāsana (Lapwing Posture)	154
60	Viparīta-Śīrṣā-dvīhastā Baddhāsana (Reversed Cranio-Manual-Locked Posture)	155
61	Jhūlāsana (Swing Posture)	156
62	Sukhāsana (Easy Posture)	156
63	Jānū-Śīrṣāsana (Knee and Head Posture)	165
64	Nāḍīśodhana Āsana (Nāḍī Purificatory Posture)	166
65	Vistṛta pāda sarvāṅgāsana (Spread-out feet, all-limbs Posture)	167
66	Ekapāda bhujāsana (Unilateral foot-hand Posture)	168
67	Dvipāda bhujāsana (Bilateral foot-hand Posture)	168
68	Śīrṣajānu sparśāsana (Genu-Cranial Posture)	177
69	Supta vṛścikāsana (Sleeping-Scorpion Posture)	177
70	Utthita dvipāda kandharāsana (Raised bila- teral foot-shoulder Posture)	178
71	Tāḍāsana (Palmyra Posture)	179
72	Khañjanāsana (Wagtail Posture)	180
73	Ekahastā bhujāsana (Unilateral hand-arm Posture)	189
74	Dvīhastā bhujāsana (Bilateral hand-arm Posture)	189
75	Jānūbhūmi-sthīrāsana (Knee support Posture)	190
76	Pādahastāsana (Foot-hand Posture)	190
77	Ekapāda kandharāsana (Unilateral foot-shoulder Posture)	191
78	Dvipāda kandharāsana (Bilateral foot- shoulder Posture)	191
79	Bhagāsana (Vulval Posture)	192
80	Udarākaraṇāsana (Belly-suction Posture)	201
81	Tolāṅgulāsana (Finger-balance Posture)	201
82	Pūrvottānāsana (Anterior-stretch Posture)	202
83	Dvipāda vīṣṭāsana (Spread-out-feet Posture)	202



84	Śīrṣāsana (Head-stand Posture)	209
85	Supta-pāda-kandharāsana (Lying foot-on-shoulder Posture)	227
86	Kaṭicakrāsana (Lumbar-Wheel Posture)	227
87	Pretāsana (Ghost Posture)	228
88	Pāda-skandhā-daṇḍāsana (Foot-shoulder-daṇḍa Posture)	228
89	Supta-vajrāsana (Lying-adamantine Posture)	229
90	Viśṭṭāpādavakṣa-bhūmisparśāsana (Extended feet-and chest on ground-Posture)	230
91	Kākāsana (Crow Posture)	230
92	Lolāsana (Pendulum Posture)	239
93	Supta-pādānguṣṭhā nāsā sparśāsana (Lying-toe and nose Posture)	240
94	Karṇāpīdāsana (Aural-Press Posture)	240
95	Merūdaṇḍāsana (Spine Posture)	241
96	Pādānguṣṭhā nasa sparśāsana (Toe-nose Posture)	242
97	Kālabhairavāsana (Kāla-Bhairava Posture)	242
98	Catuṣkoṇāsana (Four-Cornered Posture)	251
99	Kokilāsana (Cuckoo Posture)	252
100	Vṛścikāsana (Scorpion Posture)	252
101	Takiyāsana (Pillow Posture)	253
102	Mayūra-padmāsana (Peacock and lotus Posture)	254
103	Pūrṇā-cakrāsana (Complete-Wheel Posture)	263
104	Pakṣyāsana or Vāyuyānāsana (Bird or Aero-plane Posture)	264
105	Vātāyanāsana (Ventilator Posture)	264
106	Ardha-Ūrdhvāsana (Half-raised Posture)	265
107	Tribandhāsana (Triple-lock Posture)	265
108	Naṭarājāsana (Lord of the Dancers Posture)	266
109	Sūrya-namaskāra (Salutation To The Sun)	283
	<i>Glossary of Yogic Terms</i>	299
	<i>Glossary of Medical Terms</i>	301
	<i>Bibliography</i>	305
	<i>Index</i>	307

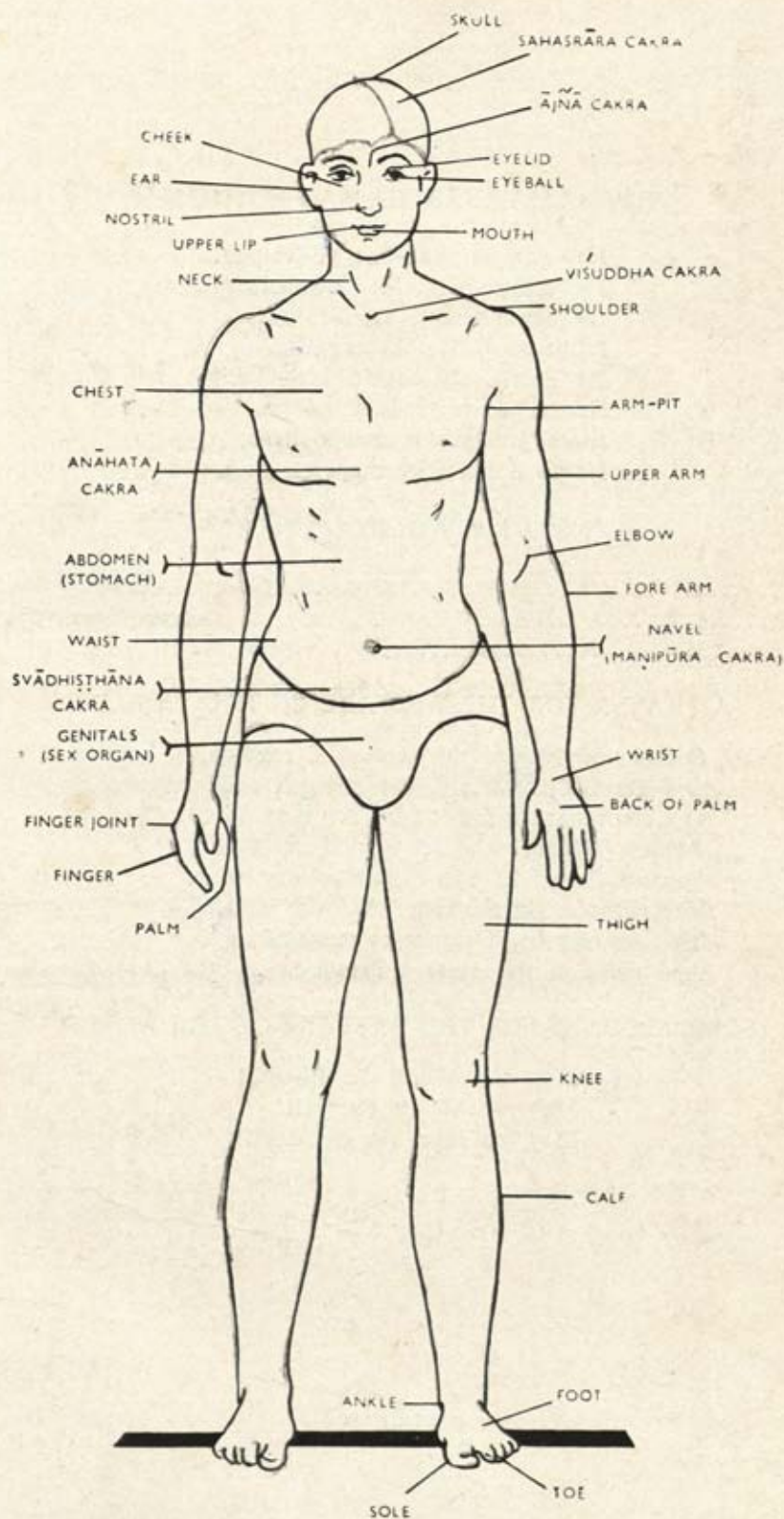
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*Figures in roman are plate numbers. Italics indicate page numbers.*

- Siddhāsana, 1-8: 13, 14, 13-24  
 Padmāsana, 9-11: 25-31  
 Ardha-Padmāsana, 12: 32  
 Bhadrāsana, 13, 14: 33,34  
 Mukthāsana, 15: 39  
 Vajrāsana, 16,17: 40,41  
 Svastikāsana, 18: 42  
 Simhāsana, 19: 43  
 Gomukhāsana, 20,21: 44,45  
 Vīrāsana, 22: 46  
 Dhanurāsana, 23: 51  
 Śavāsana or Mṛtāsana, 24: 52  
 Guptāsana, 25: 57  
 Matsyāsana, 26: 58  
 Matsyendrāsana, 27,28: 59, 60  
 Gorakṣāsana, 29: 65  
 Paścimottānāsana, 30,31: 66,67  
 Utkāṣana, 32: 68  
 Sankāṣana, 33: 73  
 Mayūrāsana, 34-37: 74-77  
 Kukkuṭāsana, 38: 78  
 Kūrmāsana, 39: 79  
 Uttāna-Kūrmāsana, 40: 80  
 Uttānamāṇḍūkāsana, 41: 85  
 Vṛkṣāsana, 42-46: 86-90  
 Maṇḍūkāsana, 47: 91  
 Garuḍāsana, 48: 92  
 Vṛśabhāsana, 49: 97  
 Śalabhāsana, 50: 98  
 Makarāsana, 51: 99  
 Uṣṭrāsana, 52: 100  
 Bhujaṅgāsana, 53: 101  
 Yogāsana, 54, 55: 102, 103  
 Cakrāsana, 56, 57: 104, 109  
 Suptapavana-Mukthāsana, 58: 110  
 Uttānapādāsana, 59: 111  
 Hastapādāṅguṣṭhāsana, 60,61: 112, 113  
 Baddha-Padmāsana, 62,63: 114,115  
 Praṇāvāsana, 64: 116  
 Naukāsana, 65: 121  
 Koṇāsana, 66: 122  
 Bhūnāmanāsana, 67: 123  
 Sarvāṅgāsana, 68: 124  
 Akarṇa-Dhanurāsana, 69: 129  
 Ūrdhva-Hastottānāsana, 70: 130  
 Parvatāsana, 71: 131  
 Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana, 72: 132  
 Garbhāsana, 73,74: 137,138  
 Brahmācaryāsana, 75: 139  
 Uttihipadpādmāsana, 76: 140  
 Mṛgāsana, 77,78: 141,142  
 Pavanamukthāsana, 79,80: 143,144  
 Ūrdhvasarvāṅgāsana, 81: 149  
 Vikāṣana, 82: 150  
 Śiṛṣacakrāsana, 83: 151



- Aśvatthāsana, 84: 152  
 Kandapīḍāsana, 85: 157  
 Ardha-Matsyendrāsana, 86: 158  
 Bakāsana, 87: 159  
 Tīṭṭibhāsana, 88,89: 160,161  
 Viparīta-Śīrṣa-Dvīhastā  
     Baddhasana, 90,91: 162,163  
 Jhulāsana, 92: 164  
 Sukhāsana, 93: 169  
 Jānu-Śīrṣāsana, 94,95: 170,171  
 Nāḍīsodhanāsana, 96: 172  
 Vistṛta Pada-Sarvāṅgāsana,  
     97: 173  
 Ekapāda Bhujāsana, 98: 174  
 Dvīpāda Bhujāsana, 99: 175  
 Śīrṣājānu Sparśāsana, 100: 176  
 Supta Vṛścikāsana, 101: 181  
 Uttihita-Dvīpāda-Kandharāsana  
     102,103: 182,183  
 Tāḍāsana, 104,105: 184,185  
 Khañjanāsana, 106,107: 186,187  
 Ekhasta Bhujāsana, 108: 188  
 Dvīhastā Bhujāsana, 109: 193  
 Jānubhūmi Sthirāsana, 110: 194  
 Pādahastāsana, 111: 195  
 Ekapāda-kandharāsana, 112, 113:  
     196,197  
 Dvīpāda Kandharāsana, 114: 198  
 Bhagāsana, 115: 199  
 Udarakarṣṇāsana, 116: 200  
 Tolāṅgulāsana, 117, 118: 203, 204  
 Pūrvottānāsana, 119: 205  
 Dvīpāda-Vistṛtāsana, 120-122:  
     206-208  
 Śīrṣāsana, 123-135: 211-231  
 Supta-Pāda Kandharāsana,  
     136: 232  
 Katicakrāsana, 137: 233  
 Pretāsana, 138: 234  
 Pada-Skandha-Daṇḍāsana  
     139-141: 235-237  
 Supta-Vajrāsana, 142: 238  
 Vistṛta-Pada-Vakṣa Bhūmi  
     Sparśāsana, 143: 243  
 Kāgāsana, 144: 244  
 Lolāsana, 145: 245  
 Supta-Pādāṅguṣṭha-Nasa  
     Sparśāsana, 146,147: 246,247  
 Karṇa-Pīḍāsana, 148: 248  
 Meru-Daṇḍāsana, 149, 150: 249,  
     250  
 Pādāṅguṣṭha-Nasa Sparśāsana,  
     151: 255  
 Kālābhairavāsana, 152: 256  
 Catuṣkoṇāsana, 153: 257  
 Kokilāsana, 154: 258  
 Vṛścikāsana, 155,156: 259,260  
 Takīyāsana, 157,158: 261,262  
 Mayūra-Padmāsana, 159: 267  
 Pūrṇa-Cakrāsana, 160: 268  
 Pakṣyāsana or Vāyuyānāsana  
     161: 269  
 Vātāyanāsana, 162,163: 270,271  
 Ardha-Ūrdhvāsana, 164, 165: 272,  
     273  
 Tribandhāsana, 166: 274  
 Naṭarājāsana, 167-172: 277-282  
 Sūrya-Namaskārā, 173-184: 285-296





## VIŚVA-KALYĀNĀRTHA IŚA-PRĀRTHANĀ

He Parama-pitā, He Viśva-pitā,  
He Rāṣṭra-pitā, He Jagadādhāra  
He Karuṇāmaya, Dīna-dayālo,  
Pūrṇa-guro, He Apāraṃpāra,  
He Pareśa aba śighra kṛpā kari,  
Hamen dijiye śuddhā vicāra,  
Jisase janatā ke sevaka bana,  
Nātha Karen sukhāmaya saṃsāra.

## VIŚVA-KALYĀNĀRTHA NĀRE

Viśva kā .....kalyāṇa ho!  
Sabhī.....Kartavya-parāyaṇa hon !!  
Paraspara.....prem ho !!!

## A PRAYER FOR THE WELFARE OF THE WORLD

O Supreme Father! the source of creation,  
O Father of the world, our strength and support,  
O Compassionate Lord! who art merciful to all,  
Peerless Teacher! who art beyond our ken.  
Supreme Lord! let Thy Grace bestow on us  
The gift of right thinking  
That we may be of service to mankind  
And make of this earth a Paradise.

## SOME SLOGANS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE WORLD

May the World be Blessed!  
May we all be dutiful!!  
May we love one another!!!

## TRANSLITERATION

*The following system of transliteration has been adopted in this book:*

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	:
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	e	ai	o	au	m̐

क्	ख्	ग्	घ्	ङ्
k	kh	g	gh	ṅ

च्	छ्	ज्	झ्	ञ्
c	ch	j	jh	ñ

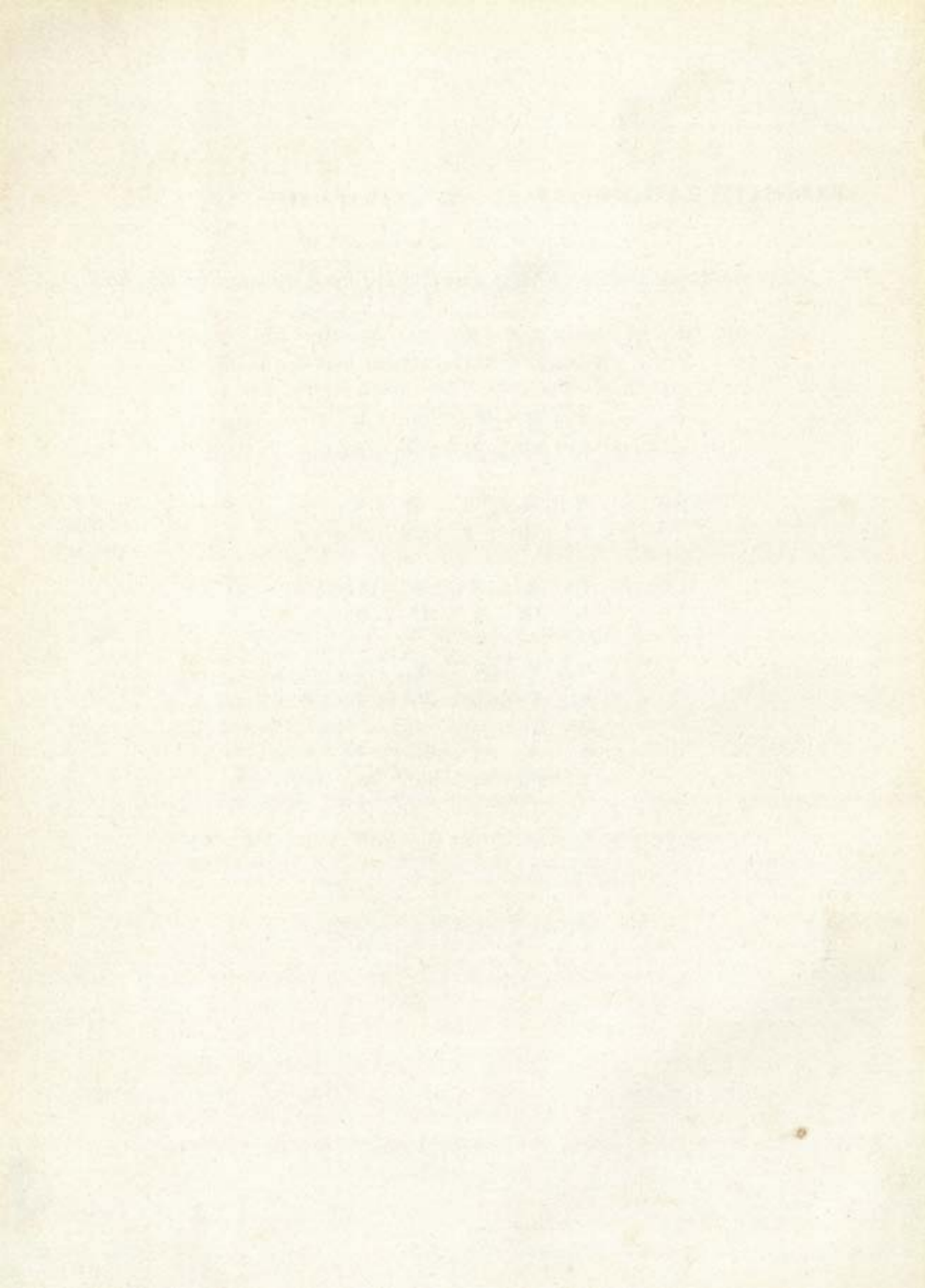
ट्	ठ्	ड्	ढ्	ण्
ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ

त्	थ्	द्व	ध्व	न
t	th	d	dh	n

प्	फ्	ब्	भ्	म्
p	ph	b	bh	m

य्	र	ल्	व
y	r	l	v

श्	ष	स	ह
ś	ṣ	s	h





## INTRODUCTION

AS MANY AS 84,00,000 āsanas or postures are mentioned in the classics of Yoga. The principal ones are 84,000, but 8,400 are predominant among them; of these, 84 are selected for special mention, while 32 are considered more important; and only eight or nine have been ranked as the most important; and even among these, four are singled out for special mention, two of which are classed as outstanding, and, finally, one is rated as superior to the other. None but Lord Śaṅkara himself, the originator of the system of Yoga, is conversant with all the 84,00,000 āsanas. However, either 108 or only 84 āsanas are commonly in vogue. A seer named Gheraṇḍa has listed the following 32 as the more important of the 84 āsanas:

Āsanāni Samastāni yāvanto jīva-jantavaḥ  
Caturaśīti-lakṣāṇi Śīvena kathitaṃ purā  
Teṣāṃ madhye viśiṣṭāni ṣoḍaśānāṃ śataṃ kṛtaṃ  
Teṣāṃ madhye martya-loke dvātriṃśad-āsanāṃ śubham  
Siddhaṃ Padmaṃ tathā Bhadrāṃ Muktaṃ Vajraṃ ca Svastikaṃ  
Siṃhaṃ ca Gomukhaṃ Vīraṃ Dhanurāsanameva ca  
Mṛtaṃ Guptaṃ tathā Matsyaṃ Matsyendrāsanameva ca  
Gorakṣaṃ Paścimottānaṃ-Utkataṃ Saṅkaṭaṃ tathā  
Mayūraṃ Kukkuṭaṃ Kūrmaṃ tathā co-ttānakūrmakam  
Uttāna-maṇḍūkāṃ Vṛkṣaṃ Maṇḍūkāṃ Garuḍaṃ Vṛṣaṃ  
Śalabhaṃ Makaraṃ Uṣṭraṃ Bhujāṅgaṃ ca Yogāsanam  
Dvātriṃśad-āsanāni tu martya-loke ca śiddhidam.

(G.S. 2, 1-6)

Being as numerous as the varieties of creatures, eighty-four lac (84,00,000) āsanas were in the past described by Lord Śiva. Of these, the important ones are eighty-four; however, the following thirty-two āsanas are considered auspicious: (1) Siddhāsana (Perfect posture), (2) Padmāsana (Lotus posture), (3) Bhadrāsana (Blessed posture), (4) Muktāsana (Liberated posture), (5) Vajrāsana (Adamantine posture), (6) Svastikāsana (Svastika posture), (7) Siṃhāsana (Lion posture), (8) Gomukhāsana (Cow-head posture), (9) Vīrāsana (Hero's posture), (10) Dhanurāsana (Bow posture), (11) Mṛtāsana (Corpse posture),

(12) Guptāsana (Concealed posture), (13) Matsyāsana (Fish posture), (14) Matsyendrāsana (Matsyendra posture), (15) Gorakṣāsana (Gorakṣa posture), (16) Paścimottānāsana (Posterior-stretch posture), (17) Utkatāsana (Squatting posture), (18) Saṅkatāsana (Contracted posture), (19) Mayūrāsana (Peacock posture), (20) Kukkuṭāsana (Cock posture), (21) Kūrmāsana (Tortoise posture), (22) Uttānakūrmāsana (Stretched-tortoise posture), (23) Uttānamaṇḍūkāsana (Stretched-frog posture), (24) Vṛkṣāsana (Tree posture), (25) Maṇḍūkāsana (Frog posture), (26) Garuḍāsana (Eagle posture), (27) Vṛṣabhāsana (Ox posture), (28) Śalabhāsana (Locust posture), (29) Makarāsana (Crocodile posture), (30) Uṣṭrāsana (Camel posture), (31) Bhujāṅgāsana (Cobra posture), (32) Yogāsana (Yoga posture).

These āsanās are capable of bestowing supernatural powers on men. Only eleven out of these thirty-two have been rated as the leading āsanās. In Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā, Svātmārāma, a disciple of Gorakṣanātha, detailed these as follows:

1. Perfect posture (Siddhāsana).
2. Lotus posture (Padmāsana).
3. Cow-head posture (Gomukhāsana).
4. Hero's posture (Vīrāsana).
5. Cock posture (Kukkuṭāsana).
6. Stretched-tortoise posture (Uttānakūrmāsana).
7. Bow posture (Dhanurāsana).
8. Matsyendra posture (Matsyendrāsana).
9. Posterior-stretch posture (Paścimottānāsana).
10. Peacock posture (Mayūrāsana).
11. Corpse posture (Śavāsana).

In Yogatattvopaniṣad, the following four have been described as the more important ones, viz.

Siddham, Padmam, tathā Siṃham, Bhadrāñcaitaccatuṣṭayam.

(Y.T.U. 1, 2, 9)

- (1) Perfect posture (Siddhāsana), (2) Lotus posture (Padmāsana),
- (3) Lion posture (Siṃhāsana), (4) Blessed posture (Bhadrāsana).



In Yogakuṇḍalyupaniṣad, only two are treated as the more important ones.

Āsanam dvividham proktaṁ padmaṁ vajrāsanam tathā.

(Y.K.U. 1, 4)

These are two āsanas: (1) Lotus posture (Padmāsana) and (2) Adamantine posture (Vajrāsana).

Here the Perfect posture (Siddhāsana) is really indicated by the term Vajrāsana. Amongst yogīs, Siddhāsana (Perfect posture) is also called Vajrāsana, although this term is restricted only to the yogīs of the higher grades. In Yogacūḍāmaṇyupaniṣad, the following verse supports the viewpoint expressed above:

Ekam Siddhāsanaṁ proktaṁ dvitīyaṁ Kamalāsanaṁ  
Ṣaṭ-cakraṁ Ṣoḍaśādhāraṁ tri-lakṣyaṁ vyoma-pañcakam  
Sva-dehe yo na jñāti tasya siddhiḥ katham bhavet.

(Y.C.U. 1, 3-4)

How can one who has not known the Perfect posture, Lotus posture, six Cakras, sixteen bases, three ideals and five types of Ākāśa (space) achieve perfection or supernatural faculties?

Here Padmāsana is referred to by the term Kamalāsana. Similarly, in Yogakuṇḍalyupaniṣad, Siddhāsana is termed Vajrāsana. In the yogic texts, Siddhāsana is described frequently by the term Vajrāsana, and Padmāsana, by the term Kamalāsana. Students of yoga should not be confused by the terminology. Out of these āsanas, one is valued as the best. This one, truly the king among the 84 lac āsanas, is Siddhāsana. The Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā states:

Nāsanam Siddha-saḍṛṣam na kumbhaḥ Kevalopamaḥ  
Na Khecarī-samā mudrā na nāda-saḍṛśo layaḥ.

(H.Y.P. 1, 43)

There is no āsana like Siddhāsana, no Kumbhaka (breath suspension) like Kevala Kumbhaka, no Mudrā (pose) like Khecarī



Mudrā (Khechari pose) and there is nothing that absorbs one's self completely like Nāda (sound).

The āsanās have been given so much of importance in yogic texts only because they help in reaching the ultimate limits of yogic realisation and also in maintaining the body in a state of good health, free from various diseases. According to yogic texts, it is not possible to be rid of diseases or to improve health without performing āsanās. Even the attainment of Samādhi, a matter of the greatest importance in yoga, is not possible without āsanās. Jābāladarśanopaniṣad says:

Āsanaṃ vijitaṃ yena jitaṃ tena jagat-trayaṃ  
Anena vidhinā yuktaḥ prāṇāyāmaṃ sadā kuru.

(J.D.U. 3, 13)

One who has mastered the āsanās has virtually conquered all the three worlds. One should always practise Prāṇāyāma in accordance with these recognised procedures and techniques.

An individual is said to have perfected an āsana when he can sit in that āsana for a period of three hours and forty-eight minutes at a stretch. Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā remarks:

Athāsane dṛḍhe yogī vaśī hita-mitāśanaḥ  
Gurūpadiṣṭa-mārgeṇa prāṇāyāmaṃ samabhyaset.

(H.Y.P. 2, 1)

The votary of yoga, after perfecting the āsanās and while consuming limited, wholesome, beneficial food, should practise Prāṇāyāma in accordance with the path shown by the guru.

It may be noted that an account of the importance of the āsanās precedes the directions for performing the Prāṇāyāma.

The great seer Patañjali has said:

Sthira-sukhamāsanam.

(P.Y., S.P. 46)

Āsana is a poised and relaxed manner of sitting.

This means that the student should try to get absolutely disciplined in the various āsanās, so that he can sit motionless and relaxed for considerable periods. Only thus will he be prepared for the various advanced disciplines and practices in yoga.

In the following aphorism, Patañjali further elaborates this idea:

Prayatna-śaithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām.

(P.Y., S.P. 47)

Perfection is attained through negation of effort and concentration on the Infinite.

When perfection is attained in any āsana, the external movements of the yogī gradually and progressively diminish till they cease altogether. This aphorism, thus, not only corroborates the idea contained in the preceding one, but also indicates that the attainment of perfection in the āsanās leads to the attainment of Samādhi. In the aphorism which follows, this idea has been further elaborated:

Tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ.

(P.Y., S.P. 48)

On attainment of perfection in the āsanās, the individual becomes immune to dualities.

The body of the yogī remains unaffected by heat or cold and other dualities on the attainment of perfection in āsanās. It means that the body acquires enough strength and tolerance to withstand stresses and strains of all types which disturb the Citta and, by making the mind unsteady, disturb the practice of yoga. These aphorisms taken together very clearly indicate that the stage of Samādhi is attained by a yogī only by perfecting the āsanās. Yogī Caraṇa Dāsa has said:

Āsana prāṇāyāma Kari pavan pantha gahi lehi  
Ṣaṭ cakkara ko chedi kari dhyāna-śūnya mana dehi.

(B.S., C.P. 89)



One must attain control on the routes of Pavana through āsanas and Prāṇāyāma, and, through transcending the six Cakras, one must concentrate one's mind on the void.

The term 'pavan' in this couplet implies a double meaning, i.e. of the various Vāyus, viz. Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna and Vyāna, in the body, as also the Prāṇaśakti. This latter faculty of Prāṇa cannot be clearly defined by any single term. As in the yogic texts, this term has been made to mean the life force as well as that cosmic fund of energy of which vitality is only one of the many manifestations.

In the Gī'tā, Lord Kṛṣṇa, while instructing Arjuna about yoga, has detailed the technique of yoga which results in the control of the mind:

Yogī Yuñjita satatāmātānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ  
Ekākī yata-cittātmā nirāśīraparigrahaḥ.

(S.B.G. 6, 10)

The yogī should try constantly to concentrate his mind on the Supreme Self, remaining in solitude and alone, self-controlled, and relieved from desires and longings for possessions.

Further, He says:

Śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiramāsanamātmanah  
Nātyucchritaṃ nāti-nīcaṃ cailājina-kuśottaram.  
Tattraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā yata-cittendriya-kriyaḥ,  
Upaviśyāsene yuñjyād yogamātma-viśuddhaye.

(S.B.G. 6, 11-12)

In a clean place which is neither too high nor too low and covered with the sacred grass, Kuśa, a deer skin and a cloth, one over the other, sitting in āsana, one must bring one's mind to concentrate and, controlling the thoughts and senses, one should practise yoga for self-purification.

The 'cloth,' referred to above, is conventionally a woollen blanket covered by a cotton cloth. Here also the āsana is indispensable to medita-



tion. In the śloka that follows, Lord Kṛṣṇa further says:

Samam kāya-śiro-grīvaṃ dhārayannacalaṃ sthiraḥ,  
Samprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaścānavalokayan  
Praśāntātmā vigata-bhīḥ brahmacāri-vrate sthitaḥ,  
Manah saṃyamya mac-citto yukta āsīta mat-parah.

(S.B.G. 6, 13-14)

By keeping the body, head and neck erect and still, while looking fixedly at the tip of his nose, without allowing his eyes to wander, serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy as well as in the thought of the Supreme Being, he should sit for the performance of yoga, with his mind turned to Me and intent on Me alone.

Thus, all the great teachers of yoga have emphasised the importance of āsanās. In the yogic texts, there are detailed descriptions of the significance, qualities, merits as well as the correct methods for the performance of āsanās.

Yogāsanās assume new significance in modern times. The Western system of exercises, aimed at developing the bulk and the power of the muscle masses, is the most commonly used system all over the world. This system is primarily, if not entirely, based on processes generating great tensions in the muscles. There is no corresponding relaxation of any group of muscles. The exertion in performing these exercises is harmful to the osteo-articular surfaces which are utilised in these movements. Consequently, a pent-up tension in the motor organs of the body is sometimes accompanied by varying degrees of organic injury. Chronic arthritic and arthromyalgic incapacity, which cripples the able-bodied, can to some extent be traced to this single cause.

The yogic āsanās, on the other hand, do not aim at developing beautiful contours or extraordinary powers. They aim at a homogeneously integrated system of neuro-muscular movements in which contraction of the muscles is always consciously followed by their relaxation or the relaxation of some other muscle masses. At every step, a mental association is established with the physical actions, so that the unfathomable reserves and powers of the mind are harnessed for achieving a perfect physical culture of the body. A few āsanās have prāṇāyāma or breath control as an integral part of the procedure, but even others are preceded or followed by exercises

in breath control as part of the general plan of the eight-limbed yoga (aṣṭāṅga-yoga). An obvious advantage from the metabolic point of view can be easily appreciated. Abundant fresh air made available to the body is bound to be useful not only for the exercise itself, but also for the body as a whole. These exercises, in addition, help in establishing fresh functional associations between the somatic and autonomous system of nerves and physiological strata. Since the health of the body is primarily and predominantly the health of the inner, autonomous, vital and essential organs, the excellence of a system which can help in generating faculties for voluntary, suitable adjustments is evident.

It is now being recognised that the mind and the body, the psyche and the soma, interact and influence each other. Yoga maintains that far-reaching effects can be produced by the effect of the mind. These effects not only affect the physical health of the body but may even overflow into states which are beyond the average, normal experience. This does not mean that these are miraculous or abnormal on any score. But it does mean that the true limits of 'normal' are hardly realised by most people. The greater part of humanity has for generations adopted a basic level of existence and has unknowingly accepted a maimed, crippled existence as normal.

Yoga affords an opportunity for a bold departure from this limitation. However, it must be realised that dealing as they do with matters of far-reaching and vital importance, the yogic practices require the utmost precision and the care due to them. It is, therefore, not advisable to depend only on books to learn these exercises; it is essential that a teacher introduce the student to the exciting mysteries of yoga to obtain maximum benefit from it.



## SOME GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Yogāsanas are best performed at dawn, in the open air, but they can be done also at other times and near an open window.
2. The bowels must be cleared before starting the āsanas. It is not desirable to bathe for 2-3 hours after the āsanas, but a bath can be taken just before. No food or drink should be taken for four hours before starting.
3. The āsanas must always be done bare-footed on a carpet or rug spread out on a hard and even surface. Clothing should be as light and loose as possible.
4. It is not possible for those unaccustomed to the postures to do them correctly in the beginning, but through practice most of them can be mastered, particularly by young persons. Those in middle age should not strain to attain perfection in any of them. It should be possible without discomfort or pain.
5. The āsanas described in this book follow the pattern set by the Vishwayatan Yogashram. A guru (teacher) from the ashram should guide the beginner in the exercises. Later these can be done with the help of this book. There are a few postures which should not be attempted without expert advice. This has been indicated clearly in all such cases.
6. The āsanas can be performed for varying durations, depending on the age, state of health and capacity of the individual. For beginners, 30 seconds should suffice for maintaining a particular posture. Gradually, the duration can be increased, but strain must be avoided.
7. Breathing throughout the performance of the āsanas should be normal except when it is indicated otherwise.





# YOGĀSANA VIJÑĀNA

## 1. SIDDHĀSANA (PERFECT POSTURE)

SIDDHĀSANA has been rated as the foremost among the 84 lac āsanas. Whereas all the other āsanas are useful for health and for developing a beautiful and well-proportioned body, the Siddhāsana is used for meditation, prayer and worship, prāṇāyāma or samādhi. It is possible to attain the ultimate heights of yoga through the practice of this āsana and thus to achieve all the perfections and siddhis (or supernatural faculties and self-realisation) of yoga. It is on this account that in the science of yoga it has been named Siddhāsana or Perfect posture.

In the yogic texts, it is stated:

Mukhyaṃ sarvāsaneṣvekaṃ siddhāḥ Siddhāsanam viduḥ.

(H.Y.P. 1, 38)

Those who have attained perfection have recognised Siddhāsana to be the foremost among the āsanas.

It has been further stated:

Nāsanam siddha-saḍṛśam na kumbhaḥ kevalopamaḥ  
Na khecarī-samā mudrā na nāda-saḍṛśo layaḥ.

(H.Y.P. 1, 43)

There is no āsana like Siddhāsana, no Kumbhaka like Kevala-Kumbhaka, no Mudrā (pose) like Khecarī-mudrā and there is nothing that absorbs one's self completely like sound.

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the heel of the left foot placed against the anus and the right heel against the testicles along the Sīvanī Nāḍī as shown in Plates 1 and 2. (The region which extends in front of the anus, over



the scrotum and along the lower surface of the penis, is connected by the Sīvanī Nāḍī, a term in yogic texts, and indicates the line along which the floor of the urethra—the duct of urinary outflow—was completed and the two halves of the scrotum got fused together during development.)

The Sīvanī Nāḍī is also known as the Citrākhyā Nāḍī or as the Vīrya-vāha (the carrier of semen). In the yogic texts, different functions have been attributed to different Nāḍīs. In the Yogaśikhopaniṣad, it is said:

Malaṃ tyajet Kuhūrnāḍī mūtraṃ muñcati Vāruṇī  
Citrākhyā sīvanī-nāḍī śukla-mocana-kāriṇī. (Y.S.U. 26-27)

The Nāḍī named Kuhū has the function of excreting of faeces, the Vāruṇī Nāḍī expels urine, the Citrākhyā or Sīvanī Nāḍī has the function of releasing semen.

The term Nāḍī has a variety of meanings in different contexts and therefore occasionally proves to be a source of confusion if read without reference to the context. Thus, depending on the context, it may mean any of the following: nerves, arteries and veins, or the various ductular or columnar structures in the body. Here it is the latter meaning of a ductlike or columnar structure that is indicated.

The toes of both feet should be kept between the thighs and calves. The hands should be placed in the lap with the right hand placed over the left, palms upward. The vertebral column and the whole body should be absolutely erect while sitting in this posture and the gaze fixed in one of the five ways mentioned below:

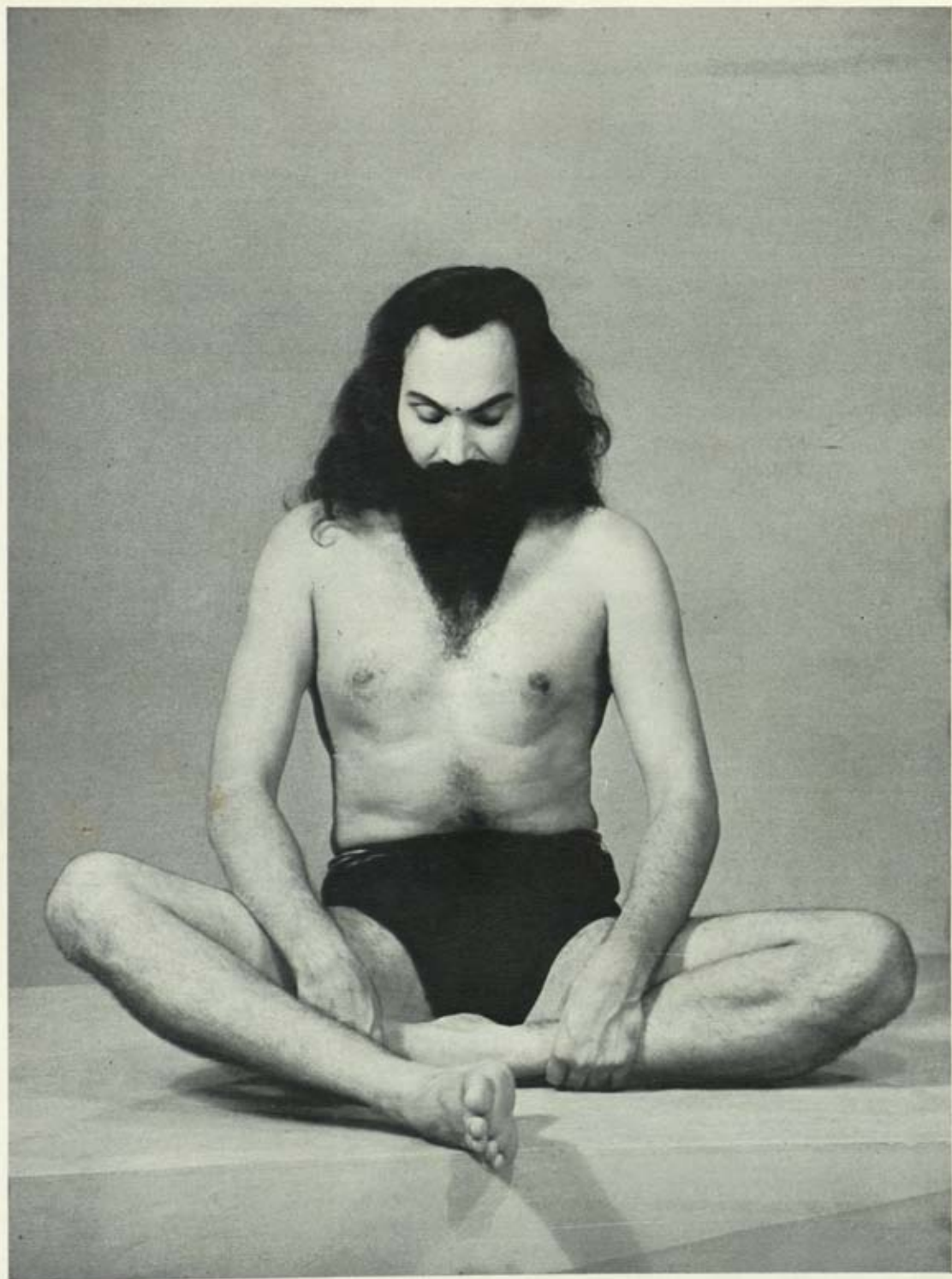
- (1) Bhrū-madhya (between the eyebrows).
- (2) Sama-dṛṣṭi (straight ahead).
- (3) Nāsikāgra (the tip of the nose).
- (4) Ardhonmeṣa (eyelids half open).
- (5) Netra-bandha (eyelids completely closed).

These different ways of using the eyes yield different results.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

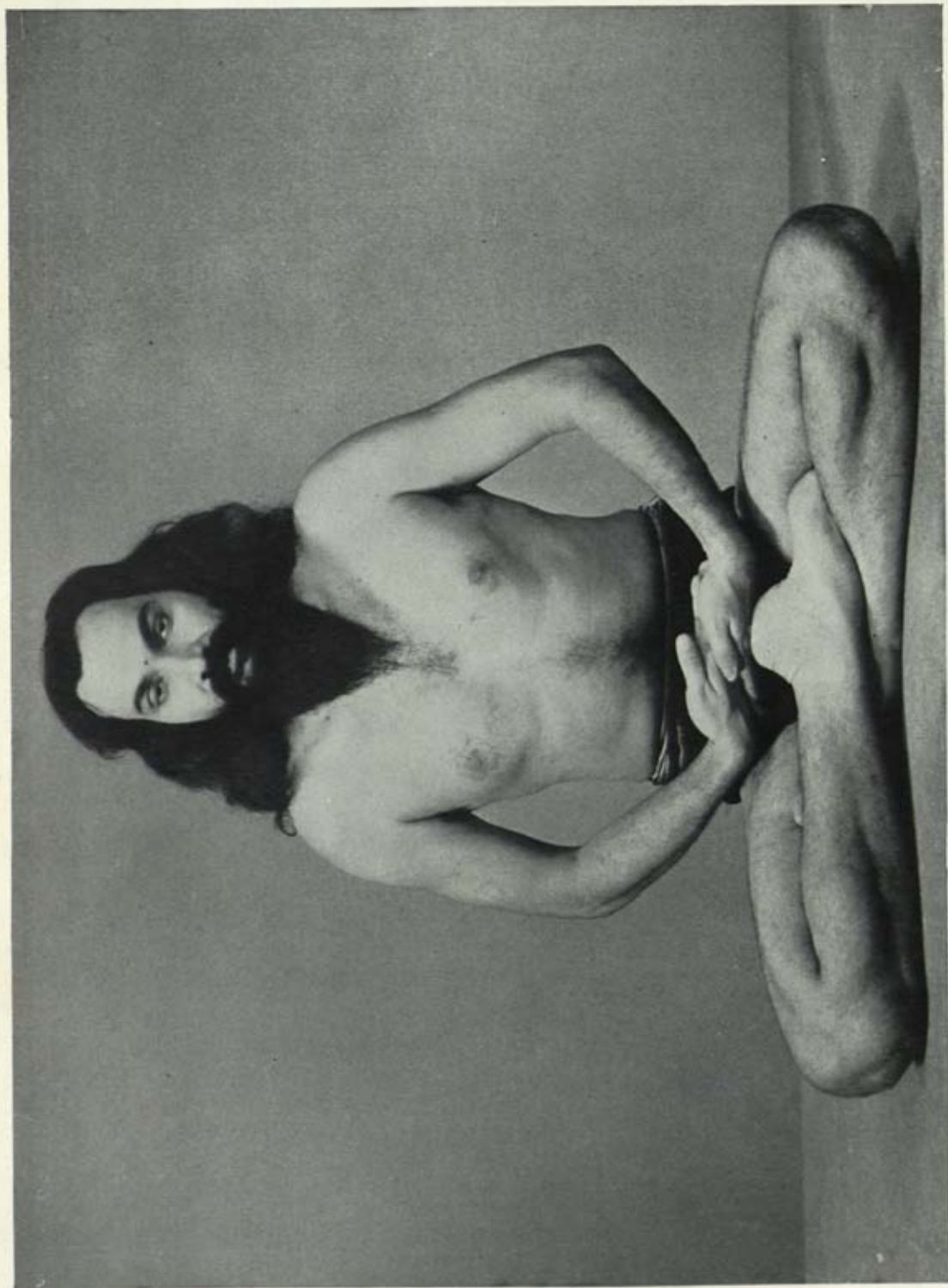
The practice of this āsana helps to check sensuality and attain Brahmacharya. (The word 'Brahmacharya,' though meaning a vow of celibacy in common





Siddhāsana

PLATE 1: Holding the left foot with the hands, place the heel as illustrated



**Siddhāsana**  
**PLATE 2: Place the toes between the calves and the thighs, the hands in the lap and gaze straight in front**



parlance, indicates also the state of the mind concentrated on the Supreme Being.) This āsana provides mental discipline and ensures the passage of the Prāṇa in the Suṣumṇā Nāḍī. It thus helps in the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī Śakti (Serpent power). It is possible to attain Dhāraṇā (concentration), Dhyāna (meditation) and even Samādhi (contemplation and self-realisation) through this āsana. It has been rated as the foremost among the techniques utilised for awakening Kuṇḍalinī.

Kimanyairbahubhiḥ pīṭhaiḥ siddhe siddhāsane sati  
Prāṇānile sāvadhane baddhe kevala-kumbhake.

(H.Y.P. 1, 41)

There is no need of any other āsana if one has mastered the Perfect posture (Siddhāsana). A careful performance of Kevala-Kumbhaka Prāṇāyama in this āsana renders the practice of any other āsana meaningless.

Utpadyate nirāyāsāt svayamevonmanī-kalā.  
Tathaikasminneva dṛḍhe siddhe siddhāsane sati  
Bandha-trayamanāyāsāt svayamevōpjāyate.

(H.Y.P. 1, 42)

By this āsana alone the Unmanī Kalā gets spontaneously generated and on the perfection of Siddhāsana all the three Bandhas (or locks, viz. the chinlock or Jalandhara-bandha, the abdominal lock or Uḍḍiyāna-bandha, and the basal lock or Mūlādhāra-bandha) develop effortlessly.

It is on this account that the yogīs ascribed to this āsana remarkable powers and stressed the need for a prolonged practice of the āsana.

Svātmārāma, a disciple of Gorakṣanātha, comments thus in Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā:

Caturaśīti pīṭheṣu siddhameva sadābhyaset.  
Dvā-saptati-sahasrāṇaṃ nāḍīnaṃ mala-śodhanam.

(H.Y.P. 1, 39)

One should practise only Siddhāsana out of the 84 āsanās because it removes the impurities of all the 72,000 nāḍīs.



He has further emphasised its specific features thus:

Ātma-dhyāyī mitāhārī yāvad dvādaśa-vatsaram  
Sadā siddhāsanābhyāsād yogī niṣpattimāpnuyāt.

(H.Y.P. 1, 40)

The yogī who performs Siddhāsana for twelve years while meditating on his self and partaking of a restricted diet attains a state of consummate perfection.

It implies that perfection can be attained merely by the practice of Siddhāsana.

As has been mentioned above, different results are obtained by fixing the gaze in different ways:

1. Bhrū-madhya-dṛṣṭi (gazing at the centre of the eyebrows), illustrated in Plate 3, produces a vision of light.

2. Sama-dṛṣṭi or looking straight ahead, as in Plate 4, is specially useful for those practising Trāṭaka or central fixation.

3. Nāsikāgra-dṛṣṭi, or gazing at the tip of the nose, as in Plate 5, gives a vision of the 5 elements. (The term 'element' used here is not to be confused with the 92 elements known to modern chemistry. It is a term of Sāṃkhya-Yoga implying the five basic varieties of matter of which the Universe is composed. These are the Ākāśa, Vāyu, Tejas, Ap and Pṛithvī. Although, usually and loosely translated as ether, air, light, water and earth, these synonyms fail to convey the philosophical and metaphysical import of the original terms, which, rather than denoting any particular substance, merely connote different basic types and stages of organisation of matter. These terms are abstract generalisations and do not refer to any of the ordinary physical or chemical equivalents. For a proper appreciation of these terms, a standard text on Indian philosophy should be consulted.)

4. Ardhonmeṣa, or the half-open eyelids (Plate 6), helps in promoting the Śāmbhavi and Unmanī poses or Mudrās. The Śāmbhavi or Unmanī Mudrā should be learnt through a guru. A description of these can be found in Vol. 3 of the Yogāśrama text series on Mudrās and Prāṇāyāma.

5. Netrabandha, or closed eyes, is specially helpful for meditation and is, therefore, essential for those whose minds are unsteady and undisciplined (Plate 7).

Siddhāsana is useful for the layman as well as for master yogīs. Its merits cannot be overstressed. Those who can maintain the pose continuously for a period of three hours and forty-eight minutes can be considered to have mastered it. This āsana should be practised in moderation by the family man; only yogīs should practise it beyond that limit. It is also known as Vajrāsana amongst the master yogīs. Yōgaśikhopaniṣad states:

Vajrāsanasthito Yogī cālayitvā tu kuṇḍalīm.

(Y.S.U. 1, 112)

Kuryādanantaram bhastrīm kuṇḍalīmāśu bodhayet.

(Y.S.U. 1, 113)

The yogī seating himself in Vajrāsana and motivating Kuṇḍalinī should then perform the Bhastrā Kumbhaka (Bellows-Kumbhaka), whereby the Kuṇḍalinī could be awakened quickly.

Here the term Vajrāsana indicates Siddhāsana because Prāṇāyāma cannot be performed while sitting in the āsana popularly known as Vajrāsana. There are many citations in yogic texts referring to Siddhāsana by the term Vajrāsana. For example, in the Bhaktisāgara, while describing Sūrya-Bhedī-Prāṇāyāma in the chapter on Aṣṭāṅga-yoga (eight-limbed yoga), Yogī Caraṇa Dāsa remarks:

Kumbhaka Sūraja bheda hī pahile dehu sunāya  
Sukha āsana kai kījiye athavā vajra lagāya.  
Athavā vajra-lagāya, pūraka dahine svara kije.  
Nakha-śikha setī roki vāyu kūr bandha karīja.

(B.S. 73)

First I will describe Sūrya Bhedī Prāṇāyāma. This Prāṇāyāma should be performed while sitting either in Sukhāsana or in Vajrāsana. After sitting in Vajrāsana, the Pūraka (forced inhalation) should be performed through the right nostril and, then, the utmost effort should be made to hold the breath.

Here, too, the word Vajrāsana used by Caraṇa Dāsa can only mean



Siddhāsana, because in the posture of Vajrāsana, as is commonly known, Prāṇāyāma is not possible.

There are two ways in which the hands can be engaged while performing Siddhāsana. One is in the manner illustrated in Plate 2. In this, the hands are kept in the lap. This leads to the enhancement of Laghimā-Śakti, that is the body gets lighter. If the hands are kept on the knees, palms upturned and the forefinger bent against the thumb, as in the other method, Garimā-Śakti is enhanced and the body gets heavier. This latter method is illustrated in Plate 8. In the beginning, the yogī should strive for the enhancement of Laghimā-Śakti and the hands should be kept in the lap. But a time comes when the yogī finds himself being buoyed up, and, if he wants to suppress this buoyancy, he must increase the Garimā-Śakti by moving the hands to the posture shown in Plate 8.

The Siddhāsana is supremely suited for the advancement and development of physical and mental as well as spiritual powers, because through it meditation, prayer, worship, prāṇāyāma and even a state of contemplation and self-realisation (Samādhi) can be attained.

It is no wonder, therefore, that of the 84,00,000 āsanās the master yogīs, and even Lord Śiva himself, have rated Siddhāsana the foremost.

## 2. PADMĀSANA (LOTUS POSTURE)

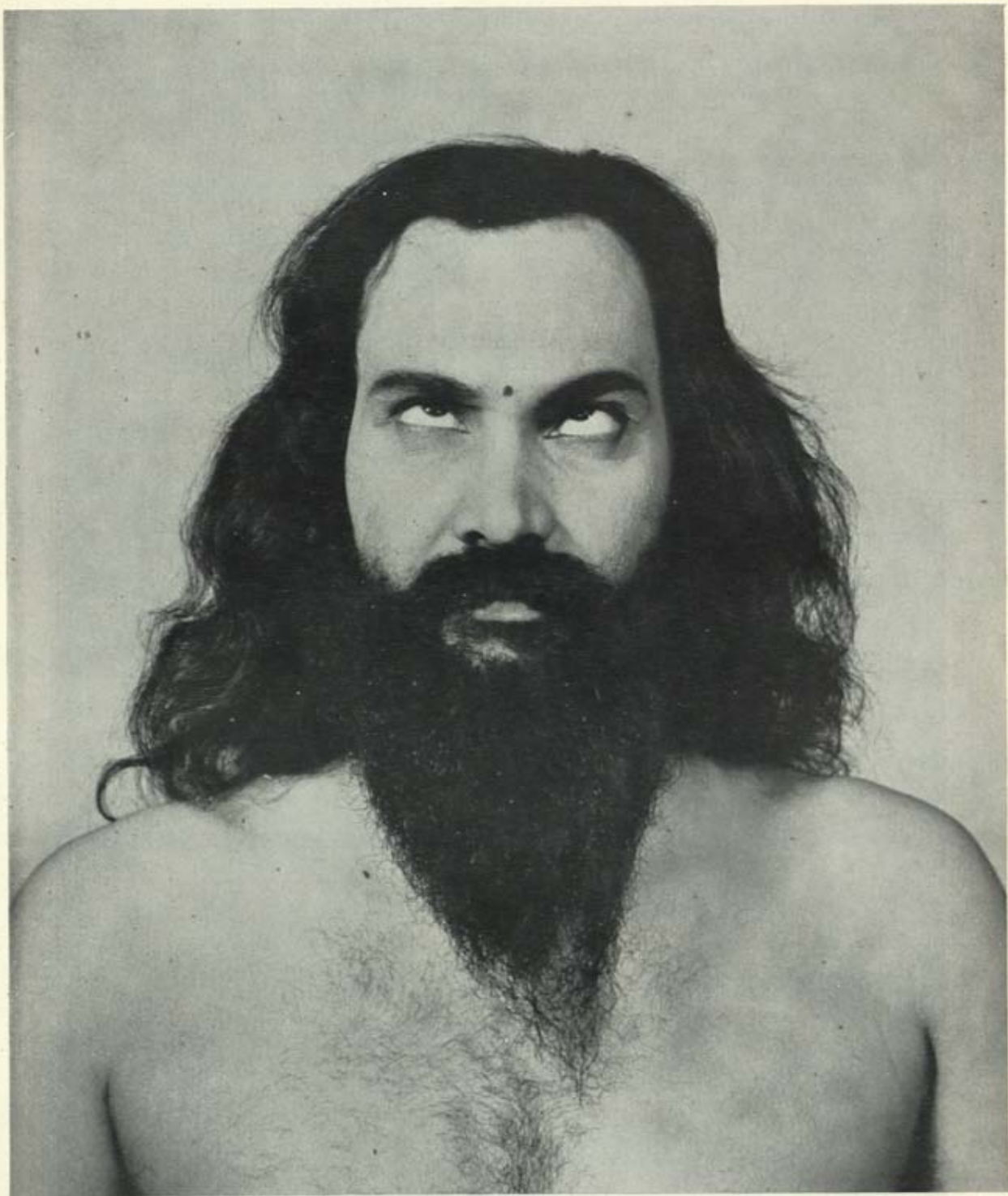
This āsana is known as Padmāsana or Kamalāsana. There are some yogic texts which use the two terms interchangeably.

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the heel of the left foot resting on the right thigh so as to be as close as possible to the navel (Plate 9). Then, the right foot should be placed on the left thigh in such a way that the heels touch each other as near the navel as possible (Plate 10). The vertebral column and the body from the waist upwards should be kept erect. Care should be taken that the knees touch the ground. The hands should be placed in the lap, palms upward. The whole procedure is to be repeated by altering the sequence in which the feet are placed on the thighs.

In Padmāsana, the different positions of the hands have different effects. Thus, keeping the hands in the lap enhances the Laghimā Śakti and the





Siddhāsana

PLATE 3: Fix the gaze between the eyebrows

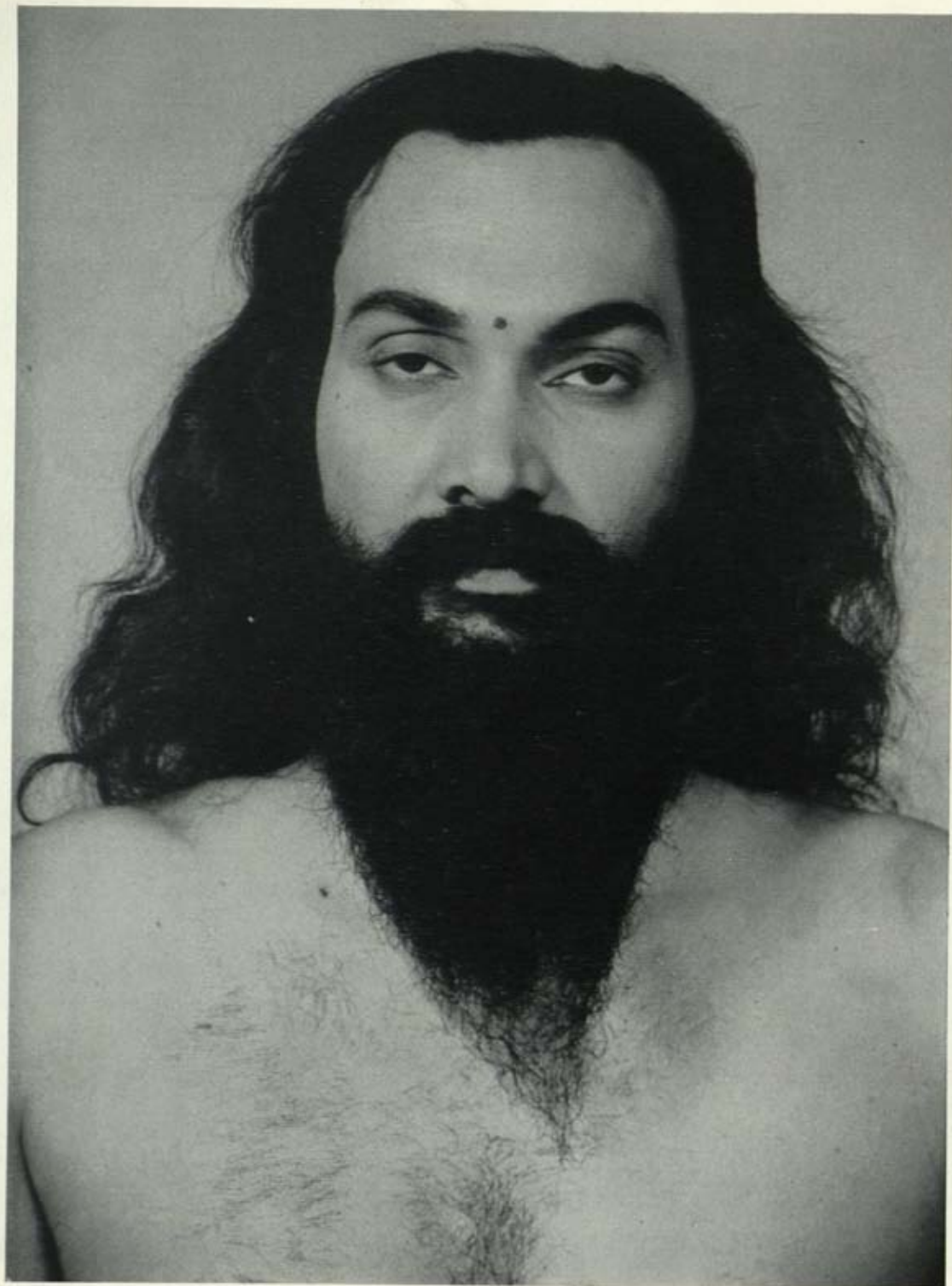


PLATE 4: Gaze straight in front

Siddhāsana

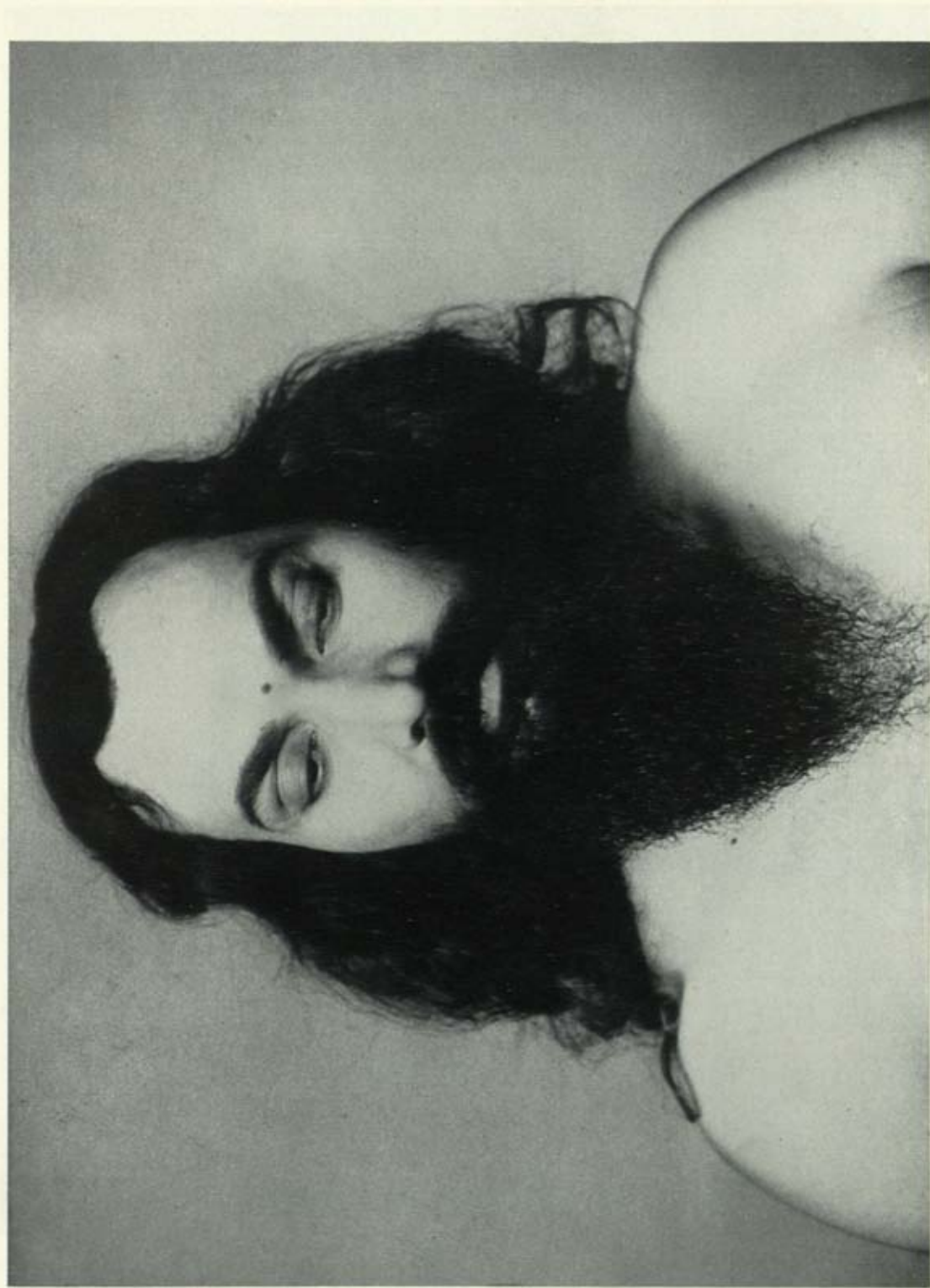
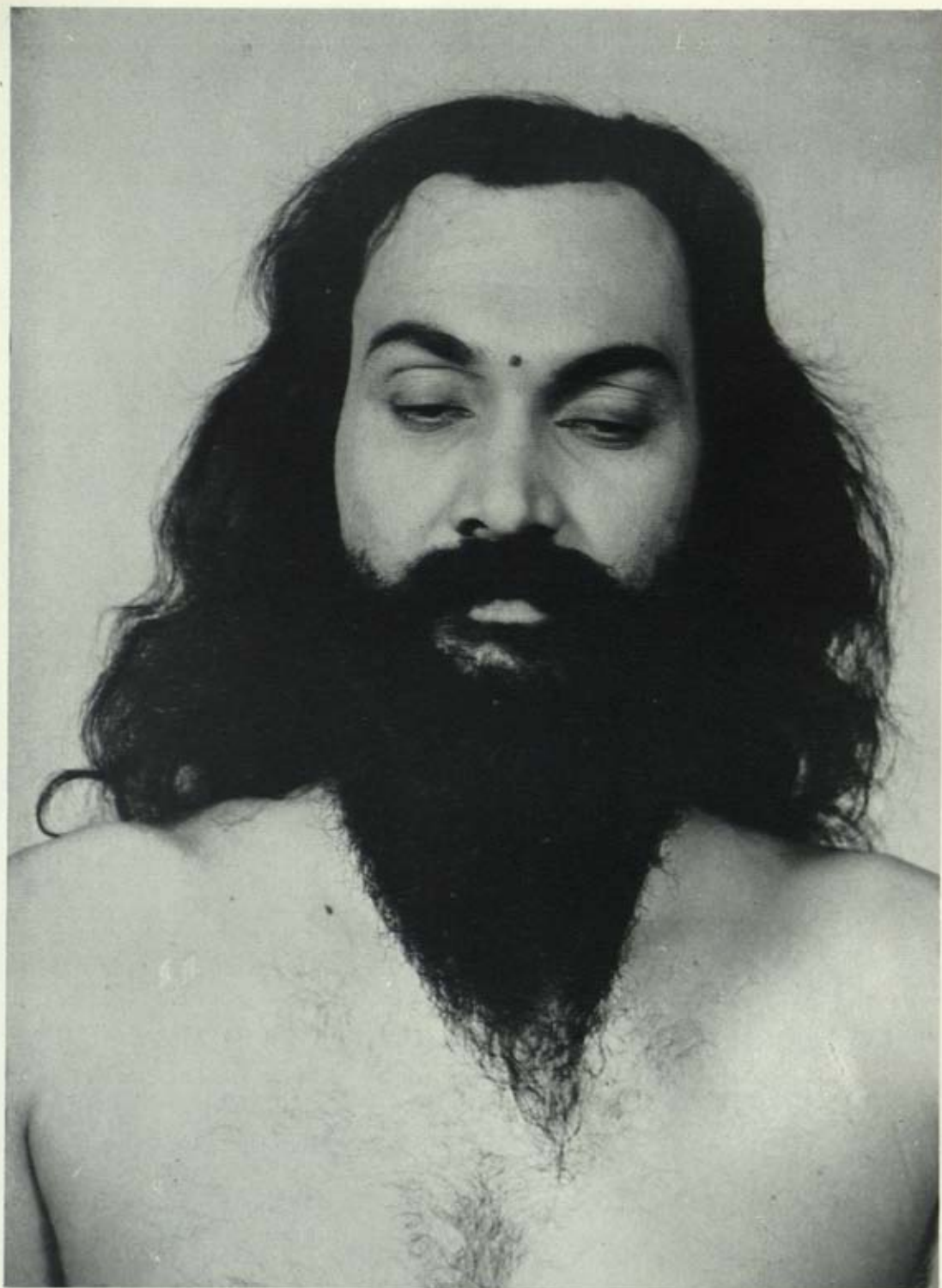


PLATE 5: Gaze at the tip of the nose

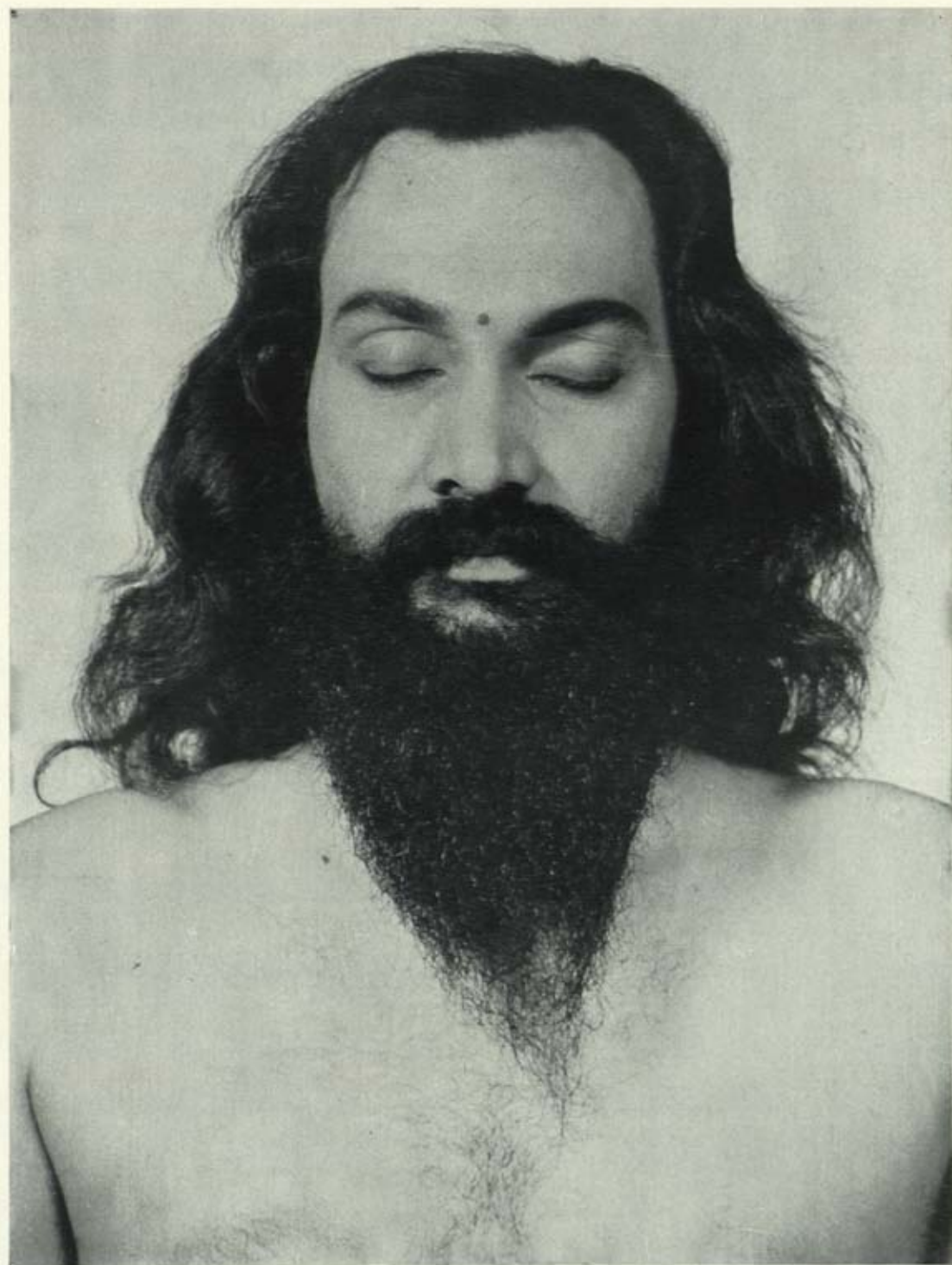
Siddhāsana





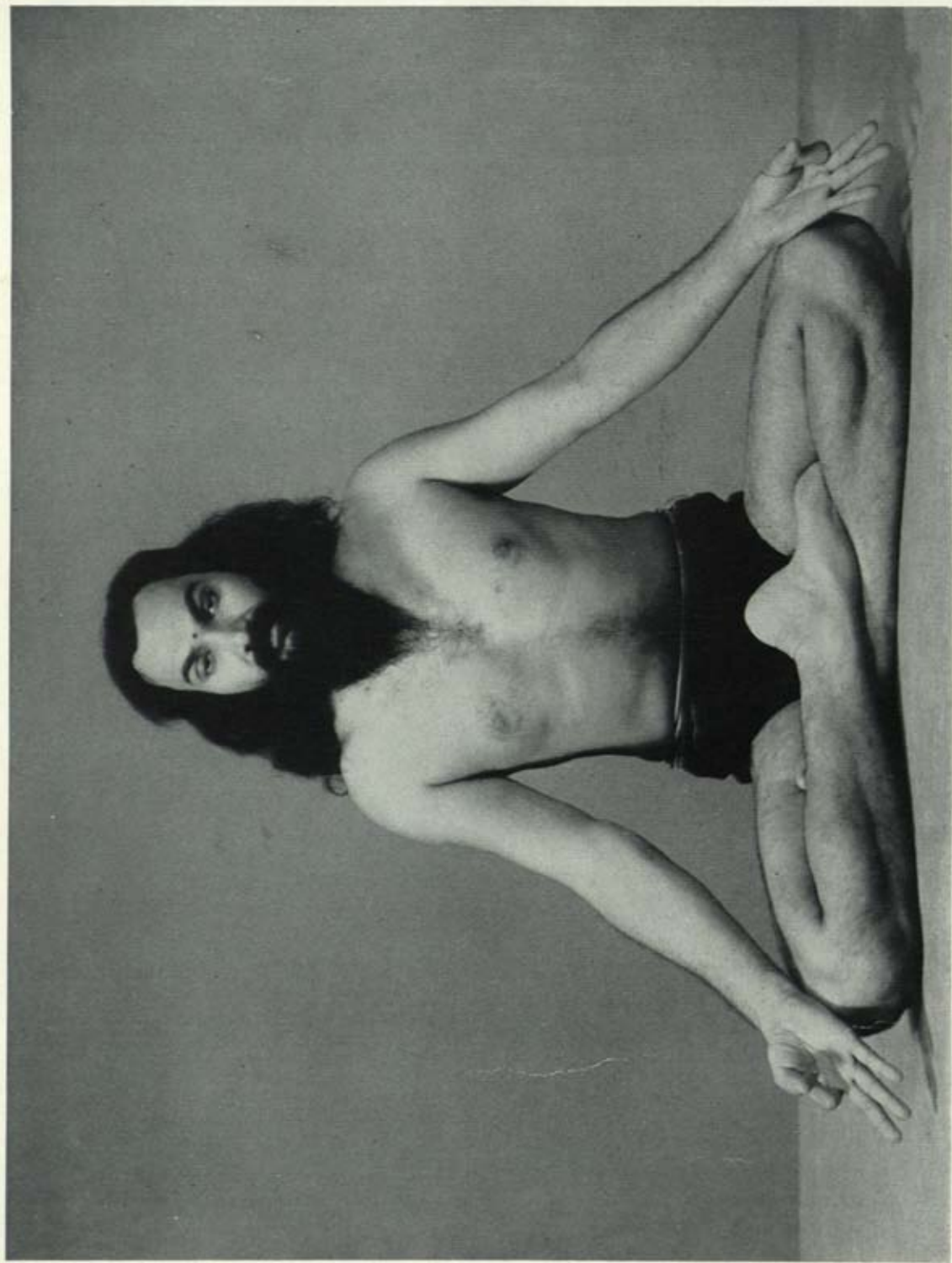
Siddhāsana

PLATE 6: Gaze through half-closed eyes



Siddhāsana

PLATE 7: Eyes closed



Siddhāsana

PLATE 8: Place open palms on the knees and gaze straight in front



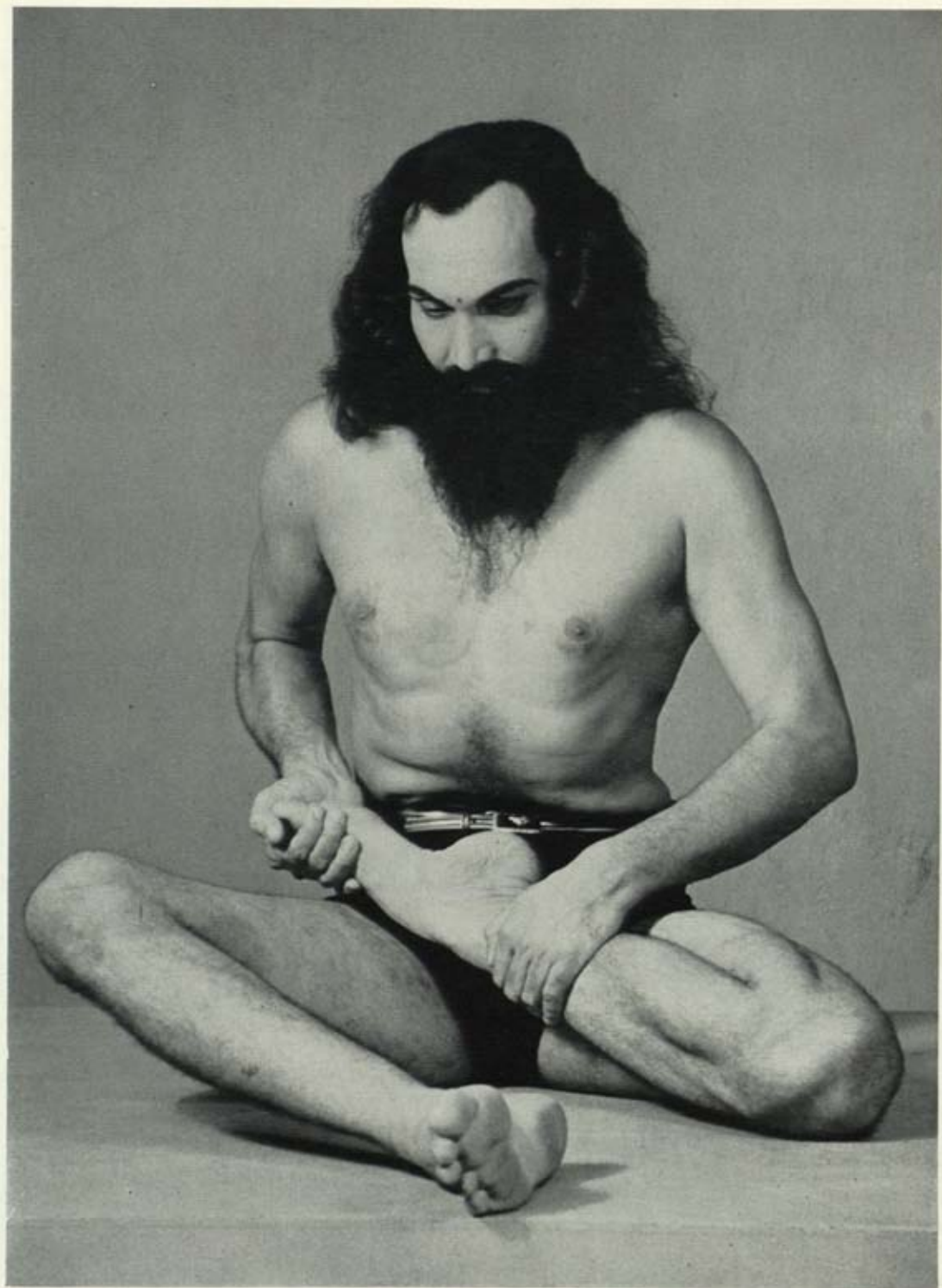
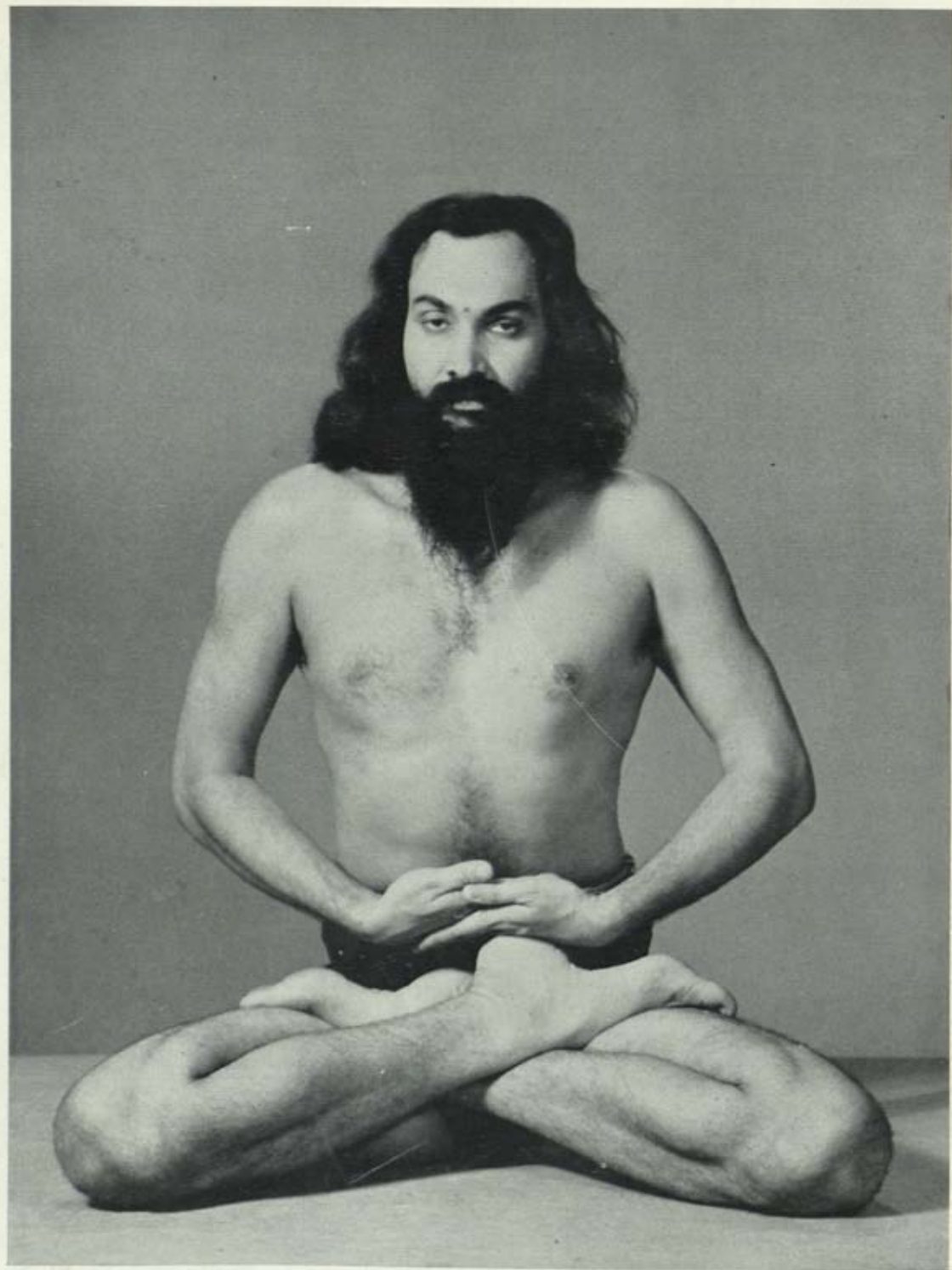


PLATE 9: Place the left heel near the navel

Padmāsana



Padmāsana

PLATE 10: Place the right heel above the left heel, the hands in the lap, and gaze straight in front



body gets lighter. Keeping the hands on the knees enhances the effect of gravity, and the body gets heavier (Plate 11). In the beginning the yogī should try to cultivate the *Laghimā-Śakti* and the hands should be kept in the lap. The practice of keeping the hands in the other position is as efficacious and useful in *Padmāsana* as in *Siddhāsana*.

In *Padmāsana*, all the five ways of fixing the gaze (enumerated in the note on *Siddhāsana*) are practised.

*Padmāsana* seems and is difficult to perform in the beginning, but it is the āsana which must be practised by all—men, women and children, old and young alike. To facilitate its practice, the great seers invented *Ardha-Padmāsana* or Half-Lotus posture, as shown in Plate 12. Here, only one foot is placed on the opposite thigh, whereas the other foot is allowed to remain on the ground. *Ardha-Padmāsana* should be attempted only by those whose bodies are extremely stiff. If *Ardha-Padmāsana* were to be practised by alternating the raised foot every two minutes, it is very likely that, in as short a period as 40 days, *Padmāsana* itself could be perfected. Those who have stiff limbs are advised to drink milk mixed with powdered, raw turmeric. This makes the limbs less rigid and renders them supple. The consumption of raw turmeric is also said to purify the blood.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Whereas this āsana, like *Siddhāsana*, is also used for meditation, prayer, worship and *Prāṇāyāma*, it has the added distinction in that it is decidedly more effective and useful than *Siddhāsana* for physical well-being. For *Prāṇāyāma*, *Padmāsana* is essential. Only when a person is able to sit in *Padmāsana* for 15 minutes at a stretch is he considered fit for undertaking *Prāṇāyāma*, because *Padmāsana* is the only āsana in which the posture remains undisturbed even when, during *Prāṇāyāma*, the body is buoyed up.

*Padmāsanastha evāsau bhūmimutsrjya vartate.*  
*Atimānuṣaṣṭhādī tathā sāmartyamudbhavet.*

(*Y.T.U.* 1, 55)

The yogī sitting in *Padmāsana* is lifted from the ground and is

suspended in mid-air. A yogī like this becomes possessed of superhuman powers and faculties.

This āsana relieves constipation, indigestion and flatulence. It improves digestion and strengthens the thighs and calves.

It is considered more useful to women than to men because it has a beneficial effect on the womb. Therefore, all the āsanās based on Padmāsana should be specially practised by women. Svātmārāma, a disciple of Gorakṣanātha, has said in Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā:

Idaṃ padmāsanaṃ proktaṃ, sarvavyādhi-vināśanam,  
Durlabhaṃ yena kenāpi dhīmatā labhyate bhuvi.

(H.Y.P. 1, 47)

This Padmāsana annihilates all ailments. Although difficult, it is capable of being perfected by all intelligent persons on earth who practise it.

It can be practised by the brahmacārī (celibate), the householder, vānaprasthī, or the sannyāsī (recluse). It is supposed to be perfected if the posture can be maintained continuously for a period of 3 hours and 48 minutes in the prescribed fashion. As sexual urges are diminished by the practice of Siddhāsana, men leading normal domestic lives should practise it only to a limited extent. But this restriction does not apply to Padmāsana. Irrespective of how long it is performed, Padmāsana has beneficial effects.

Baddha-padmāsano yogī namaskṛtya guruṃ Śivam  
Nāsāgra-dṛṣṭirekāki prāṇāyāmaṃ samabhyaset.

(Y.T.U. 1, 106)

The yogī, seating himself in Padmāsana, should bow down to the great teacher of yogīs, Lord Śiva, and should practise prāṇāyāma after fixing his gaze on the tip of his nose.

Here the practice of Prāṇāyāma has been indicated in Padmāsana because, as mentioned above, perfect prāṇāyāma can be performed only in Padmāsana. Svātmārāma, a disciple of Gorakṣanātha, writes:



Padmāsane sthito yogī nāḍī-dvāreṇa pūritam  
Marutaṃ dhārayed yas tu sa mukto nātra saṃśayaḥ.

(H.Y.P. 1, 49)

If the yogī seated in Padmāsana directs the breath after full, deep inspiration into the path of Suṣumṇā Nāḍī, he gets liberated; there can be absolutely no doubt about it.

It is evident that Siddhāsana and Padmāsana are the foremost among the 84 lac āsanas. Even if a person only sits in Padmāsana, without the accompanying Prāṇāyāma, prayer, meditation or contemplation, he will benefit immensely by it.

### 3. BHADRĀSANA (BLESSED POSTURE)

#### P O S T U R E

Kneel with the heels together under the buttocks. Both hands should be placed on the thighs. Sit, keeping the gaze fixed on the tip of the nose and applying Jālandhara Bandha (Chin lock); the body should be kept steady. This is illustrated in Plate 13. The great seer Gheraṇḍa has said:

Gulphau ca vṛṣaṇasyādho vyutkrameṇa samāhitāḥ,  
Pādānguṣṭhe karābhyam ca dhṛtvā ca prṣṭhadeśataḥ,  
Jālandharam samāsādyā nāsāgramavalokayet,  
Bhadrāsanaṃ bhavedetat sarvavyādhi-vināśakam.

(G.S. 2, 9-10)

One should sit comfortably after reversing and upturning both the feet in such a manner that the heels touch each other beneath the testicles. Thereafter, the toes of the right and the left foot should be caught hold of by the left and right hands respectively, and the yogī should concentrate his gaze on the tip of his nose after applying the Chin lock. The Bhadrāsana thus achieved is the destroyer of all ailments.

In the yogic texts there is a description of another posture of the



Bhadrāsana. In this, the hands are taken behind the back and the right hand holds the big toe of the right foot and the left hand of the left foot, after kneeling in the manner described above. This alternative posture is illustrated in Plate 14.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Bhadrāsana is beneficial in many ailments. It strengthens the thighs, the knees and the legs. It is also of great help to the vertebral column if practised sufficiently long. This āsana is also useful to the lungs.

In the practice of this āsana, initially, the hands are placed on the knees. Only after some practice should the hands be taken behind the back as illustrated in Plate 14.

This āsana has been found useful for developing the ability to concentrate because the mere practice of fixing the gaze leads to the stabilising of the mind. Although the Bhadrāsana is easy to perform, it is nevertheless capable of bestowing subtle benefits.

#### 4. MUKTĀSANA (LIBERATED POSTURE)

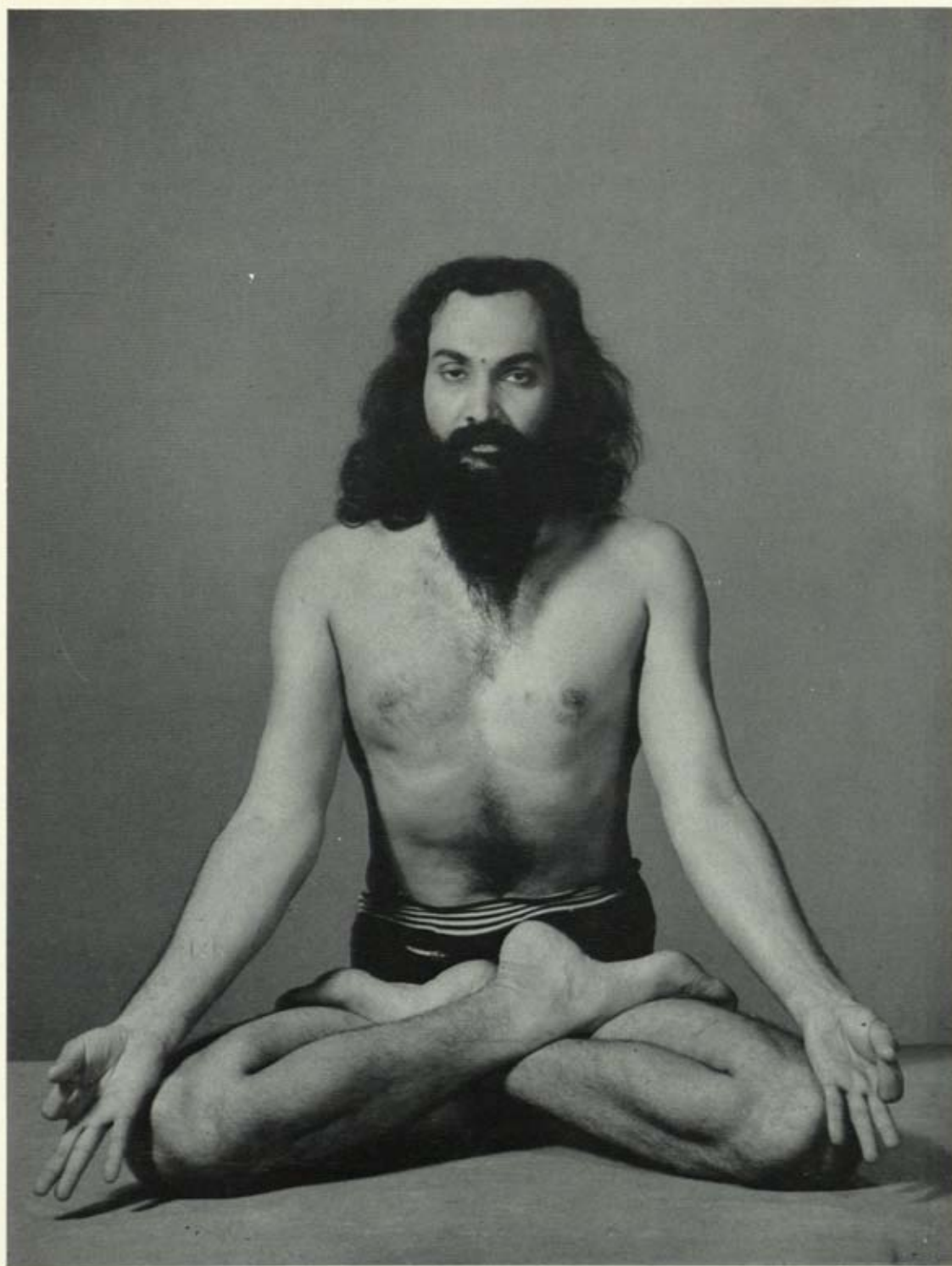
##### POSTURE

Bring the heel of the left foot near the anus. The right foot should be placed on the left foot in such a manner that the heel of the right foot remains beneath the testicles. The posture is similar to the Siddhāsana except that the feet are at a slightly lower level, as shown in Plate 15. Keeping the trunk erect, the hands should be placed either in the lap or on the knees. The seer Gheraṇḍa has commented on this āsana thus:

Pāyu-mūle vāmagulphaṃ dakṣagulphaṃ tathopari,  
Śirogrīvāsamaṃ kāryaṃ muktāsanaṃ tu siddhidam.

(G.S. 2, 11)

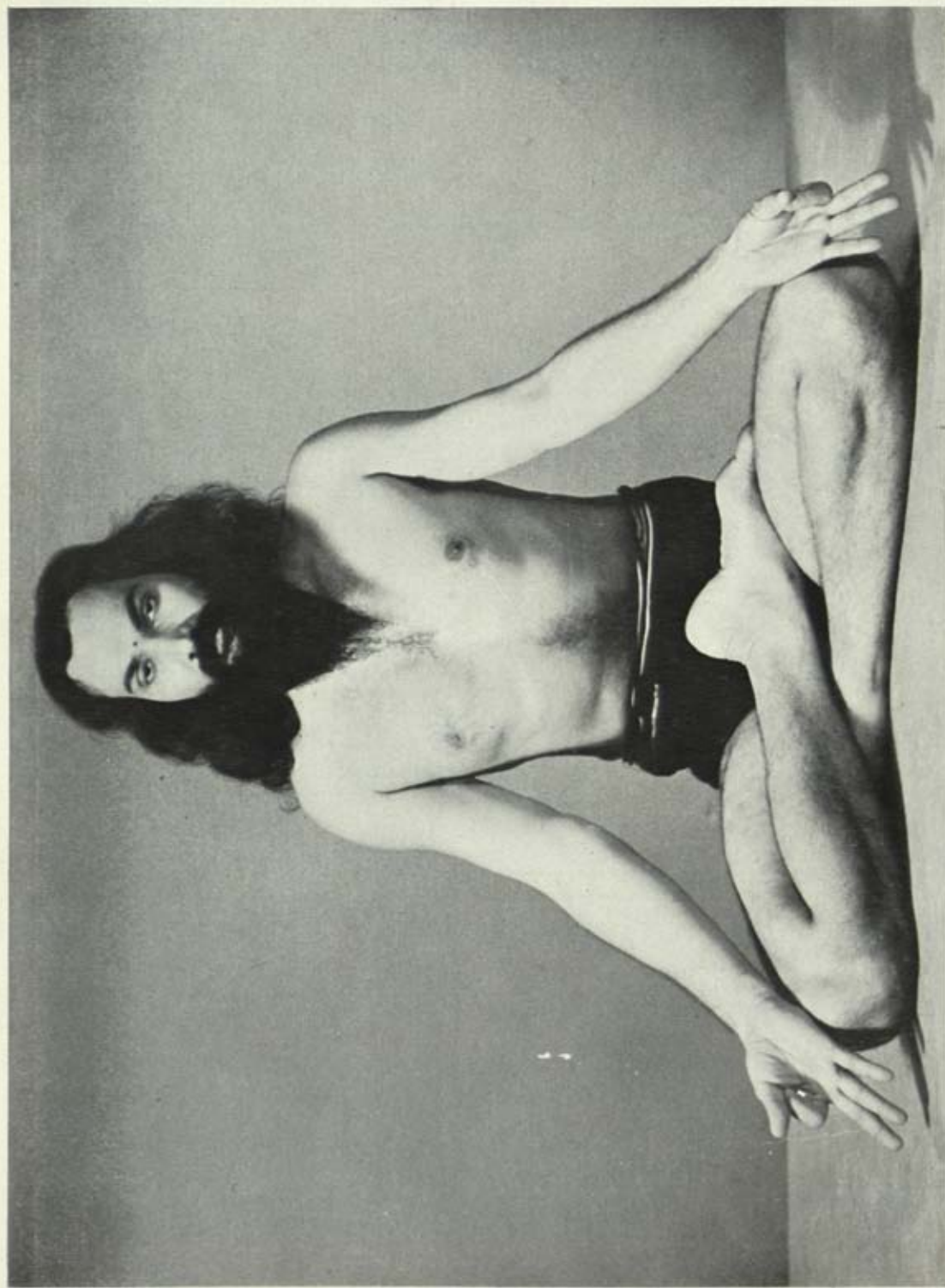
The left heel on the anus and the right heel on top of it, the head and the neck being kept erect, results in Mukthāsana which is capable of bestowing many perfections and supranatural faculties.



Padmāsana

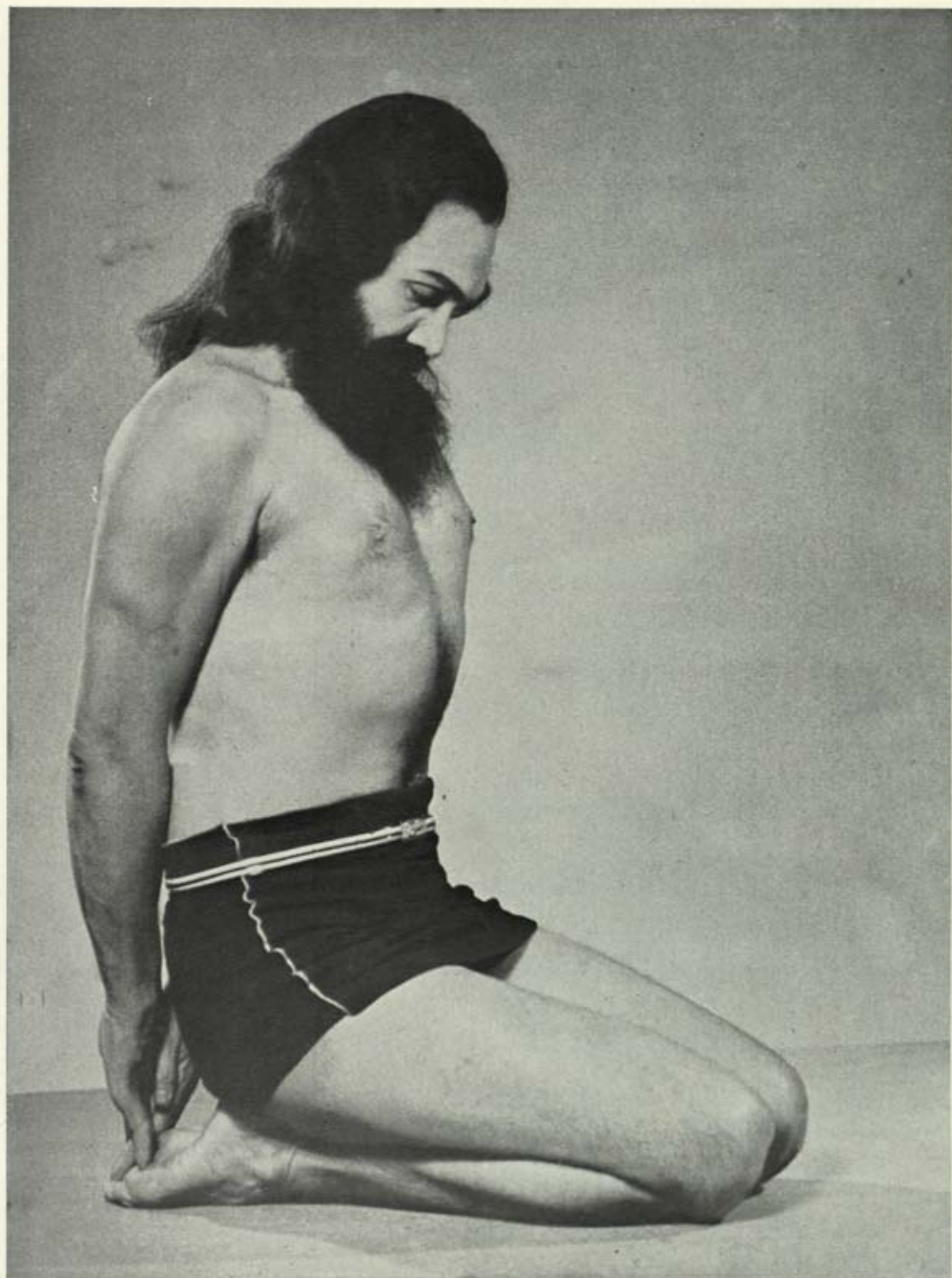
PLATE 11: Place open palms on the knees





Ardha-Padmāsana

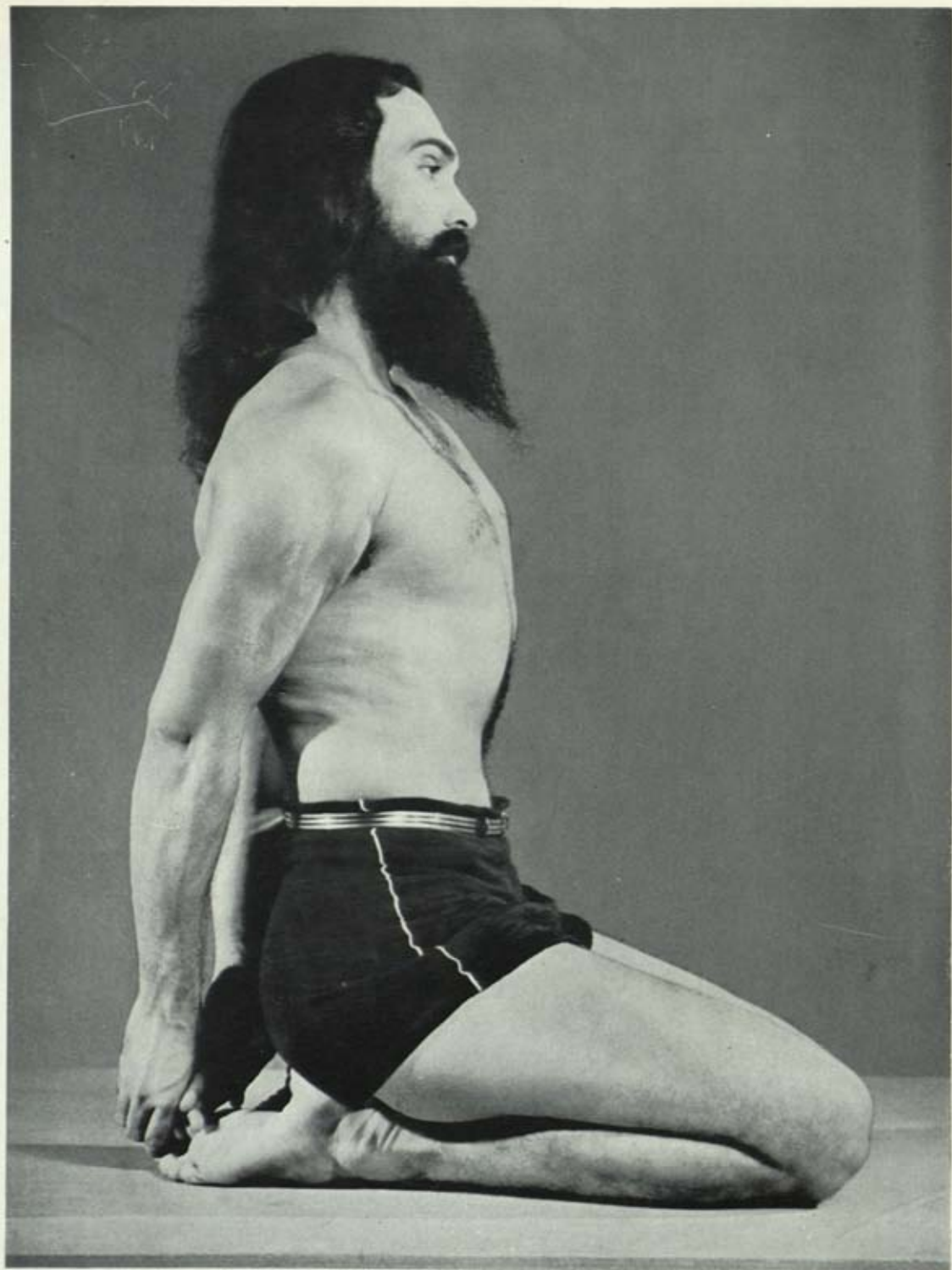
PLATE 12: Only one heel is placed near the navel, the other is on the ground



**Bhadrāsana**

PLATE 13: Holding the toes with the hands, the chin should touch the chest





Bhadrāsana

PLATE 14: With the heels under the buttocks and holding the toes, gaze straight in front

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana is similar to Siddhāsana. Hence Gheraṇḍa has described its virtues in just one single word "Siddhidam," i.e. "the giver of perfections and supranatural faculties." This may also mean that it gives the same benefits as Siddhāsana. Only the yogīs of high attainments sit in this āsana. Its practice enhances and develops spiritual faculties as well as the capacity to concentrate. Through it one can attain peace and repose. The āsana is neither very difficult nor very easy to perform. Its subtle details should be learnt only through an accomplished master or guru.

### 5. VAJRĀSANA (ADAMANTINE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Squatting on the toes and placing the heels beneath the anus, the hands are placed on the thighs while keeping the trunk and the neck erect, as in Plate 16. The āsana can be performed also with the heels placed on either side of the buttocks as shown in Plate 17.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The body gets strong and firm from the practice of this āsana. Hence the yogīs have named it Vajrāsana, implying that through its practice the body becomes like adamant or Vajra. Through this the toes, knees, legs and thighs get strong. It is extremely useful for those who are prone to excessive sleep. It has proved useful for students and those who keep late hours at night. It should be practised for 5 minutes after meals, when the flow of the nāḍīs is usually downwards; the āsana reverses this flow and it ascends and thus helps in the speedy digestion of food. The essence derived after the digestion of food is so wholesome and pure that the whole body, including the bones and the nāḍīs, becomes like adamant. Gheraṇḍa says:

Jaṅghābhyāṃ vajravat kṛtvā gudāpārśve padāvubhau,  
Vajrāsanaṃ bhavedetat yogināṃ siddhi-dāyakam.

(G.S. 2, 12)



Vajrāsana which is performed by keeping the feet on the sides of the anus makes the thighs like adamant and is a bestower of many perfections and supernatural faculties (Siddhis) to the yogī.

## 6. SVASTIKĀSANA (SVASTIKA POSTURE)

### POSTURE

The posture, described in Gheraṇḍa Samhitā, is as follows:

Jānunorantare kṛtvā yogī pādatale ubhe  
Rjukāyaḥ samāsīnāḥ svastikaṃ tat pracakṣate.

(G. S. 2, 13)

Place the left foot against the right thigh and the right foot against the left thigh while keeping the body straight and the arms stretched so that the hands project beyond the knees. Care should be taken that the knees touch the ground and the whole body—the thighs, the waist, the back, etc.—remains erect (Plate 18).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana is particularly useful for those whose feet get either very warm or very cold, or whose feet ache or sweat profusely (hyper-hydrosis). All these symptoms are relieved by this āsana. Those who have extremely cold feet in winter or perspire excessively in summer should practise this āsana for 20 minutes daily.

## 7. SIṂHĀSANA (LION POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Squat on the ground on the toes with the feet and heels together under the anus (Plate 19). The chin should be in chin lock (Jālandhara-Bandha) and the eyes should gaze at the point between the eyebrows. The mouth should be opened as wide as possible. The tongue should

be extended as far as possible. The hands should be placed on the knees or in the lap. Care should be taken that the heels touch the anus (Sivanī Nāḍī), and, while sitting on the toes, the feet should be absolutely straight and raised in such a way that both the heels are in contact.

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

An undisturbed celibacy is attained through the practice of this āsana. It also helps in relieving the ailments of the oral cavity, teeth, tongue, jaws and throat. The outstanding feature of the āsana is that it generates fearlessness. Timid people must practise this āsana. It helps in making the voice clear and it has been found useful for improving the eyesight. The body of one who practises Simhāsana is blessed with infinite energy like that of a lion. Just as a lion, although so strong and powerful, is one of the most disciplined of animals, exhibiting a far greater control over itself than other animals, those practising this āsana also develop power and virility, while, at the same time, they become more self-controlled and disciplined in their behaviour and responses; like the lion their sensual motivation is poor. An additional, distinctive feature of this āsana is that by its practice all the three locks, i.e. the Basal lock (Mūla-Bandha), Abdominal lock (Uḍḍiyāna-Bandha), and the Chin lock (Jālandhara-Bandha) are applied automatically. Svātmārama has said about this āsana:

Simhāsanaṃ bhavedetat pūjitaṃ yogī-puṅgavaiḥ  
Bandha-tritaya-sandhānaṃ kurute cāsanottamaṃ.

(H.Y.P. 1, 52)

The Simhāsana has been lauded by accomplished yogīs because this āsana helps in the effortless accomplishment of all the three locks and thus bestows the powers attributed to these locks.

## 8. GOMUKHĀSANA (COW-HEAD POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left leg bent so that the heel touches the anus. The right leg also should be bent so that the right heel touches



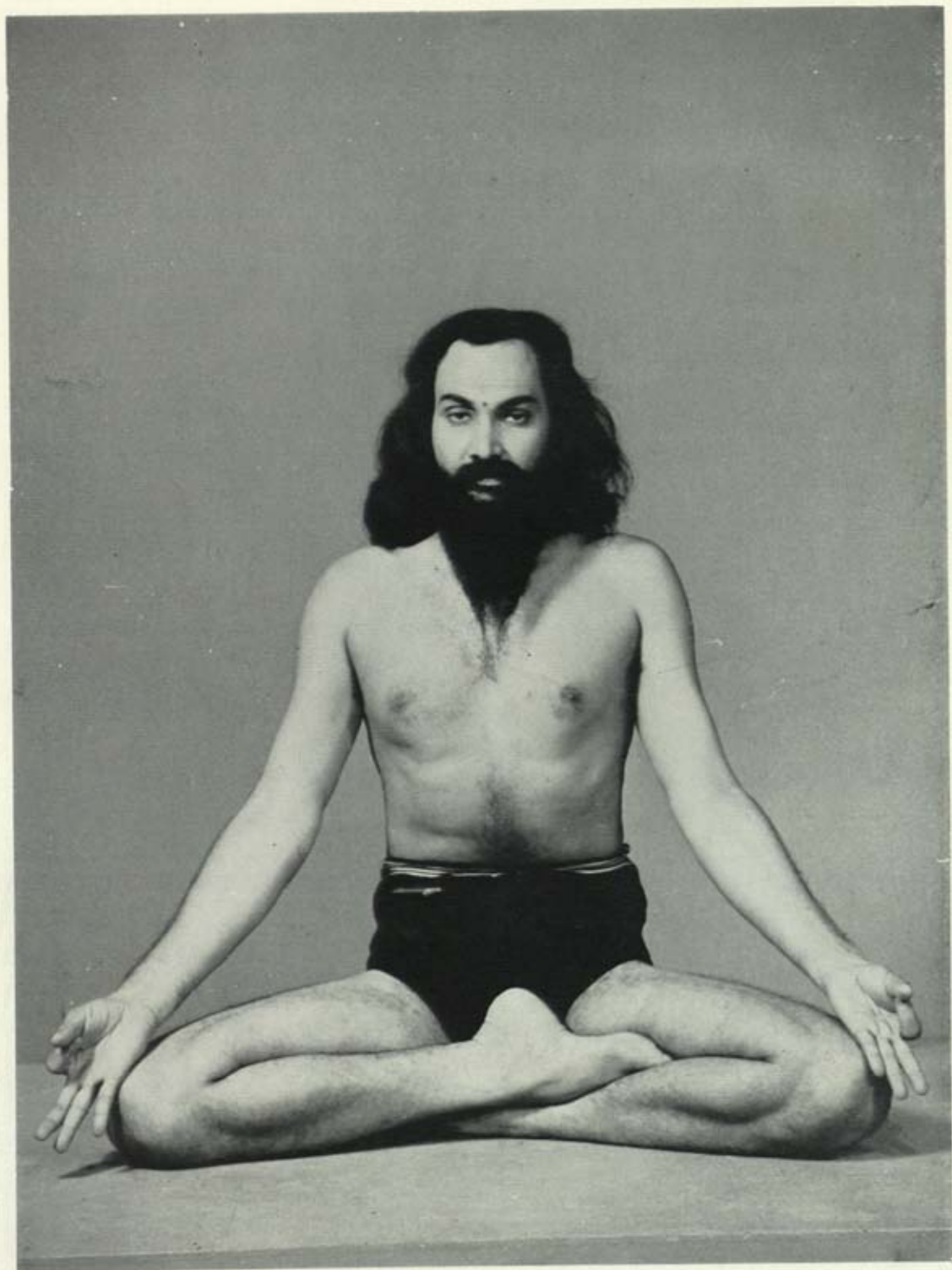
the left buttock. Care should be taken that the left foot remains straight, touching the ground, and the toes of the right foot also touch the ground. The right arm should be raised and bent at the elbow behind the shoulders towards the back. The left arm should be bent upwards behind the back so that all the eight fingers of both the hands are interlocked. Then the right elbow should be lowered as far as possible. During all this, the eyes have to be kept open and the respiration has to go on as usual. The āsana has been illustrated in Plate 20. The process should be repeated by starting this time on the right side instead of the left as described above. This would result in bringing the right foot near the anus as shown in Plate 21. Irrespective of which way the āsana is practised, one knee must rest on the other.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana gives strength to the feet, knees, and waist. The arms and shoulders develop. The chief and unique characteristic of this āsana is that it is helpful in diseases of the lungs. Patients of asthma and phthisis (tuberculosis of the lungs) should specially practise it because the respiratory movement of the lung on the side on which it is performed is almost stopped and the other lung works more rapidly and vigorously. By alternating its practice, the resting lung can be forced into a state of increased activity. This way the cleansing as well as the haemo-circulatory actions on the lungs are initiated and enhanced. It is possible to inhale markedly greater amounts of oxygen than is ordinarily needed. In this manner, innumerable pores and alveoli of the lungs get cleaned up. It is on this account that yogīs have held the practice of this āsana to be of a general utility for all types of individuals.

### 9. VĪRĀSANA (HERO'S POSTURE)

This āsana assumes the posture of a hero or a warrior. There are four varieties of this āsana; the most important one is described below. Śrī Hanūmān showed an overriding preference for it. Hence, at times, it has also been referred to as Hanūmān āsana.



Muktāsana

PLATE 15: With the toes of the feet tucked in between the legs, gaze straight in front



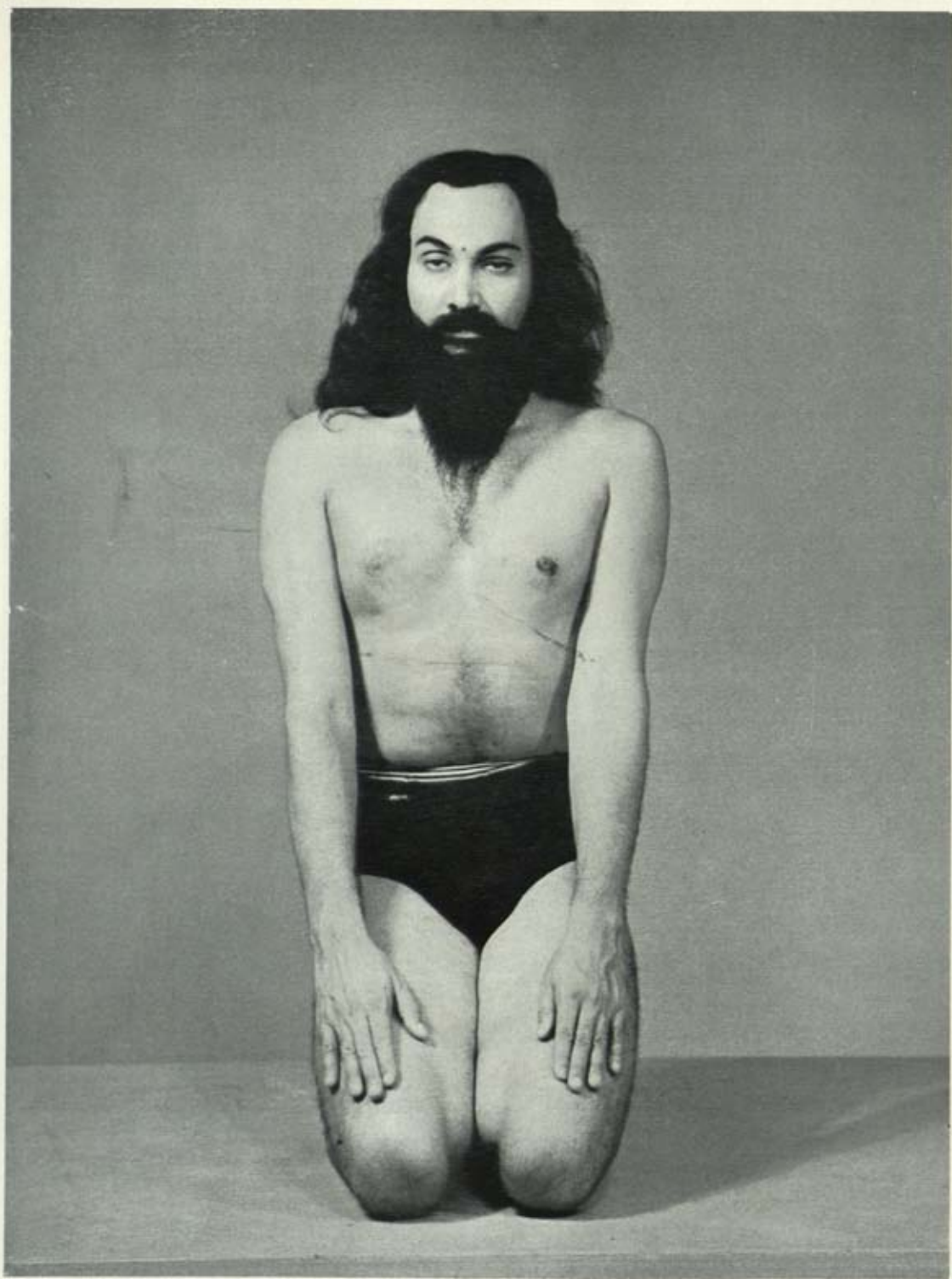
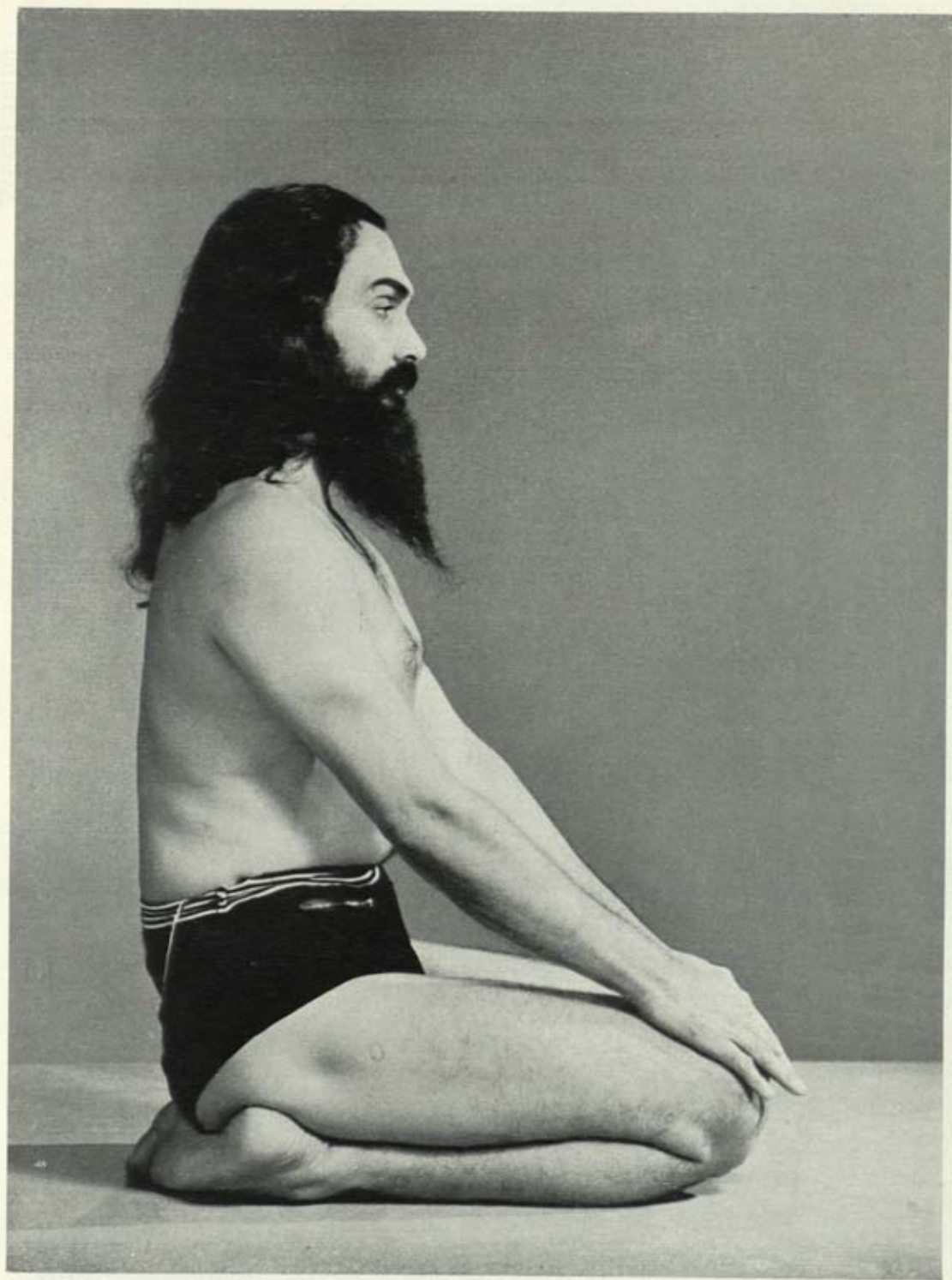


PLATE 16: Sit on the heels with hands on the thighs

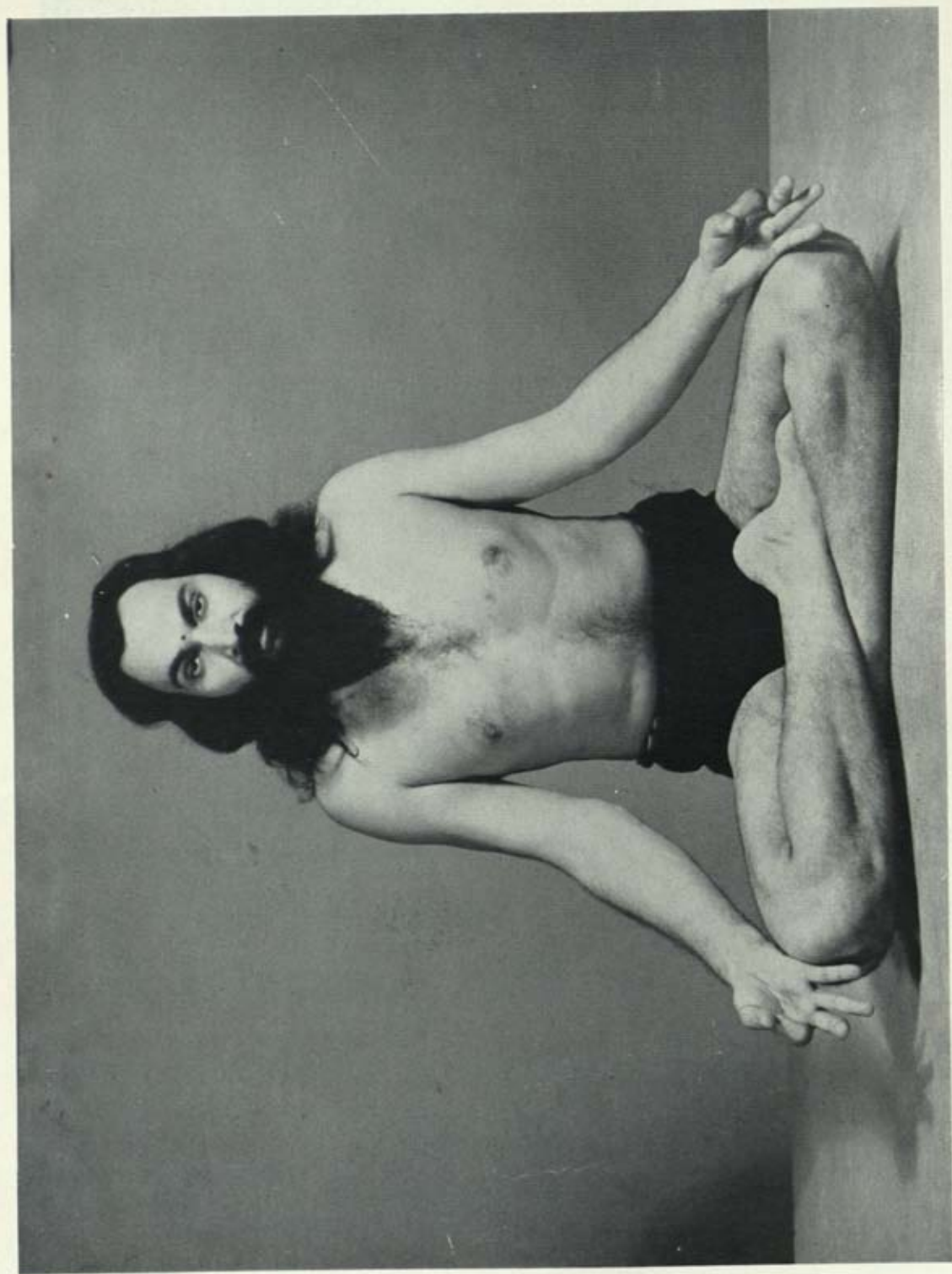
Vajrāsana



Vajrāsana

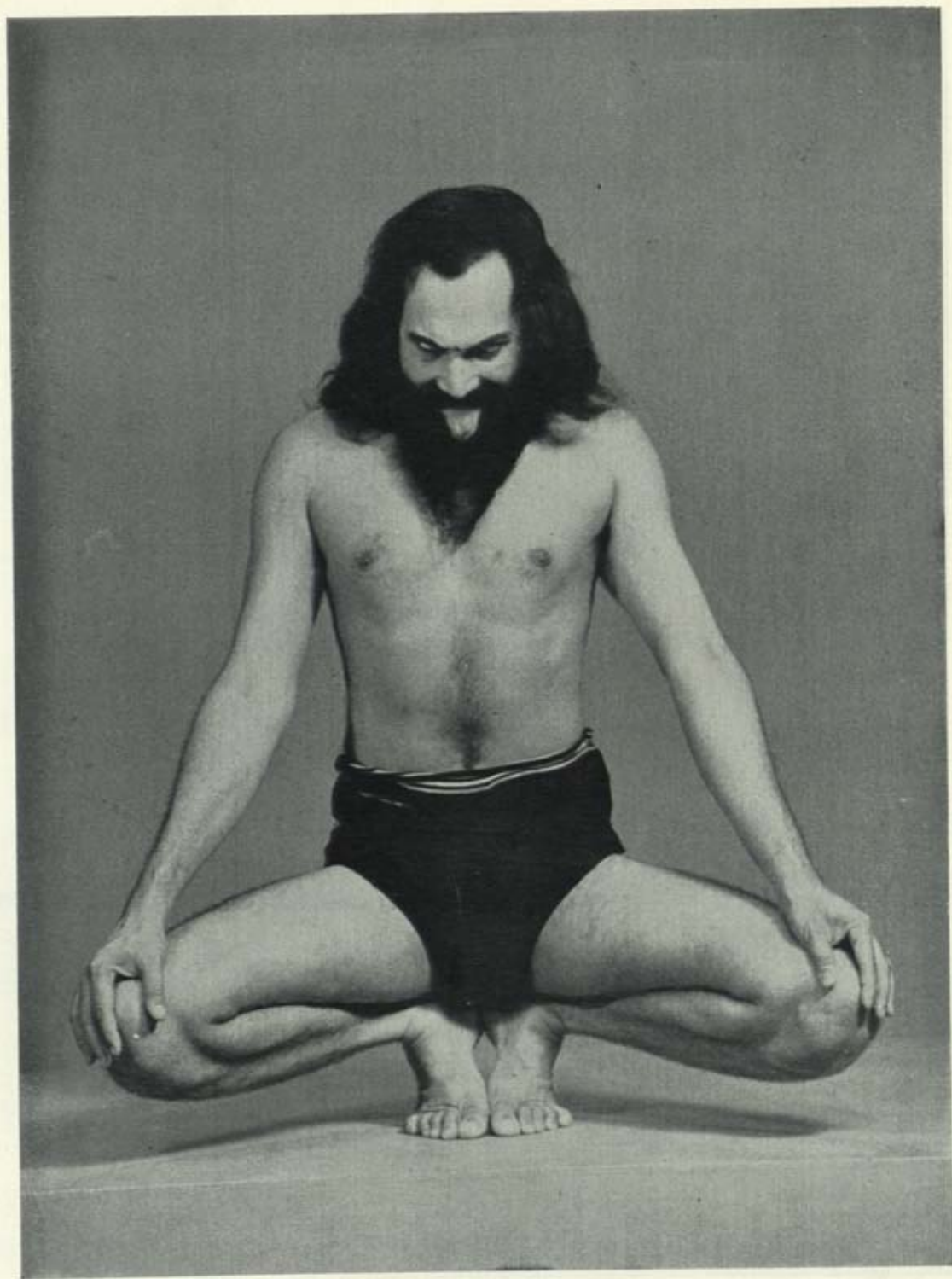
PLATE 17: Squat with the toes together and hands on the knees





Svastikāsana

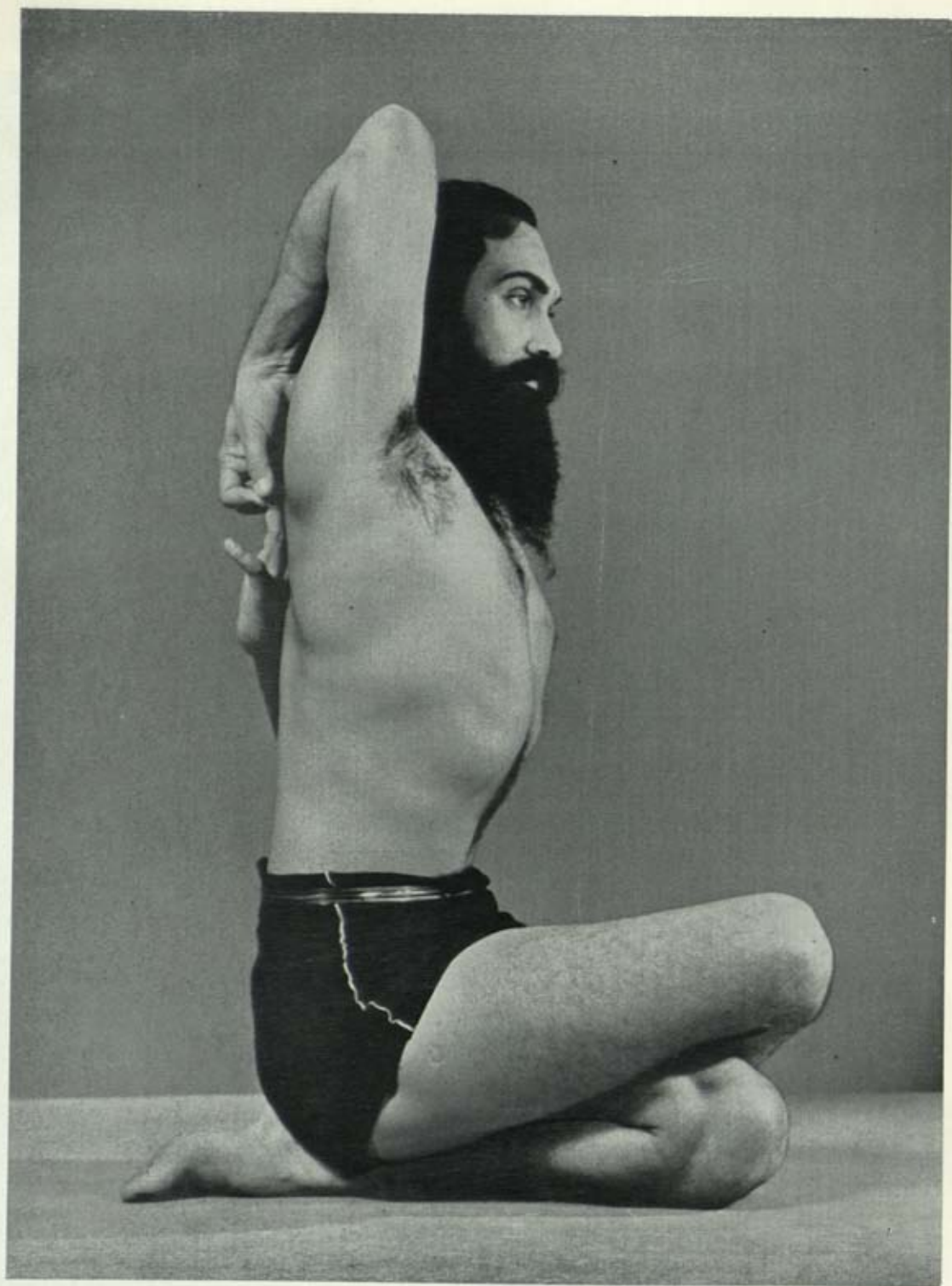
PLATE 18: Tuck the toes in between the thighs and calves, and keep hands open on the knees



Simhāsana

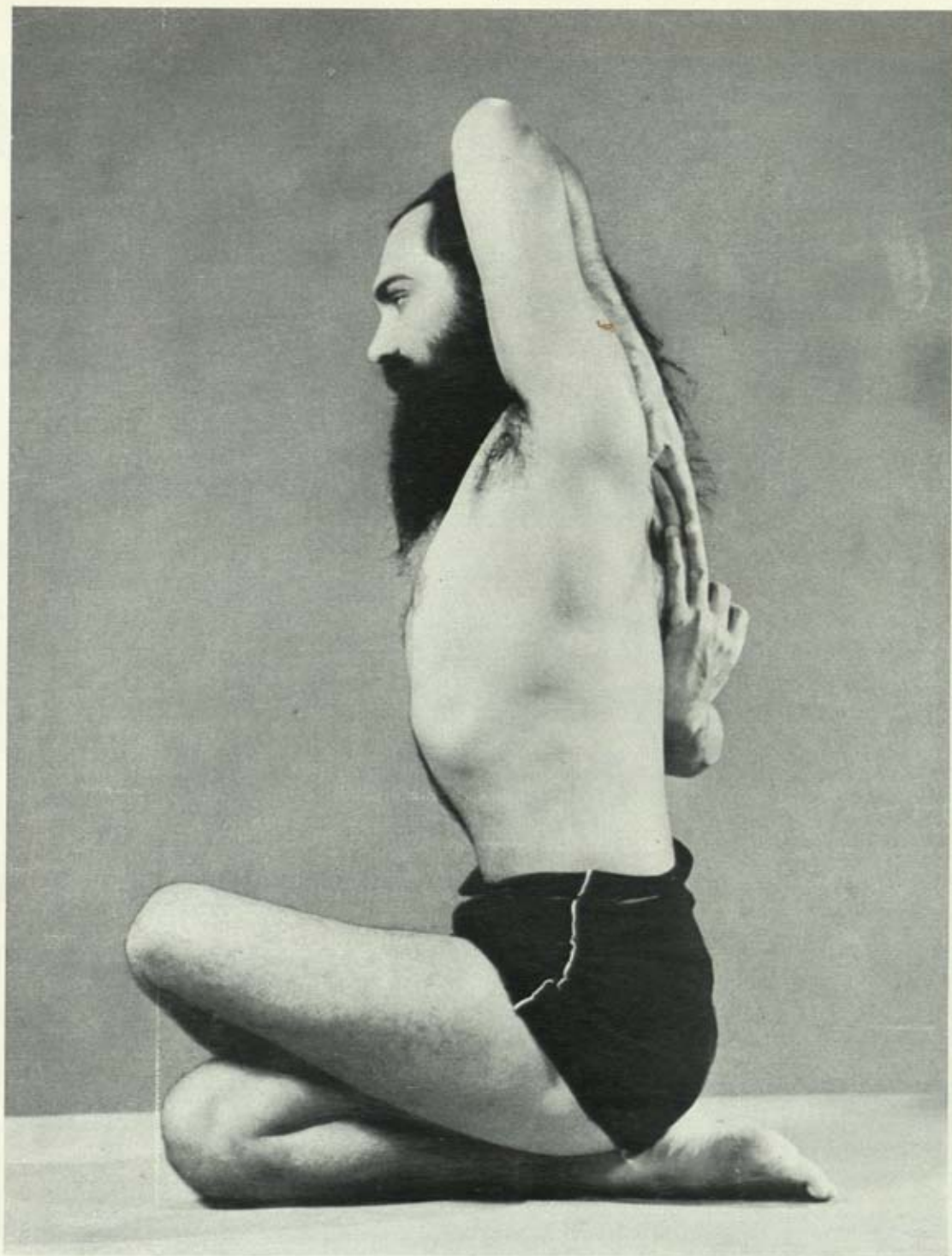
PLATE 19: Squatting on the toes, with tongue protruding, gaze between the eyebrows





Gomukhāsana

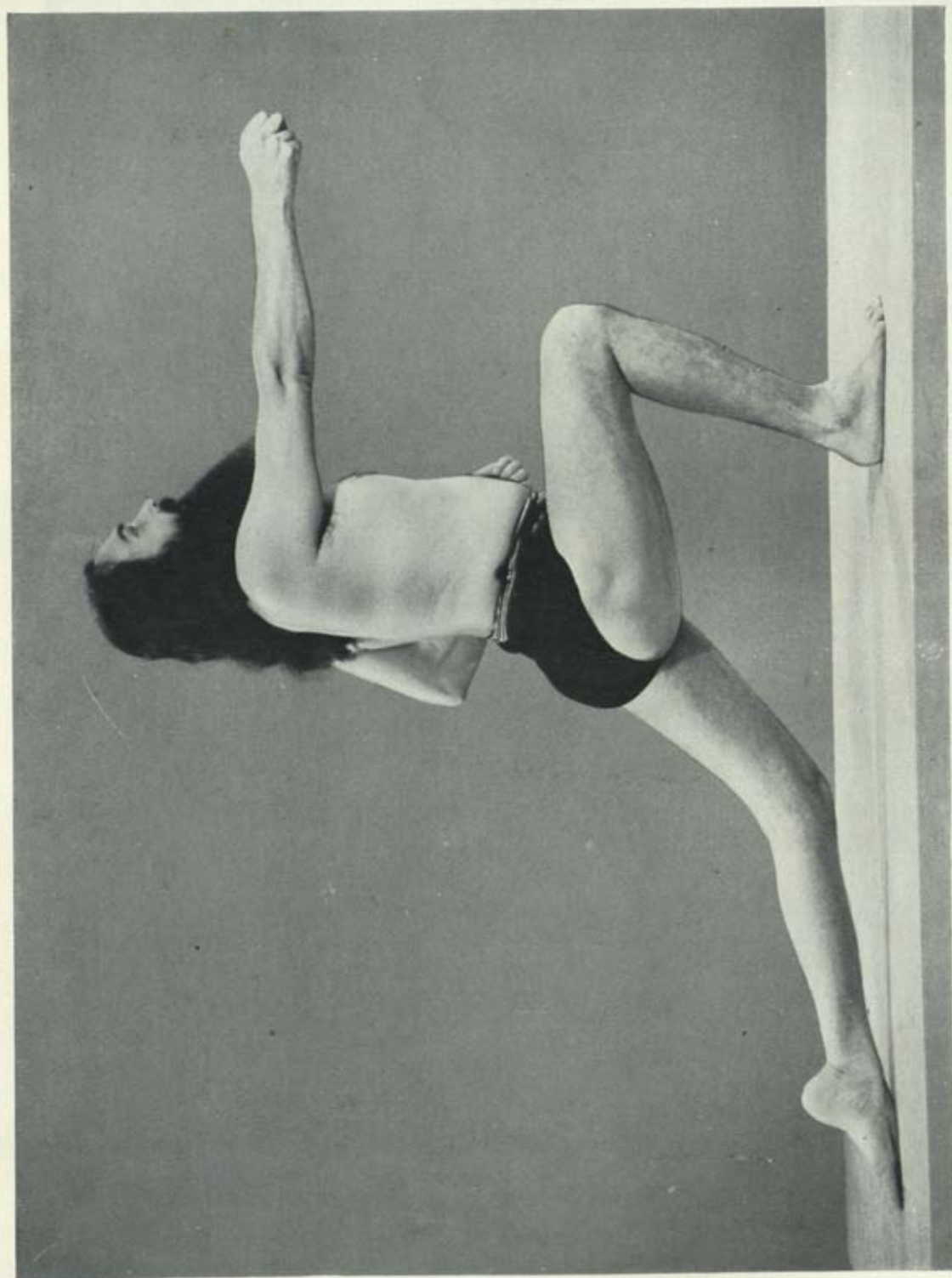
PLATE 20: Sit on the left heel with the right leg bent and the fingers interlocked behind the back



Gomukhāsana

PLATE 21: Sit on the right heel as in Plate 20





Virāsana

PLATE 22: With the left leg stretched back, the right leg is bent and the right arm stretched forward

## POSTURE

Stand on the ground with the left leg stretched backwards and the right knee bent. The fists of the hands should be clenched, with the thumbs tucked inside them. The right arm should be stretched forward in front of the chest and the left arm bent back. The trunk should be stretched backwards with full strength and the leg should be kept straight. Both eyes should be kept open without blinking. This has been illustrated in Plate 22. The āsana should be performed again by reversing the position of the lower limbs, i.e. by keeping the left foot forward and the right foot backward.

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana generates unprecedented strength, vigour, courage, fortitude, and power. It also removes lethargy. Those prone to excessive sleep must practise this āsana. It is believed that Lakṣmaṇa went without any sleep for twelve years with Śrī Rāma in the forest on account of the effect of Vīrāṣana. When in the night Śrī Rāmacandra and Śītā would go to sleep in the forest, Lakṣmaṇa used to keep awake, the arrow fastened on his bow and in the posture known as Vīrāṣana. Śrī Tulsīdāsa says in Rāmacarita Mānasa:

Baḍabhāghī Aṅgada Hanumānā  
Carana kamala Cāpata vidhi nānā  
Prabhu pāche Lakṣmaṇa Vīrāṣana,  
Kaṭi niṣaṅga kara bāṇa śarāṣana.

Fortunate are Aṅgada and Hanumān who are massaging the feet of the Lord (Śrī Rāmacandra) in various ways. Lakṣmaṇa is behind the Lord in Vīrāṣana having the quiver on his waist and the bow and the arrow in his hands.

The Vīrāṣana, apart from markedly reducing the need for sleep, also imparts fearlessness and chivalry. That is why Śrī Hanumān showed an overwhelming preference for it. Most of the time he used to sit in this āsana.



The practice of this āsana dispels seminal disorders and ailments. It reduces the waist and makes the chest broader. The feet, the thighs, and the arms are strengthened. It is extremely advantageous and useful for archers. Thousands of years ago, the great archers used to practise shooting with their bows and arrows while sitting in this āsana.

Although many varieties of this āsana are known, only one type has been described in detail.

## 10. DHANURĀSANA (BOW POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the back with the palms upturned and kept close to and by the side of the thighs on the ground. The legs should be lifted gradually so that the toes touch the ground behind the head at a distance at which the outstretched arms can hold the toes. The big toes should then be held by the hands. The legs from thighs to feet and arms from shoulders to fingers must remain absolutely straight, as shown in Plate 23. After holding the toes in this position for as long as possible, the feet should be released, the palms returned to their original position on the ground, and the feet should also be returned gradually to their original position. This āsana should be practised according to one's capacity and strength. It should not be done with jerks or hurriedly as it could prove harmful.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana makes the body supple and resilient. It has definite advantages for the vertebral column. According to the teachings of yoga, good health, longevity, and the absence of disease are in direct proportion to the suppleness and resilience of the spine.

The practice of this āsana also improves the circulation of blood. It is a panacea for persons with paunches and heavy buttocks and for those who suffer from flatulence.

This āsana makes the shoulders and the neck strong and the waist slim.

The body becomes beautiful and radiant. The eyes sparkle and eyesight improves.

Those with high blood pressure or heart diseases must not practise this āsana.

## 11. ŚAVĀSANA OR MRTĀSANA (CORPSE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the ground on the back with the outstretched hands placed near the buttocks with the palms upward. The heels must touch each other while the toes point outwards. The whole body should be relaxed to the extent of a feeling of being separated from the body. All the parts of the body—neck, chest, shoulders, waist, back, belly, eyes, knees, legs, feet, and hands—should be completely relaxed. It should be ensured that not even the smallest part of the body remains tense. This āsana has been illustrated in Plate 24.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

However tired a person may be, if this āsana is performed for even ten or fifteen minutes, the fatigue is relieved. Those who either have no capacity for work or who tire out soon must practice this āsana. It has to be performed by all yogīs, amateurs and adepts alike, because, without this āsana, the fatigue generated in the minute nerves and tissues by the performance of various āsanās and prāṇāyāma cannot be relieved; it is the Śavāsana alone which can remove it. Gheraṇḍa has commented as follows:

Uttāna-śavavad bhūmau śayanaṃ tu śavāsanaṃ,  
Śavāsanaṃ śrama-haraṃ citta-viśrānti-kāraṇam.

(G.S. 2, 19)

Lying like a corpse on the ground is called Śavāsana. This āsana removes fatigue and relaxes the mind by checking its activity.

The important point to note is that the body must be kept completely



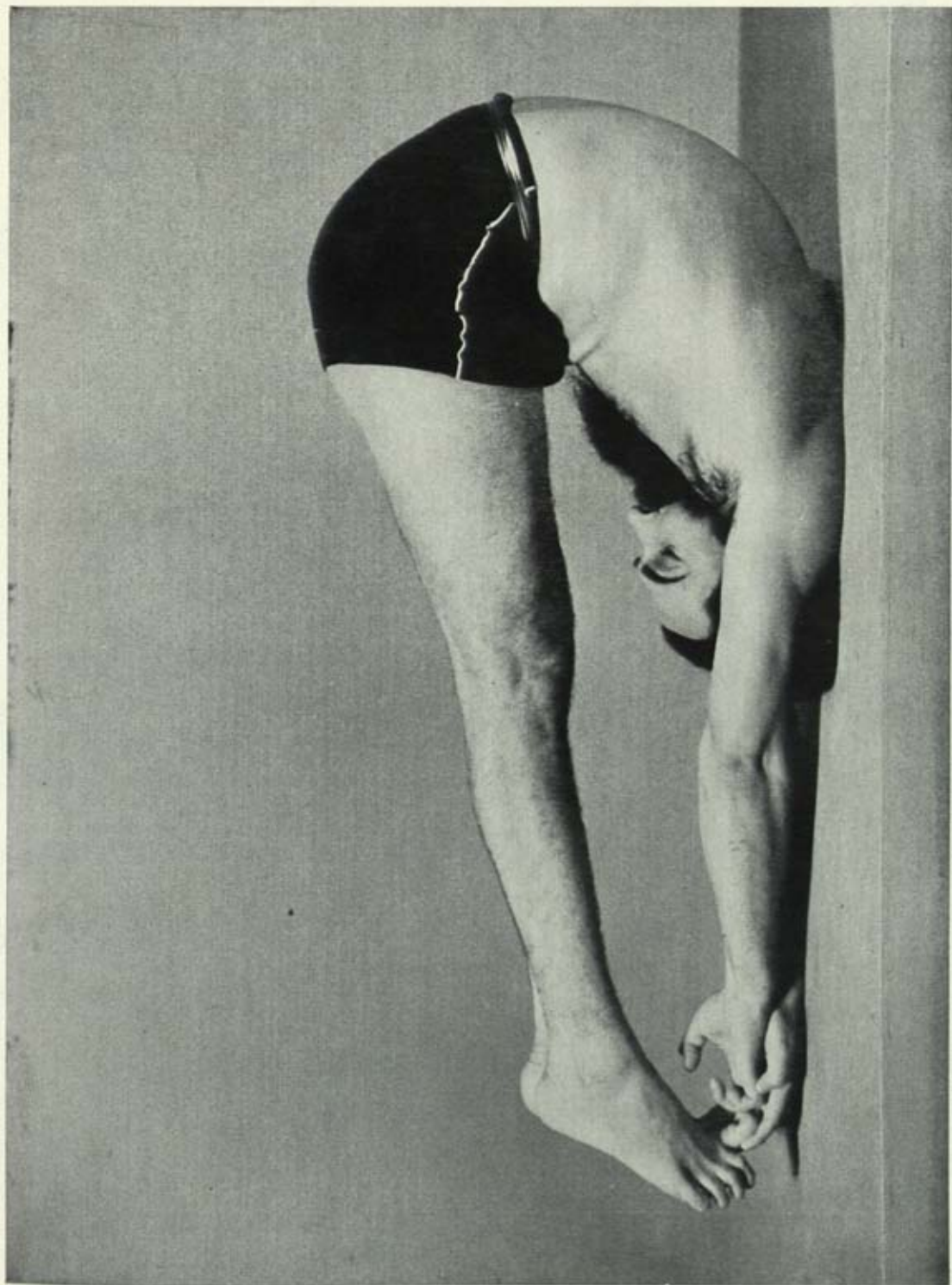
relaxed. This āsana appears to be very easy to perform but there are only a few who can really perform it properly. Benefits accrue from this āsana only if it is performed after fully understanding its details and implications.

The yogīs get relief from the fatigue produced by the Prāṇāyāma, which is practised continuously for many hours, by the performance of this corpse posture. The corpse posture is so intimately linked with Śīraṣāsana that it is imperative to perform Śavāsana for half as long a period as was devoted to the performance of Śīraṣāsana. It is useful for the yogīs to sleep in Śavāsana. The āsana is also utilised for the attainment of samādhi (a state of deep meditation). The Śavāsana removes physical as well as mental fatigue, and has been accorded a pride of place in the science of yoga.

Śavāsana is a unique feature of the yogic system of exercises and is unparalleled by any other exercise in the whole gamut of physical education, being a process in which not only is there no active contractile tension generated in the motor organs of the body, but an attempt at active relaxation is made to include every part of the body. The expectations are more than justified by the practical results of this āsana.

The attempt at active relaxation of each contractile muscle group provides concurrently, though indirectly, mental association and familiarity with their position in the body. This in itself is very important and significant from the point of view of developing a capacity to mobilise and harness the effects of Prāṇa-śakti in the body. This creates unexpected physiological possibilities.

The unsurpassed relaxation and excellent physical recuperation provided by this āsana can, in part at least, be explained in physiological terms. During the state of profound muscular relaxation, the muscle tone, and consequently the intra-tissue tension, falls precipitously. This results in a marked lowering of the peripheral extra-vascular-resistance against the inflow of arterial blood. In consequence, on the one hand, more nutrients and oxygen enter the muscle mass and thus help in providing the requisite raw materials for releasing energy and, on the other hand, provide a ready outflow of accumulated waste materials, metabolic intermediaries (some of which are markedly toxic even in low concentrations), and gaseous end-products like carbon-dioxide. A flushing out of these substances relieves the metabolic checks. It is believed that the feeling of fatigue in the exercised muscles is on account of the accumulated lactic and other acids. A diminution in their concentration by their being flushed out



Dhanurāsana

PLATE 23: The toes must touch the ground behind the head and held by the hands



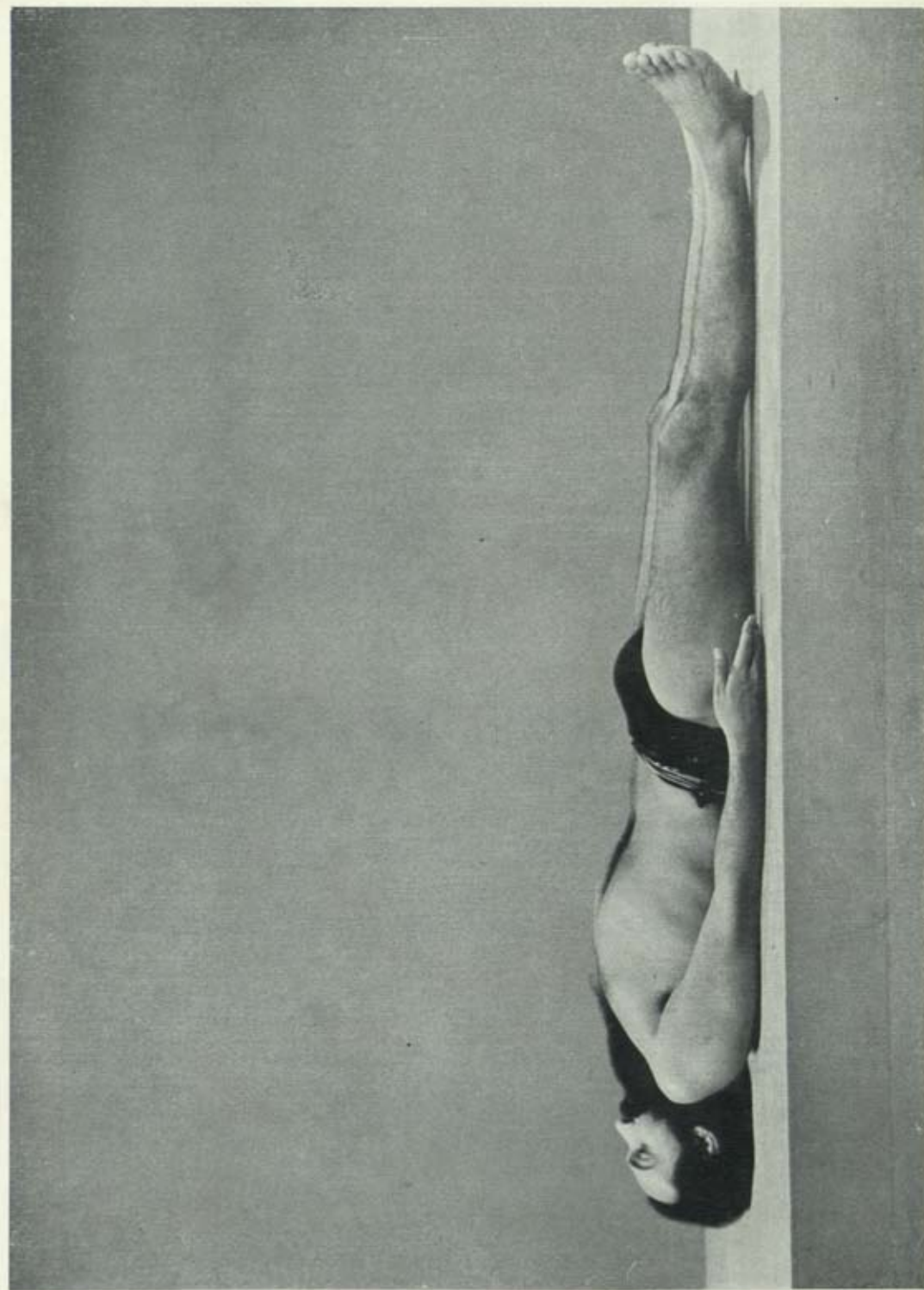


PLATE 24: Lie relaxed on the back like a corpse

Śavāsana

as well as by their quick disposal due to enhanced oxygen levels would and does result in relief from the sense of fatigue.

## 12. GUPTĀSANA (CONCEALED POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left foot so placed that the heel comes in contact with the anus. Then, by lifting the buttocks, place the right foot on top of the left in such a way that the toes are concealed under the thigh of the left leg. While seated, the hands should be extended beyond the knees and the trunk kept absolutely erect. The right heel must press against the anus and should not lose contact with it (Plate 25).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana is a cure for wet dreams and other seminal disorders. Seminal incontinence and sexual hyperexcitability are also relieved. It has been held to be very useful for diseases of the urethral system. The Citrākhyā Nāḍī is directly affected, on account of which the circulation of blood in the genital organs improves. The āsana makes it possible to practise uninterrupted celibacy, and cures seminal disorders and many ailments of the anus and genitalia.

Even the minutest of the nāḍīs cannot escape the beneficial effects of Guptāsana. It is useful for all. Practised with the abdominal lock (Uḍḍīyāṇa-Bandha) or the basal lock (Mūla-Bandha), the serpent power (Kuṇḍalinī) gets awakened very quickly. It is impossible to describe all its virtues. Not only are the feet concealed in this āsana, but its qualities and virtues are also concealed. It is for these reasons that it has been aptly named Guptāsana by the yogīs.



### 13. MATSYĀSANA (FISH POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

After sitting in Padmāsana, the head is taken backward in such a way that the occiput (i.e. the highest point on the rear of the cranium) touches the ground, the back being arched and raised from the ground. The left foot should then be held with the right hand and, subsequently, the right foot with the left hand. The knees must touch the ground and the back should be arched to the extent that the body is supported merely on the occiput and the knees. This is illustrated in Plate 26. When this āsana has been mastered even the forehead can be made to touch the ground.

The hands are kept free behind the neck in performing this āsana in water.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Ocular defects can be cured by this āsana. It is also effective for ailments of the throat, like tonsillar diseases. The spine becomes resilient and constipation is relieved. It is also very useful for diabetic patients and for curing aching knees and the back.

A special feature of this āsana is that it is possible to rest in water in this posture without drowning.

The āsana is a potent prophylactic against the development of pulmonary ailments, and is specially useful against the maladies of the uterus. The menstrual flow becomes regular and normal, and dryness of skin and coarseness of the features can also be improved; the skin becomes smooth and the face becomes radiant. It is for this reason that women take to this āsana oftener than men, and they are well advised to do so though the āsana is bound to prove useful to all. For the eradication of many dangerous, irremediable, and supposedly incurable diseases, this āsana is extremely helpful.

### 14. MATSYENDRĀSANA (MATSYENDRA POSTURE)

A great yogī by the name Matsyendra used to sit in this āsana, hence this name. Being personally and directly favoured by Lord Śiva Himself,

Matsyendranātha was able to develop into a great yogī. His disciple Gorakṣanātha was an equally capable and brilliant yogī and is particularly well known among yogīs. A common belief is that he is immortal.

## POSTURE

Sit on the ground. Lift the left foot and place it on the right thigh so that its heel is near the navel (Plate 27). Then the right foot should be lifted and kept on the other side of the left knee, so that the toes do not project beyond the knee. The left arm should be so intertwined round the right knee that the toes of the right foot can be held in the left hand. Then, encircling the back, the right hand should be brought to a position so that it can touch the left heel, and the chin and the cheek should touch the shoulder (Plate 28). The āsana should be repeated with the right foot on the left thigh.

In Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā, Svātmārāma, the disciple of Gorakṣanātha, writes:

Vāmorumūlārpitadakṣapādam  
Jānor bahir veṣṭitavāmapādam  
Pragṛhya tiṣṭhet parivartitāṅgaḥ  
Śrī-matsyanāthoditamāsanam syāt.

(H.Y.P. 1, 26)

Keeping the left foot underneath the left thigh and sitting after intertwining and grasping the left foot with the right hand and rotating the face towards the left is Matsyendrāsana.

Matsyendra pīṭham jaṭhara pradīptam  
Pracaṇḍa ruṇ-maṇḍala-khaṇḍanāstram  
Abhyāsataḥ kuṇḍalinī prabodham  
Candra sthiratvam ca dadāti puṁsām.

(H.Y.P. 1, 27)

The Matsyendrāsana stimulates gastric secretion. It is an efficient instrument for combating serious ailments. It awakens kuṇḍalinī (serpent power) and stabilises the "lunar power" (in the palate). This śloka outlines the beneficial effects of the āsana.

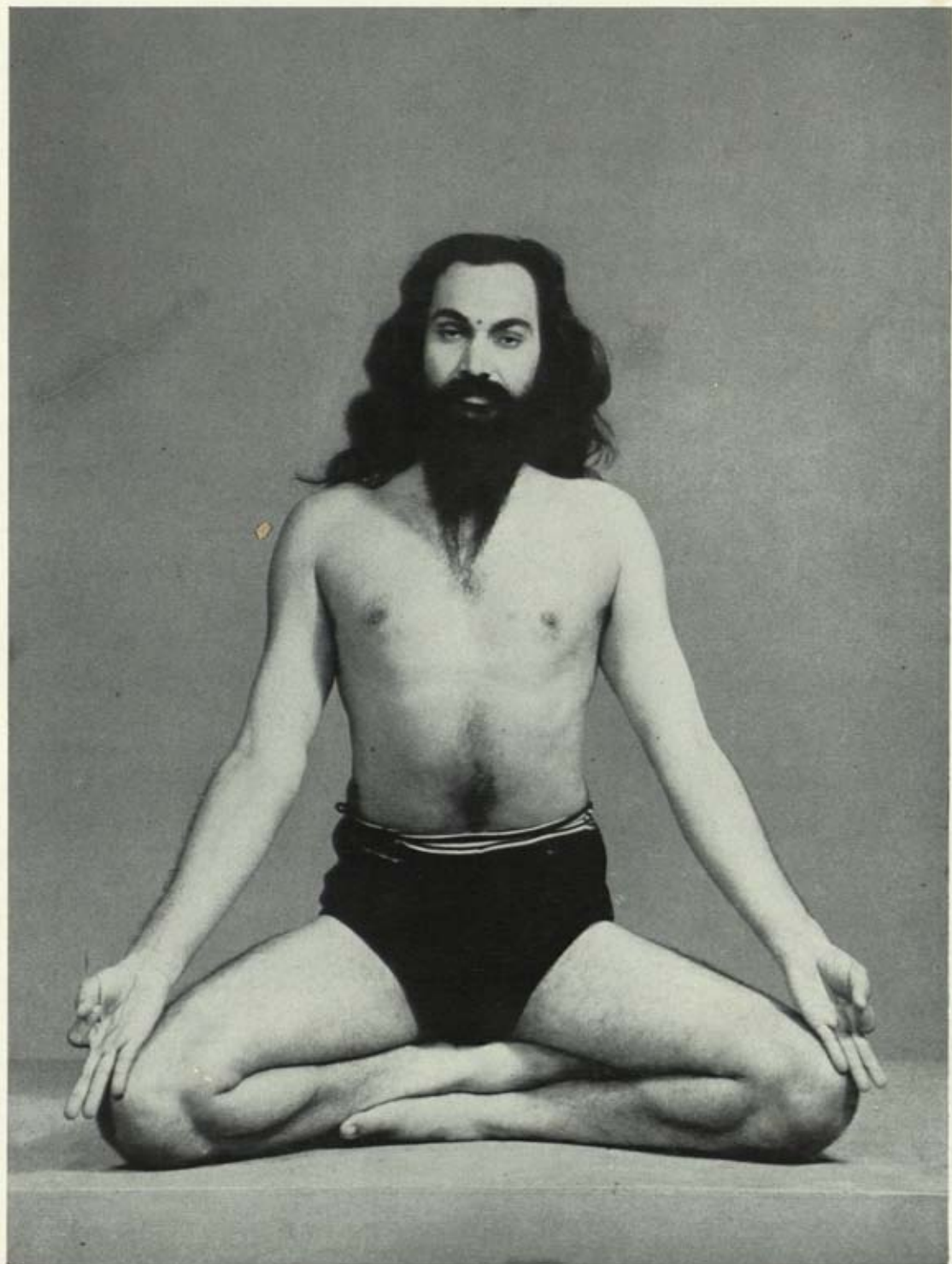


## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Flatulence, chronic enlargement of the spleen as well as disorders of the liver are relieved by this āsana. It is most beneficial for intestinal disorders. Matsyendrāsana is also the only yogic āsana which cures helminthiasis, the disease produced by the infestation of the body, specially the gastrointestinal tract, by worms of various types which are usually difficult to get rid of. There are three varieties of worms, viz. the roundworms, the flatworms, and the tapeworms. The presence of worms in the intestines induces dyspeptic changes and interferes with the digestion, absorption, and assimilation of nutrients from the diet. The worms themselves consume substantial proportion of the nutritious products and thus cause malnutrition. These worms can be expelled from either end of the digestive canal but usually there are many of them and the occasional expulsion of a few worms hardly gives relief. Similarly, the natural death of the worms is of no practical significance, since it is infrequent and its contribution negligible in the face of adverse, overwhelming biological factors which favour the persistence of infestation. The continuous practice of Matsyendrāsana results in extermination of these infections, by killing the worms as well as by causing them to be expelled.

Medical tests have proved that this āsana provides immense benefit to cases of diabetes mellitus. It is most likely that a direct stimulation of the pancreas may induce a release of insulin which, in turn, provides relief, sometimes, in the severest cases of diabetes mellitus.

The practice of this āsana brings about the eradication of many diseases. The 'serpent power' or the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, which is instrumental in enabling the yogīs to scale the ultimate heights of yoga, is speedily 'awakened.' However, the āsana is at least as difficult to perform as is beneficial. Not more than one person in a thousand is capable of doing it. In order to overcome the inherent difficulties of this āsana, another āsana known as Ardha-Matsyendrāsana (Half-Matsyendrāsana) has been devised and elaborated by the yogīs. This Ardha-Matsyendrāsana has most of the virtues of Matsyendrāsana.



Guptāsana

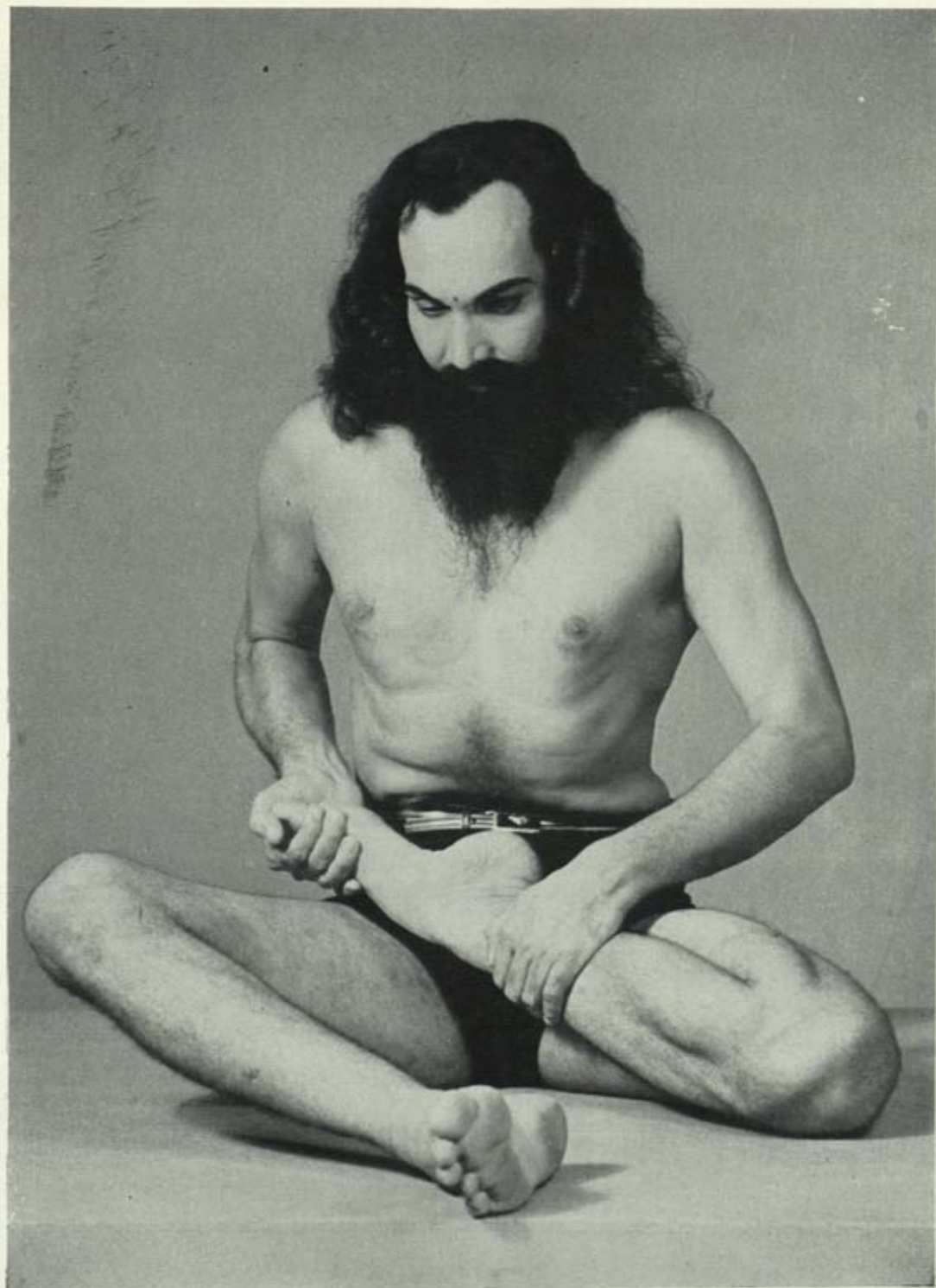
PLATE 25: Place the right heel above the left and keep the hands open on the knees





Matsyāsana

PLATE 26: Holding the toes in Padmāsana, only the knees and head must touch the ground



**Matsyendrāsana**

**PLATE 27:** Holding the left ankle and toes of the left foot with both hands the left foot should be brought near the navel



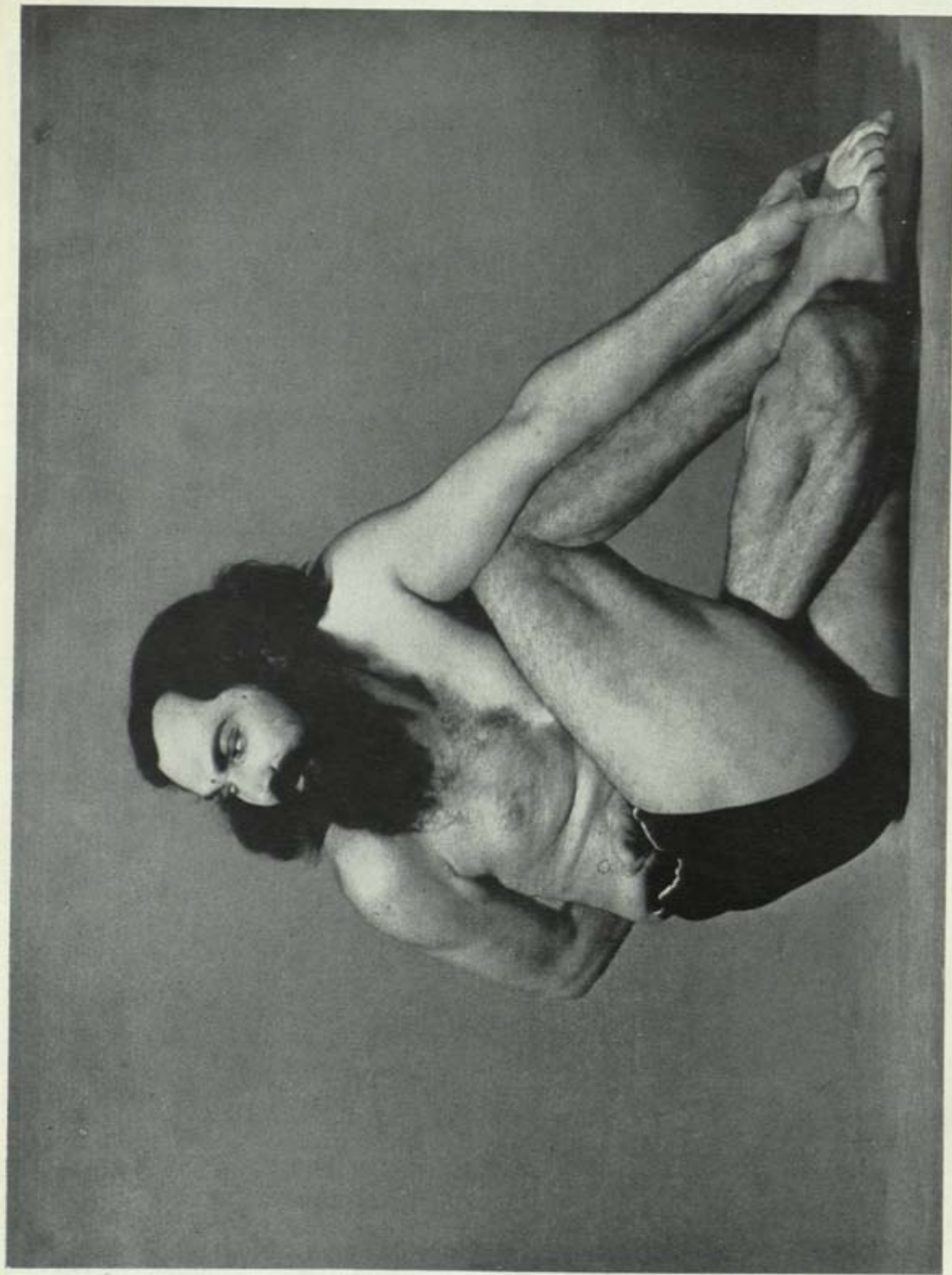


PLATE 28: With the left heel near the navel, twist the left arm round the right knee and hold the toes of the right foot Matsyendrāsana

## 15. GORAKṢĀSANA (GORAKṢA POSTURE)

Gorakṣāsana is named after the great yogī Gorakṣanātha who used to sit in this āsana.

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground and bring the soles of the feet into contact. While holding the feet together with the hands, move forward to squat on the feet so that the knees touch the ground on either aide. Then the hands should be placed on the knees. The spine and the neck are kept erect (Plate 29).

Neither the chest nor any other part of the body should be bent forward.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Gorakṣāsana unifies Prāṇa and Apāna, that is the Prāṇa is directed to flow in Suṣumṇā Nāḍī. This awakens Kuṇḍalinī.

The āsana is useful in cases of ano-rectal disorders. Piles may be cured by it. Patients of urinary diseases must practise it. The āsana is most useful for the portion of the body below the waist, specially the joints. It is highly effective in lessening the rigidity of the joints of the knee, the ankle, and the pelvic region.

Some persons can perform the āsana very easily whereas others can master it only after strenuous and extended practice. Women can perform this āsana far more easily than men, but it is equally useful for men and women. Patients of exostosis as well as the yogī, the householder, the children, and the aged must practise this āsana.

## 16. PAŚCIMOTTĀNĀSANA (POSTERIOR-STRETCH POSTURE)

The āsana is so named because the posterior or back (paścima) gets stretched (uttāna).

The seer Gheraṇḍa has said:

Prasāryya pādau bhuvī daṇḍarūpau  
Saṁnyāsta bhālaścitiyugmamadhye,



Yatnena pādaū ca dhṛtau karābhyāṃ  
Yogīndrapīṭham paścimottānamāhuḥ.

(G.S. 2, 22)

Both the legs should be stretched together on the ground and, by making an effort, the toes should be firmly held with the hands. The head should be placed on the knees (Plate 30). The resulting posture is known as Paścimottānāsana.

After some progress has been made in its practice, an attempt should be made to hold the feet between the interlocked fingers of the hands, as illustrated in Plate 31.

Gorakṣanātha has commented as follows:

Iti paścimatānamāsanāgryaṃ pavanaṃ paścimavāhinaṃ karoti  
Udayaṃ jāṭharānalasya kuryādudare kārśyamapāgatāṃ ca pumsām.  
(H.Y.P. 1, 29)

It is thus that Paścimottānāsana, the foremost of all āsanās, directs the flow of Prāṇa-vāyu posteriorly, i.e. the Prāṇa starts coursing through the Suṣūmṇā. This āsana stimulates gastric secretion and the corpulence of the abdomen gives way to slimness and brings about equanimity in the nerves.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana ensures proper circulation of blood in the whole body. It makes the spine resilient, which in turn cures many diseases. Those who have heavy thighs and buttocks can derive extraordinary benefit from its practice. Dermatological (skin) diseases are cured. The waist becomes supple. The odours of the body are removed and a pleasant aroma is generated. The Prāṇa and Apāna get united, and, if one were to sit in this āsana for 3 hours and 48 minutes, a state of contemplative self-realisation (samādhi) may effortlessly, almost spontaneously, develop. This reduces the respiratory excursions to such an extent that no more than five respirations per minute are deemed to be necessary. It is claimed that its practice will induce longevity—one could live for as many as 300 years, or even more.

The practice of this āsana relieves arthritis, sciatica, backache, pain in the knees, the thighs, and the legs. The face becomes radiant and the mind gets repose. Irritable persons are advised to practice this āsana. It also induces a keen appetite for food.

Further, a variety of worms infesting the gut get killed and eradicated through the practice of this āsana.

The usefulness of this āsana is in direct proportion to the length of time it is practised. It is one of those āsanās which could be and has to be practised for hours together.

This āsana should not be performed with jerks, or after meals.

## 17. UTKAṬĀSANA (SQUATTING POSTURE)

Since the body remains partly raised in this āsana, it has been called Utkāṭāsana in the classics of yoga.

Aṅguṣṭhābhyamavaṣṭabhya dharāṃ gulphe ca khe gatau,  
Tatropari gudaṃ nyasya vijñeyam Utkāṭāsanam.

(G.S. 2, 27)

Squatting on the ground on the toes, the heels should be raised under the anus. The heels should be joined together. The elbows should then be placed on the knees while interlocking the fingers. This is known as Utkāṭāsana (Plate 32).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana relieves the painful afflictions of the joints of the feet and the fingers. It is also very helpful in the attainment of uninterrupted celibacy (Brahmacarya). Its practice induces the semen to course upwards. The abdominal lock or uḍḍīyāna-bandha gets applied while this āsana is performed, on account of which all diseases of the abdomen are relieved and even cured. It refreshes the brain. It induces a forcible suction of blood from the abdomen as well as the head and returns it with extreme velocity. For vasti, it is an essential āsana to perform. Both Jala-vasti (water douche) and pavana-vasti (air douche) are performed while poised in this āsana. Vajrolī, another of the yogic practices, is also accomplished



while sitting in this āsana. Because of these reasons, this āsana is treasured highly. Nyaulī (the prominent rectus abdominis muscles which are brought close to each other near the median line) is rotated in the abdomen while sitting in this āsana.

Being important in a variety of ways, Utkāṣana has been held to be of great importance in the science of yoga.

## 18. SANKAṬĀSANA (CONTRACTED OR CHINKĀ POSTURE)

Stand on the right foot with the left leg twined round the right leg (Plate 33). The left arm should also be intertwined with the right (in the manner in which strings are intertwined to form a rope), and stretched upwards. The āsana should be repeated after alternating the whole process by standing on the left foot. This is called Saṅkaṭāśana.

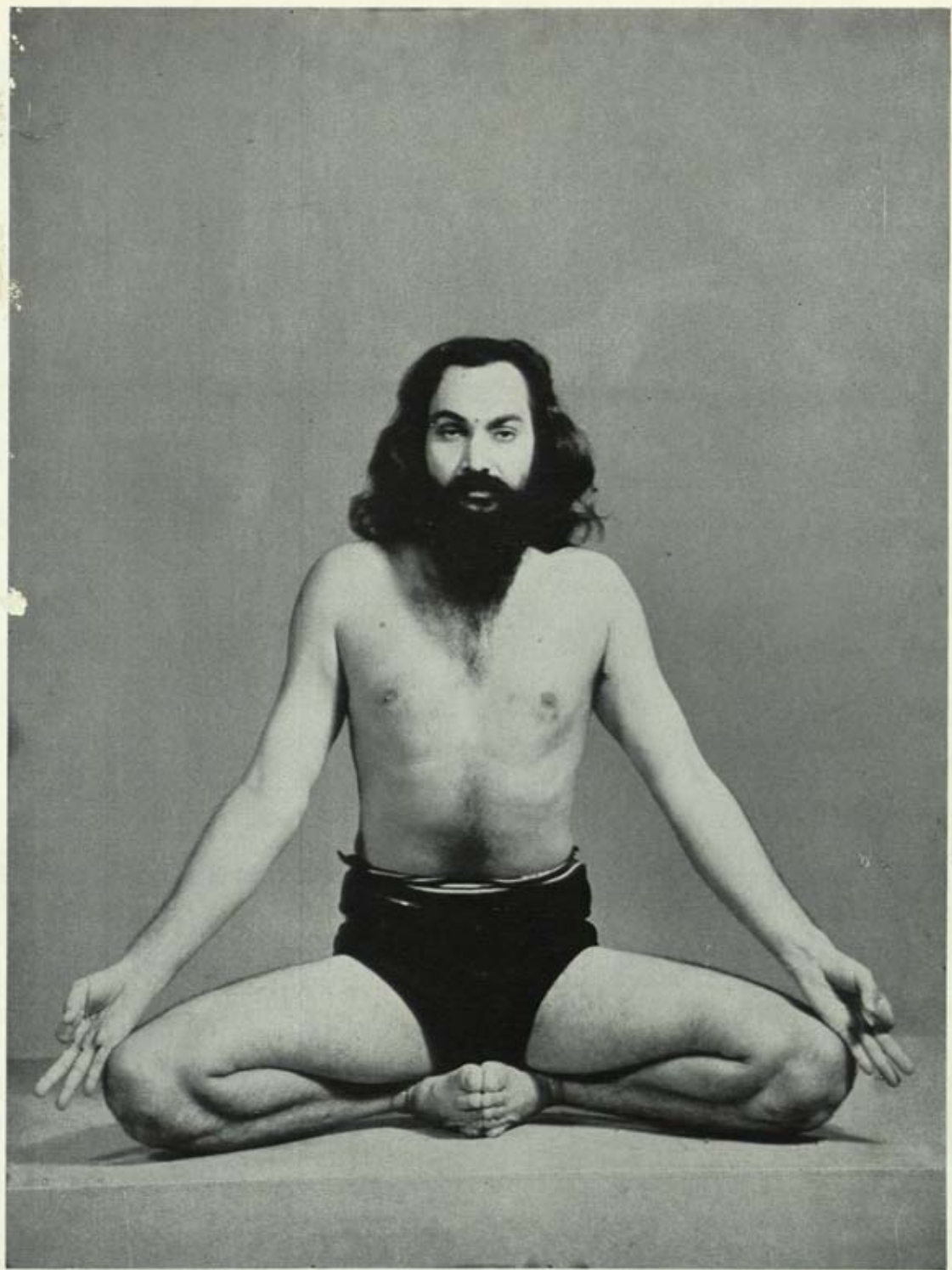
### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana helps those who have enlarged testicles. Its practice also strengthens the feet, the thighs, the knees, and the hands. Fatigue produced through walking is quickly relieved. The āsana provides a useful remedy for arthritis and other analogous disorders. Persons with abnormally heavy thighs and legs or those with tremulous, weak thighs and feet must practise this āsana. Further, persons who have to stand for long periods continuously, such as guards, sentries, etc., derive special benefit from the practice of this āsana. Although very easy to perform, the āsana is an extremely useful one. It can be perfected by practice in just a few days. For dancers, this āsana is most useful.

## 19. MAYŪRĀSANA (PEACOCK POSTURE)

The yogīs have named this āsana Mayūrāsana because of its resemblance to a peacock. Thus, describing it, the yogic texts observe:

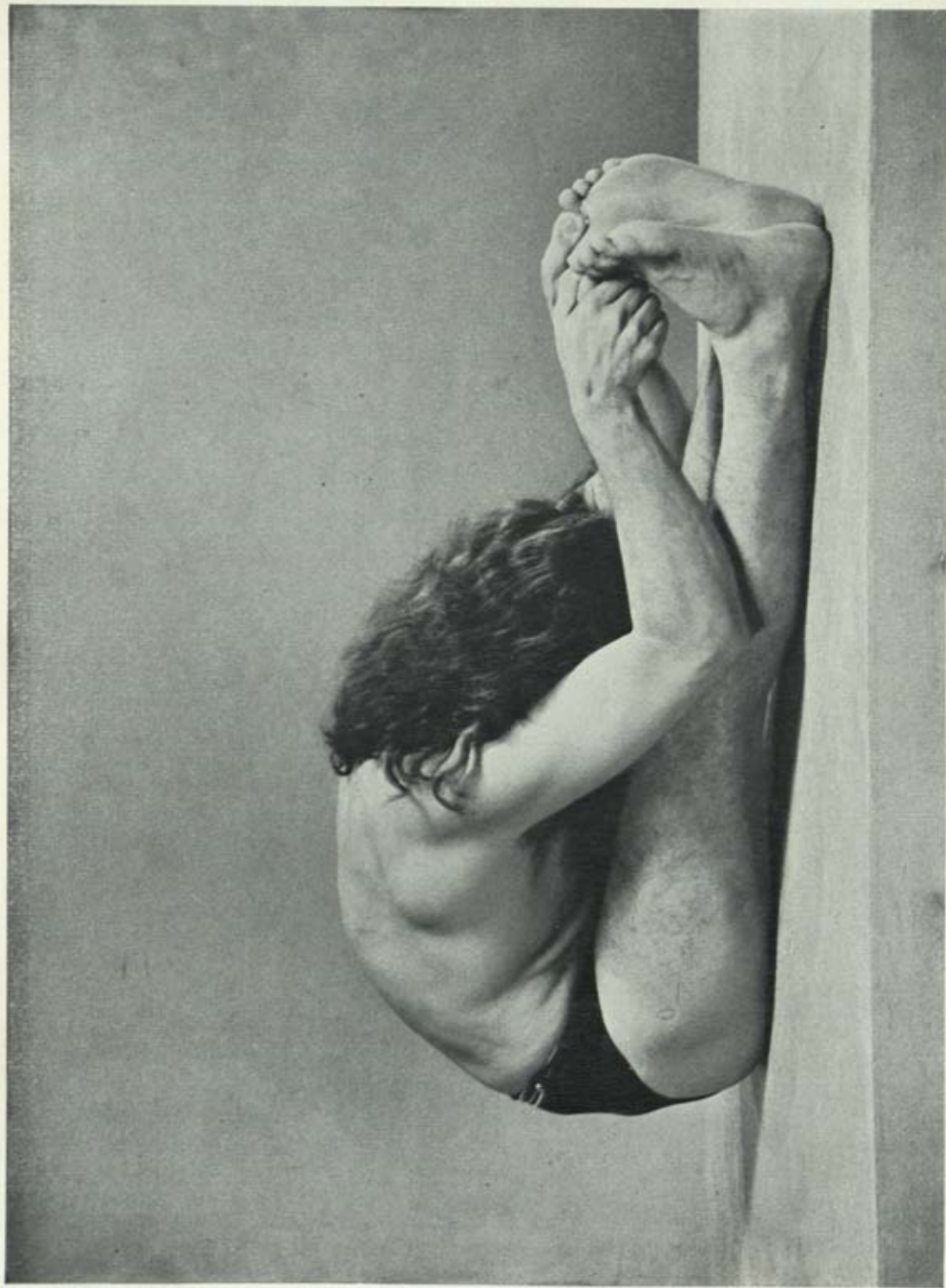
Dharāmavaṣṭabhya karadvayena tat-kūrparasthāpita-nābhi-pārśvaḥ  
Uccāsano danḍavadutthitaḥ syān Māyūrametat pravādanti pīṭham.  
(H.Y.P. 1, 30)



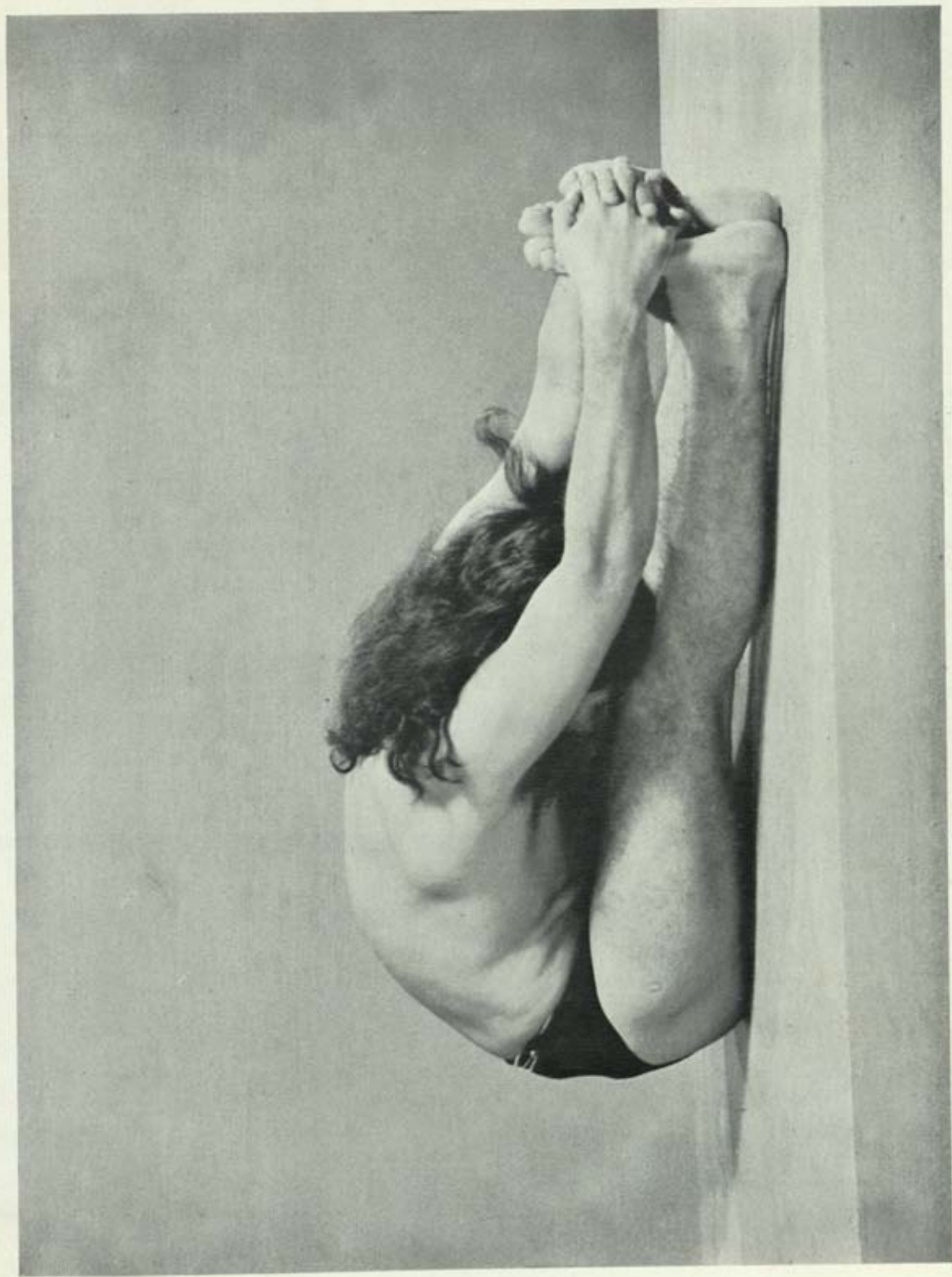
Gorakṣāsana

PLATE 29: Squat on the toes with the toes together and hands on the knees





Paschimottāsana  
PLATE 30: Touch the knees with the head while holding the toes with the hands



Pāścimottānāsana

PLATE 31: Touch the knees with the head while the hands are clasped round the feet



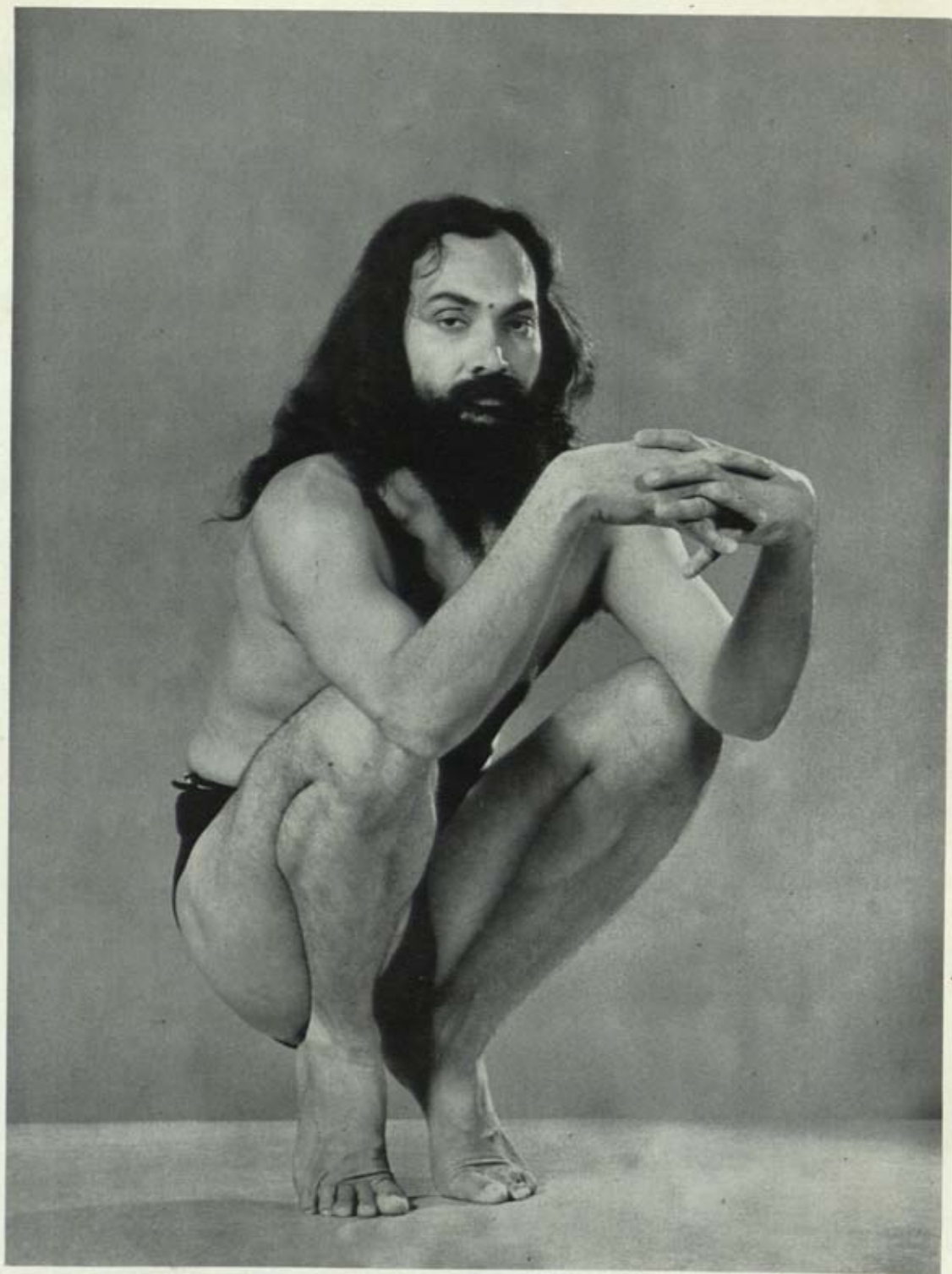


PLATE 32: Squat on the toes with elbows on the knees

Utkatāsana

Holding the body suspended like a raised pole by the elbows planted on earth makes a peacock posture (Mayūrāsana).

### POSTURE

The anus should rest on the heels, while the soles are kept in contact and the knees about 18 inches apart (Plate 34). The hands should be so placed between the knees that they are slightly apart, not more than 2½ inches. The elbows should be joined together and brought against the navel. Then the knees and the feet should be lifted from the ground in such a way that the weight of the body is borne on the hands (Plate 35). For the first few days the exercise should extend only thus far. Later, attempts should be made to extend the lower limbs straight backward like the wings of a peacock, while the head is kept straight (Plate 36). The point to be emphasised is that the elbows should touch the body at the navel and the weight of the whole body should be on the hands. After attaining some mastery, it is possible to perform this āsana by supporting the body on one hand (Plate 37). However, for deriving maximum benefit from this āsana, it is not essential to master this latter variation. Even the usual method (Plate 36) has all the beneficial effects of this āsana.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana relieves indigestion. Constipation and flatulence can be cured in just ten days' practice. Svātmārāma has very aptly remarked:

Harati sakalarogānāśu gulmodarādi  
Nabhibhavati ca doṣānāsanam Śrī-Mayūram  
Bahukadaśana-bhuktaṃ bhasma kuryādaśeṣam  
Janayati jatharāgniṃ jārayetkālakūṭam.

(H.Y.P. 1, 31)

This Mayūrāsana removes all maladies of the abdomen. It helps in reducing to ashes the excessive and unwholesome quantities of food, and, by stimulating and generating the digestive 'fire' of the stomach, even the bitterly poisonous elements (in the diet) are annihilated.



The peacock feasts on a venomous creature like the serpent without being afflicted by its poison, and not only digests it but also prefers it to all other food. It is believed that the peacock eats more than any other bird and that the "fire" of its stomach remains ablaze all the time. It is, therefore, thought that those who practise this āsana also succeed in getting rid of abdominal ailments. It is equally effective against chronic enlargements and other disorders of the spleen as well as for diseases of the liver. Even unwholesome food yields nourishment. It is claimed in the classics on yoga that with its help even poison can be easily assimilated. A person who can practise it for 15-20 minutes at a stretch becomes immune to the poisonous effects of snakes and scorpions just as the peacock is.

This āsana is also extremely useful for defective eyesight. Patients of myopia or hyper-metropia should practise it daily. The hands and arms become extremely strong and it is highly beneficial for the lungs as well.

## 20. KUKKUṬĀSANA (COCK POSTURE)

### POSTURE

After assuming the posture of Padmāsana, the arms are inserted in between the thigh and the calf on either side, so that the forearms below the elbows emerge. The hands should then be placed on the ground leaving a space of four fingers in between. The whole body should then be lifted up as far as possible so that the weight is placed on the hands. This is known as Kukkuṭāsana (Plate 38).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana makes the hands, the arms, and the forearms as well as the elbows extremely strong. The āsana is particularly useful for gunners and riflemen and for all those who have to use their arms.

The practice of this āsana combats laziness, helps to carry on with little sleep, and early rising becomes easy.

The yogīs have remarked that the practice of the Cock posture is bound to be more rewarding than the practice of eating cocks!

The practice of the āsana makes the body firm. Persons with weak



and narrow chests or with crooked arms must practise it. Those who develop tremors or cramps while writing, or those who get easily tired, should also practise this āsana. It has been held to be useful for all: householders, mendicants, yogīs, soldiers, policemen, farmers, and musicians.

## 21. KŪRMĀSANA (TORTOISE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Squat on the ground with the heels on either side of the buttocks and the toes touching each other. The elbows should press against the navel and the hands should be clenched. Stretch the upper part of the body as far as possible (Plate 39).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana cures pains in the knees and reduces sensitivity to cold. Sitting in this āsana for 10-15 minutes should suffice to dispel the feeling of chill even if there is not sufficient clothing to protect one from the cold. This āsana induces excessive 'fire' in the body (i.e. induces increases in calorogenic and exothermic metabolism) and causes the mind to concentrate. Just as a tortoise withdraws into the interior of its shell, the practice of this āsana enables people to detach themselves from their mental and sensual association to look within themselves. The Kūrmāsana is a very important and useful āsana for awakening the serpent power (Kuṇḍalinī Śakti) since the 'fiery-sun' situated in the region of the navel gets excessively excited on account of this āsana. (The 'fiery sun' of yogic terminology perhaps equates with the sum total of important calorogenic exothermic reactions for which the active participation of the liver, the adrenals, and the pancreas, situated in the vicinity of the navel, apart from the little understood possible participation by the various nervous plexuses, is very important.) The yogīs are said to be capable of producing so much heat in their bodies by the practice of this āsana that they perspire even in chilly, winter weather. A few yogīs further accentuate the potential of this 'fire' by holding the breath while performing the āsana. This may enable a yogī to attain complete immunity to cold and, even on snow-clad mountains, the yogī may still perspire. In this way, Kūrmāsana



wards off many diseases and by awakening the Kuṇḍalinī helps the yogī in reaching the abode of unending bliss.

## 22. UTTĀNA-KŪRMĀŚANA (STRETCHED-TORTOISE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

First assume the Kūrmāsana posture (Plate 39). Then lean back to touch the ground with the head while keeping the hands on the thighs. The resulting āsana is Uttāna-Kūrmāsana (Plate 40).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana is useful for all the ailments of the neck. It makes the spine resilient. It is also useful for curing painful conditions of the back and waist as well as for respiratory ailments. Its practice reduces bulkiness and streamlines the abdomen; the waist becomes supple and beautiful.

The āsana is said to induce such changes in circulation-dynamics that the blood-flow through the brain and similar other delicate tissues becomes slow and steady so as to ensure a more effective exchange of metabolites.

The 'nābhi-cakra' or 'navel-plexus' of yogic terminology, believed to be the source of '72,000 nerves,' can be regulated by this āsana, but its main effect is on the brain, the abdomen, the throat, and the knees.

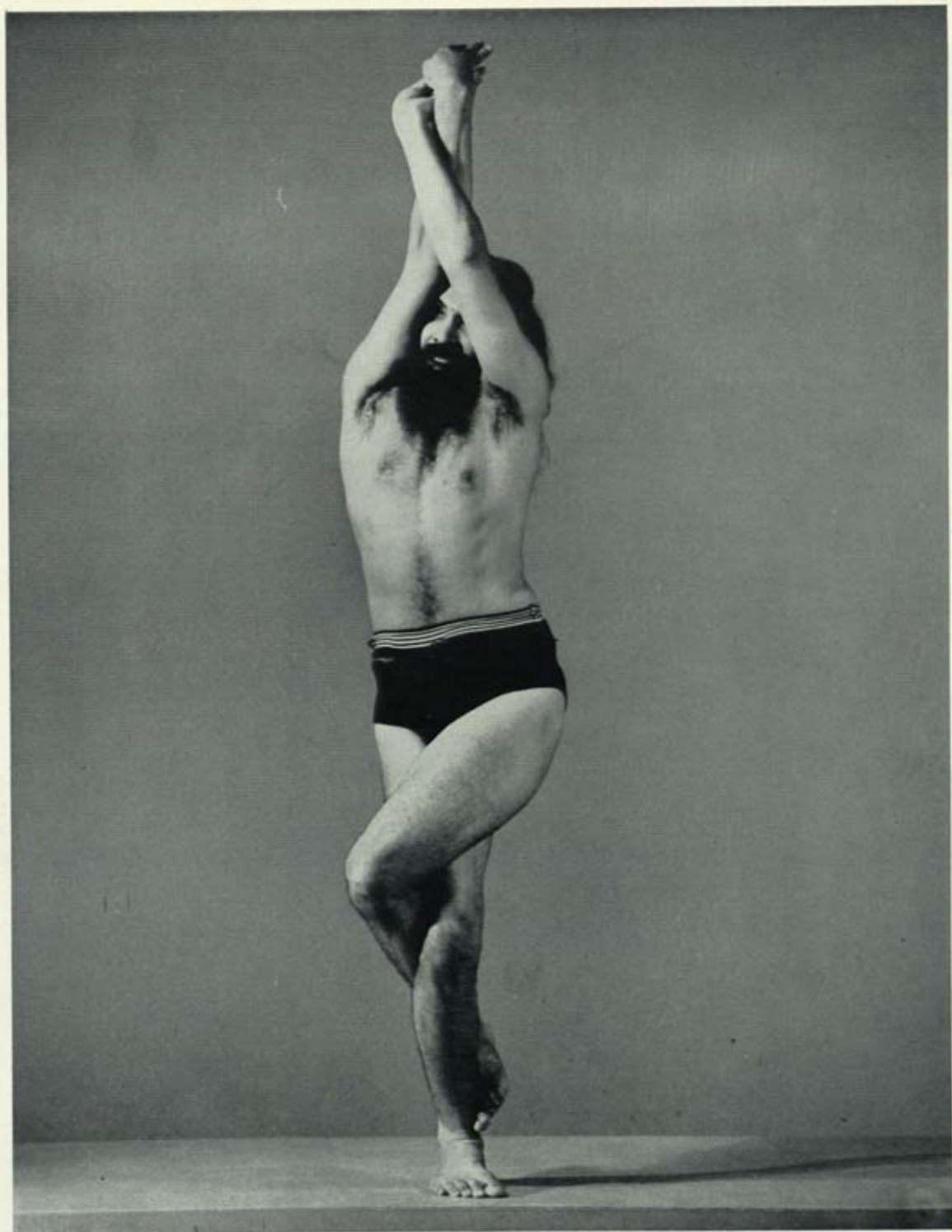
## 23. UTTĀNA-MANḌŪKĀŚANA (STRETCHED-FROG POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit in Maṇḍūkāsana (Plate 47) and move the whole body backward so that the head touches the ground. The arms should be raised and clasped behind the head (Plate 41). This is called Uttāna-Maṇḍūkāsana.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

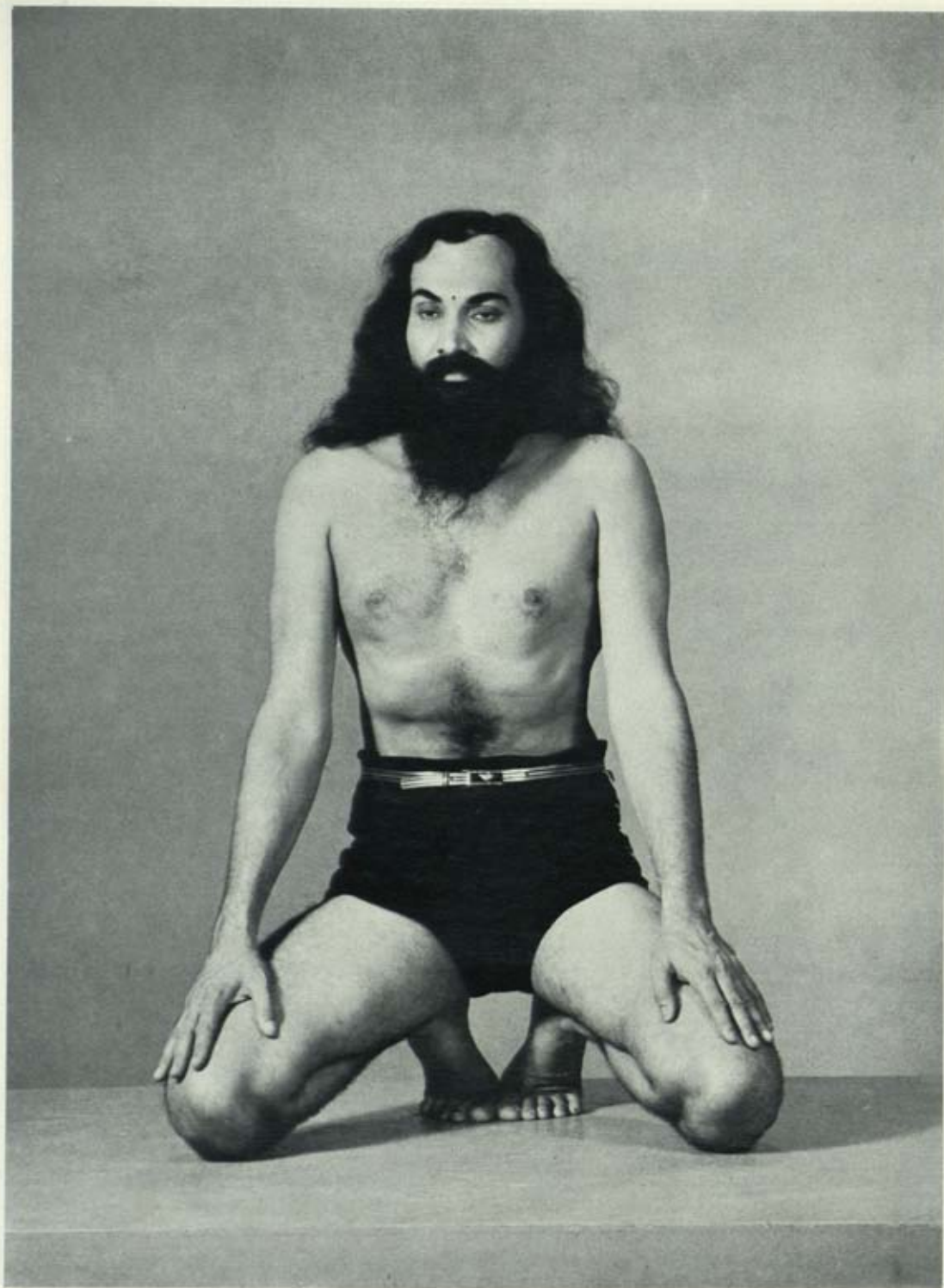
The lungs improve under the influence of this āsana. The waist becomes



Saṅkaṭāsana

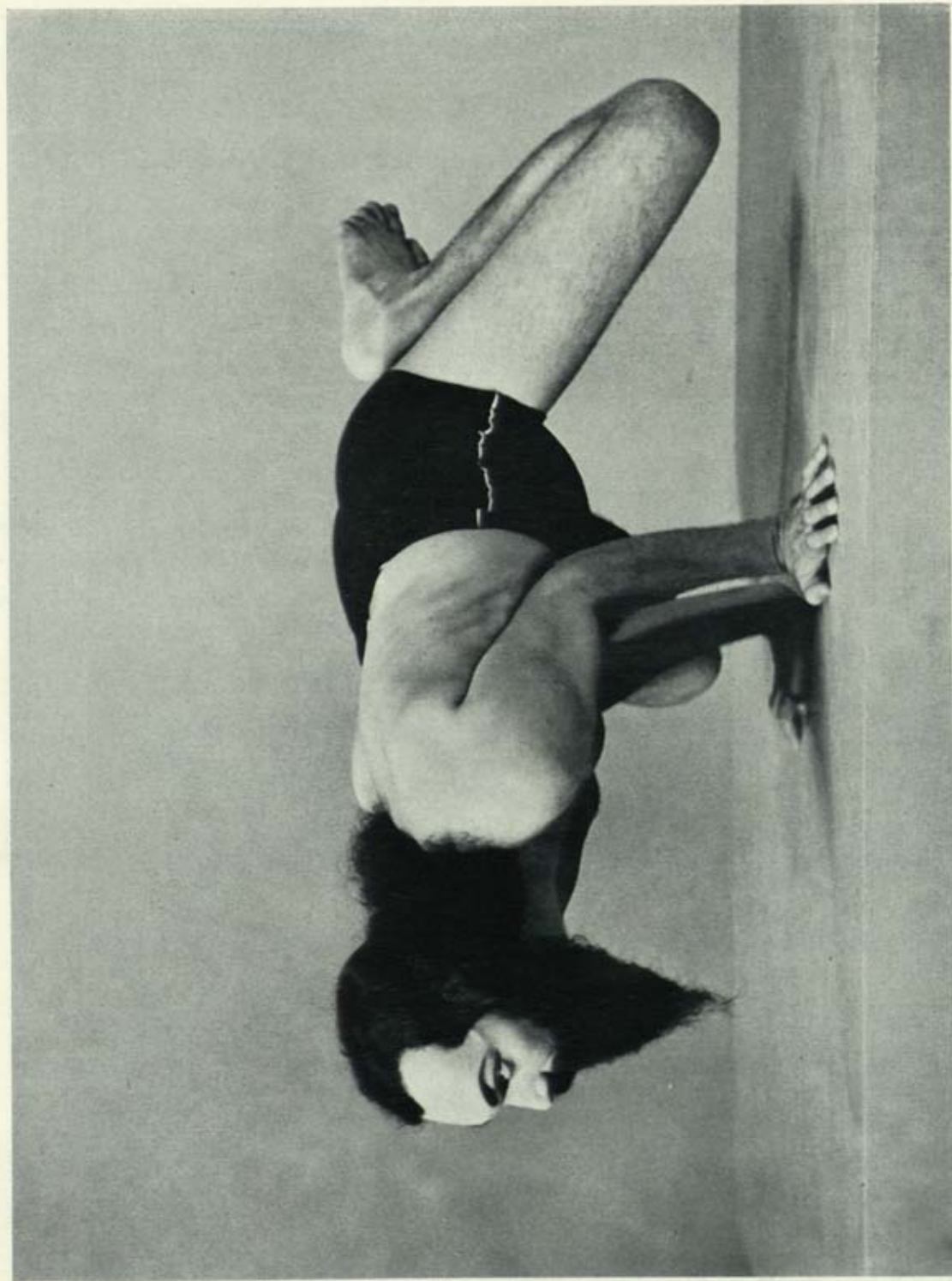
PLATE 33: Intertwine the right leg with the left, the arms likewise





Mayūrāsana

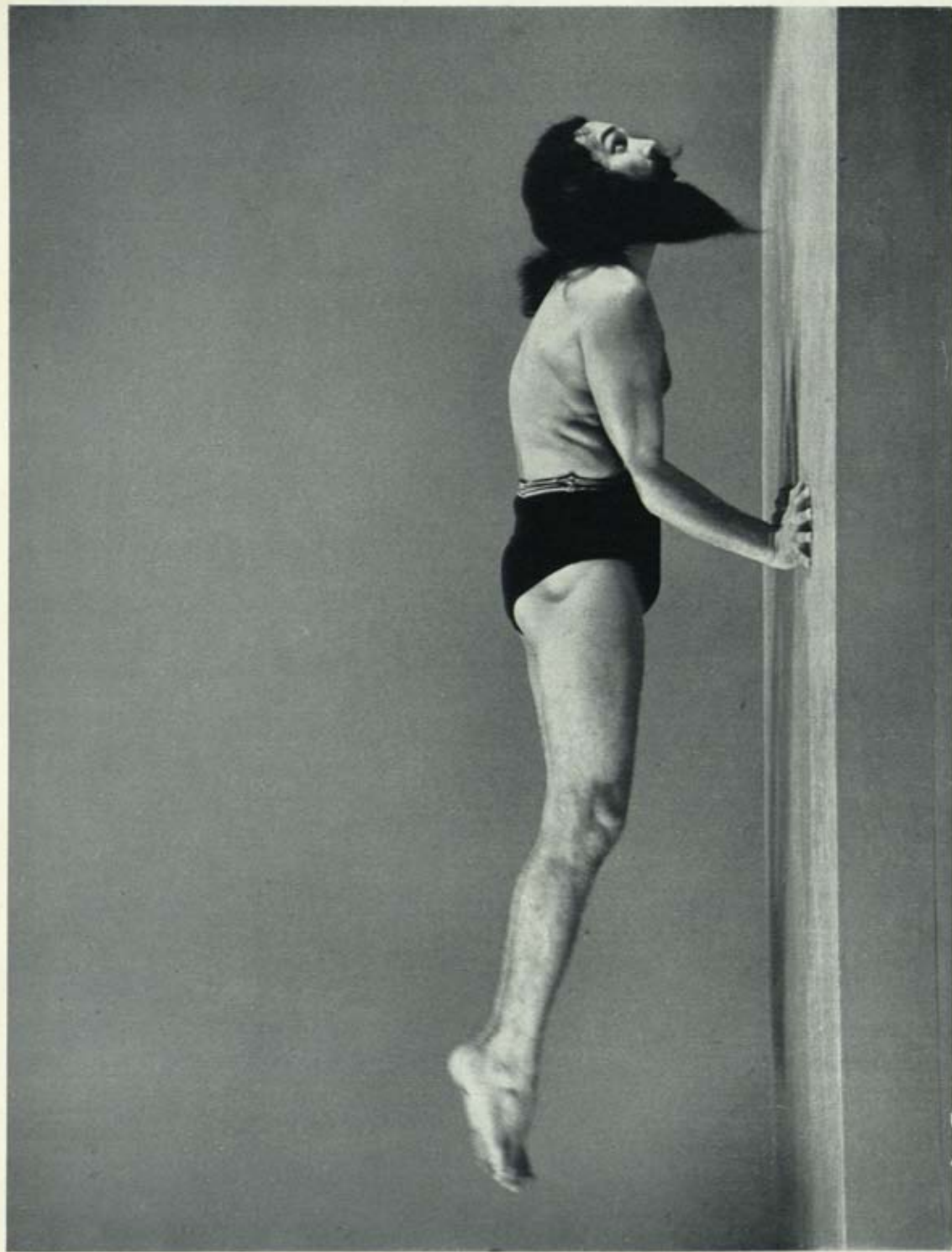
PLATE 34: Preparation for the āsana



## Mayūrāsana

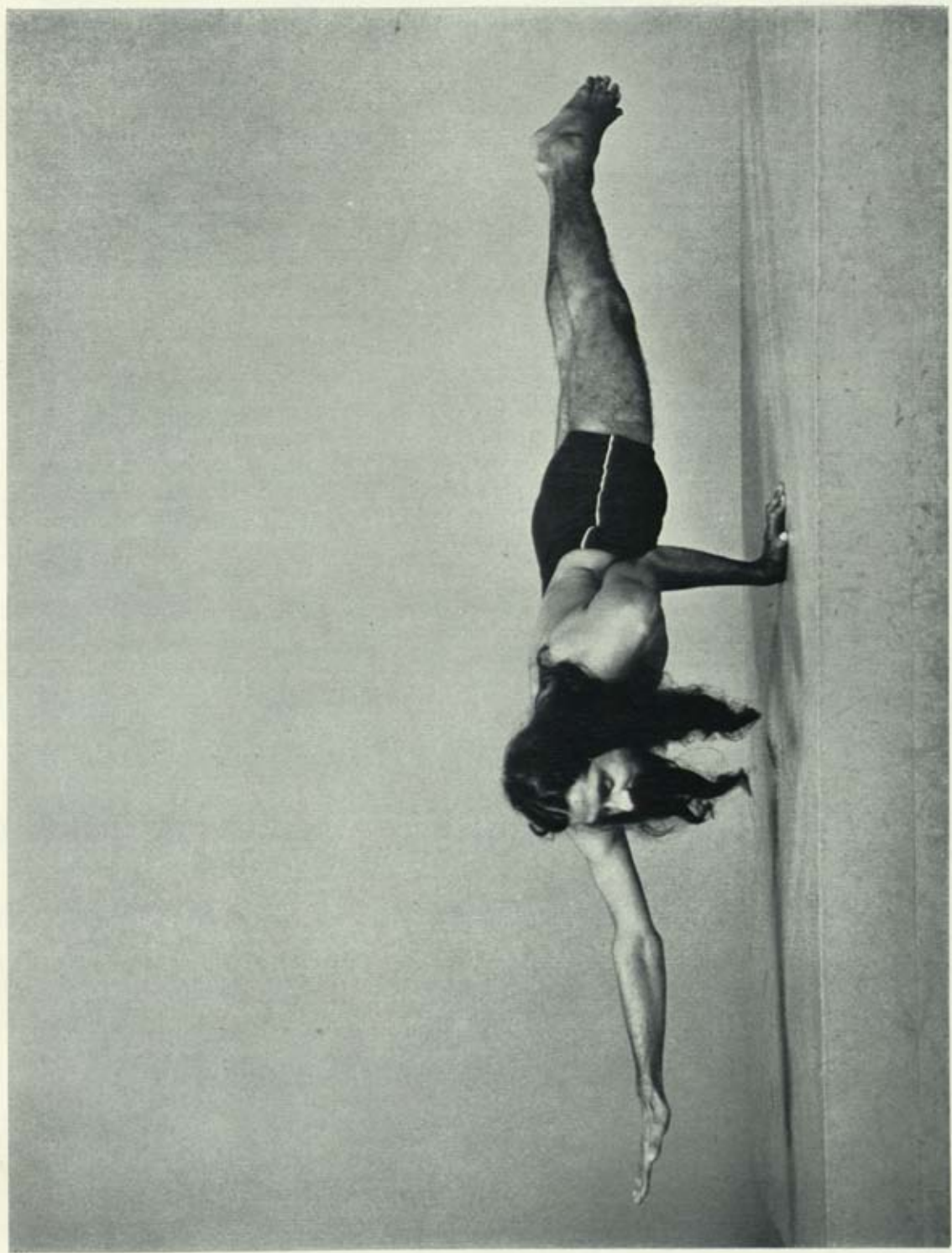
PLATE 35: With elbows pressed against the navel, raise the legs, resting the body only on the hands





Mayurāsana

PLATE 36: Stretch the legs straight backwards



Mayūrāsana

PLATE 37: Support the body only on one hand



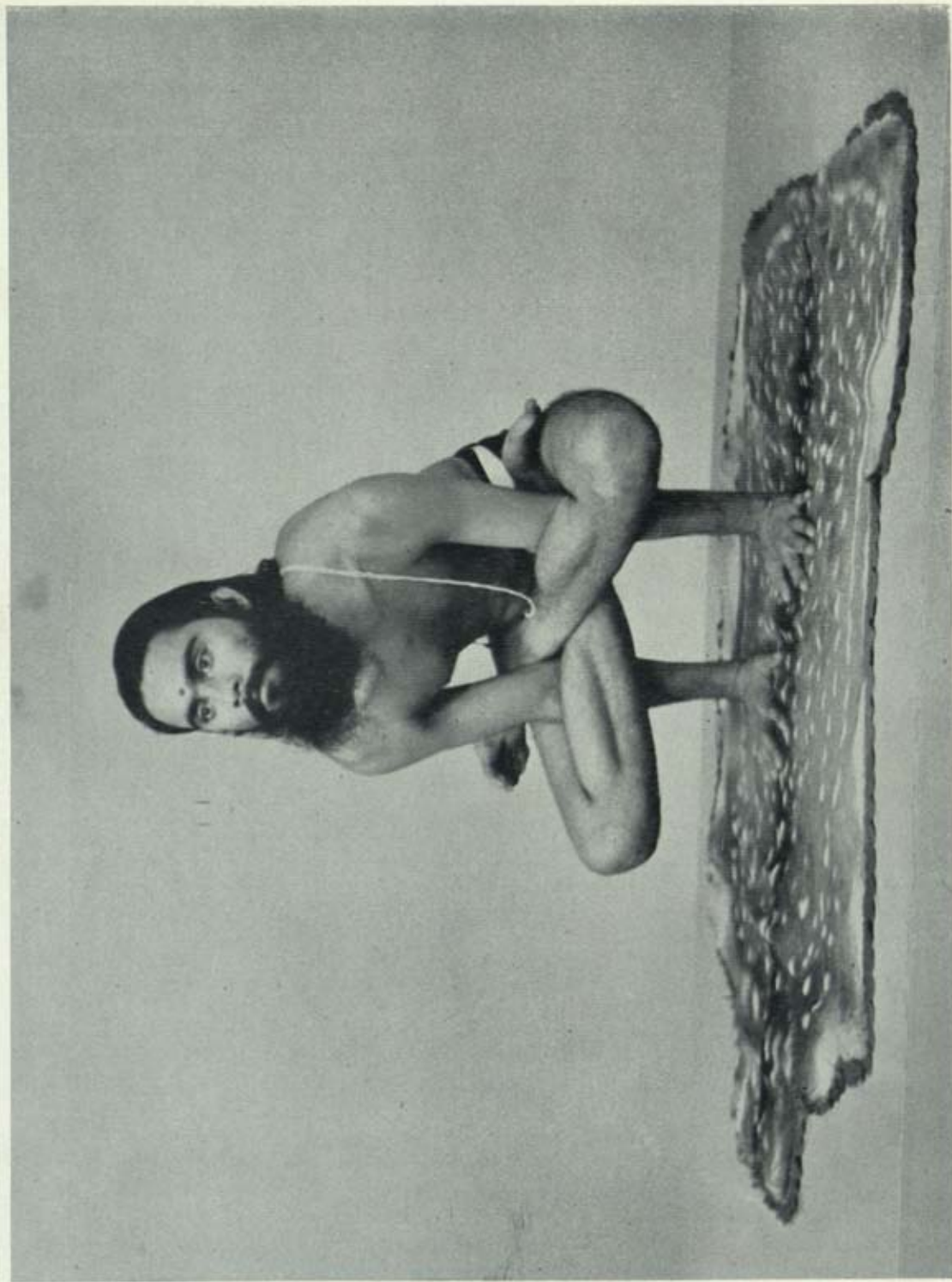
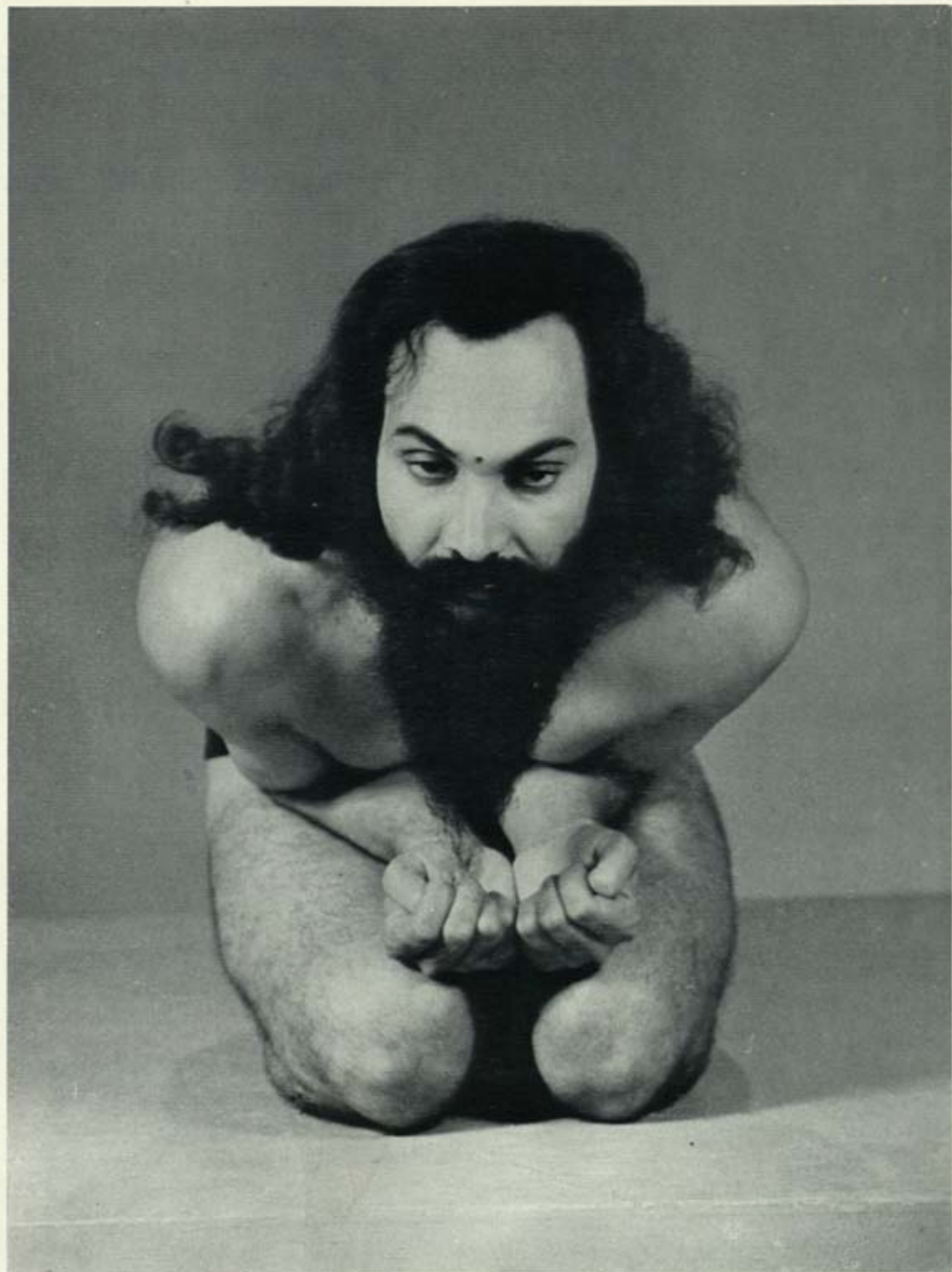


PLATE 38: Sitting in Padmāsana, support the body only on the hands

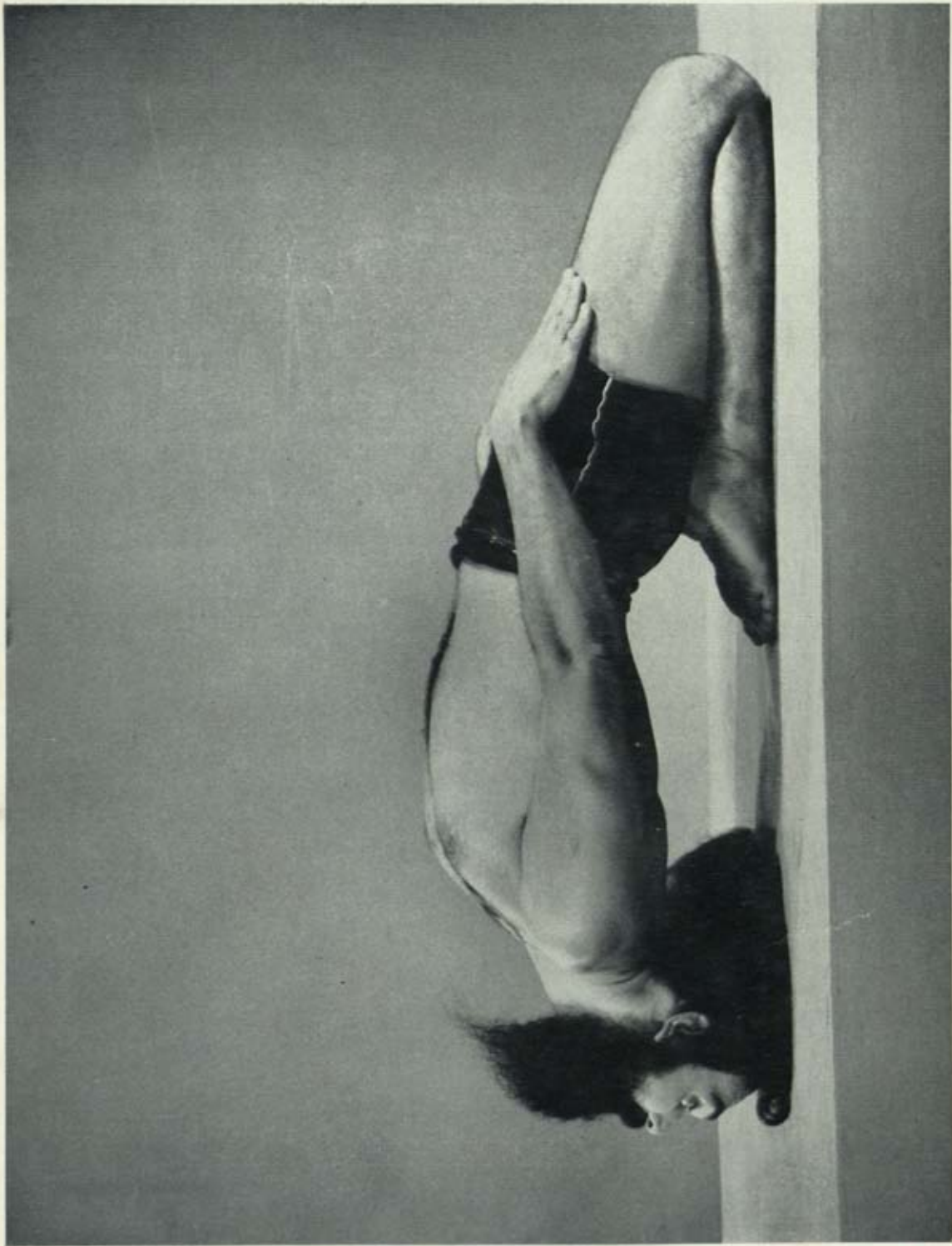
Kukutāsana



Kūrmāsana

PLATE 39: Squat on the ground and bend forward while pressing the elbows against the navel





Uttānā-Kūrmāsana

PLATE 40: After squatting in the Kūrmāsana posture, lean backwards to touch the ground with the head

slender and resilient. The body becomes proportionate and beautiful.

Persons who suffer from giddiness must practise this āsana. It is also immensely helpful for the regulation of a displaced 'navel' (nābhī-cakra), especially so if the displacement be upwards.

It shares many benefits and effects with Maṇḍūkāsana. Frequent practice of this āsana helps in establishing a healthy order in the flow of blood through the arteries, veins, and capillaries. It allows the breath to be held for long and is specially beneficial for those who practise Prāṇāyāma.

It is believed that frogs while hibernating breathe by upturning the tongue. Similarly, the ability to hold the breath for long periods proves highly efficacious for the yogī.

## 24. VRKṢĀSANA (TREE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground and place the hands before the feet at a distance of about a foot. Then, keeping the body as straight as possible, the whole weight should rest on the palms and the toes (Plate 42). The back and the feet should then be gradually lifted so that the weight is borne only on the hands (Plate 43). The legs should then be gradually straightened so that from the feet above to the palms below the whole body is in a straight line like a tree (Plate 44). A recognised variation of this āsana includes the practice of moving forward and backward on the palms. Some go even a step further and practise balancing on one hand only (Plate 45). Yogīs have further modified the standard form in attempts to represent different shapes of trees as met with in nature. Plate 46 illustrates yet another variant of the āsana called Vakra-Vṛkṣāsana or crooked-tree posture.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The upper limbs gain great strength, even as much as 50 times the normal, by the practice of this āsana. The circulation of blood in the body as a whole improves, and the brain as well as the heart gets sufficient quantities of blood without any effort.



The āsana is very useful for the eyes as well as for the upper respiratory tract. Patients of asthma are advised to practise this āsana.

Patients of high blood pressure (hypertension) and heart diseases are cautioned against the practice of this āsana. Only after these diseases have been cured through other yogic practices should this āsana be practised, but only under the strict supervision of a capable teacher or Guru.

The practice of this āsana cures dermatological disorders as well. In fact, this āsana is similar to Śīrṣāsana in its many effects.

For those who wish to attain a state of undisturbed celibacy (brahmacharya) and to sublimate their sex-drives, as well as for those who suffer from flatulence, this āsana is very useful.

Vṛkṣāsana is one of the commonly known and practised āsanās.

## 25. MANDŪKĀSANA (FROG POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Squat with the heels by the side of the buttocks. The knees should be joined together and the palms, one above the other, ought to be placed near the navel. Then the body should be bent forward and the head slightly raised to resemble a frog (Plate 47). Other variations of this āsana have also been described in yoga in which one has to hop and leap like a frog. However, these variations are uncommon.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of Maṇḍūkāsana unifies the Prāṇa and the Apāna. The body gets lighter so that the buoying up of the body after Prāṇāyāma is facilitated. The variant of the standard āsana, which is mentioned above, is used predominantly if not exclusively by the yogīs. However, the standard method is easy to practise even for ordinary persons.

The āsana is particularly useful for those who want to hop and jump, for abdominal ailments—most of which get cured by it—and for persons with protuberant bellies, and also those who suffer from shortness of breath, and who, on that account, have to breathe more than 15 times a minute.

It is also a cure for flatulence. The collection of gases in the upper

segments of the gut is forced up and the collection in the lower segments is forced out by this āsana.

## 26. GARUDĀSANA (EAGLE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground in such a way that the right leg gets intertwined with the left, and the arms are also intertwined with each other like the strands in a rope.

The intertwined hands should be placed in front of the chest like the beak of the eagle. The resulting āsana is called Garuḍāsana, illustrated in Plate 48. A variation of the āsana consists in attempting to sit in this āsana.

The āsana has to be repeated by alternating the position of the left and right limbs.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana is immensely helpful in cases of enlargement of the testicles. It should be practised leaning forward to obtain speedier relief. It provides great strength to the feet and thighs, and is of special benefit to those who have to walk long distances. Its practice even for a short while after a journey on foot quickly relieves fatigue.

Any ache or arthritic disorder of the knees, the feet, and other joints, as well as pain or tremulousness of the shoulders, the elbows, the arms, and the forearms, is cured by the practice of this āsana. It has also been found to be useful for patients of ano-rectal and urinary maladies.

## 27. VR̥ṢABHĀSANA (OX POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the legs bent sideways. Keeping the feet at some slight distance from each other, the hands should be placed forward like the front hooves of an ox (Plate 49).



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana improves respiration. Persons who breathe mostly through one nostril are specially advised to perform this āsana. If it is the left nostril, the feet should be placed towards the right side and vice versa. The practice of this āsana makes it possible to breathe through the nostril which is usually blocked.

The āsana also helps in expelling gases of the abdomen through the ano-rectal passage. This, in turn, helps in generating and augmenting a feeling of well-being and happiness. It is extremely useful for hunters and gunmen.

It cures fickleness of the mind and enables one to concentrate; amongst all the āsanās this is the most tranquillizing and soothing; its practice neither causes any painful side-effects nor does it lead to exhaustion.

If practised without blinking, this āsana could generate the same faculties as are generated by Trāṭaka (central fixation).

Hands, arms, shoulders, thighs, knees, and other parts of the body gain in strength.

## 28. ŚALABHĀSANA (LOCUST POSTURE)

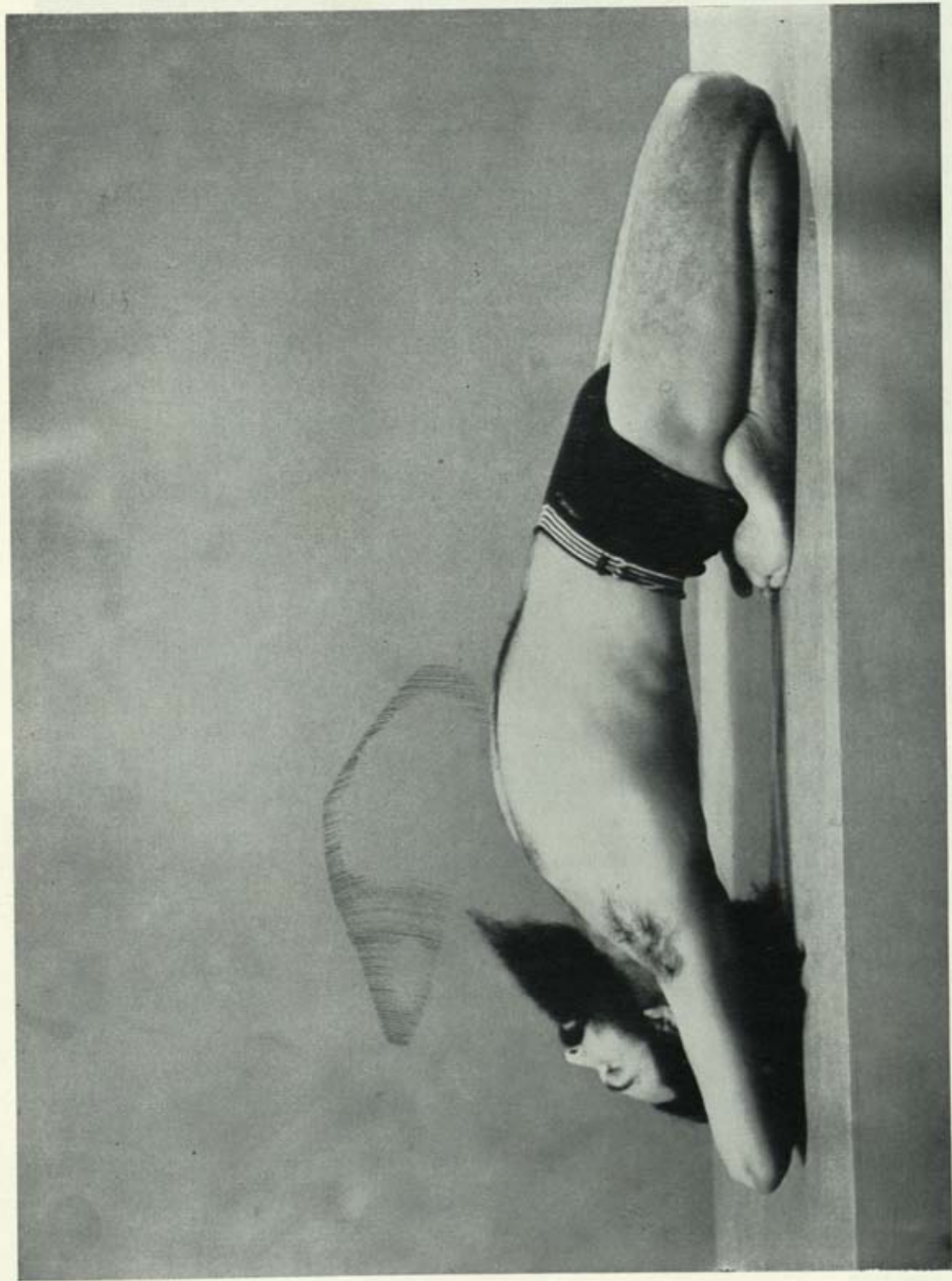
### POSTURE

Lie on the abdomen and place the palms near the shoulders. The feet should be joined together and the body should be raised from the ground, as much as possible, above and below the waist. The body from the waist to the feet should be erect.

In a variation of this method, the hands, one over the other, are kept beneath the abdomen in such a way that the fingers point towards the external genitals. The feet should be joined together and the body above and below the waist should be raised above the ground as much as possible (Plate 50).

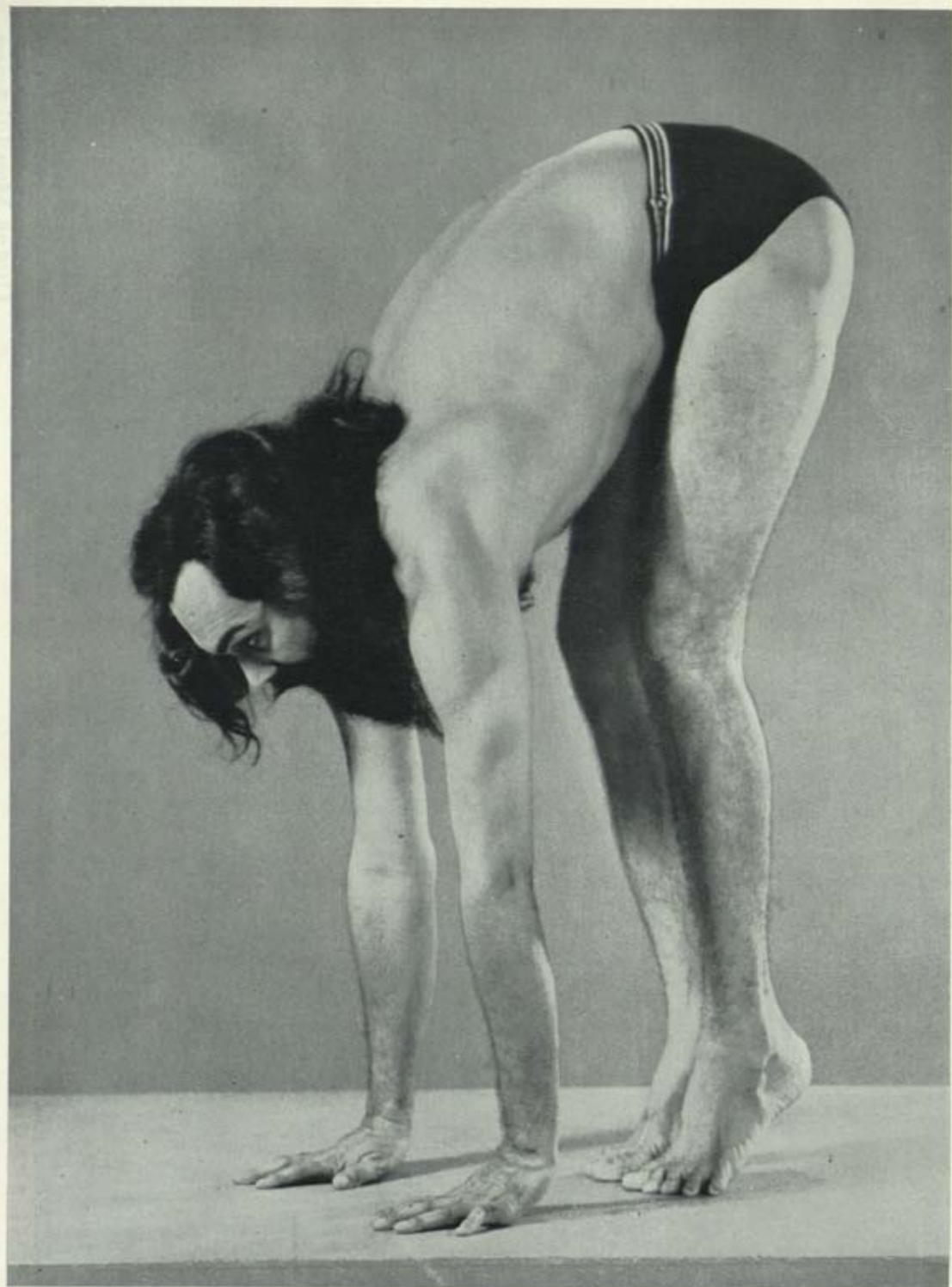
### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The chest broadens through the practice of this āsana. The waist becomes resilient and supple. It is also very useful for the shoulders and



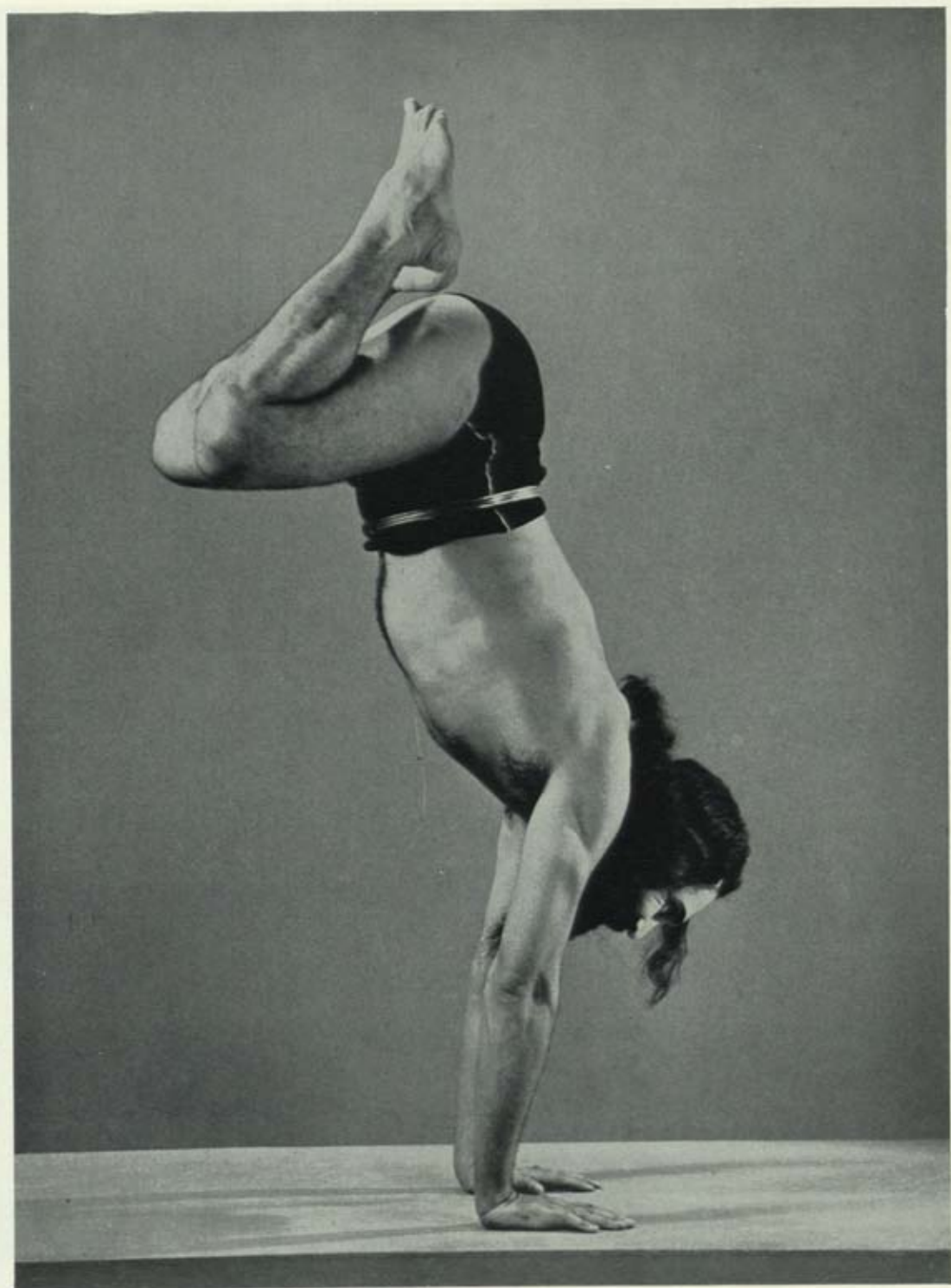
Uttānā Maṇḍukāsana  
PLATE 41: With the heels under the buttocks and arms clasped under the head, arch the back





Vṛkṣāsana

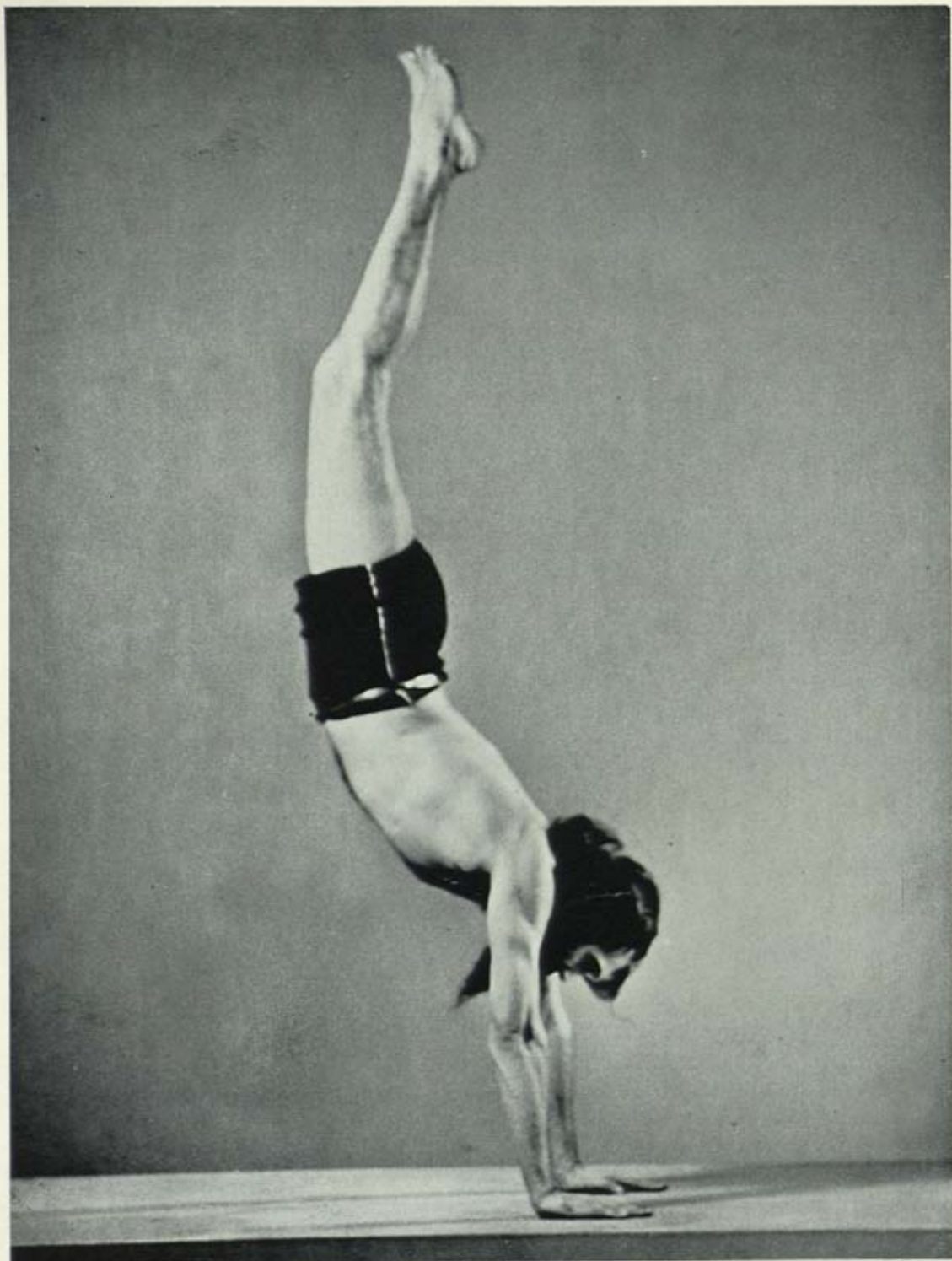
PLATE 42: Preparing to raise the legs while resting on the hands



Vṛkṣāsana

PLATE 43: Raise the legs, resting on the hands





Vṛkṣāsana

PLATE 44: Straighten the legs, resting on the hands

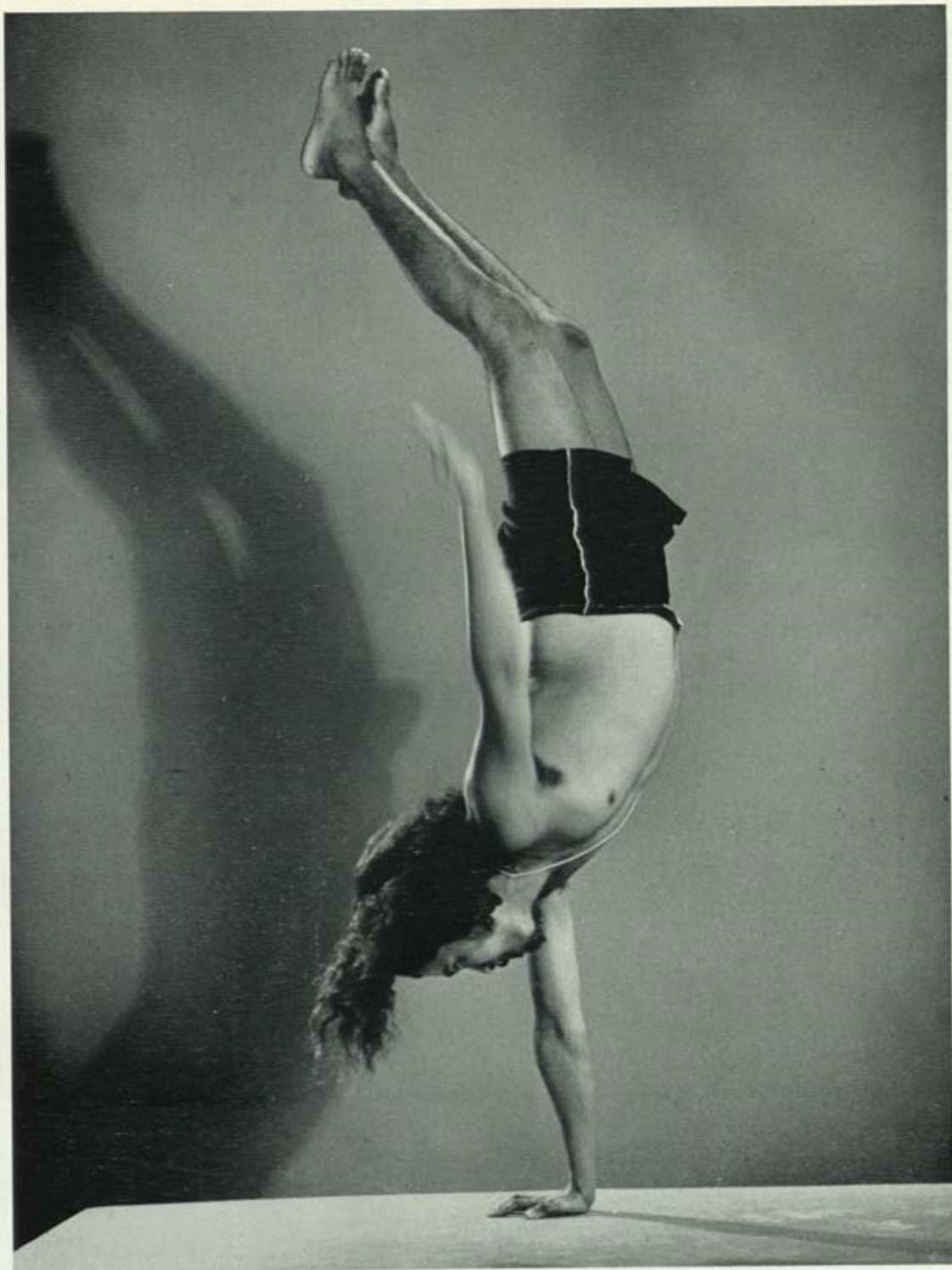


PLATE 45: Support the body on one hand only

Vṛkṣāsana



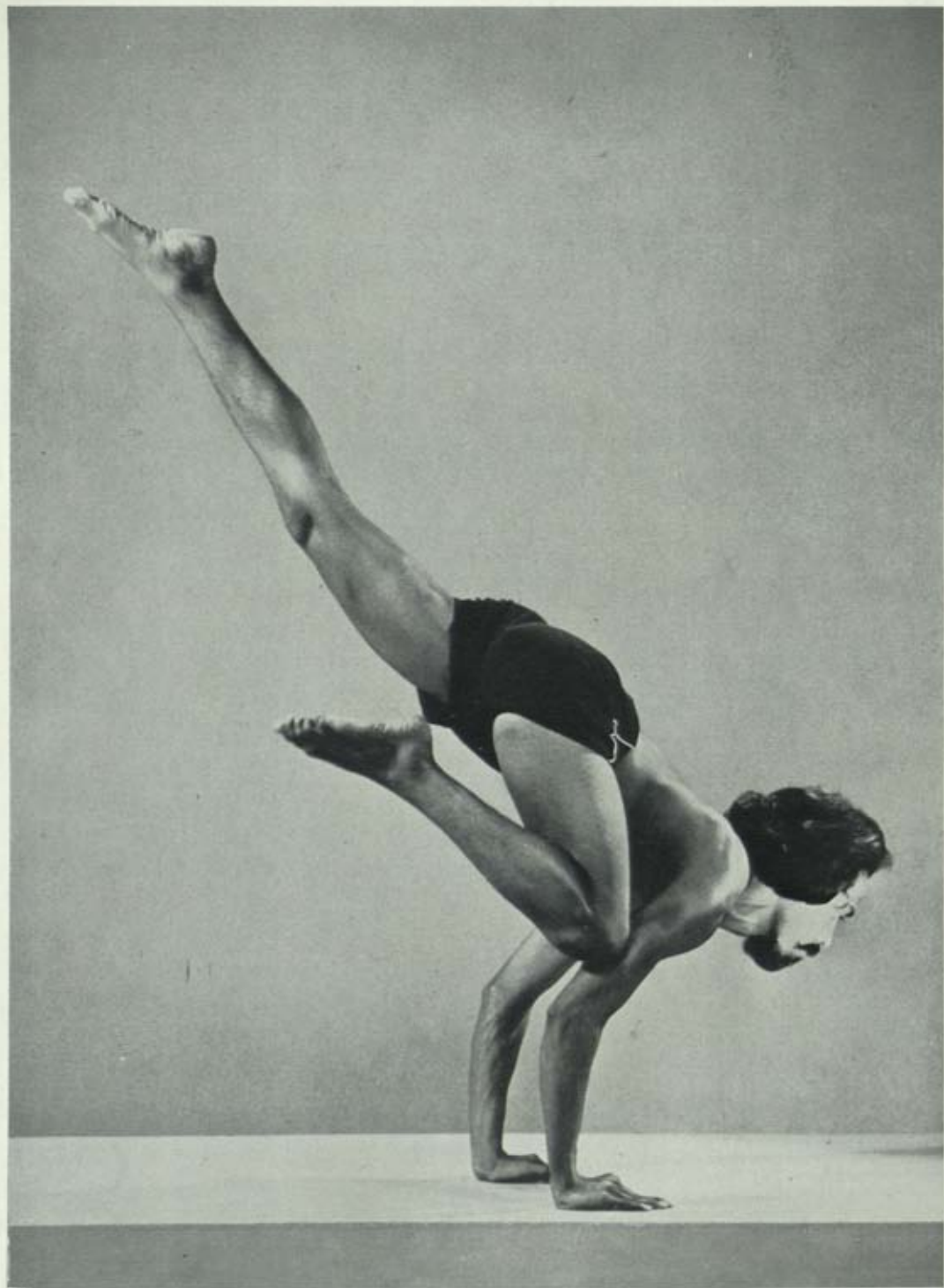


PLATE 46: One leg raised straight back and the other bent

Vṛkṣāsana

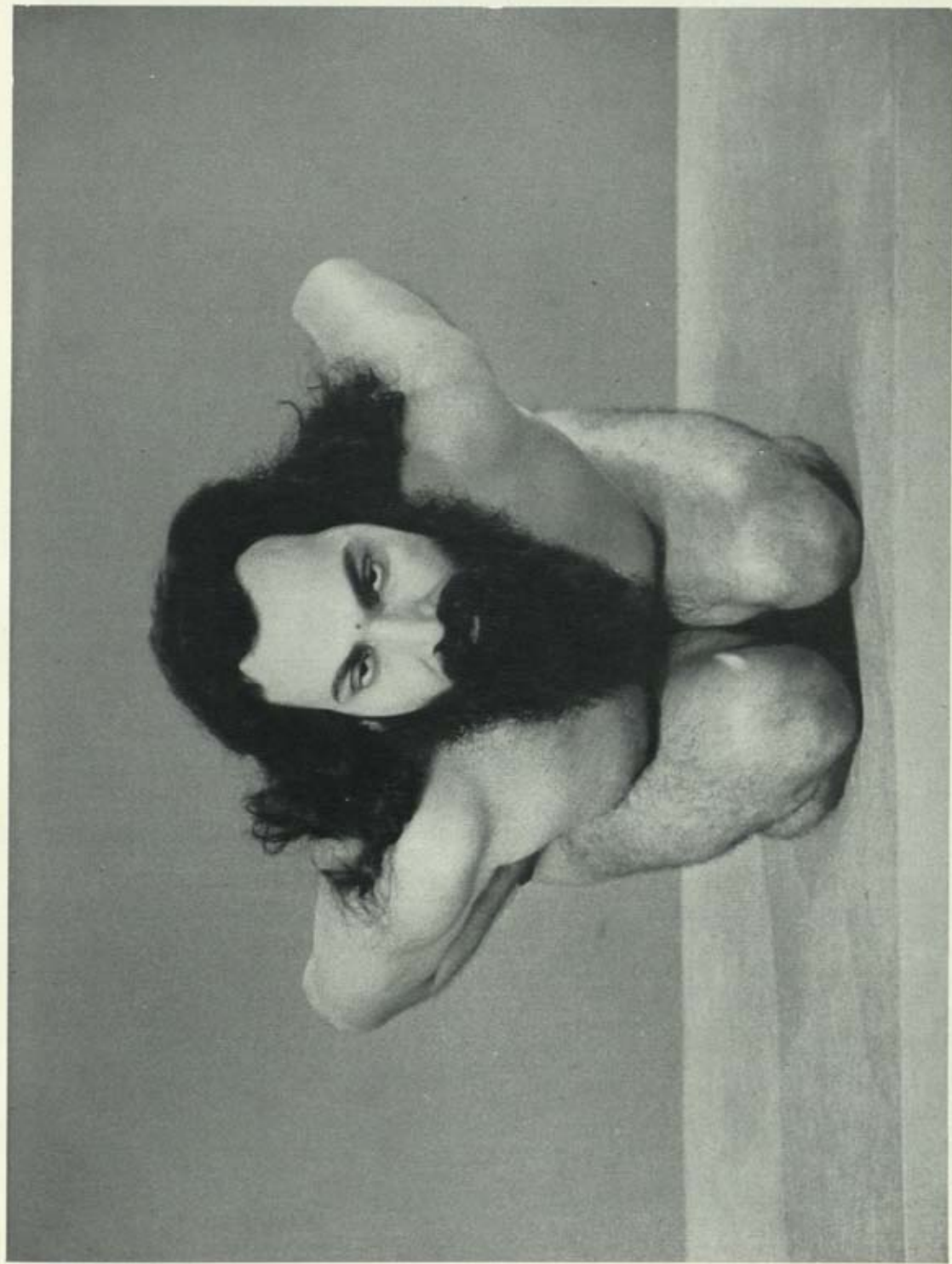
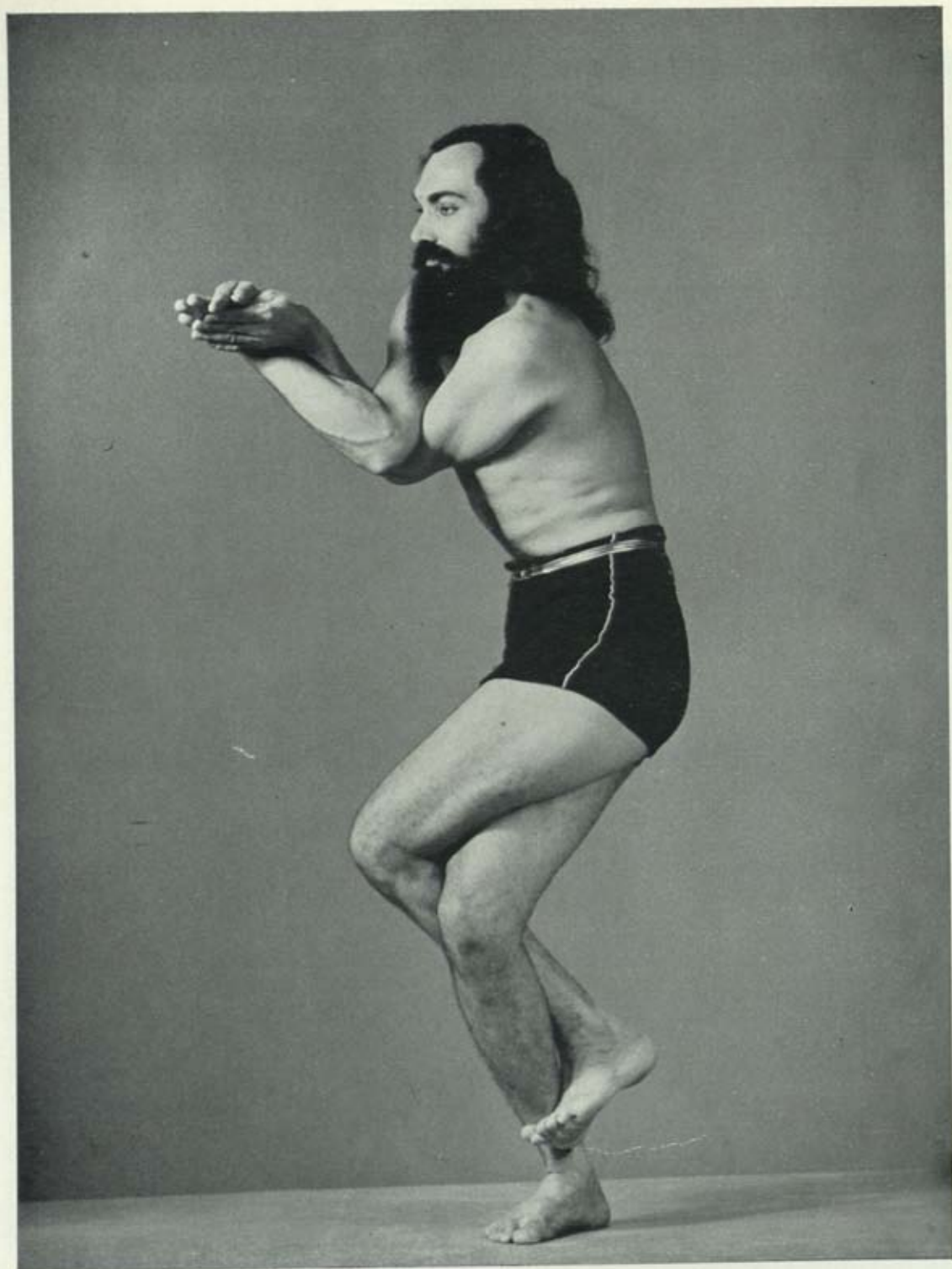


PLATE 47: Squat and bend forward with the hands against the navel

Maṇḍukāsana





Garuḍāsana

PLATE 48: Stand on the right foot, and twist the left leg round the right and the arms likewise

abdomen. It relieves constipation and stimulates digestion.

The āsana is easy to perform and is also very useful. Women, in particular, need to practise it.

Just as the locusts have a distinctive and highly developed faculty of hopping high, the practice of this āsana sublimates many of man's faculties.

The practice of the locust posture affects the fine tissues and haemocirculatory channels instead of affecting the gross masses of muscles as most other exercises do.

The navel assumes its normal position; the āsana helps in the development and expression of Maṇipūra-Cakra or navel Cakra.

## 29. MAKARĀSANA (CROCODILE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the ground, face downward, and with the arms stretched forward (Plate 51).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana helps in relieving fatigue and is useful for the abdomen as well. Persons with irregular and crooked bodies ought to practise it. The āsana generates subtle energies inside the body and renders the body firm and strong like that of a crocodile. Long practice slows down respiration, an achievement of great importance to the yogīs.

The āsana generates a submissive, humble, and reverential attitude, perhaps on account of the fact that the process of prostration, used as a greeting amongst the yogīs and saints, is similar to this āsana. Although resembling a ferocious animal (the crocodile), it is in reality associated with wonderful and miraculous attributes, diametrically opposite to those of the animal it is said to depict. Other āsanās not only physically resemble the creatures they are named after, but also produce behavioural patterns similar to them; the Makarāśana is the only exception to this rule.



### 30. UṢṬRĀSANA (CAMEL POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lying face downward, bend the knees and hold the legs just above the ankles. Then raise the body from the waist upwards. This is Uṣṭrāsana. Authors have at times carelessly equated this āsana with Dhanurāsana (Bow posture), but that is a different āsana altogether.

The seer Gheraṇḍa writes thus about this āsana:

Adhyāsya śete padayugma-vyastam  
prṣṭhe nidhāyāpi dhṛtam karābhyām  
Ākuñcayetsamyagudarāsyagāḍham  
Uṣṭram ca pīṭham yogīno vadanti.

(G.S. 2, 40)

Lying face downwards with the legs bent and holding the legs, the body should be contracted powerfully. This is called Uṣṭrāsana by the yogīs (Plate 52).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana removes constipation and stimulates the gastric secretions. It also relieves ache or colic of the abdomen. A distinctive and important aspect of this āsana is that it restores the displaced 'navel' to its normal position. If the abdomen or buttocks have become corpulent, it must be practised for 10-15 minutes daily. The vertebral column (spine) becomes resilient.

It also postpones the onset of old age and senility. It is useful as a general preventive against disease. It is a must for patients of diabetes mellitus. Besides, it is rated an excellent general prophylactic, if practised daily.

Patients of hernia should avoid it.

### 31. BHUJANGĀSANA (COBRA POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lying on the abdomen, the lower limbs should be joined together and kept close to the ground. While the body from the toes to the navel touches the ground, the hands should be kept under the shoulders and, resting on them, the body above the navel should be lifted above the ground, as high as possible, so that it resembles the hood of a cobra, as shown in Plate 53.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana relieves constipation, indigestion, and flatulence. It is very useful for patients with chronic constipation. The yogic practice known as Śaṅkhaṇḍaprakṣāḥana, which is one of the six yogic cleansing procedures detailed in the book "Yogic Sūkṣma Vyāyāma" (the 1st volume of the Āśrama Grantha Mālā), and used for cleansing the whole gut from the mouth through the small and large intestines to the rectum, is possible only on account of Sarpāsana or Bhujangāsana.

The practice of this āsana makes the waist slender and the chest broad and is very useful for reducing corpulence. The body becomes beautiful.

The āsana is equally useful to all: men, women, and children; young and old; the healthy or the sick.

Patients of hernia are strictly warned against its practice.

### 32. YOGĀSANA (YOGA POSTURE)

The āsana is known as Yogāsana, because of all the āsanās this is the only one in which Prāṇāyāma is essential. Kumbhaka or breath suspension has to be practised during the course of the performance of this āsana; this awakens Kuṇḍalinī, and it is on account of this awakened 'serpent-power' that the ultimate heights of yoga are scaled.

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground. Raise the left foot and place it on the right thigh



in such a manner that the heel is below the navel. Then the right foot should be similarly raised and placed on the left thigh, so as to make the heels touch each other below the navel. Then the left hand should be placed in the lap and the right hand placed on top of it so that the palms face upward one on top of the other. Fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose, inhale as deeply as possible through the nostrils (Plate 54). This should be followed by holding the breath for as long as possible, to be followed in turn by breathing out slowly through the nostrils.

As an alternative, these processes can be repeated after sitting in Baddha-Padmāsana (Bound-Lotus posture), as shown in Plate 55.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana improves digestion and relieves constipation. Since mild Prāṇāyāma is also coupled with other physical activities in this āsana, the body becomes radiant and the features become beautiful. Aggressive behaviour gives way to gentleness. The āsana is very helpful for concentration. Respiratory ailments are cured; even those suffering from phthisis can be cured by it. The mind becomes soothed and relaxed and the body feels light. It also helps in mental progress and development. If someone with fever were to bring his head into contact with the ground for 15 minutes in Yogāsana, the fever is bound to come down, leaving the body healthy. There are only three āsanās—Baddha Padmāsana, Yogāsana, and Tri-bandhāsana—which have this effect. This is so because they resemble one another closely with the only difference that, whereas regulation of breath is practised in Yogāsana, it is not in Baddha Padmāsana, and the three 'locks' are applied in Tri-bandhāsana.

The perfecting of this āsana results in the attainment of yogic power since the basis of yoga is kuṇḍalinī which gets aroused on account of the regulation of breath. When the kuṇḍalinī gets awakened, the yogī becomes worthy of liberation.

Everyone must practise Yogāsana, for it occupies an important place in the hierarchy of āsanās and hence its inclusion amongst the 32 āsanās by Gheraṇḍa. An accomplished Guru must be found for teaching the mysterious and little known aspects of this āsana.

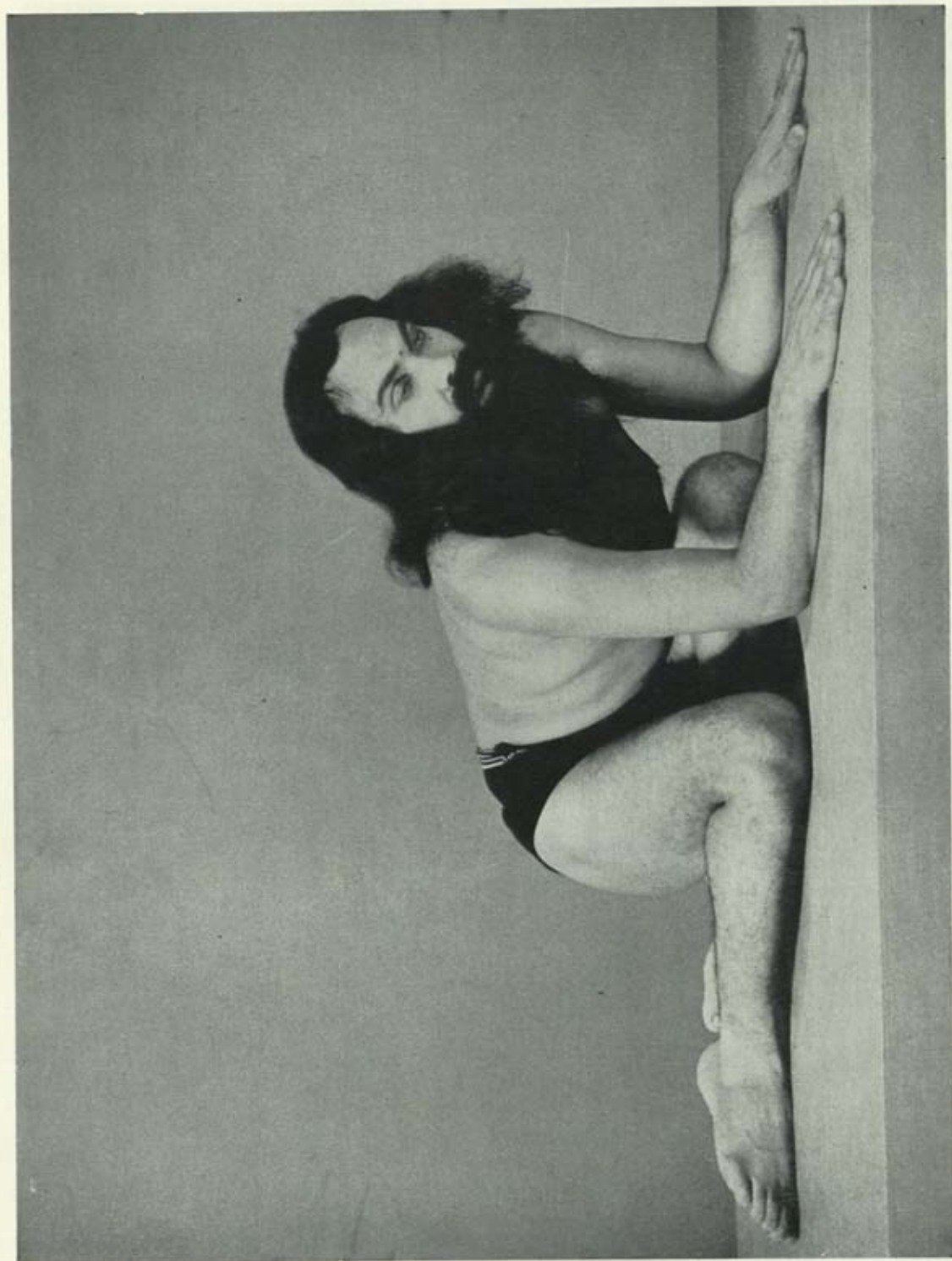
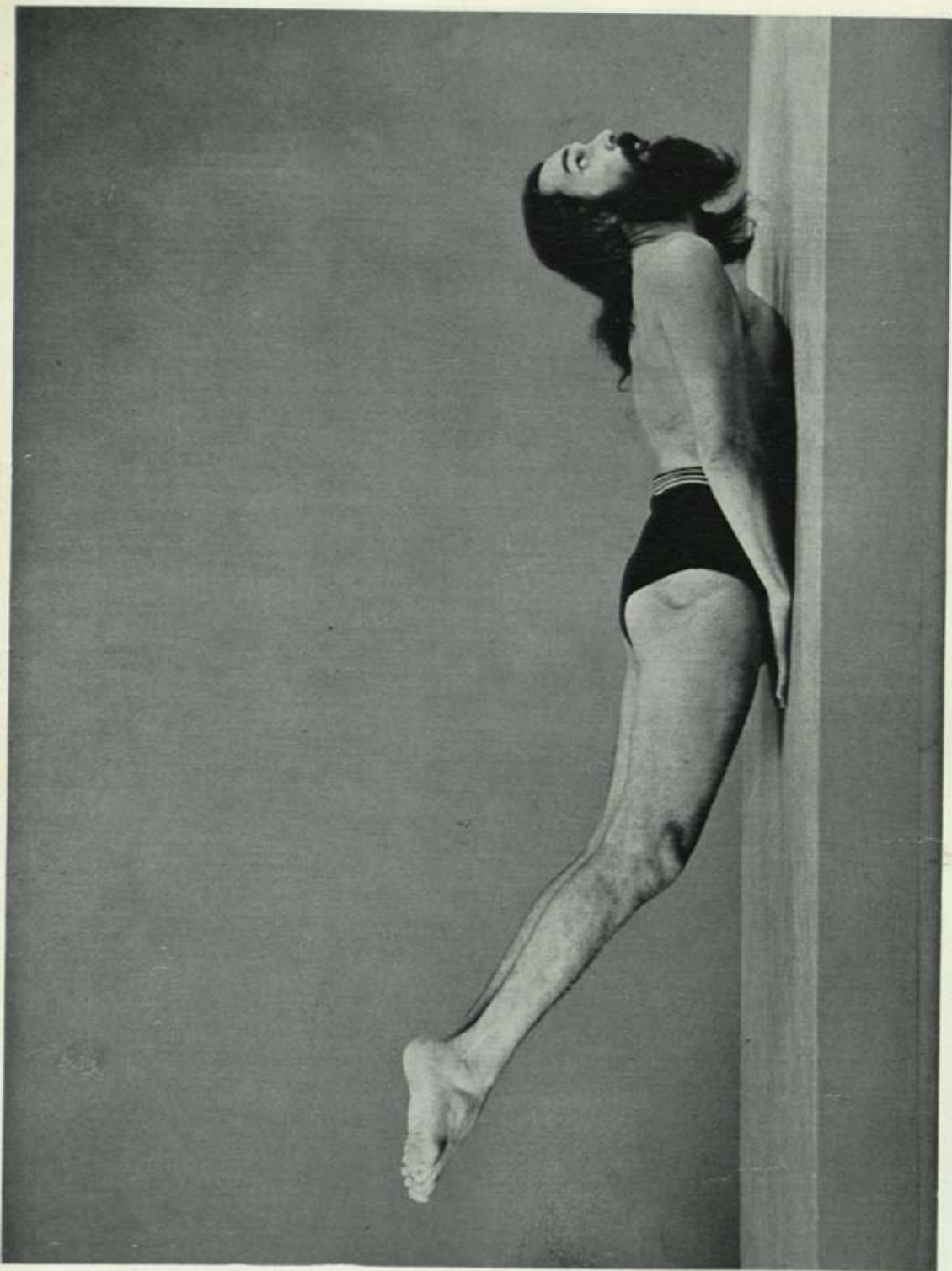


PLATE 49: With legs bent sideways, place the hands on the ground

Vr̥ṣābhāṣana





Śalabhāsana

PLATE 50: Lying face downward raise the body above and below the waist

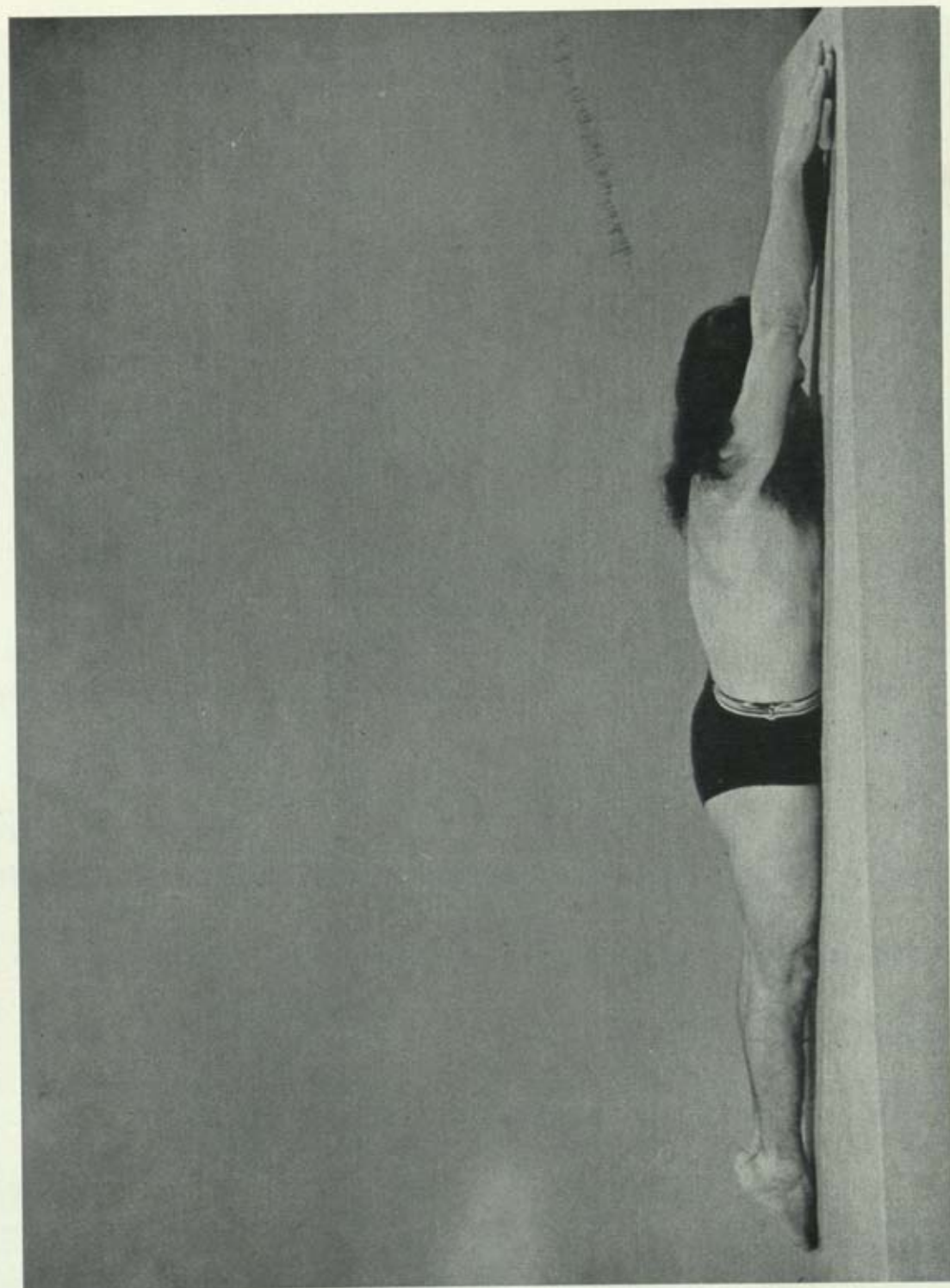
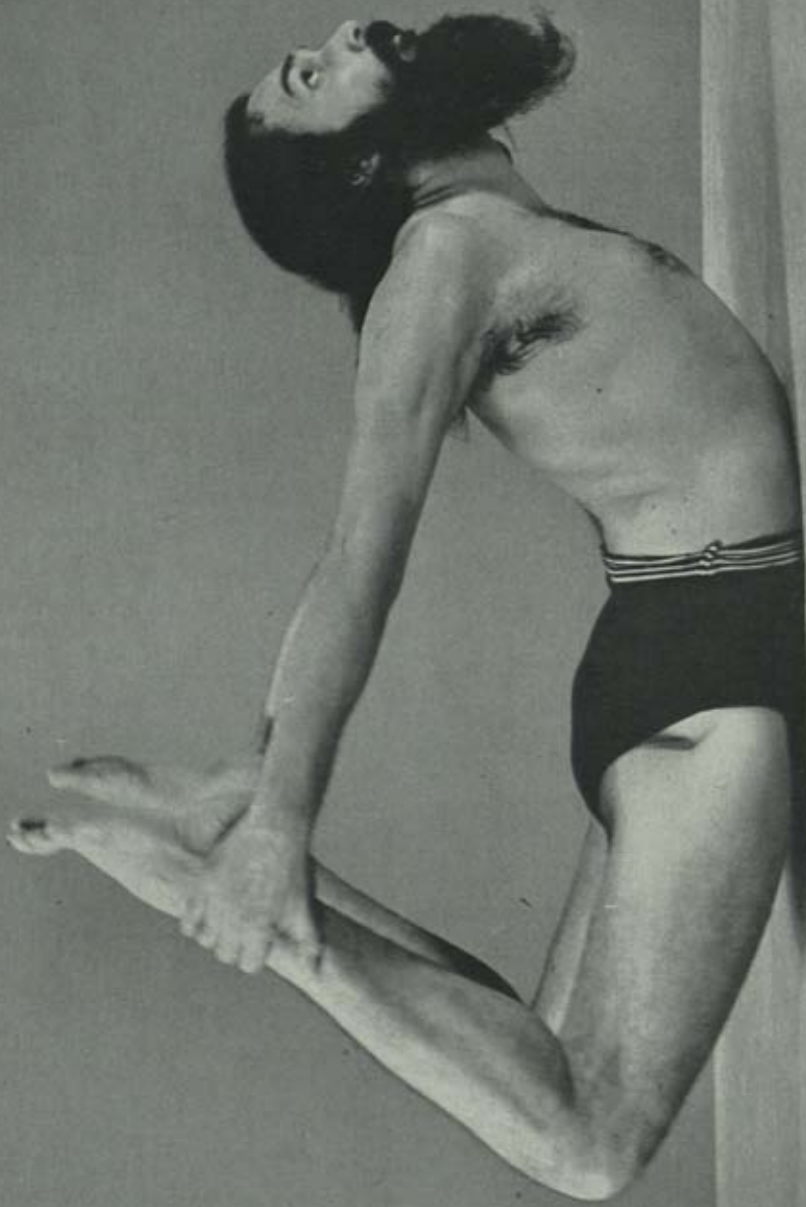


PLATE 51: Lie face downward with the head between the outstretched arms

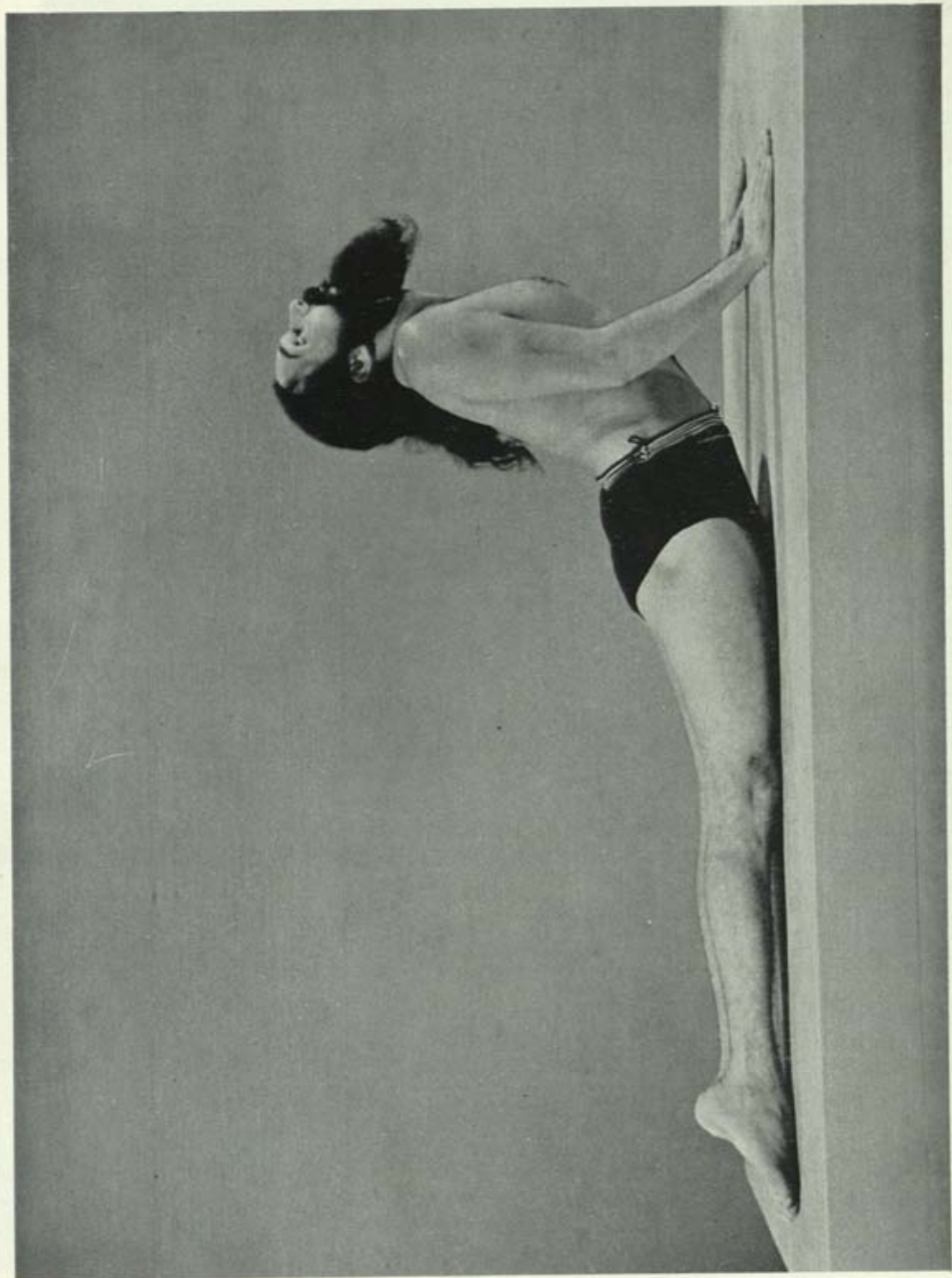
Makarāsana





## Uṣṭrāsana

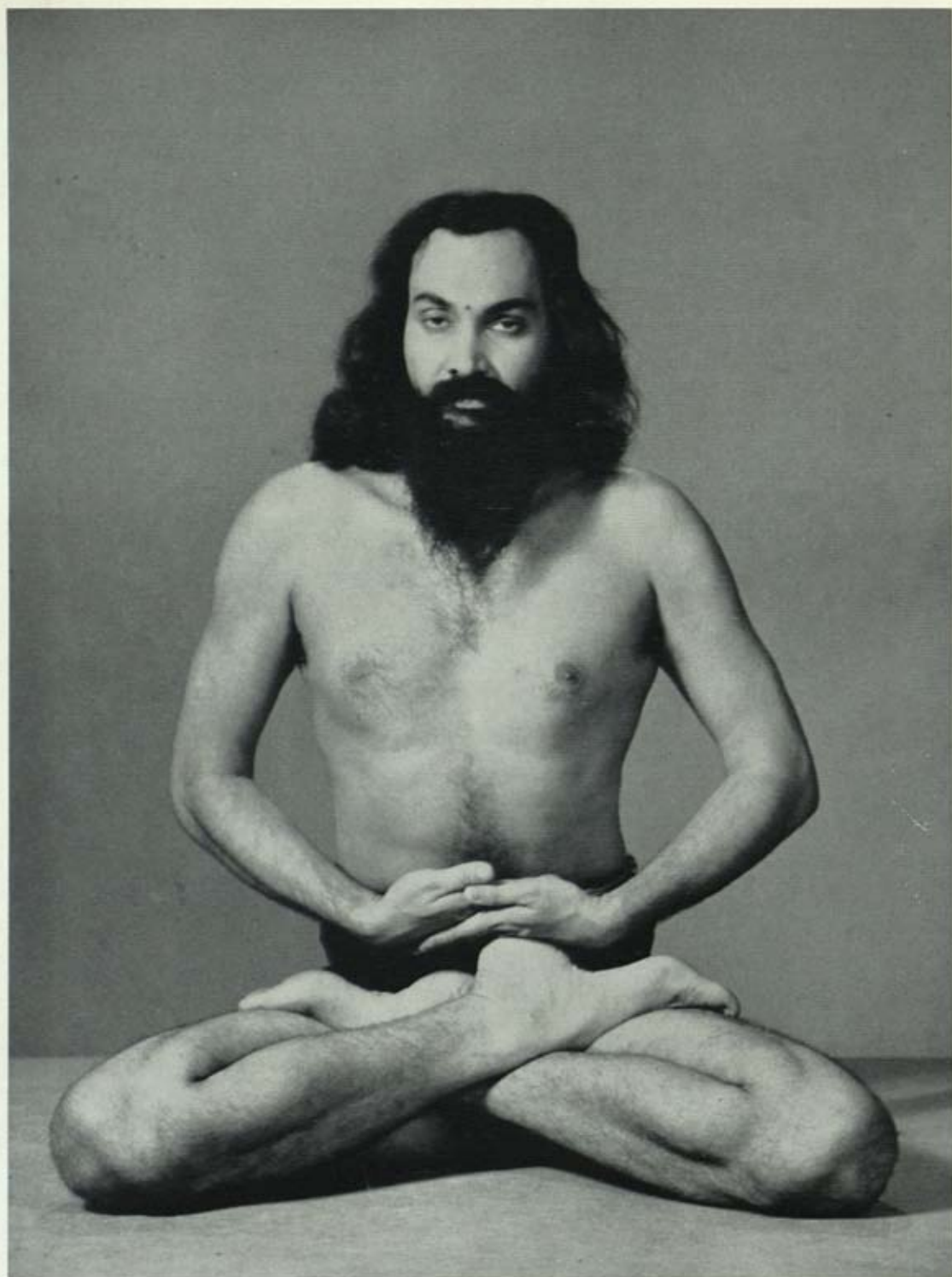
PLATE 52: Grasp the ankles and raise the body above the waist



# Bhujangāsana

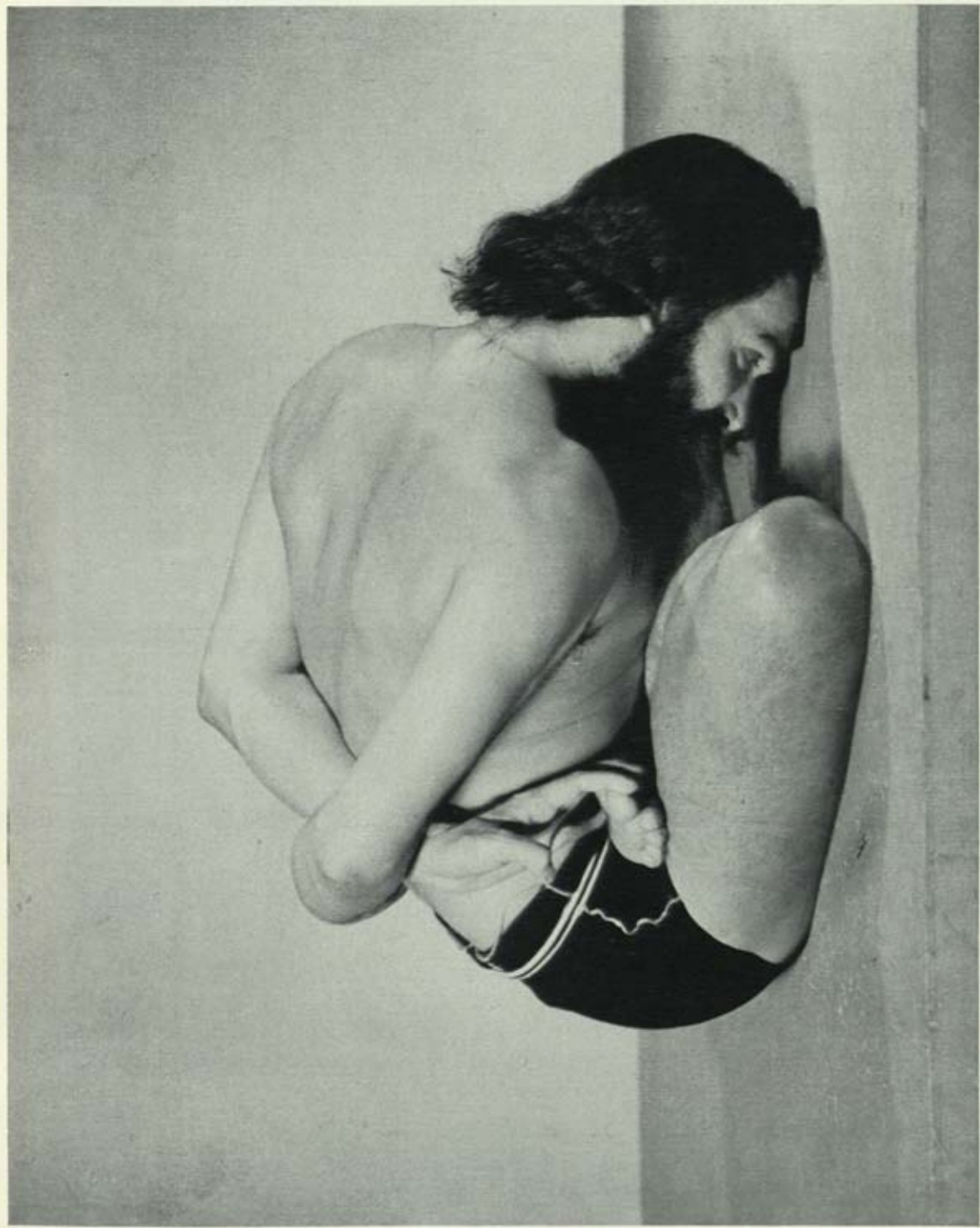
PLATE 53: Raise the body above the navel while keeping the legs and the hips on the ground





Yogāsana

PLATE 54: Sitting in Padmāsana place the right heel on the left, breathe in through both nostrils and look straight ahead



Yogāsana  
PLATE 55: Sitting in Padmāsana, cross the arms behind the back, and breathing in, place the forehead on the ground



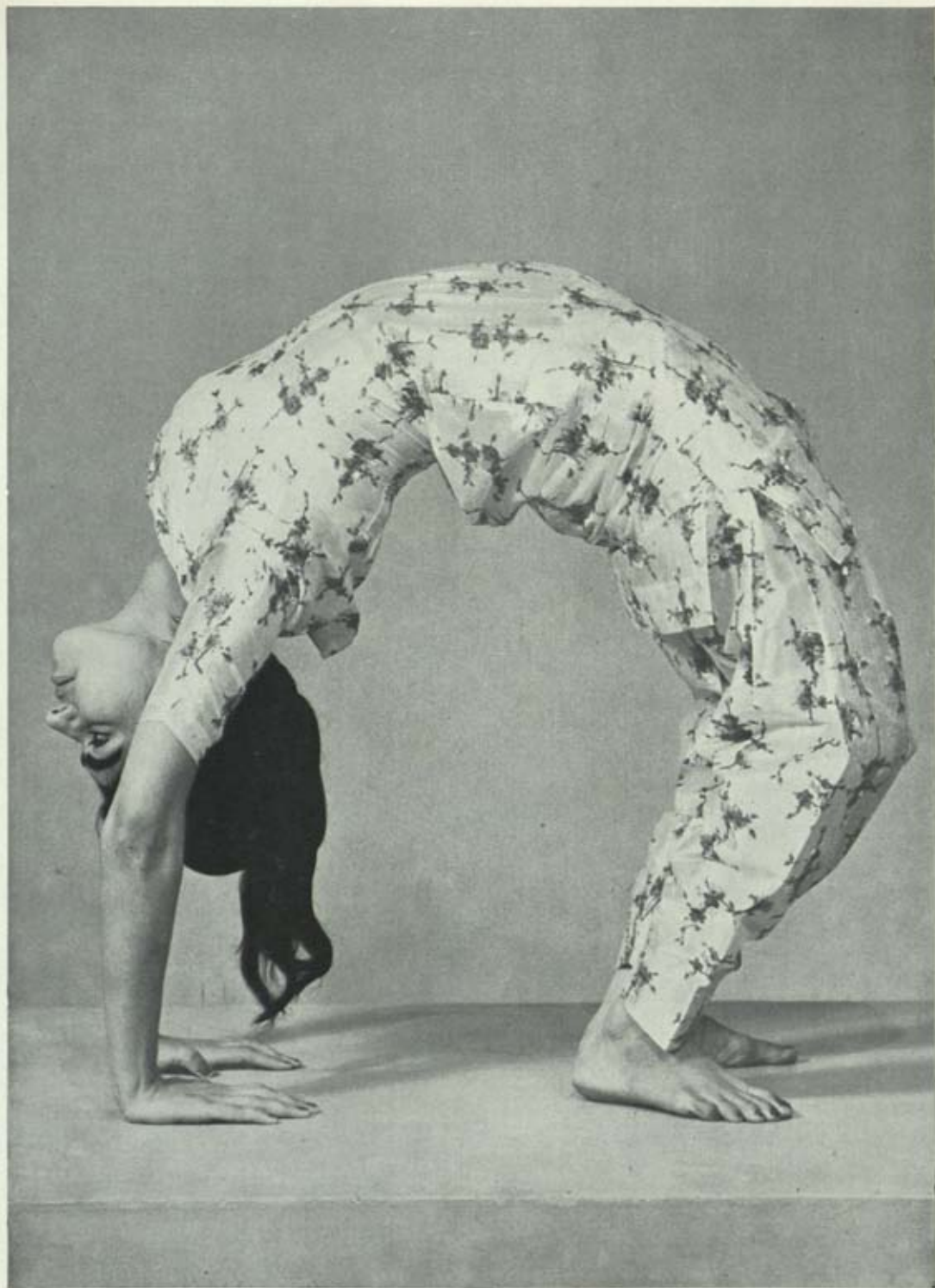


PLATE 56: With hands and feet on the ground, arch the back

Cakrāsana

### 33. CAKRĀSANA (WHEEL POSTURE)

#### P O S T U R E

Lie on the back with the feet on the ground, touching the buttocks. The palms are placed on the ground by the side of the head. The body is then raised to such an extent that it assumes the shape of an arc (Plate 56). After remaining in this posture for some time, the body should be rested on the ground and the āsana should be repeated many times. A variation consists in raising the body on the toes instead of on the feet (Plate 57). Some persons perform yet another variation, which consists in raising the arms backward so as to touch the ground with the hands while keeping the back arched. However, ordinarily, this variation is not tried till the poses depicted in Plates 56 and 57 have been perfected.

#### E F F E C T S   A N D   B E N E F I T S

It is claimed that senescence (old age) is delayed by the practice of this āsana. It directly affects the vertebral column (spine), on account of which the body becomes resilient and supple, the waist slim, and the chest broad. Premature stiffening of the spine induces the onset of old age in man. Cakrāsana, which counters this development, is, therefore, an āsana of prime importance.

The āsana has an effect also on the knees, upper limbs, and the shoulders.

The āsana is specially useful for removing the rigidity of the bones and joints of the thoracic cage. This osteoarticular apparatus is essential for respiratory movements.

It must be noted that the āsana should not be practised beyond one's physical limits. If, on the first attempt, some difficulty is experienced, it ought to be practised slowly and gently and preferably with the help of another person who can, in the early stages, help in lifting up the back for arching. Once the movements in raising and arching the back are properly grasped, it becomes very easy for any one to perform the āsana.

The Cakrāsana is a blessing for dancers. The navel region gets rightly positioned when this āsana is practised. As a result of this āsana, the nāḍīs get toned up and stabilised, and get an improved haernodyanamic supply.



### 34. SUPTAPAVANA MUKTĀSANA (LYING- WIND-RELEASE POSTURE)

#### P O S T U R E

Lie on the back with the feet extended. The left leg should be bent both at the groin and the knee. It should be held firm against the chest by encircling it with the arms. The head, the shoulders, and the right leg should also be raised above the ground (Plate 58). The posture should be repeated by bending the right leg.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Wind in the abdomen and indigestion are symptomatic of a poorly functioning gastro-intestinal system. This weakness is relieved by the practice of this āsana. Due to the pressure exerted on the abdomen by this āsana, the colonic accumulations of gases are pressed out through the ano-rectal passage.

Besides this, the āsana produces other wholesome effects as well. It develops the buttocks, the circulation of blood in the lower extremities improves, and arthritic and other disorders of the knees and lower extremities are relieved. Lumber and back pains also are alleviated by this āsana, because the lumbo-sacral bones get exercised by it.

### 35. UTTĀNAPĀDĀSANA (FOOT-STRETCH POSTURE)

#### P O S T U R E

Lie comfortably on the ground with legs stretched out. The hands should be placed beside the hips. The body above and below the hips and waist should be raised about a foot and the hands should be moved from the hips to the raised thighs. Care should be taken that no portion of the body above or below the waist and hips touches the ground (Plate 59).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana produces a unique effect on the body. Since the whole body gets balanced at the waist, the Navel-Centre (Nābhi-Cakra), which is

anatomically almost in the middle of the body (which, as Maṇipūra Cakra in the yogic traditions, is believed to be the centre and source of 72,000 nāḍīs), is affected. It is believed that for the health of an individual it is essential that this centre should be in its normal position. Its displacement, either upwards or downwards, sideways or obliquely, results in a variety of abdominal disorders like pain in the abdomen, flatulence, indigestion, diarrhoea, etc. For restoring a displaced 'navel' to its original position, the Uttānapādāsana is the most important and the best method. By its practice the displaced 'navel' gets rectified and, further, the possibility of a fresh displacement is reduced. The physio-pathology of the 'navel centre' is little understood by the practitioners of modern medicine. But the fact remains that many ailments on account of displacement of the 'navel' get quickly relieved after its rectification and by no other procedure. In 'Yogic Sūkṣma Vyāyāma,' the first volume of the Yogaśhrama Granthamālā, other methods and postures for the rectification of the 'navel' have been detailed in the chapters on Nābhi Parīkṣā (the examination of the navel).

The Uttānapādāsana has such a wholesome and useful influence on the finest and the subtlest of the tissues in the body that those who practise it overcome nervousness. As a matter of fact, everyone can easily practise this āsana.

### 36. HASTAPĀDĀNGUṢṬHĀSANA (HAND-TOE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Stand on the ground with the left leg raised as high as possible and grasp the toes with the hands. The head should be bent forward to touch the left knee (Plate 60). The whole procedure is repeated by raising the right foot.

An alternative method consists in holding the big toe of the stretched left leg with the right hand. The body should be kept erect while keeping the left hand on the waist (Plate 61).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana is useful in ailments of the feet, the knees, the lumbar region, and the back. Crookedness of the body disappears through its practice. It



is particularly useful for persons with tremulous lower limbs and also for those who are required to stand for long periods. It improves circulation of blood between the hips and the toes and is recommended to those who suffer from lumbago.

The āsana is used often for increasing height.

### 37. BADDHA-PADMĀSANA (BOUND-LOTUS POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

The left foot should be placed on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh so that the heels touch each other just beneath the navel. The hands should be taken behind the back in order to grasp the toes; the right hand should grasp the toes of the right foot and vice versa. Sit erect, keeping the whole body, including the vertebral column, straight, as illustrated in Plate 62. A variation of this āsana consists in keeping the head on the ground for as long as possible after the posture described above has been attained (Plate 63).

The āsana ought to be repeated after alternating the sequence and order of the legs.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana is helpful in ailments of the abdomen such as chronic splenomegaly, and other splenetic as well as hepatic disorders. It is good for digestion. It improves digestion so rapidly, at times, that it has been rightly named Bhasmāsana (the ashing posture). Even deep-seated pyrexial ailments (called bone-fevers in Ayurveda) are benefited by it. Practice of the āsana makes one immune to cold weather.

Those with regional anhidrosis are also advised the practice of this āsana. Women derive much benefit from its practice; many disorders of the uterus (womb) are cured by it. The flabbiness and the wrinkled condition of the abdomen after childbirth are easily remedied by this āsana. It can be considered to be an excellent prophylactic against many disorders of the abdomen. The āsana is very useful for patients with hernia. The Baddha-Padmāsana is rated even superior to Padmāsana in its capacity to relieve some diseases.

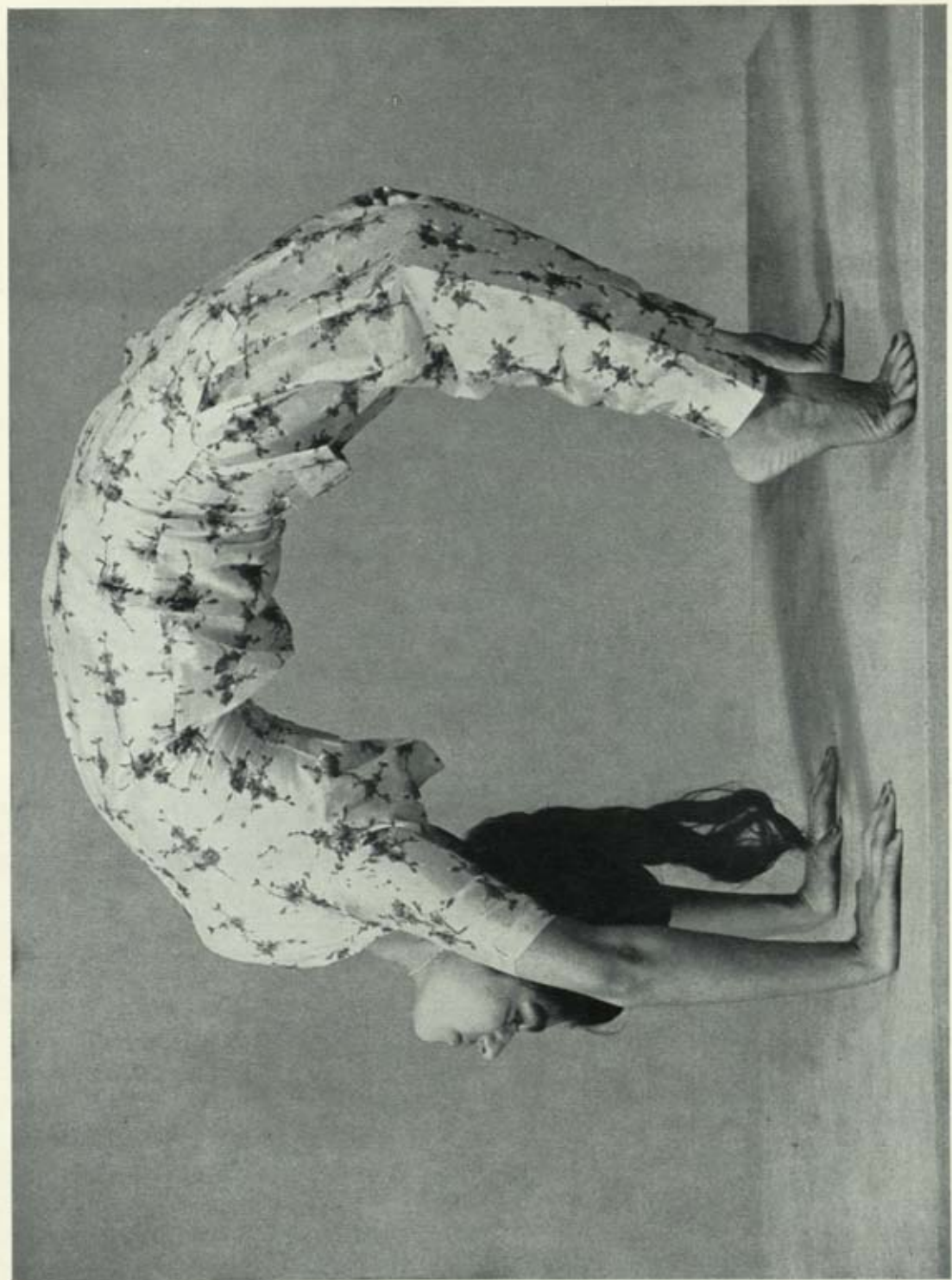
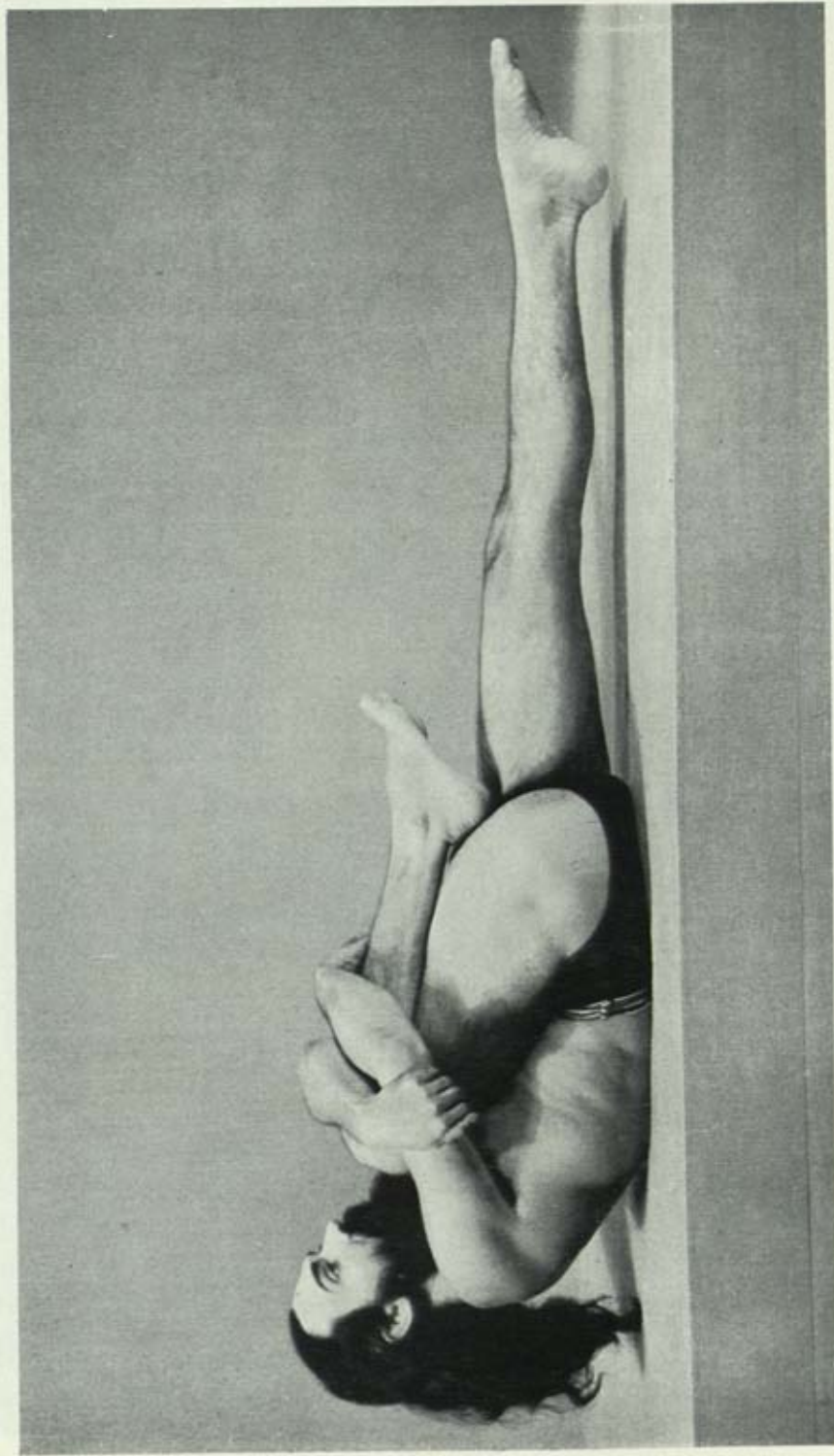


PLATE 57: As in Plate 56 but resting on the toes instead of the feet

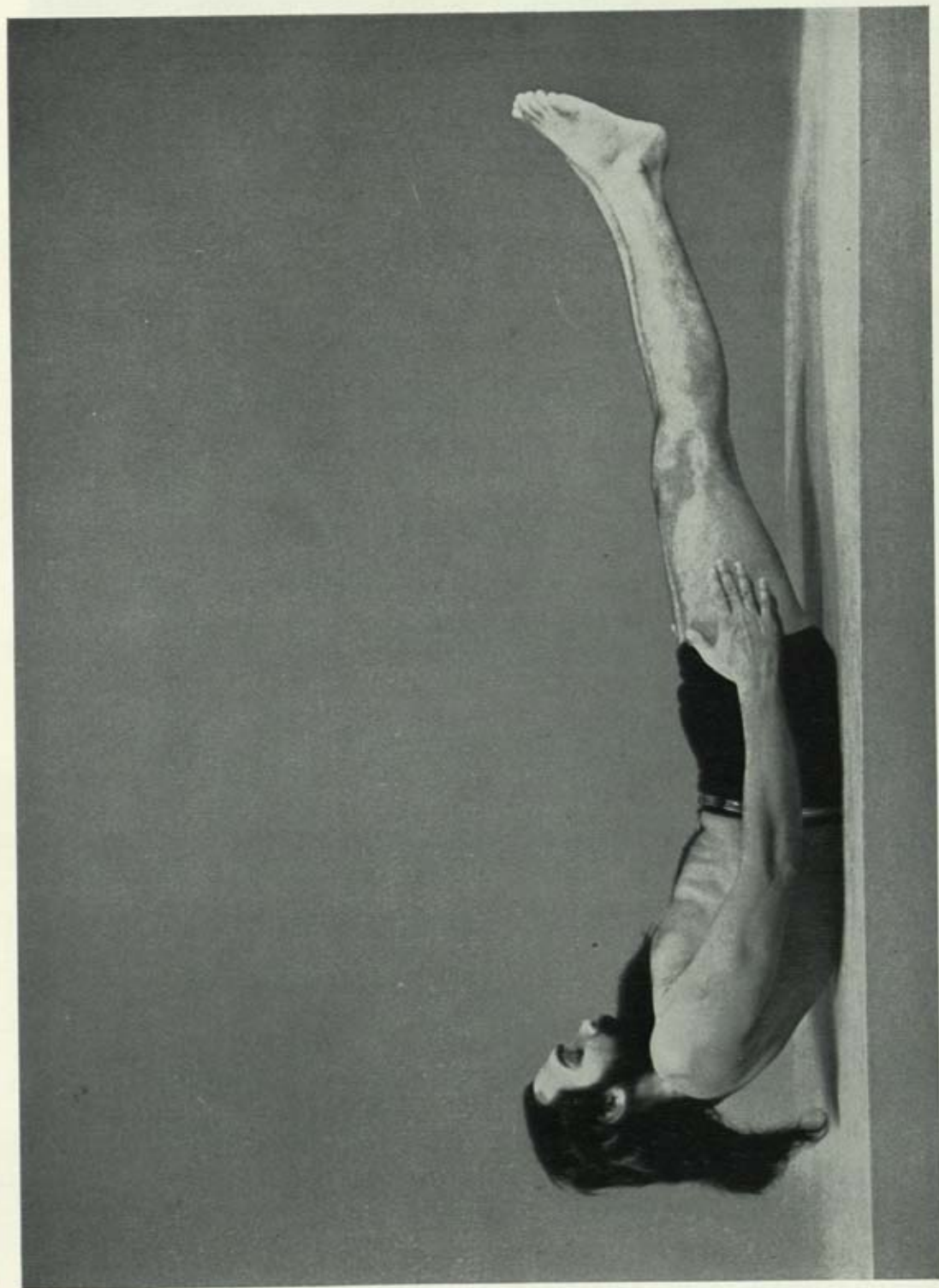
Cakrasana





### Supta-pavana-muktāsana

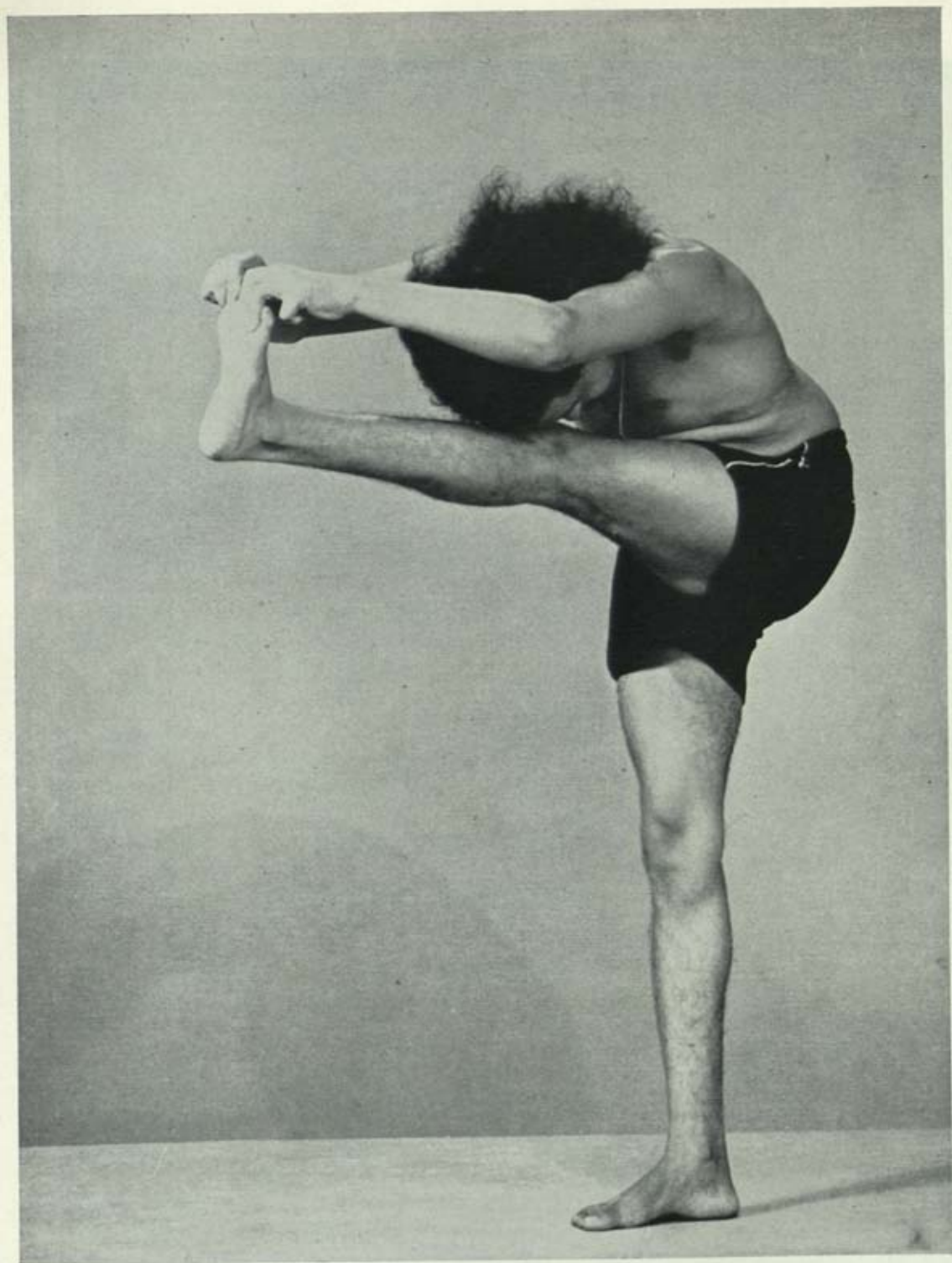
PLATE 58: With the right knee bent and held against the chest, the head, shoulders and the left leg should be raised



## Uttānpādāsana

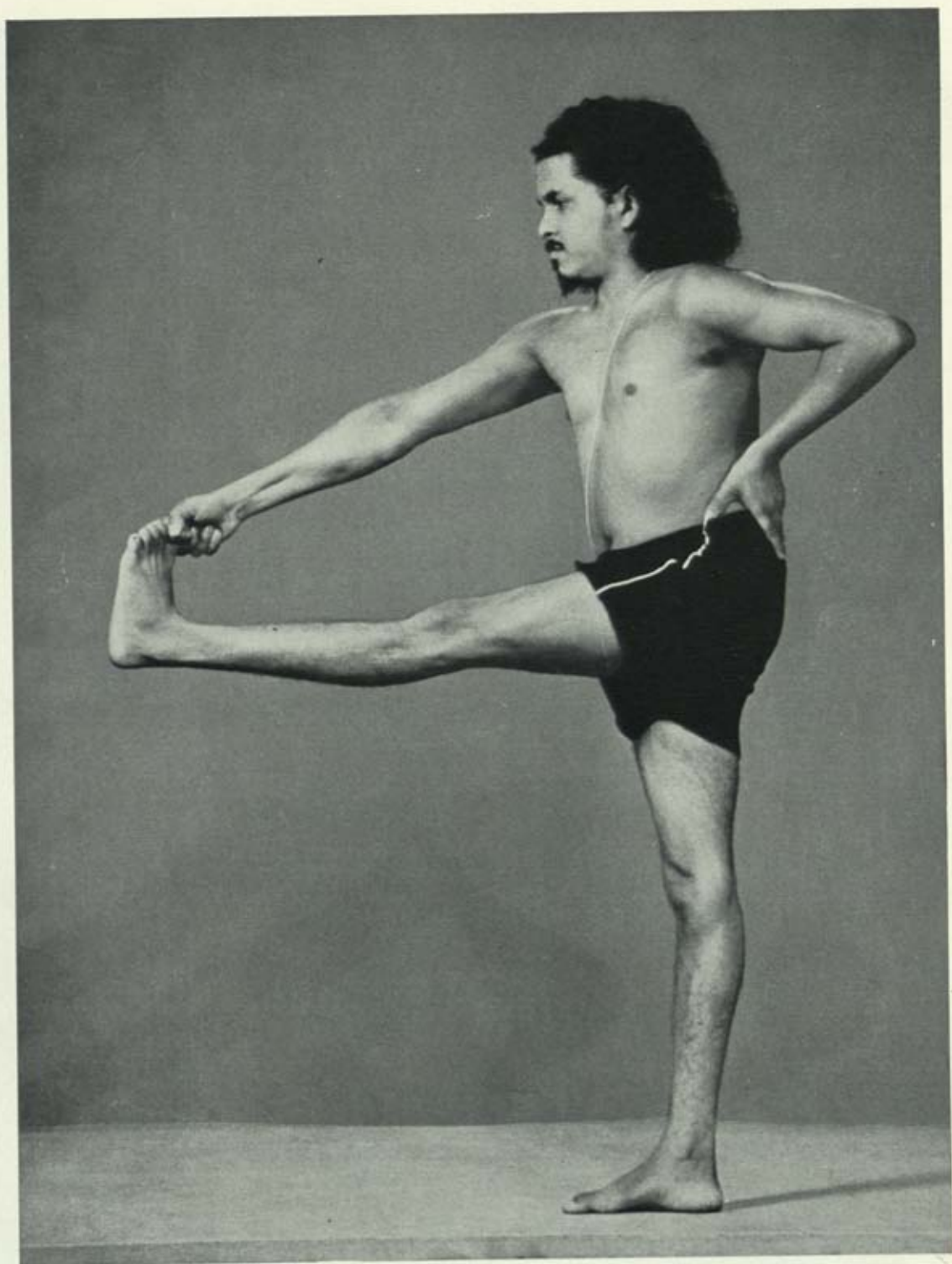
PLATE 59: Raise the body above and below the waist





Hasta-pādānguṣṭhāsana

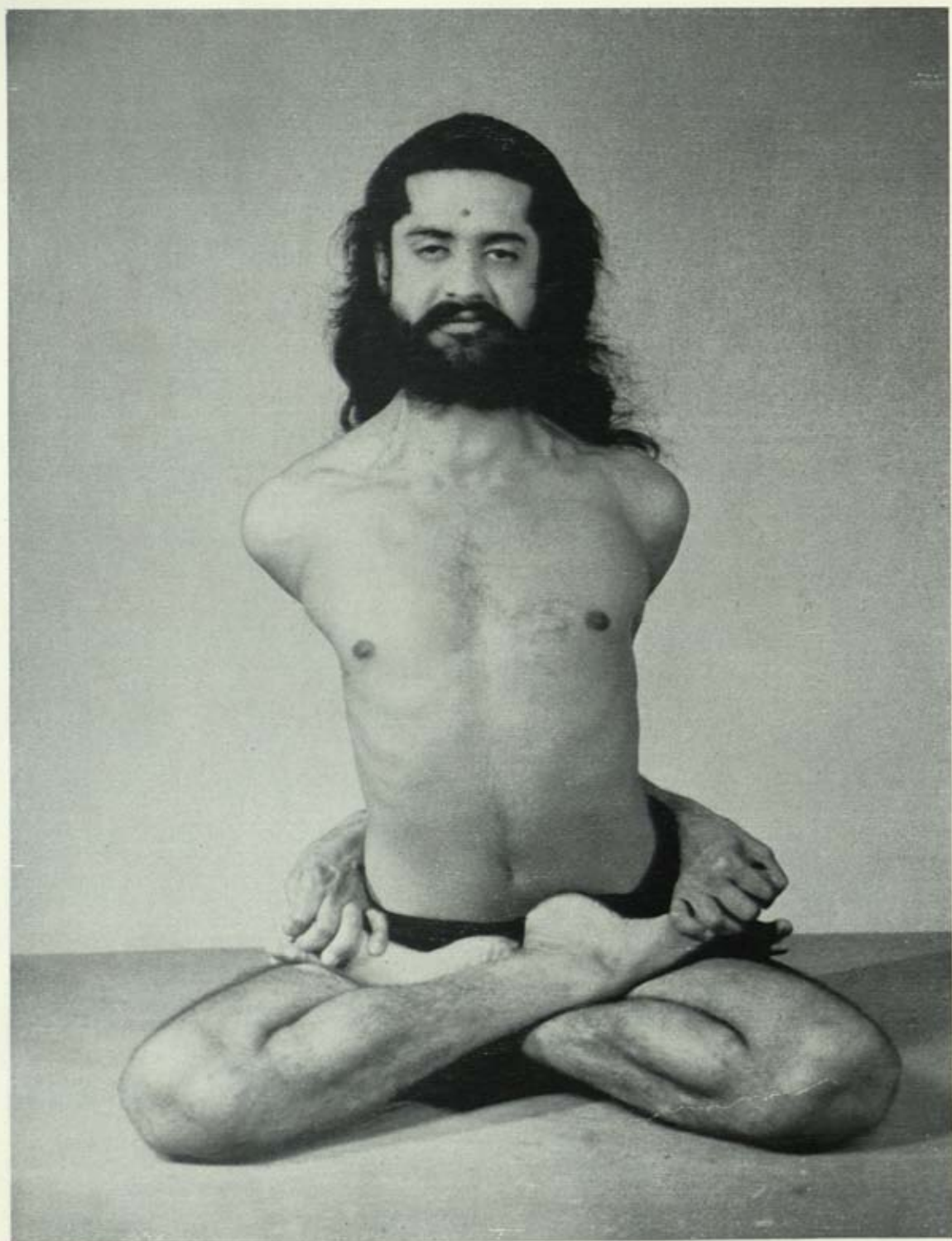
PLATE 60: Place the head on the left knee after raising the leg and holding the toes with both hands



Hasta-Pādānguṣṭhāsana

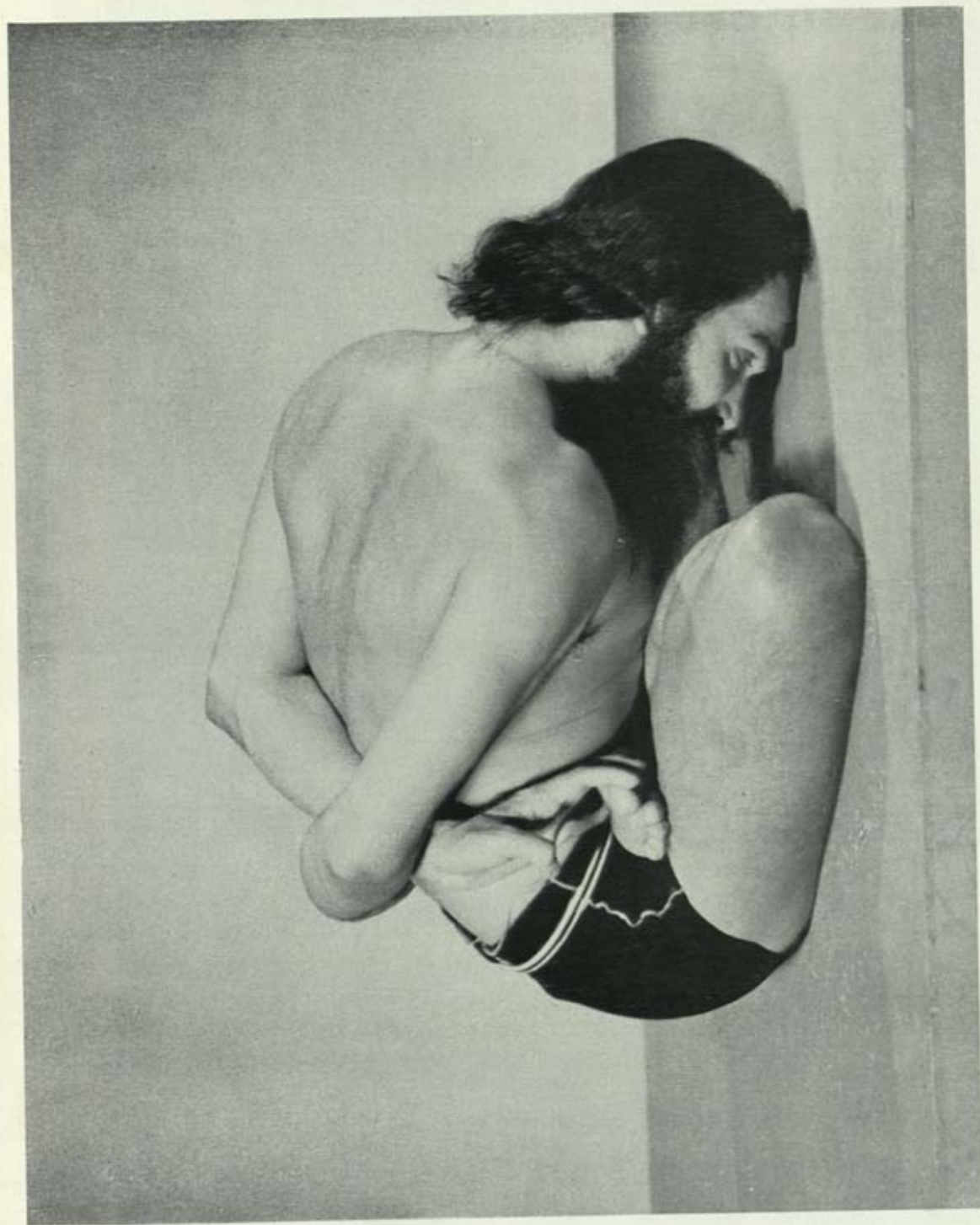
PLATE 61: While holding the toes with the right hand, keep the left hand on the waist and stand erect





Baddha-padmāsana

PLATE 62: Sitting in Padmāsana, cross the arms behind the back and hold the toes with the hands



**Baddha-padmāsana**  
PLATE 63: Sitting in Padmāsana, cross the arms behind the back, and, breathing in, place the forehead on the ground



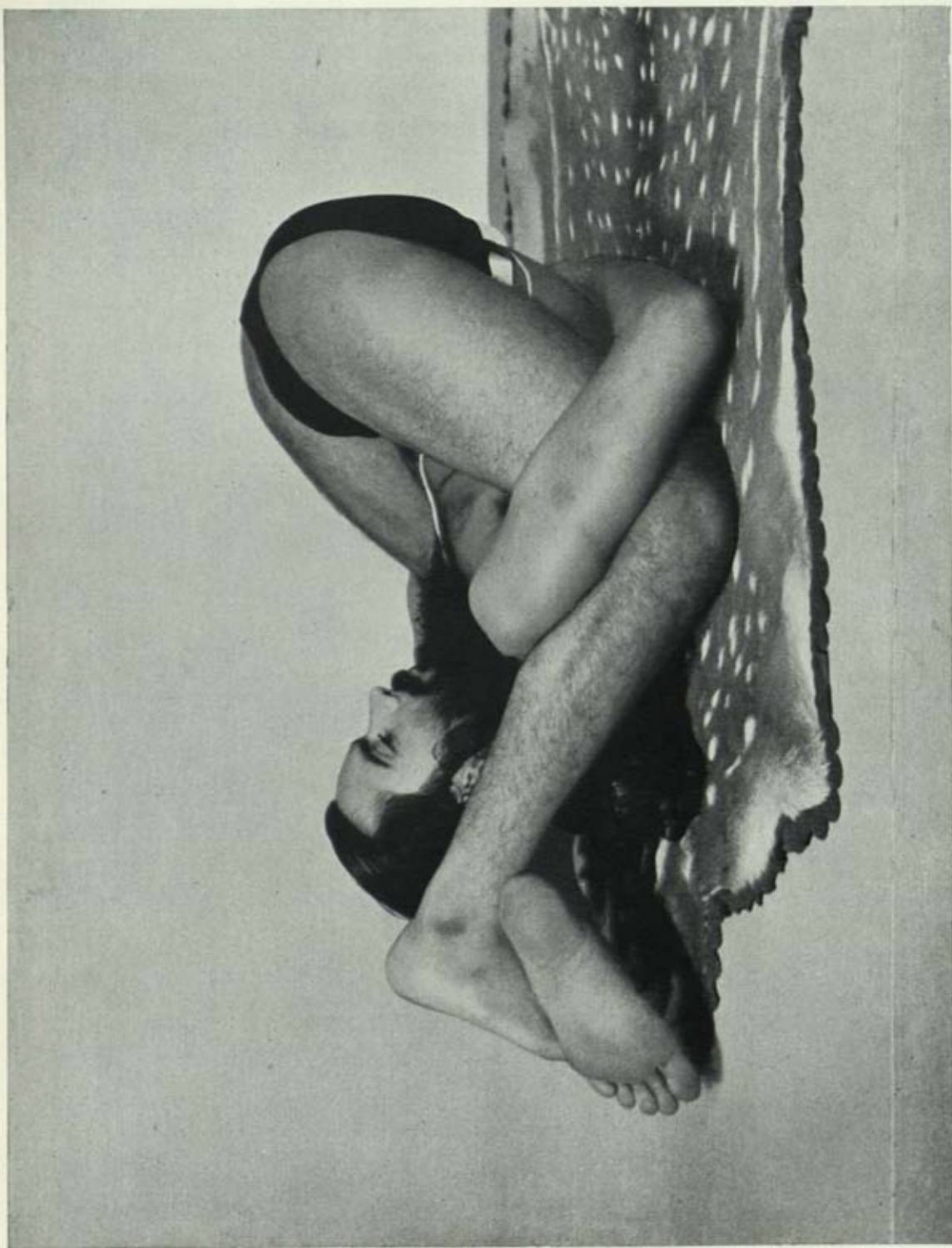


PLATE 64: With both feet behind the head; encircle the thighs with the arms

Prapavāsana

The āsana is useful for the practice of prāṇayāma as directed towards the purification of the nāḍīs. Its practice very quickly unifies the prāṇa and the apāna, which in turn generates concentration of the mind, beatitude and lightness of the body, in short, the supreme goal of yogis.

The āsana is equally good for sick and the healthy as well as for the yogī. It is rather difficult to perform, but a gradual practice for three months usually results in a mastery over it.

A large number of variations of this āsana are practised by the yogis. These are adaptable for an infinite number of higher yogic practices or therapeutic usages. However, these varieties and subtleties can be known and must be practised only under the experienced supervision of an accomplished Guru.

### 38. PRANAVĀSANA (PRANAVA POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lie on the ground, flat on the back, the left foot raised and placed under the neck, and the right foot raised and placed on the left foot. While remaining in this position the thighs should be encircled and held by the arms (Plate 64). The āsana can be repeated after alternating the order of the feet.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The mind attains concentration by the practice of this āsana. The spine becomes supple and resilient. Contemplation for self-realization (samādhi) becomes easier. The prāṇa and the apāna get unified. Although decidedly difficult to perform, the āsana imparts wonderful effects and benefits. In a woman such changes can be induced in the uterus (womb) that she would fail to conceive. (On this account, young girls are strictly advised against its practice.) Women who do not want any more children should be able to achieve contraception by its practice.

The mind gets tranquillized and the prāṇa gets unified with the apāna.

Backache, piles, and all other ano-rectal maladies are relieved by this āsana. It develops the abdomen, back, shoulders and neck. It should be practised properly and unhurriedly.



The āsana has also been referred to as Dvipāda-supta-kandarāsana.

### 39. NAUKĀSANA (BOAT POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lie face downwards with the arms extended forward. The legs and the arms should be raised as high as possible so that the body takes the shape of a boat (Plate 65).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Abdominal flabbiness can be reduced by this āsana. It improves the digestion and relieves constipation. It is also useful for pulmonary ailments (diseases of the lungs).

The āsana improves the circulation of blood in the muscles in the region of the neck, the abdomen, the lower limbs, and the shoulders. The body becomes light and agile.

### 40. KONĀSANA (ANGLE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Standing with feet as wide apart as possible, the left hand should touch the left foot and the right arm should be extended upward by the side of the head. Care should be taken that the trunk does not lean forward or backward. The procedure is to be repeated on the other side. The āsana has been illustrated in Plate 66. Though there are a number of variations of this āsana, only one has been described here.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana relieves backache and develops the buttocks. The body becomes light. Ailments of the lungs and frequent boils and pimples on the skin are cured.

A special feature of the āsana is that it helps in increasing height.

There are a number of other āsanas which can be practised along with this āsana for overcoming shortness of stature. The āsana proves useful for patients of sciatica, if practised slowly.

Another special feature of the āsana is that it can be practised even by a pregnant woman without causing her any harm. For the first six or even seven months of pregnancy women can perform this āsana slowly. It harmonizes and equilibrates the numerous nerves coursing transversely and obliquely through the body. Even though so simple, the āsana is extremely useful for women. Women with bent or crooked bodies, or those who experience difficulty in walking erect, must perform this āsana. But it should not be performed in jerks or hastily since it loses all its excellence and usefulness. It is only by keeping the body in this posture for some time that its advantages can be obtained.

The āsana, besides increasing height, also makes the body well proportioned.

#### 41. BHŪNAMANĀSANA (BOWING-DOWN POSTURE)

##### POSTURE

Sitting on the ground the legs are stretched out sideways as far as possible like the wings of a vulture. The toes are then held with the hands, and the abdomen, the chest, and the chin are pushed down to touch the ground for about 30 seconds (Plate 67).

##### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana relieves piles as well as many urinary disorders. For dancers, it is a boon. The waist becomes supple and the body below the waist becomes well proportioned and beautiful. Although the āsana is difficult to perform, yet with some practice it can be mastered. Its practice regulates and develops the muscles of the gluteal region (the area of the hips). The portion of the body above the waist also develops.

The practice of the āsana makes the body so pliant that like rubber it can be moved and bent in any direction.

A sustained practice of the āsana reduces the respiratory rate, a fact of supreme importance in itself. Keeping the body in this āsana for long



enables one to concentrate and a state of meditation can be achieved. Simultaneously, the respiration becomes long drawn out and after some time it becomes virtually imperceptible. However, it is not easy to stay in this āsana for long.

Practice and will power alone can ensure mastery over this āsana.

There are a number of āsanās which, though difficult to perform, are not particularly advantageous. This āsana, on the other hand, by virtue of its capacity to reduce the respiratory rate, is important.

For women it is comparatively easier to perform than for men. It is necessary to perform it daily.

For āsanās of this type (in which the joints and ligaments have to be put under considerable strain) it is advisable to take raw turmeric with milk (in the proportion of about 12 gm of raw turmeric mixed with half a kilogram of warm milk).

## 42. SARVĀNGĀSANA (ALL-LIMB POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the back, while keeping the legs extended, the feet should be gradually raised so that the toes can touch the ground behind the head, and should be held in this position (Plate 68). The body from the hips to the shoulders should be as straight as possible. The feet are then gradually returned to their original position.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The exercise of this āsana allows the blood in the blood vessels of the feet to return effortlessly to the heart, and also improves circulation of blood in general. As a result, a large number of dermatological disorders are cured.

The āsana is the foremost amongst the āsanās for reducing obesity. The paunch vanishes, the body becomes beautiful, the eyes radiant, and the face relaxed.

Patients of high blood pressure are warned against its practice till their blood pressure has been normalised by other yogic practices.

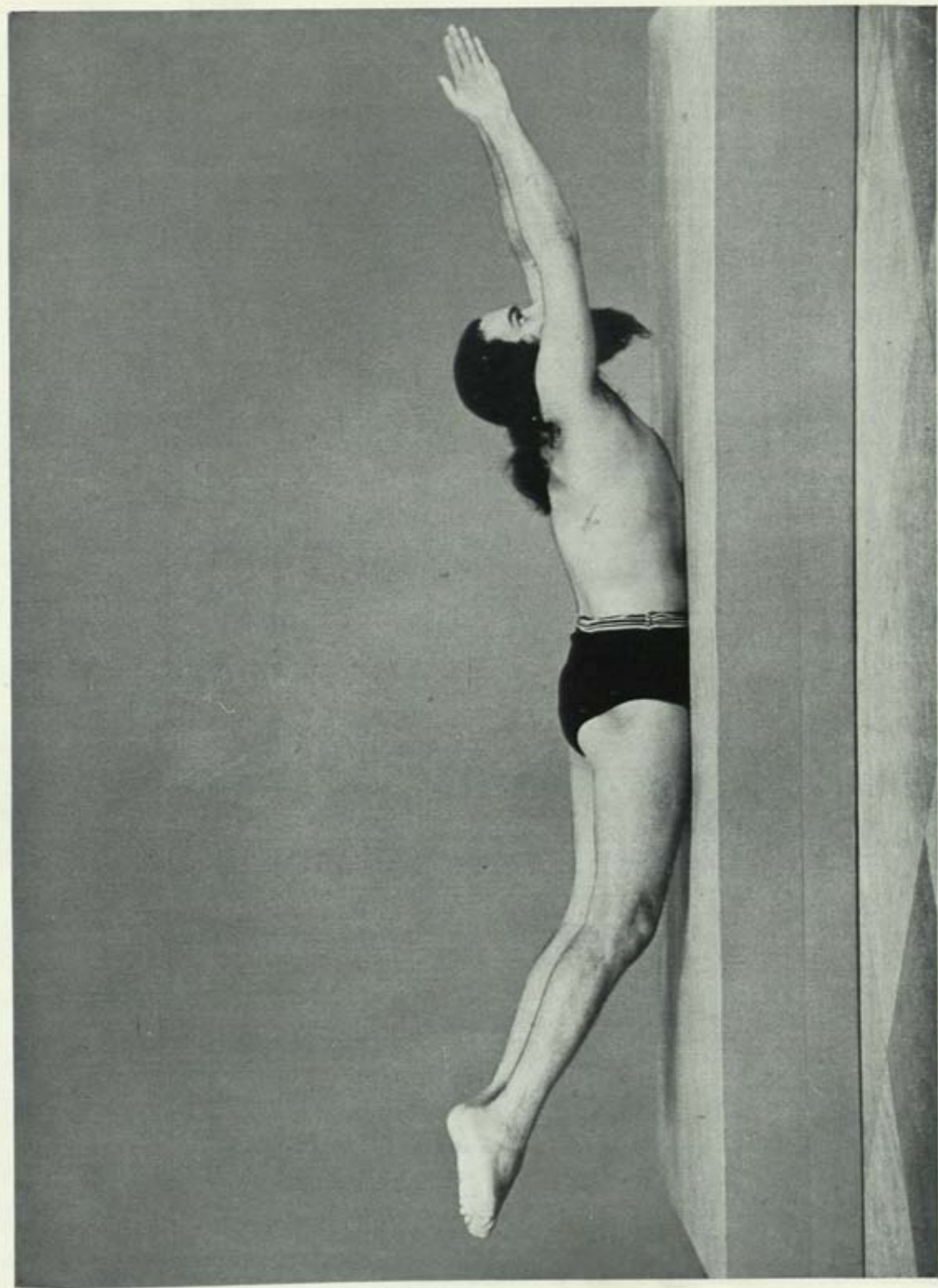
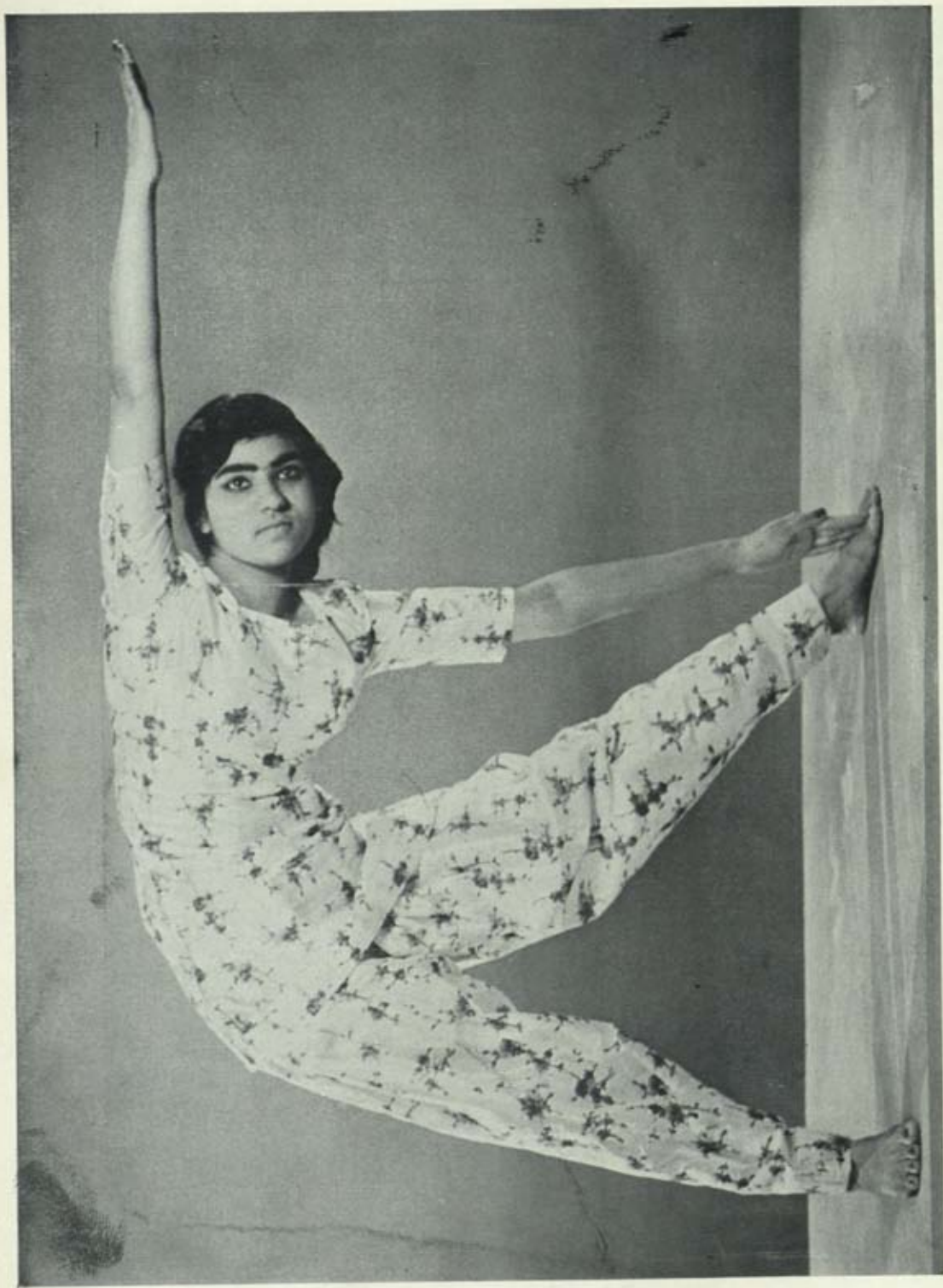


PLATE 65: Raise the legs and arms slowly as high as possible

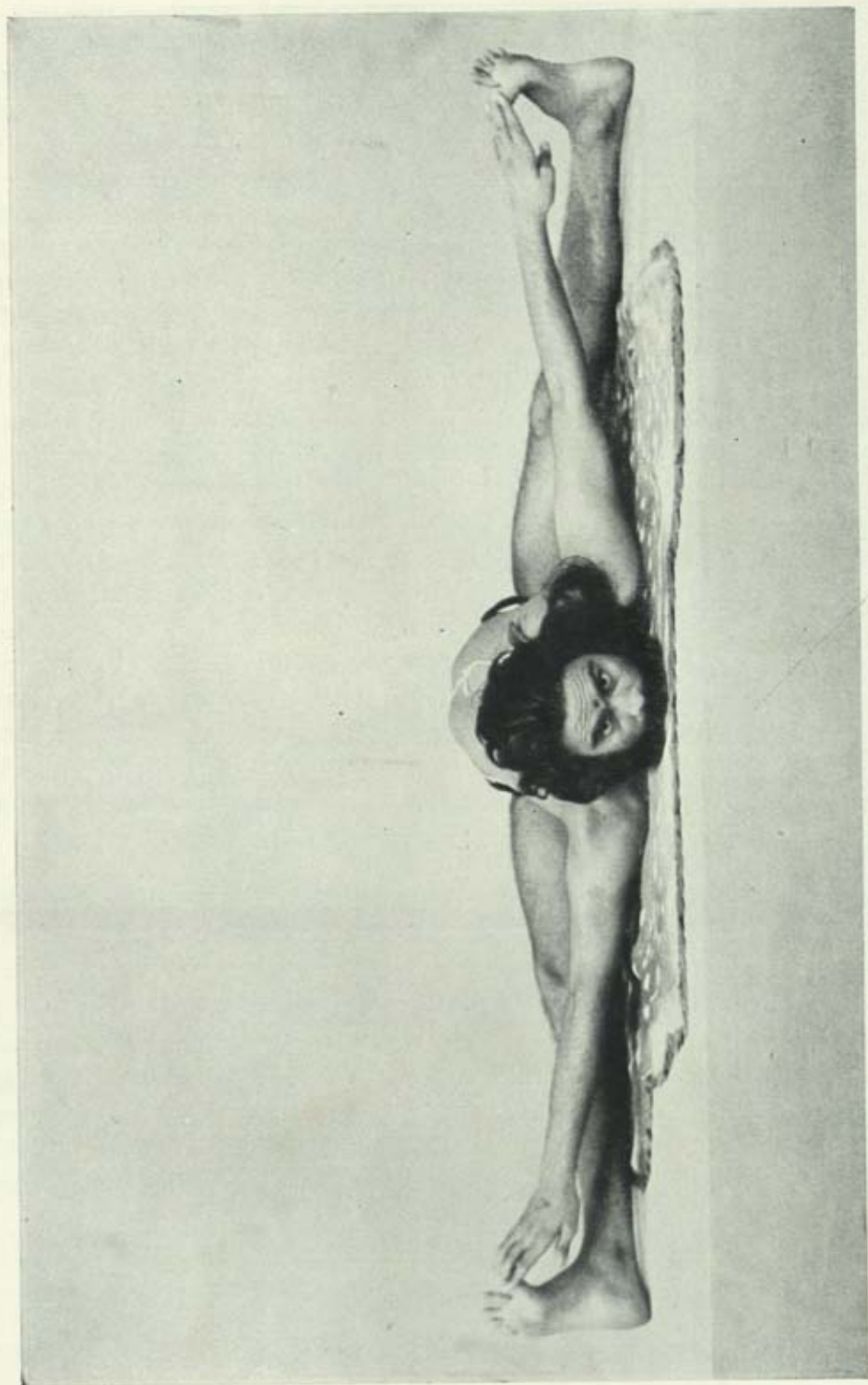
Naukāsana





## Konāsana

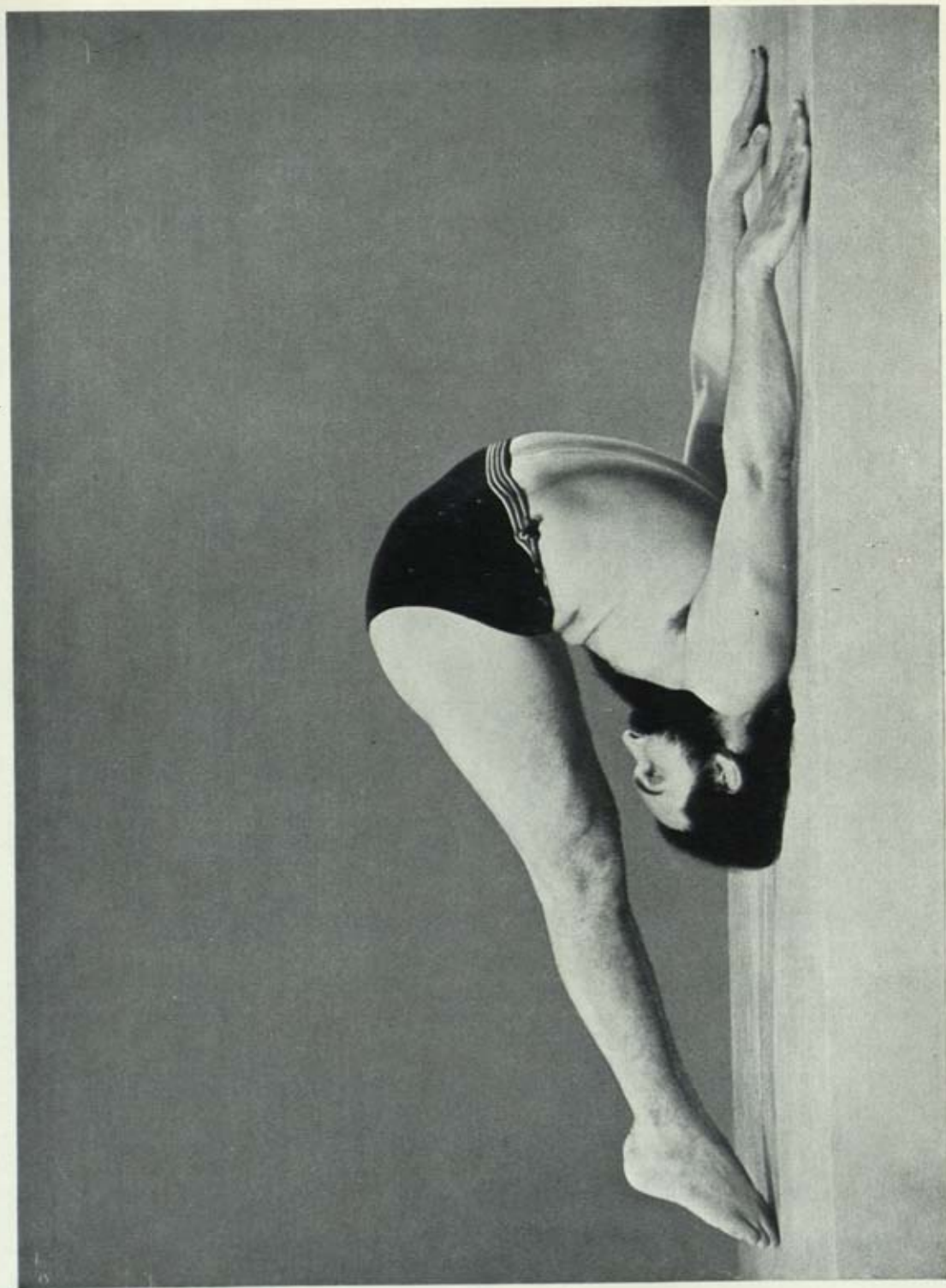
PLATE 66: Touch the toes of the left foot with the left hand while keeping the right arm straight



### Bhūnāmanāsana

PLATE 67: Holding the toes with the hands touch the ground with the chin, chest and abdomen





## Sarvāṅgāsana

PLATE 68: Raise the legs slowly to touch the ground behind the head while keeping the legs straight

Women derive great benefit from the practice of this āsana. Abnormal mobility of the uterus is treated by the practice of this āsana along with that of the abdominal lock (Uḍḍīyana bandha). Its practice also eradicates pelvic pains due to the abnormal mobility of the womb.

The āsana should never be performed with jerks, else the nāḍīs may get dislodged. Should the nāḍīs be found displaced on account of a faulty performance of the āsana, causing pain, the Sarvāṅgāsana should be immediately followed by the performance of Uṣṭrāsana (Camel posture). This would eliminate the pain instantly. At places, it has even been stated that every time Sarvāṅgāsana is performed the practice of the Uṣṭrāsana should invariably follow and vice versa, the two āsanās being supplementary to each other.

The practice of Sarvāṅgāsana makes the spine resilient and this in turn bestows health, beauty, and rejuvenation to the body. The lack of elasticity and the onset of rigidity of the spine is believed to be an important factor in senility. Hence, in the discipline of Yoga, particular attention is paid to keep the spine healthy and resilient. The Master Yogī, Lord Śaṅkara, himself devised 84 lac āsanās to triumph over old age and even Death itself. The practice of this āsana removes bad odours from the body, makes the waist slim, and reduces obesity. It can be usefully practised by all—children, young persons, old men, and women; only patients of heart diseases or of high blood pressure must perform it under the surveillance of an accomplished Guru.

#### 43. ĀKARNA-DHANURĀSANA (PULLED-BOW POSTURE)

##### POSTURE

Seated on the ground, with legs stretched out, the left big toe should be caught by the right hand and the right big toe by the left hand. The right foot should be pulled up to such an extent by the left hand that its big toe can touch the left ear (Plate 69). The āsana must be repeated by pulling up the left foot to the right ear.



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The benefits of the āsana are similar to those of the Bow posture (Dhanur-āsana), except that it proves particularly useful for the nāḍīs which course obliquely and transversely from one side to another in the body and hence its usefulness in condition of displaced nāḍīs. Its practice improves circulation of blood in the nāḍīs.

The āsana is particularly useful for gunners and archers. Since the arms, forearms, shoulders, chest, waist, back, thighs, and calves are all stretched, they become well developed, beautifully proportioned, and strong. Daily practice of this āsana results in a supple and agile body.

### 44. ŪRDHVA-HASTOTTĀNĀSANA ( UP-STRETCHED ARMS POSTURE )

#### POSTURE

Stand on the ground, with the arms raised and the fingers of the hands interlocked, the trunk should be swung alternately to the right and to the left (Plate 70).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana relieves constipation very quickly. It makes the waist slim, the chest broad and removes fatty deposits on the hips and the buttocks. It increases height and relieves painful conditions of the ribs.

A special use of the āsana is made in the procedure known as Śaṅkha-prakṣāḷana (Conch-cleansing) or Vārisāra, one of the six yogic cleansing procedures, used for the cleansing of the entire intestinal tract of the abdomen. This is one of the four āsanās practised in sequence for the performance of Śaṅkha-prakṣāḷana. This procedure is described in detail in the book *Yogic Suksma Vyayama* published as the first volume of the *Yogāśrama Grantha Mālā* (Yogic Text Series).

## 45. PARVATĀSANA (MOUNTAIN POSTURE)

### P O S T U R E

Sitting on the ground, the left foot should be placed on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh, just as in Padmāsana. The body is then lifted so that it is supported only on the knees. The arms should be raised upwards with the palms together and the body should be kept steady like a mountain (Plate 71).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The body becomes firm and the knees as also the thighs get strong, and the balancing power of the body as a whole increases tremendously. This āsana is excellent for dancers. Though apparently simple, it is extremely difficult to perform, since it requires that the whole body should be balanced on a precarious base.

The āsana relieves pain in the knees and beautifies the calves. It is equally useful for men and women and specially useful for those with bent and crooked bodies or a stoop.

## 46. PĀDĀNGUṢṬHASĀNA (BIG-TOE POSTURE)

### P O S T U R E

Sit on the ground, with the right ankle placed on the left thigh and the whole body raised above the ground. The hands should be placed on the waist and the whole body maintained in that posture (Plate 72). The āsana should be repeated by supporting the body on the right foot for the same period as on the left foot.

It is to be noted that in this āsana the whole weight ought to be on the toes. The āsana should be learnt under the expert supervision of a Guru and performed carefully.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana helps in the attainment of celibacy. Wet dreams



disappear after it has been practised for only a few days, and a state of Brahmācarya can be attained, since the Sīvanī Nāḍī or the Citrākhyā Nāḍī which carries semen along its course is brought under the control of the will by the practice of this āsana. All seminal disorders are rectified by the practice of this āsana. The genital organs get a plentiful supply of blood. The āsana is distinctive inasmuch as it develops self-control as well as full sex potency and virility. Every young boy and girl should perform the āsana, though it is also useful to persons of all ages and all types—to the sick and healthy, young and old, family man or brahmācārī.

Since the health of the body and vigour of the mind are dominantly dependent on wholesome sex secretions, a loss of semen or of its analogue in women must be controlled. A variety of circumstances can result in the loss of these secretions through over-indulgence in sex, etc. According to classic yogic concepts, one does not become a brahmācārī merely by non-indulgence in the sex act but only by possessing wholesome and unpolluted sex secretions. Only one who guards the sex secretions in the right way can be called a brahmācārī. Since the Sīvanī Nāḍī or Vīryavahā Nāḍī is brought under conscious control by the practice of this āsana, everyone should practise it. The āsana very quickly induces concentration of the mind and stability of the body.

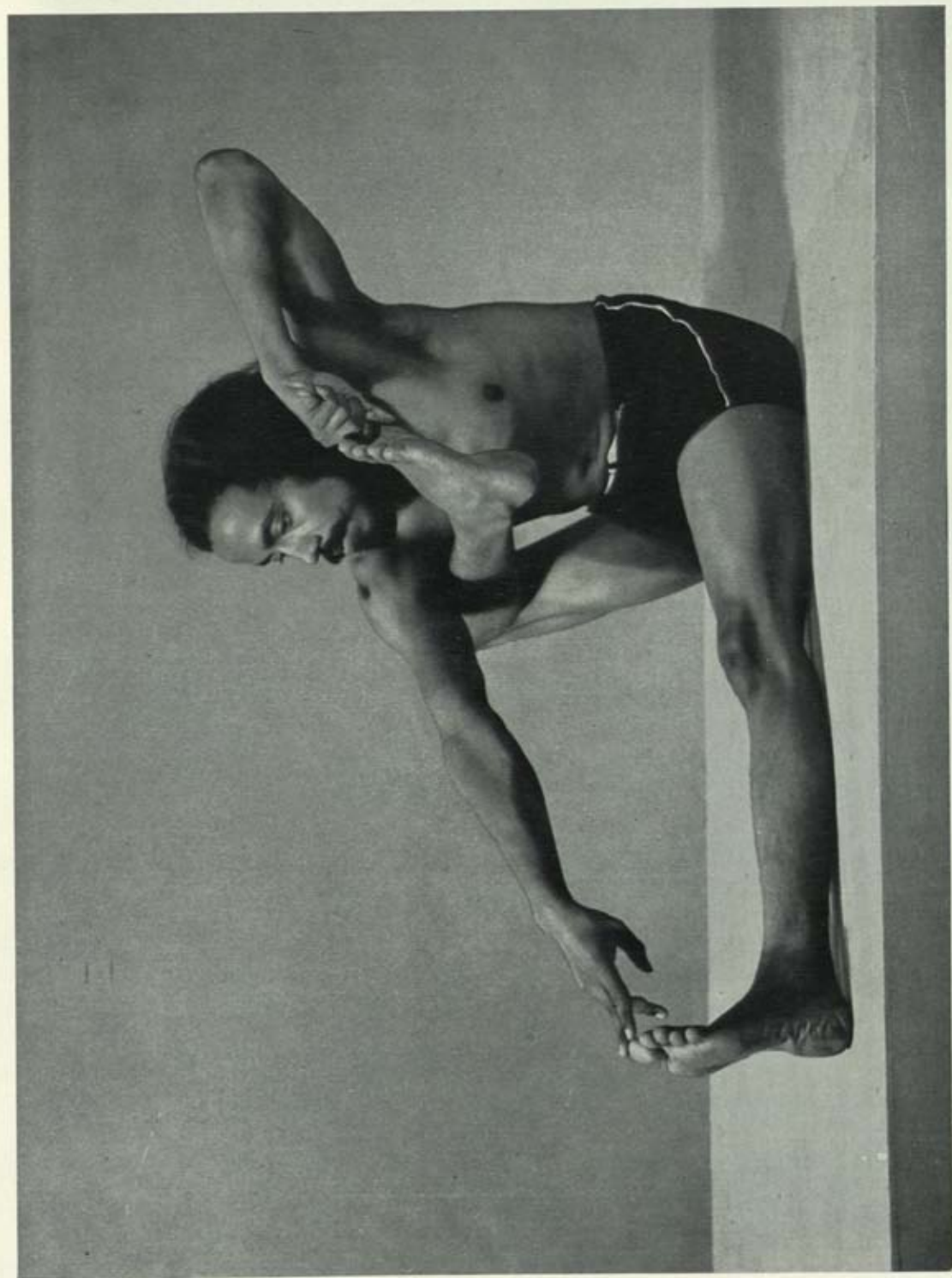
## 47. GARBHĀSANA (FOETUS POSTURE)

### P O S T U R E

Place the left heel on the right thigh and the right heel on the left thigh. Insert the arms through the space between the calf and the thigh; they should go so far down that the elbows emerge below the calves and the thighs (Plate 73). The knees should then be raised towards the shoulders as far as possible and the hands should be placed on the jaws. The body is maintained in this position (Plate 74).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

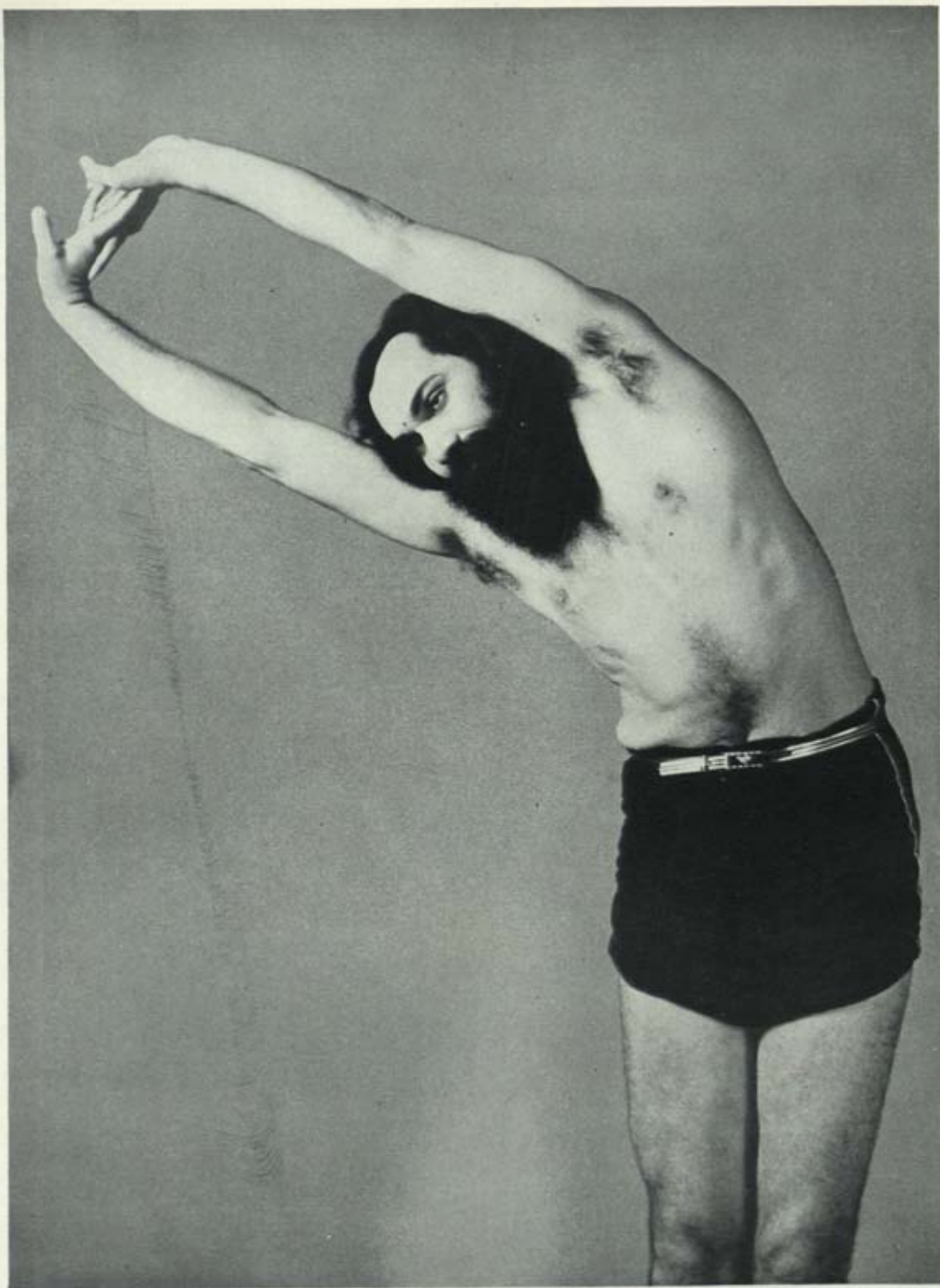
It is believed that this āsana increases the intake of oxygen by the body accompanied by the consequent elimination of carbon dioxide from the system. This results in making the entire body of the yogi beautiful and the



Ākarpadhanurāsana

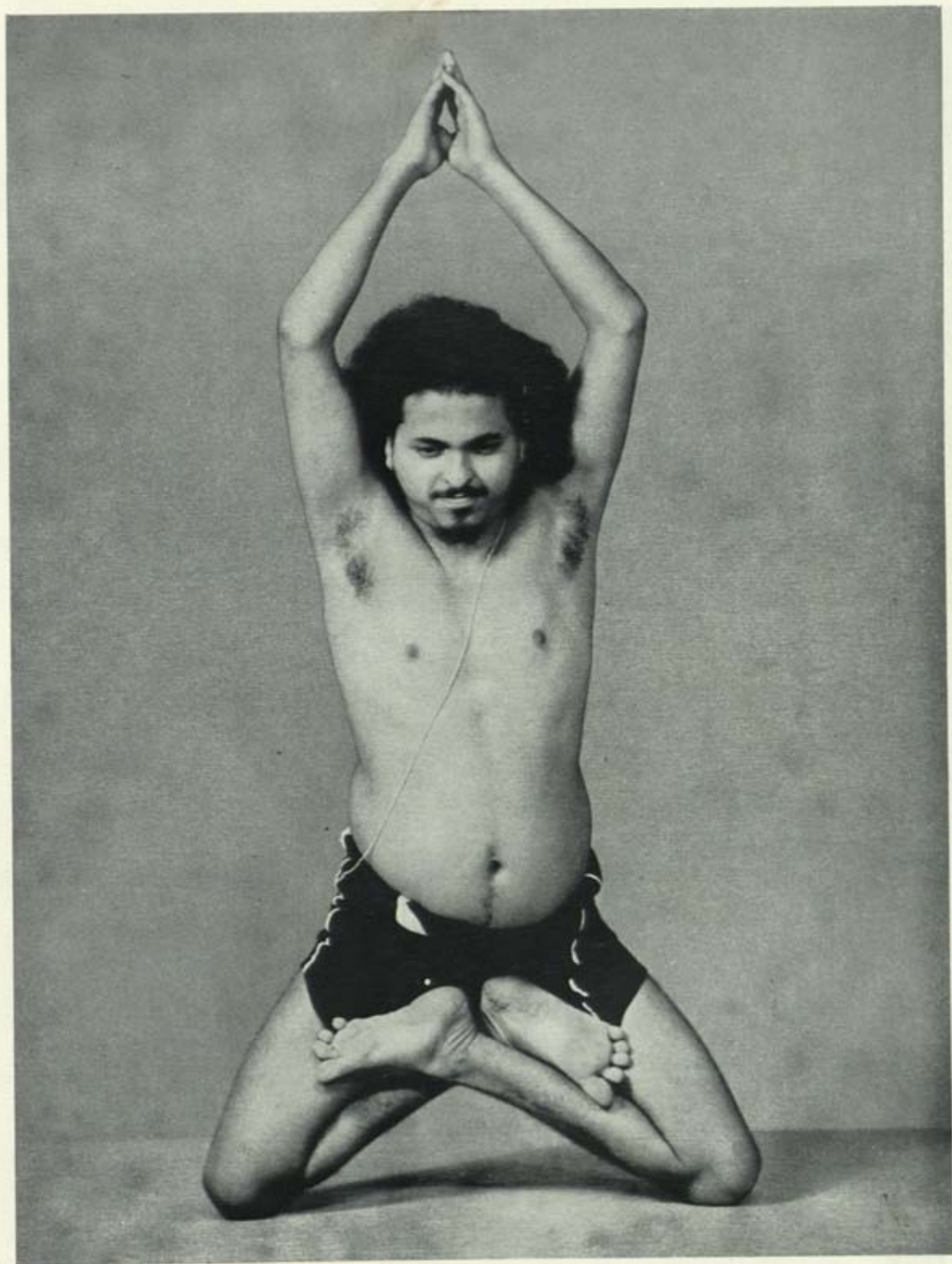
PLATE 69; Holding the toes of the feet raise the right foot to touch the left ear





Urdhva-hastottānāsana

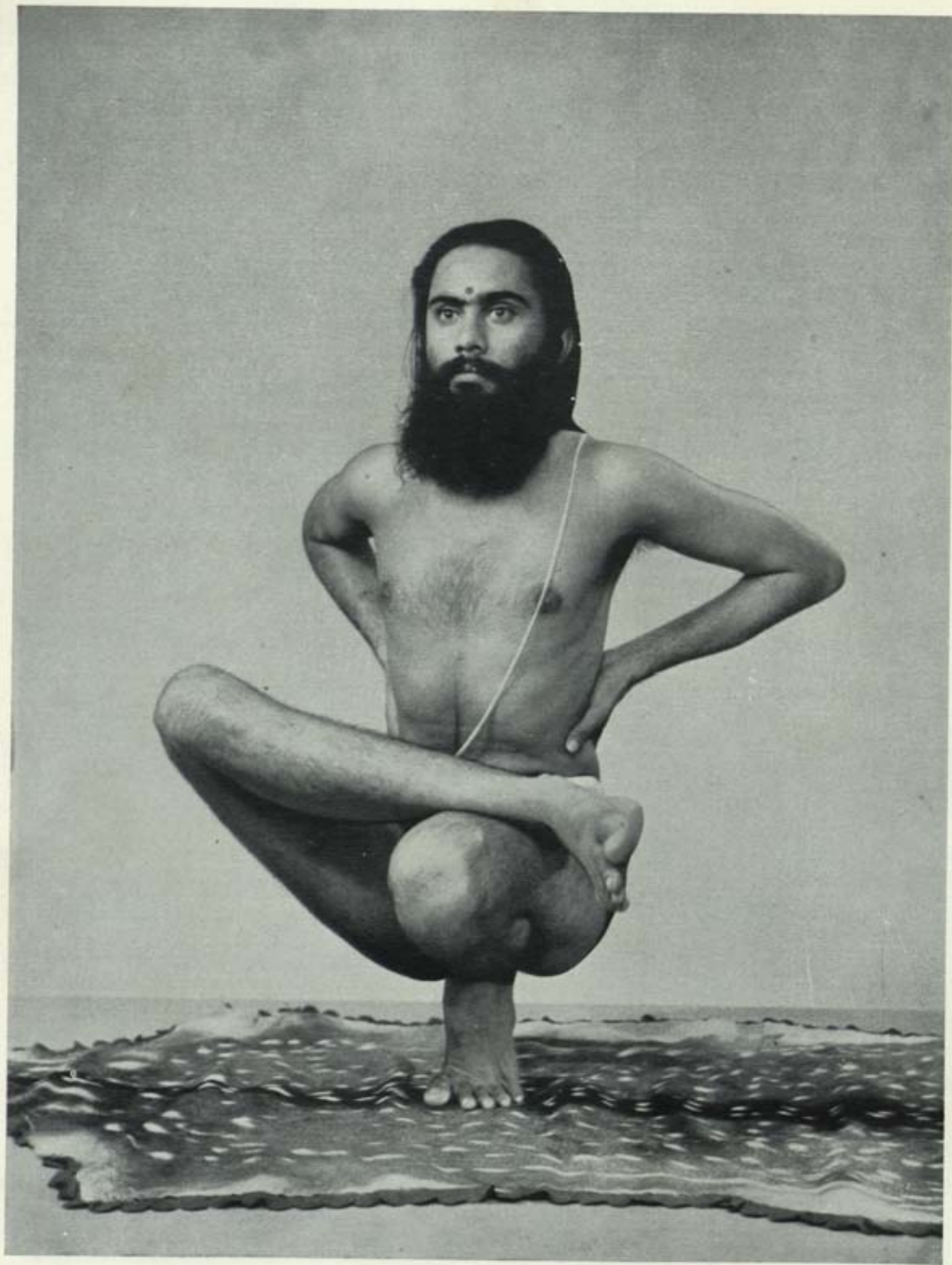
PLATE 70: Swing to the right and the left alternately



Parvatāsana

PLATE 71: Raise the body, after doing the Padmāsana, and balance it on the knees only





Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana

PLATE 72: With buttocks resting on the left heel, place the other heel on the left thigh

face radiant. The āsana combines all the advantages of Padmāsana and Baddhapadmāsana and is particularly useful for women. Its effect on the womb is excellent and unparalleled to any of the other 84 lac āsanās. Its practice proves very useful and of therapeutic value in a number of uterine ailments. Should a young girl at the age of 14 or so start the practice of this āsana, there will be almost no chances of uterine disorders developing in later life. If women practise this āsana before childbirth they would hardly suffer any pains. The practice of the āsana after childbirth helps in restoring vitality and beauty within a period of three months.

A large number of uterine disorders are cured by this āsana if performed by women. It is immaterial whether they wish to bear children or not. The health of a woman is in no small measure dependent upon the health of the uterus. Irregularities in the menstrual period, and in the duration of the menstrual flow, abnormalities in the colour of the monthly discharge, or giddiness during menses are all symptomatic of an unhealthy womb. These disorders in turn may result in a variety of consequential disorders such as sterility or possibly the birth of deformed or weak children.

The āsana is useful not only for women but for men as well. Some persons give up the practice of this āsana because it is difficult. This is a grave mistake. The practice of this single āsana alone provides more benefits than a hundred other āsanās, since it exercises practically every part of the body; every tissue and organ has its blood circulation improved; the abdomen, lungs, chest, shoulders, waist, thighs, knees, calves, buttocks, spine and all other parts of the body gain strength and agility. The practice of this āsana wards off the onset of senility and its regular practice is rejuvenating. Every student of yoga should practise it and realise its untold potentialities.

#### 48. BRAHMACARYĀSANA (CELIBACY POSTURE)

##### POSTURE

Kneeling on the ground, bend the legs on either side and place the hands on the knees. Keep the buttocks and anus in contact with the ground and remain seated in a relaxed state (Plate 75).



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana sublimates the flow of sex secretions in the Viryavāhā Nāḍī and reduces the heat of Sīvānī Nāḍī (symbolically implying that the cruder forms of sex urges are replaced by a sublimated integration of sex drives). As a result, disorders like wet dreams are cured. Persons afflicted by this disorder are advised to practise this āsana for about five to ten minutes before going to bed. It enhances virility and enables one to concentrate.

This āsana proves particularly useful if practised at the time of retiring to sleep after meals. It may be noted that although, in general, it is forbidden to practise āsanās after meals, this one (i.e. Brahmācaryāśana) can be safely performed even after a full meal.

### 49. UTTHITA PADMĀSANA (UPLIFTED-LOTUS POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground, with the left foot placed on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh, so that the heels should come in contact with each other below the navel, as in Padmāsana. The whole body is then lifted from the ground, supported on the hands which are on the side of the body (Plate 76).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana provides adequate circulation of blood to the hands, elbows, shoulders, chest, etc., and generates extraordinary strength in the upper extremities. It is particularly useful for those who are required to use their hands in manual labour. It is a useful āsana for combating muscular weakness. The heart and the lungs get toned up by it.

It is also very useful for women, since the mechanical pressure exerted by the heels while in Padmāsana influences and improves the condition of the uterus.

The āsana is not particularly difficult to perform. It generates fearlessness and is particularly indicated for women who are nervous and timid.

It is a very useful āsana for developing a beautiful chest and gracefully proportioned upper limbs.

The āsana is useful for both men and women, but is specially recommended for women.

## 50 MRGĀSANA (DEER POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground, with the right leg bent and the foot placed on the ground. The left leg should be bent and while the knee rests on the ground the foot should rest on the side. In this position sit in a relaxed manner while keeping the left hand on the cheek and the right hand on the right knee (Plate 77). The āsana should be repeated by using alternate limbs, i.e. by placing the right foot on the side and the left foot on the ground. There is a variation of this āsana. In this, the heel of the left foot is brought forward as far as possible, i.e. towards the chest, and instead of being placed in front of the body, the right foot is bent backward and is held by the right hand. Instead of keeping the left hand on the cheek, it holds the left knee (Plate 78).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana produces lightness in the body, and generates deer-like dexterity and agility. Painful conditions of the hips and the knees disappear. This āsana also develops the facility to sense the presence and the movements of animals and human beings within a radius of two hundred to a thousand yards. It is this faculty which enables even a sleeping deer to be aware of danger and to protect itself from the most ferocious creatures, like lions. The practice of this āsana makes the body light and the feet nimble and improves the capacity to run and jump. The lower limbs get streamlined and the legs become beautiful and well proportioned. The āsana is specially recommended for those who have fat legs and rough skin. The skin becomes fine and lustrous, which in turn makes the whole body beautiful and radiant. While performing this āsana the eyes should gaze steadily if full advantage is to be derived from it. Blink as infrequently as possible while performing this āsana.



## 51. PAVANAMUKTĀSANA (WIND-LIBERATING POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the feet, calves and thighs of the extended legs touching each other. The knees should be drawn up against the chest and clasped by the arms. The trunk is kept straight through the pressure of the thighs. Look straight in front. This constitutes Pavanamuktāsana (Plate 79). A variation of this procedure consists in drawing up only one knee while the other remains on the ground. The chest and the neck are bent backwards (Plate 80). The āsana can be repeated after alternating the order of the legs.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana speedily relieves and expels accumulations of gas in the abdomen. The body feels light and the digestion improves. Those who suffer from frequent belching and eructations due to the disorderly and disturbed Apāna-Vāyu are strongly recommended the practice of this āsana. A continued practice is a sure cure for almost all gaseous disorders of the abdomen.

The āsana appears deceptively simple but its occult mysteries can be mastered only on being systematically trained under the direct supervision of an accomplished Guru.

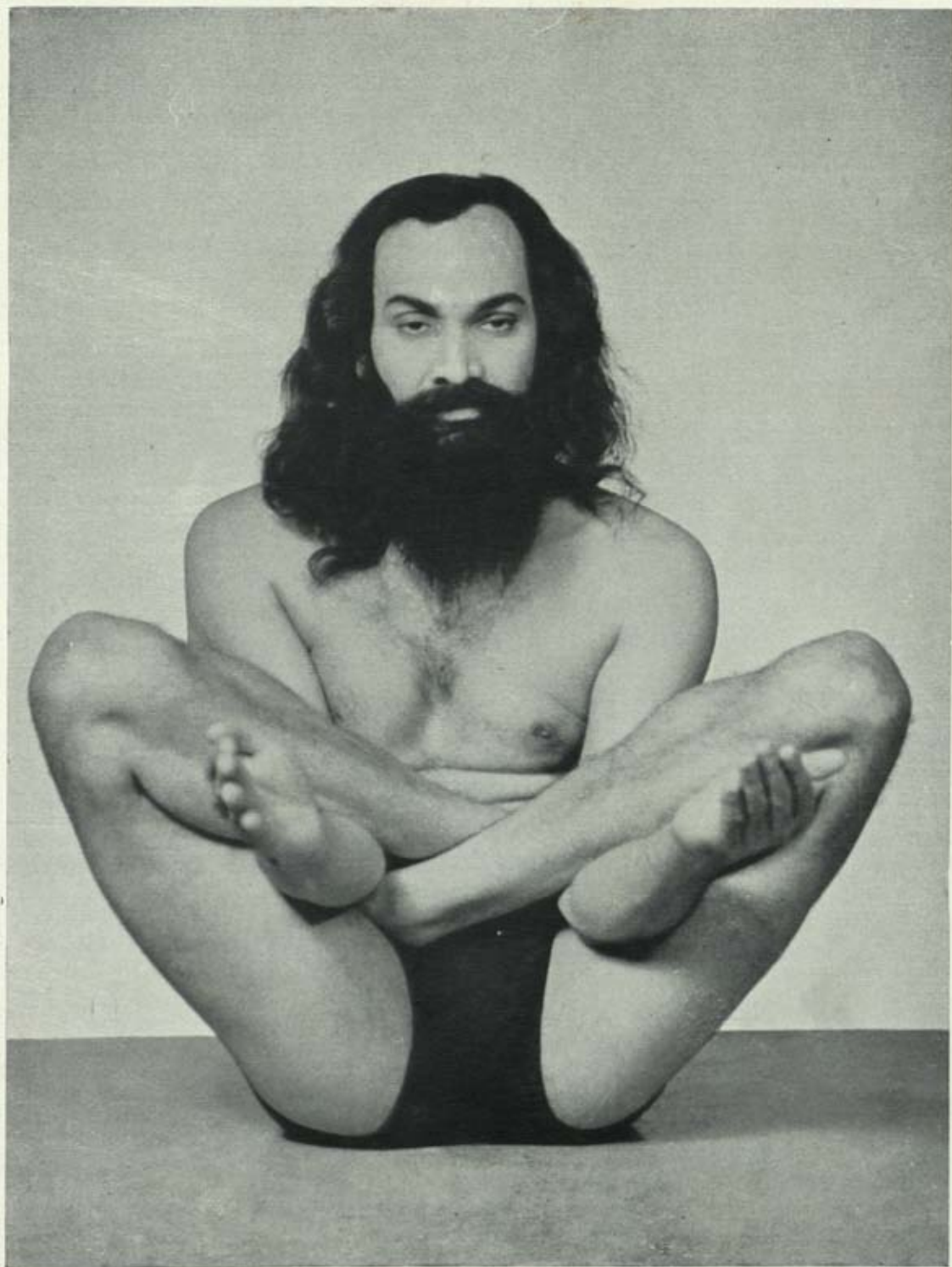
## 52. ŪRDHVASARVĀNGĀSANA (SHOULDER-STAND POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the back with feet together. Raise the trunk so that the weight of the body is borne by the shoulders. The waist is supported by the hands and the body is kept absolutely straight from the shoulders to the feet (Plate 81).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana reduces corpulence and relieves the body of



Garbhāsana

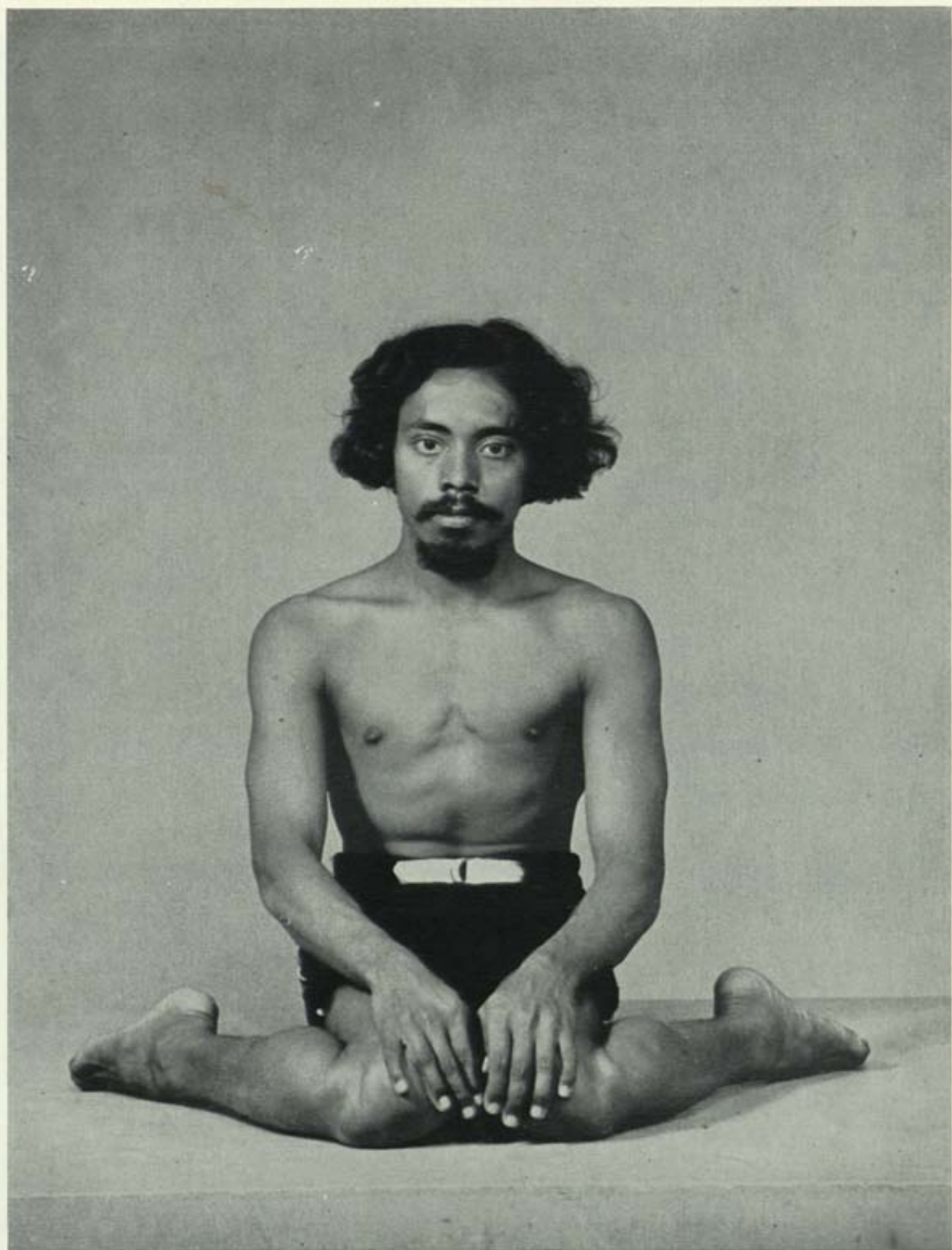
PLATE 73: After doing Padmāsana insert the arms between the calves and thighs





## Garbhāsana

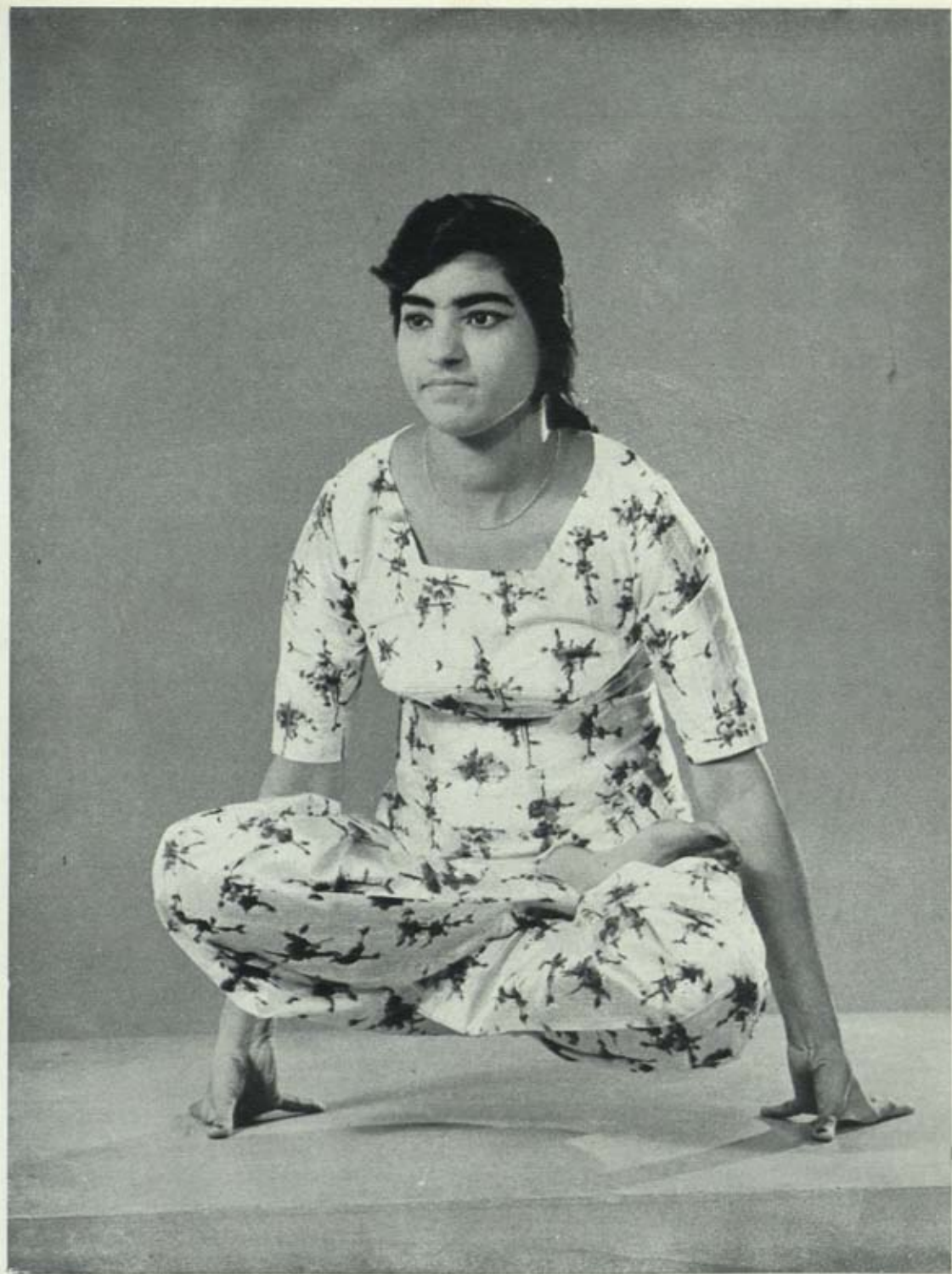
PLATE 74: Raise the knees as high as possible and hold the hands against the jaws



Brahmacaryāsana

PLATE 75: Kneel keeping the hands on the knees and lower the body so that the buttocks touch the ground





Utthita-Padmāsana

PLATE 76: Sitting in Padmāsana, raise the body from the ground, supporting it on the fingers

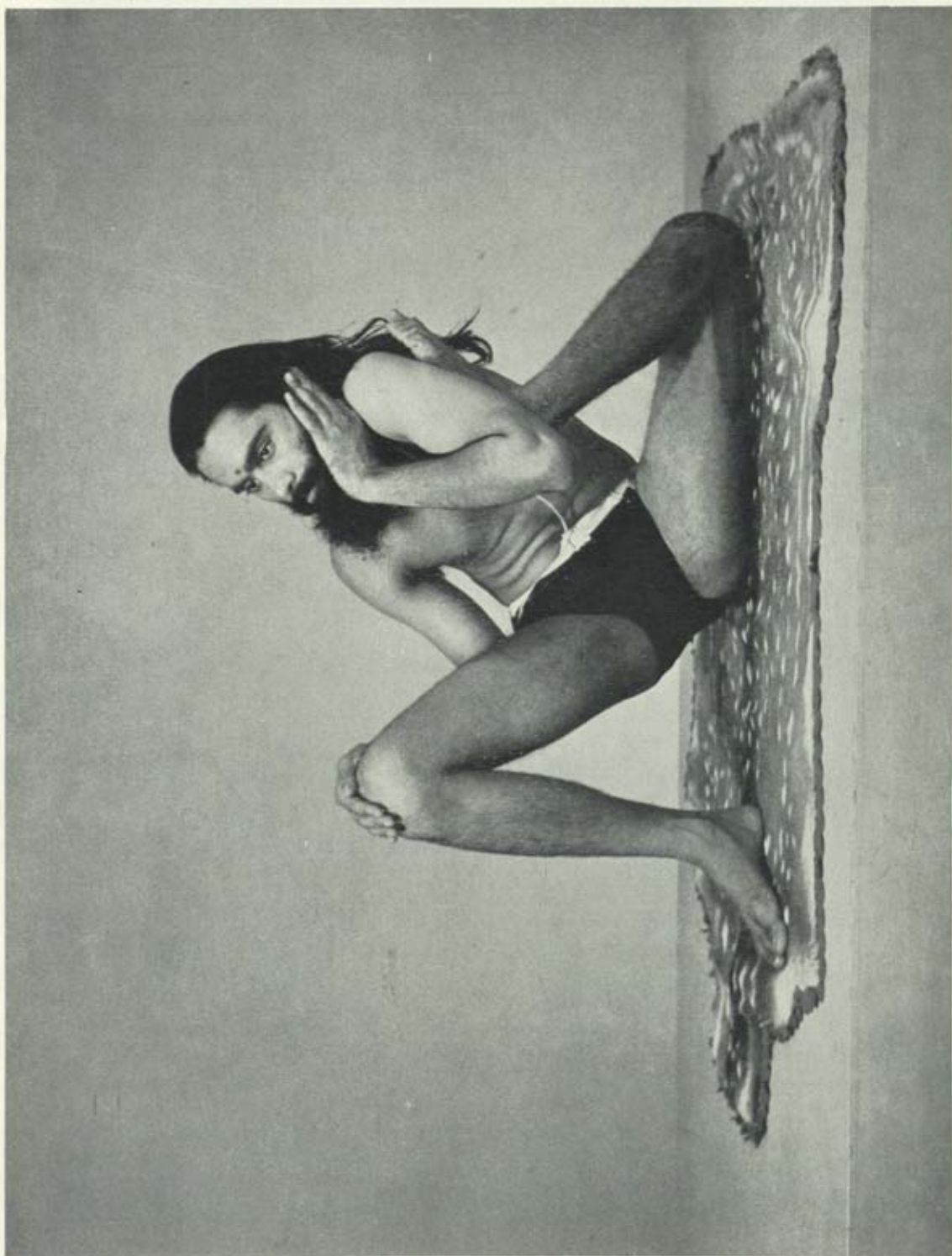
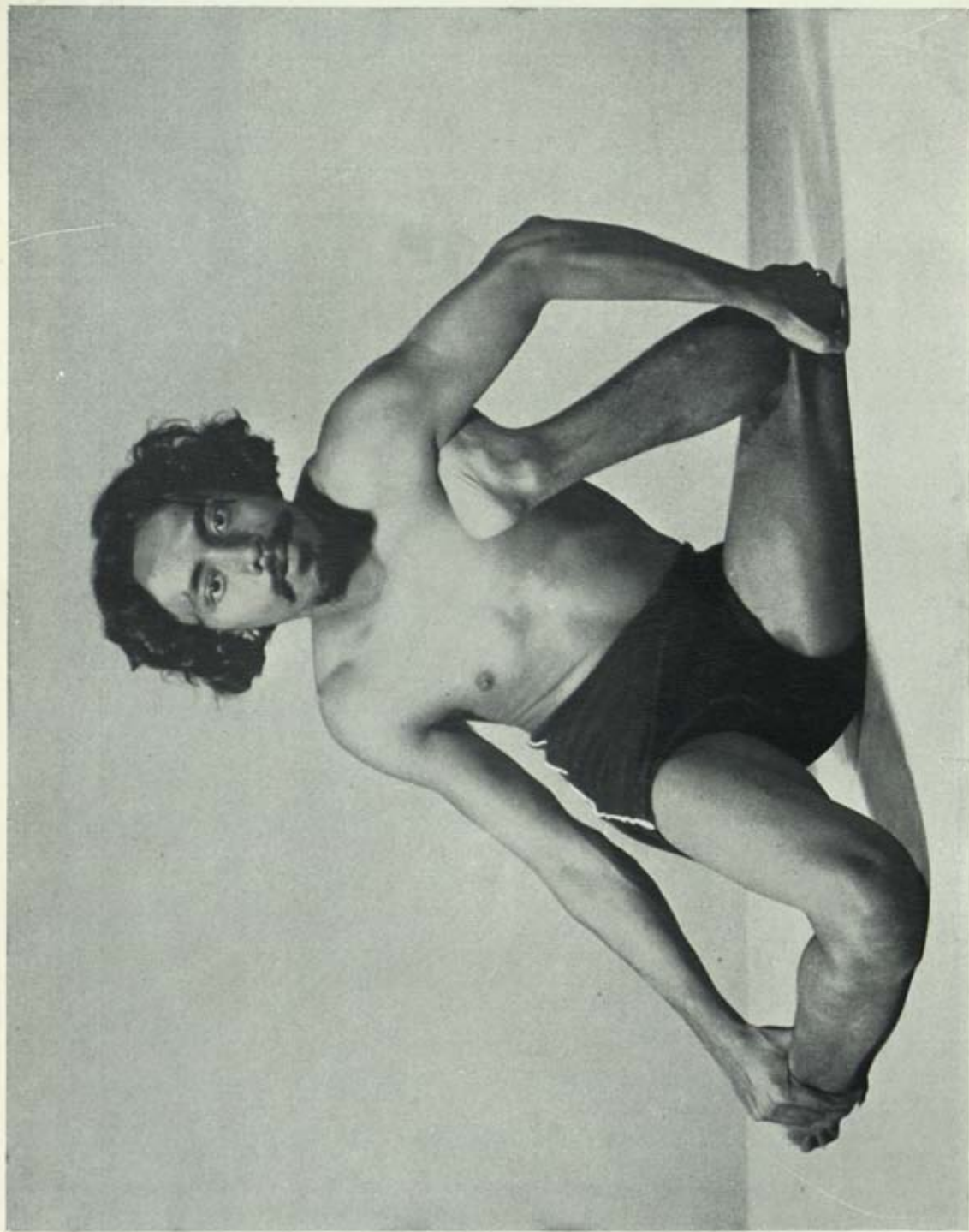


PLATE 77: With the left foot raised to the side, the right foot should be on the ground. The left hand should be on the cheek

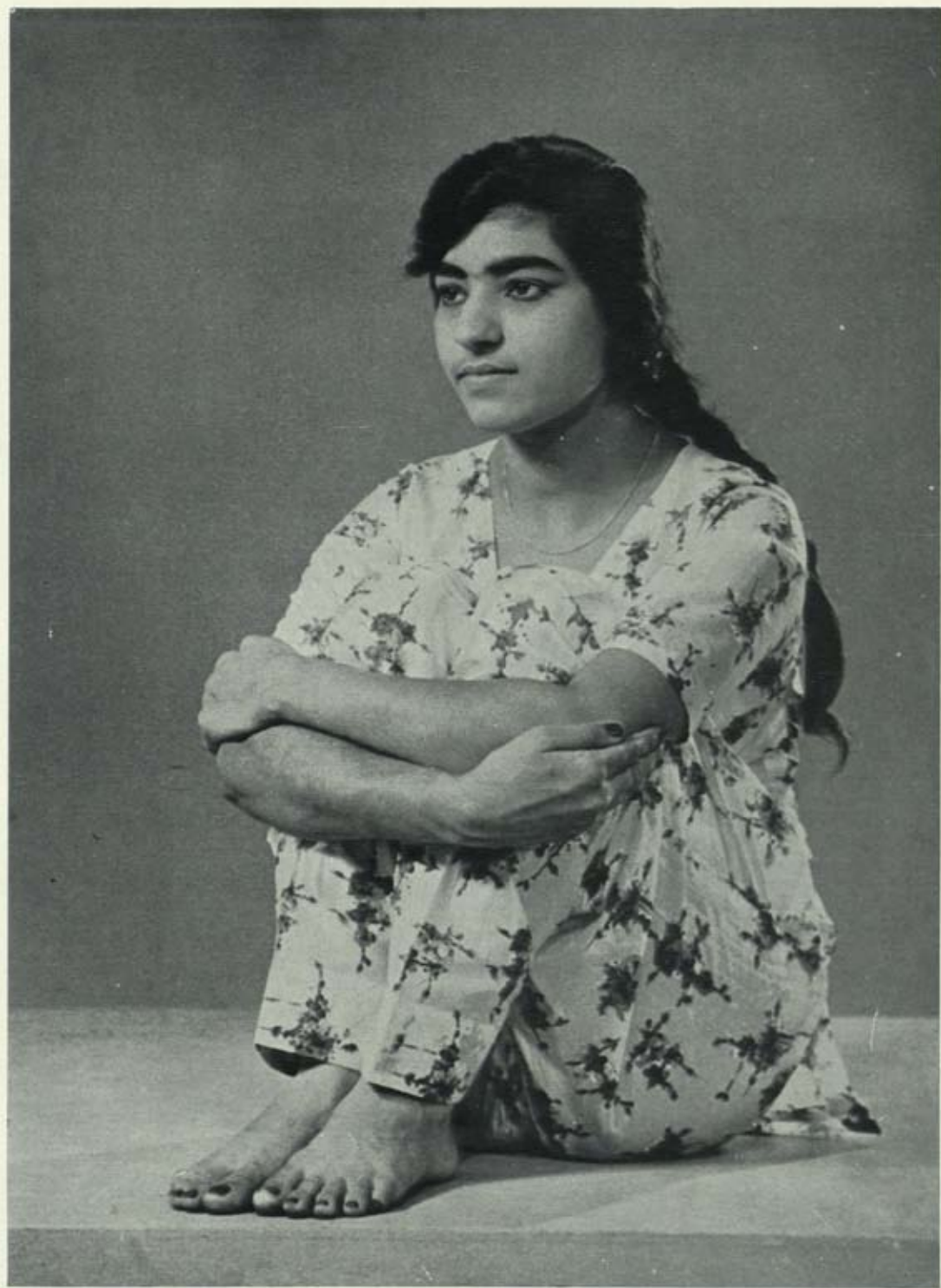
Mṛgāsana





## Mrgāsana

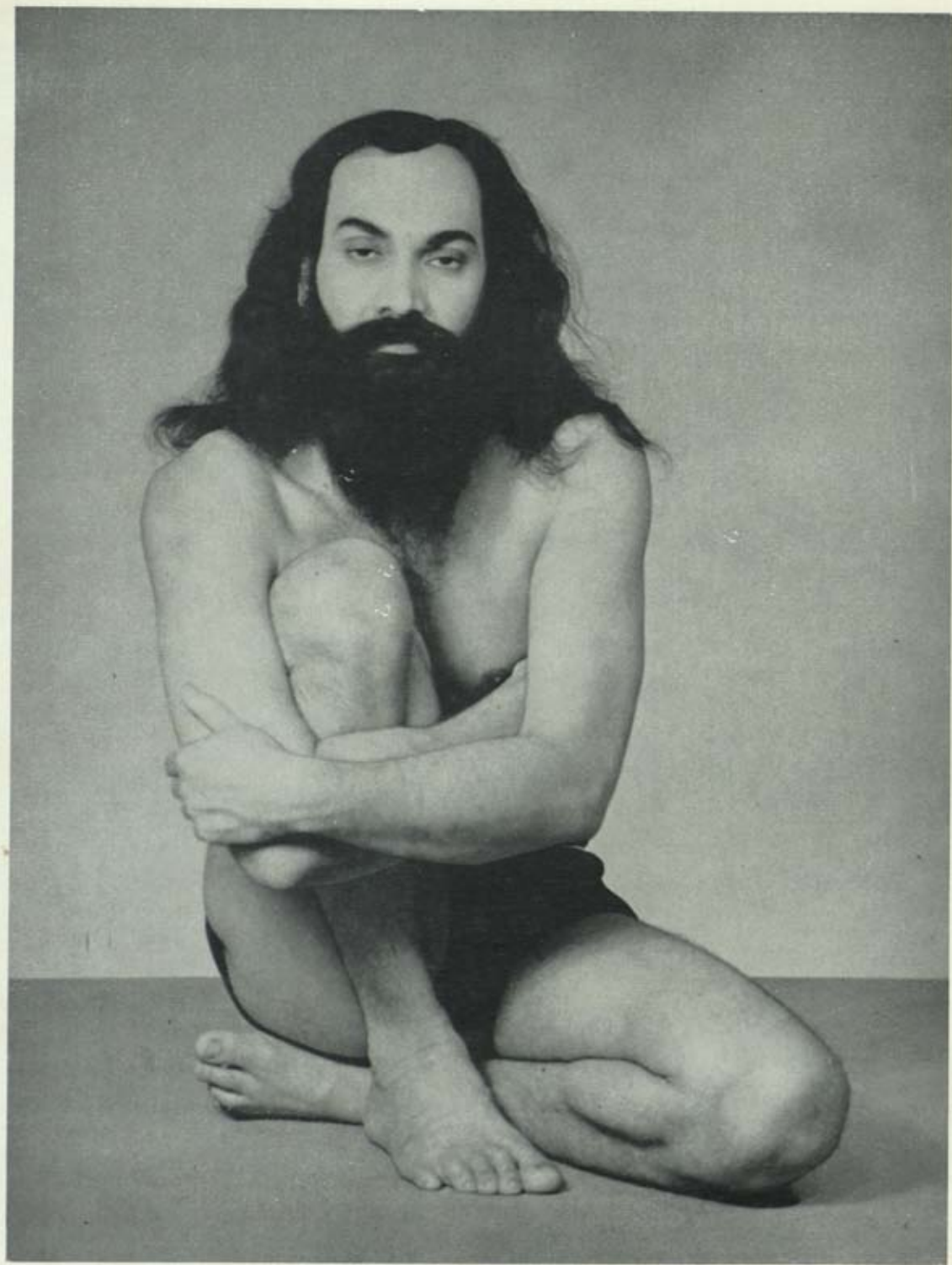
PLATE 78: The left foot is placed on the chest and the right leg is bent backward with the right hand on the heel. The left hand is on the left knee



Pavanamuktāsana

PLATE 79: Press the knees against the chest while the trunk is kept straight





Pavanamuktāsana

PLATE 80: Placing the left heel under the buttocks clasp the right leg tightly with the arms

bad odours of sweat and other bodily secretions. It improves the digestion. The āsana is recommended for reducing the waist line. Many of its effects are similar to those of Śīrṣāsana (Head-stand). It ensures plentiful flow of blood to the heart and the brain, which in turn prevents premature greying of hair or alopecia. Patients of high blood pressure and heart diseases are warned against practising it. They must perform it only after these diseases have been normalised by the practice of other yogic techniques. Patients of hernia should practise it only after they have had sufficient and proper training from a Guru and then also in combination with the abdominal lock (Uḍḍīyāna-bandha). The practice of this āsana immediately provides relief in cases of even the mildest displacement of the uterus. Painful conditions of the uterus are promptly relieved by its practice.

Women ought to practise this āsana along with the abdominal lock (or Uḍḍīyāna-bandha).

The āsana proves useful to patients of tonsillar diseases as well as of ocular ailments. It is beneficial to singers. Persons who are extremely sensitive to heat or cold in the feet are strongly recommended this āsana. It makes the back strong and the hips graceful and well proportioned. Its daily practice wards off the onset of old age and the face glows. Those who cannot practise Śīrṣāsana must practise this āsana, which gives almost similar benefits.

### 53. VIKATĀSANA (FORMIDABLE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Squat on the toes of the right foot with the heels raised. The right knee should be bent to touch the ground and the right hand kept on it. The left foot should be held with the left hand and turned to such an extent that the toes should come very close to the navel. The left knee should then be held down by the left hand while gazing straight in front (Plate 82).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana, even for a few minutes, relieves fatigue caused by long walking. The āsana is useful for arthritic disorders. Its practice



makes the hips, thighs, calves, knees, and toes beautiful, well developed, and well proportioned, and is thus useful for dancers. Rigidity of the vessels and nerves can be reduced by its practice.

Although the āsana is difficult to perform, yet it is one of those very few extraordinary āsanas which, in the shortest time, are capable of providing unparalleled benefits. Hence, its popularity amongst the yogīs despite the difficulty in its performance. Every yogī makes it a point to practise it regularly even if to a limited extent.

## 54. ŚĪRṢACAKRĀSANA (CEPHALIC-WHEEL POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand keeping a foot's distance between the outstretched arms and between the feet. The head is then lowered to touch the ground and the whole body is swung to the right and to the left in a wheel-like fashion without moving the head and the hands. This, as illustrated in Plate 83, is Śīrṣacakrāsana.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana increases the strength and power of the arms; it makes the shoulders strong, and the upper limbs which get an improved circulation of blood become muscular and beautiful. The āsana is held to be beneficial to the heart as well. Respiratory and asthmatic disorders are relieved by it. It is very useful for patients of pulmonary tuberculosis. It makes the chest broad, the waist slim and supple, and the neck as well as the eyes also derive equal advantage. The ribs remain pliant and elastic as a result of which one can remain young both in body and spirit. A daily practice results in keeping the spine flexible and firm. This is the only āsana which imparts rubber-like elasticity to every limb of the body. With advancing years, products of metabolism and waste materials get deposited in the joints. This reduces mobility and creates a sense of aging. The practice of this āsana prolongs the period of youth. The rigidity of the ribs induces immobility of the thoracic cage, which, in turn, impoverishes the gaseous exchange in the lungs and consequently various respiratory ailments and even tuberculosis may

develop. This is also counteracted by this āsana. In fact, it is held that the benefits of this single āsana are equal to the combined effects of tens of āsanās. If there is no time to perform fifty āsanās, the practice of this āsana alone is sufficient even for five minutes a day.

N.B.: During the entire course of the performance of this āsana the palms and the head should be kept perfectly immobilised at one point on the ground. Even the slightest motion vitiates the good effect.

## 55. AŚVATTHĀSANA (HOLY FIG TREE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Standing, the right foot should be raised back as far as possible. The left arm should be raised upward and the right arm stretched sideways. The chest should be expanded (Plate 84). The āsana can be repeated, by alternating the position of the legs.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana makes all the ten Vāyus of the body, viz. Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Vyāna, Udāna, Nāga, Kūrma, Kṛkālā, Devadatta, and Dhanañjaya, to circulate freely and evenly. The pīpal tree is regarded as the best of all trees in the world. Some hold that unlike other trees which give out oxygen only in the day and release carbon-dioxide in the night, the pīpal tree continues to release oxygen even in the night. It is on this account that amongst Hindus it is forbidden to cut down the pīpal tree. The practice of this āsana is believed to ensure the enhanced intake of 'Prāṇa' in the body, i.e. it allows a greater intake of oxygen and a greater release of carbon-dioxide and other gaseous impurities from the body. It thus imparts health and beauty.

The āsana is extremely useful for women, since it can be practised even during pregnancy. During pregnancy, occasionally, unusual stresses and strains develop in the respiratory system and the expectant mother may feel some difficulty in breathing. This āsana prevents such troubles, improves the circulation of the blood and even alleviates labour pains.



## 56. KANDAPĪDĀSANA (ROOT-SQUEEZING POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the heels near the navel and the reverted toes of the feet pressed to the abdomen. The hands should be placed either near the chest or on the knees (Plate 85).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

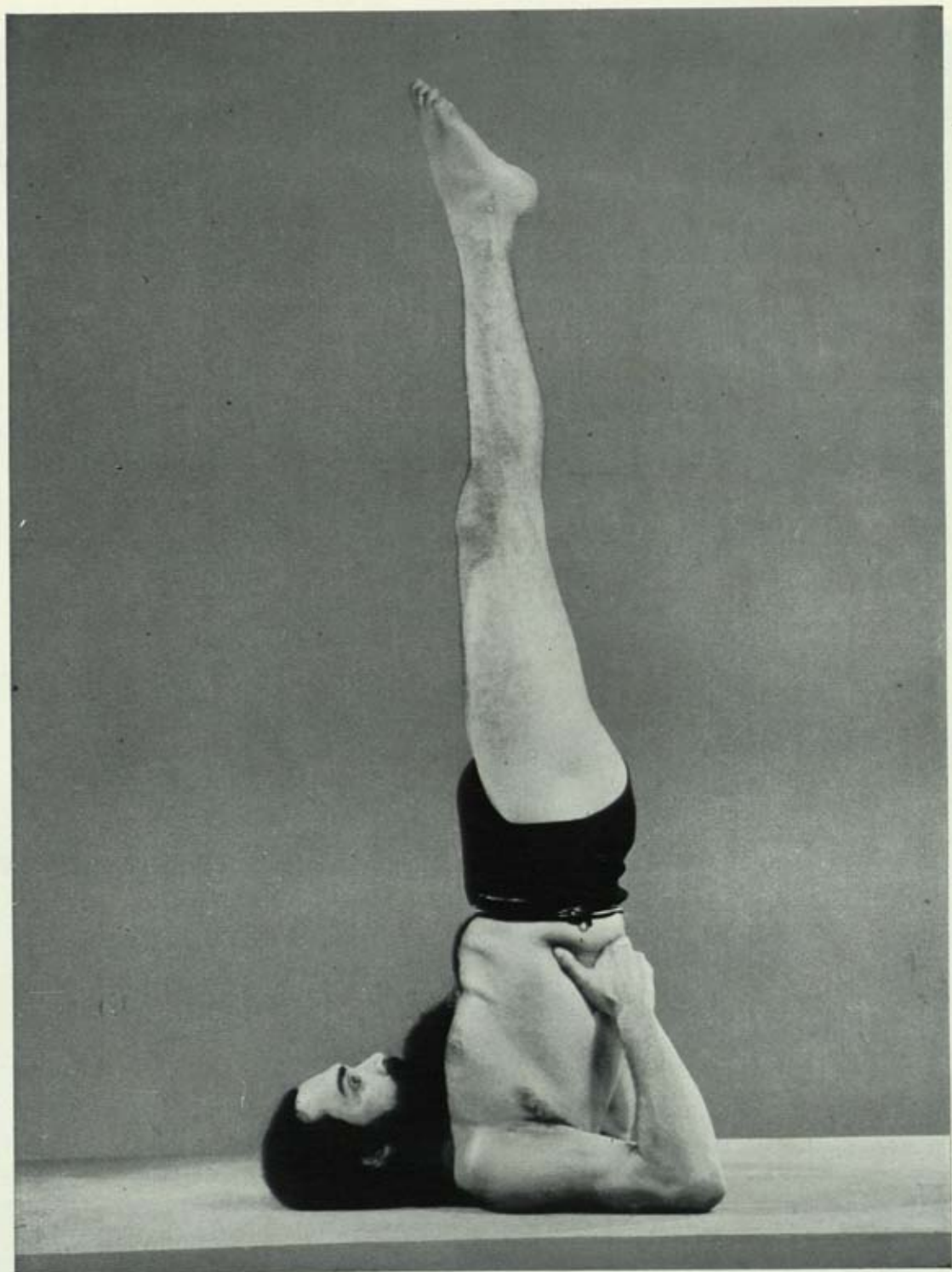
The practice of this āsana contracts the root-region or Maṇipūra Cakra. This region is supposed, according to classic yogic teaching, to be the site of origin of the 72,000 nāḍīs which are spread throughout the body. This root-region is of great significance to the yogīs. It is through the contraction and agitation of this region that the great yogīs can motivate the Prāṇa along the course of Suṣumṇā and thereby traverse all the six Cakras and finally make it reach the Brahma-randhra area, which helps in attaining a state of divine self-realisation and contemplation, i.e. Samādhi. Ordinarily, only yogīs of highest calibre practise this āsana. Its special features and benefits are detailed in the volume on Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma (the third volume of the Āśrama Granthamālā).

The āsana is undoubtedly helpful to yogīs in attaining the highest and the best in yoga. But it is also remarkably useful for the layman as it can cure chronic splenomegal and splenic ailments, disorders of the liver, etc. Many abdominal disorders also get cured. Its practice results in a normalised and proper functioning of all the nāḍīs of the body. The feet, thighs, and knees get strengthened by this āsana. Its practice facilitates the performance of innumerable āsanās.

The āsana is somewhat difficult to perform, and, hence, it should be practised only after seeking initial guidance from a capable teacher.

## 57. ARDHA MATSYENDRĀSANA (HALF-MATSYENDRA SPINE-TWIST POSTURE)

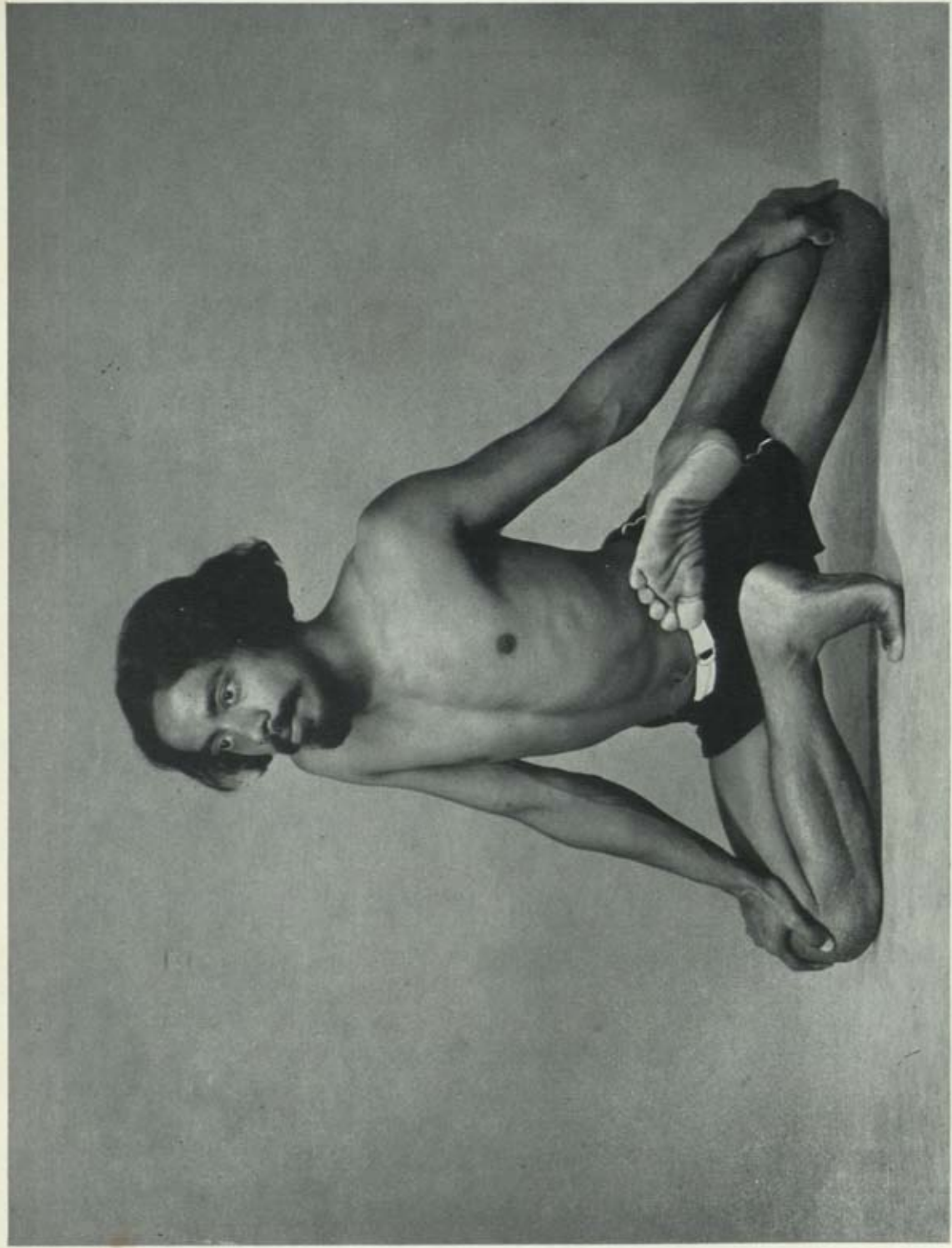
Matsyendrāsana and half-Matsyendra have been so named because a great yogī of the past, Matsyendranātha, sat mostly in these āsanās. It has been



Urdhvasarvāṅgāsana

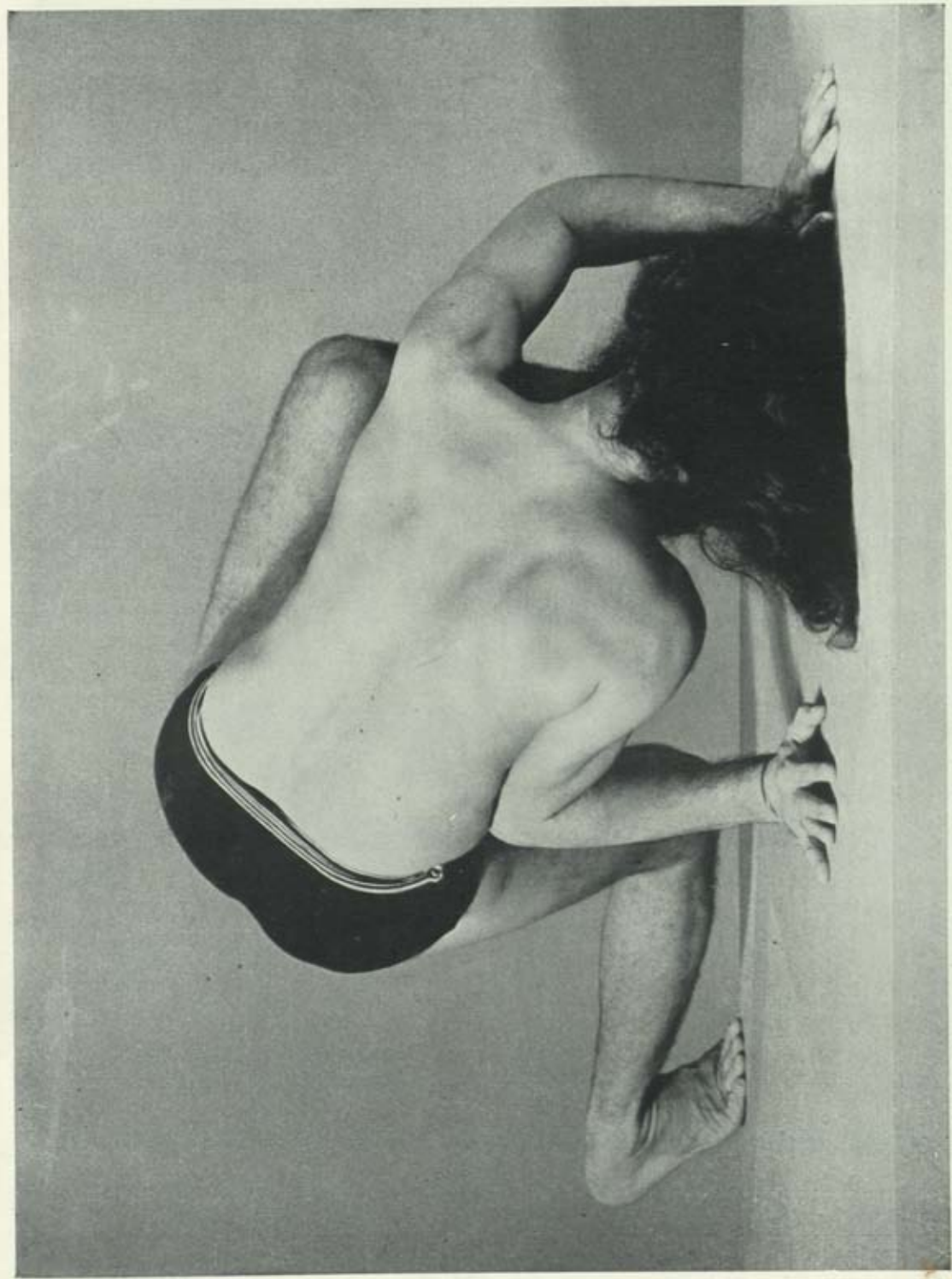
PLATE 81: Raise the body supporting it only on the shoulders, with the hands on the waist





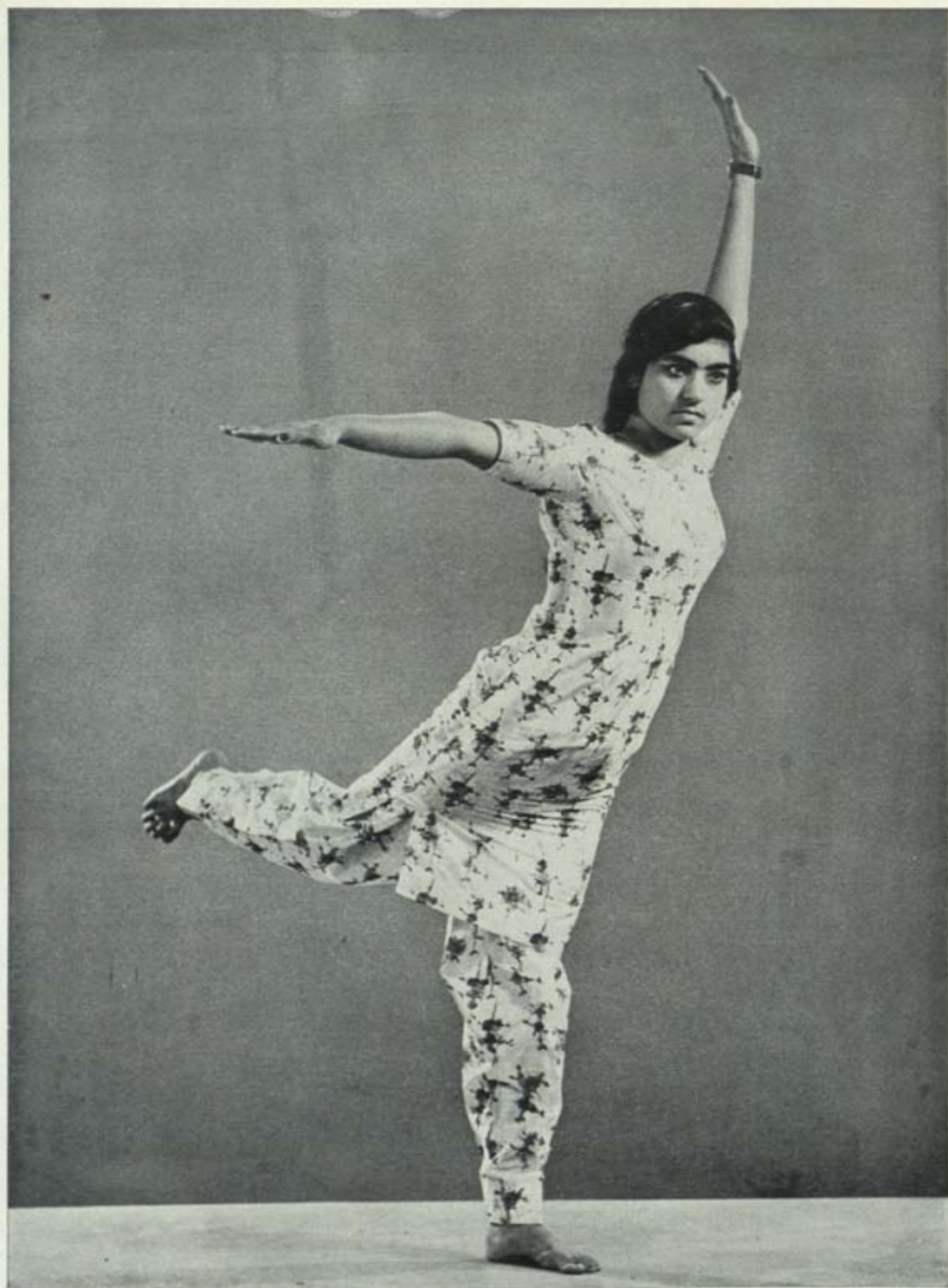
## Vikatāsana

PLATE 82: The left foot is raised so that the toes touch the navel while the knee is held down by the hand; the right knee should be bent to touch the ground



Śiṛṣācakrāsana  
PLATE 83: Without moving the hands and the head, the body should swing to the right and left





Aśvatthāsana

PLATE 84: Raise the left arm upwards the right leg backwards the right arm sideways

also called the spine-twist posture by modern authors on account of its action on the spine.

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left leg bent and the heel under the anus. The right foot should then be placed near the left knee on the ground. The left arm should encircle the knee and the hand should grasp the toes of the right foot. The right arm should be taken behind the back around the waist in an attempt to touch the navel. While looking straight in front the chin should touch the shoulder as illustrated in Plate 86. The āsana should be repeated by using the alternate limbs.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The physiological benefits of this āsana are similar to those of Matsyendrāsana. The āsana is as efficient in the eradication of disease as it is for unifying Prāṇa and Apāna in Suṣumṇā and for awakening Kuṇḍalinī in order to attain deep contemplation and self-realization (Samādhi). However, since not more than one person in a thousand can do it correctly, the great yogī Matsyendranātha, moved by his compassion for men, invented this half-Matsyendrāsana, so that those who could not practise the Matsyendrāsana may derive almost as much benefit from Ardha-Matsyendrasana.

#### 58. BAKĀSANA (CRANE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Place the palms on the ground. Raise the feet above the ground with knees bent and pressing the arms. Hold the body above the ground, keeping only the hands on the ground (Plate 87).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The arms and hands acquire great strength through the practice of this āsana. It builds up cardiac reserves as well. Ailments of the shoulders are



cured. It develops the faculty of keeping the body in balance. It induces the development of tolerance or a relative insensitivity towards many painful and discomforting conditions of the body. The āsana has been held to be an important means of inducing mental concentration.

## 59. ṬIṬṬIBHĀSANA (LAPWING POSTURE)

### P O S T U R E

Lie on the back. Holding the big toes with the hands, raise the legs as high as possible. Care should be taken to see that the arms and the legs are entirely straight (Plate 88). A variation of this standard practice is to sit on the ground and raise the legs while the entire body is lifted on the hands (Plate 89). Both the variants are known as Ṭiṭṭibhāsana.

### E F F E C T S   A N D   B E N E F I T S

The āsana is believed to produce a wholesome effect on the bones and the skeletal system of the body. The muscles of the entire body are also strengthened by its practice. The lapwing is a tiny bird which sleeps with its feet towards the sky. Poets have interpreted this to mean that the bird keeps the feet raised towards the sky as a precautionary measure against the sky falling on it and its eggs during sleep. A regular practice of this āsana makes the body so strong that ordinary ailments never occur. It is believed that the lapwing, a small bird, is so powerful that it can overpower a bird even four times its size, with the result that even fair-sized birds keep away from it. It is a common observation that a couple of lapwings are sufficient to tire a kite, that is if the kite manages to escape alive. Similarly, the practice of the āsana bestows tremendous power on the yogī. Since the physical, mental as well as the spiritual powers improve on account of the practice of this āsana, the Ṭiṭṭibhāsana has its own unique significance.

## 60. VIPARĪTA-ŚIRŚA-DVIHASTA BADDHĀSANA (REVERSED CRANIO-MANUAL-LOCKED POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground. Bend the head. The arms and the chest should then be pushed through the space between the legs to such an extent that the area above the navel should be clearly visible at the back. The ankles should be held with the hands (Plate 90). Being very difficult, the āsana as described above is hardly ever practised by laymen. In an easier variation of this āsana, the posture depicted in Plate 91 is to be attained. Here the difference is that, instead of both the shoulders, only one shoulder and a portion of the head protrude between the legs. The practice of this āsana for a few days makes its performance quite easy.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana makes the spine extraordinarily supple. The head gets plentiful supplies of blood; hence its utility in diseases of the brain. The āsana is also very useful for maladies of the knees, thighs, and calves. It can cure piles. The āsana is useful for the eyes and in ocular ailments as well. Premature greying of the hair, shedding of hair or wrinkling of the face can all be retarded by this āsana. Those who experience giddiness are strongly advised to practise it. This is the only āsana which ensures a proper supply of blood to all parts of the body from the head to the toes. At first, its practice should be restricted to the pose illustrated in Plate 91. After a few days of practice, when it can be easily done, the pose depicted in Plate 90 should be attempted. In the course of the performance of this āsana, the respiratory excursions diminish tremendously both in extent and in frequency. This is regarded as very important by the yogīs.

The āsana is said to induce concentration. It ought to be done gradually and with care and never jerkily or forcibly.



## 61. JHŪLĀSANA (SWING POSTURE)

### POSTURE

The left heel should be placed on the right thigh and the right heel on the left thigh so that the heels touch just as in Padmāsana. Then placing the hands on the ground as in Plate 92 lift the whole body above the ground so that it can swing freely in the air.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana makes the waist slimmer and the chest broader; the power of both gets toned up. It also prevents fatigue even after excessive exertion. The āsana improves digestion and creates a sense of well-being. It is said to be specially useful for those below 16 years. It is beneficial to all, for men as well as women. It helps in the elimination of impure and waste air from the body, and the inhalation of pure air (Prāṇa Vāyu).

## 62. SUKHĀSANA (EASY POSTURE)

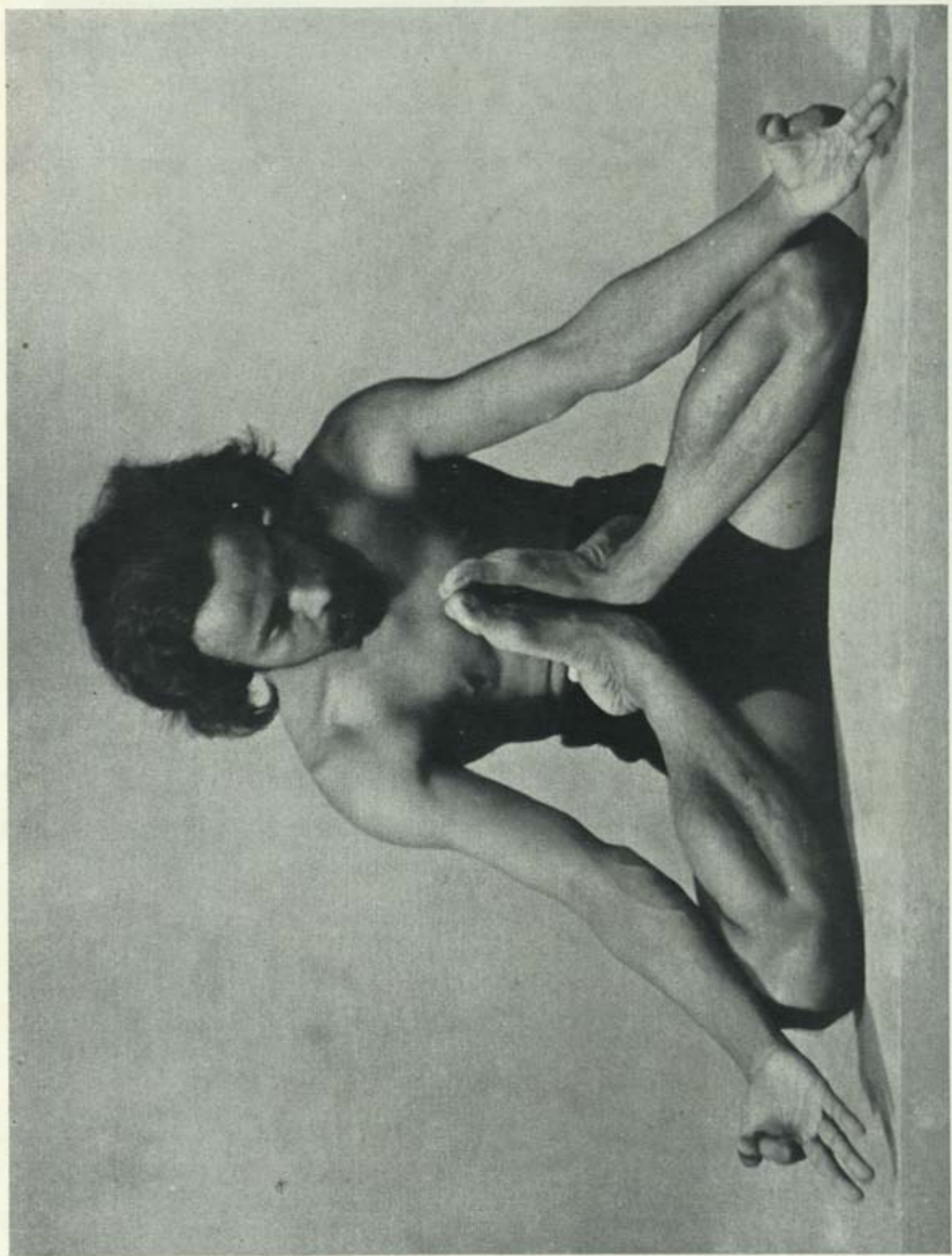
### POSTURE

Sit on the ground comfortably (Plate 93), with the hands placed on the knees.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Those who cannot perform Padmāsana or Siddhāsana for meditation, prayers or prāṇāyāma, and who on that account are considered unfortunate, have to resort to Sukhāsana. There are a few practices described in the yogic texts which cannot be performed without Padmāsana or Siddhāsana. One such is Bhastrikā (Bellows respiration). Those who cannot perform Padmāsana or Siddhāsana can do this exercise in Sukhāsana. It being so simple, its value for women is apparent.

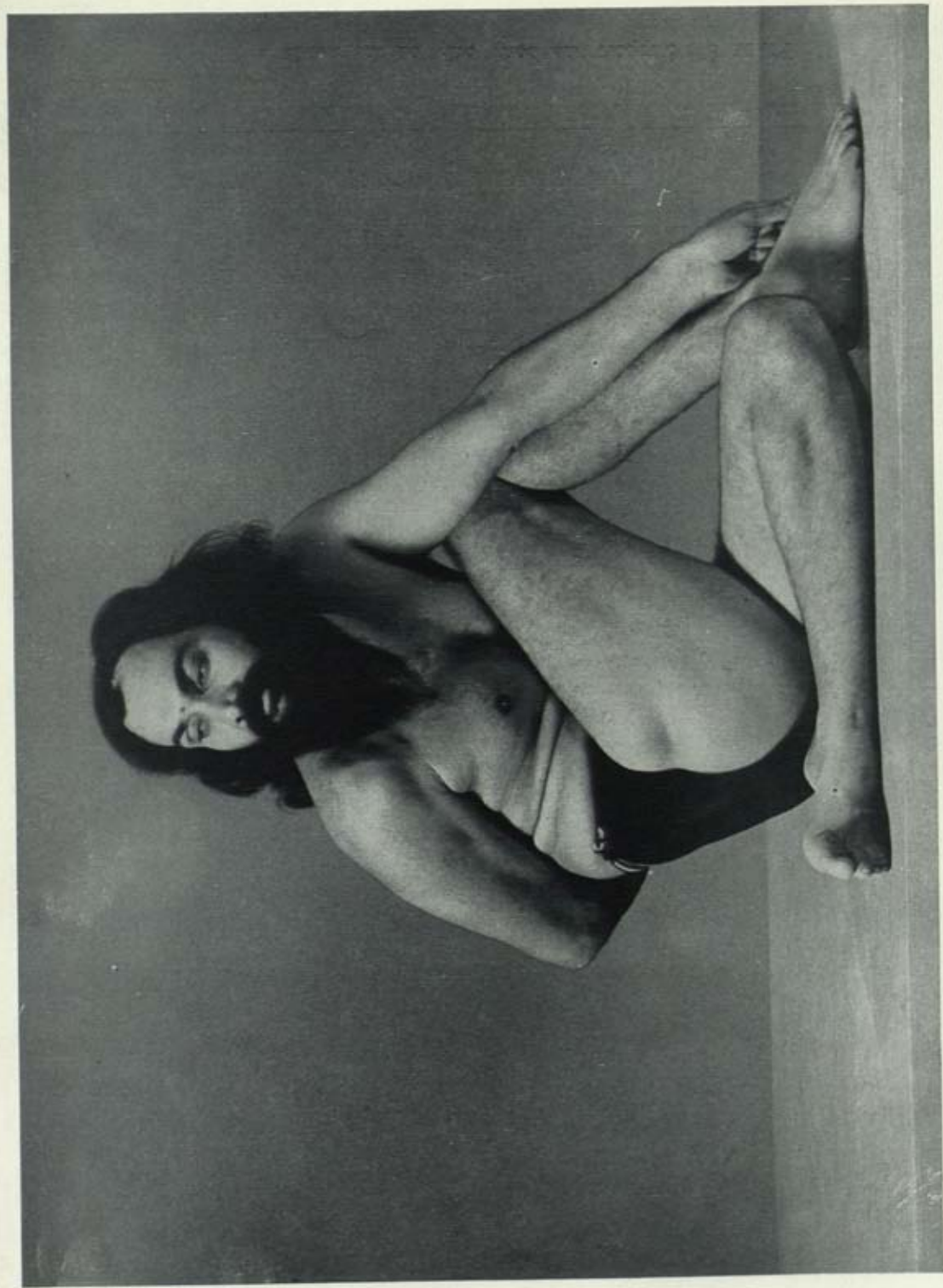
In yogic science a number of āsanās have been termed Sukhāsana. Actually, any āsana in which the individual can sit comfortably is Sukhāsana for him, according to yogic teachings. An āsana is deemed to have been perfected if a person can sit continuously without fidgeting



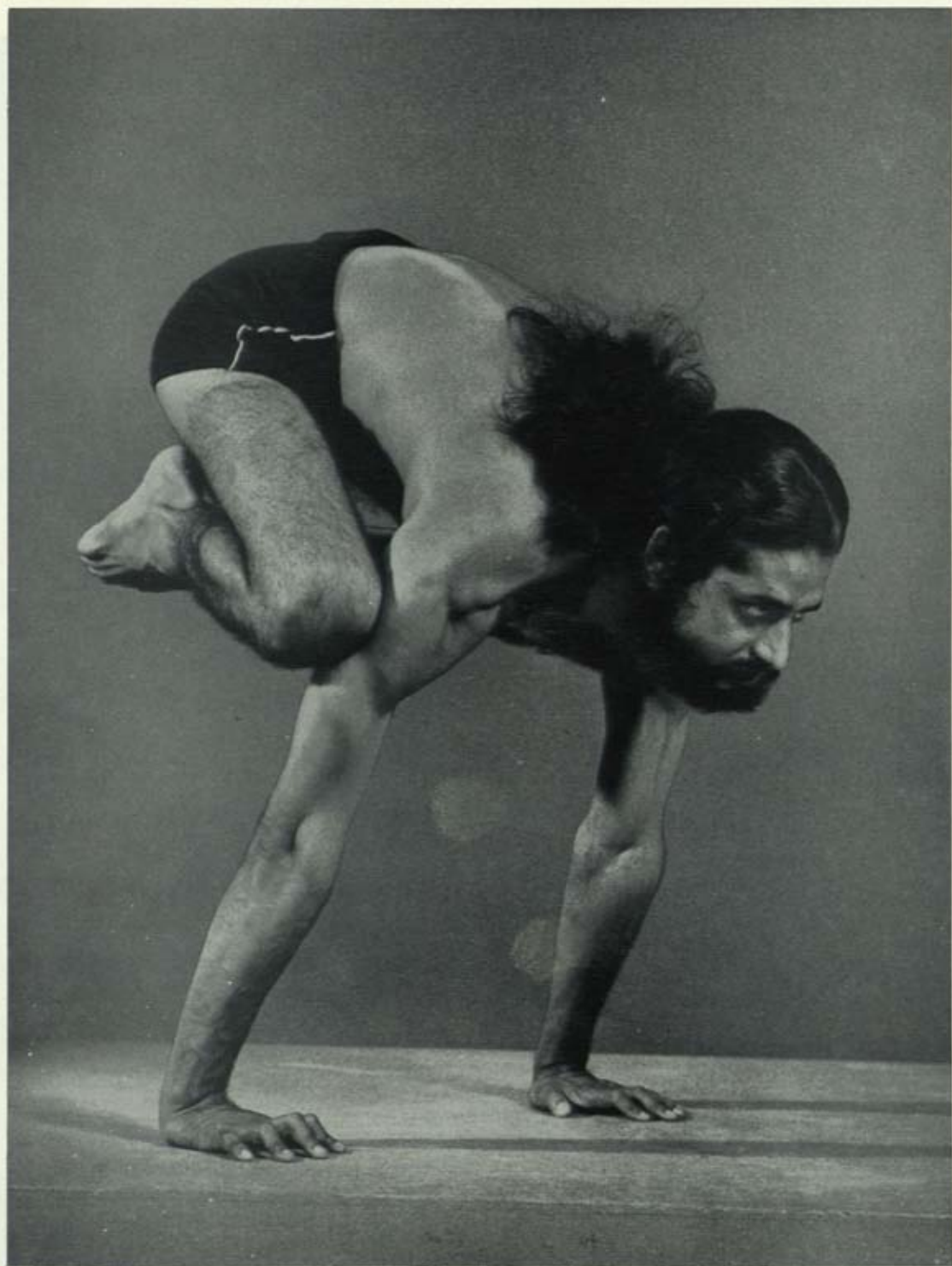
## Kandapīḍāsana

PLATE 85: Place the heels on the navel with the toes pressed against the stomach





**Ardha-matsyendrāsana**  
PLATE 86: The right foot should be near the left knee and the left hand should grasp the toes of the right foot after encircling the knee. The right arm should encircle the back



Bakāsana

PLATE 87: Support the body only on the hands



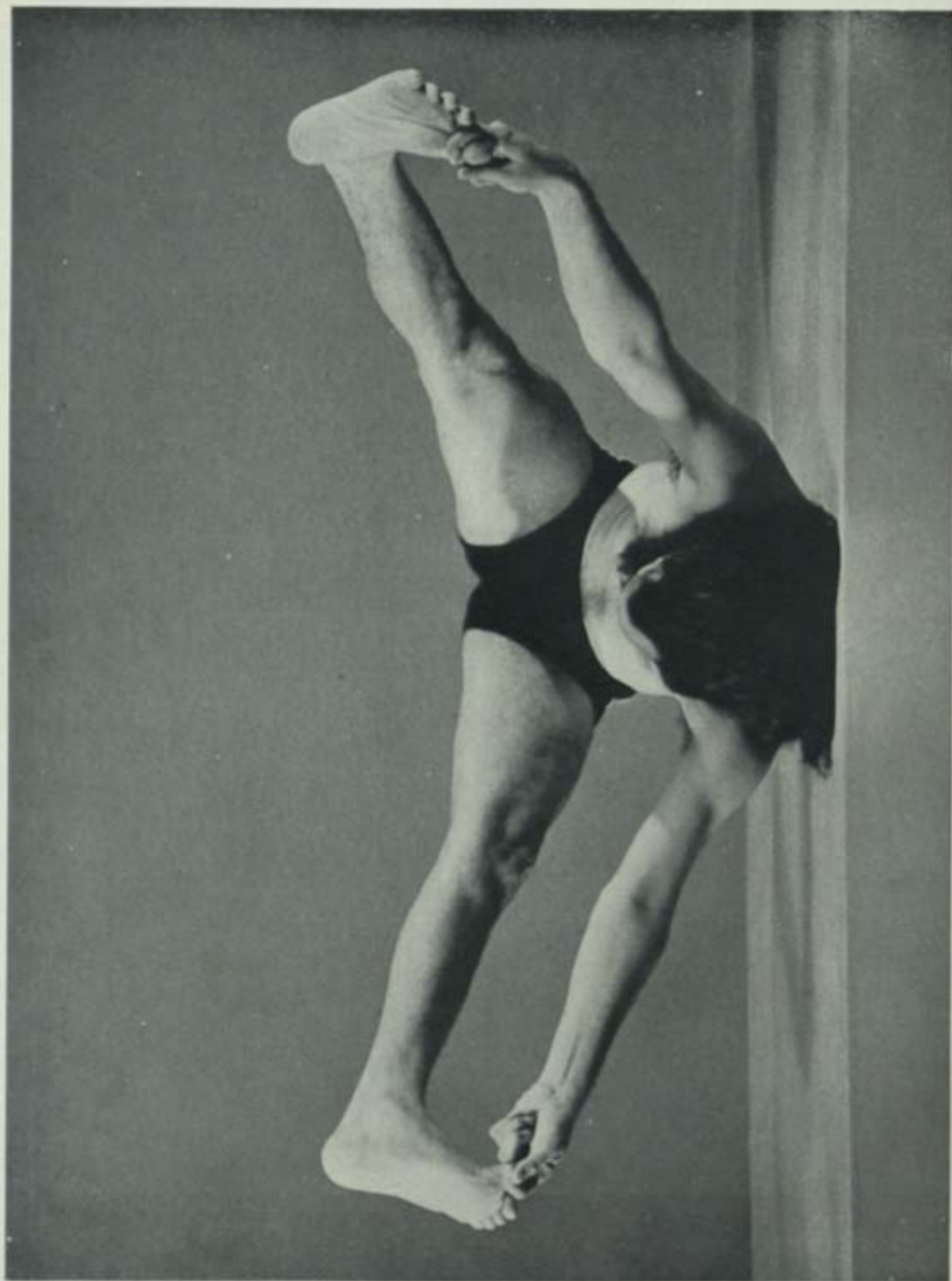
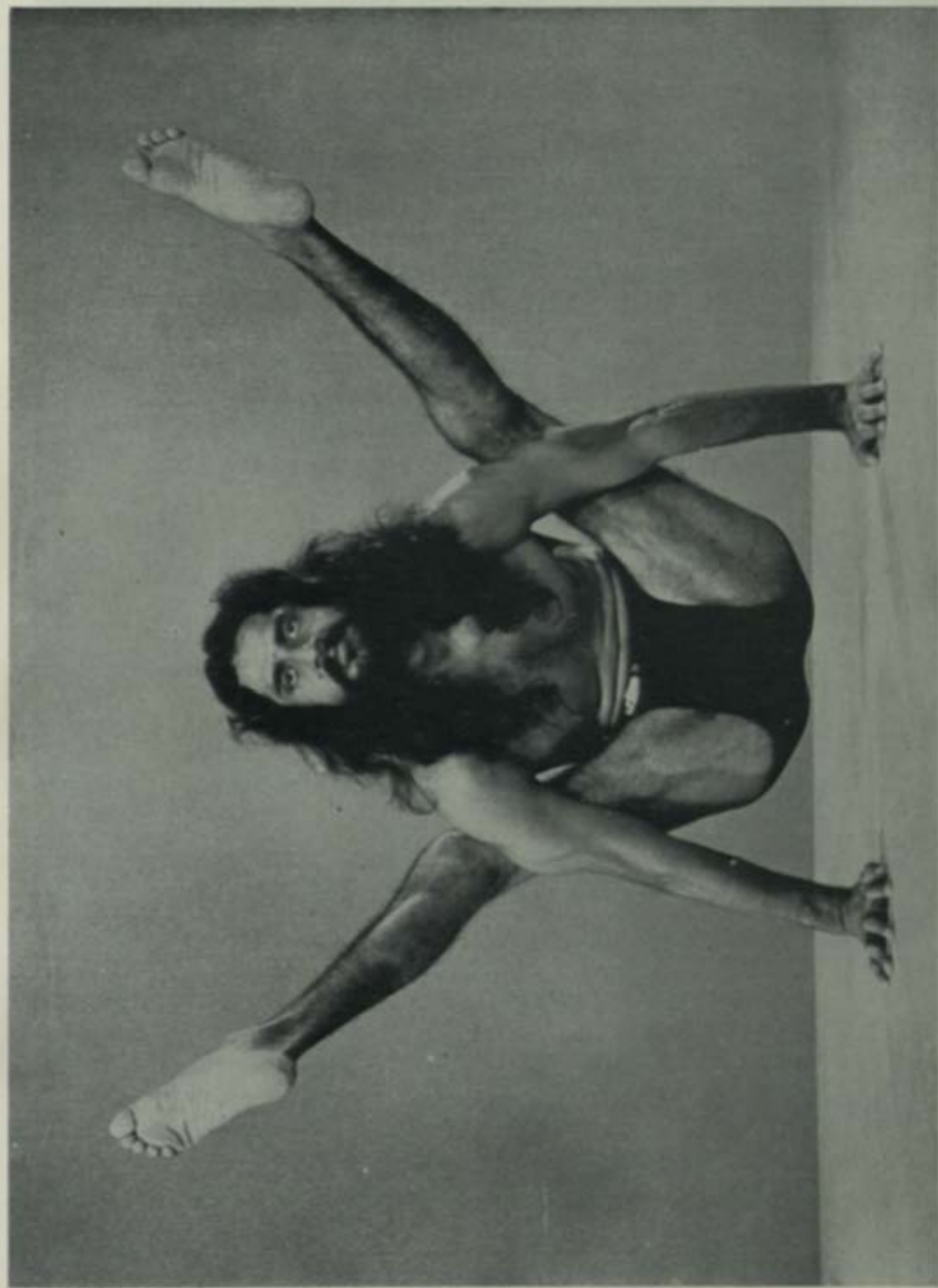


PLATE 88: Raise both legs as high as possible while holding the toes

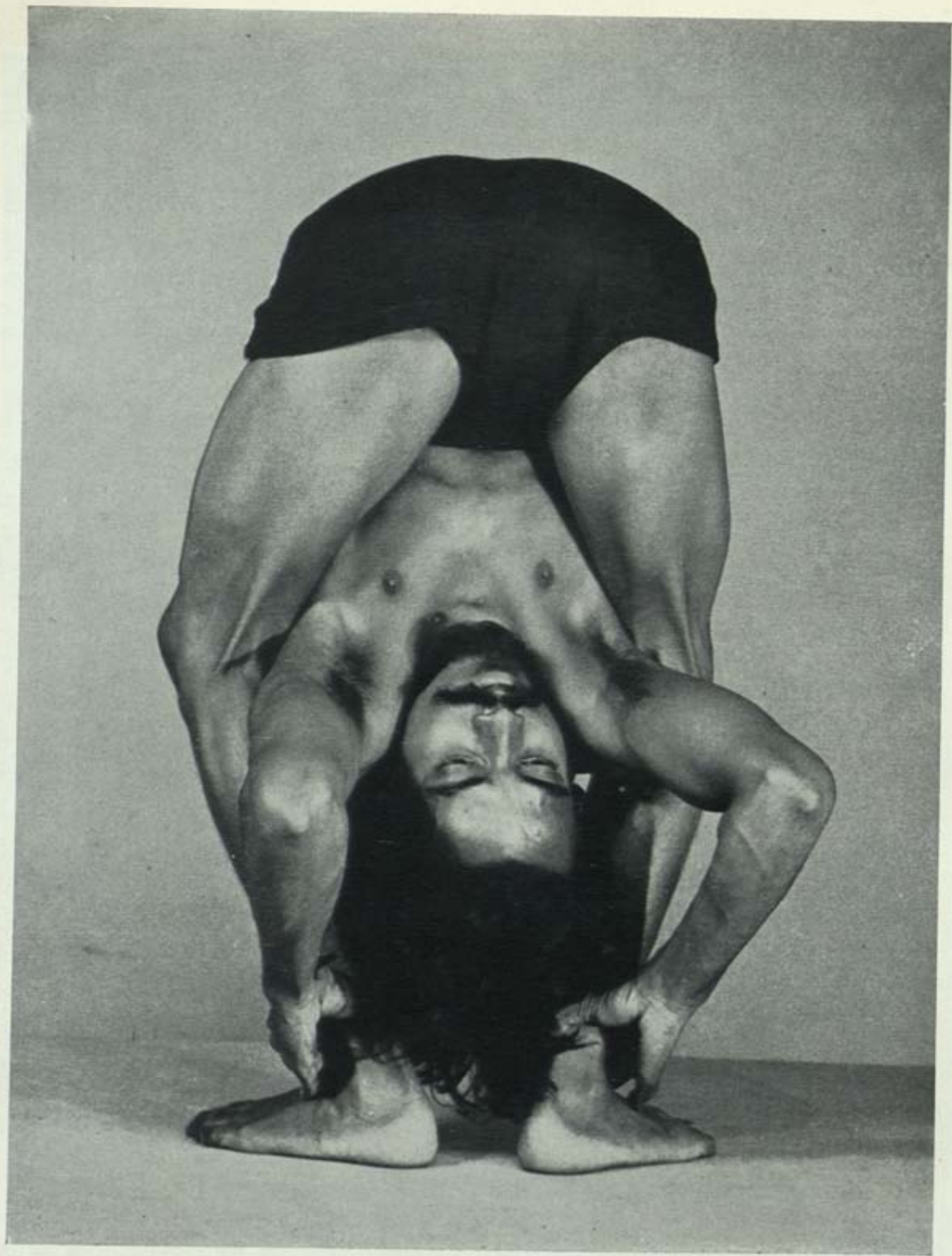
Tittibhasana



# Tittibhāsana

PLATE 89: With the left leg on the left shoulder raise the body, resting on the hands, so that the right leg is also raised





Vīparīta-śīrṣā-dvīhastā-baddhaāsana

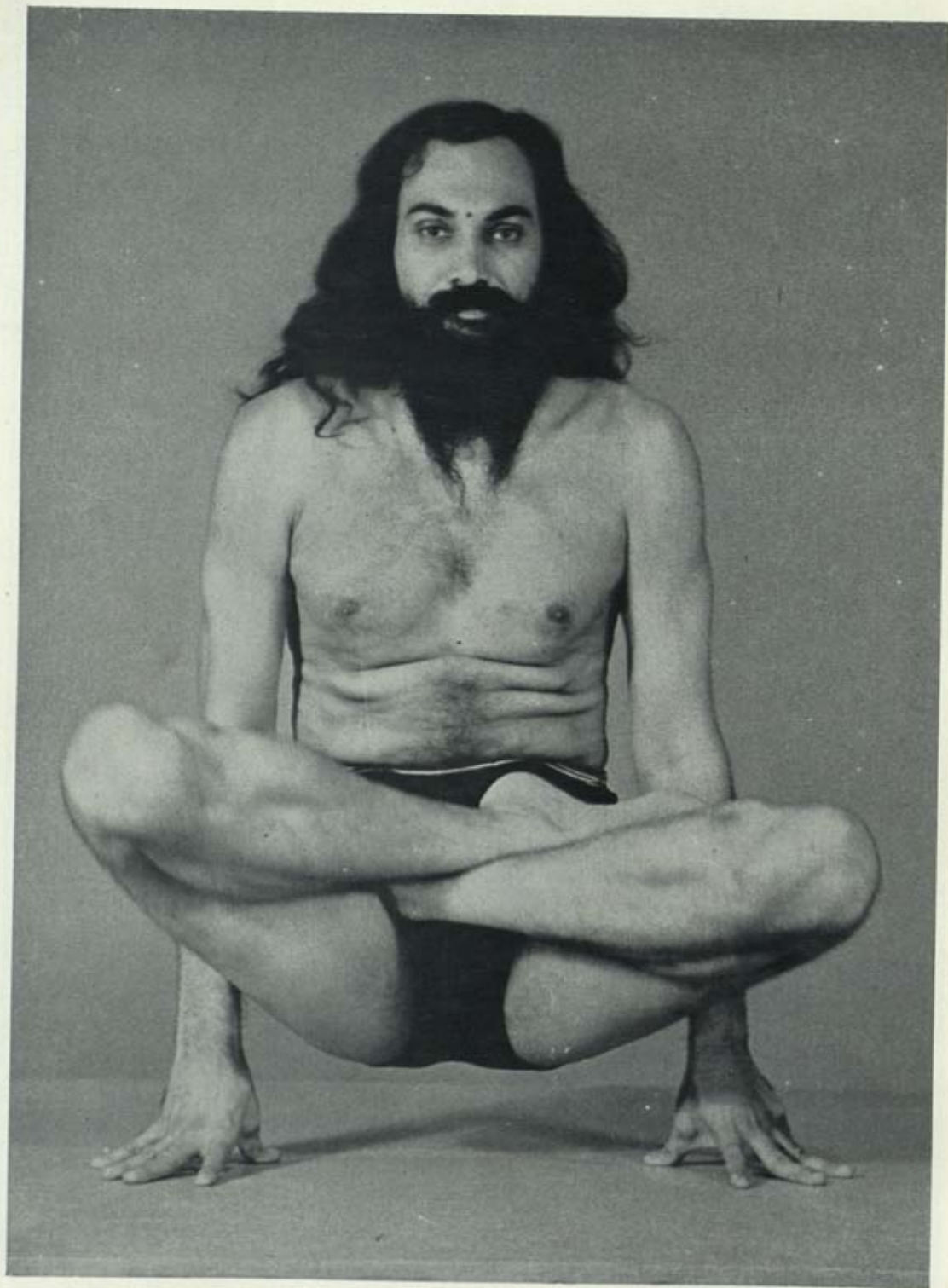
PLATE 90: Bend forward and push arms and head between the knees while holding the ankles



Viparīta-śīrṣā-dvīhastā-baddhaāsana

PLATE 91: Only one shoulder and a part of the head should protrude between the legs





Jhulāsana

PLATE 92: Sitting in Padmāsana, swing the body back and forth supporting it on the fingers

for a period of 3 hours and 48 minutes. And any āsana so perfected becomes a source of triple benefits—physical, mental, and spiritual. The practice of Sukhāsana is no exception to this general rule.

### 63. JĀNU-ŚĪRṢĀSANA (KNEE-AND-HEAD POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with legs stretched out. The left foot should then be placed on the right thigh so that the left heel is near the navel. Then, catching hold of the toes of the right foot with the left hand, the head should be made to touch the right knee and, carrying the right hand behind the back, an effort should be made to touch the left heel. This, as illustrated in Plate 94, is Jānu-Śīrṣāsana. The āsana should be repeated with the position of limbs reversed. In cases of hernia, the heel of the bent leg should be placed on the side of the hernia, while the sole of the foot remains on the thigh. For enlarged testicles, especially enlargements which fluctuate and which are due to the disorders of Bādi in the Āyurvedic-Ūnānī terminology, a slightly different procedure is adopted. In this, the leg on the side on which the testicle is enlarged is kept extended (Plate 95) while the other leg is bent and the tip of the heel is applied to the base and root of the enlarged testicle. The sole of the foot should be kept on the thigh. The extended foot is then held with both the hands for 10-15 minutes daily. This would almost entirely eliminate the possibilities of hernia and testicular enlargements.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana improves circulation of blood. It is recommended for those with rigid bodies. It proves extremely useful in the treatment of hernia and enlargement of the testicles.

A number of variations exist for the performance of this āsana. One can perform Mahāmudrā in this āsana. This mudrā, described in detail in *Āshrama Granthamālā*—Volume 3, 'Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma'—entails inhalation, exhalation, and suspension of breath. The Jānu-Śīrṣāsana shares in the benefits and effects of Paścimottānāsana; like it, this āsana unifies Prāṇa and Apāna, awakens kuṇḍalinī, sublimates Manovahā Nāḍī,



and removes bad odour from the secretions of the body. It is very easy to perform and equally useful to men and women.

All the different procedural modifications of this āsana can be understood and learnt from a teacher of yoga.

#### 64. NĀDĪŚODHANA ĀSANA (NĀDĪ PURIFICATORY POSTURE)

##### POSTURE

Stand on the ground, with feet kept together. Raise the arms, arch the whole body backwards and hold the ankles with the hands so that the head is in contact with the thighs. Care should be taken that the legs are not bent at the knees. Keep up a normal easy respiration through the nostrils (Plate 96).

Gradually and progressively, an effort must be made to get the head in contact with the knees from behind. Some authorities even indicate that the head should be made to touch the buttocks. Either way, the part of the body from the feet to the waist must be kept straight.

The āsana should never be performed with jerks or forcibly, as it can be harmful.

##### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana occupies pride of place amongst the 84 lac āsanās, being the only āsana capable of a purificatory effect on all the 72,000 nāḍīs of the body. It is on this account that it has earned its name. The yogī is able to develop an easy control over the Idā, Piṅgalā, and Suṣumṇā nāḍīs, which are the bases of the whole body. The Prāṇa and the Apana become unified. The Prāṇa is spontaneously made to course through the Suṣumṇa and the whole body becomes resilient and pliant, so that it can be easily bent or moulded into any shape. The spine becomes so flexible that, through this āsana alone, the yogī acquires control over his entire body. The central point for all the 72,000 nāḍīs, the navel centre, is also affected by the āsana.

Its practice develops the entire body. It relieves pain in the thighs, waist, and back with remarkable rapidity.

## 65. VISTRITA PĀDA SARVĀNGĀSANA (SPREAD-OUT FEET, ALL-LIMBS POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the back. The feet should be raised to touch the ground behind the head with the toes. The legs should be spread as wide as possible and steadied in this position by being firmly held with hands holding the toes (Plate 97).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana brings relief in the diseases of the tonsillar region and the neck. The shoulders as well as the back develop. The spine becomes resilient and healthy. This by itself proves sufficient for the elimination of many unknown maladies of the body. Obesity can be easily cured through the practice of this āsana. Those with heavy hips are strongly recommended the practice of this āsana. It also removes odours from the bodily secretions. It is a boon for many disorders of the skin. The practice of the āsana wards off the onset of old age. According to classic yogic concepts, the palatal region is believed to be the source of a vital fluid named 'amṛta'—or ambrosia (which rejuvenates the body and could, theoretically, induce immortality) and the region around the navel is the seat of scorching, all consuming 'Sun'. A lowering of the palatal region below the level of the 'Sun' in this āsana ensures that the 'amṛta' does not get burnt up by its 'heat' and, by spreading through the body, produces a youthful state.

Besides this, the āsana has many other benefits. For instance, it is considered extremely useful for patients of anorectal diseases. Its practice improves the circulation in the lungs whereby asthmatic and tubercular afflictions are prevented. The āsana is also useful against hernia. It develops eyesight and clear vision.

Patients of heart diseases and high blood pressure are warned against its practice.

There are many varieties and numerous mysteries of the āsana; they have to be learned through a Guru.



## 66. EKAPĀDA BHUJĀSANA (UNILATERAL FOOT-HAND POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left leg on the shoulder so that the foot points outward. The palms of the hands should be placed on the ground by the side of the body and the entire body raised above the ground as far as possible. In so doing, the right leg must also be raised above the ground and kept as straight as possible (Plate 98). The āsana should be repeated by placing the right leg on the shoulder.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana gives great strength to the chest and shoulders. The upper limbs become well-proportioned, beautiful, and strong. It improves blood circulation in the thighs and knees and is useful for arthritic disorders of the body. Women should not practise this āsana.

## 67. DVIPĀDA BHUJĀSANA (BILATERAL FOOT-HAND POSTURE)

### POSTURE

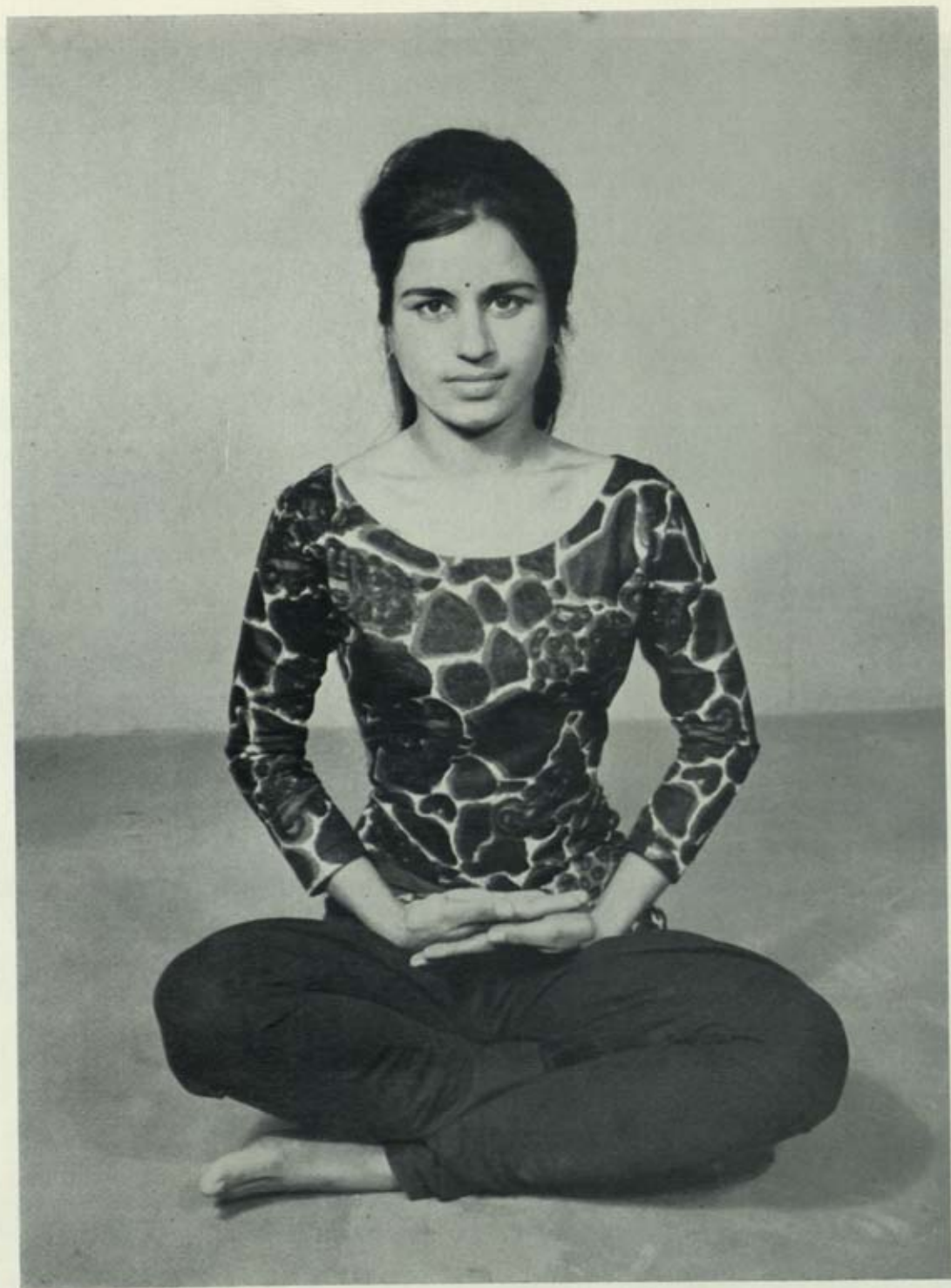
Sit on the ground with the legs on the shoulders, so that the feet point outwards. The body should then be lifted above the ground as high as possible by supporting it on the palms (Plate 99). After the body has been held in this position for some time, it should be gradually lowered to touch the ground.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana provides relief from piles and other allied disorders. Ailments of the anorectal region and external genitals will benefit from this āsana after just a few days.

Women who wish to bear children must not practise this āsana.

The practice of this āsana gives strength to the upper limbs. Since it strengthens the shoulders as well as the arms and hands the āsana is



Sukhāsana

PLATE 93: Sit cross-legged with hands on the lap





## Jānuśīrṣāṇa

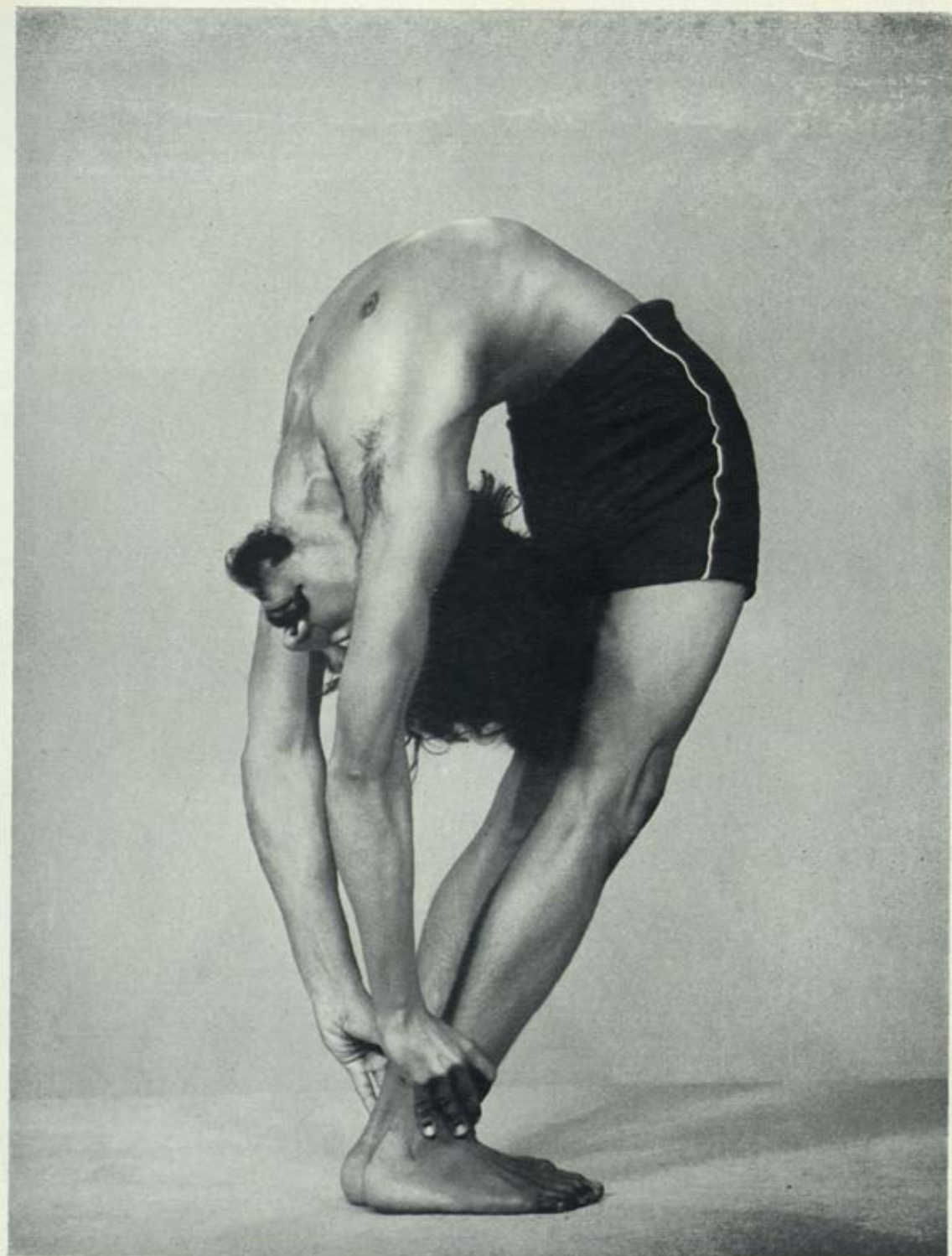
PLATE 94: The head should touch the right knee while the right arm encircles the back



### Jānuśīrṣāsana

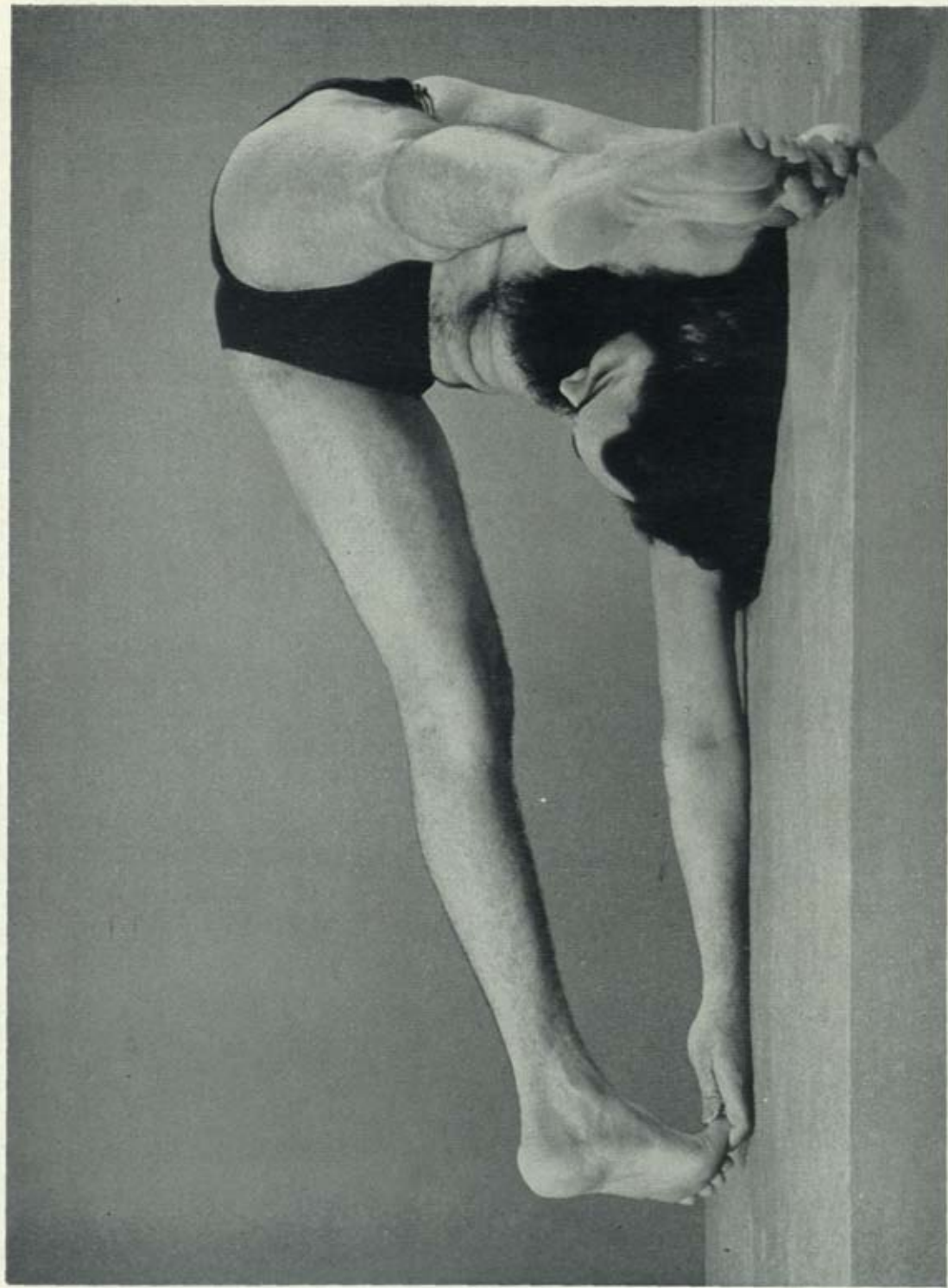
PLATE 95: With the right leg stretched forward, press the left heel against the spot affected by hernia and clasp the toes of the right foot with hands





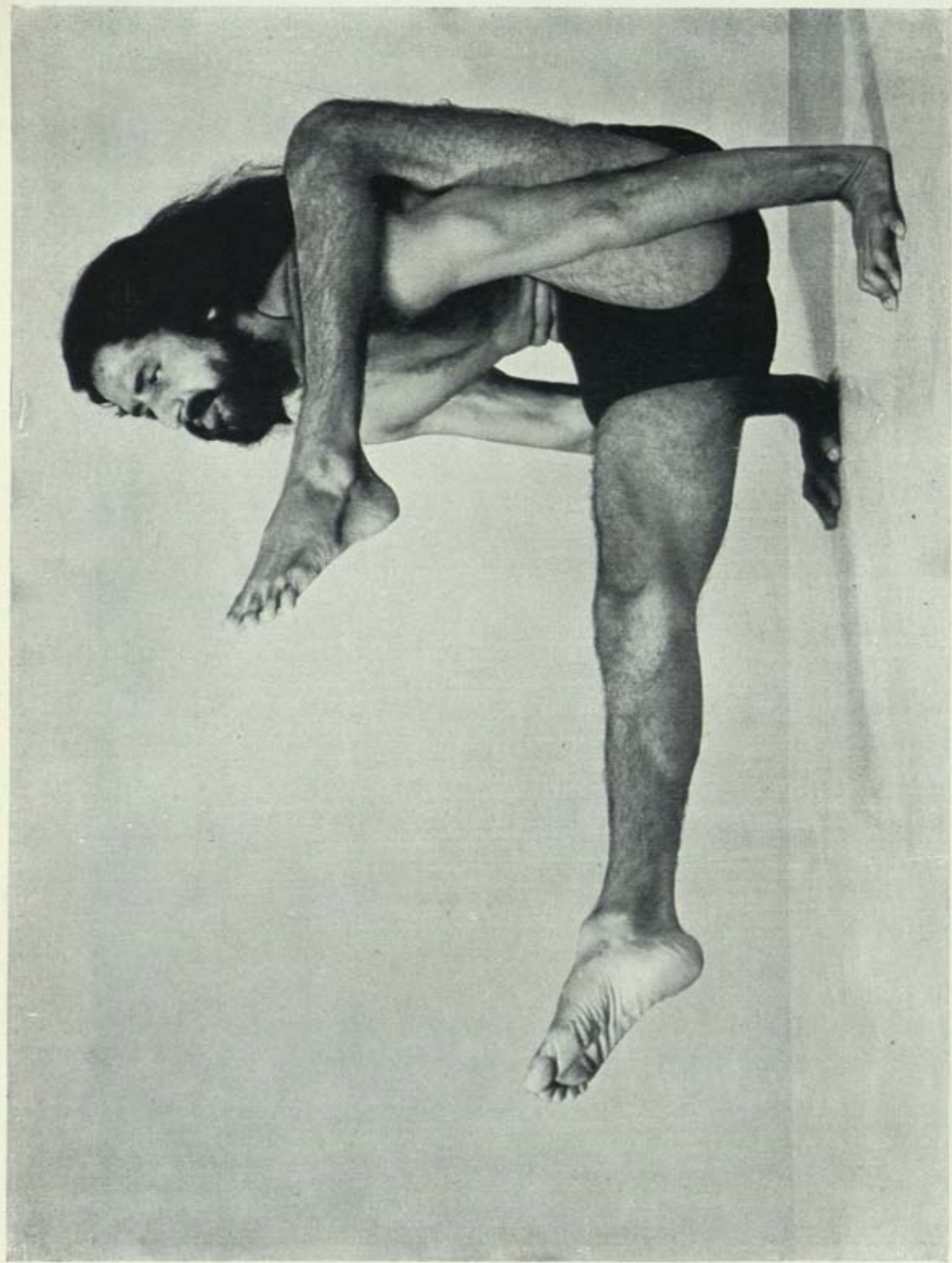
Nāḍī-śodhanāsana

PLATE 96: Bending backwards with raised arms the head should touch the thighs while holding the ankles with the hands

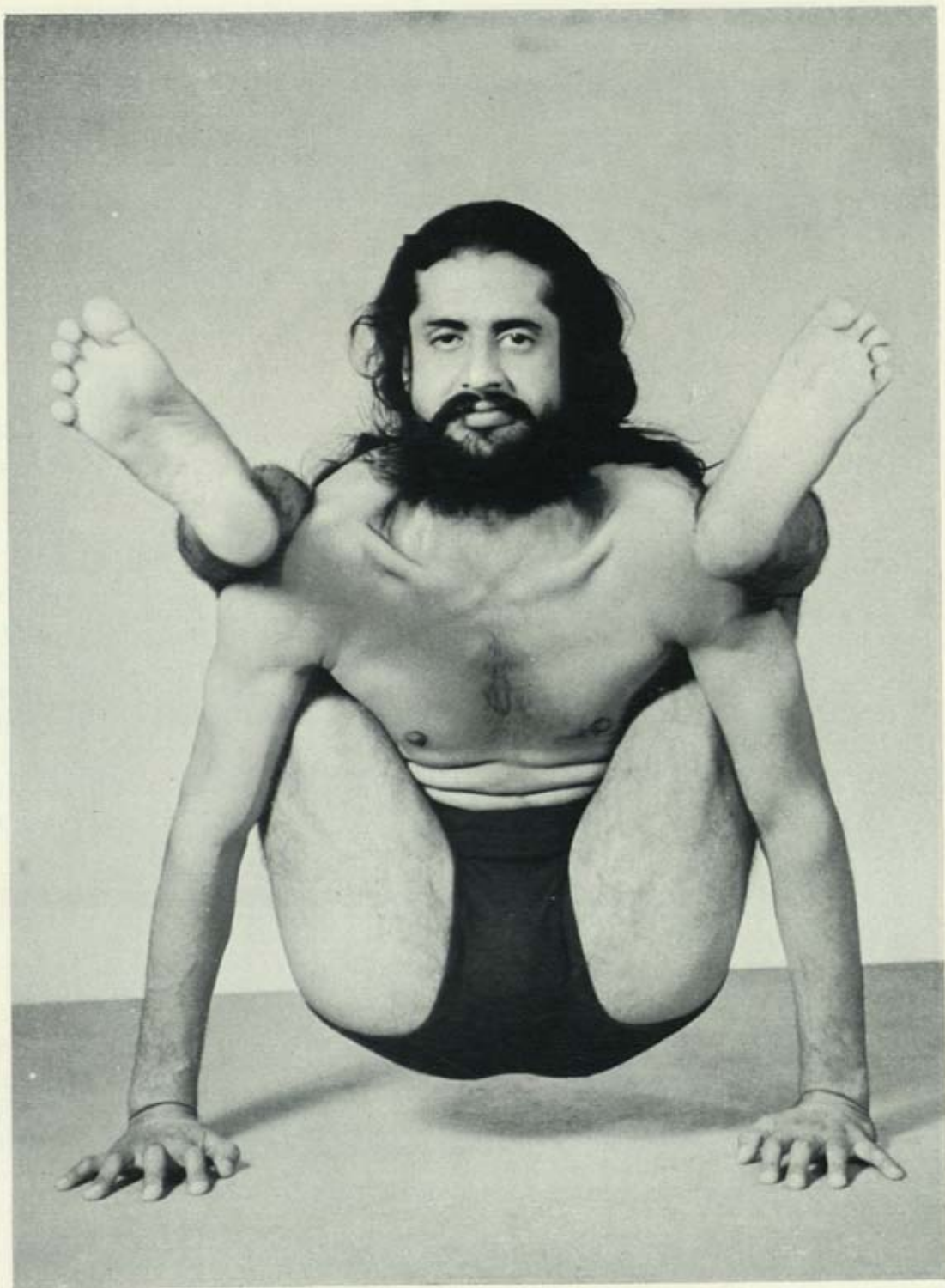


*Vistṛta-pāda-sarvāṅgāsana*  
PLATE 97: Raise the legs so that the feet touch the ground behind the head; the legs should be spread wide apart and the toes held by the hands





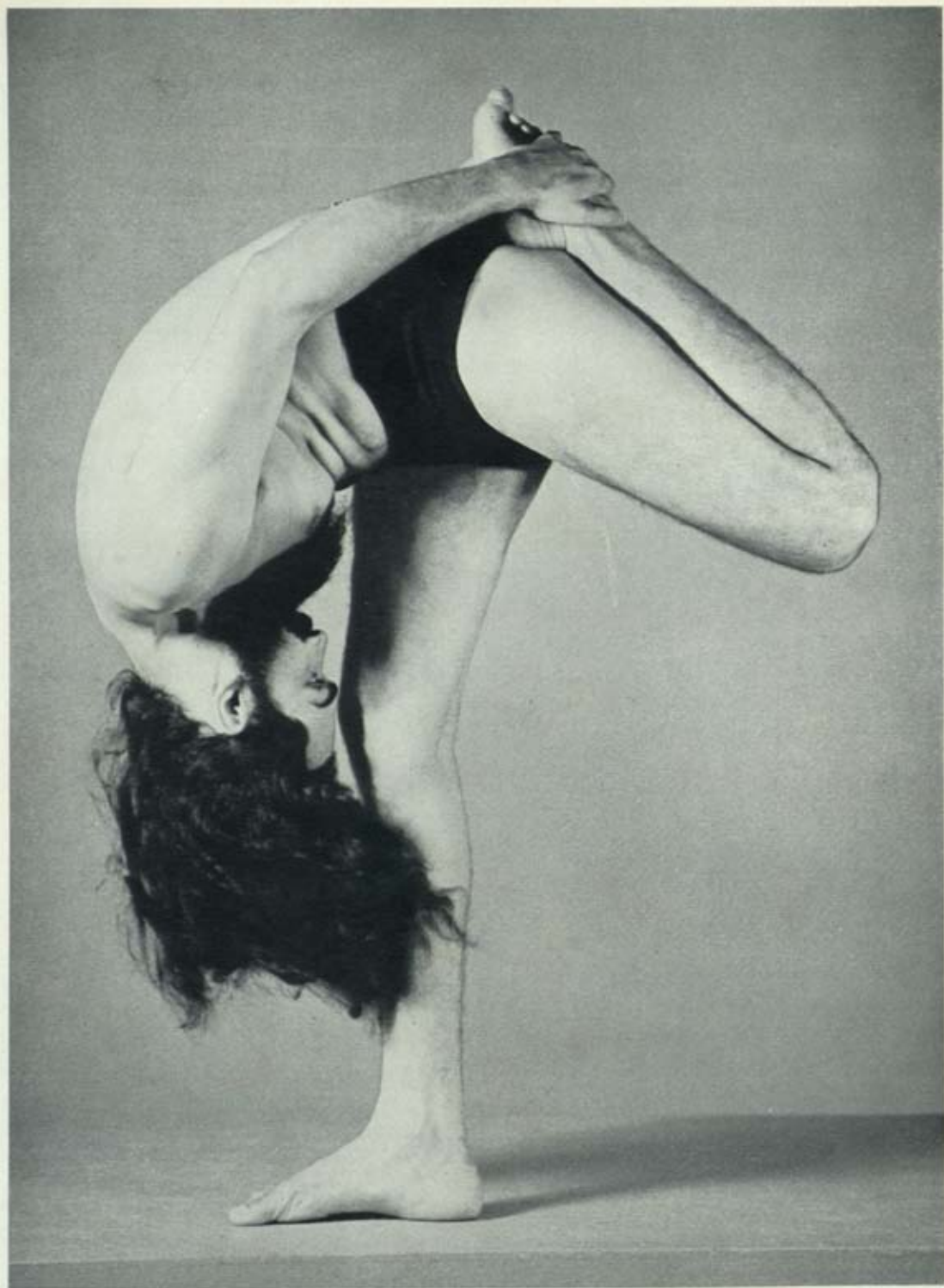
**Ekapada-bhujāsana**  
PLATE 98: With the left leg on the left shoulder raise the body, resting on the hands, so that the right leg is also raised



Dvipāda-bhujāsana

PLATE 99: With feet on the shoulders, raise the body supported on the hands





Śīrṣa-jānusparśāsana

PLATE 109: Raise the left foot and with hands press the heel against the buttocks; then lower the head to touch the knee

significant for military and police personnel. It prevents fatigue even after a long drill practice with a gun. It is also useful to those engaged in heavy manual labour.

## 68. ŚĪRŚAJĀNU SPARŚĀSANA (GENU-CRANIAL POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground. Lift the left foot towards the buttock and clasping the toes with the hands press the heel against the buttock. The head should then be lowered to touch the knee. The right leg should not be bent (Plate 100).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana, though apparently simple, is in reality a difficult one. A special feature is that its practice after prolonged exertion can help in overcoming fatigue. It is excellent for military and police personnel as well as for sentries and watchmen. It is recommended for those required to stand continuously for long hours. It has been found to be useful for patients of sciatica, arthritis, and crooked or bent lower limbs. It relieves pain in the calves, knees, and waist, and is also helpful in maladies of the throat and neck.

## 69. SUPTA VR̥ŚCIKĀSANA (SLEEPING-SCORPION POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the ground face downward; spread out the arms on the ground like the wings of a vulture. The thumbs should touch the ground while the fingers should be raised and fanned out. The feet should be gradually raised and brought forward to such an extent that they lie near the chin with the big toes touching each other. Look straight ahead and keep the body in this position (Plate 101).



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The effects are similar to those of Vṛścikāsana (Scorpion posture) with the difference that in addition to making the spine resilient, the chest, shoulders, waist, thighs, and calves are also developed. The āsana is said to produce a good effect on the thyroid gland. By virtue of this, the whole body derives a wholesome effect. The āsana is very useful for the eyes, ears, jaws, throat, and teeth. Poisonous waste matter in the body finds an easy way out and an increased intake of oxygen is possible. Carbon-dioxide and other waste products are promptly eliminated from the body. The blood thus becomes highly purified, and this is very beneficial in a variety of skin disorders.

No extraordinary effort or force should be used to practise this āsana; the feet should be raised slowly and gradually brought near the chin. Force may do harm.

### 70. UTTHITA DVIPĀDA KANDHARĀSANA (RAISED BILATERAL FOOT-SHOULDER POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground. Place the the left leg behind the left shoulder so that the toes point towards the right shoulder. Similarly, place the right leg behind the right shoulder with the toes pointing to the left. Thereafter, the whole body must be raised above the ground to rest on the palms (Plate 102). In another version of this āsana the body is raised on the palms after placing the legs on the shoulders as described above but only after putting the feet together on the head as shown in Plate 103.

In this āsana the arms are bent and straightened and the body raised and lowered accordingly. This should be learnt through a teacher.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this asana makes the palms, the arms, the forearms, and the shoulders strong. The upper limbs become well developed, well proportioned, and attractive. The āsana is held to be extremely useful for labourers whose work involves physical exertion. Pulmonary ailments get rectified

easily by its practice. Those who live in congested localities where the air is polluted should practise this āsana for five minutes in the early hours of the morning. It would make them virtually immune to the adverse effects of bad air to which they are exposed later in the day. This āsana tones up and vitalises the alveolar membrane, which, it is believed, enables a person to extract the maximum amount of oxygen even from an atmosphere which does not have a high percentage of oxygen. The āsana provides sufficient blood circulation to the lower extremities from the thighs to the toe.

A protracted practice of the āsana induces the Prāṇa to course through the suṣūmṇā, i.e. the Prāṇa and the Apāna get unified and homogeneous.

Women are advised against the practice of this āsana.

## 71. TĀDĀSANA (PALMYRA POSTURE)

### POSTURE

With feet together, stand on the toes. The arms should be raised by the side of the ears, with the palms open (Plate 104). There are a number of variations of this āsana. While keeping the body from the shoulders to the feet as before, the arms can swing back and forth, sideways or up and down at will or describe a circle, like palm leaves spreading out in all directions from the trunk of the tree (Plate 105).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The body becomes well built and beautifully proportioned, nimble and agile through the practice of this āsana. Height can also be increased. The āsana is very beneficial for women since it can be practised even up to the fifth day before confinement for childbirth. Its practice does not exhaust a pregnant woman, but, on the contrary, makes her feel fresh and well. Out of the 84 lac āsanās, this is the only āsana which can be practised by a woman throughout the ten months of pregnancy, and it helps in making childbirth almost painless and in keeping the expectant mother healthy. The āsana provides a wholesome, non-tiring, and bracing exercise which keeps the body nimble and active and in addition makes the delivery painless. During pregnancy women must practise this āsana with great care and caution and in accordance with the instructions of



a teacher. The Tāḍāsana is also beneficial in sciatica and for those whose limbs are hyper-sensitive to cold.

## 72. KHANJANĀSANA (WAGTAIL POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Place one foot on the other so that the feet are under the buttocks. The buttocks should be raised so that the weight of the entire body is borne on the knees. The arms should also be raised sideways (Plate 106). Another procedure adopted for this āsana consists in placing the feet a foot apart and keeping the legs in position by intertwining them with the arms (Plate 107). It is not difficult to perform; the ability to balance the body is slightly difficult to acquire. While performing the āsana the feet have to be kept wagging like the tail of the wagtail (Khañjana); the hands represent its wings on two sides. Like the hypermotile tail of the wagtail, this posture is an extremely unsteady one and continuous practice is required to stabilise it, else the wagging will not cease.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana cures the diseases of the knees. It is said that with advancing years the articular surfaces of the body, especially at the knee and the ankle, get degenerated and also acquire deposits of waste and harmful products. This may cause the production of excrescences on the surface and painful conditions of the knees and calves. For such persons this āsana is extremely useful.

The āsana has been held to be extremely useful for dancers. Its practice helps mental concentration and develops the faculty of keeping the body in proper equilibrium and balance. Patients of asthenia, specially muscular asthenia, will find this āsana extremely useful. Those who are nervous and agitated on the slightest provocation are strongly recommended to practise this āsana.

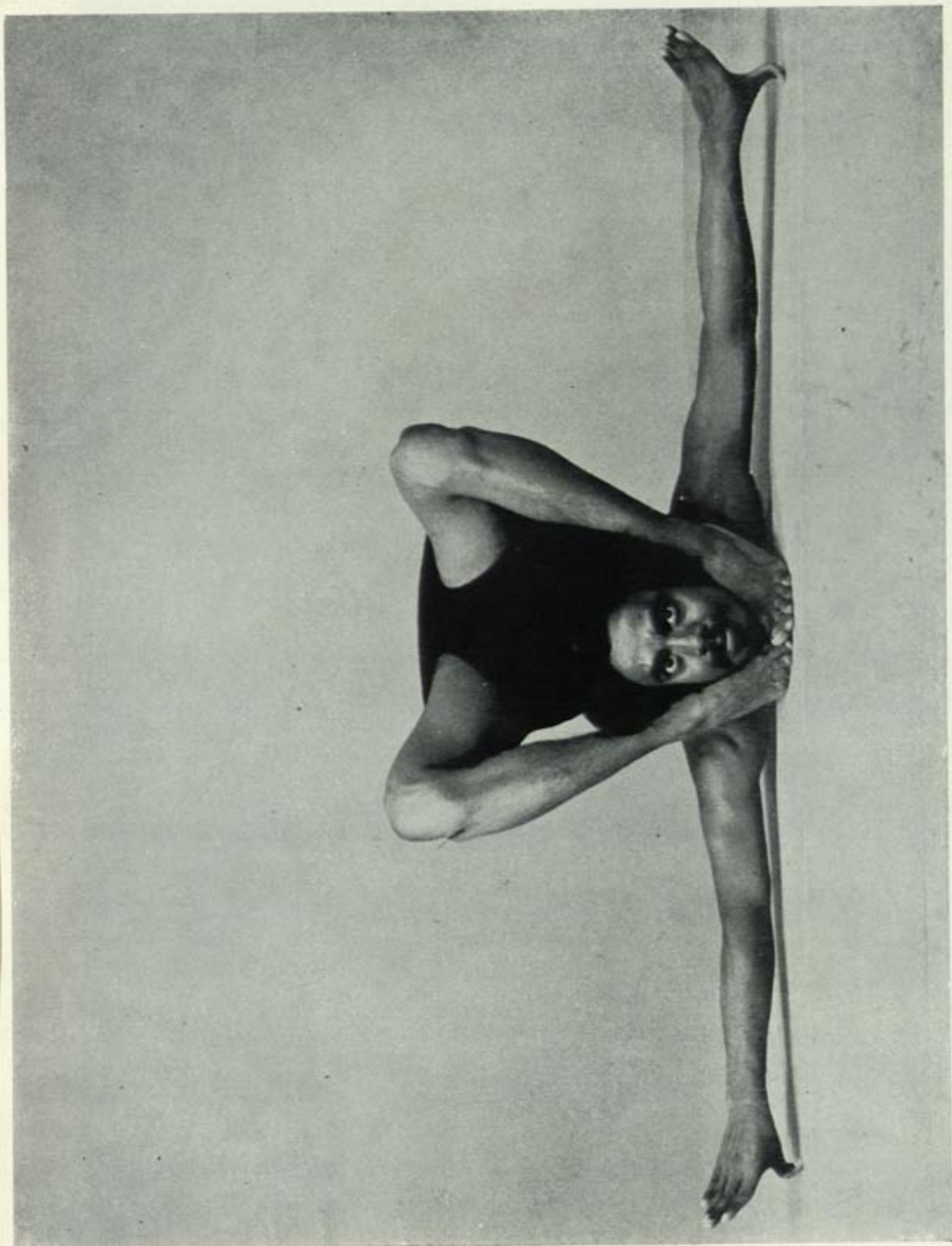
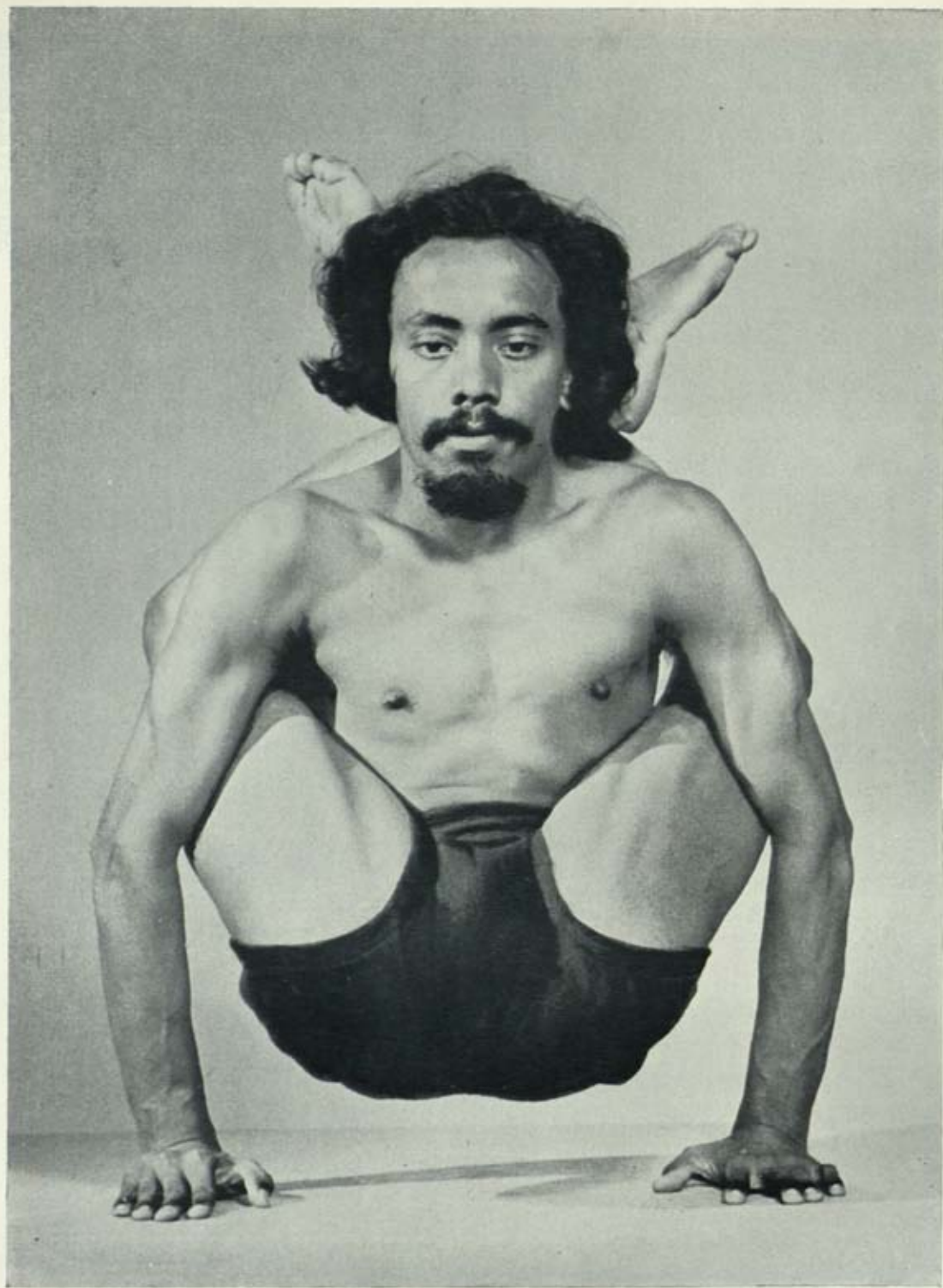


PLATE 101: With arms outstretched bring the feet forward below the chin

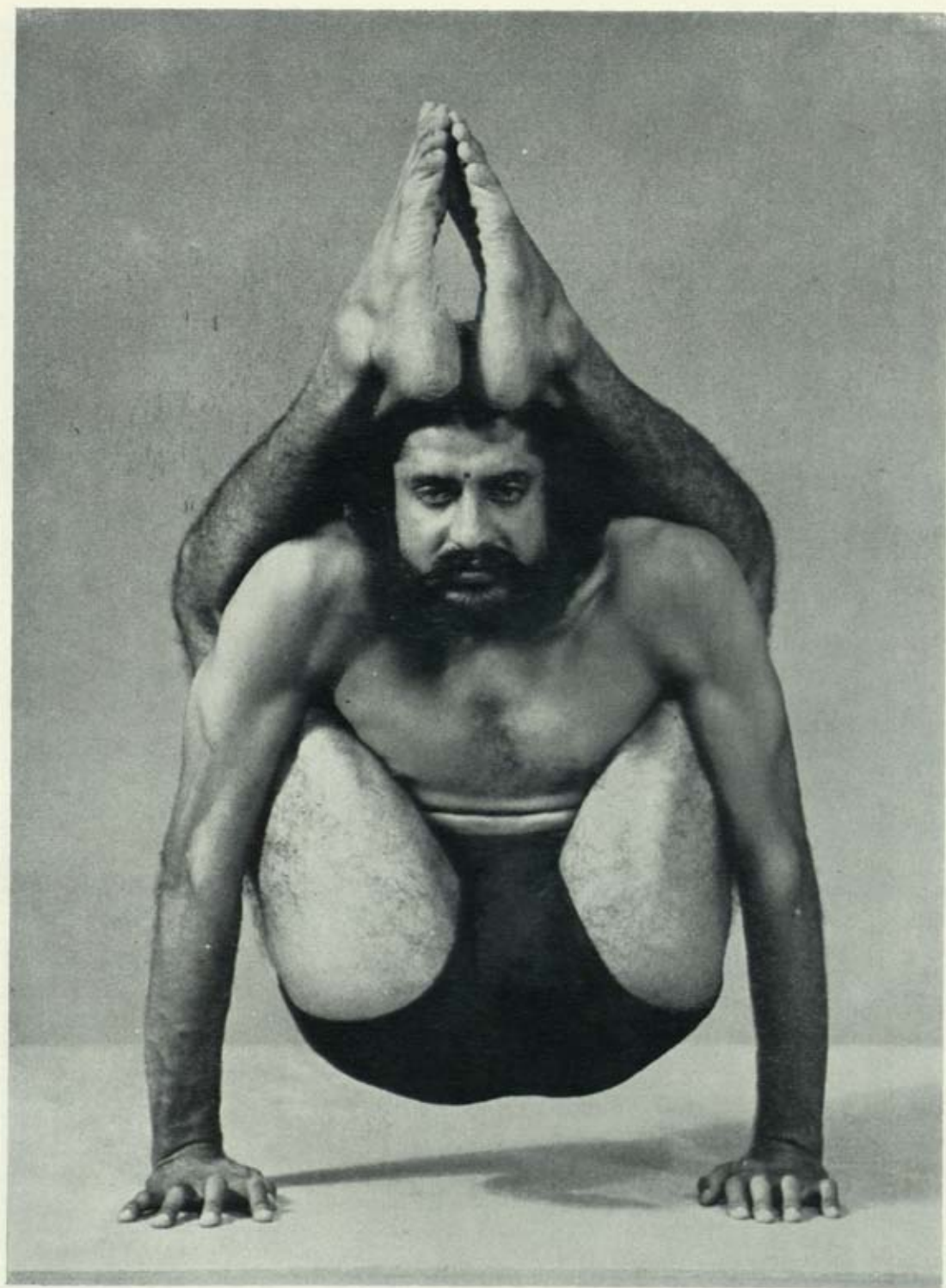
Supta-vrścikāsana





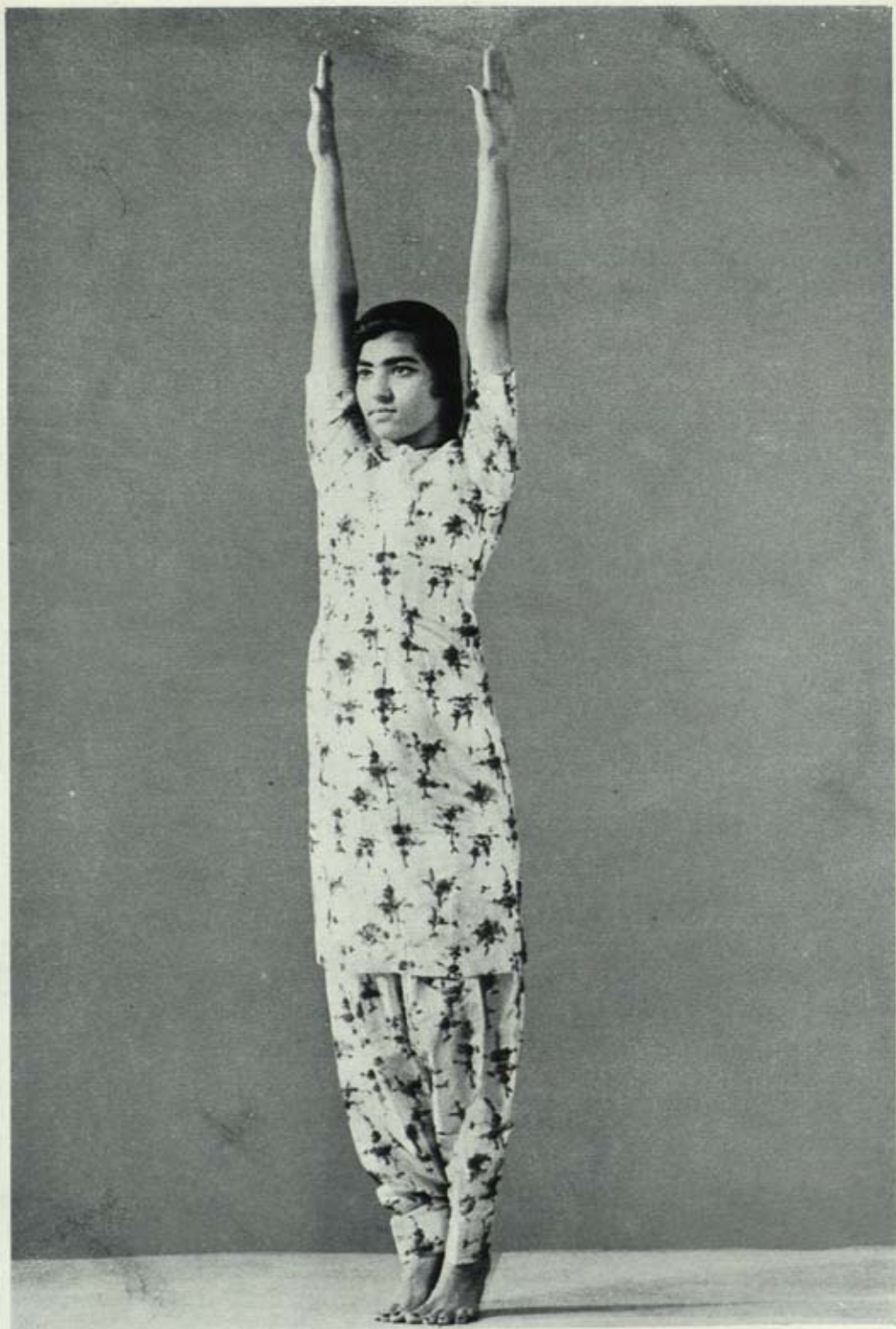
Utthita-divipāda-kandharāsana

PLATE 102: With the legs behind the shoulder raise the body from the ground supporting it on the hands



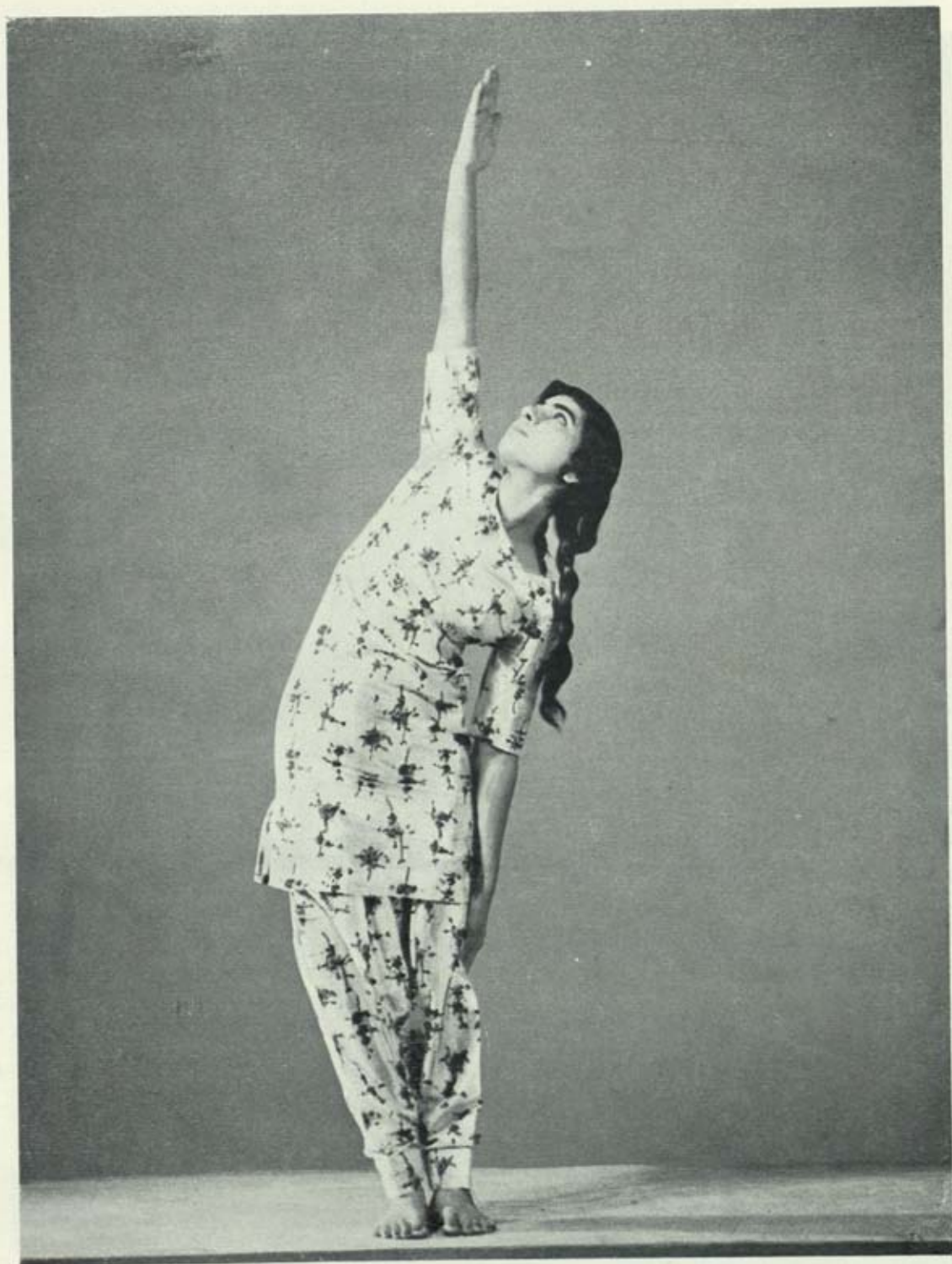
Uttita-dvipāda-kandharāsana  
PLATE 103: As in Plate 102 except that the feet are placed on the head





Taḍāsana

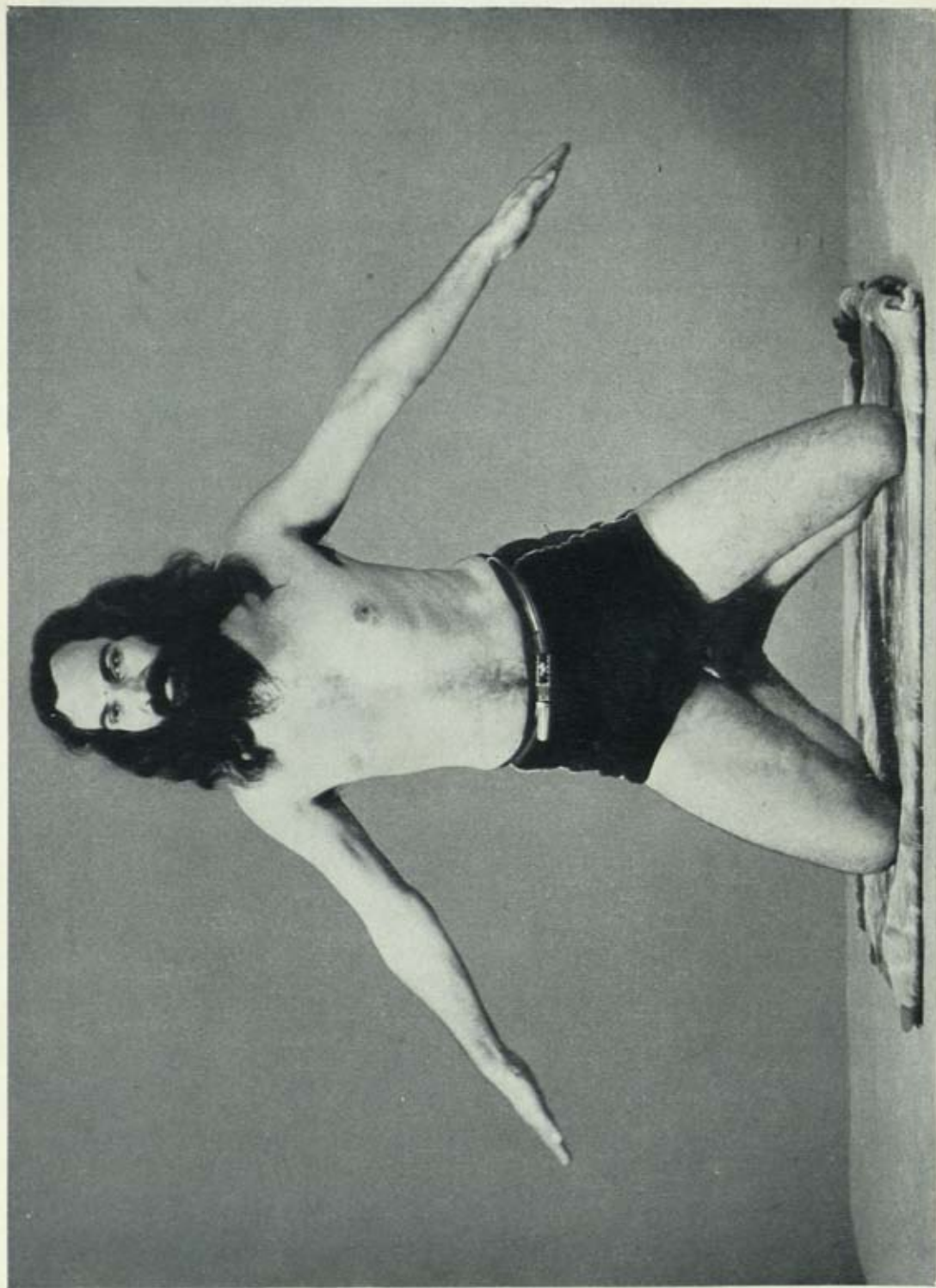
PLATE 104: Standing on the toes, raise the arms upwards



Taḍāsana

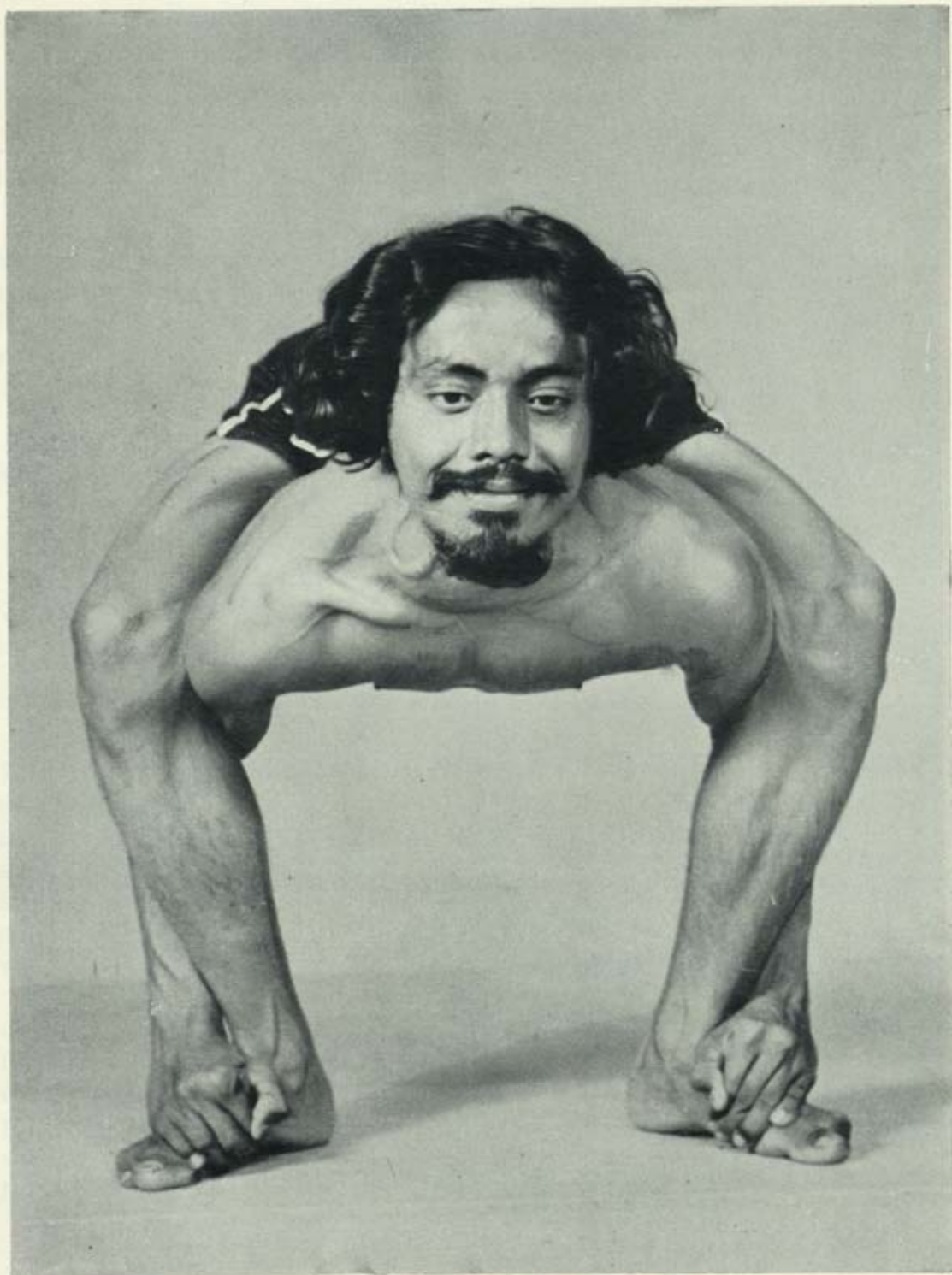
PLATE 105: Lower the left arm, pointing to the ground while the right arm remains pointing upwards





Khaṇḍanāsana

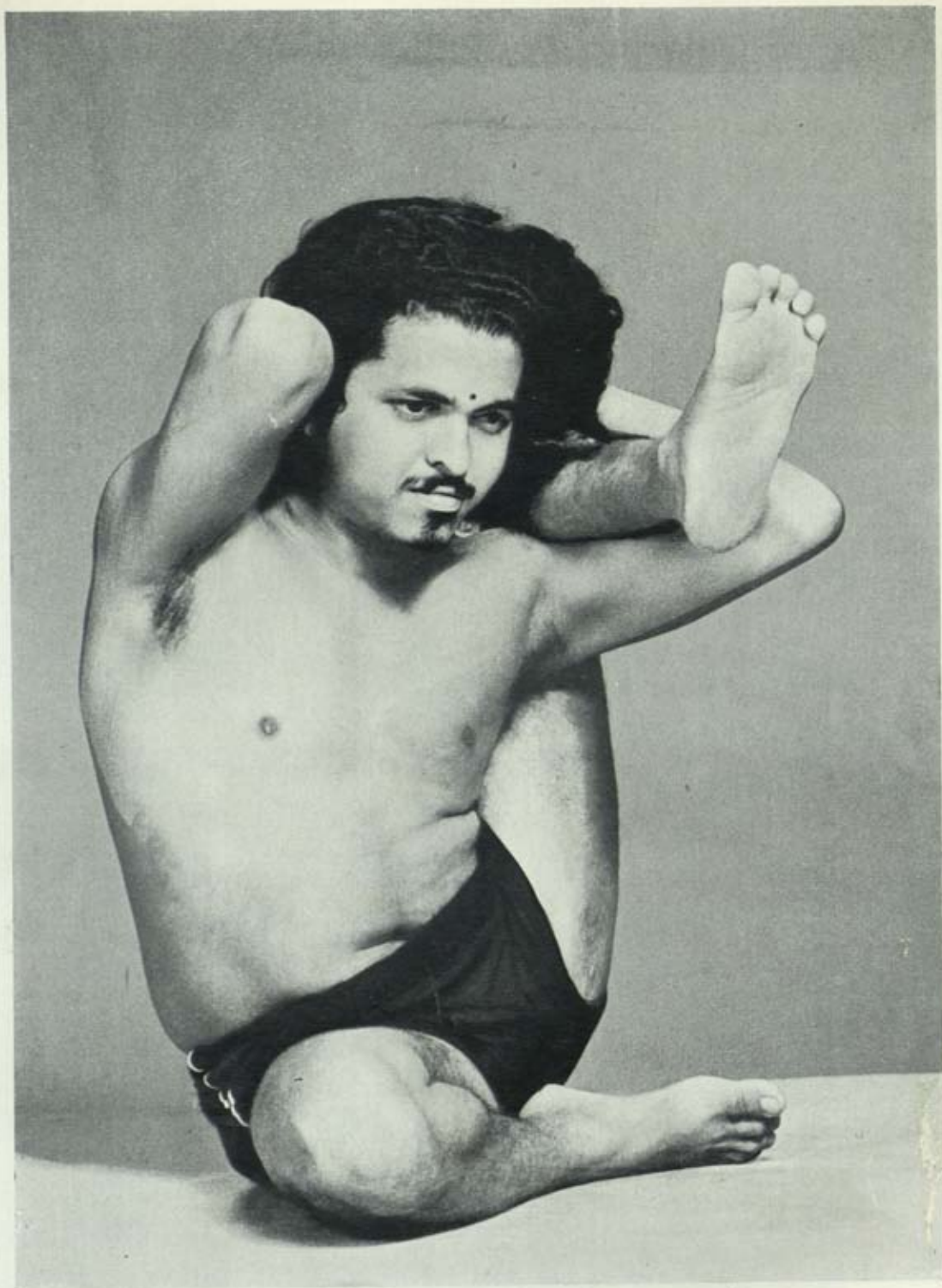
PLATE 105: Kneel with one foot resting on the other, both raised from the ground



Khañjanāsana

PLATE 107: Bending backward bring the head and shoulders forward between the legs while holding the feet with the hands





Ekahastabhujaṣana

PLATE 108: With the left foot on the shoulder clasp the hands behind the back

### 73. EKAHASTA BHUJĀSANA (UNILATERAL HAND-ARM POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sitting on the ground, place the left leg on the left shoulder with the knee bent at shoulder level. The right heel should then be brought close to the anus. The hands should be placed behind the neck with the fingers of the hands interlocked (Plate 108). The āsana should be repeated by placing the right leg on the right shoulder.

### 74. DVIHĀSTA BHUJĀSANA (BILATERAL HAND-ARM POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sitting on the ground the feet should be placed on the shoulders with the knees bent. The hands should hold the legs in position (Plate 109).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The preceding āsana, the Ekahasta bhujāsana, as well as the Dvihasta bhujāsana improves blood circulation in the region of the thighs, knees, calves, etc. Their practice brings relief to painful knees. Since the sacro-iliac joint situated above the rectum and the buttocks is exercised, this āsana can and does prove to be an excellent prophylactic against painful conditions of the lumbar region and back. Ailments of the hips, buttocks, waist, thighs, and knees can all be alleviated by its practice.

Women are warned against its practice, especially those who wish to have children. Those who do not, may practise this āsana. It is believed that its practice prevents conception, heaviness of the hips and it reduces buttocks and cures piles. The arms gain extra strength and it is usually practised by and prescribed for weight-lifters and others who do manual work. It gives resilience to the joints. Young girls should not practise this āsana.



## 75. JĀNU-BHŪMI-STHIRĀSANA (KNEE-SUPPORT POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Kneel with knees a foot apart. The hands are taken behind the back so that the toes of the left foot are held by the left hand and those of the right foot by the right hand. The whole body is kept straight while looking straight ahead (Plate 110).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana is an unfailing remedy for complaints of the knees; it even prevents them. The calves and the ankles are also benefited by it. It removes unwanted and superfluous matter on the articular bones and surfaces of the knee joints. Even at an advanced age no difficulty is experienced from immobility of the joints, whether for sitting, standing or for moving about.

The āsana is extremely useful for football players, for workers on treadle machines, for those who cycle extensively and for those who have to walk long distances or stand for long hours.

A modification of the āsana consists in moving the knees, backwards and forwards, after spreading a thick blanket on the ground.

## 76. PĀDAHASTĀSANA (FOOT-HAND POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground with feet together and arms extended upwards and the whole body also pulled upwards. The arms are then brought forward to touch the ground in front of the feet. Either the palms should be kept on the ground or the big toes should be held by the hands while keeping the legs and feet together. The head should touch the knees (Plate 111). The body from the hips to the feet should remain absolutely straight.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana makes the shoulders strong, the waist slim, and

the chest broad. Height can also be increased by the practice of this āsana. It helps in reducing weight, makes the spine resilient, and thus cures many unknown maladies.

Though this āsana is extremely easy to perform yet it is very beneficial. Even limited practice of the āsana can produce an immediate and noticeable effect.

## 77. EKAPĀDA KANDHARĀSANA (UNILATERAL FOOT-SHOULDER POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground. Raise the left leg to encircle the neck (Plate 112). Then, joining the hands, gaze straight in front. There is another method of performing this āsana; in this the right leg remains on the ground (Plate 113). The āsana is repeated with the right leg raised.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana provides relief in painful conditions of the region extending from the waist to the feet. It improves circulation in the lower limbs. It is helpful in cases of piles. The body from the waist to the feet develops and becomes well-proportioned. The knees and the feet become supple and elastic. The shoulders also become strong.

## 78. DVIPĀDA KANDHARĀSANA (BILATERAL FOOT-SHOULDER POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground and place the left leg on the right shoulder as in Ekapāda Kandharāsana. Then the right foot should be taken back and placed on the left foot which is already on the right shoulder (Plate 114). This position should be maintained as long as possible.

The āsana should be repeated after alternating the order of the feet.



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana not only provides the benefits which have been described for the Ekapada-kāndharāsana but, in addition, it prevents conception. Eka as well as the Dvipāda Kandharāsana should be practised only by those women who do not wish to have more children. Young girls are warned against the practice of this āsana.

The āsana is somewhat difficult to perform but perseverance and regular practice should enable one to do it well. Should it be difficult, 12 grammes of raw powdered turmeric, taken with half a kilogram of warm milk, will relax the 'nāḍīs' and make the performance of the āsana easier.

The practice of the āsana removes fatigue and blood circulation improves to such an extent that no pimples or boils develop in the region below the waist.

## 79. BHAGĀSANA (VULVAL POSTURE)

### POSTURE

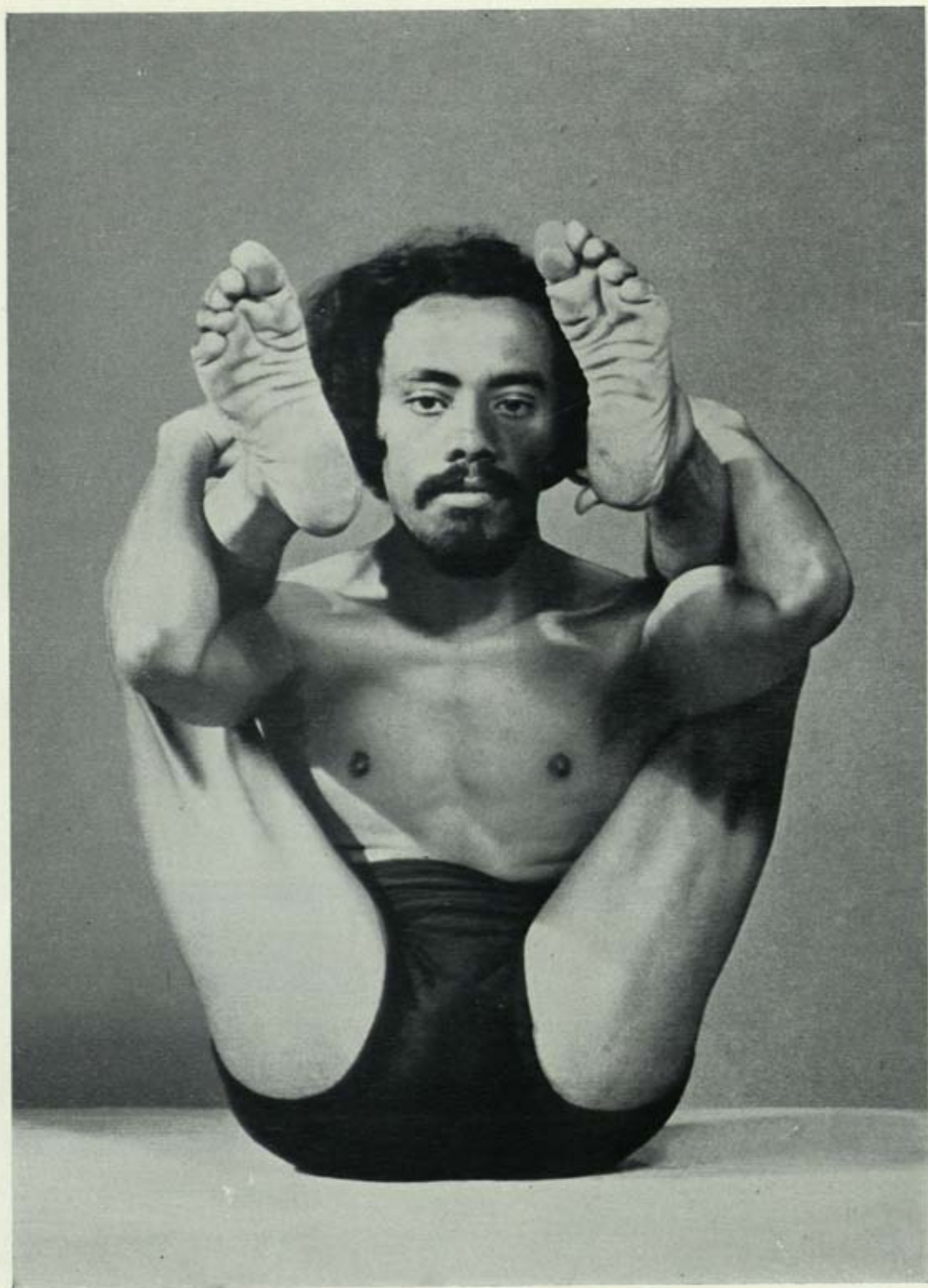
Sit on the ground with knees bent and as wide apart as possible. The heels should be joined together and brought near the testicles. The toes of the feet should be turned down and placed on the ground. The heels should be joined together and kept upwards. The hands should be kept on the knees (Plate 115).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana develops strength in the knees, thighs, calves, ankles, and toes. It wards off arthritic disorders and fatigue in the waist and hips. The āsana is very useful for the ano-rectum as well as the external genitalia. Although it is slightly difficult to perform, yet its results are remarkable. It is very useful for pains in the joints and for crooked lower limbs. The āsana makes the feet shapely and attractive.

Even Kuṇḍalinī is influenced by this āsana. Hence, it has been recommended as very useful for the disciples of yoga.

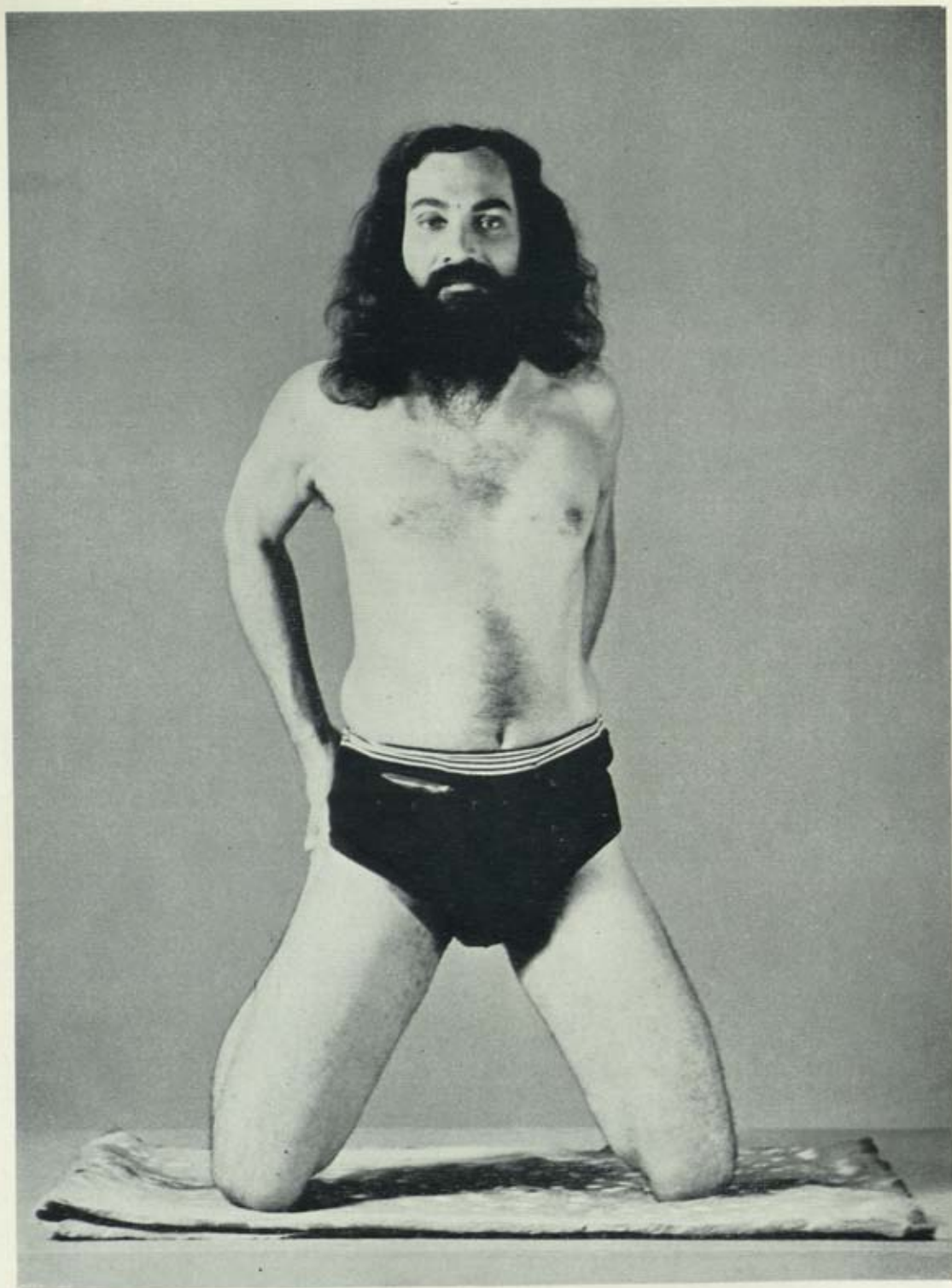
The āsana is tonic for feet tired through excessive walking or when painful in cold climates.



Dviastabhujāsana

PLATE 109: Feet on the shoulders are kept in position by the hands





Jānubhūmisthirāsana

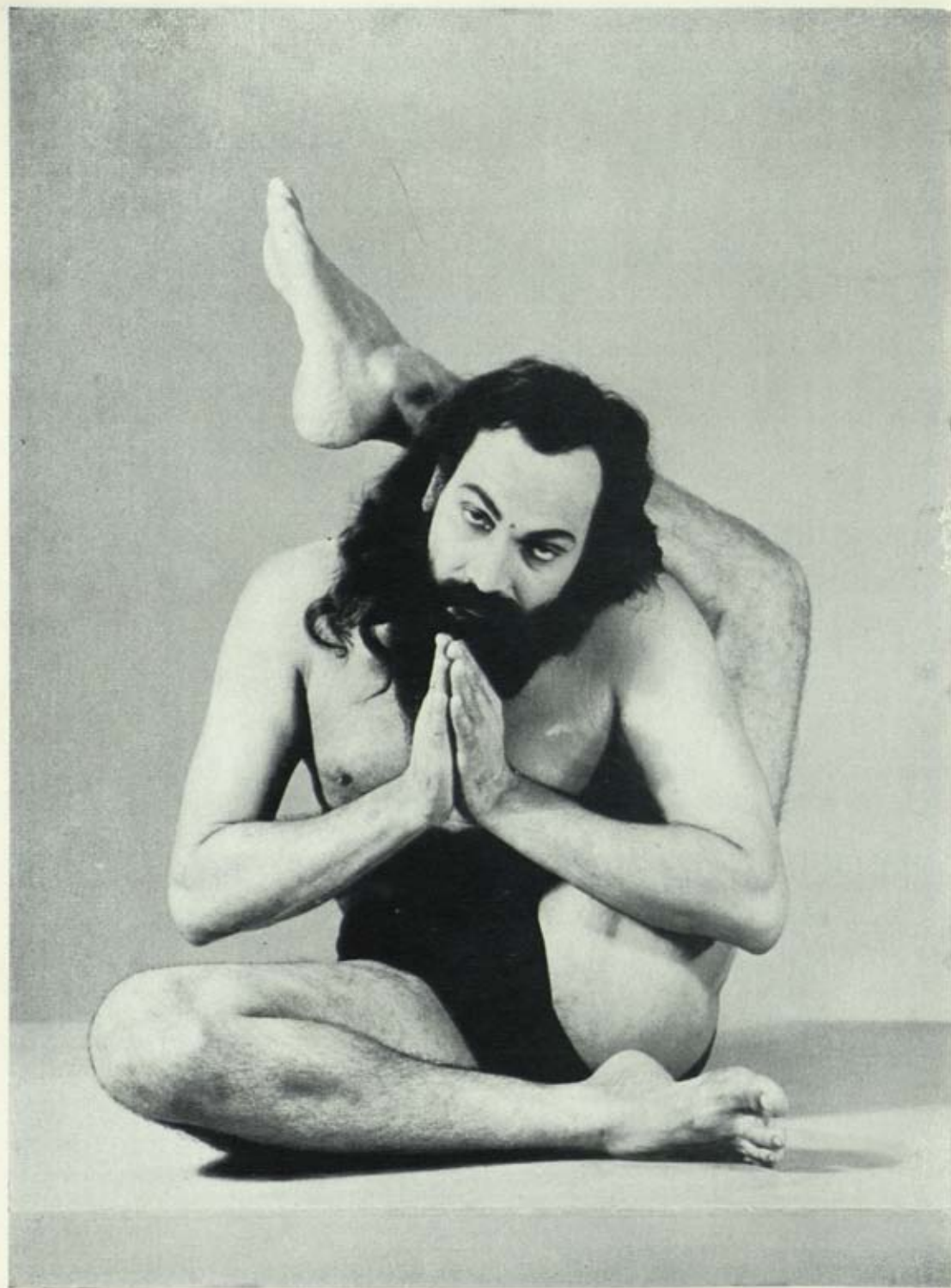
PLATE 110: While kneeling, the toes are held by the hands against the buttocks



Pāda-hastāsana

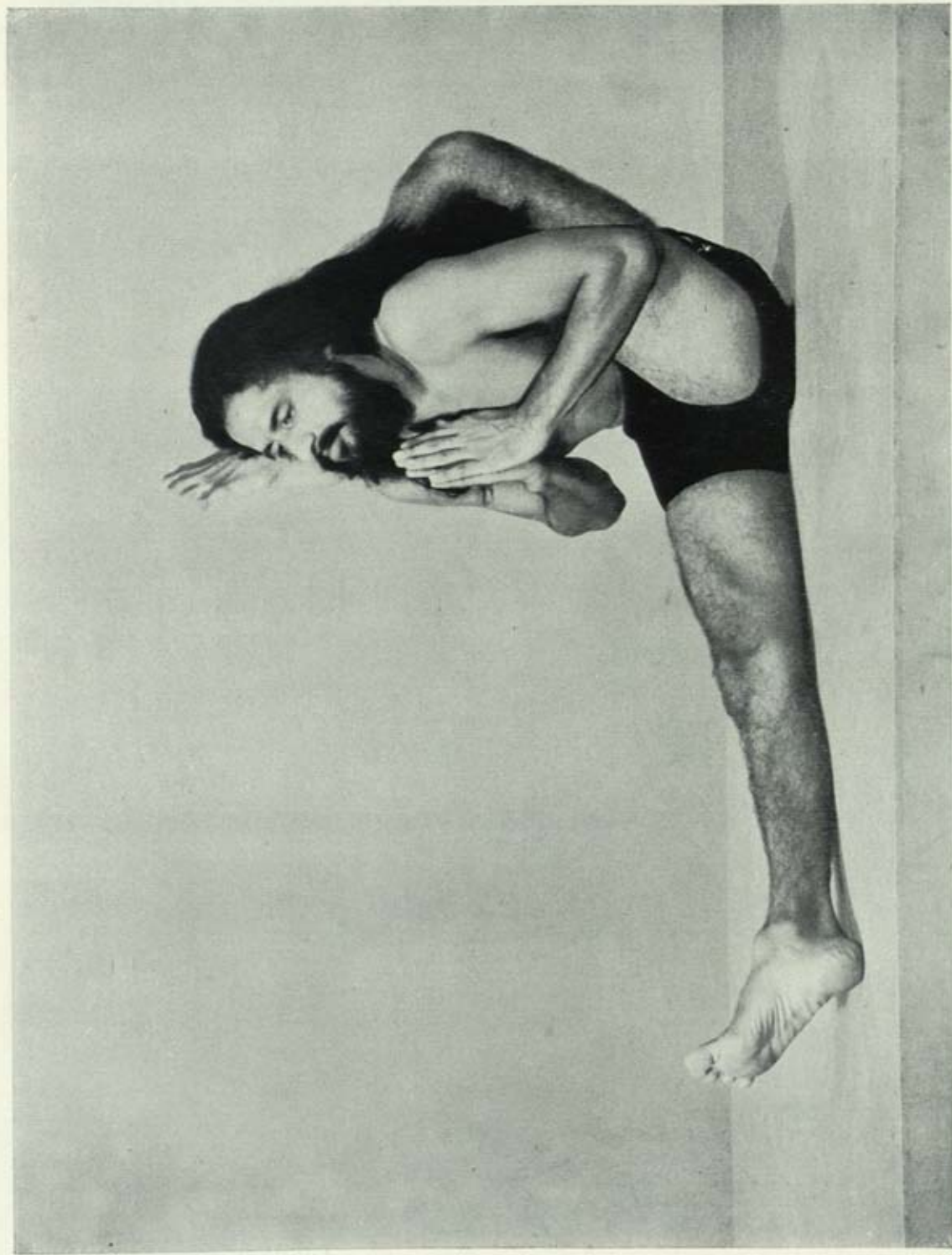
PLATE 111: Bending forward place the palms on the ground and the head on the knees





Ekapāda-kandharāsaṇa

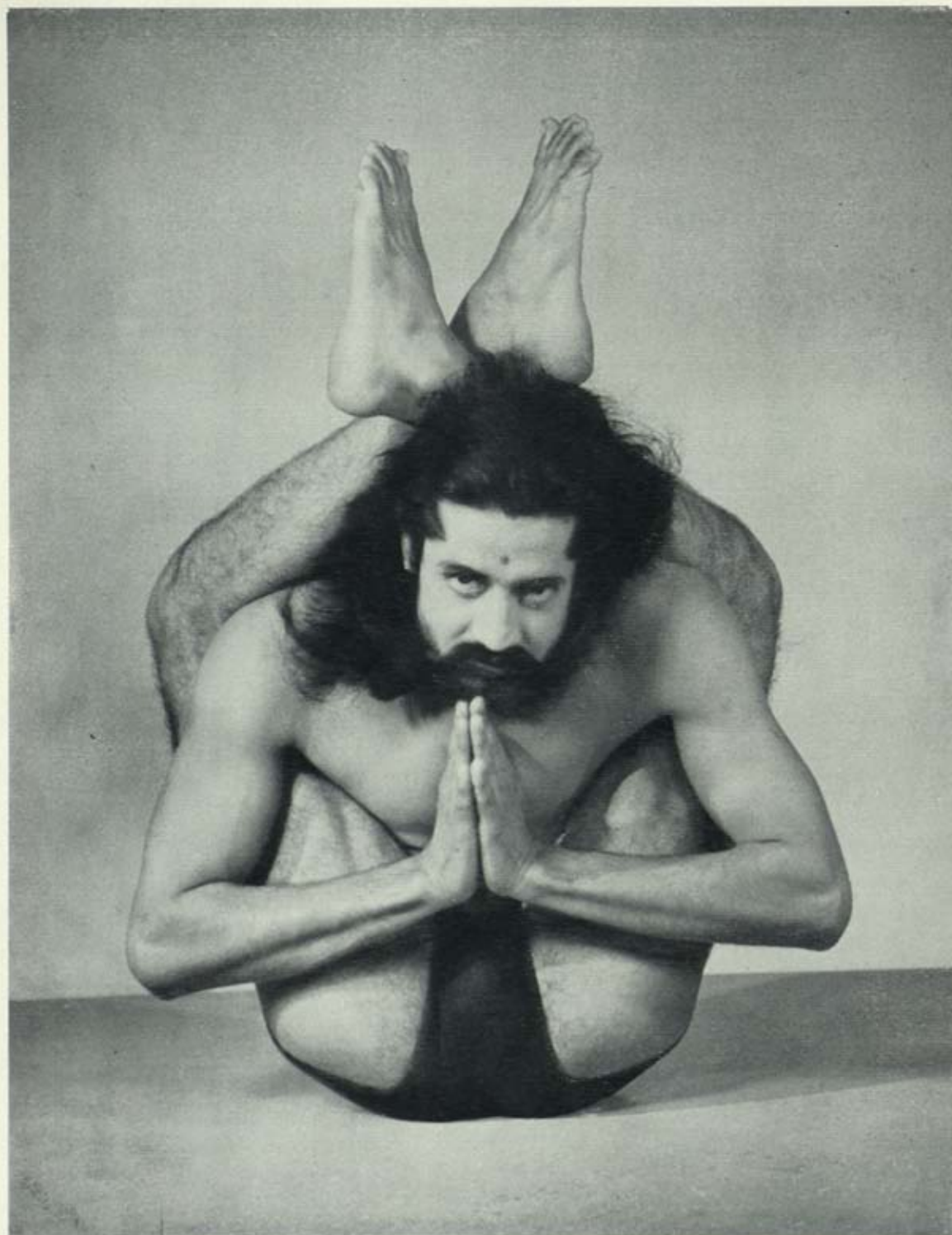
PLATE 112: Place the left leg behind the neck



Ekapāda-kandharāsana

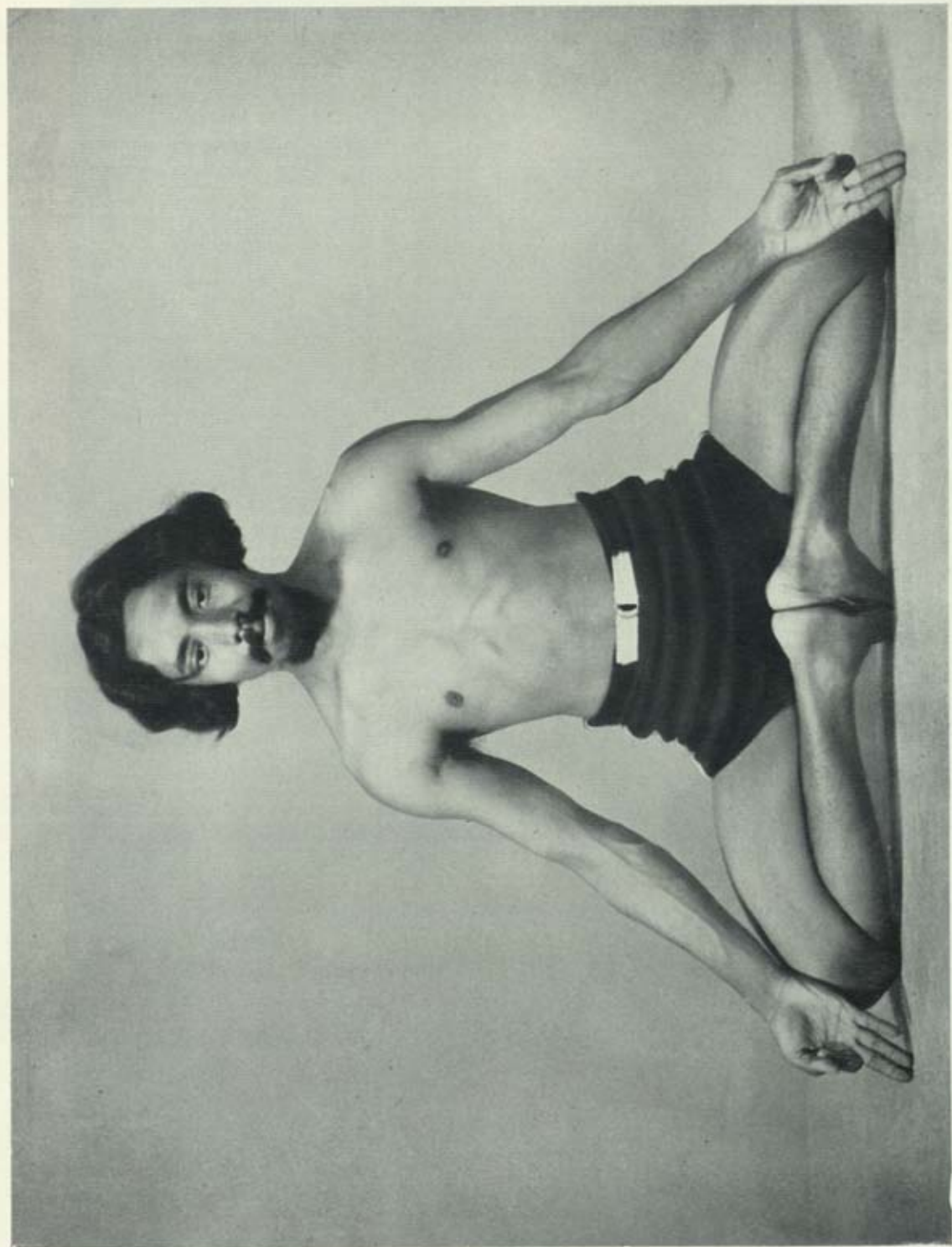
PLATE 113: As in Plate 112 except that the other leg is stretched forward





Dvipāda-kandharāsana

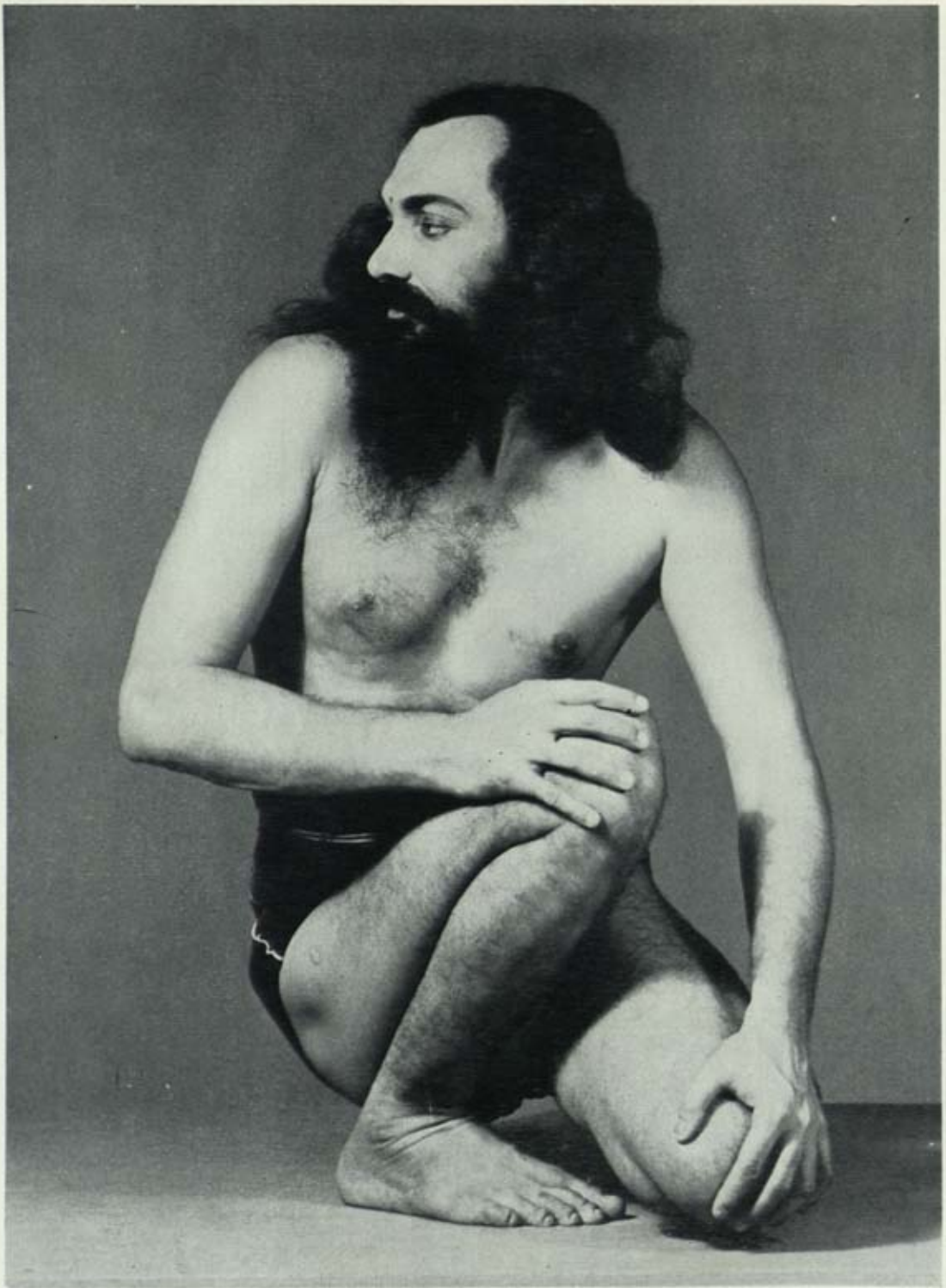
PLATE 114: Crossing the ankles behind the neck the heels should be placed on the neck, supporting the body on the buttocks, the hands should be joined together while looking straight ahead



Bhagāsana

PLATE 115: The knees and the toes should be placed on the ground





Udarākarṣaṇāsana

PLATE 116: Press down each knee alternately

## 80. UDARA KARṢANĀSANA (BELLY-SUCTION POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Keep the distance of a hand-span between the feet and sit in Kāgāsana (Plate 91). Then, keeping the hands on the knees, push the right knee with the right hand close to the left foot, about an inch above the ground. This should be followed by a similar movement of the left knee towards the right foot (Plate 116). Although it seems simple, yet this āsana is somewhat difficult to perform.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana cures indigestion and ensures normal digestion of food. Its practice is also an unfailing remedy for constipation. It is one of the four āsanās used in sequence for the conch-cleansing (Śaṅkha-prakṣālaṇa) procedure which cannot be achieved without it.

The āsana relieves pain in the lower limbs and acts as a sure prophylactic against the maladies of the joints of the lower limbs. The feet develop great strength, and therefore it has been held to be of great use to those who have to walk long distances.

## 81. TOLĀṄGULĀSANA (FINGER-BALANCE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with legs stretched out together. Finger tips are placed on the ground by the side of the buttocks and the whole body is lifted up (Plate 117). There is an alternative method for performing this āsana; lie on the ground with the fists clenched and placed under the waist. The body below and above this point should be raised about a foot (Plate 118).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana strengthens the arms and the fingers. Those who get tremors of the hands while writing or otherwise must practise this āsana.



The fingers become shapely and supple. For hyperhidrosis of the hands, or for those whose hands remain abnormally cold or warm, the practice of this āsana is essential. The strength of the body increases through its practice and nervousness and anxiety are controlled. Either type of Tolāṅgulāsana is sufficient to cure the waist of most of its ailments. It prevents the degeneration of the vertebral column. It improves condition of the spine and consequently ensures good health of the whole body.

## 82. PŪRVOTTĀNĀSANA (ANTERIOR-STRETCH POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with legs stretched out in front. Catch hold of the big toes. The legs should then be raised as high as possible and kept in that position (Plate 119). Care should be taken to see that the legs from the thighs to the feet remain absolutely straight.

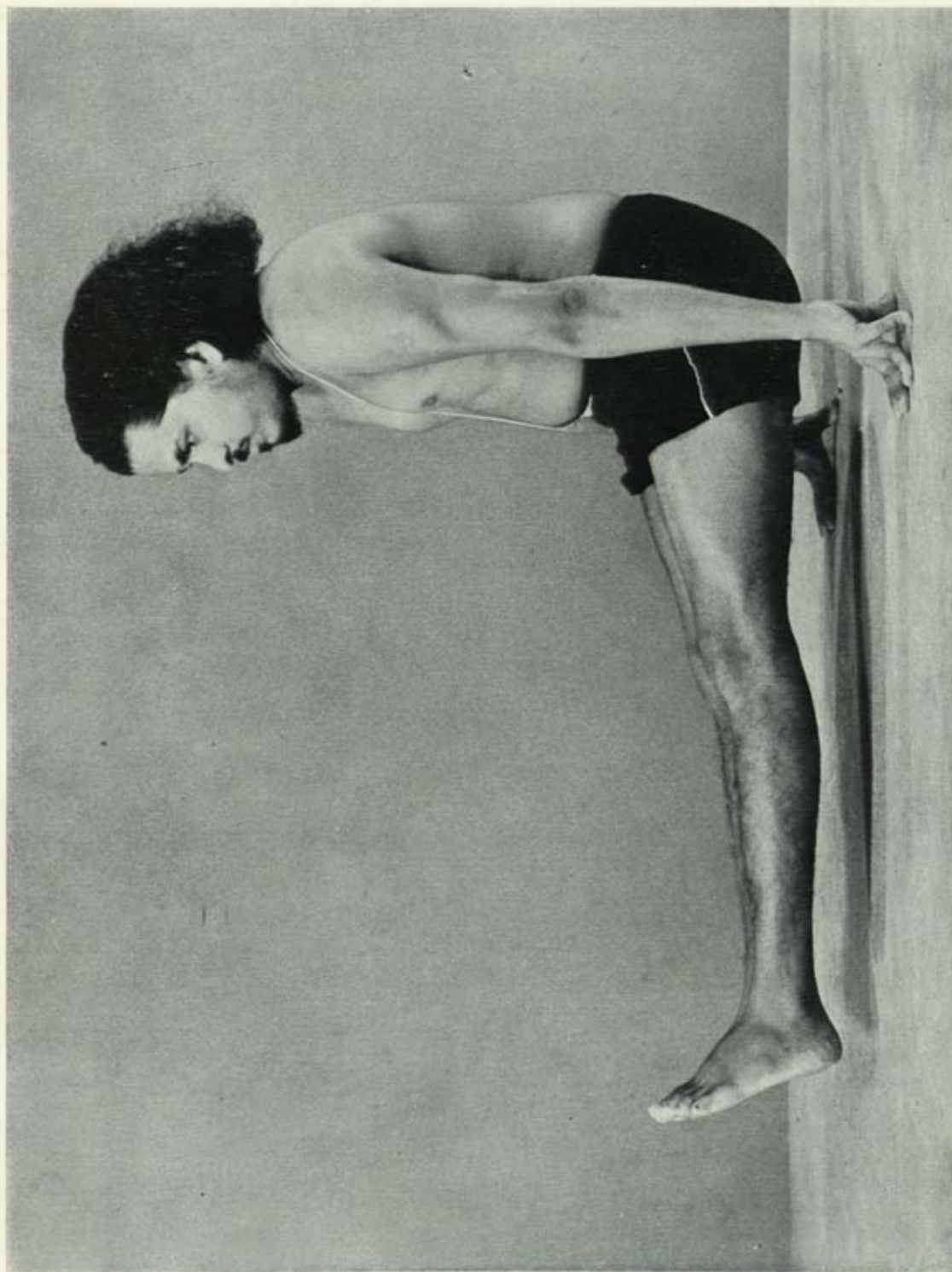
### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana exercises the osteo-articular apparatus of the pelvis. It relieves fatigue of the body and helps in improving circulation of blood in the entire body. It provides balance and poise. The āsana is extremely simple to perform but is at the same time beneficial.

## 83. DVIPĀDAVISTRITĀSANA (SPREAD-OUT FEET POSTURE)

### POSTURE

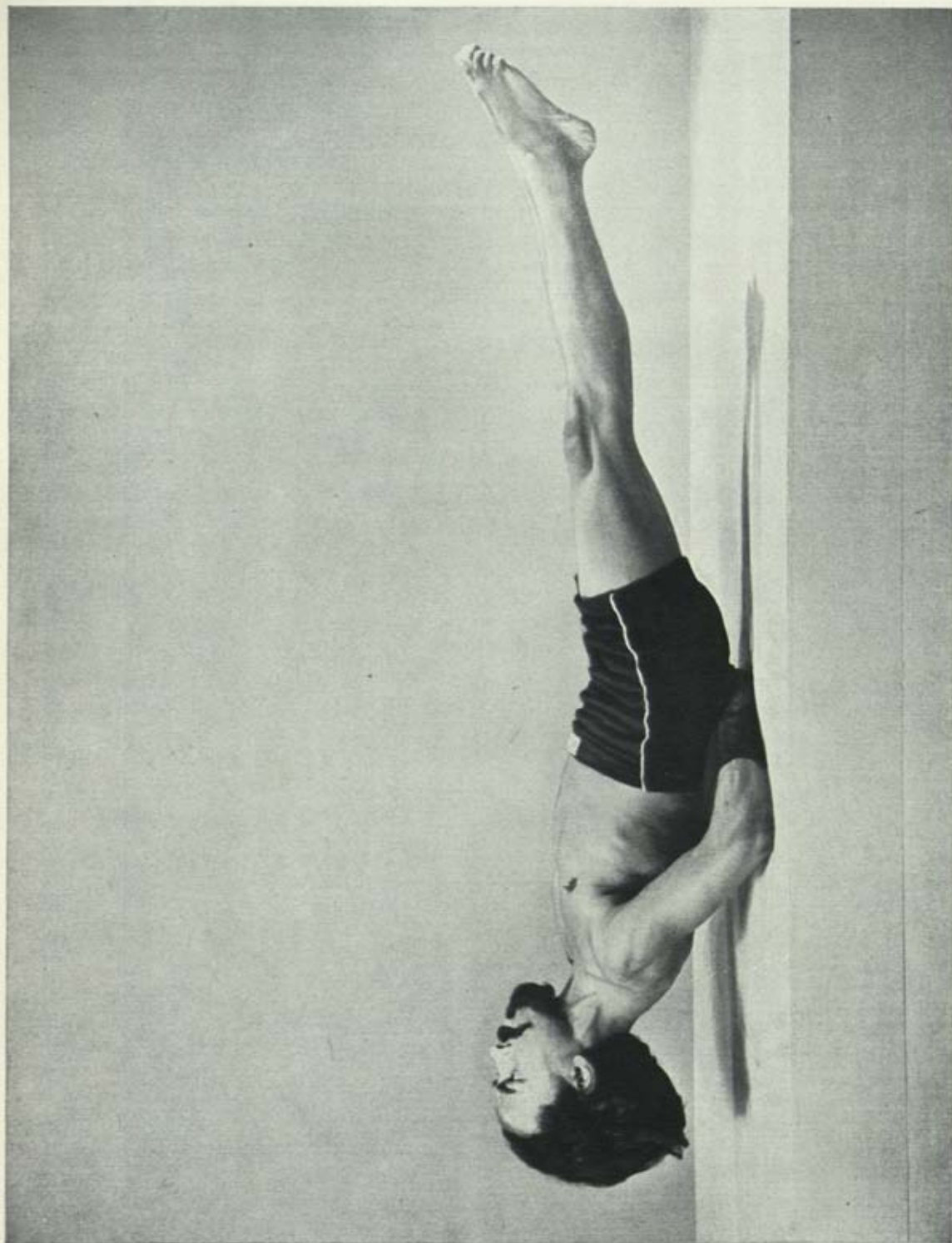
Stand on the ground with the feet spread as far apart as possible and the body lowered to the ground in what is commonly known as a split. The hands are placed on the legs, the right hand pointing towards the right foot and the left hand towards the left foot. The āsana is performed in a variety of ways, some of which are illustrated in Plates 120, 121, and 122.



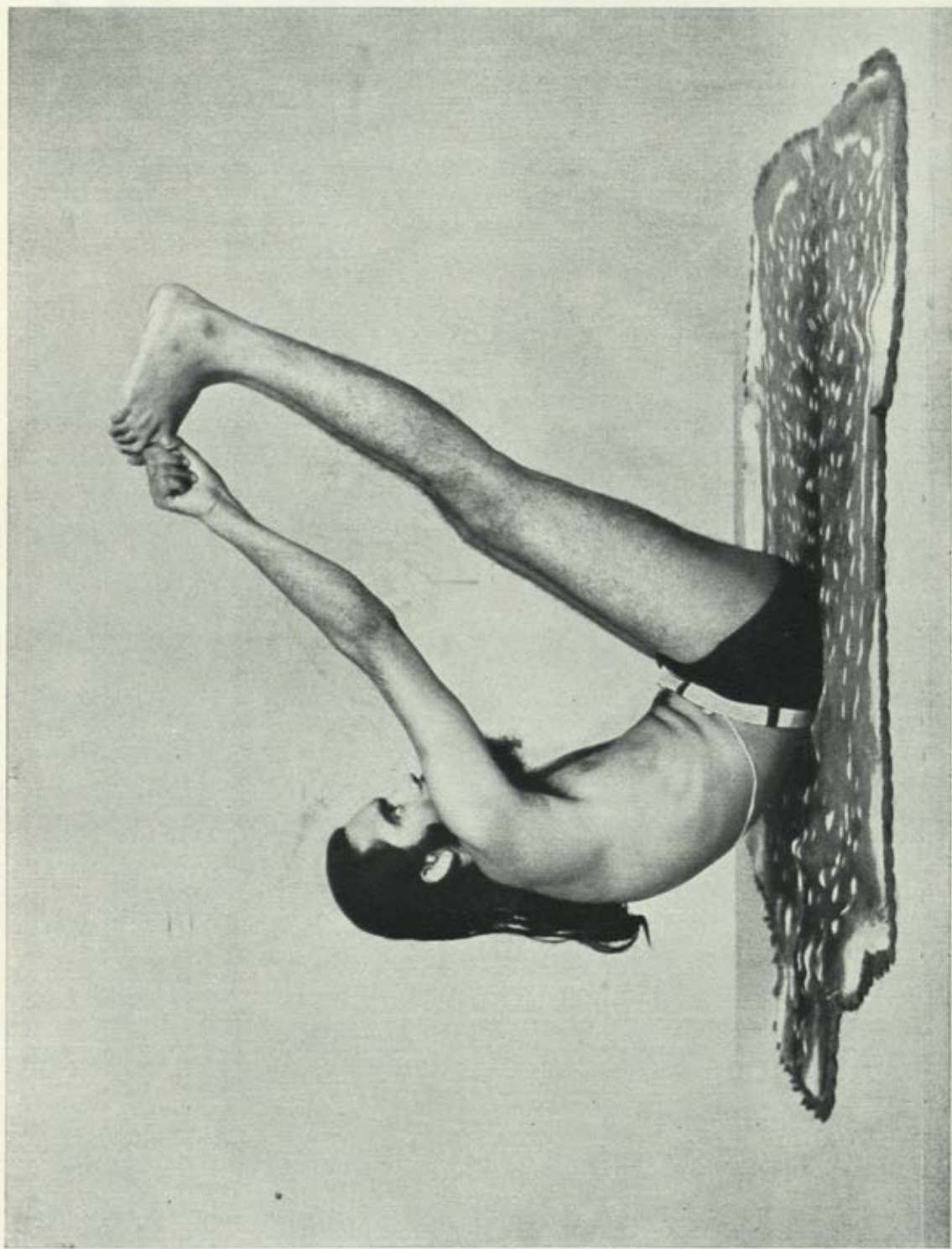
Tolāṅgulāsana

PLATE 117: With the legs stretched, support the raised body only on the fingers





Tolāṅgulāsana  
PLATE 118: With the hands under the waist raise the body with only the waist touching the ground



Pūrvottānāsana

PLATE 119: Raise the feet from the ground as high as possible



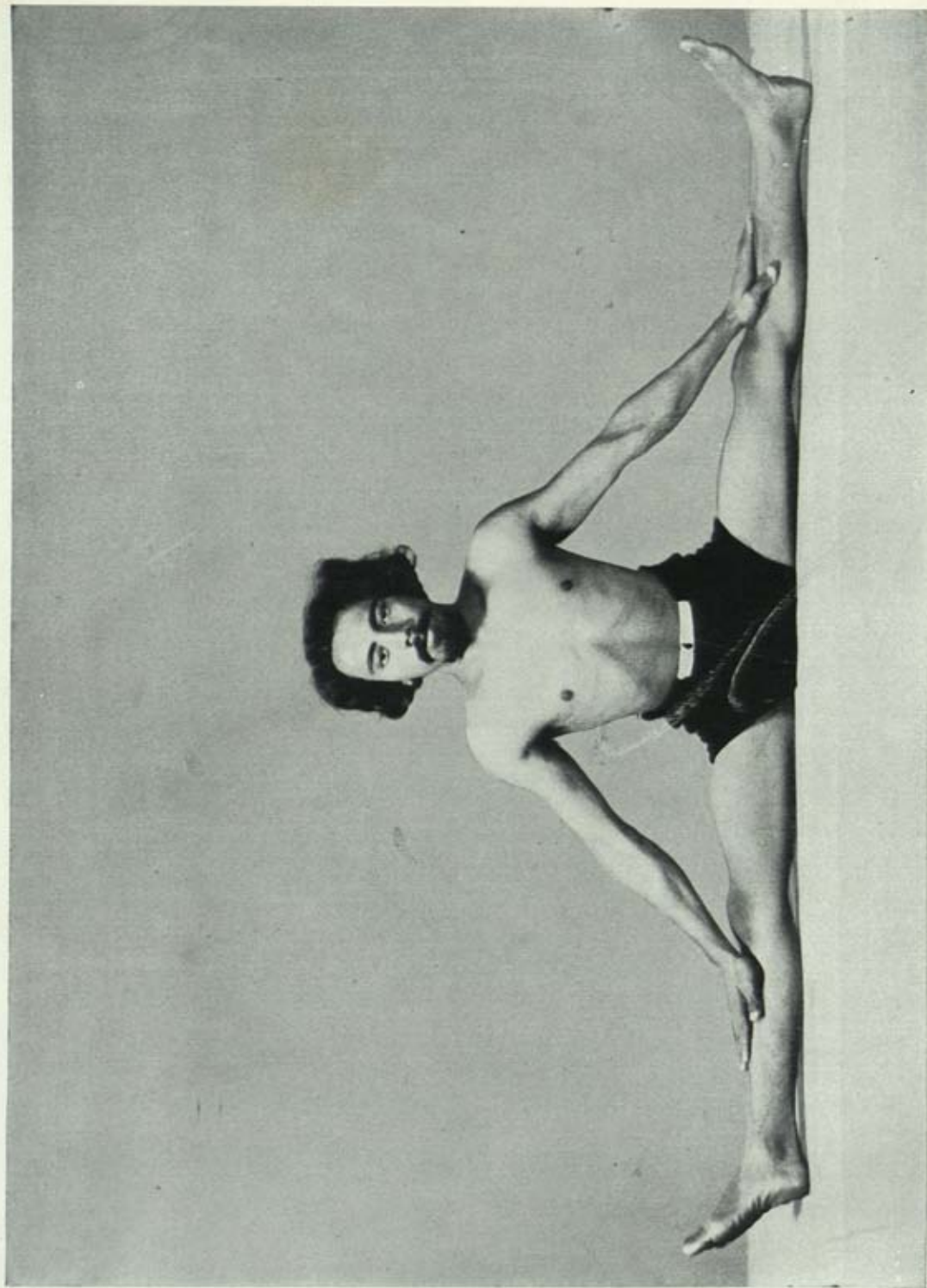


PLATE 120: The entire body from the heel of one foot to the other must touch the ground

Dvipāda-vistrāṣana

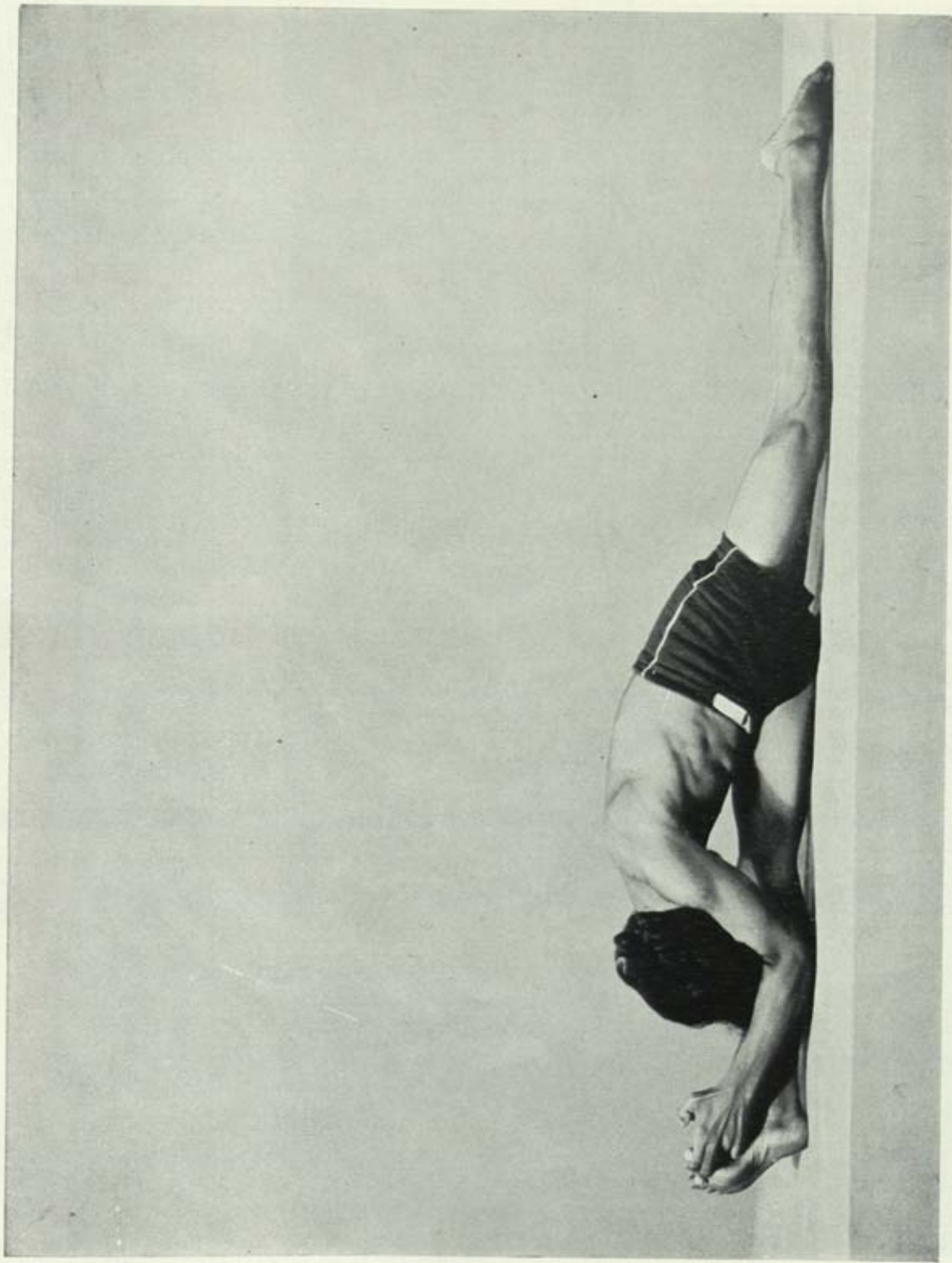


PLATE 121: While holding the toes of the right foot, place the head on the right knee with the left leg stretched backwards

Dvipāda-vistrāṣana



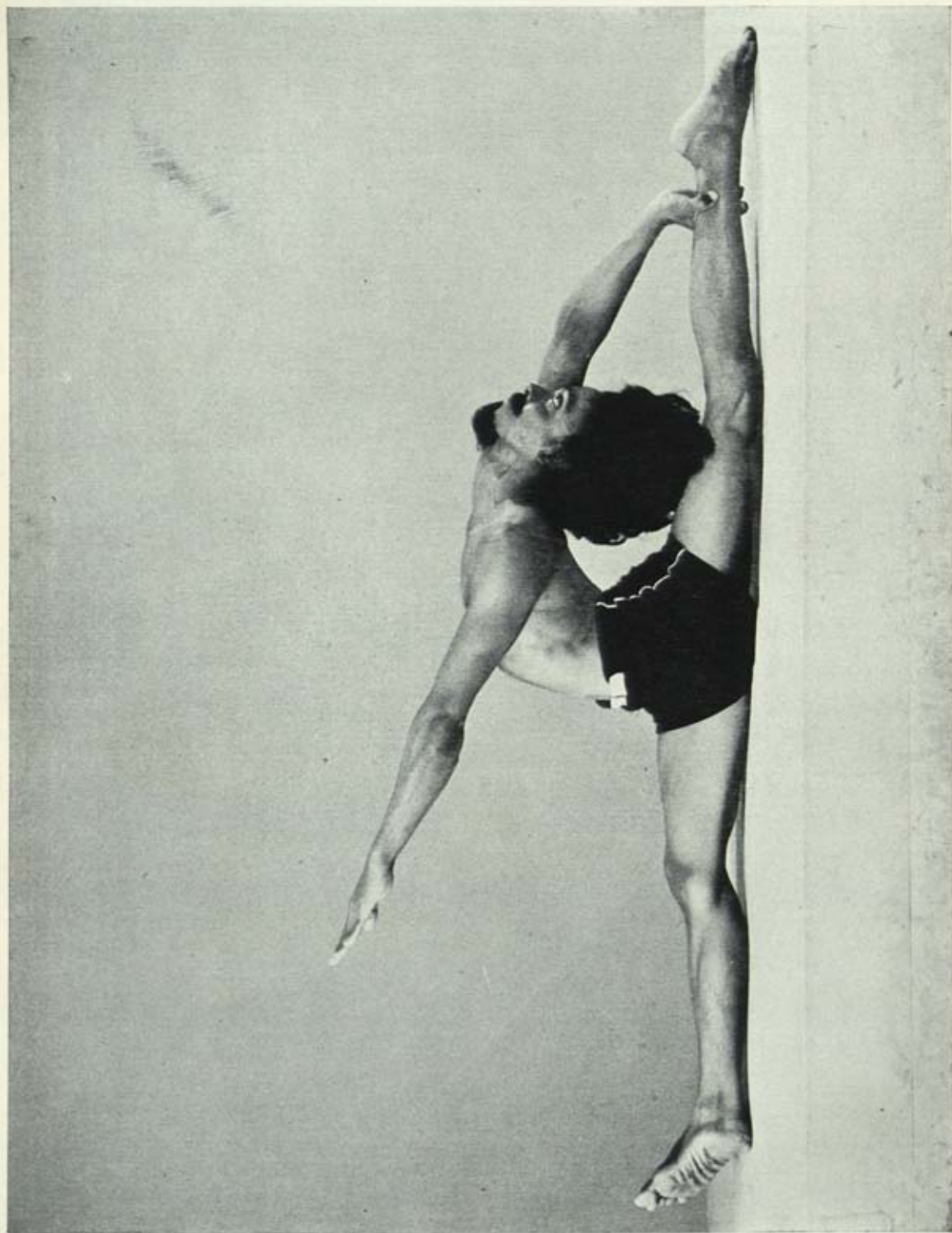


PLATE 122: Bend backwards to place the head on the left knee

Dvipāda-vistṛtāsana

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana is useful in the treatment of piles, fistula, and many similar ano-rectal conditions. It induces proper circulation of blood through tissues of the external genitalia and the ano-rectum. The practice of the āsana also increases height. Persons of short stature, but below 25 years of age, can gain few extra inches through a rigorous and sustained performance of the āsana. It also cures painful afflictions of the feet, knees, and thighs. For dancers this āsana is extremely helpful. The body as a whole becomes resilient and pliant and the portion of the body below the waist becomes elastic. This makes effortless the movements associated with walking, running, or standing. Consequently, the āsana is useful for sportsmen, particularly for those who run and jump.

It is believed that the practice of this āsana for even half a minute is as beneficial as the practice for an hour of many other āsanās. A further distinctive and very significant advantage of the āsana is that through it sexual drives are sublimated.

### 84. ŚĪRṢĀSANA (HEAD-STAND POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Roll a piece of cloth similar to the one used by peasant women (called *geṇḍurī* or *īṇḍaī*) to support pitcher of water or other heavy articles on the head. On this rolled cloth, place a side of the head (Plate 123). This area, which is considered the most appropriate for the performance of this āsana, is four-finger broad—half of which is on the forehead below the hairline, and the other half just above the hairline. The fingers should be interlocked and placed as in Plate 124. After placing the head on the *geṇḍurī* as described above, the knees should be raised to such an extent that the legs are absolutely straight (Plate 125). The legs should then, one by one, be drawn towards the trunk so that the knees approach the aillae (Plate 126). Then the legs should be bent and raised (Plate 127). When the body gets properly balanced in this position, the legs can be straightened (Plate 128). A sudden attempt at straightening the legs without attaining equilibrium may result in a fall. It may take months and even years to acquire the proper balance and



skill required for performing Śīrṣāsana. Some even spend a life-time and yet fail to achieve the proficiency required in performing Śīrṣāsana without any external support. The technique described above is quite simple and can be easily mastered by anyone in a few days.

The āsana can prove harmful if performed with the support of a wall because this may result in overtaxing the body's capacity. However, when it is performed in the manner described above, it is impossible to do it beyond the limits of one's physical reserves; the moment the physical capacity is exceeded the position cannot be maintained. There are a few variations in the method of performing this āsana, as illustrated in Plates 129 to 132.

After completing the āsana, stand erect and raise the arms. The fists should be repeatedly and alternately clenched and relaxed, at least 10 times. After this, the body should be gently massaged upwards. This massage is prescribed to provide the necessary physiologico-mechanical corrective to the haemo-dynamic state of the body when standing erect and upright after having finished the Śīrṣāsana. It is believed that, on the resumption of the erect posture after the Śīrṣāsana, the blood that has collected in the heart and the cranio-cerebrum rebounds in a fast stream. The abnormal flow can cause damage to the finest tissues. The gentle massage is aimed at slowing down the blood stream so that blood can circulate without causing any undesirable effects.

After this, the Śavāsana (Corpse posture) should be performed for half as long as the time taken in performing the Śīrṣāsana (Plate 133). Śavāsana causes the blood to be satisfactorily redistributed in the body, hence the necessity of performing it after Śīrṣāsana. If Śīrṣāsana is not followed by Śavāsana, harmful effects are likely. Hence, it must follow Śīrṣāsana for an appropriate length of time.

Should the nostrils be blocked before starting Śīrṣāsana, the attempt should be given up; at least one nostril should be open and functioning for the passage of breath during Śīrṣāsana otherwise the fine tissue components of the brain are likely to be damaged.

Those who cannot take a simple, nourishing, and balanced diet should not perform the āsana for longer than ten minutes. For a practice of the āsana beyond ten minutes, it is essential to observe strict celibacy and to take plenty of milk and ghee (clarified butter). If the āsana is performed unmindful of these precautions and safeguards, harmful consequences may follow.

Most persons start performing Śīrṣāsana after just reading about it in

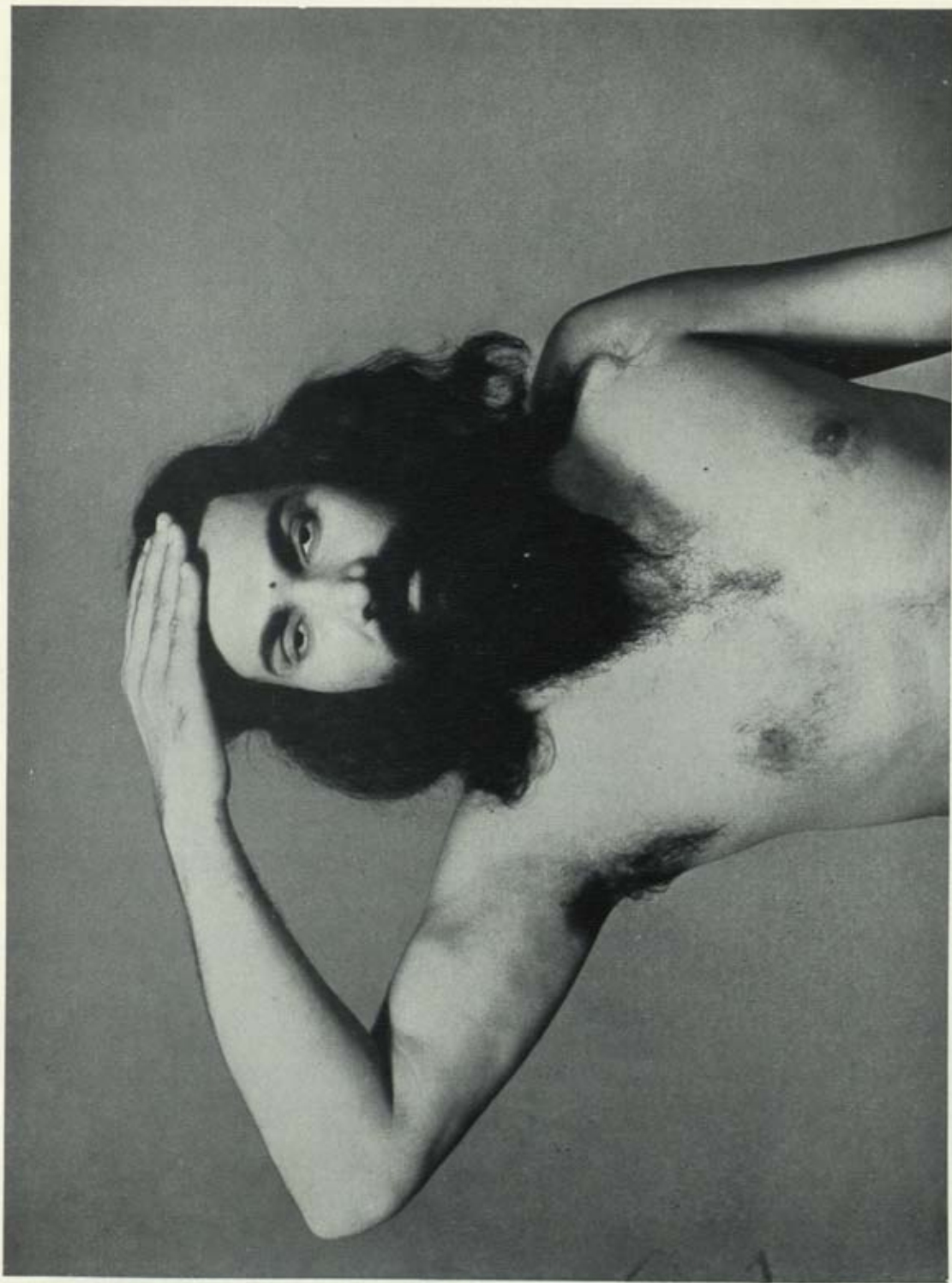


PLATE 123: The four fingers indicate the area on which the weight of the body is to be supported

Śīrṣāsana



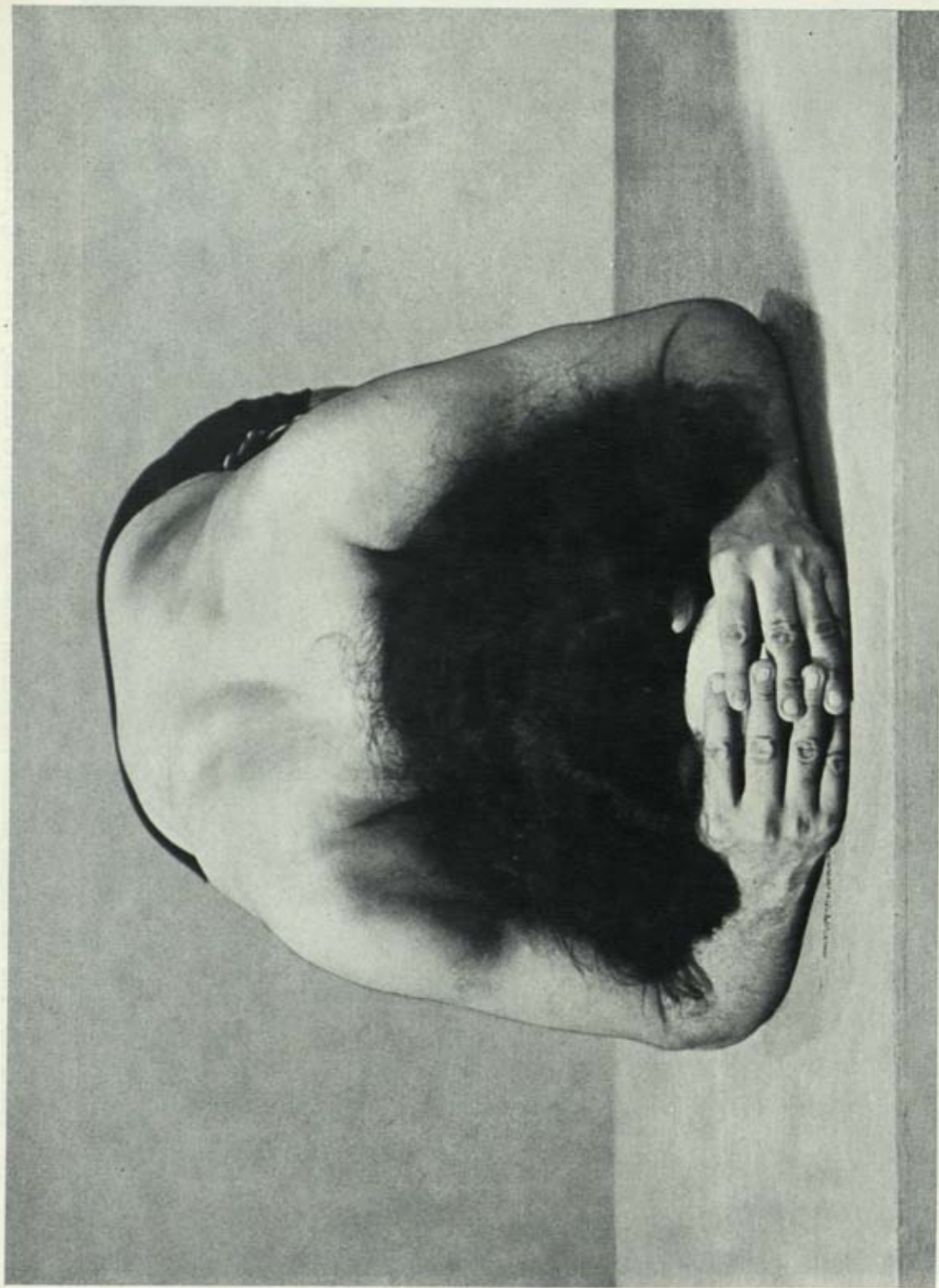
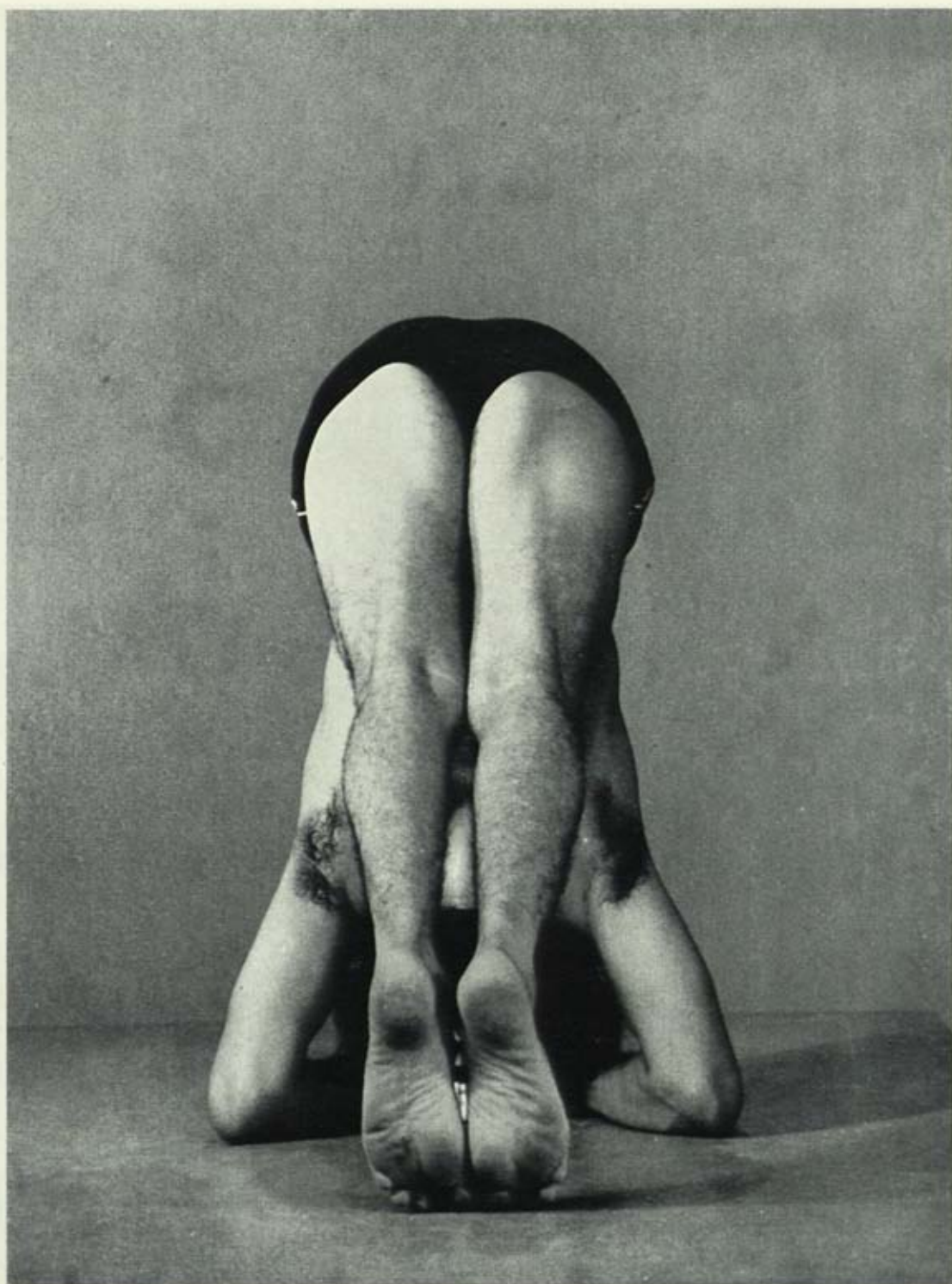


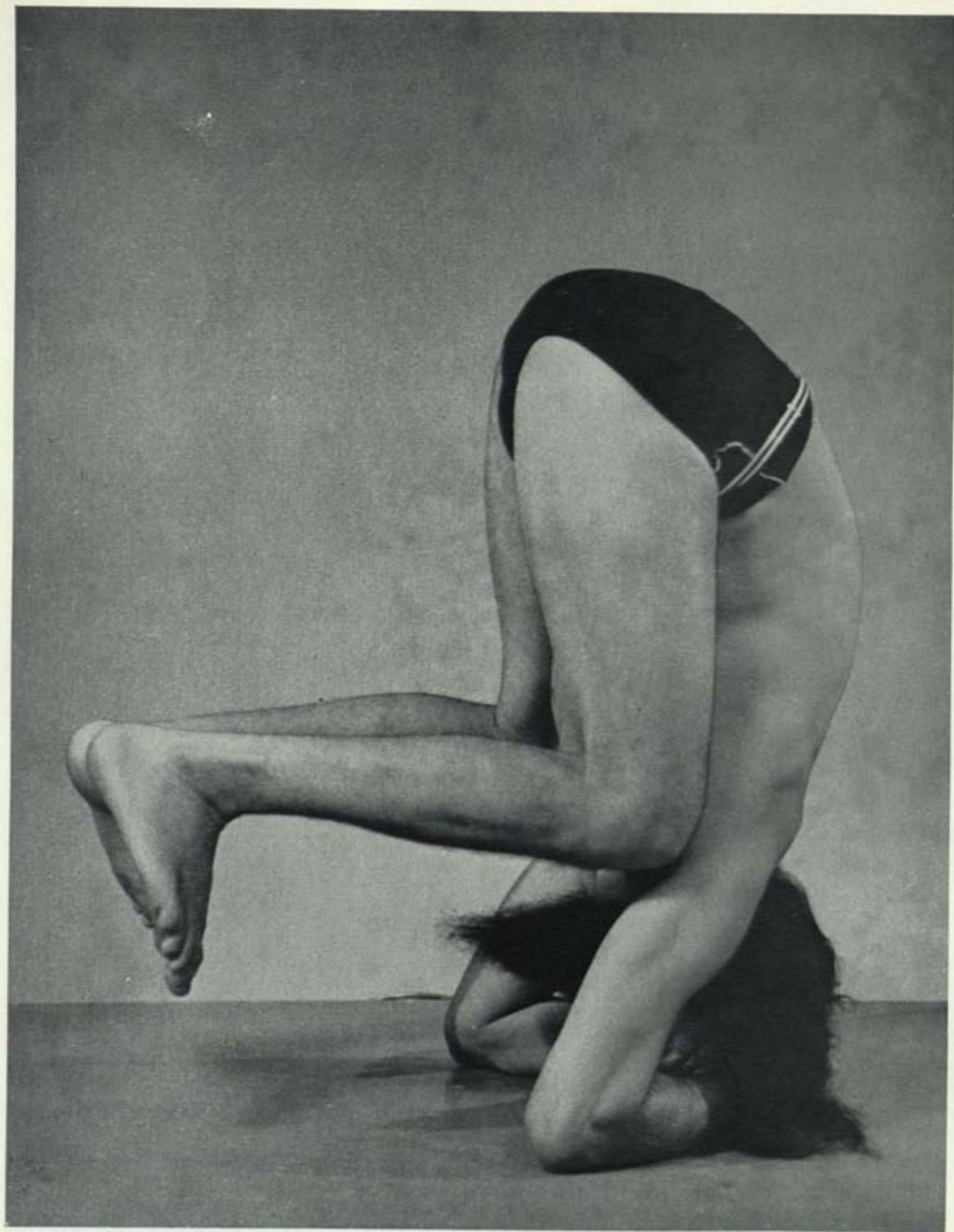
PLATE 124: Making a rool of cloth place the correct portion of the head on it in preparation for the Śīrṣāsana



Śīrṣāsana

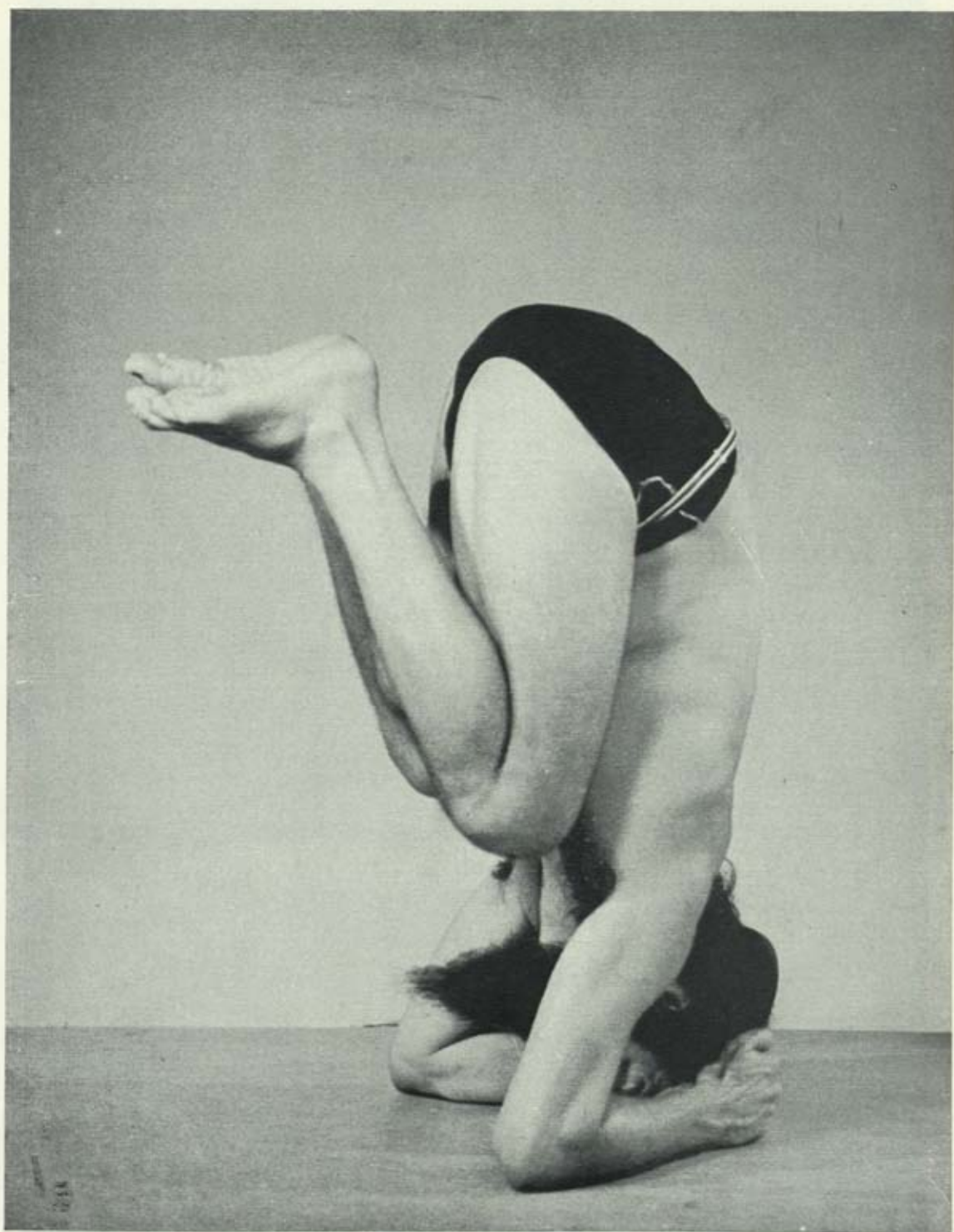
PLATE 125: Placing the head on the rolled cloth draw the legs up near the head





Śīrṣāsana

PLATE 126: Pull the legs in towards the trunk slowly and gradually



Śīrṣāsana

PLATE 127: The legs, bent at the knees, are raised while standing on the head



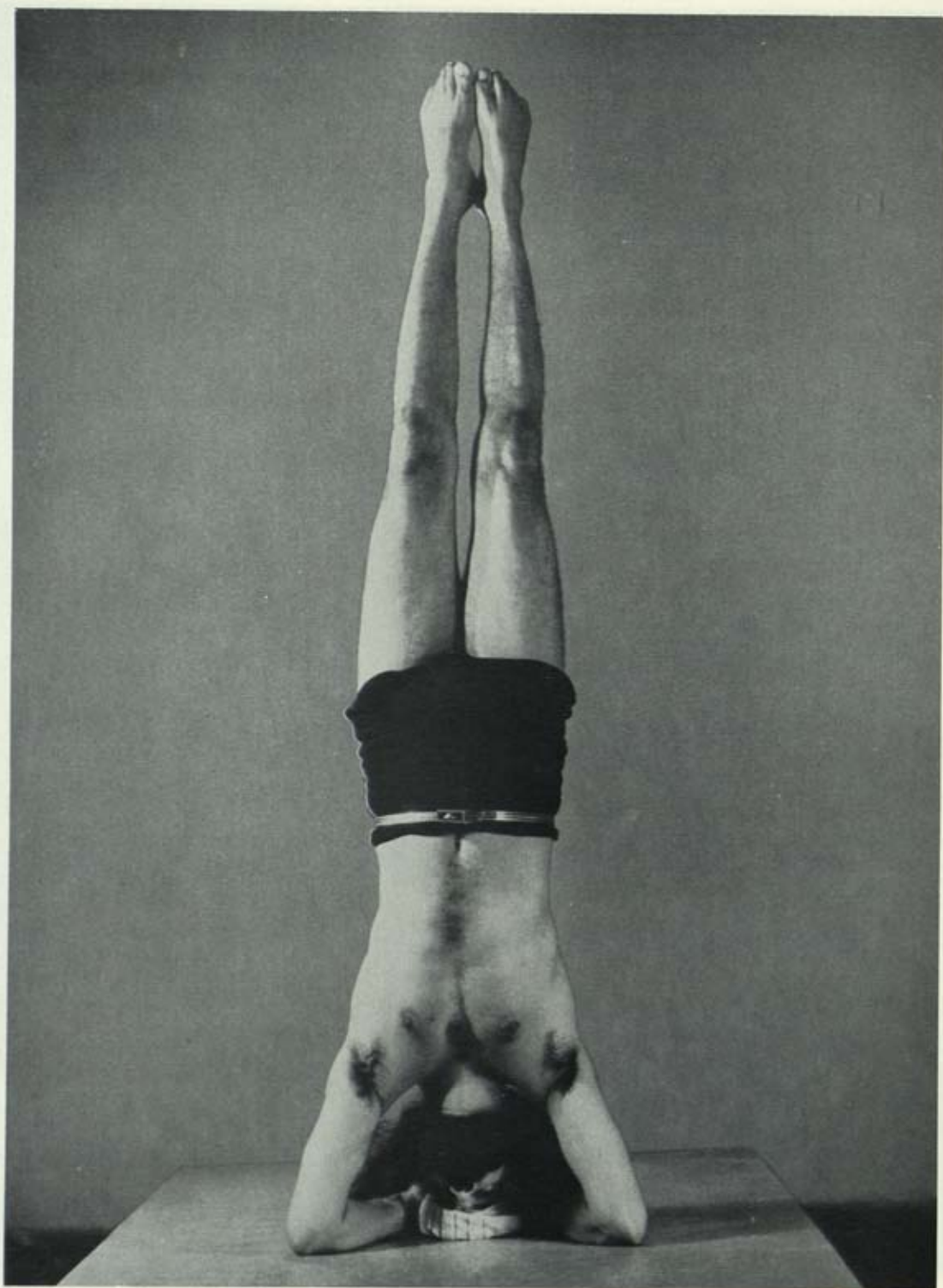
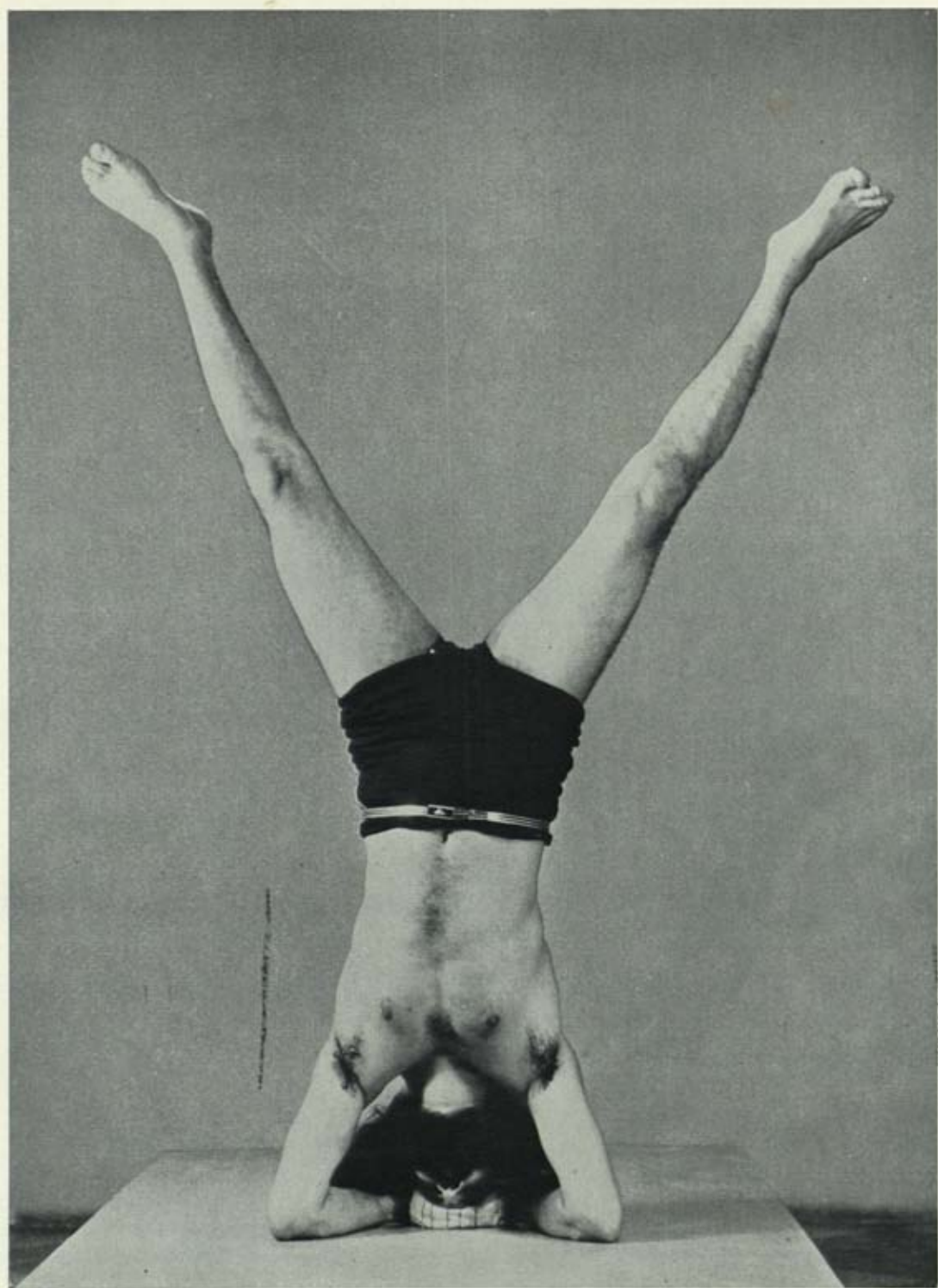


PLATE 128: The body raised fully must be straight and steady

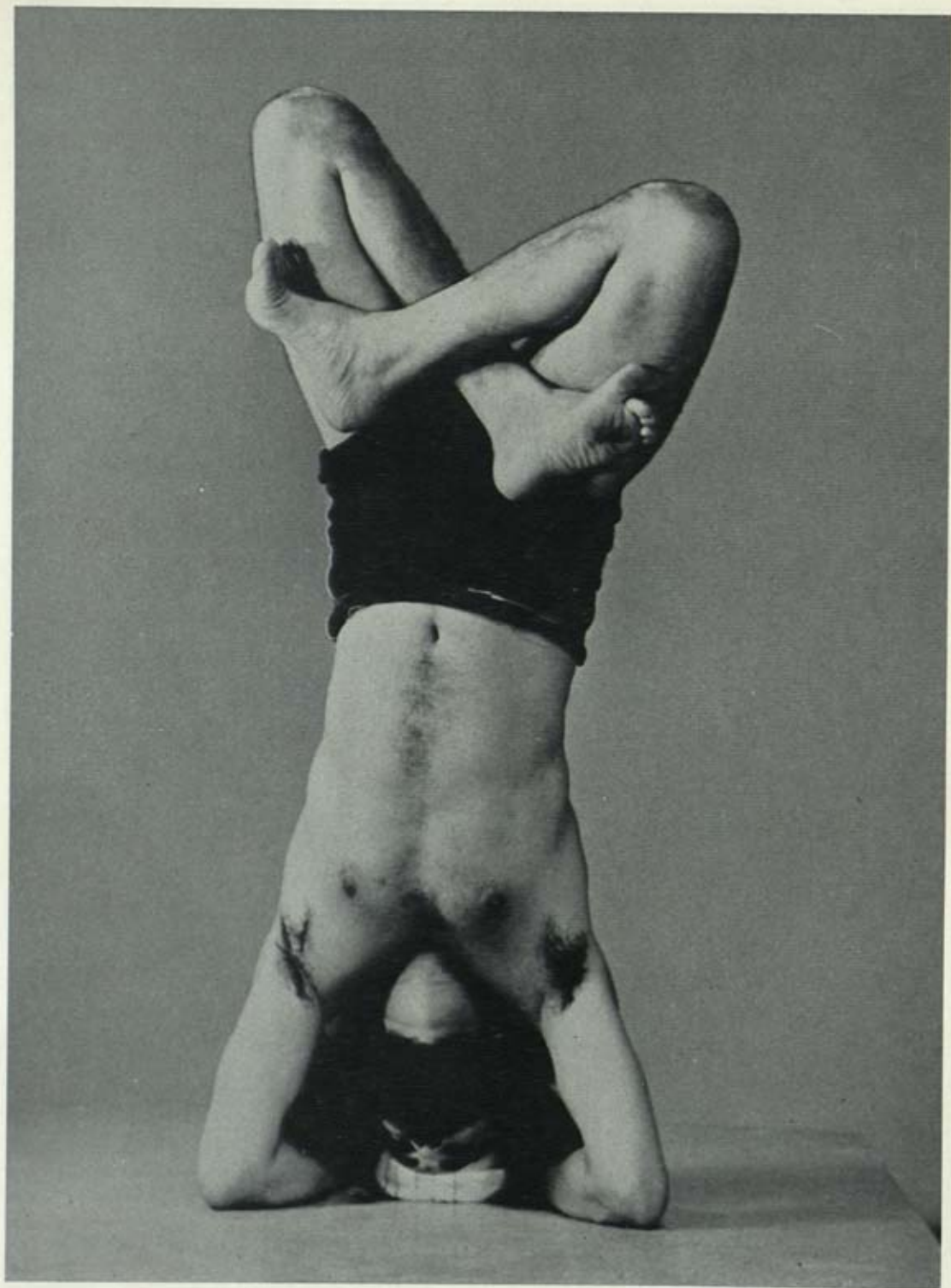
Śīrṣāsana



Śīrṣāsana

PLATE 129: While still in the Śīrṣāsana separate the legs as widely as possible





Śirṣāsana

PLATE 130: The Padmāsana posture should be assumed while standing on the head

books. This can be dangerous and may result in harm instead of good. A wrongly performed Śīrṣāsana could generate a host of diseases. Premature greying of hair, falling of hair, disorders of the eyes, mental weakness, dislodgement of the navel, wet dreams, and mental diseases can result from it. Such disorders, resulting from a wrong performance of this āsana, can be and have been rectified by performing it properly.

The area of the head indicated in Plate 134 is the area which is extremely soft in infants (it is known as anterior fontellae in medical terminology). This is very vulnerable and may get perforated easily. It is known as Brahmarandhra in yogic texts. Steadying in Prāṇa at this point, yogīs can know the supreme Divinity. This is the area referred to in *Yogic Sūkṣma Vyayama* in the context of the technique for developing the memory (Smarāṇa-śakti-vikāśaka-kriyā). If Śīrṣāsana is performed by posing on this part of the head a number of ailments, which may even prove incurable by modern medical procedures, can result.

The third portion of the head illustrated in Plate 135 is where a tuft of hair, called the śikhā, is supposed to be grown by every Indian Ārya. Standing on this for the performance of Śīrṣāsana is absolutely useless, although no harm comes of it either.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Like the lion, who is the undisputed lord of the beasts, the Śīrṣāsana is called the king of yogic āsanās for its effectiveness in curing diseases. There is hardly any ailment which cannot be cured by its performance. It combines all the beneficial effects of the 84 lac āsanās. Its practice provides relief in ocular disorders, premature greying of hair, blood-dyscrasia, lepromatous and allied diseases, spermatorrhoea, menstrual disorders, and the like. In wet dreams, fistula and other ano-rectal maladies, coryza and respiratory catarrh, Śīrṣāsana by itself proves remarkably and unfailingly effective. An outstanding feature of the āsana is that a number of mental diseases can be cured by its practice. Even lunatics have been treated and cured by it. However, Śīrṣāsana ought to be practised only after learning it properly from an accomplished teacher.

Patients of heart disease and high blood pressure are strictly forbidden the practice of this āsana until some other yogic techniques have cured these diseases.



Śīrṣāsana makes the blood of the entire body flow to the brain, the heart, and the upper parts of the body. Practice of the āsana even for a day proves sufficient to keep the heart toned up for a number of days.

Śīrṣāsana also helps in the sublimation of sex energies. The semen is rid of all impurities. As a result the face becomes radiant and relaxed and the eyes sparkle.

A marvellous attribute of the āsana is that one who performs it correctly and regularly may never become old. The yogic explanation for this phenomenon is that, by this up-side-down posture, the nectarean secretions (called amṛta or the immortalizing fluid) produced by the 'Luna' situated in the area of the palate are prevented from being burnt out and annihilated in the formidable, fiery blaze of the 'Sun' located in the navel.

Svātmārāma, the disciple of the great yogi Gorakṣanātha, comments thus in 'Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā':

Yatkiñcit sravate candrādamṛtaṃ divyarūpiṇaḥ  
Tatsarvaṃ grasate sūryastena piṇḍo Jarāyutaḥ.

(H.Y.P. 3, 77)

The body gets old on account of the Surya consuming and destroying all the divine nectar—amṛta—in whatever quantity it is released from the 'Luna'.

(The 'Sun' is supposed to be situated in the region of the 'navel' and the 'Luna' is in the 'palate'.)

Since in Śīrṣāsana the relations of the organs in the body get reversed, this could be the method of putting off old age, as has been remarked by Svātmārāma, the disciple of Gorakṣanāth:

Tatrāsti, Kāraṇaṃ divyaṃ sūryasya mukhavañcanam  
Gurūpadeśato jñeyam na tu Śāstrārtha-koṭibhiḥ.

(H.Y.P. 3, 78)

For the sake of this divine fluid (i.e. the 'amṛta') the mouth of the 'Sun' is to be avoided. This can be known through the instructions of a Guru and not through the mere literal study of numerous texts.

The meanings as well as the implications of the 'Luna', the 'Sun', and the 'amṛta' are discussed frequently in yogic literature. This is also discussed in detail in the context of Khecari mudrā in *Yogāsrama Granthamala* (Vol. 3), in which another method for the preservation of this amṛta has also been described.

Urdhvaṃ nābher adhastālor urdhvaṃ bhānur adhaḥ śaśī  
Karaṇī Viparītākhyā guru vākyena labhyate.

(H.Y.P. 3, 79)

The reversing process (Viparīta-Karaṇī) in which the 'navel' is above the 'Sun' is attained by instructions from a Guru.

This reversal of the relative positions between 'Luna' (the source) and the 'Sun' (crematorium of the immortalizing 'amṛta') naturally would be expected to preserve the fluid against destruction which in turn will ward off old age.

It is somewhat difficult to interpret this great concept of yoga in modern medical terms and until more is known about the physiological significance of various organisations and secretions in the body, it is not even desirable to attempt to do so. Nevertheless, a physiodynamic assessment of this posture does provide some insight into the beneficial effects of this celebrated āsana.

In this posture, the greater part of the body remains above the level of the heart. Only a few organs and a limited region of the body remains below its level. To the portions below the heart, a more effective supply of blood can be made, since it is assisted by the force of gravity. Normally these regions get the supply of blood against the gravitational pull and therefore the supply is never profuse. At the same time there is a more effective and easy return of the venous blood to the heart under the influence of gravity from the areas below the heart. The blood may stagnate in these regions unless helped by muscular activity under normal conditions. This increased venous return of blood to the heart stretches the muscles of the heart, and thus generates a proportionately more powerful contractile impulse. The improved contractile activity of the heart is useful for the whole body including the heart itself which also enjoys an increased share of the blood pumped out by it, but predominantly its salutary effects are likely to be felt by the cranio-cerebral regions

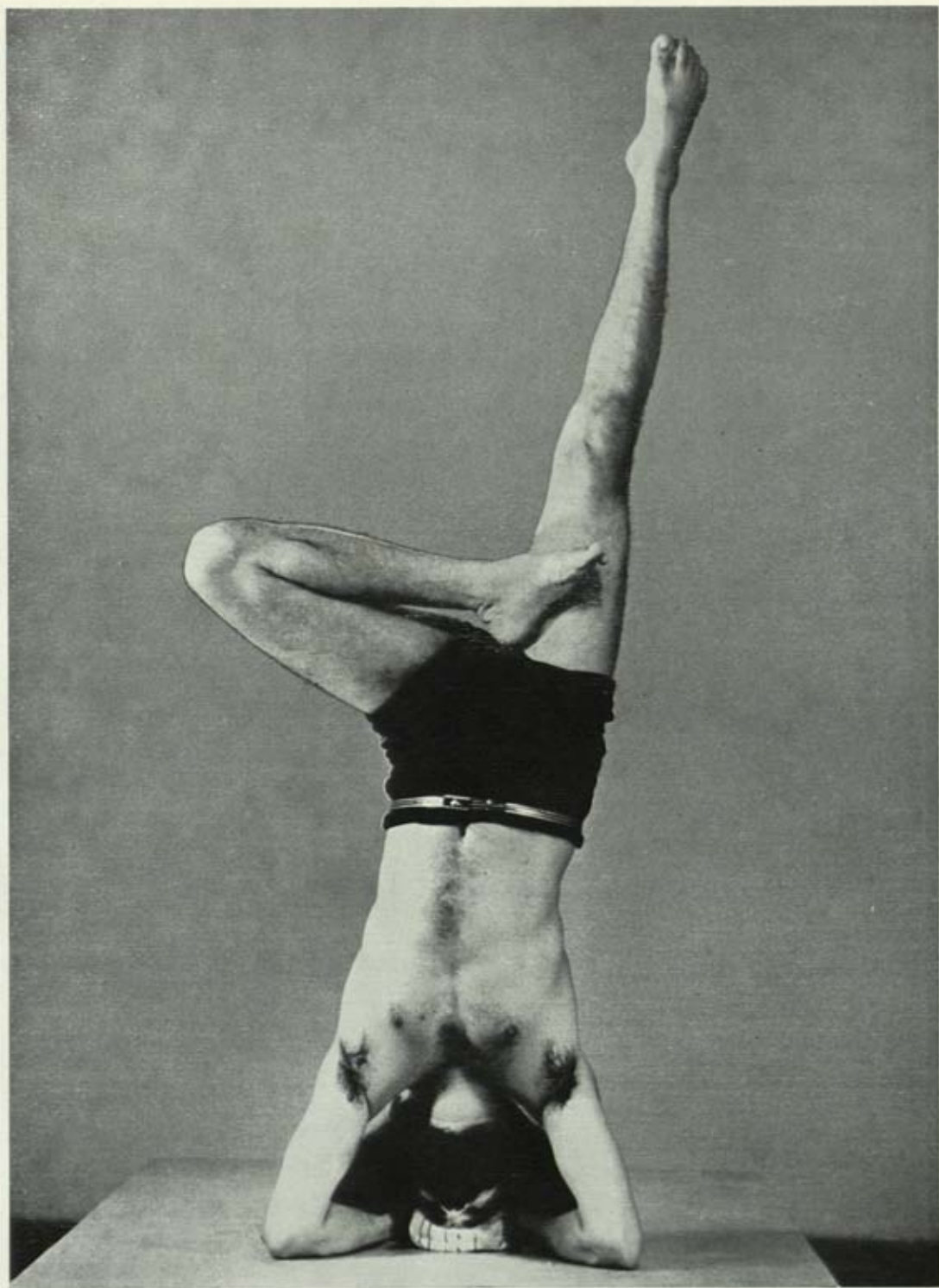


in which the circulation is assisted by the forces of gravity. The veins of the head and the neck are peculiar in being devoid of any valves. This absence of valves in an upright posture helps better drainage towards the heart but up-side-down it leads to venous congestion and pressure. This arterial supply of blood (both due to the assistance of gravity and to the augmented contractility of the heart) causes a greater amount of nutritious fluid to escape from the capillaries in the extravascular and extracellular spaces inside the tissues. All the cells of the region would thus get bathed in this salubrious tissue fluid full of nourishment and vital gases (like oxygen, etc.) A better structural as well as functional state of all the organs in the area can thus be taken for granted. When one considers that this is the area where the important endocrine or ductless glands are situated which secrete hormones directly into the blood, and which on account of their multiple and essential effects on almost all the aspects of growth of the body, mental and sex activity as well as on other subtle and gross aspects of the human personality, are rightly called the 'Glands of Destiny' (such as the anterior and posterior pituitary, thyroid, parathyroid and pineal glands), one cannot but appreciate the tremendous physiological possibilities of this posture.

The general tonic effect of this unusual and improved haemo-dynamic position is experienced by other less sophisticated but nonetheless quite important organs of the body. One such organ is the skin. The skin of the scalp, as every one is well aware, has been and is capable of being a very important source of socio-aesthetic embarrassment. A shining bald head glows with nothing but the untold agony of the helpless person. Śīrṣāsana, by augmenting the nutrition of the skin and its components, can and does help in restoring their impaired health. And it is not surprising that the regular and correct practice of this āsana should instil vigour into and revitalise the skin and thus prevent the falling and greying of hair.

Śavāsana provides the much-needed rest after the Śīrṣāsana which places unusual strain on various parts and organs of the body. Śīrṣāsana should be performed last (the most unusual exercise being reserved for the last) and the whole sequence of the exercises must end with the relaxation of the body through Śavāsana.

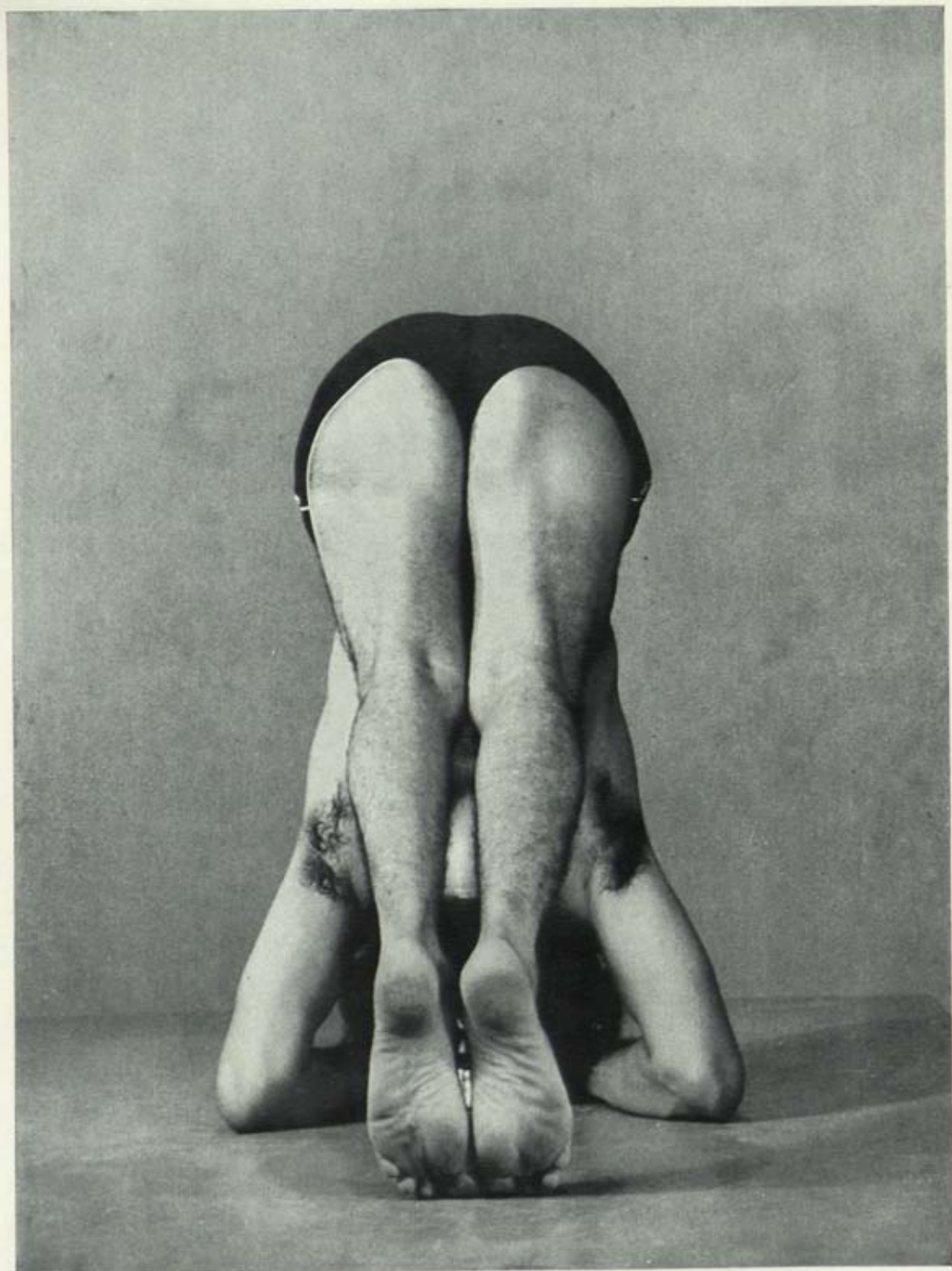
As mentioned earlier it is dangerous to perform this āsana without the proper guidance of experienced teachers.



Śīrṣāsana

PLATE 131: While in Śīrṣāsana bend one leg





Śīrṣāsana

PLATE 132: Lower the feet gradually to the ground keeping the legs straight

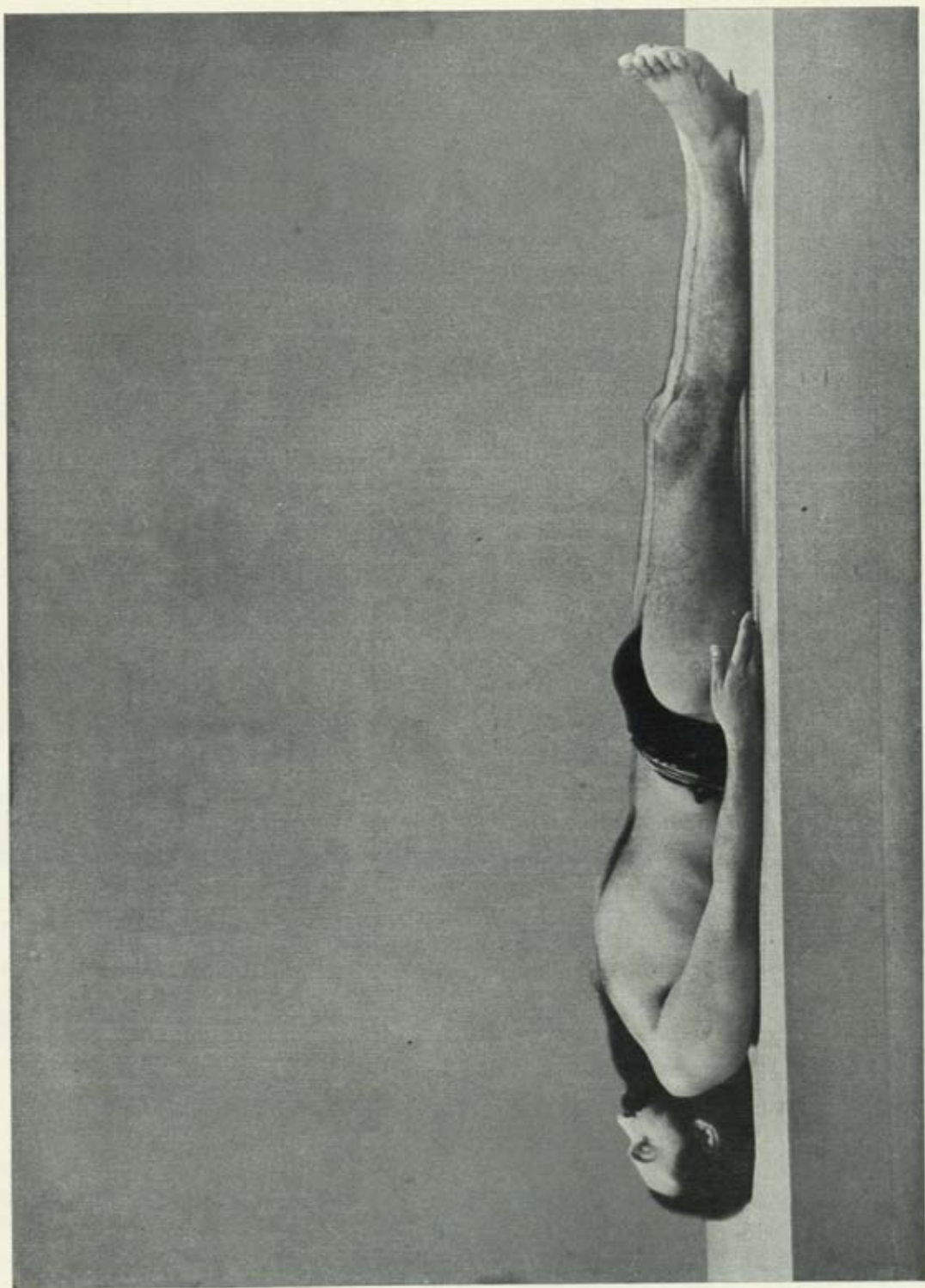


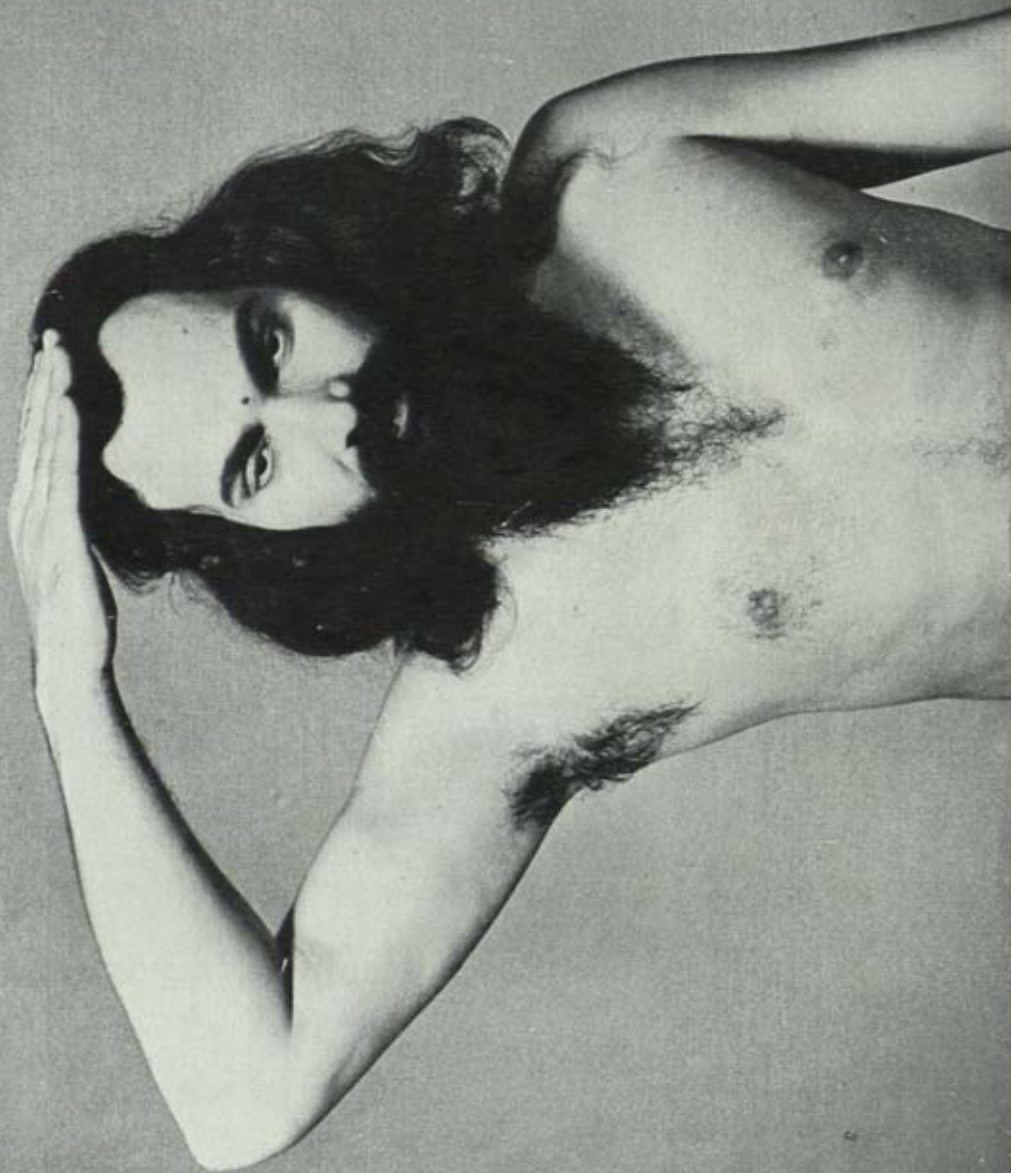
PLATE 133: Lying on the back relax the body in the corpse pose

Śavāsana (Śīrṣāsana)



# Śirṣāsana

PLATE 134: The fingers point to the area of the head which should not support the weight of the body while doing Śirṣāsana



## 85. SUPTA-PĀDA-KANDHARĀSANA (LYING FOOT-ON-SHOULDER POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground and place the right leg behind the right shoulder with the toes pointing towards the left shoulder. Lie down on the ground while keeping the left leg straight (Plate 136). The āsana should be repeated by reversing the position of the limbs.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana reduces heavy hips and buttocks and relieves, and in many cases cures, piles and constipation. It is useful in painful conditions of the thighs and the knees. It develops the portion of the body below the waist and makes it flexible. Women who wish to bear children and young girls should not practise this āsana.

## 86. KATĪCAKRĀSANA (LUMBAR-WHEEL POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground with feet twelve inches apart and arms outstretched in front of the chest. Swing towards the left as far as possible, and then towards the right. The arm on which side the body is swinging should be kept straight while the other arm should be bent (Plate 137).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The waist becomes slim and supple and the chest expands. It is recommended to persons of short stature. It relieves constipation and makes the lumbar region extraordinarily strong. The ribs acquire resilience whereby many respiratory ailments, even tuberculosis of the lungs, can be prevented. The shoulders, neck, arms, abdomen, back, and thighs are strengthened. It is equally useful for men as well as women. Though easy to perform, yet the āsana has many advantages.



The āsana is very helpful to dancers. It is one of the four āsanas used in the procedure known as Śaṅkha-prakṣāḷana (conch-cleansing), one of the six cleansing procedures.

## 87. PRETĀSANA (GHOST POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with knees bent. Hold the feet and put them together. The feet should then be reversed so that the heels point forward (Plate 138). The hands should be kept on the knees while the trunk is kept straight.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana proves to be of special benefit for the knees and the heels. It is useful for exostosis of the knees and for pains in the joints. The whole of the lower limbs from the thighs to the feet are made firm and strong by this āsana. It is an unfailing remedy for arthritic disorders. If used in treating piles, it should be coupled with the practice of the basal-lock (Mūla-bandha). Those who practise this āsana do not feel exhausted even after walking long distances. It helps in mastering many other āsanas.

## 88. PĀDA-SKANDHA-DANDĀSANA (FOOT-SHOULDER DANDA POSTURE)

In this āsana, the foot is kept on the shoulder while doing the exercise known as 'daṇḍa'. In this the body, supported on feet and hands, is slightly raised above the level of the ground; then with the maximum possible force the trunk is thrust forward and downward till it almost touches the ground, and then lifted to its original position. This is repeated many times.

## POSTURE

Stand on the ground with the right foot placed on the right shoulder so that the heel as well as the toes of the right foot lie on the left shoulder. Then keeping the hands a foot apart on the ground the left foot should be taken backwards as far as possible. This done, the 'Daṇḍa' exercise is to be preferred (Plate 139). There are some variations of this standard procedure. One consists in placing the right foot as above, balancing the body on the hands and extending the left foot backwards as far as possible, (Plate 140). Then one lies on the ground so that the head, the knee, the calf, and the toes touch the ground. It has also been designated Ekapād-askandhamayūrāsana. Another variation has been illustrated in Plate 141.

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana strengthens the musculo-skeletal system of the upper limbs and the chest. It has proved beneficial to the shoulders and the back, and patients with various ailments of these regions must practise it. The āsana is helpful in relieving pain in the feet, waist, and knees and for developing resilience in the body. It unifies Praṇa and Apāna. It is extremely useful for the regulation of the nāḍīs that course obliquely and transversely in the body, and for awakening Kuṇḍalinī (Serpent power). All the three versions of the āsana stimulate the gastric digestive system ('fire of the stomach') and improves the faculty of balancing the body.

A somewhat difficult āsana, it can be mastered through sustained practice.

## 89. SUPTA-VAJRĀSANA (LYING-ADAMANTINE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit in Vajrāsana (No. 5) and swing the trunk backwards until the head touches the ground. Both hands should be placed on the thighs as illustrated in Plate 142.



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana relieves fatigue; it makes the waist resilient and the chest broad. If it is practised from early childhood, asthma can be prevented.

It relieves painful conditions of the back and the knees. It is good for the throat and diseased tonsils. The āsana proves useful in certain cases of ocular disease as well. It is useful for the restoration of the dislodged 'navel' to its normal position; but all such techniques should be learnt from a teacher of yoga.

A special feature of the āsana is that, by improving circulation of blood, it makes for a healthy body. Hence, it has been named Supta-vajrāsana.

### 90. VISTRITA-PĀDA-VAKṢA-BHŪMI SPARŚĀSANA (EXTENDED FEET AND CHEST ON GROUND POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with legs stretched forward. Then spread them as far apart as possible. The chest should be brought forward to touch the ground and the arms clasped together at the back (Plate 143).

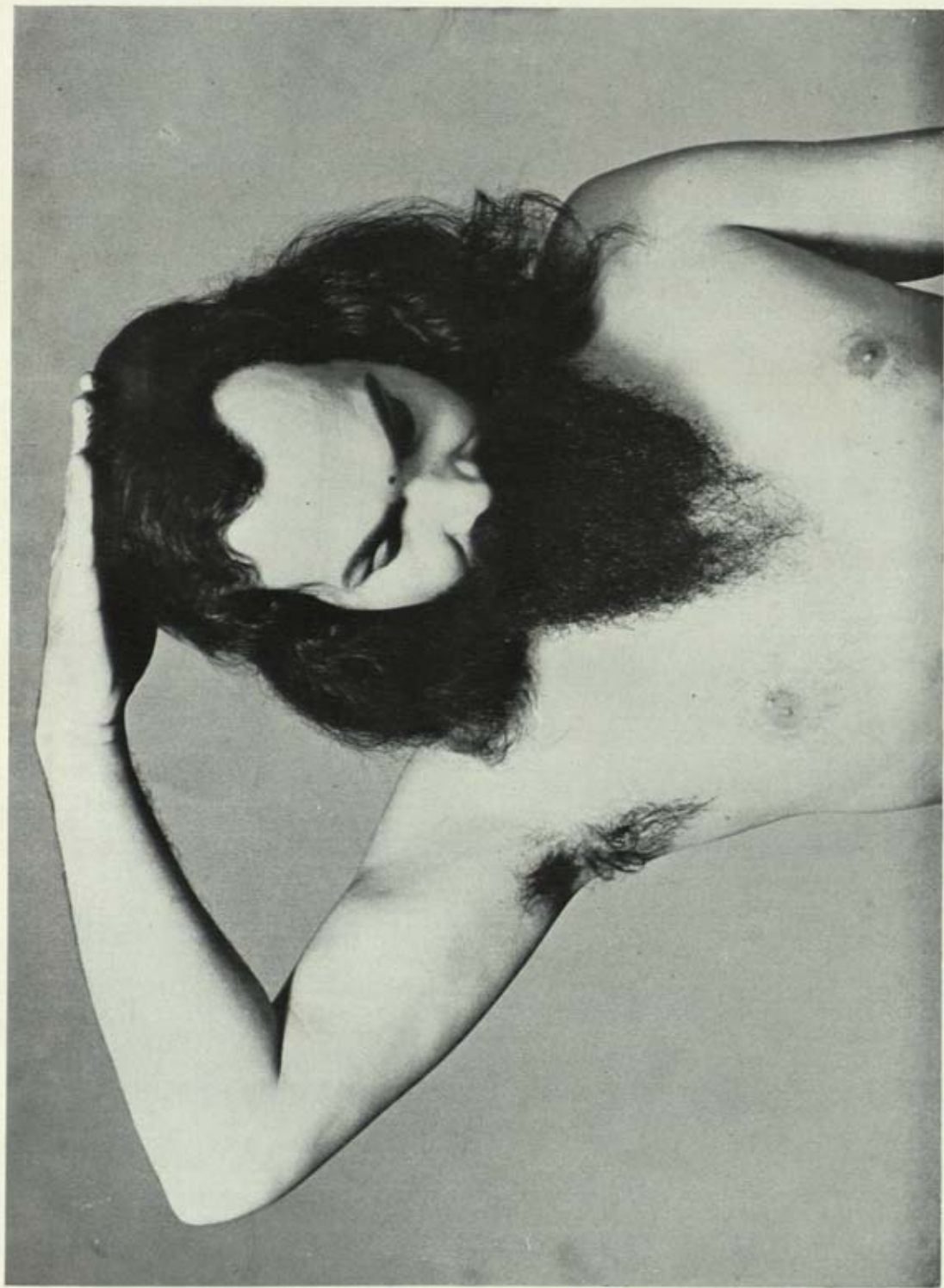
#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana can increase height. Piles and similar diseases are eliminated and even the possibilities of such disorders in the ano-rectal area diminish. The āsana is extremely useful for dancers. The circulation of blood in the region below the waist is stimulated and consequently this region becomes resilient and supple though at the same time strong. The āsana is believed to be useful for respiratory ailments. It must be practised gradually and persistently.

### 91. KĀKĀSANA (CROW POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

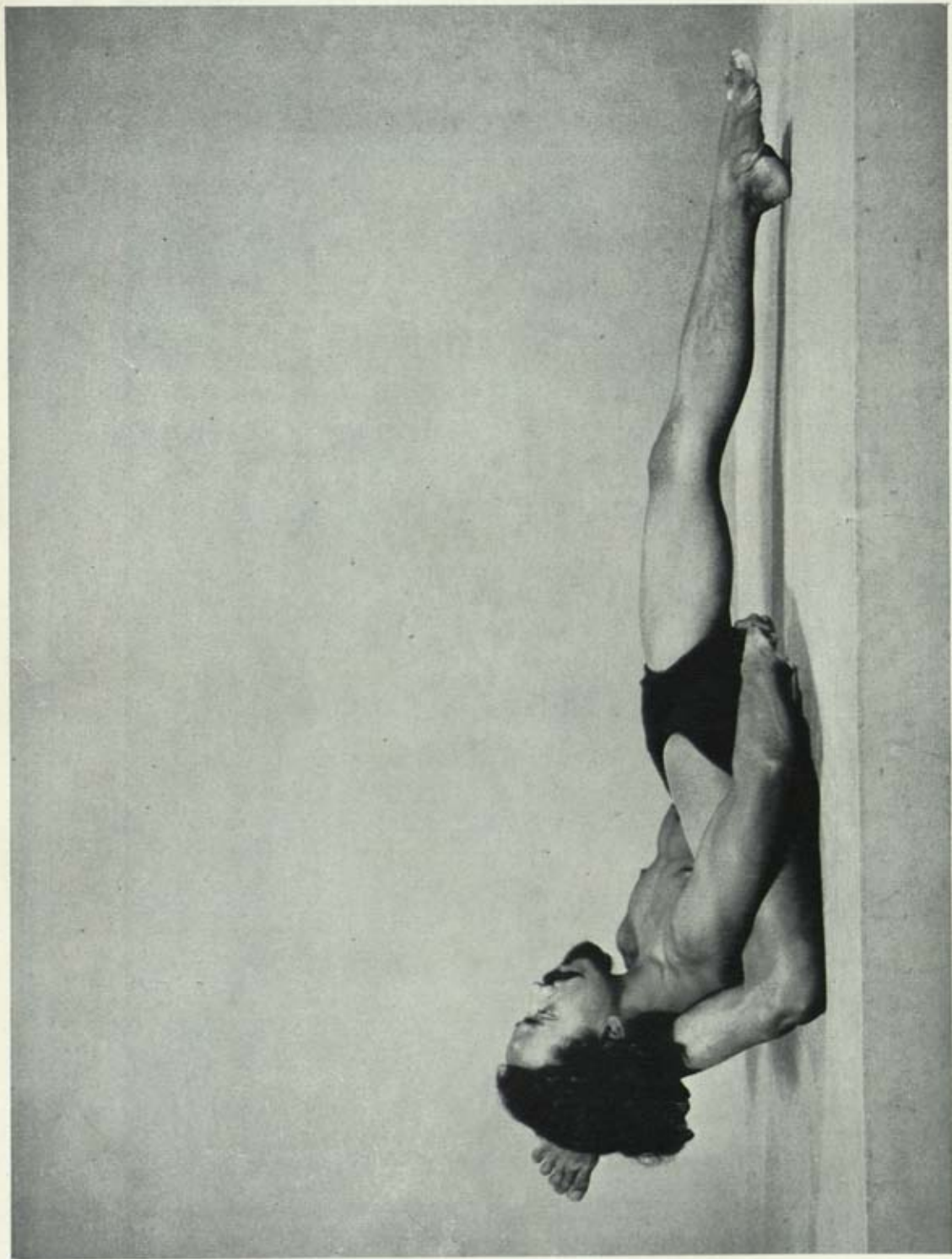
Squat on the ground with feet about a foot apart. Keep the hands on the knees, the neck straight, and look evenly in front (Plate 144).



## Śīrṣāsana

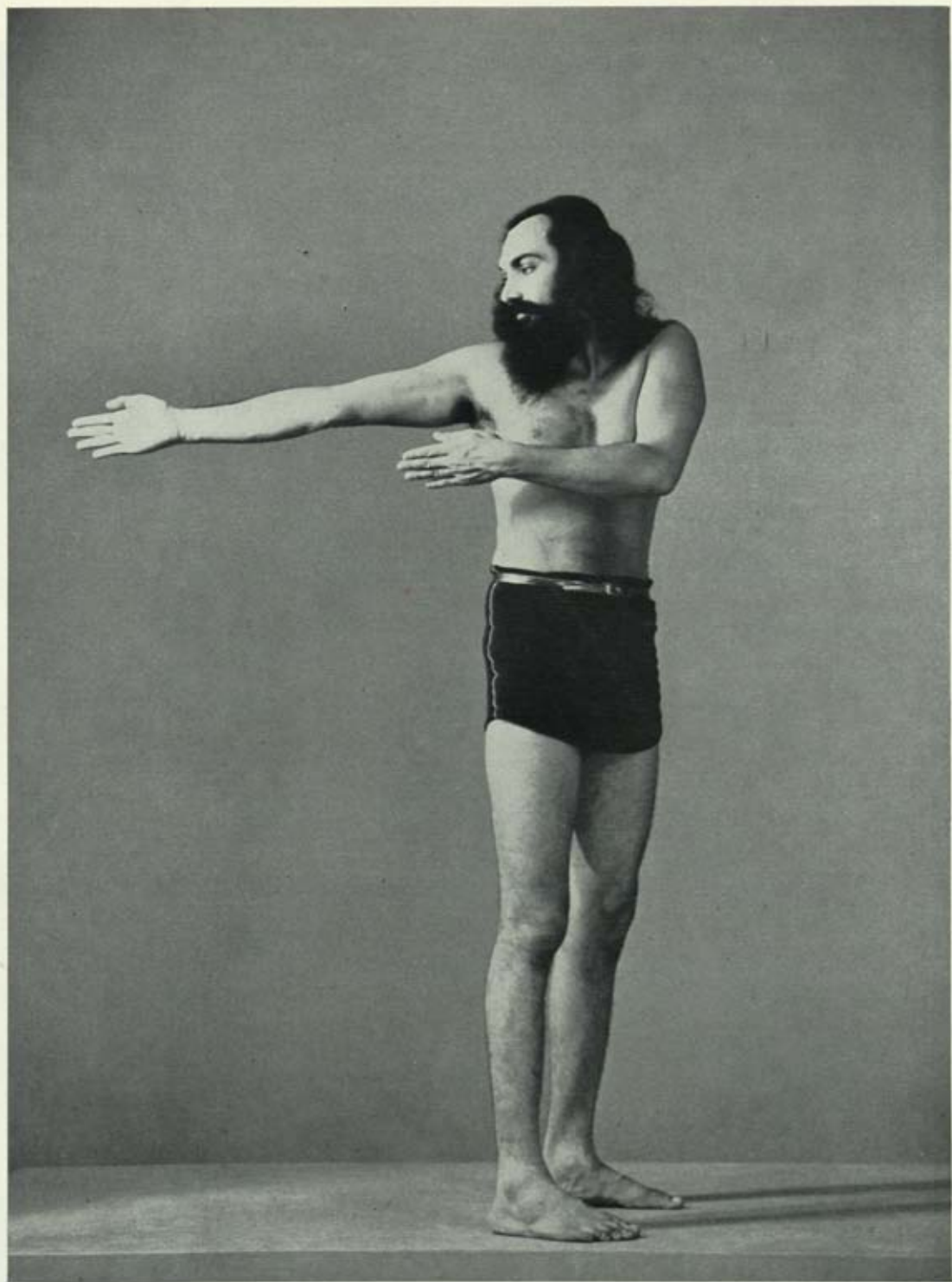
PLATE 135: The fingers show the area of the head on which the weight of the body may be supported but without any benefit





Supta-pāda-kandharāsana

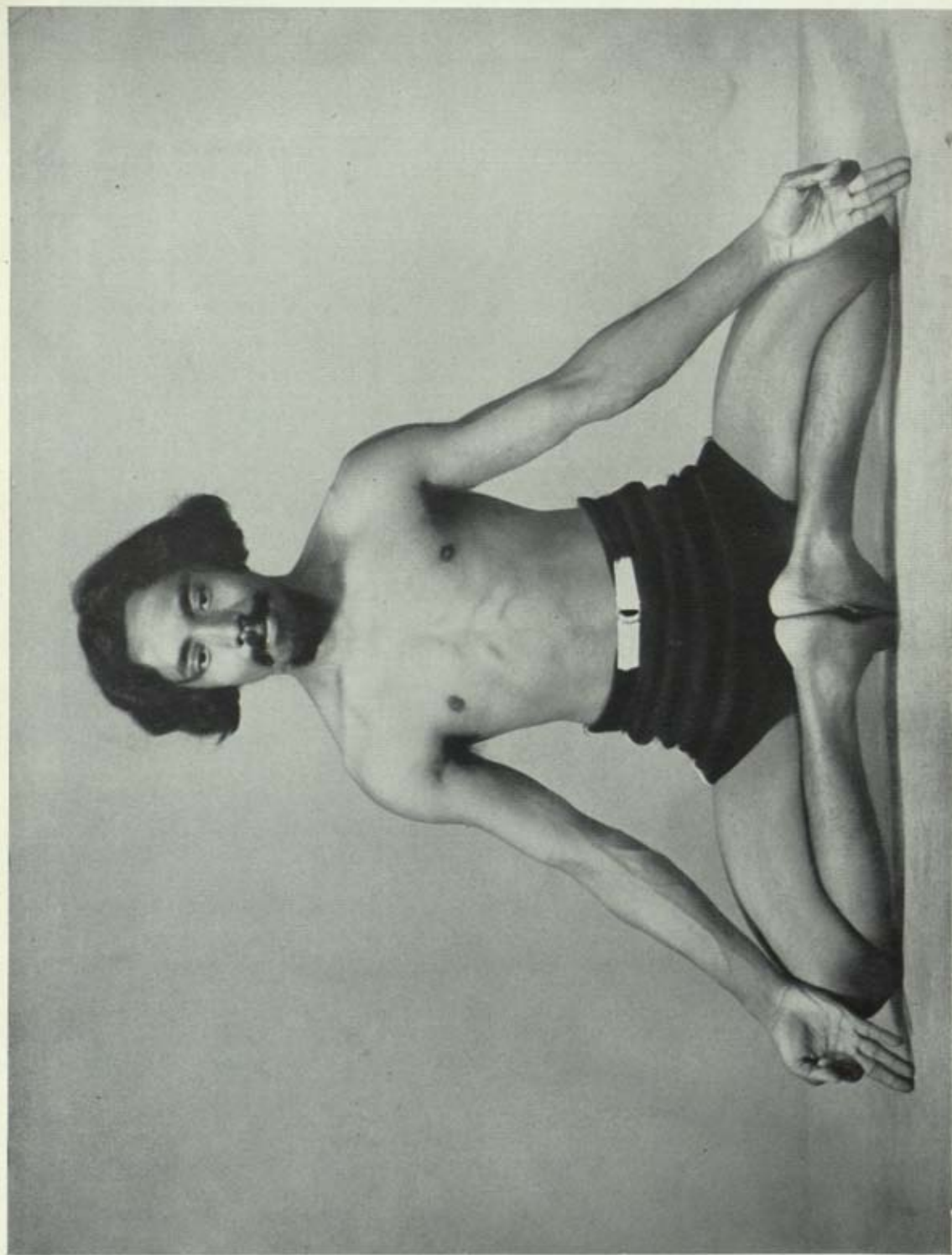
PLATE 136: With the right foot on the left shoulder keep the left leg straight



Kaṭicakrāsana

PLATE 137: Swing the body to the left and right





Pretāsana

PLATE 138: Turn the toes inwards and the heels forward

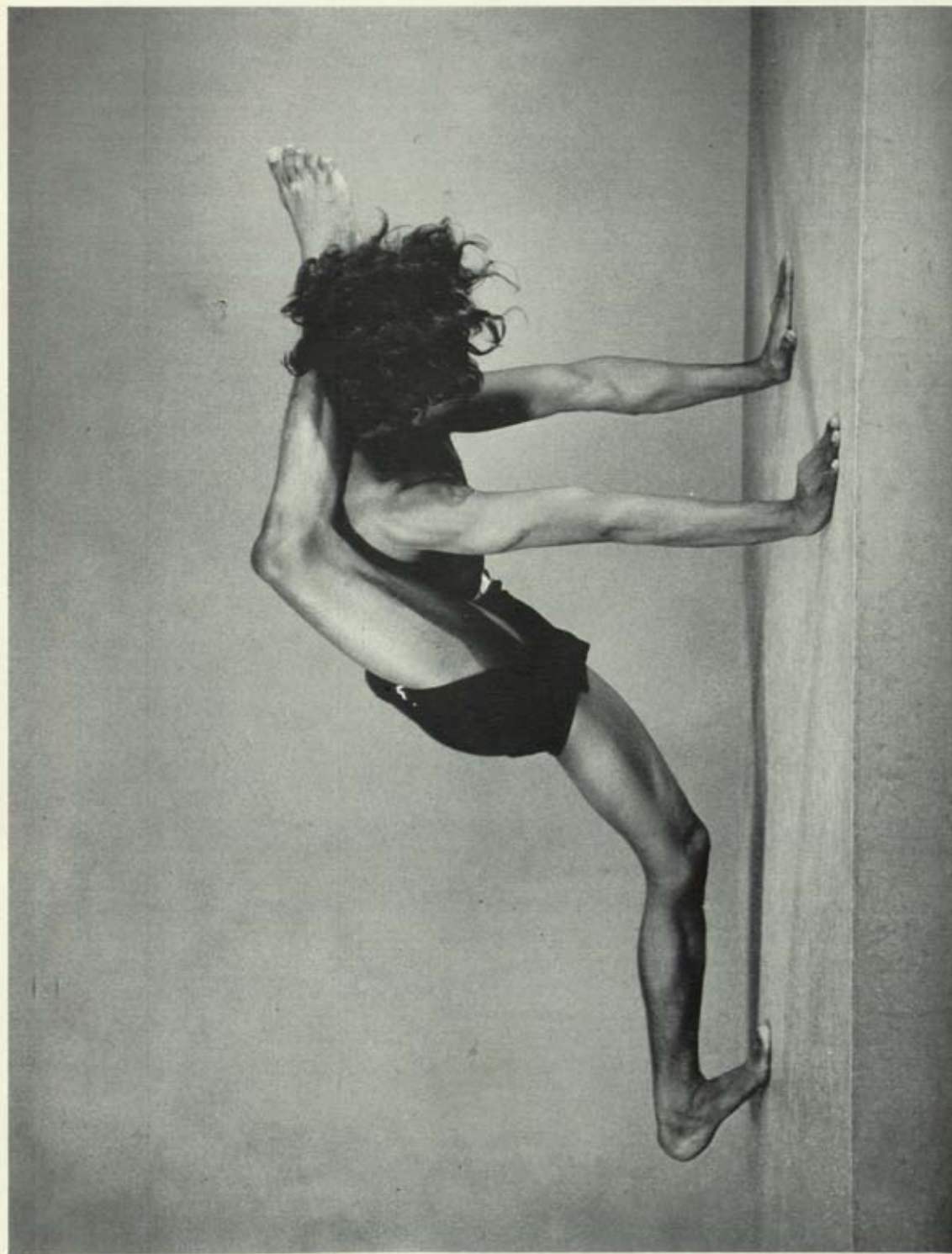
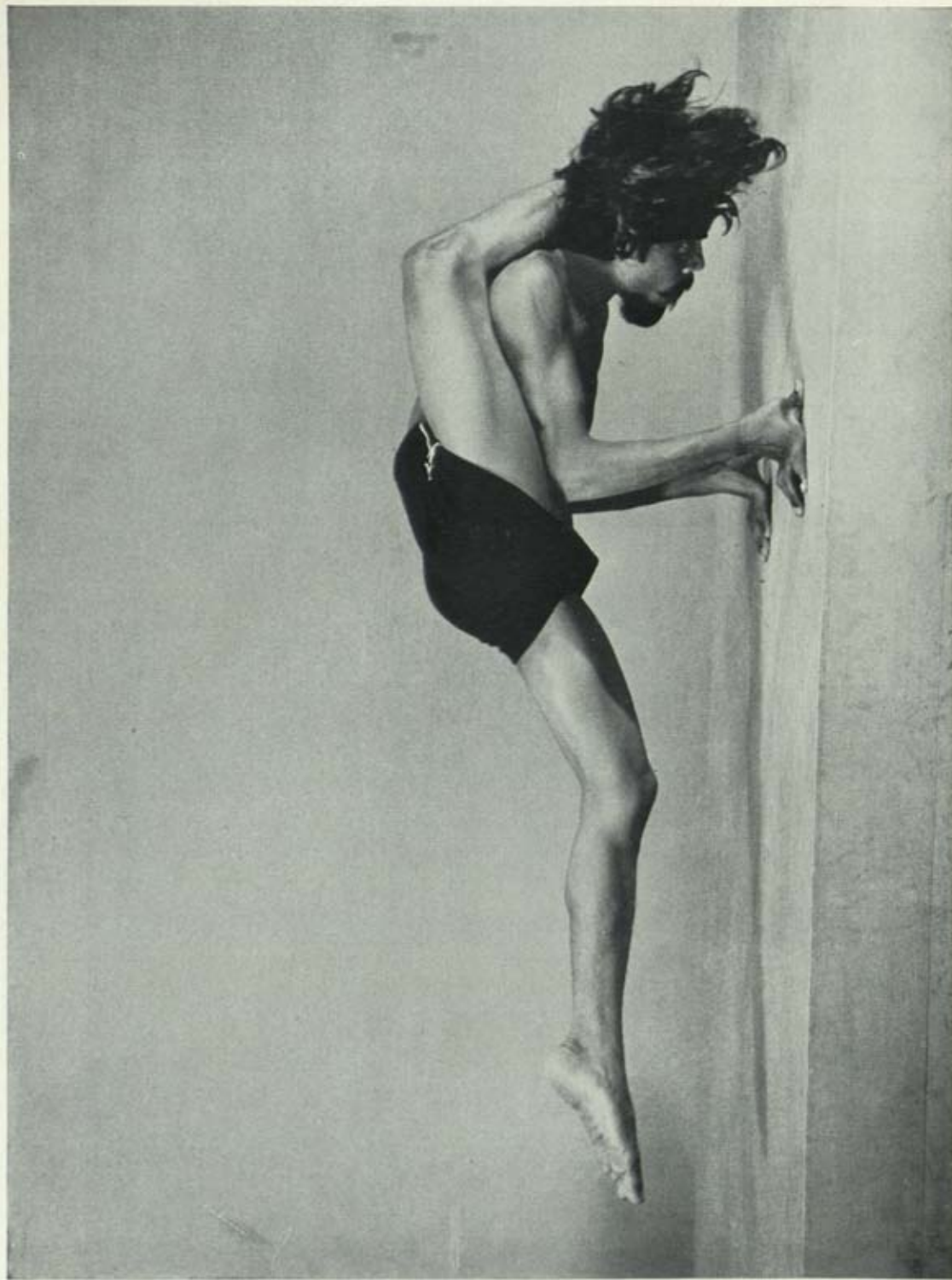
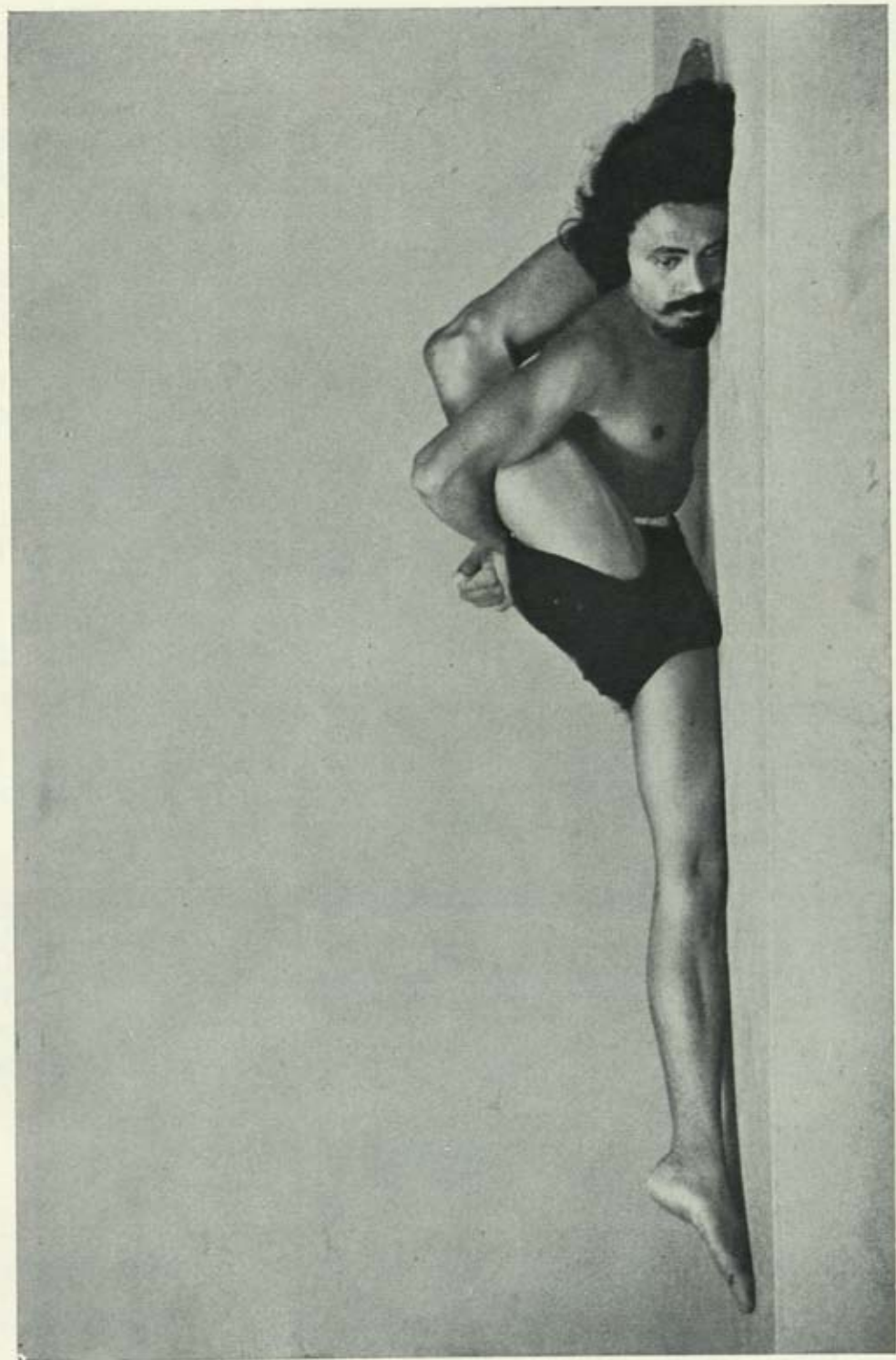


PLATE 139; Place the right foot on the shoulder and the hands on the ground  
Pāda-Skandha-danḍāsana





**Pada-Skandha-danḍasana**  
PLATE 140: Raise the body from the ground, resting it on the hands. The left leg must also be raised



Pāda-Skandha-danḍāsana

PLATE 141: The right leg across the shoulders is held in position by the clasped hands



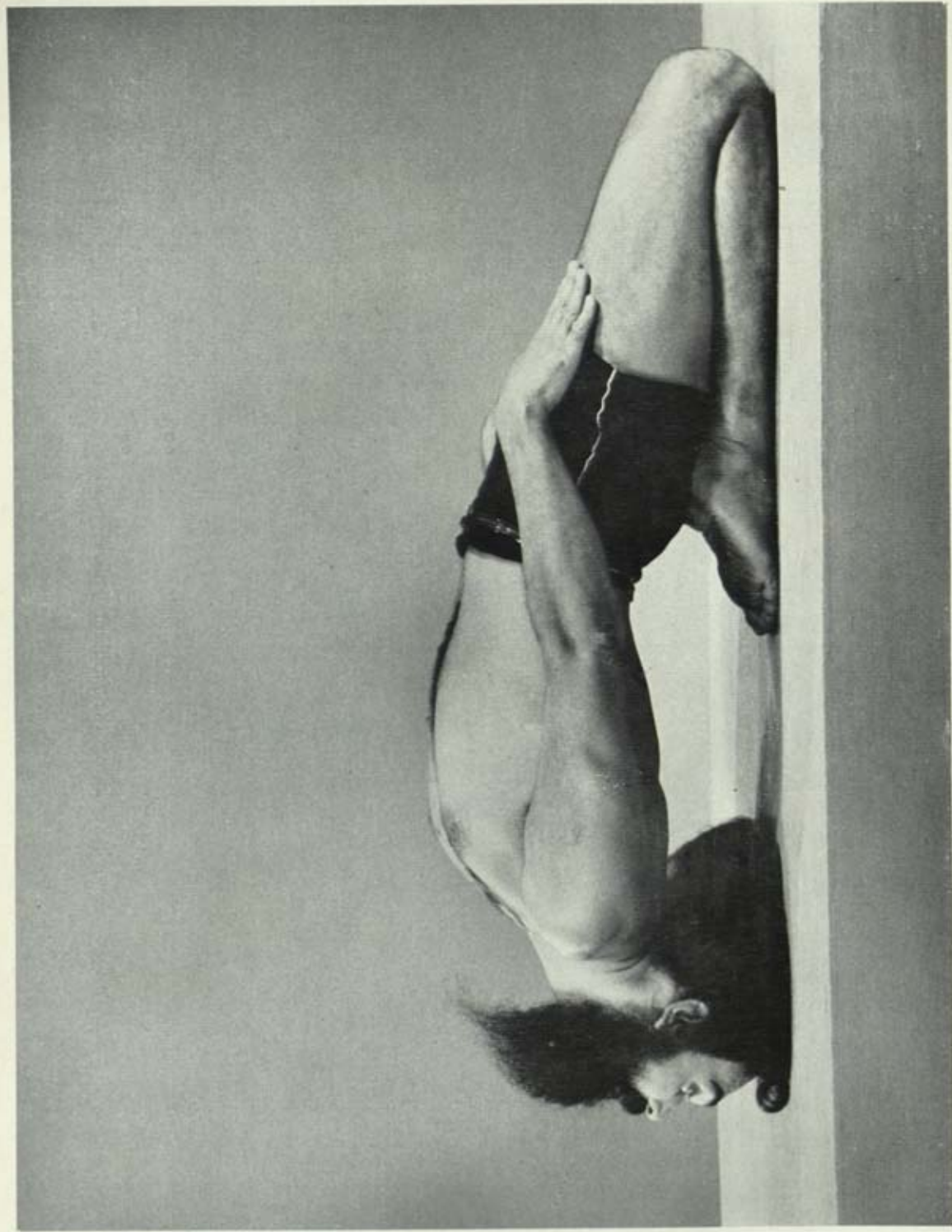


PLATE 142: Swing backwards to touch the ground with the head and arch the back

Supta-vajrāsana

## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana makes the body agile. It is easy, but is essential in many yogic procedures. In the Śaṭkarma or the six cleansing procedures of yoga, the āsana occupies a unique place. This is the āsana in which water is taken before the Kuñjala. Vastradhauti is performed in this posture, as are also the Sūtraneti, Jalaneti, and Dugdhaneti and also in introducing the tube in the ano-rectal opening before performing Jalavasti.

Whenever there is limited space on the occasion of the congregation of sādhus, the Chief orders everyone to sit in this āsana since the least space is occupied in this way.

The practice of the āsana makes the knees flexible and improves circulation of blood in widely separated regions like the thighs, buttocks, calves, knees, and neck. This in turn proves helpful in the performance of other āsanās.

## 92. LOLĀSANA (PENDULUM POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Squat on the ground and lift the entire body on the hands (Plate 145).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The upper limbs, specially the arms, become extraordinarily strong. The shoulders and the back are developed. The ribs retain their resilience even in old age. Trembling hands can be cured. The āsana has also proved to be of use in phosphaturia and other allied disorders associated with loss of minerals through the urinary passages.



### 93. SUPTA-PĀDĀNGUṢṬHA-NĀSĀ-SPARŚĀSANA (LYING TOE-AND-NOSE POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lie on the back. Holding the left foot with hands bring it close to the face so that the big toe touches the nose, while the right leg is kept absolutely straight with its heel on the ground (Plate 146). Repeat with the left leg stretched on the ground and the right foot raised to touch the nose. With practice and proficiency in the performance of this āsana, the feet can be brought up simultaneously to touch the nose (Plate 147). Care should be taken not to allow the body from the head to the hips to be raised above the ground.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The waist becomes slender and supple by the practice of this āsana. If those whose 'navel' is dislodged were to practise it repeatedly, the 'navel' could be brought back to its normal position. The āsana is believed to produce a subtle tension on the nerves of the whole body, as a result of which the body is immunized against maladies like sciatica. The Suṣu-mṇā Nāḍī, which is considered to be the foremost amongst the 72,000 nāḍīs of the body, is kept under control. Its benefits extend to the external genitalia as well as the ano-rectum.

### 94. KARNA-PĪDĀSANA (AURAL-PRESS POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Lie on the back, and raise the legs in such a way that the knees come in contact with the ears (Plate 148). This posture should be maintained for as long as possible.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana is useful to the brain, throat, nose, and ears. The eyesight improves and diseases of the throat, like tonsillar ailments, are cured.

Corpulence is reduced and it is useful in asthma and other respiratory disorders. Since the performance of the āsana forces out mechanically the stagnant accumulations of the gases in the respiratory passages, it allows increased intake of fresh air. This proves extremely useful in maintaining good health, especially of lungs.

The āsana is believed to be very effective in relieving the maladies of the ears. In addition, piles, constipation, and some blood disorders can be treated by it. Sufficient practice also unifies Prāṇa and Apāna.

Although Karṇa-piḍāsana is not a very difficult āsana, it is not very convenient to remain in this position for long.

## 95. MERU-DANDĀSANA (SPINE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Lie on the stomach. Catching hold of legs above the ankles, the feet should be brought forward, so that the toes are near the chin (Plate 149). There is another more difficult but far more useful modification of the āsana. Here, lying on the ground the ankles are grasped and the feet are gradually pulled towards the head to such an extent that the head should come to lie beneath the knees and the toes touch the ground (Plate 150).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana is primarily useful for the spine. None of the 84 lac āsanās have a comparable effect on the spine. Its practice makes the spine resilient. The Prāṇa and the Apāna get unified, whereby a state of Samādhi, that of deep contemplation and self-realization, is spontaneously achieved. It has such an excellent effect on the Suṣūmṇā that by its practice alone the Prāṇa can be made to merge with Apāna. Although a difficult āsana to perform, yet the effort is amply rewarded on account of its wonderful effects. Its practice is recommended for making a heavy body shapely, for the purification of the 72,000 nāḍīs, for the realisation of the Cosmic Uncaused Sound (Anāhata), and for the eradication of a large number of ailments. Those who practise it should consume liberal quantities of ghee (clarified butter), butter, almonds, etc., and should give up food containing sour



and pungent ingredients, as also salt in excessive quantities. If these precautions are not scrupulously observed, adverse effects may be produced by this āsana. It cures most of the common maladies of the abdomen, but patients of hernia, tuberculosis, peptic ulcers, and heart diseases are warned against this āsana till such time as, through other yogic procedures, these are brought under control. Milk, mixed with raw turmeric, can be of great benefit.

Either version of the Merudaṇḍāsana is useful and if its practice is started at a very young age it can be mastered with ease.

## 96. PĀDĀNGUSTHA-NĀSĀ-SPARŚASĀNA (TOE-NOSE POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on the ground and place the right foot two steps forward. The hands should be taken back and the right wrist clasped in the left hand. The trunk is bent forward so that the nose touches the big toe of the right foot (Plate 151). The āsana is to be repeated with the left foot forward.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

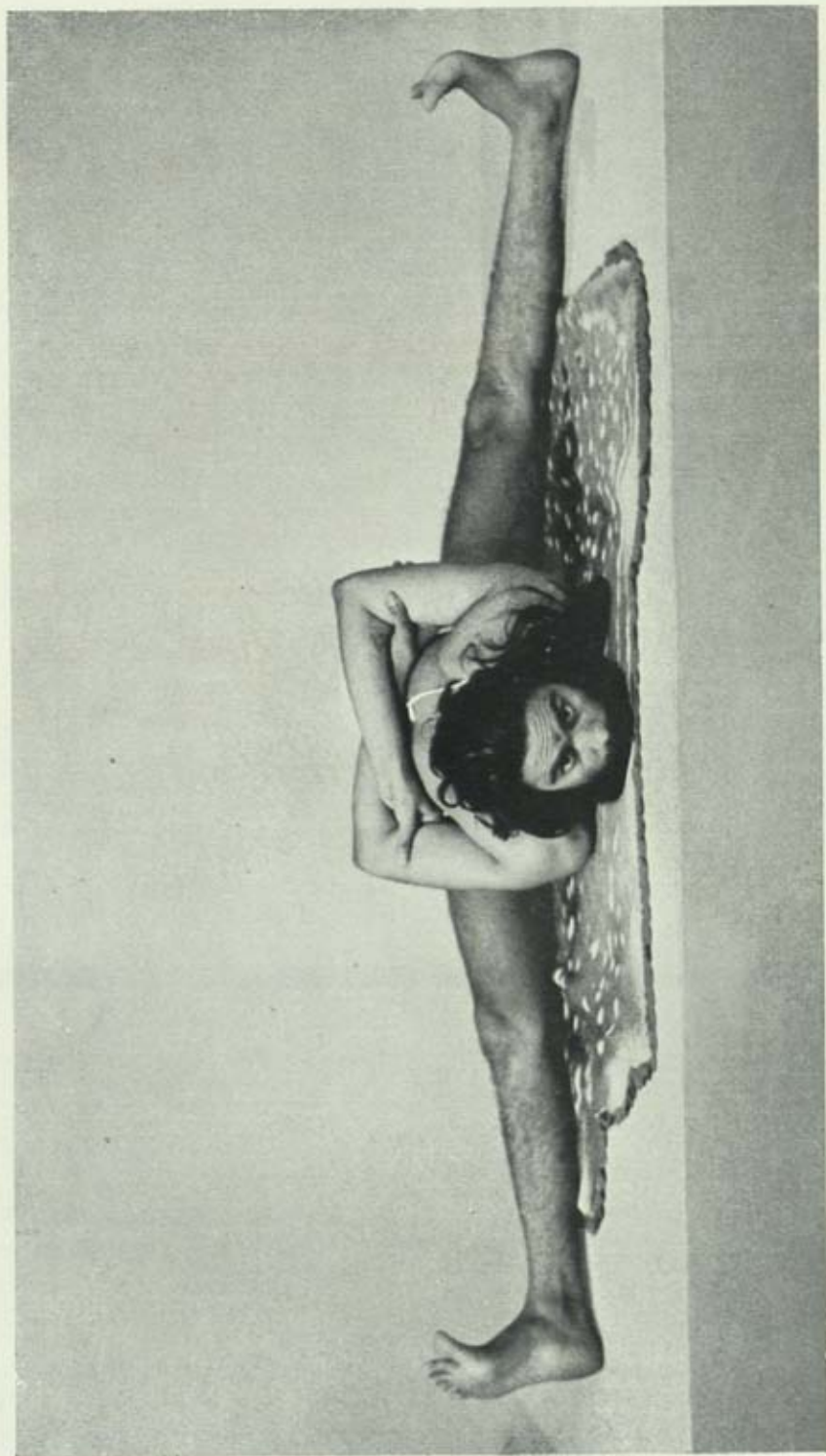
The practice of the āsana helps in the treatment of seminal disorders; wet dreams are cured and sex drives are sublimated. The āsana is held to be excellent for those who have poor eyesight. It also helps in increasing height and in curing ano-rectal maladies.

## 97. KĀLABHAIRAVĀSANA (KĀLA-BHAIRĀVA POSTURE)

Since this āsana resembles the ferocious form believed to be assumed by Lord Kālabhairāva for causing dissolution of Creation, it is named after him.

### POSTURE

Stand with the feet a foot apart and one foot straight behind the other. One arm should be stretched in front and the other behind, the mouth



Vistṛtapādavakṣa—bhūmiśpaśāsana  
PLATE 143: Touch the ground with the chin and chest with arms clasped behind the back



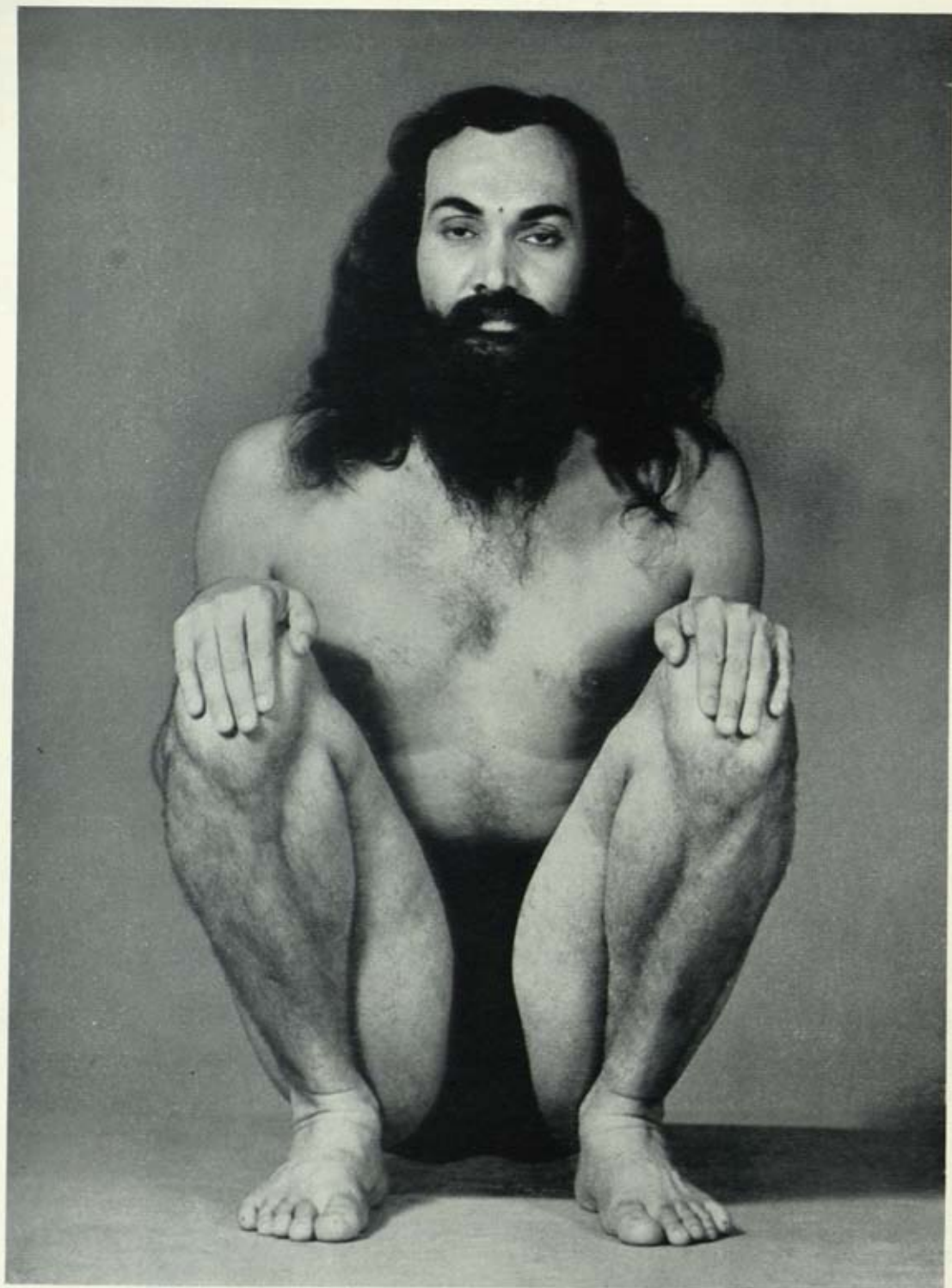
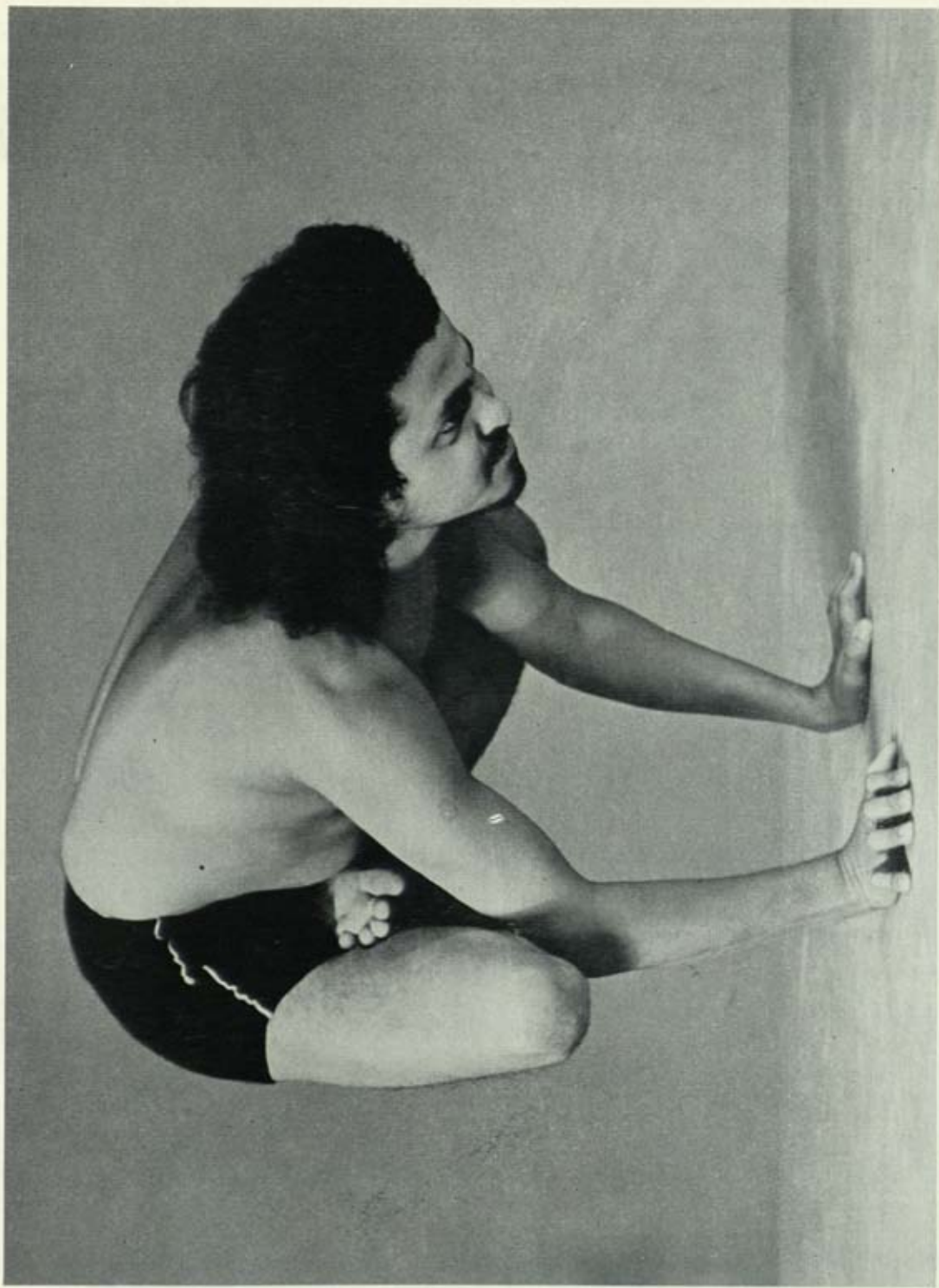


PLATE 144: Squat on the ground with the hands on the knees

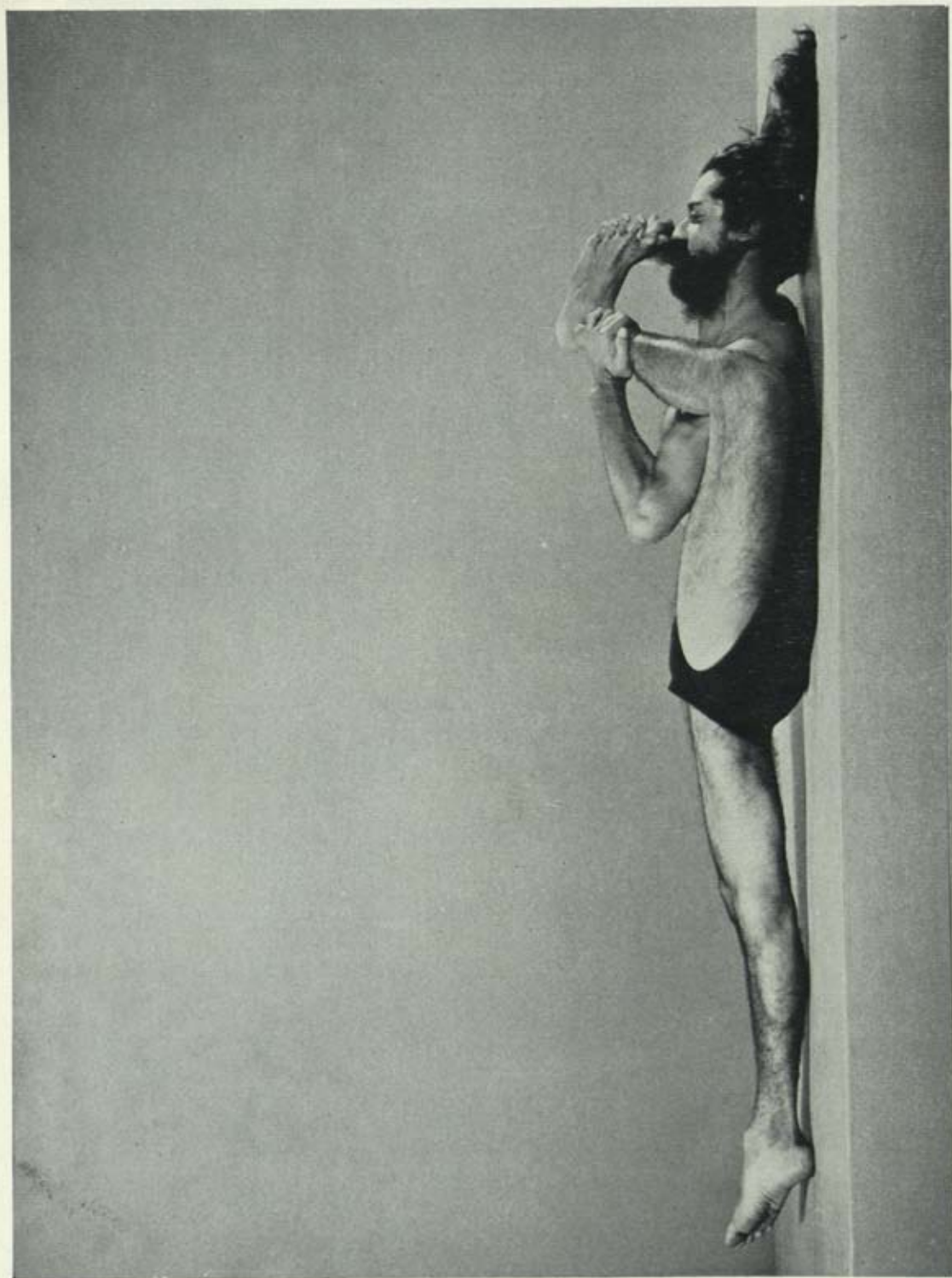
Kāgāsana



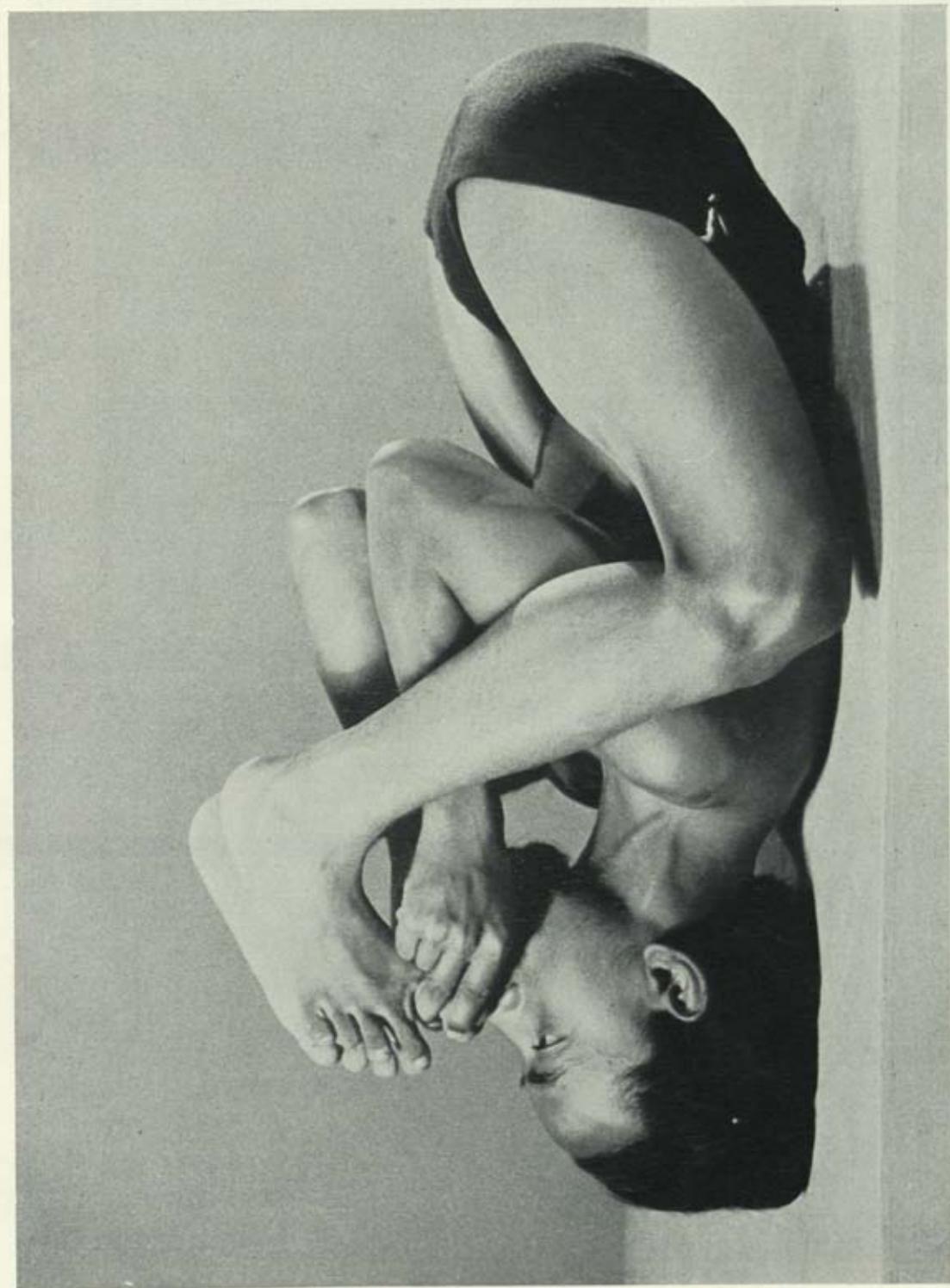
Lolāsana

PLATE 145: Sit in Padmāsana and raise the body, supporting it on the hands





**Supta-pādāṅguṣṭha-nāsā-Śparśāsana**  
PLATE 146: Raise the left leg so that the toes can touch the nose while the rest of the body remains on the ground



Suptapādāngusthā-nāsāparśāsana  
PLATE 147: Raise both legs to touch the nose with the toes and hold them there



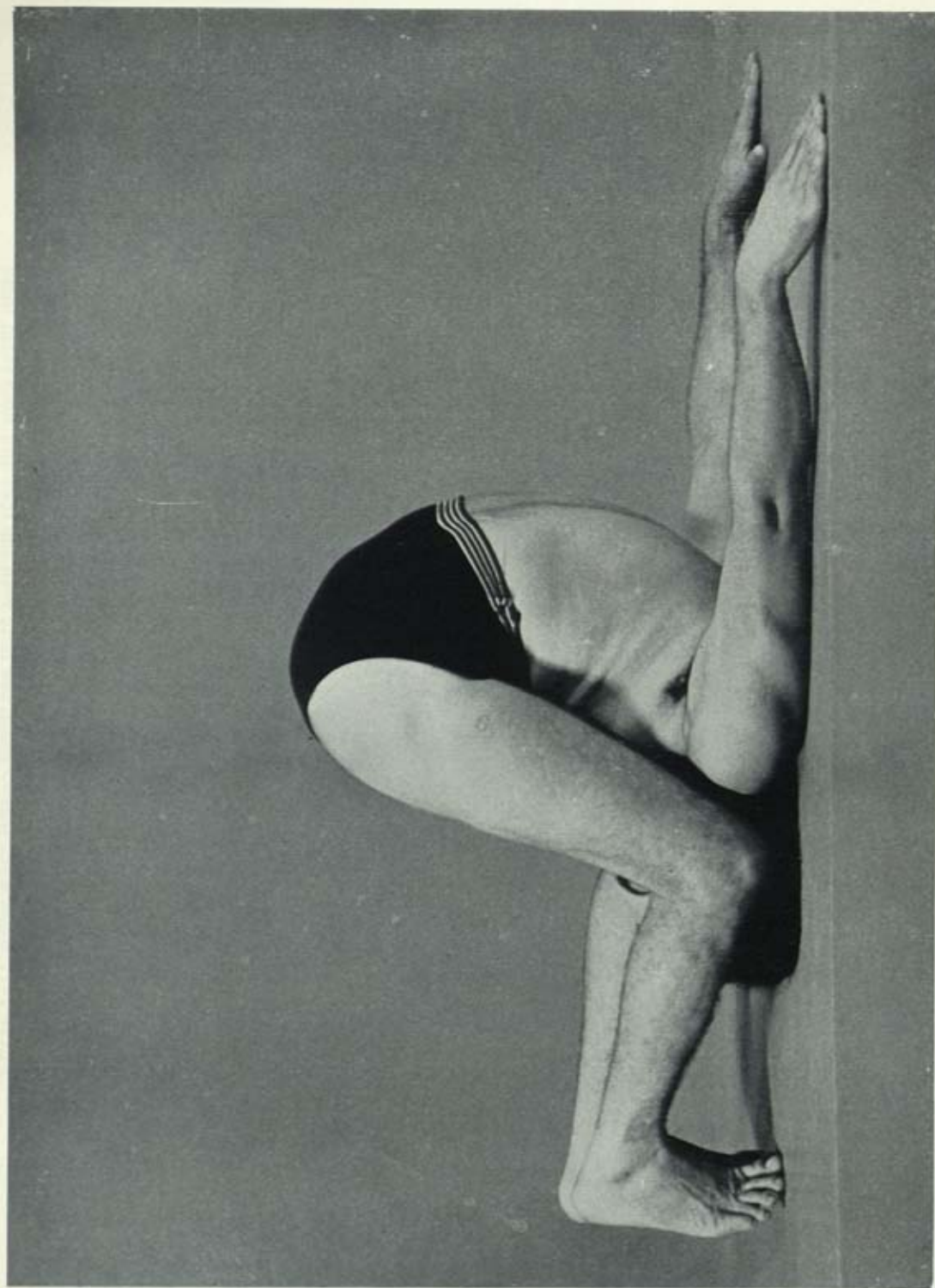
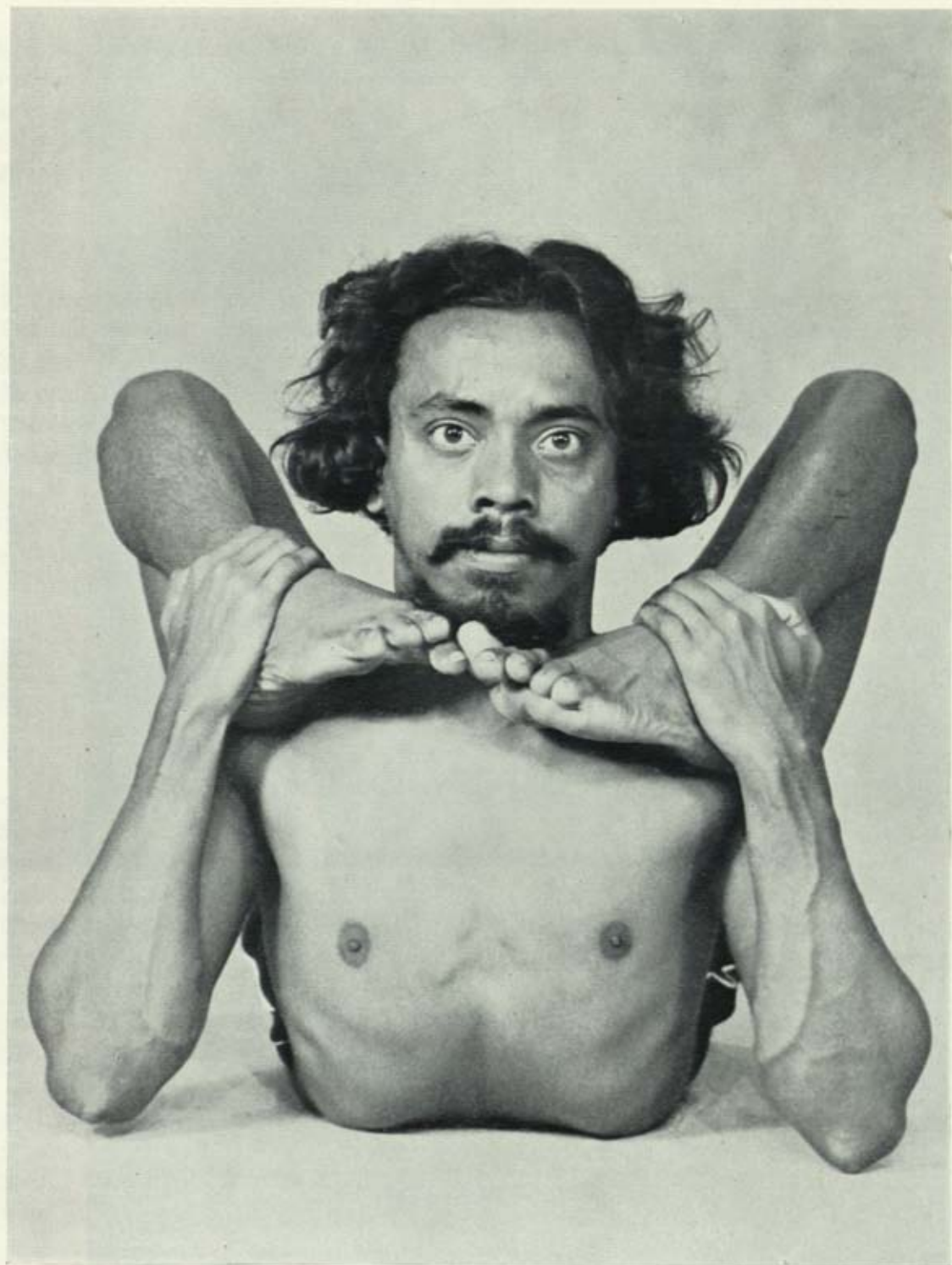


PLATE 148: Raise legs slowly until the knees are beside the ears

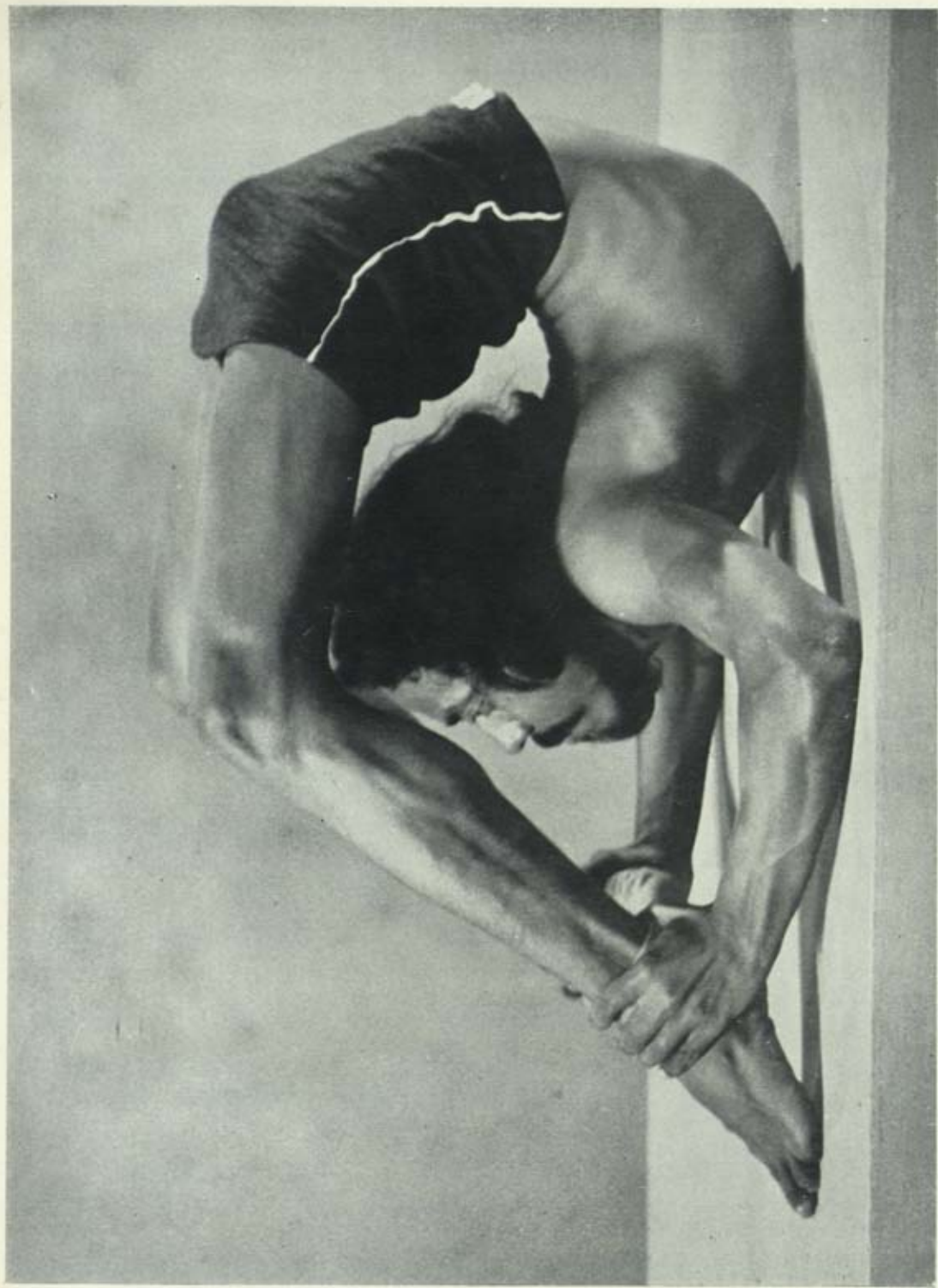
Karṇapīḍāsana



Merudaṇḍāsana

PLATE 149: Bring the feet forward and hold them under the chin





Merudandāsana  
PLATE 150: Raise the legs gradually so that the head is under the knees and the hands hold the ankles

kept wide open and the tongue thrust out fully. The eyes should be wide open and the gaze fixed between the eyebrows. The body should be kept absolutely still in this position (Plate 152). Some persons perform this āsana after reverting the eyelids. The position of the feet can be changed.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of the āsana makes the body strong. It also imparts courage. This is its most outstanding characteristic. It produces a subtle effect on the finest nerves of the body and a sensation as though all the nāḍīs (nerves and vessels, etc.) of the body were being pulled forcibly upwards. The body thus becomes agile and radiant. The Manovahā Nāḍī flows upwards, i.e. it bestows will-power. The āsana does not seem at all difficult but it is only through perseverance that its merits can be appreciated. It is very useful in combating diseases of the eyes, teeth, jaws, gums, tongue, and throat.

Pimples and boils on the face get cured and even wrinkled skin becomes soft and the face radiant.

### 98. CATUṢKONĀSANA (FOUR-CORNERED POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit with the left leg bent under the buttocks and with the heel near the anus. Lift the right foot and hold it near the chin by resting it on the right arm. Keep it in that position by interlocking the fingers of the hands. The trunk should be kept erect (Plate 153). The āsana should be repeated by using alternate limbs.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana makes for increased blood circulation in the thighs, knees, and calves, relieves painful conditions of the lower limbs, is useful in sciatica, and ensures the intake of abundant fresh air into the lungs. It is useful for pains in the back and the lumber region. It is a 'must' for those who have disproportionately heavy calves, thighs, and buttocks. It is



equally useful for the throat since its performance produces considerable strain on the neck and throat muscles.

The āsana also straightens bent or crooked legs.

## 99. KOKILĀSANA (CUCKOO POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left heel on the right thigh and the right heel on the left thigh so that the heels touch each other just below the navel. Hold the toes of the feet so that the right hand holds the toes of the right foot and vice versa. Placing the elbows on the ground bend slightly forward and look straight ahead (Plate 154).

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana cures indigestion, flatulence, and acts as a stimulant to the gastric digestive functions. Regular practice of the āsana awakens the Kuṇḍalinī. It is believed to increase the blood supply to the spleen and liver as a result of which the body feels light. Even though simple, yet the āsana is extremely useful; everyone can perform it easily and benefit from it. Persons who have disturbed Apāna Vāyu are specially advised to practise this āsana. The āsana is a cure for corpulence of the body in general and of the paunch in particular.

The āsana helps to make the voice melodious and resonant like that of a cuckoo. According to the yogic concepts, the navel is the source of sound. Only that sound which originates in the navel is captivating. The āsana makes speech faultless and clear. The yogīs of the highest level of accomplishment use it generally for arousing the Kuṇḍalinī.

## 100. VRŚCIKĀSANA (SCORPION POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Kneel on the ground with the buttocks resting on the heels. Place the palms on the ground keeping them about a foot apart and raise the body

completely on the forearms with the feet bent like the sting of the scorpion (Plate 155). In a variation of the posture the hands are planted on the ground and the body rests only on the hands. It is then bent to such an extent that the toes can touch the forehead (Plate 156).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The practice of this āsana is believed to provide profuse quantities of blood to the heart without any effort. The heart is consequently spared any strain. Though slightly difficult to perform, yet the āsana is extremely beneficial. It has been observed that the practice of this āsana for half an hour every day makes the body immune to the poisonous sting of the scorpion or snake bite. It is said to purify the blood, as a result of which numerous diseases of the skin like pimples, boils, etc., are easily cured. The arms develop extraordinary strength and the health of the throat is ensured. It has been found useful against ocular ailments as well. Common ocular diseases in their initial stages can be checked and even cured shortly after one is initiated to this āsana.

Some persons insist on performing this āsana by placing the feet on the top of the head, but in practice it has not been found to be of any particular advantage, even though it is not harmful. Actually, persons performing the āsana this way are generally too thin or they become so. It is essential to perform the āsana only to the extent to which it is convenient.

#### 101. TAKIYĀSANA (PILLOW POSTURE)

##### POSTURE

Lie on the ground, and place the right foot on the left shoulder while the left leg is fully stretched on the ground. Place the left hand on the left knee. Bend the right arm and, keeping the elbow on the ground, bring the fist into contact with the head (Plate 157). The āsana should be repeated by alternating the limbs used in the various sequences. Another method is to sit on the ground while the left leg is stretched forward. The right hand should be placed on the left knee (Plate 158).



## EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The yogīs do not use a pillow; this āsana is used by them instead. Practice of this āsana unifies the Prāṇa and the Aṇā and Kuṇḍalinī Śakti (Serpent power) gets aroused. Its practice can cure many of the body's ailments. It is very effective in changing the nostril through which breathing takes place—called the change of 'Svara' in the language of yoga. It is believed to be of tremendous significance and the yogīs claim to accomplish many marvellous feats with its help. A detailed description of this can be found in 'Yogāśrama Grantha Mālā', Vol. 3. Yogīs can ensure success in any pursuit, cure diseases, and discover the thoughts in the minds of others by means of this 'Svara'. To control the 'Svara' the yogīs use Takiyāsana. Takiyāsana and another 'Asa' āsana (which has not been described in the present volume) appear very simple. A casual observer cannot fathom the significance of these āsanās, if these are performed in his presence. The yogīs not only achieve obvious results by their practice, but subtle effects of the highest yogic significance are also achieved. It is thus effective both for the eradication of physical ailments and also for the generation of subtle powers.

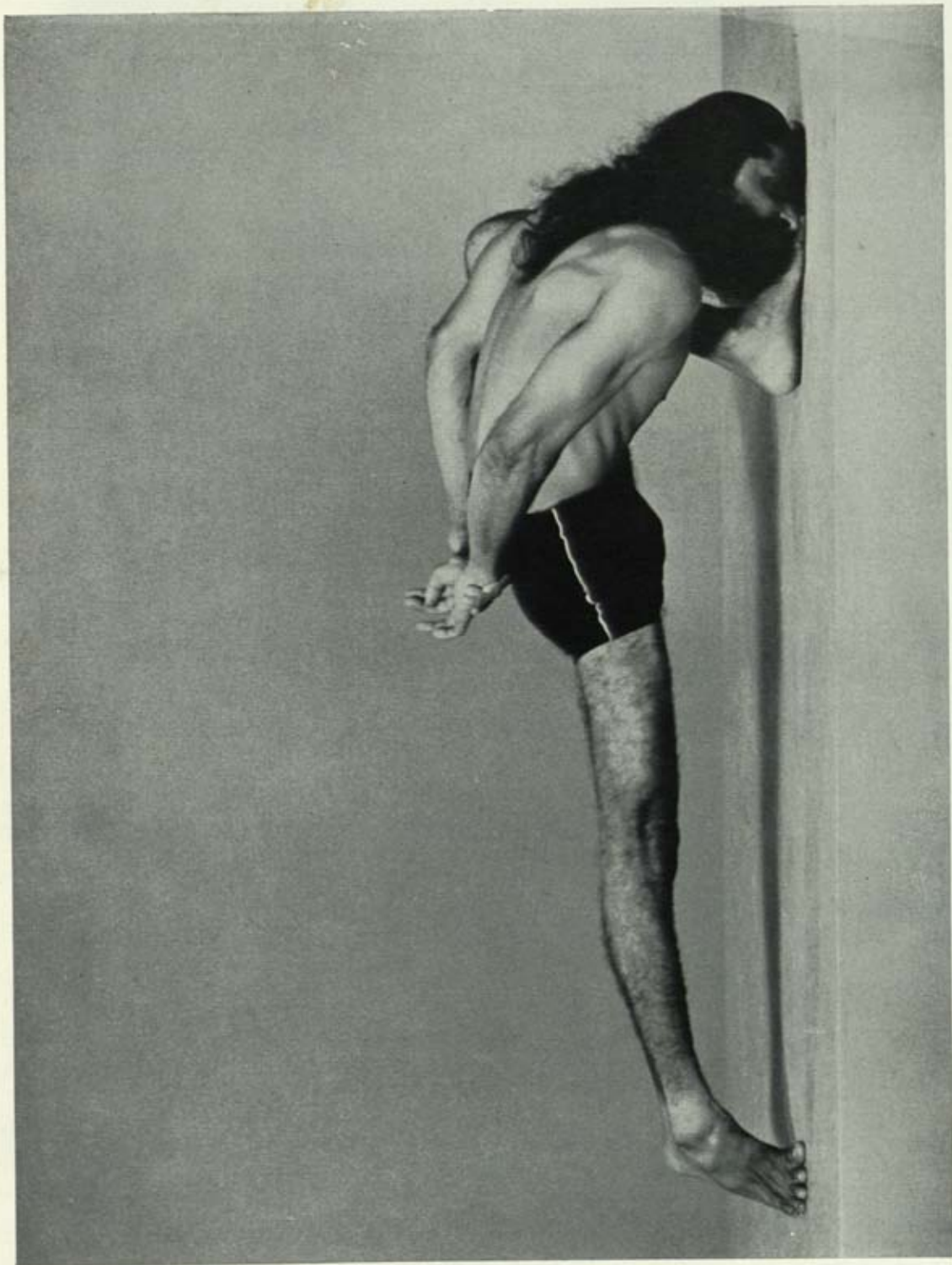
### 102. MAYŪRA-PADMĀSANA (PEACOCK AND LOTUS POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Sit in Padmāsana. Put the hands on the ground with a distance of four fingers between the hands. Then raise the body supported on the hands (Plate 159). The elbows should be pressed against the navel. It is a Mayūrāsana for all intents and purposes, except that it is performed after sitting in Padmāsana.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

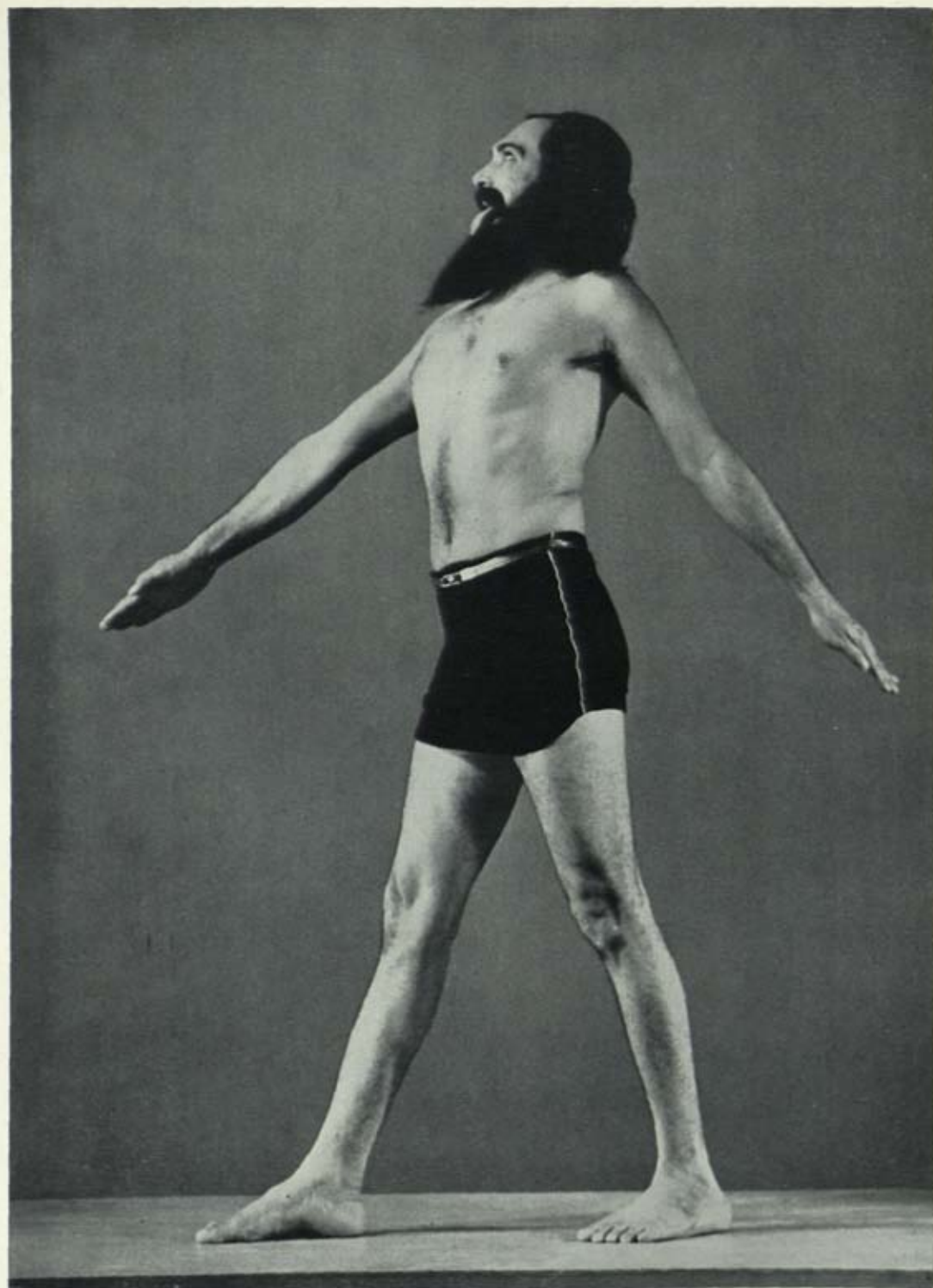
The āsana relieves flatulence. Even heavy food proves wholesome. It contains all the remarkable attributes of the Mayūrāsana described earlier. It is more useful for women.



**Padāṅguṣṭha-nāśa-sparśāsana**

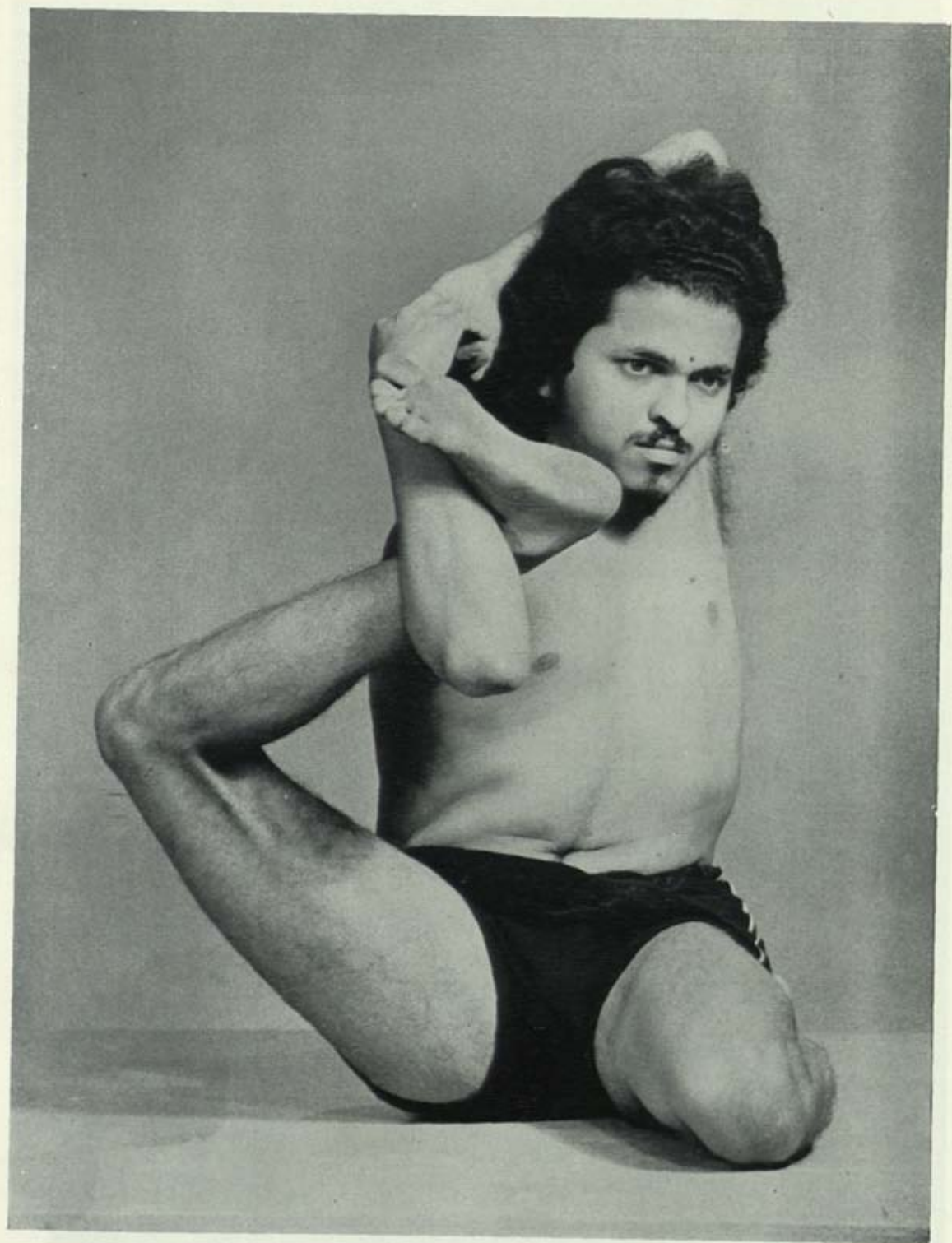
PLATE 151 : Bending forward touch the toes with the nose while the other leg is stretched backward





Kāla-bhairavāsana

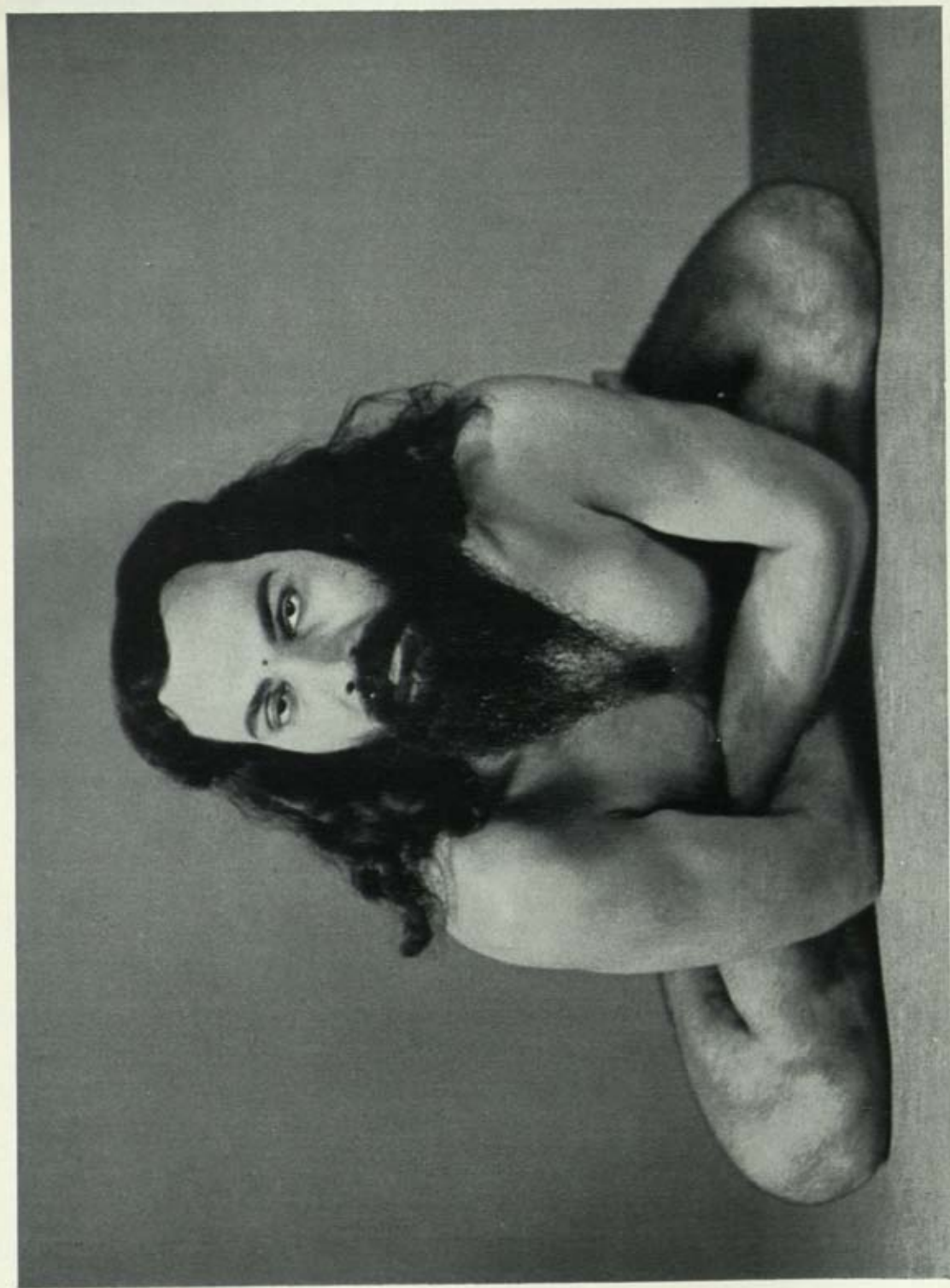
PLATE 152: With one arm stretched backward and the other forward, the tongue should protrude to the maximum extent



Catuṣkoṇāsana

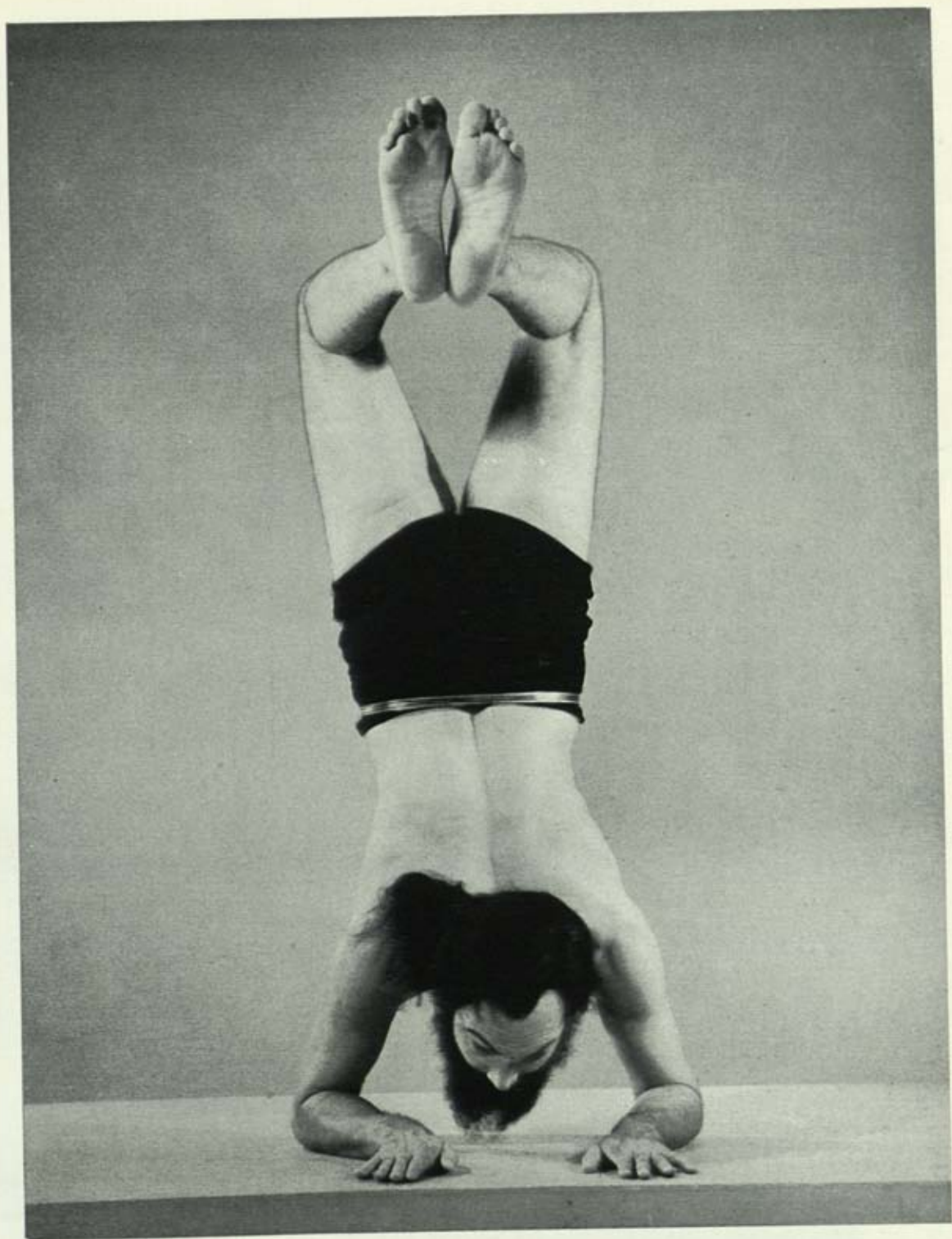
PLATE 153: The right leg is held up by the right arm while the left arm encircles the neck and the fingers of the two hands are interlocked





Kokilasana

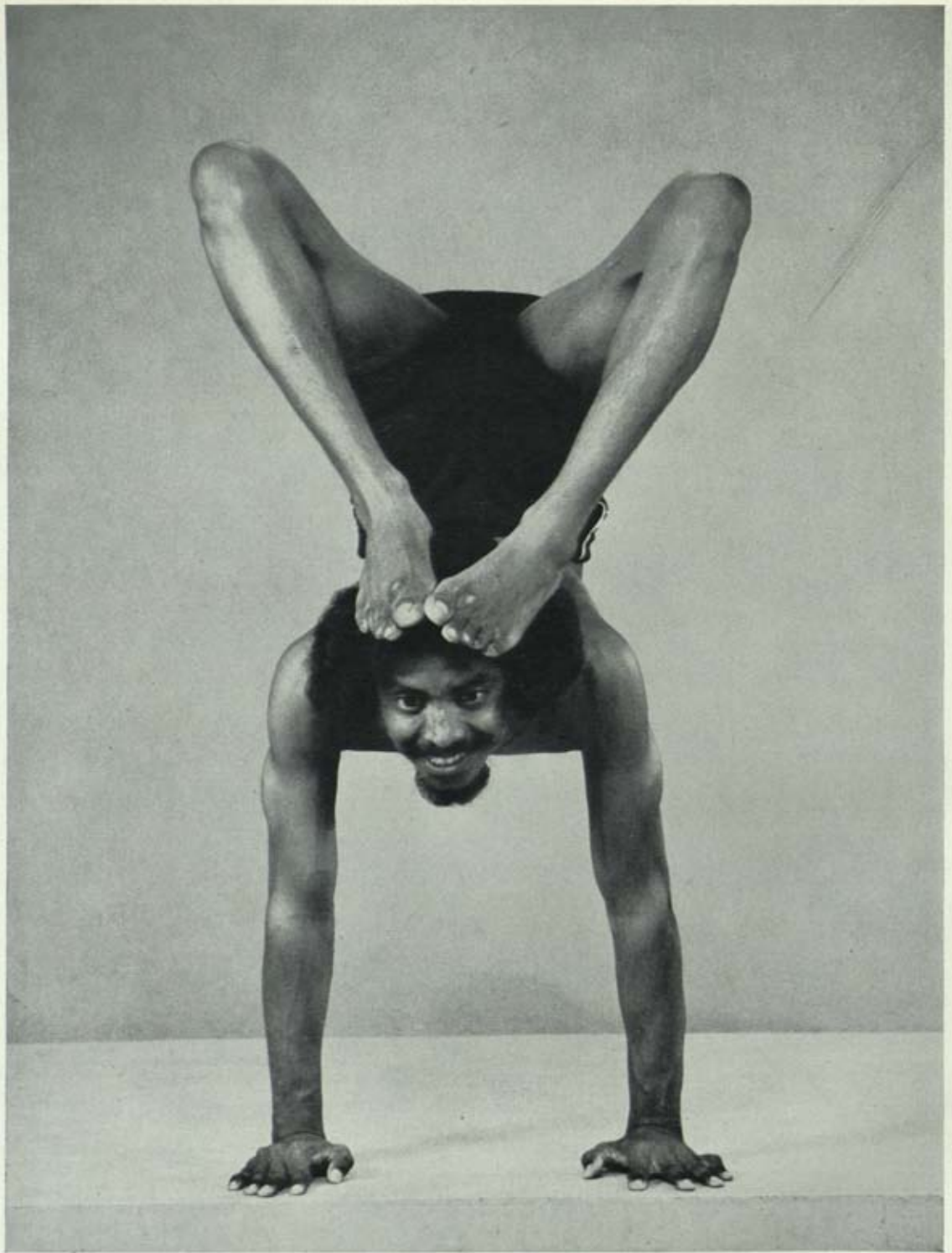
PLATE 154: While in Padmāsana, place both elbows on the ground



Vṛścikāsana

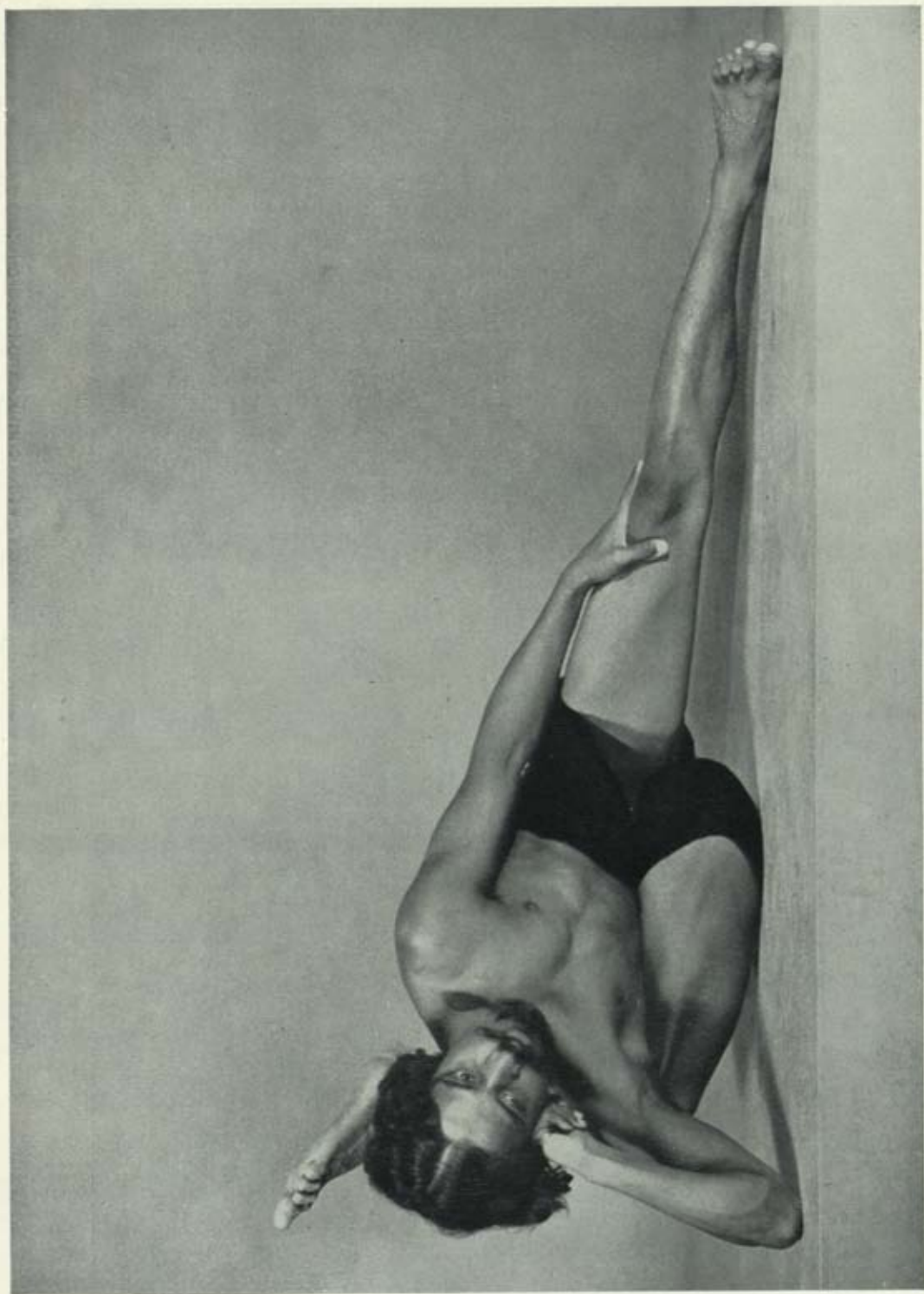
PLATE 155: Raise the body supported on the forearms with legs bent





Vṛścikāsana

PLATE 156: Place both feet on top of the head while supporting the body on the hands



## Takiyāsana

PLATE 157: with the right foot on the left shoulder, the left leg stretched fully along the ground place the right elbow on the ground and the hand should support the head



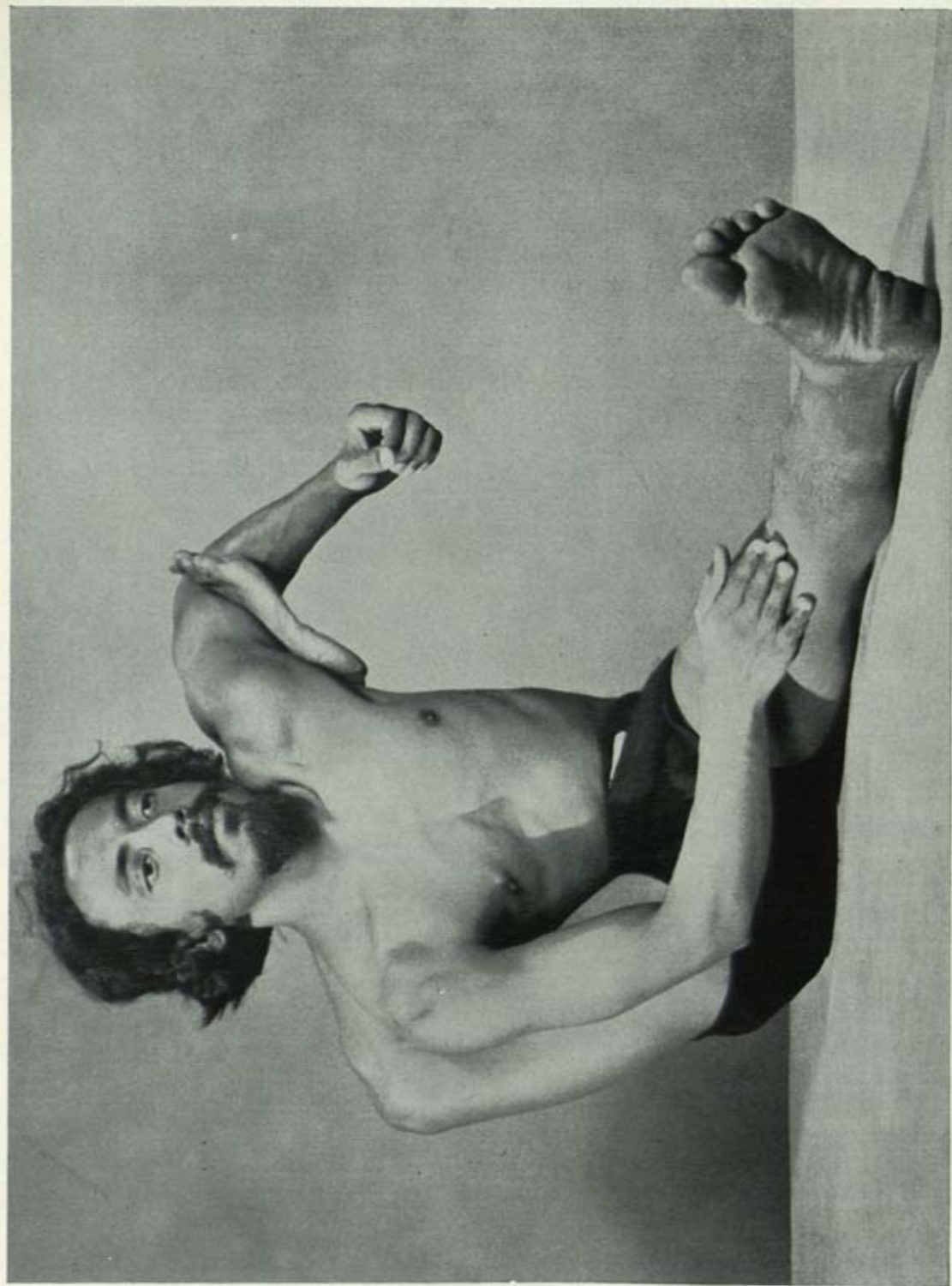


PLATE 158: With the left leg stretched place the right foot under the left armpit

Takiyasana

### 103. PŪRṆA-CAKRĀSANA (COMPLETE-WHEEL POSTURE)

#### POSTURE

Keep a distance of a foot between the hands and between the feet while lying face downward. The head can be kept between the arms while the body is raised. Move from the left to the right or alternately from the right to the left by moving the feet. The hands should not be moved. During the performance of the āsana the body assumes the Wheel posture (Cakrāśana), Half-Wheel posture (Ardha-cakrāśana) or, while moving all around, the Full-Wheel posture (Pūrṇa-cakrāśana) as shown in Plate 160.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

The āsana has all the beneficial effects of the Cakrāśana described earlier, with one added feature. By the practice of this one āsana alone, the whole body is exercised. Those who are hard-pressed for time can effectively exercise their whole body by the practice of this āsana. The āsana proves its effectiveness in the shortest period of time, compared with other āsanās. Not only are the muscles of the waist, knees, spine, and neck exercised by this āsana, but the lungs also are exercised and cleaned by the repeated alternate turning from left to right and from right to left. As a result, even the possibility of a disease like tuberculosis is eliminated. The practice of the āsana enables the osteo-articular mechanism of the ribs to remain resilient, in spite of advancing age. It relieves constipation and flatulence. The āsana is superb in inducing a more effective exchange of gases in the lungs. It increases the intake of oxygen and also increases the elimination of carbon-dioxide from the system. It tones up and strengthens the heart. The odour of perspiration is removed by the practice of this āsana for a few days. Skin diseases like pimples and boils are also cured by its practice. The texture of the skin becomes soft and lovely. No other āsana is equally effective in improving the shape of the back and of the toes.



#### 104. PAKṢYĀSANA OR VĀYUYĀNĀSANA (BIRD OR AEROPLANE POSTURE)

##### P O S T U R E

Stand on the ground and place the right foot behind the right shoulder so that the heel and toes come to lie on the left shoulder. The arms should be spread out like the wings of a vulture. The left leg must be kept straight. The āsana is repeated by changing the position of the limbs (Plate 161). The āsana resembles a bird in appearance. Its practice makes the body feel very light and the mind care-free. The feeling of lightness of the body becomes so marked that it almost feels as though it does not exist. Young girls and also women wanting to bear children should not practise this āsana. It is useful for the ailments of feet, knees, waist and for piles. For walkers and mountaineers, this āsana is very helpful. It develops the capacity to keep the body properly balanced. The faculty to contract or expand the body is also said to be acquired through this āsana.

#### 105. VĀTĀYANĀSANA (VENTILATOR POSTURE)

##### P O S T U R E

Stand on the ground, put the heel of the left foot on the right thigh and gradually lower the knee to touch the right ankle. The hands are joined together as in Plate 162. The āsana should be repeated by standing on the left foot. There is also a variation of this āsana in which the knee is gradually lowered and brought to the ground near the heel. The hands are kept joined together as before, while looking straight ahead (Plate 163).

##### E F F E C T S   A N D   B E N E F I T S

The thighs and the lower limbs become strong. It is held to be very useful for patients of hernia. It is an excellent āsana for dancers; the gait improves and becomes graceful. Those who walk with a stoop should practise it.

## 106. ARDHA-ŪRDHVĀSANA (HALF-RAISED POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Stand on one foot with the other raised as high as possible so that the two legs form almost a straight line. The ankle of the raised leg should be held with one hand, while the other leg is kept straight. The other arm is stretched out straight in front (Plate 164). There are a few more difficult variations. In one of these, the right foot is raised to such an extent that the toes touch the forehead, where they are held in position by the right hand; the left arm is stretched straight in front (Plate 165). Both these āsanas ought to be repeated after alternating the limbs.

### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

This āsana is a boon for dancers. It makes numerous dance poses possible. The spine, the feet, the knees, and the thighs are benefited. The most striking effect is that the body becomes so supple that it can be turned and twisted with great ease. The effects of this āsana are primarily on the muscles. The acrobats of the past (called naṭas) used to delight audiences by displaying the aesthetic effects of this āsana. In the West, too, it is this āsana, under various local guises, which is used by ballet dancers and others.

## 107. TRIBANDHĀSANA (TRIPLE-LOCK POSTURE)

### POSTURE

Sit on the ground with the left heel placed on the right thigh so that it is close to the navel. The right foot should be placed on the left thigh so that the heels touch below the navel. Sit erect with the hands on the knees. Then, the basal lock (Mūla-bandha) should be applied by drawing the ano-rectum upwards while inhaling and the abdominal lock (Uḍḍiyāna-bandha) after exhaling. The chin-lock (Jālandhara-bandha) should also be applied at the same time, i.e. the chin should be fixed to the sternal notch while keeping the eyes closed. Sitting in Padmāsana after full exhalation and with the application of all the three locks, viz. Mūla-bandha, Uḍḍiyāna-



bandha, and Jālandhara-banda is known as Tribandhāsana (Plate 166.) This can also be performed in Baddha-Padmāsana.

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

Many ailments of the abdomen get relieved by the practice of this āsana. It stimulates digestive functions and relieves constipation and flatulence. It directs the Prāṇa to course along the Suṣumṇā and the state of meditation is spontaneously produced. This is one āsana where the āsana (posture), mudrā (pose), and prāṇāyama (breath regulation) are simultaneously performed.

The āsana is undoubtedly difficult to perform but regular practice makes it possible for the body to re-adapt itself. If, in performing this āsana in the Baddha-Padmāsana posture, it is not possible to hold the toes, it should suffice to keep the arms behind the back.

The āsana is also known to help in the treatment of the ailments of spleen and liver and chronic splenic enlargements.

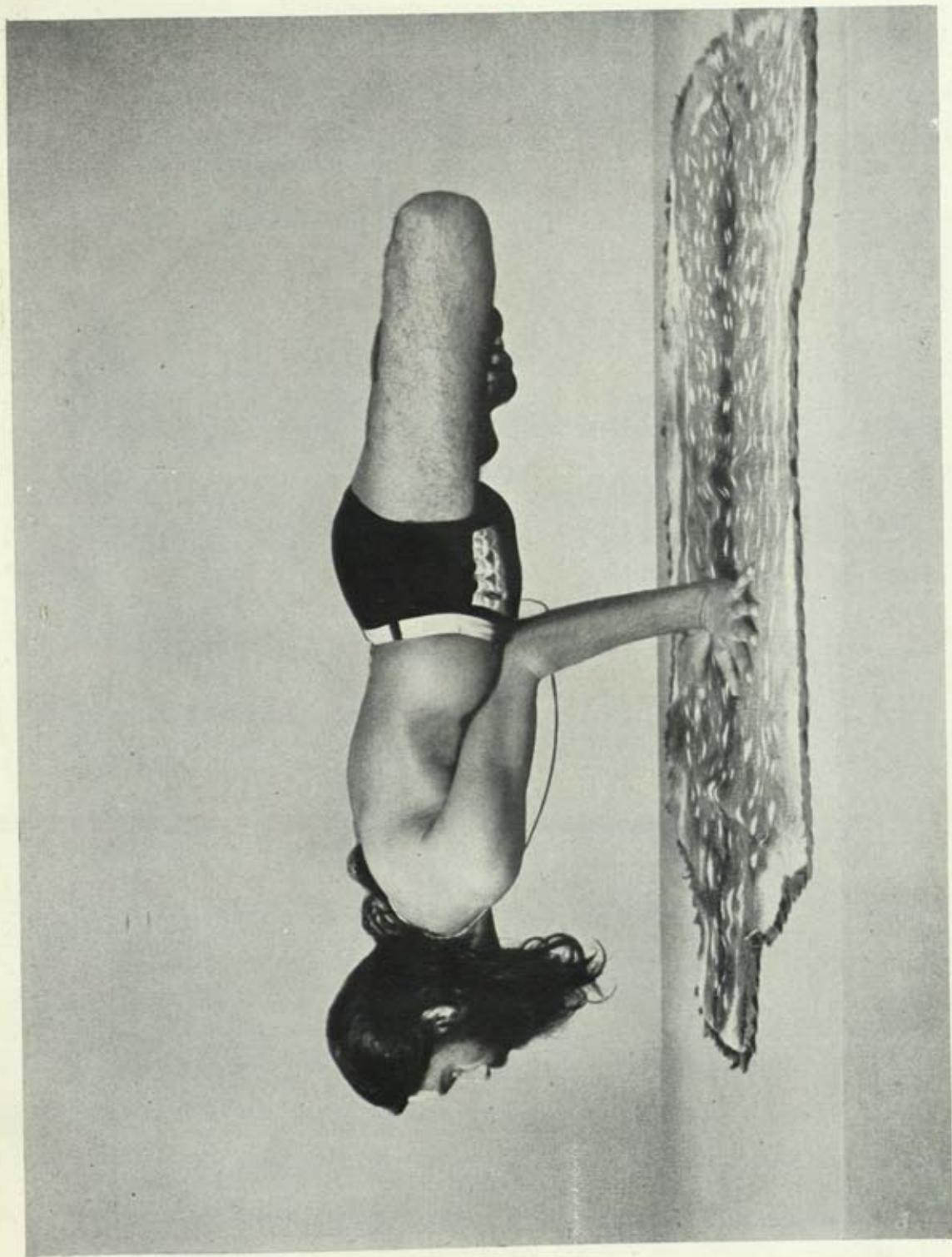
Even samādhi (deep contemplation and self-realisation) develops spontaneously if the āsana is practised persistently and properly. A milk fever caused by exposure to the cold can be cured in fifteen minutes if the āsana is performed after placing the forehead on the ground (Plate 63). Even deep-seated fevers (called 'fever of the bone' in India) are cured by this āsana.

#### 108. NAṬARĀJĀSANA (LORD OF THE DANCERS POSTURE)

Naṭarājāsana is named after Lord Śaṅkara Himself. Lord Śaṅkara is the originator of the system of yoga and the description of the 84 lac āsanās has been derived from the instructions imparted through the lotus-mouth of the Lord Himself. Lord Śaṅkara is regarded as the source of knowledge of yoga. In the Upaniṣads, Lord Śaṅkara has been described as the instructor of yoga to Lord Brahmā.

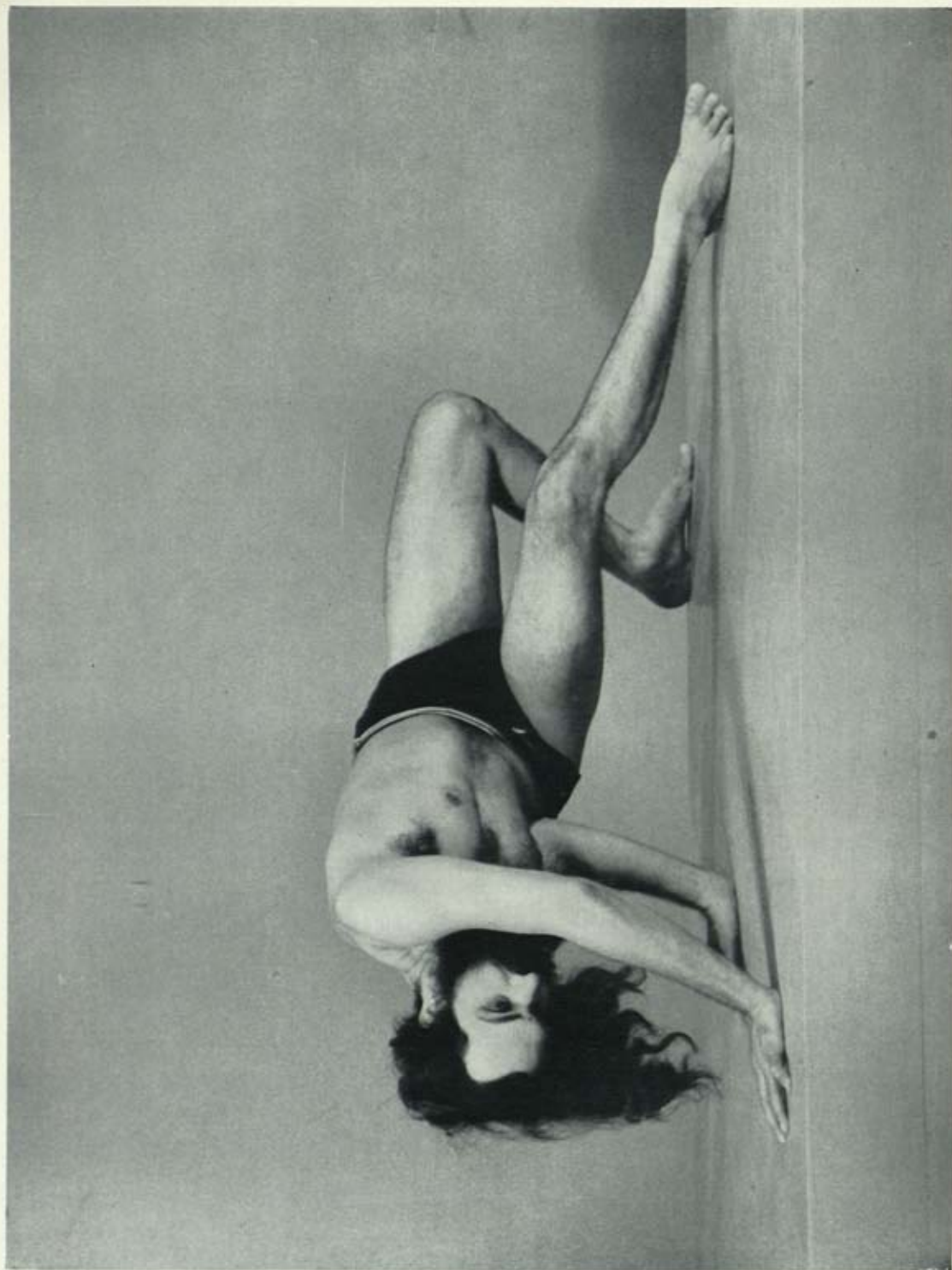
In Yoga Śikhopaniṣad, Lord Brahmā addressed Lord Śaṅkara thus:

Sarve jīvāḥ, sukḥair duḥkḥair māyājālena veṣṭitāḥ  
Teṣāṃ muktiḥ katham deva kṛpayā vada Śaṅkara  
Sarva siddhikaram mārgam māyājāla-nikṛntanam



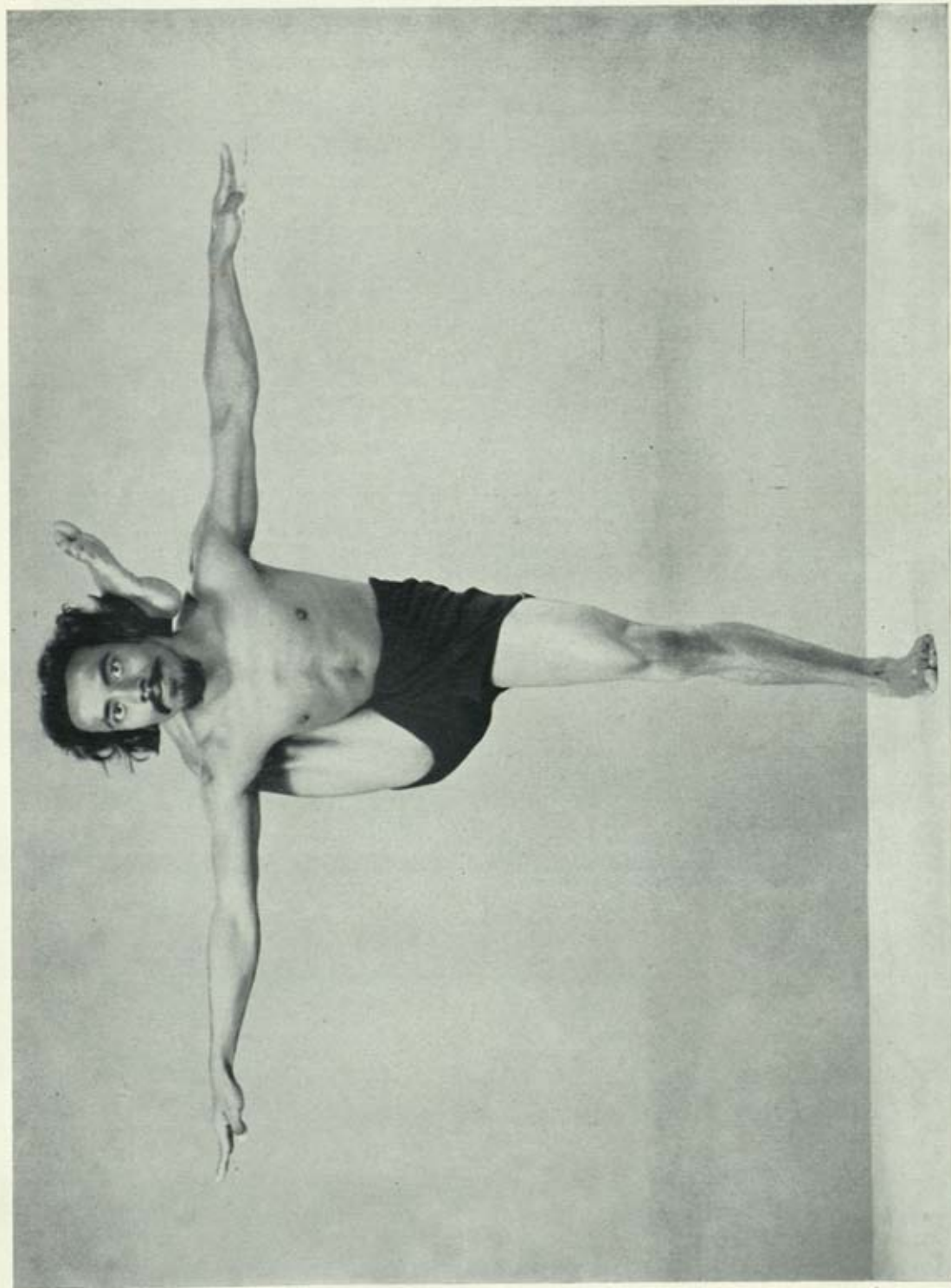
Mayūrapadmāsana  
PLATE 159: While in Padmasana raise the body supporting it on the hands with elbows pressed against the navel





## Purnacakraṣana

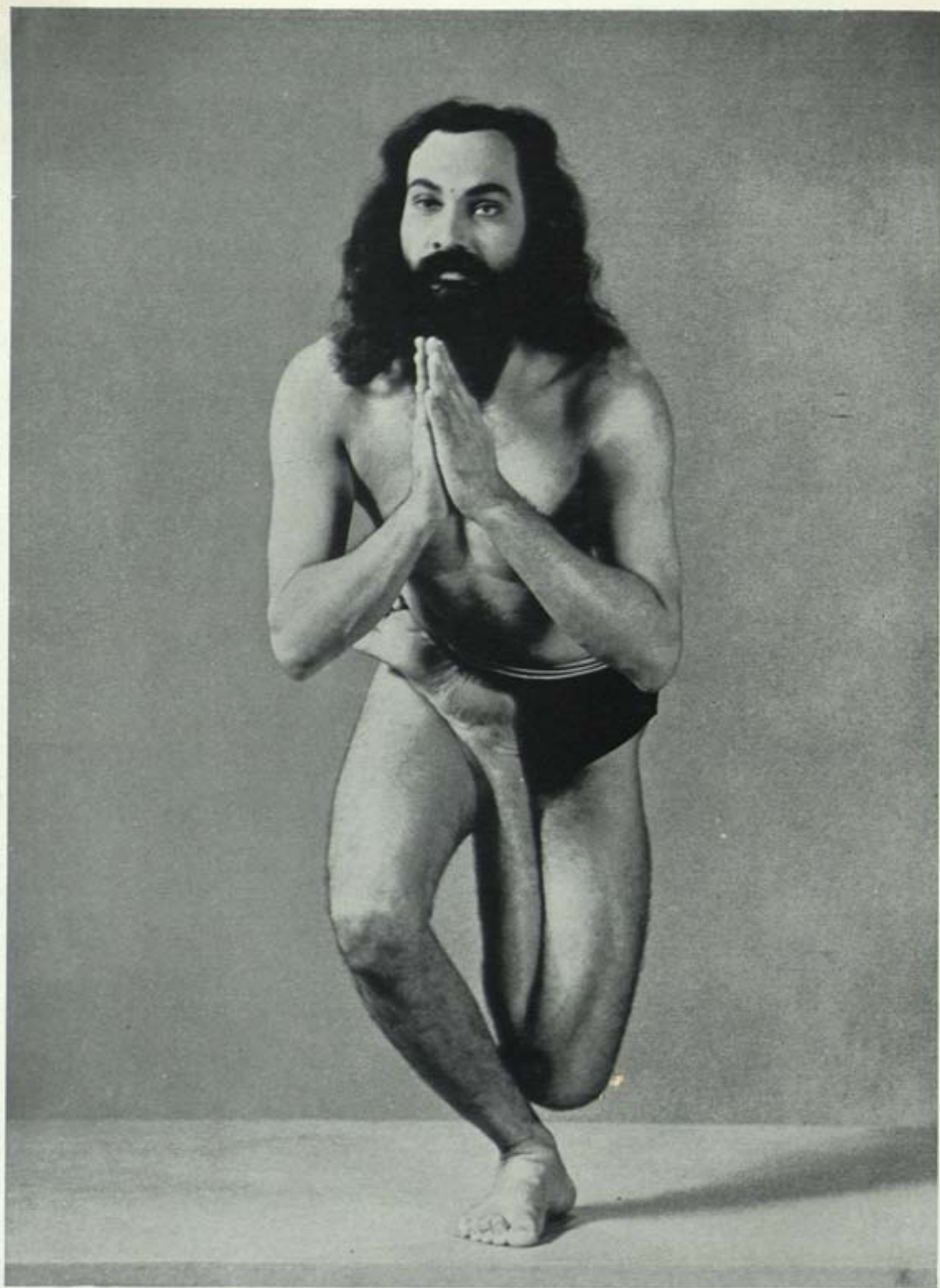
PLATE 160: With the hands on the ground move in a circle with the feet



## Pakṣiāsana

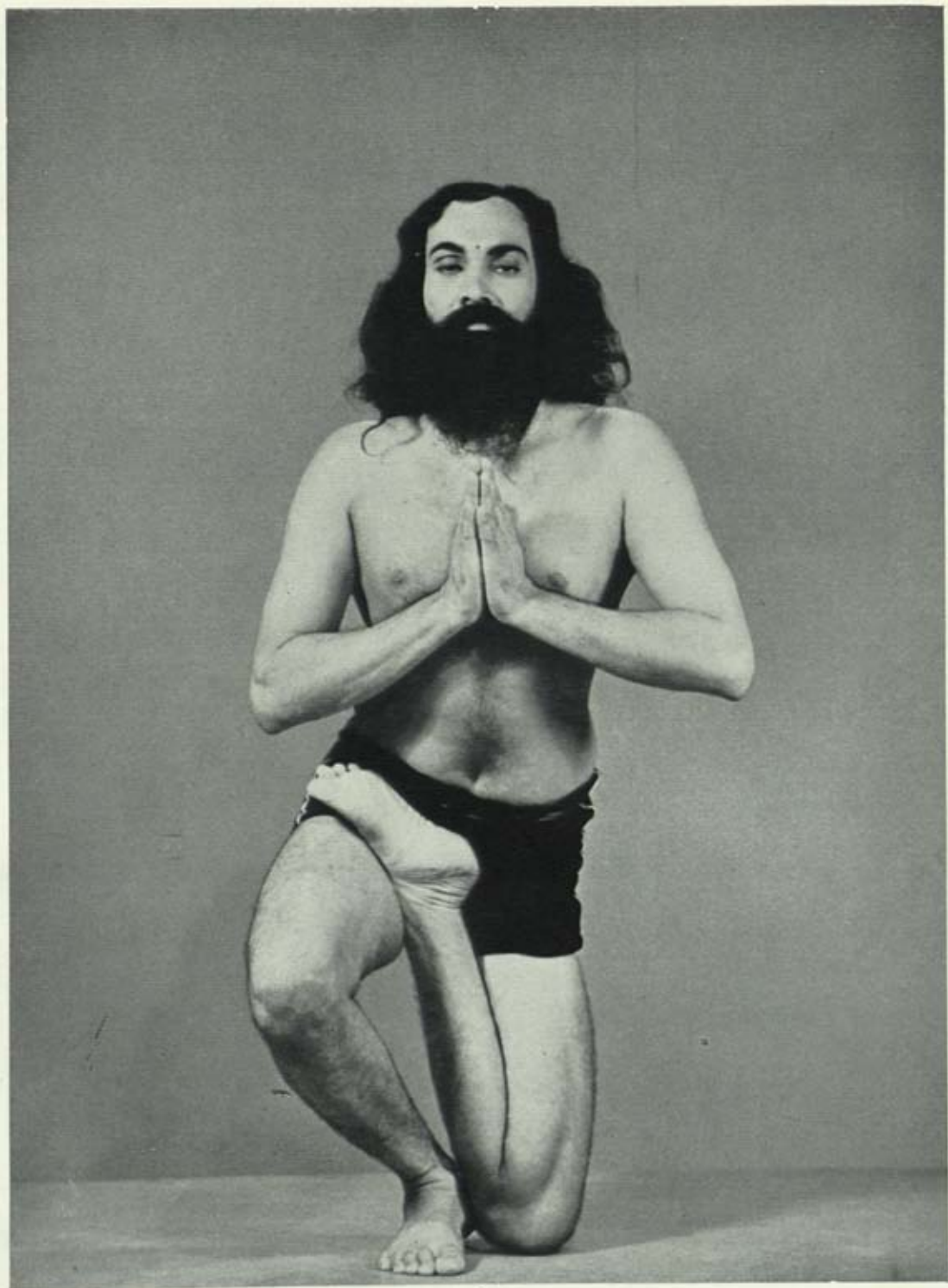
PLATE 161 : With the right foot on the shoulder, stand on the left foot with arms outstretched





Vātāyanāsana

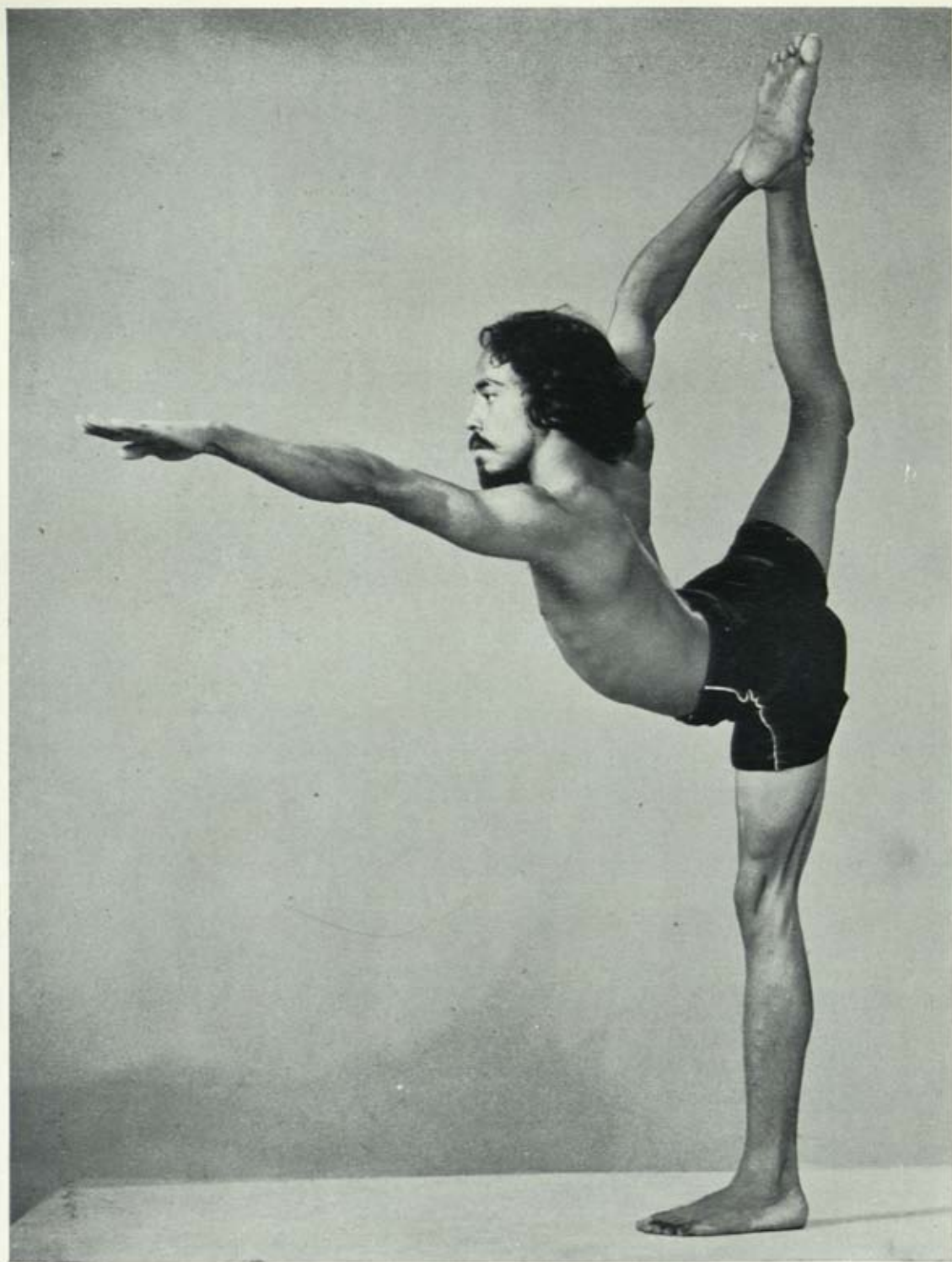
PLATE 162: Bend the left leg to place the toes on the right thigh while the knee touches the right ankle



Vātāyanāsana

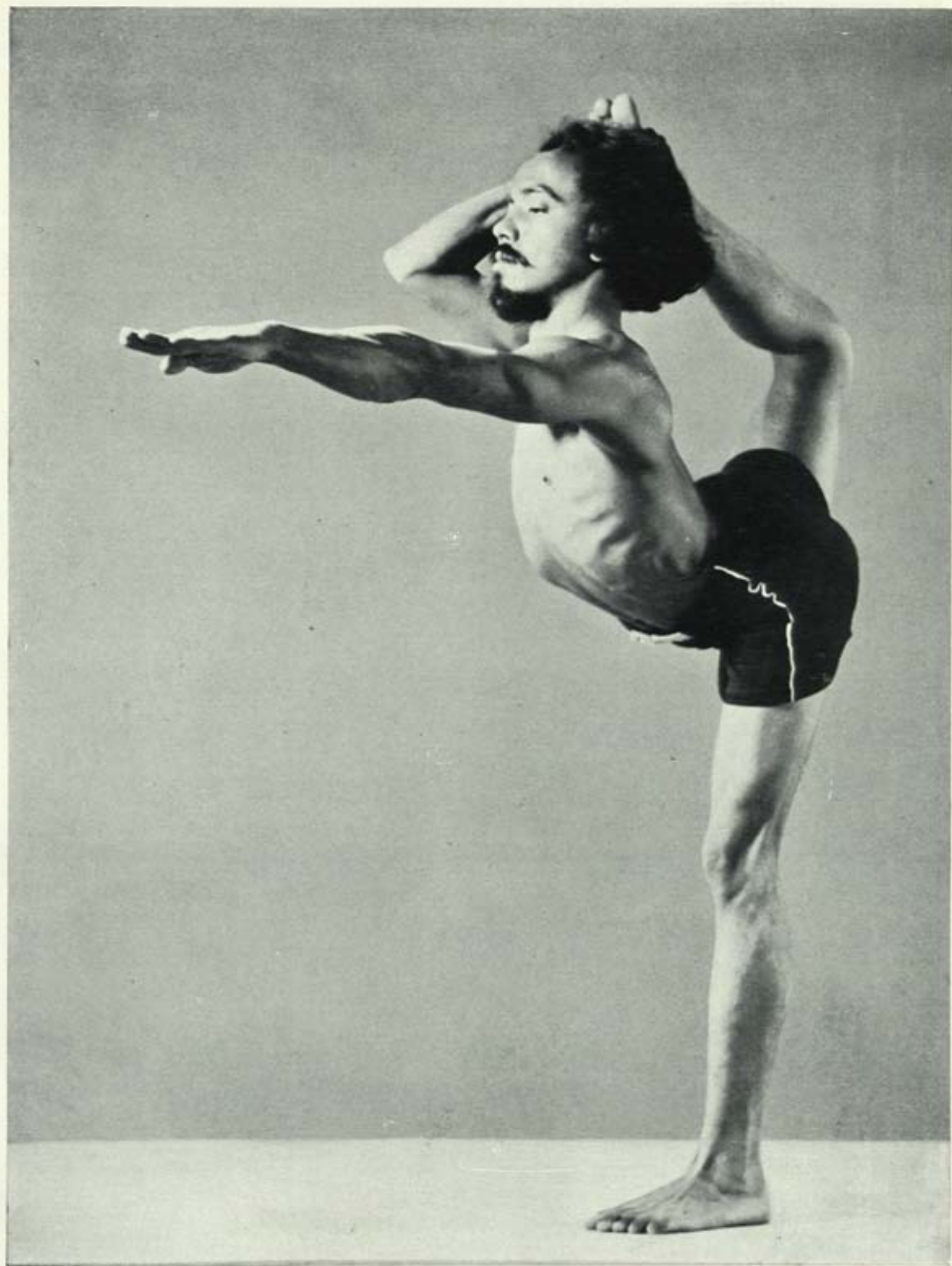
PLATE 163. Lower the knee to touch the ground





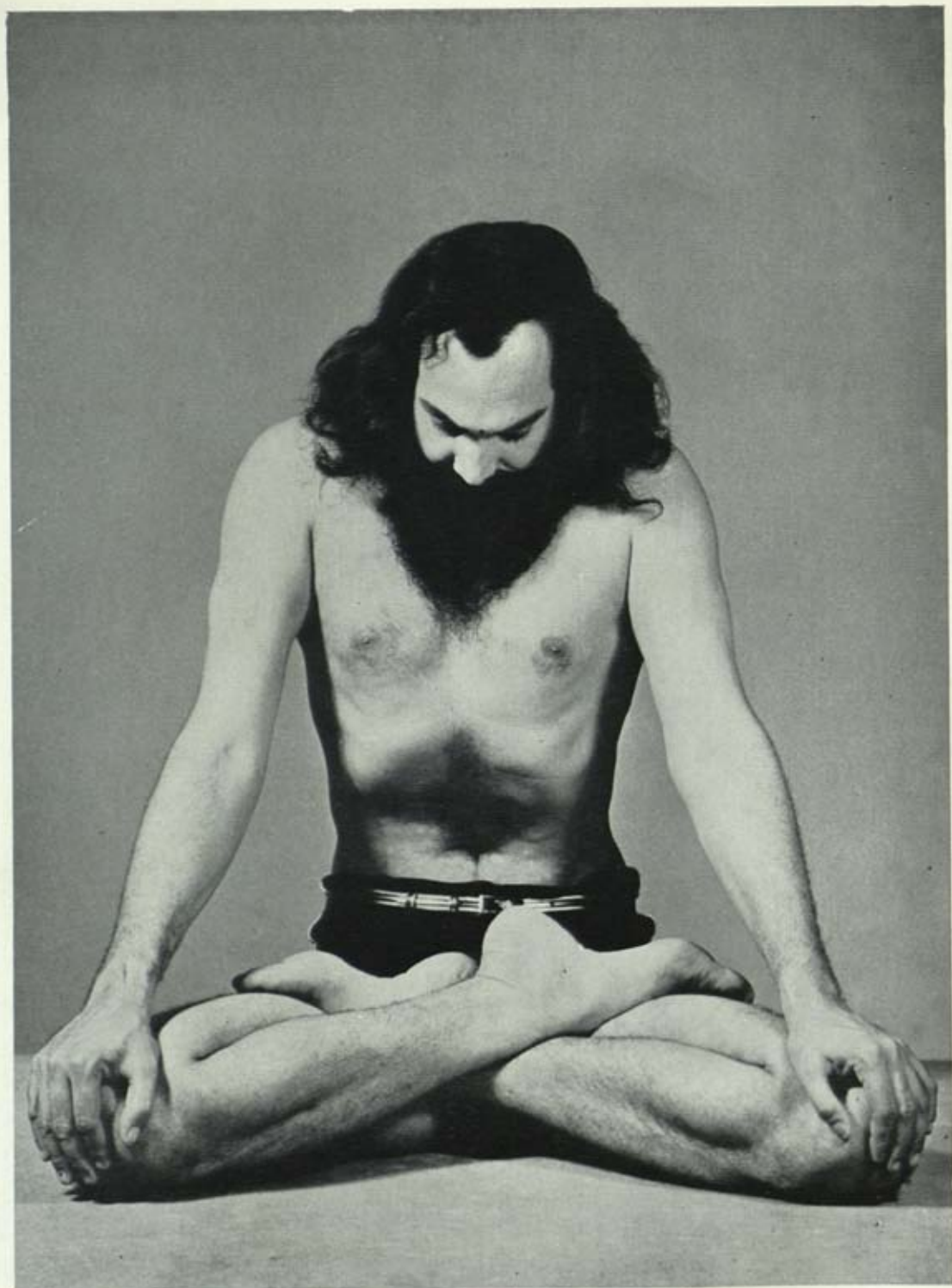
Ardha-Ūrdhvāsana

PLATE 164: Raise the right leg upwards and hold the toes with the right hand while the left arm is stretched forward.



Ardha-Urdhavāsana  
PLATE 165; Place the raised right foot on the head





Tribandudhāsana

PLATE 166: While sitting in Padmasana, apply the Mul-banda  
Jalandharbandha and Uddiyanbandha

Janama-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-nāśanaṃ sukhadaṃ vada.

(Y.S.U. 1, 1-2)

All creatures are invested by the deluding network of happiness and sorrow. O, Lord Śaṅkara, kindly say how they can have deliverance. Please explain the path which produces fulfilment and perfection, which cuts through the web, the warp and woof of Māyā; which annihilates the cycle of birth, death, old age, and disease and which imparts felicity and bliss.

In reply, Lord Śaṅkara declared:

‘Nānā mārgaistu duṣprāpaṃ kaivalyaṃ paramaṃ padaṃ  
Siddhi-mārgeṇa labhate nānyathā padma-sambhava.

(Y.S.U. 1, 3-4)

There are manifold ways but by these it is extremely difficult to attain that most excellent and blissful position, which, O Lotus Born, can be had by none other than the pathway of Siddhi (i.e. the path of yoga).

Elsewhere, Lord Śaṅkara, instructing His consort, Pārvatī, says:

Prāṇa eva paraṃ mitraṃ prāṇa eva paraḥ sakha  
Prāṇa-tulyaḥ paro bandhur nāsti nāsti varānane.

(S.S. 219)

Prāṇa is the best friend, Prāṇa is the best companion, and there is absolutely no other equal or better kinsman than Prāṇa, O lovely faced!

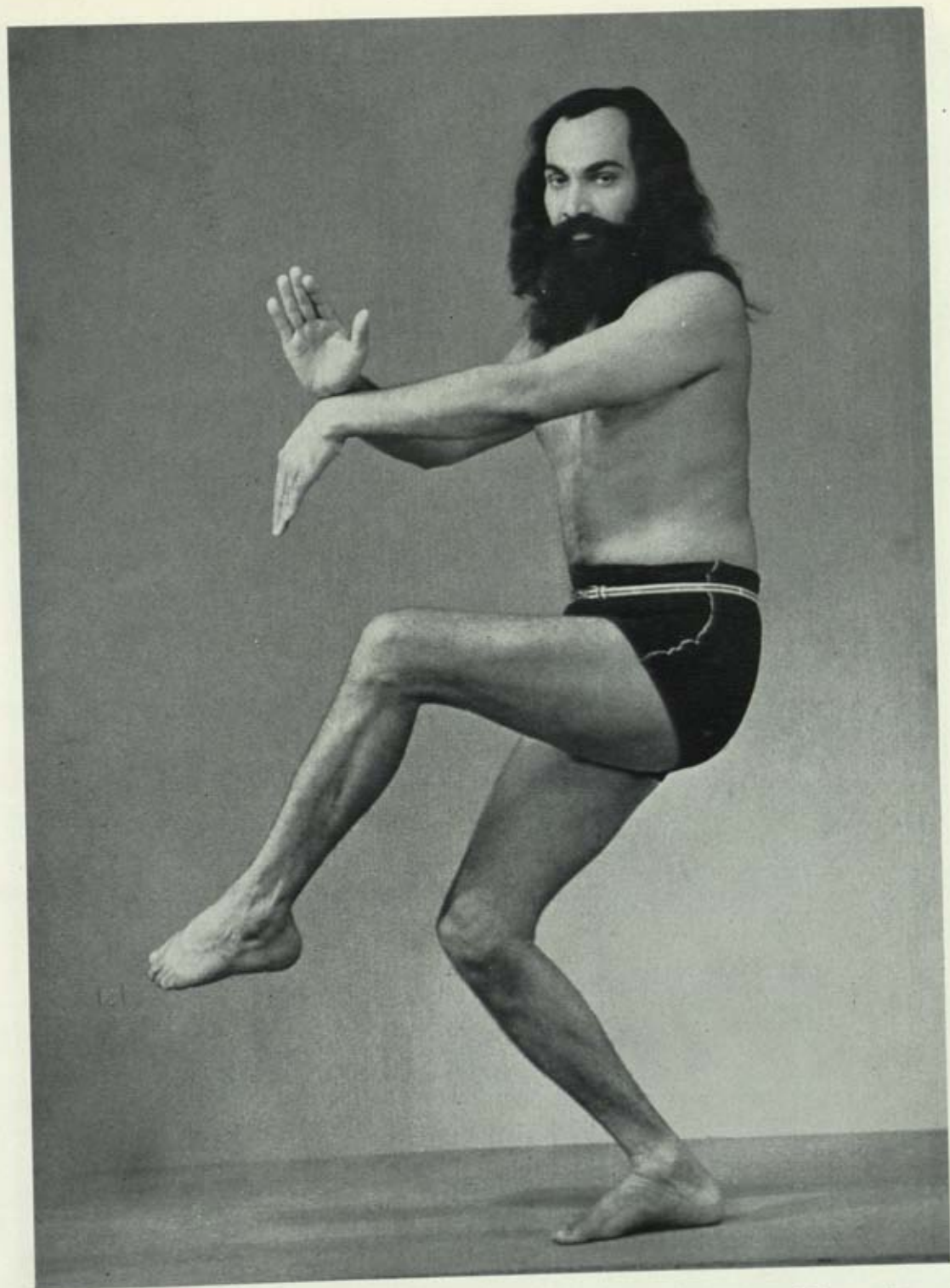
Instances abound in literature of Lord Śaṅkara instructing the savants but there is no indication of any one having instructed Lord Śiva Himself. Hence, the belief that Lord Śaṅkara is the sole source and propounder of the science and technique of yoga.

The Naṭarājāsana is very well known, being considered the most charming in creation. It is also the cause of the annihilation of the entire creation (in its macrocosmic aspect, as used by the Great Lord



Śiva). When He, Lord Śaṅkara, the Master Dancer (Naṭeśvara), performs the famous Tāṇḍava, it is this Naṭarājāsana which provides the basis for that celebrated dance and it is on this account that the Earth undergoes dissolution and is absorbed in the Waters. The Waters in turn merge in the Fire; the Fire in the Air (Vāyu), and finally the Air in the Ākāśa. Thus the creation of Brahmā is annihilated in its entirety by the Great Lord of Dancers, Lord Śaṅkara, through the rhythm of this great dance, originating from this great āsana. Actually, the Naṭarājāsana is so widely popular that copper and other metal representations of this āsana can be found in the market-place and even in scattered shops, in all sizes, from the smallest to the largest. Some use these for decoration of their homes, whereas others treat as the images of Lord Śaṅkara and, therefore, worship them. It is thus that Naṭarājāsana comes to be the most widely known āsana. There are many variations of the āsana. Here only six have been described, viz. the postures depicted in Plates 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, and 172. The fifth is the posture of Lord Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance for causing the dissolution of creation.

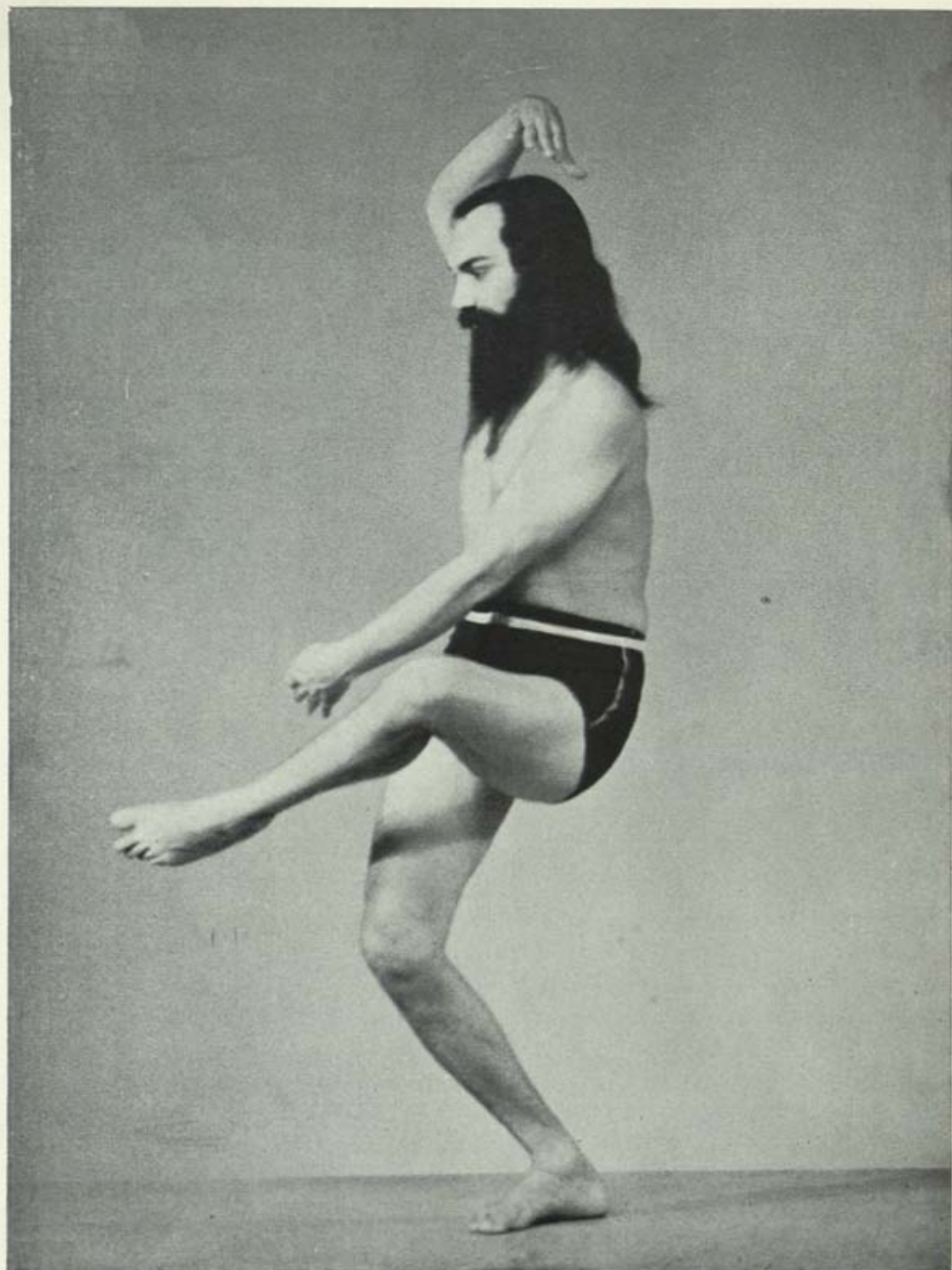
These six versions do not exhaust the innumerable possibilities of Naṭarājāsana, which are also impossible to persent in photographs. It is believed that Lord Śaṅkara, when dancing, assumes four arms, which is impossible for mortals. Yet, the practice of Naṭarājāsana is an incomparable asset for dancers. Its practice develops awareness of the mysteries of the art of dancing and dexterity in the technique of the dance. There is a legend about the two supreme deities associated with the dance—Naṭarāja (Lord Śiva) and Naṭavara (Lord Kṛṣṇa). Lord Kṛṣṇa was a past master in the art of dancing and used to participate in and conduct the dancing group of milkmaids, the Gopīs. Once, when Naṭavara Kṛṣṇa was in the group dancing with the milkmaids in Vṇḍāvana, Lord Śaṅkara assumed the form of a dancing maiden and stealthily joined their numbers. But how could this not be known to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is none other than the cause of the origin and preservation of creation? He, therefore, asked the leading Gopīs, “Has not a new Gopī graced our company today, performing a most charming dance, her movements overflowing in dalliance, delicate, amorous expressions and captivating side-long glances?” The milkmaids looked at the charming stranger who was none other than Lord Śaṅkara Himself, disguised in the form of a Gopī. Realising that Lord Kṛṣṇa had discovered His identity, Lord Śaṅkara, incar-



Naṭarājāsana

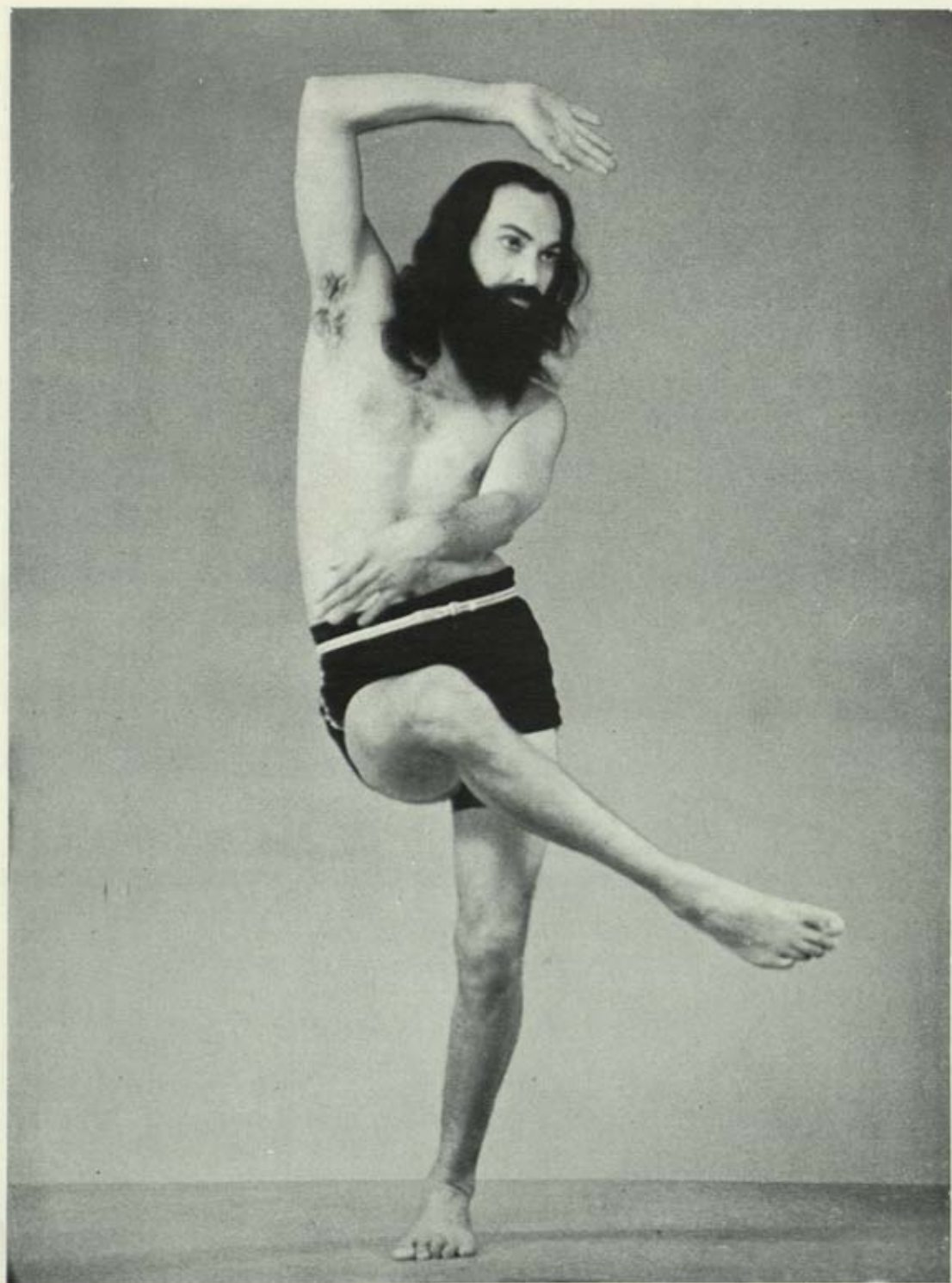
PLATE 167: Standing on the right foot bend the left leg towards the right, and hold the hands in the Naṭarāja Pose





Naṭarājāsana

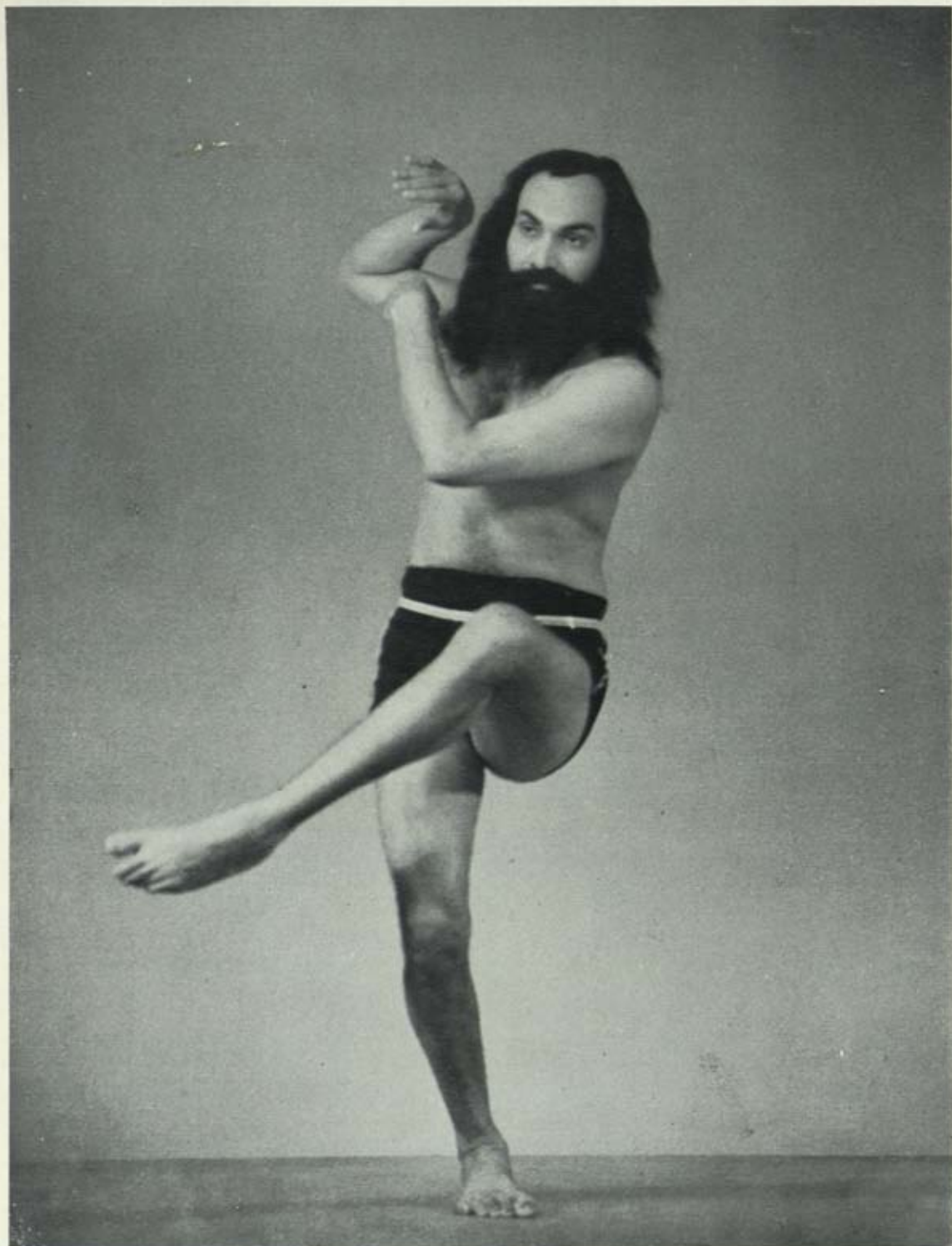
PLATE 168: Standing on the right foot bend the left knee and the arms



Naṭarājāsana

PLATE 169: Standing on the left foot, bend the right knee and the arms





Natarājāsana

PLATE 170: Standing on the right foot, bend the left knee and the arms in a dance pose



Naṭarājāsana

PLATE 171: Standing on the right foot raise the left knee and bend the body backward folding the hands



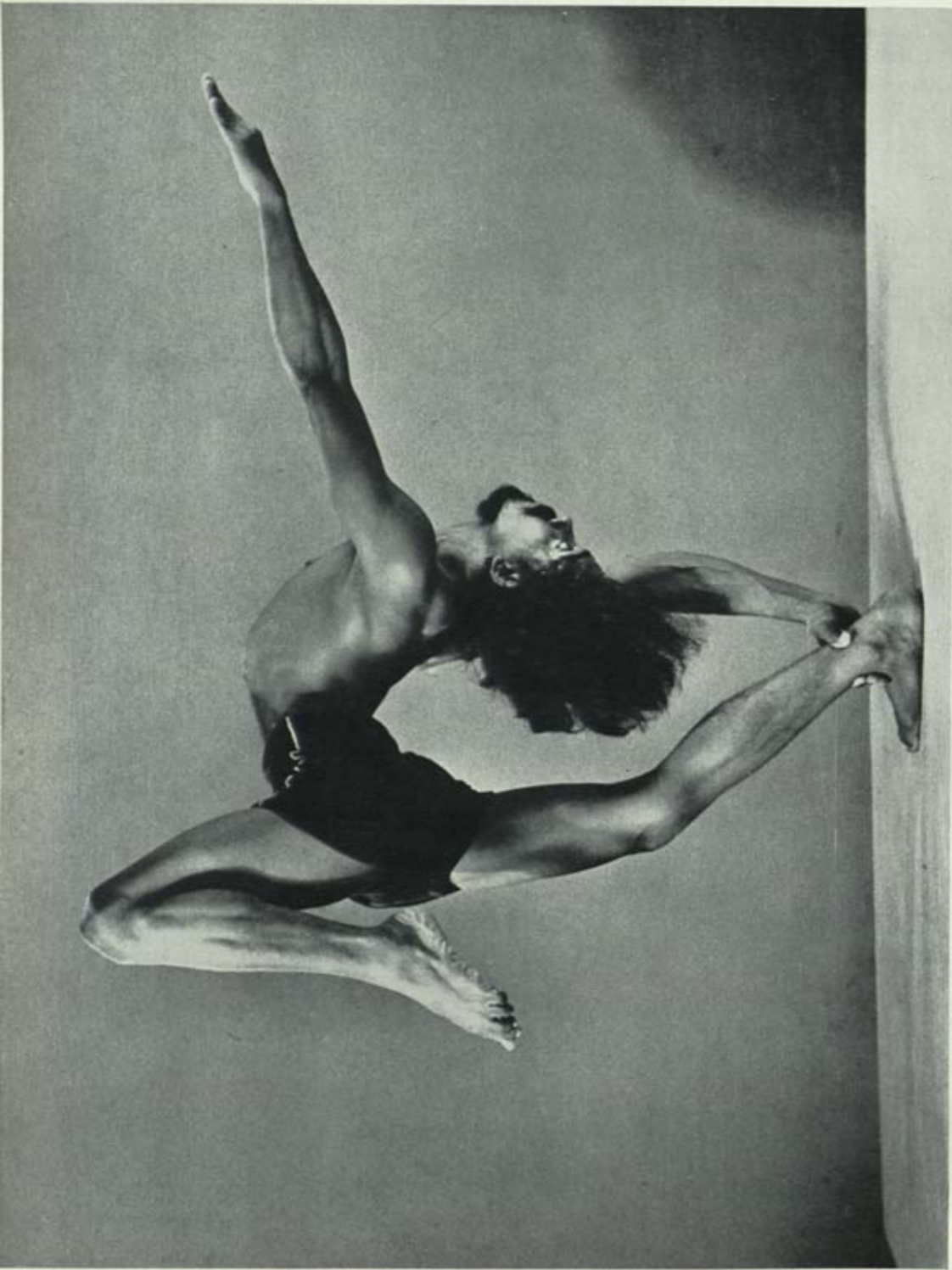


PLATE 172: Standing on the right foot, raise the left knee, bend backward to clasp the right ankle with the right hand while stretching the left arm upward

Natarājāsana

nated as a Gopī, overwhelmed with beatitude and ecstasy, started performing a most unusual and beautiful dance which cannot be described in words by ordinary mortals. From that moment Lord Śaṅkara came to be known as Gopeśvara Mahādeva.

For the practice of Nāṭarājāsana one foot is planted on the ground while the other is raised in various directions. One hand is kept on the forehead while the other is moved as required; the head is kept steady but the gaze is shifted in different directions. In attempting to signify the different emotions appropriate expressions are assumed by the face, the eyes, and the limbs, though it would be impossible and imprudent on the part of anybody to conjure up the feelings and thoughts in the Mind of Nāṭeśvara. Only Lord Śaṅkara Himself can comment on these. It is generally conceded that on earth there is no one who can actually and properly perform this āsana as Śaṅkara can. He knows the details and the intricate mysteries of the āsanas, for He alone is the source of all the 84 lacs āsanas.

## 109. SŪRYA-NAMASKĀRA (SALUTATION TO THE SUN)

Sūrya-Namaskāra is in vogue in India. Even those who are not familiar with the specialised aspects of yoga are conversant with Sūrya-Namaskāra to some extent at least. Sūrya-Namaskāra actually comprises sixteen components, but here only twelve have been detailed. This is, perhaps, because the Sun, with all its sixteen aspects, is said to be present only when the whole of Creation is in the throes of Final Dissolution; ordinarily, the Sun is visible only in its twelve aspects. The Sūrya-Namaskāra with sixteen divisions is extremely difficult and it is, therefore, generally performed with twelve divisions.

### POSTURE

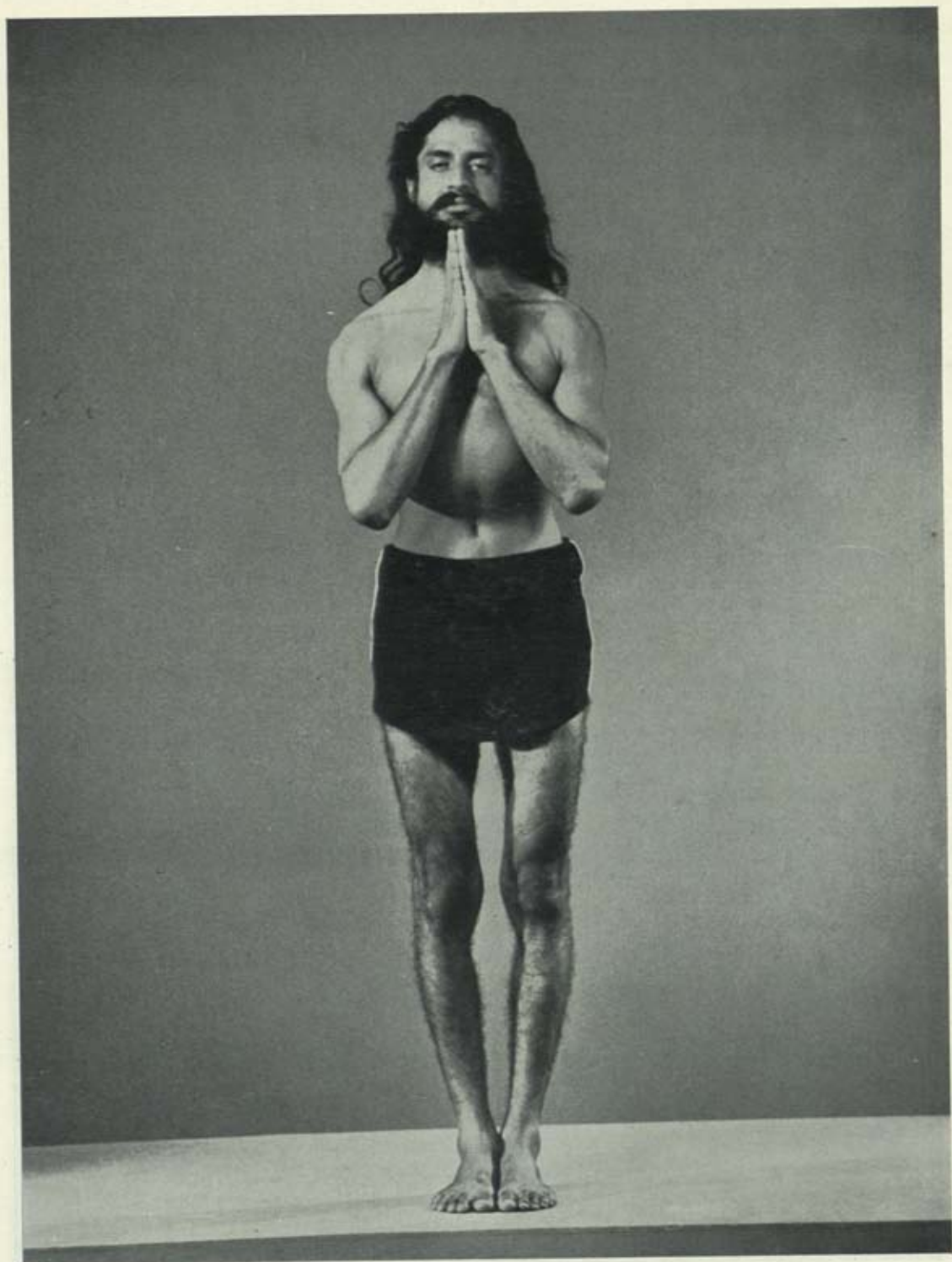
Stand facing east, the direction of the rising sun. Folding the hands reverently before the Lord Sun, place them on the chest to worship the Sublime Deity, just as they are placed for greeting any distinguished person (Plate 173). After this, the arms, and in fact every part of the body, should be kept absolutely rigid. The arms are then raised and, at the same time, while the body from the feet to the waist and



the extended arms are kept straight, the trunk, from the waist to the shoulders, is arched slightly backwards (Plate 174). The arms are then swung forward and downward slowly, so as to touch the ground by the side of the feet, while the head touches the knees (Plate 175). While doing so, the body should not be bent at the knees. Standing upright, again the left foot should be taken backwards with a jerk while the chest is kept expanded and taut (Plate 176). The arms should be lifted upwards and backwards (Plate 177). The left foot should be brought back to its initial position with a jerk while lowering the arms, and the right foot should be carried backwards (Plate 178). Again, the arms are gradually lifted upwards and the chest arched slightly backward and kept taut (Plate 179). Lowering the hands to touch the ground, the feet should be taken backward, while the buttocks are kept raised as much as possible and the whole body kept rigid (Plate 180). Supporting the whole body on the hands and the feet, it should be lowered to such an extent that it should remain just above the surface of the ground but for the hands and the toes (Plate 181). The chest should be pulled up and, while supporting the body on the hands and the toes, the chest and the head should be stretched backwards (Plate 182). Then the feet should be brought forward between the hands with a jump. The waist should be lifted up and the legs should be kept absolutely straight while the head is kept on the knees (Plate 183). Then, the arms should be raised and, keeping the body rigid, the hands should again be folded in front of the chest (Plate 184).

#### EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

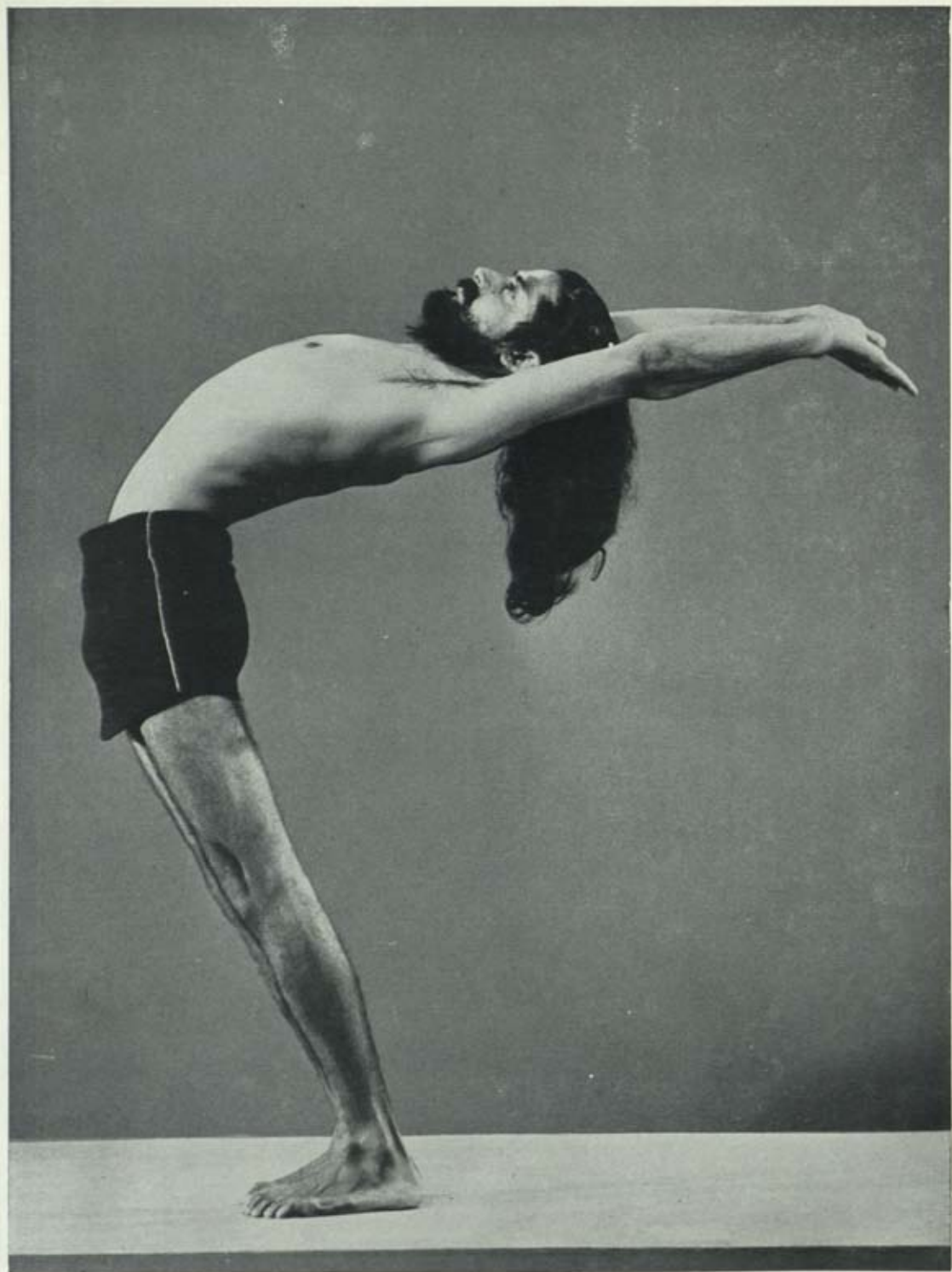
Sūrya-Namaskāra is rated one of the best yogic exercises since, through it alone, the benefits of āsanās, mudrās as well as prāṇāyāma can be attained. It induces the inflow of pure vital air in sufficient quantities in the lungs, which makes the body glow like the sun. This is also the reason for its being called Sūrya-Namaskāra. Like the sun, this exercise also has twelve divisional components. For each part of the body, there is, theoretically, a provision of a separate and distinctive type of Sūrya-Namaskāra, so that not even the tiniest part of the body escapes its wholesome influence. It broadens the chest and beautifies the arms. Dermatological disorders are prevented and those who already have them can be cured. It relieves constipation and stimulates digestion. Curing the



Sūrya-namaskāra

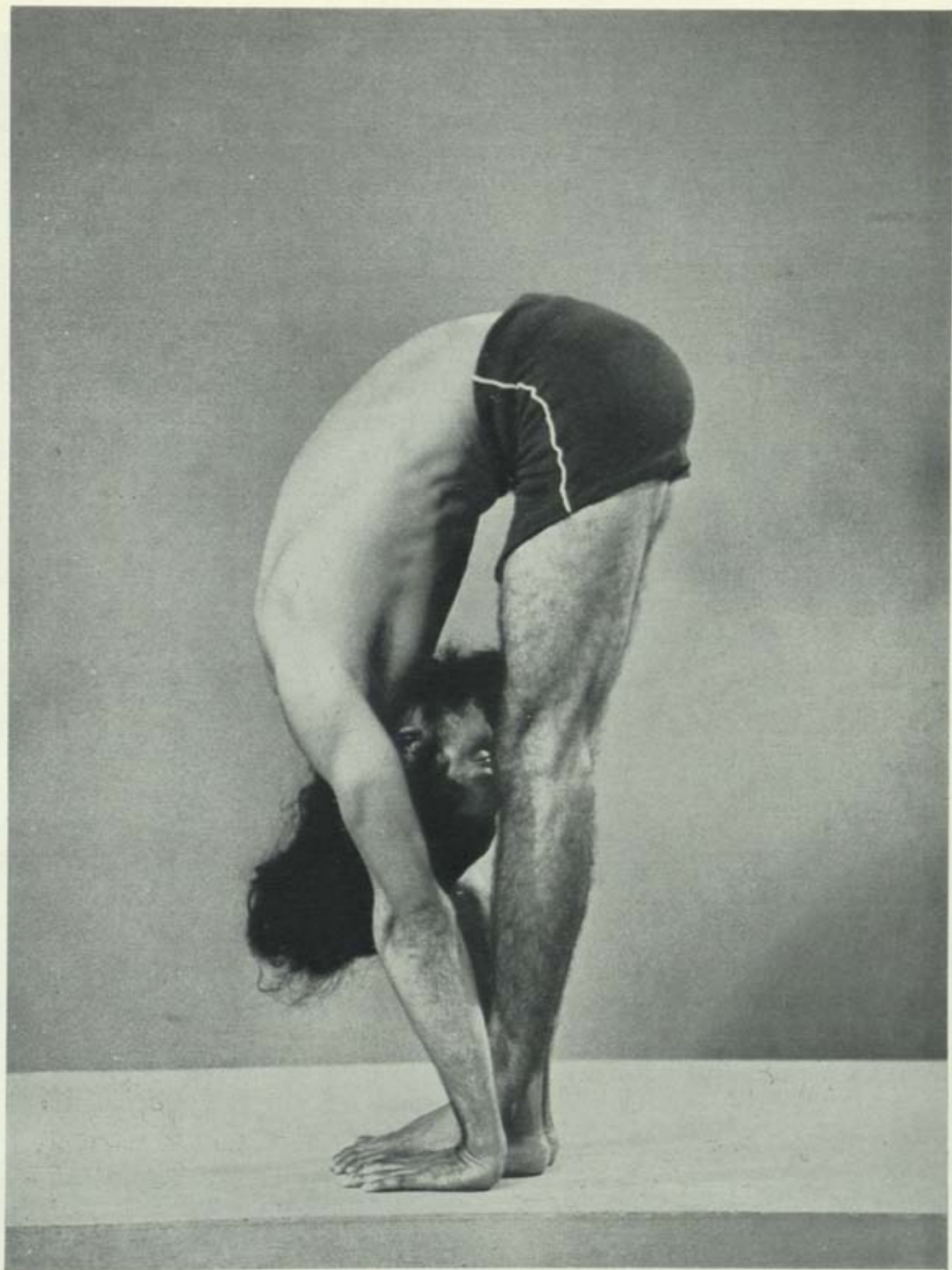
PLATE 173: Stand with folded hands





Sūrya-namaskāra

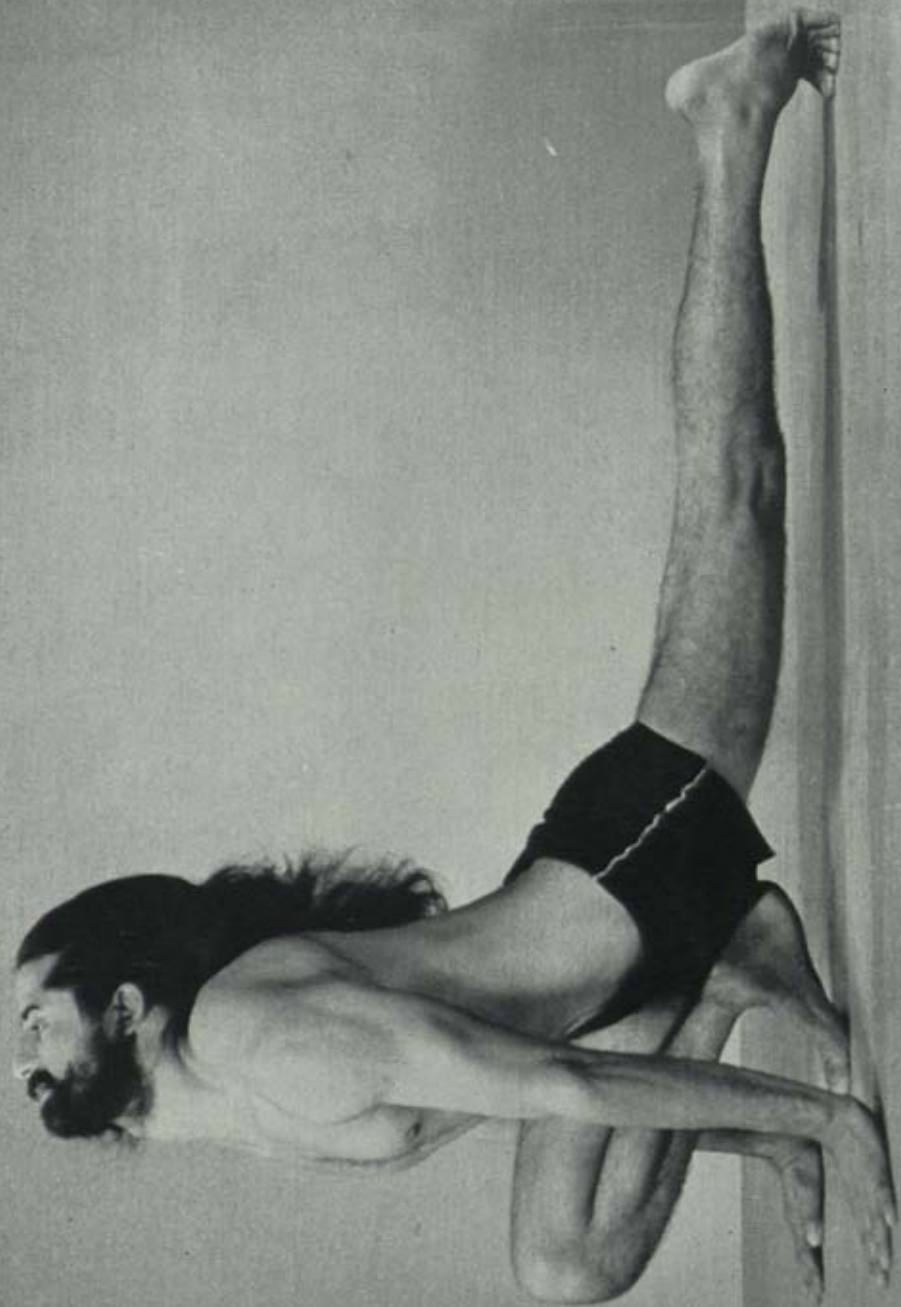
PLATE 174: Bend backwards with arms raised



Sūrya-namaskāra

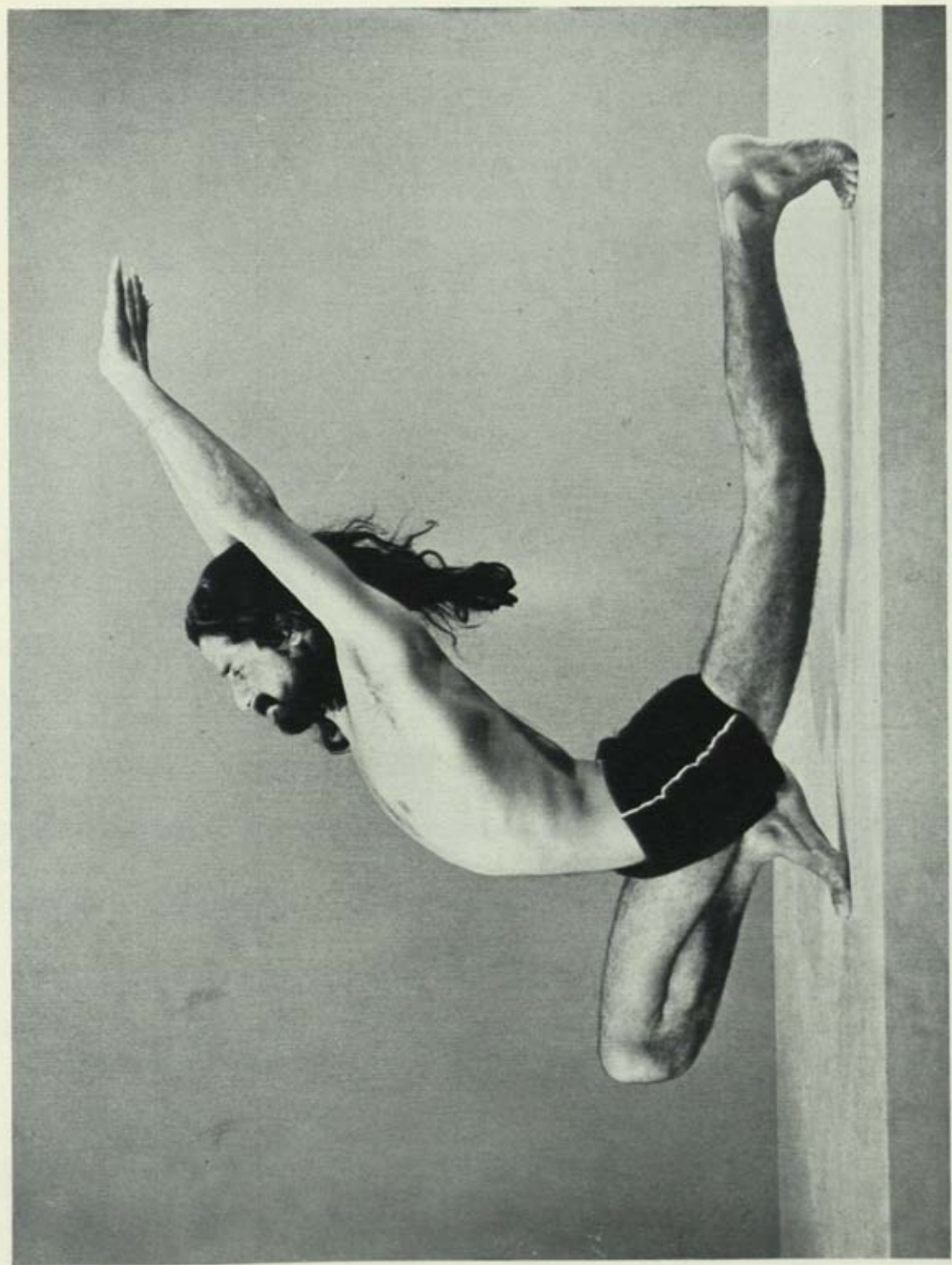
PLATE 175: Bend forward to touch the ground with the hands and the knees  
with the head





Sūrya-namaskāra

PLATE 176: Stretch the left leg backwards with arms raised and right knee bent



Sūrya-namaskāra

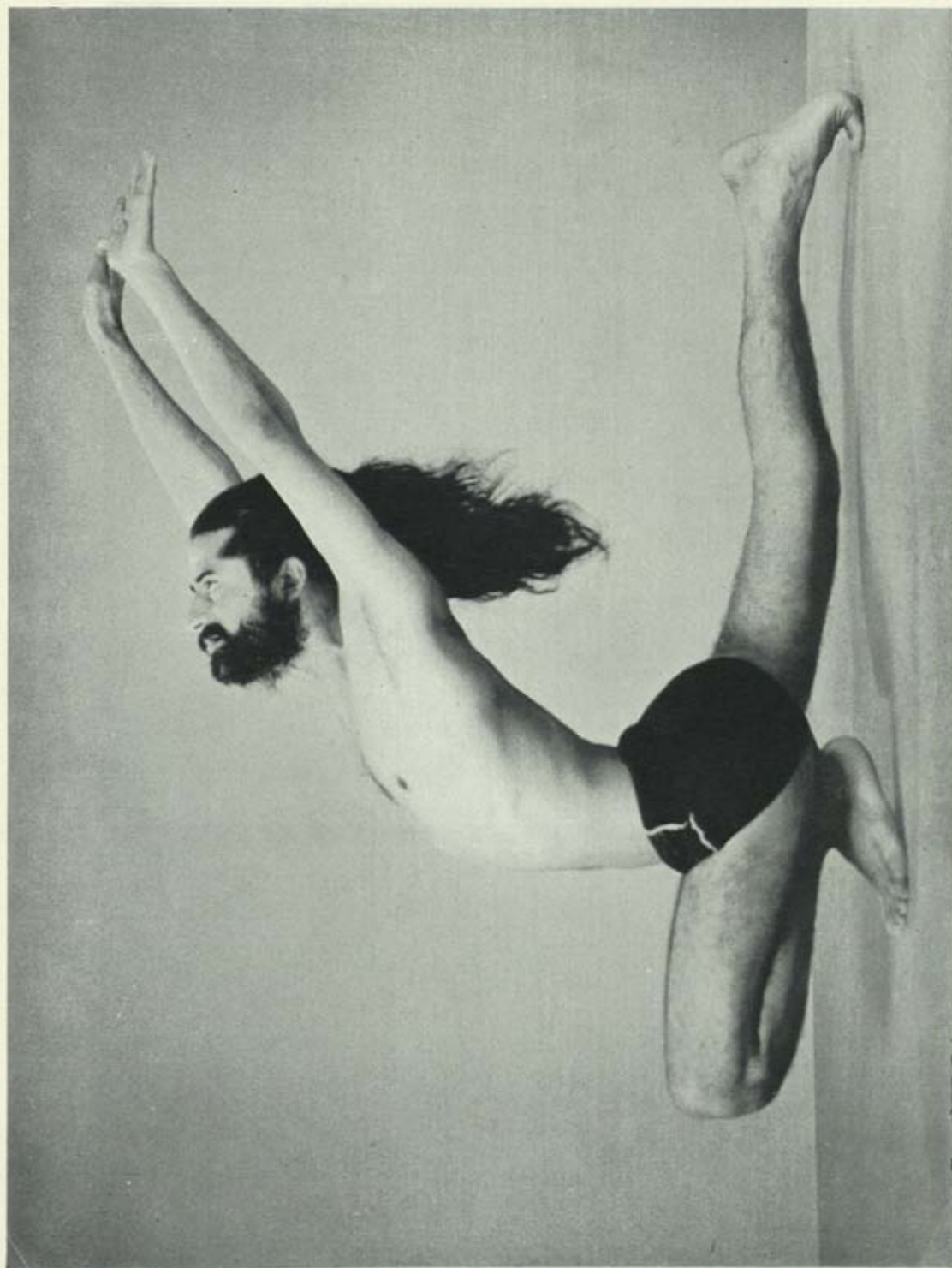
PLATE 177: Stretch the left leg backwards





PLATE 178: With both hands on the ground, right leg stretched backwards and left leg bent at the knee, stretch backwards as far as possible

Sūrya-namaskāra



**PLATE 179:** With right leg stretched backwards and left leg bent at the knee stretch backwards, with arms above the head as far as possible.

Sūrya-namaskāra



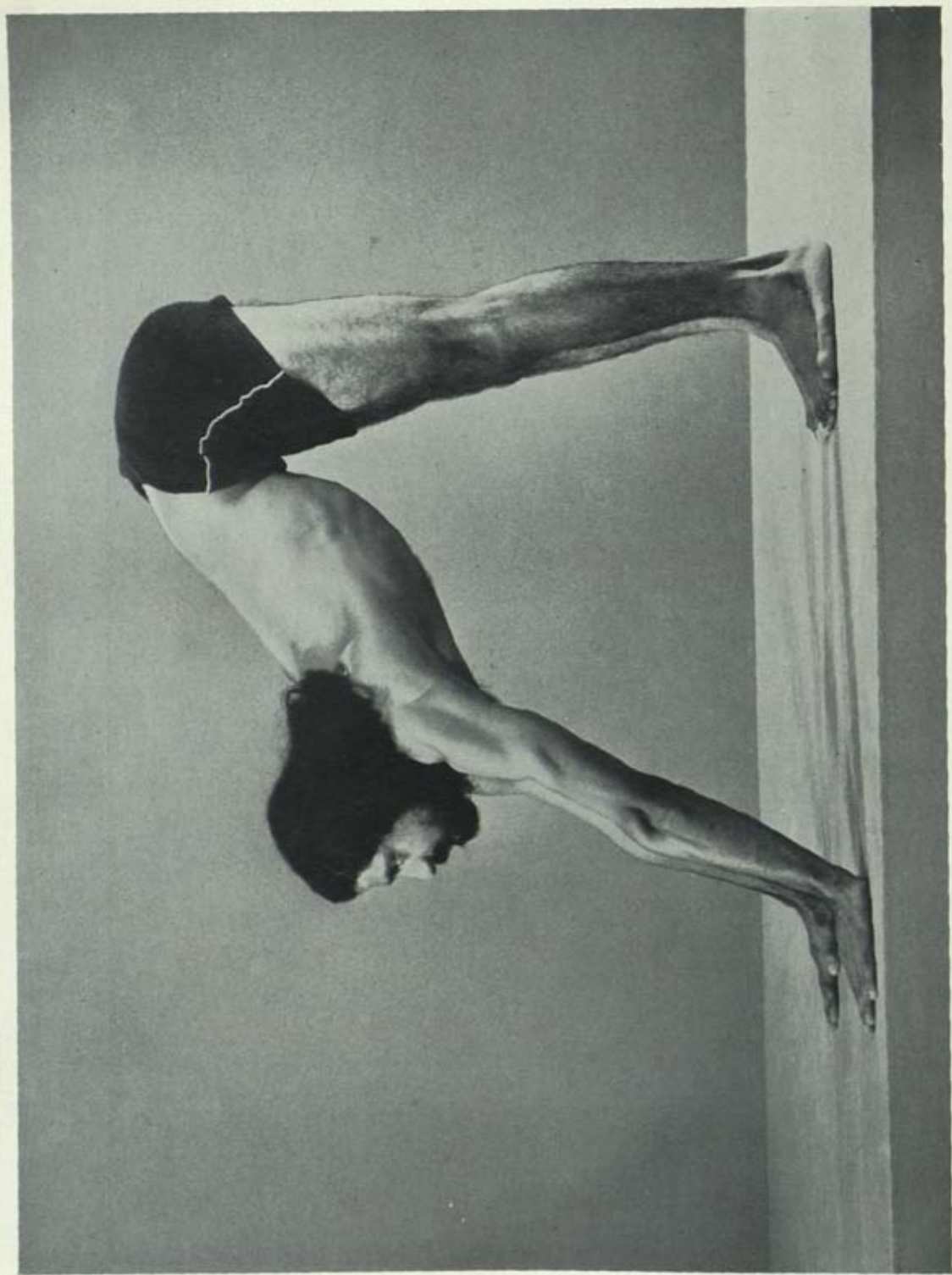
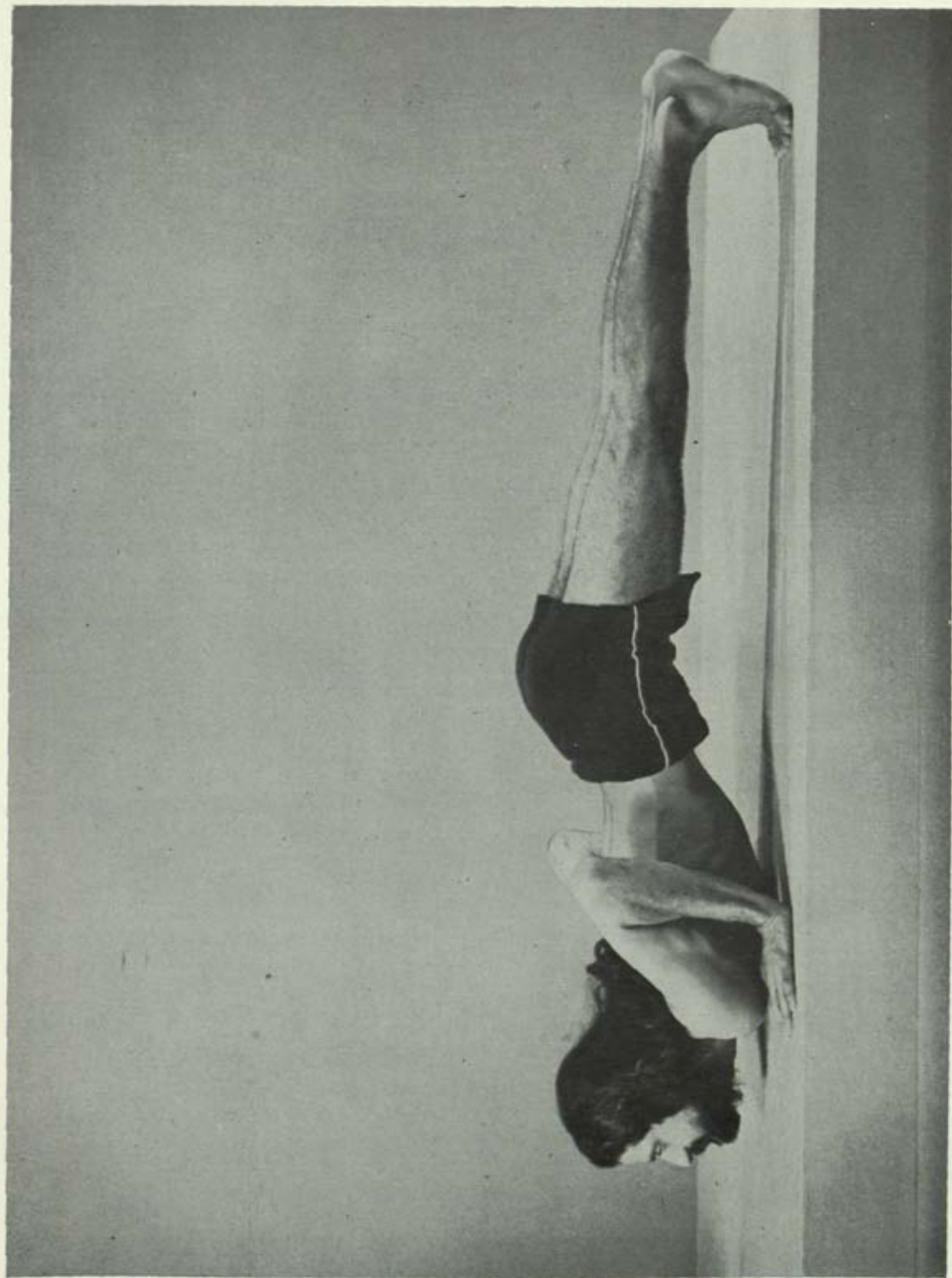


PLATE 180: Arch the back with the body resting on hands and feet

Sūrya-namaskāra



Sūrya-namaskāra

PLATE 181: The whole weight of the body is supported on the palms and toes



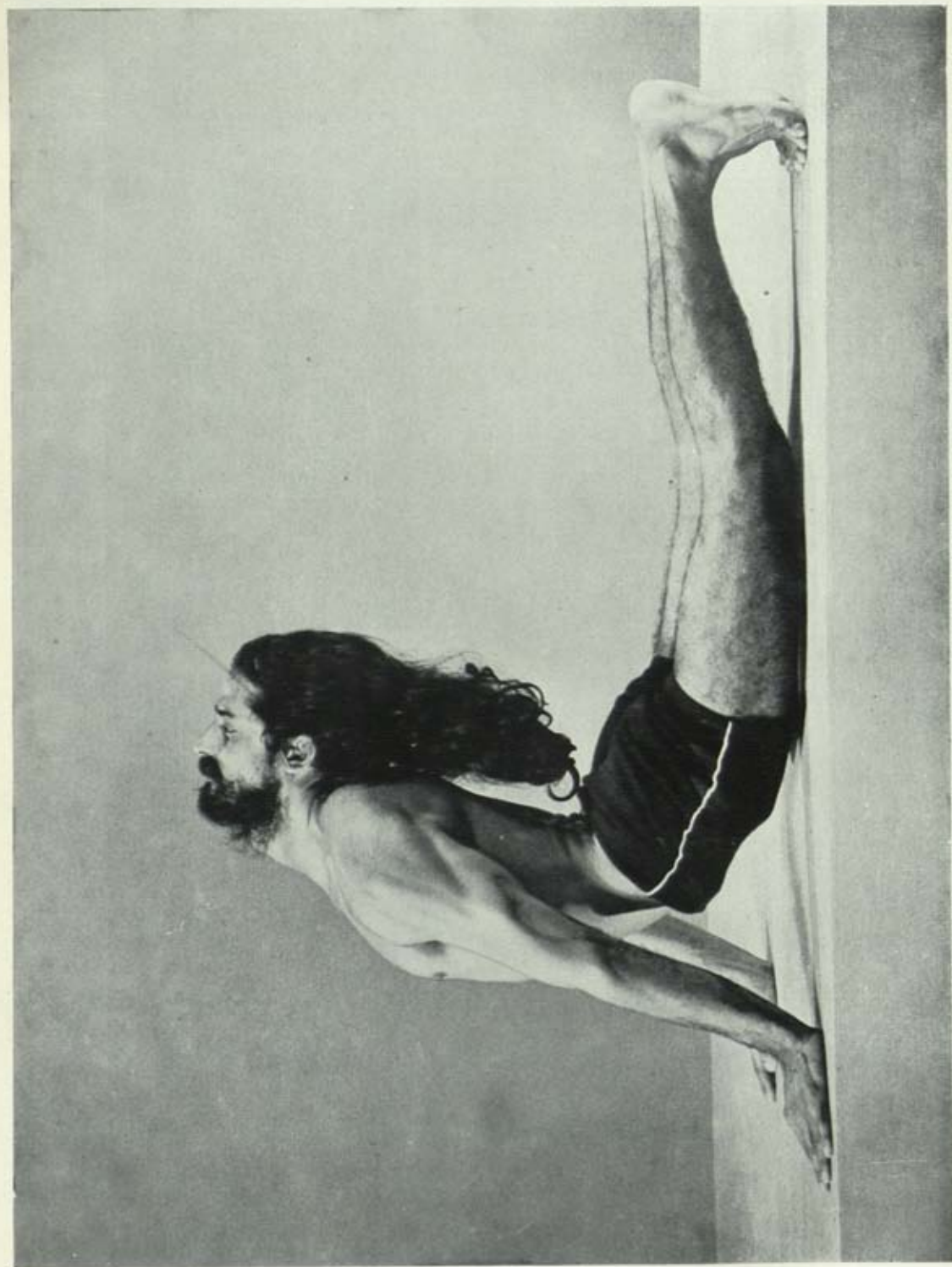
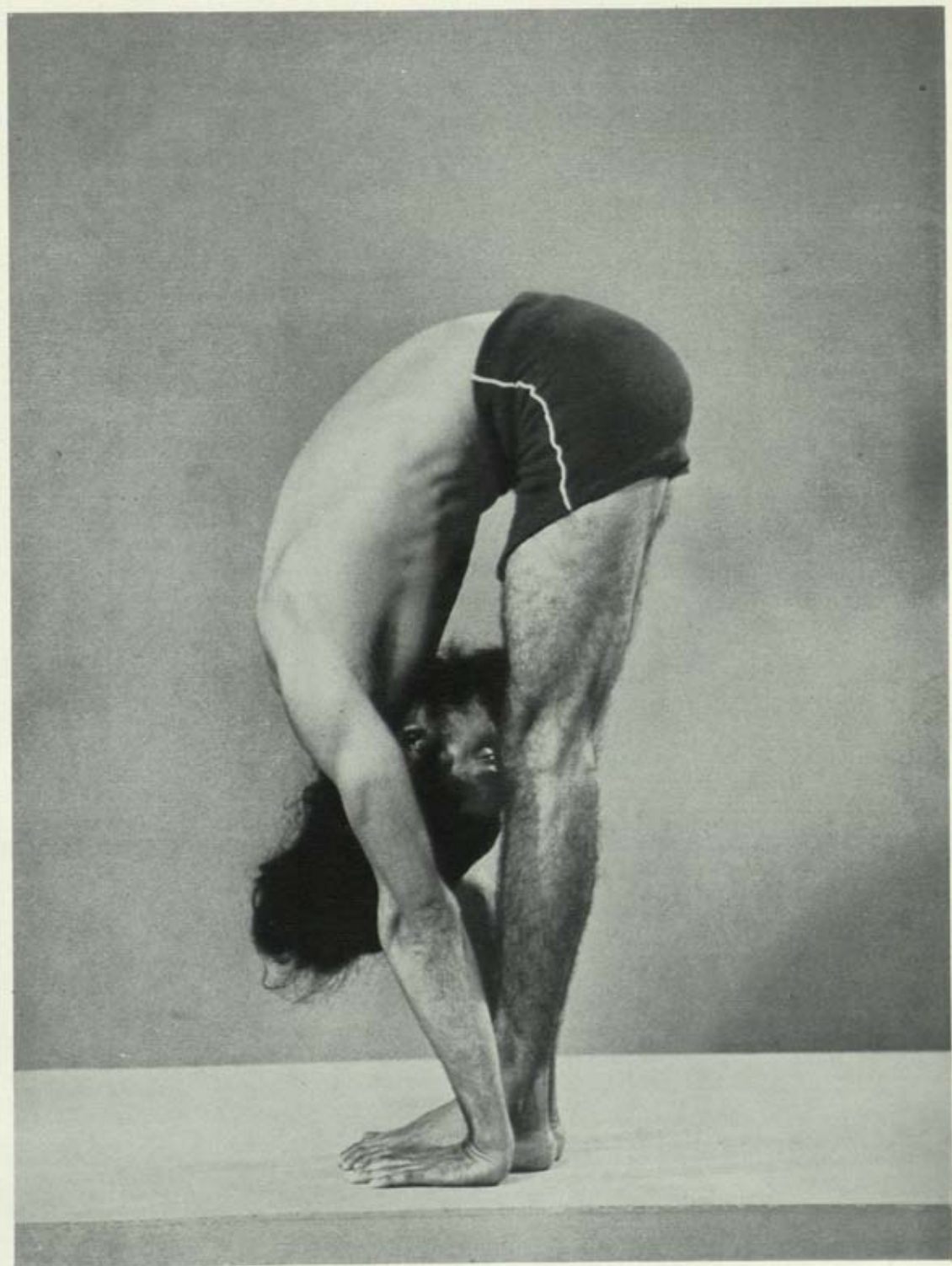


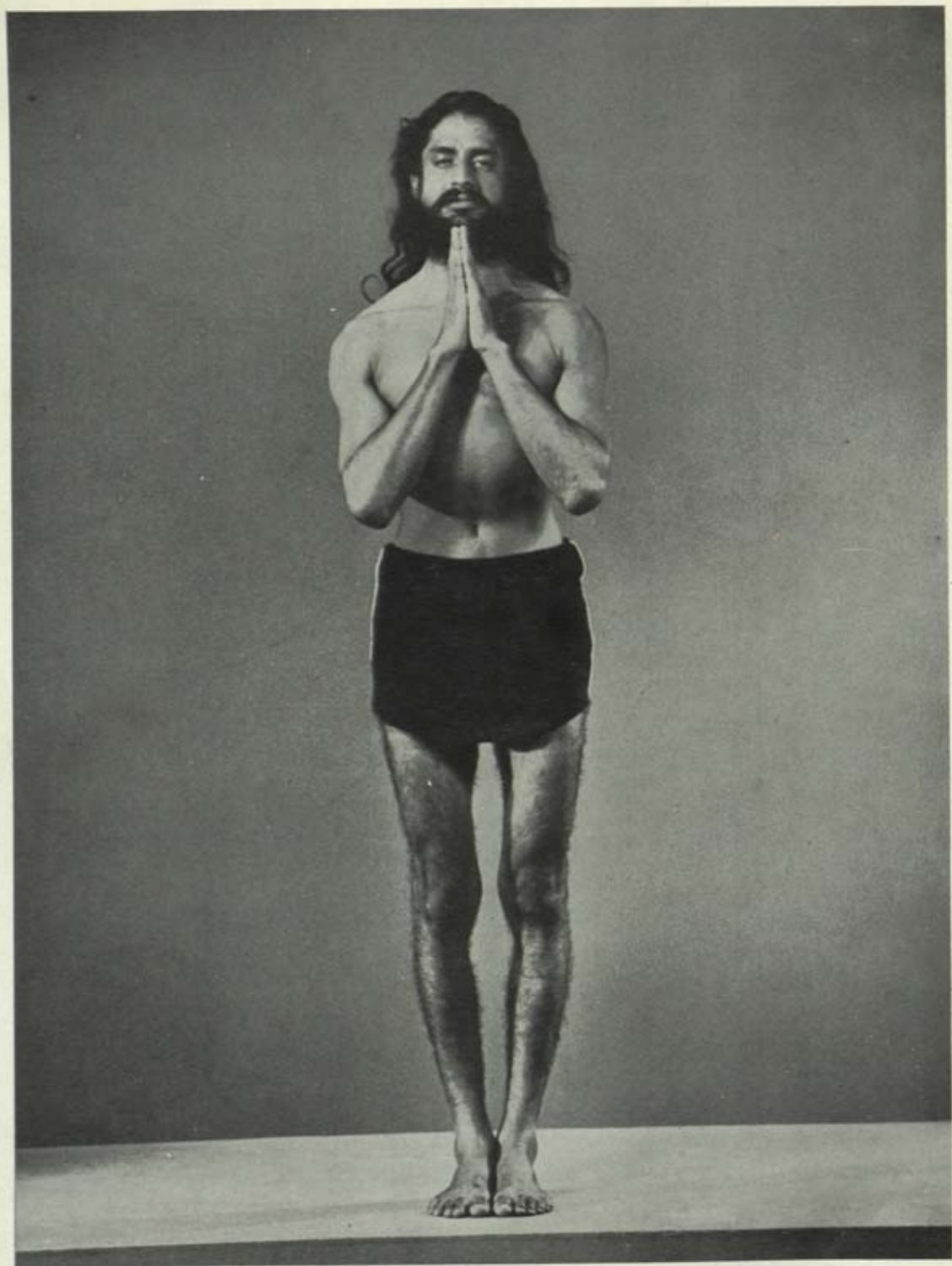
PLATE 182: Lying on the ground support the body on the toes and hands, and raise the trunk as high as possible



Sūrya-namaskāra

PLATE 183: Bend forward to touch the ground with the hands and the knees with the head





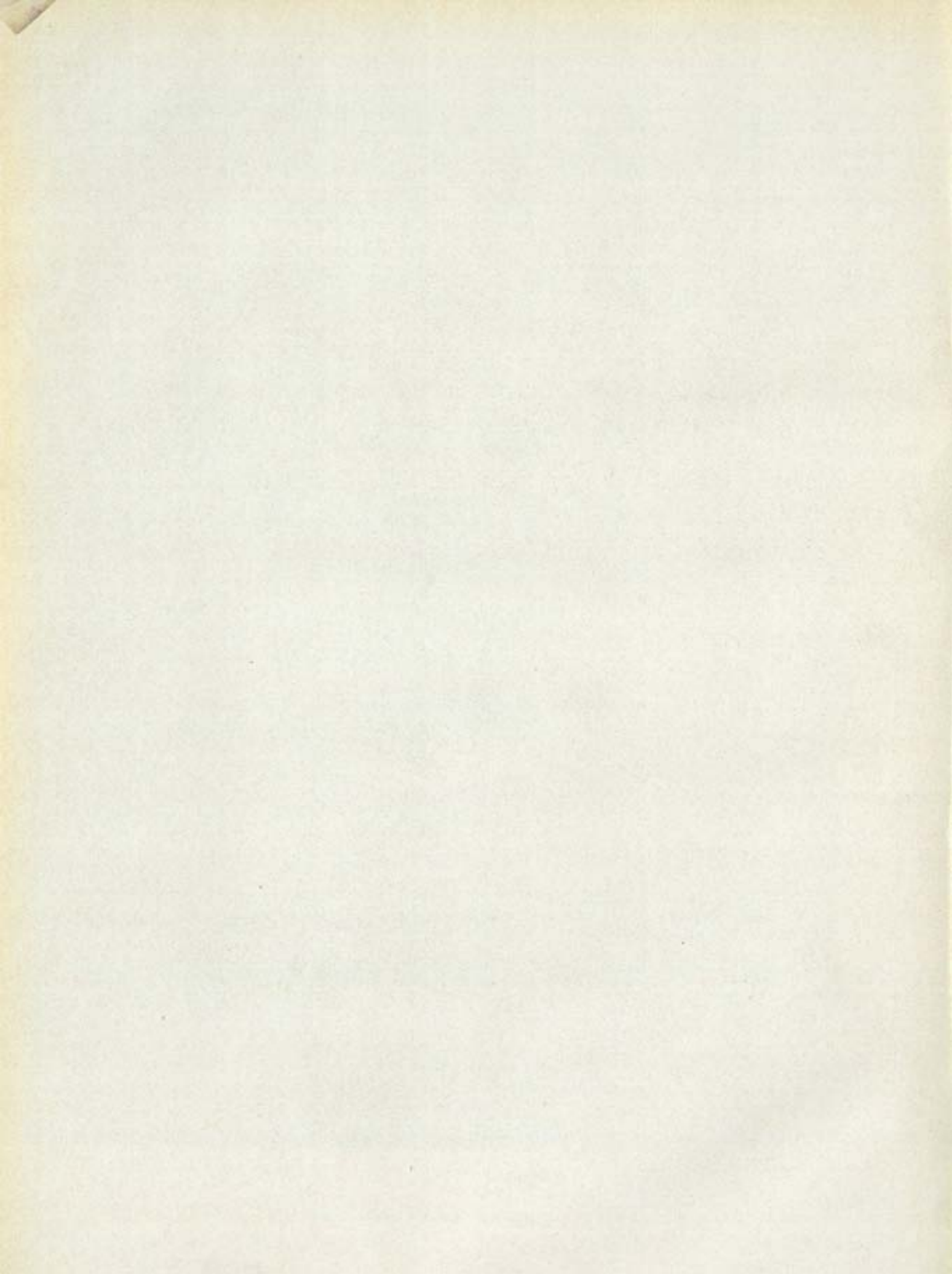
Sūrya-namaskāra

PLATE 184: Stand with folded hands as if in prayer

abdominal complaints, it also reduces the paunch. Its practice makes the spine and waist flexible. It is useful for all, but pregnant women should not continue its practice after the third month of pregnancy. Though popular and commonly known in this country, many do it without proper guidance and, therefore, do not derive any benefit from it. It is a useful exercise for gunners and manual labourers and is particularly recommended for those of short stature or with crooked bodies. Some authorities hold that the practice of Sūrya-Namaskāra is of advantage when performed in open air and bright sunshine. Continence and celibacy are easily achieved by its practice. Lethargic and lazy persons can also derive great advantage. Patients of hernia are warned against its practice.

Sūrya-Namaskāra should be performed in the morning since the exercise has a definite relationship to the sun and full advantage is only derived by its being performed at the right time.





## GLOSSARY OF YOGIC TERMS

ĀKĀŚA—Finer aspect of matter from which air(vāyu) evolves

BHASTRĀ-KUMBHAKA—Bellows-like retention of breath after repeatedly inhaling by mouth

JĀLANDHARA-BANDHA—A physical posture in which the chin touches the sternal-notch (i.e. Kaṇṭha-Kūpa)

KUNḌALINĪ-ŚAKTI—Mysterious serpent power, inherent in every individual which if roused, can work wonders. It even helps one to attain salvation

MUDRĀ—Postures of the different limbs of the body

MŪLA-BANDHA—One of the 26 postures. It is formed by the contraction of the rectum

NĀBHI-CAKRA—One of the seven plexuses. It is in the navel

PRĀṆĀYĀMA—Control of breath

SAMĀDHI—Trance

SUṢMNA-NĀḌĪ—Cerebral column

TĀNḌAVA—Name of the dance of Śiva

TRĀṬAKA—Gazing at a particular point without blinking. It is beneficial for eyesight

UDDIYĀNA-BANDHA—One of the 26 postures. The contraction of the belly after exhaling

UNMANĪ-KALĀ—Art of sitting in meditation in a particular physical posture

UNMANĪ-MUDRĀ—A certain physical posture in meditation





## GLOSSARY OF MEDICAL TERMS

ADRENALS—Glands that secrete a hormone

ALVEOLAR MEMBRANE—Inner lining of minute air chambers inside the lungs

ALVEOLI OF LUNGS— —do—

ANHIDROSIS—An abnormal deficiency of sweat

ANORECTAL DISORDERS—Disorders of the terminal part of the intestine, i.e. anus and rectum

ANORECTAL PASSAGE—Passage pertaining to anus and rectum

ANTERIOR FONTANELLE—A spot at the junction of the bones of the skull in the front and at the top of the head

ARTHRITIS—Inflammation of joints

ASTHMA—A disease characterised by difficulty in breathing

ASTHENIA—Loss of strength and energy

BLOOD DYSCRASIA—An abnormal composition of the blood

CALORIGENIC METABOLISM—Chemical changes in the body that produce heat or energy

CORYZA—Cold in the head

CRANIUM—The skull

DERMATOLOGICAL DISORDERS —Disorders pertaining to skin

DIABETES MELLITUS—Disease characterised by increase of sugar in blood and its passage in urine. It is marked by thirst and ultimate weakness of the body

DYSPEPTIC CHANGE—Changes due to indigestion

ENDOCRINE GLANDS—Glands that secrete vital hormones into the blood

EXCRESCENCE—Abnormal outgrowth



EXOSTOSIS—Excess development of bone

EXOTHERMIC METABOLISM—Chemical changes in the body producing heat

FLATULENCE—Distension of the stomach with gases

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM—System comprising the stomach and intestines

HAEMO CIRCULATORY ACTIONS—Circulation of blood in the body

HAEMODYNAMICS— —do—

HAEMODYNAMIC SUPPLY—Supply of blood in the body

HELMINTHIASIS—A morbid state due to presence of worms in the intestines

HYPERHIDROSIS—Excess of sweating

INTRA-TISSUE TENSIONS—Tensions inside tissues

INSULIN—Hormone secreted by the pancreas

LACTIC ACID—An organic acid pertaining to milk

LEPROMATOUS—Pertaining to leprosy

LUMBAGO—Pain in the back

LUMBAR REGION—Lower back region

LUMBO SACRAL BONES—Bones of the lower back region

METABOLIC CHECKS—Checks on the chemical changes of the body

NAVEL PLEXUS—Network of nerves at the navel

NERVE PLEXUS—Network of nerves

OBESITY—Fattiness

OCCIPUT—The back part of the head

OCULAR DEFECTS—Defects pertaining to the eyes

OSTEO ARTICULAR APPARATUS—Bones and joints system

OSTEO ARTICULAR MECHANISM—Mechanism of bones and joints

PANCREAS—A digestive gland

PARATHYROID GLANDS—Hormone secreting glands which have effects on bone and the utilisation of calcium in the body

PELVIC REGION—Lower extremity of the abdomen consisting of a ring of bones

PERIPHERAL EXTRAVASCULAR RESISTANCE—Resistance of blood vessels in the periphery of the body

PHOSPHATURIA—Presence of phosphate crystals in urine

PHTHISIS—Tuberculosis

PINEAL GLAND—One of the endocrine glands

PITUITARY GLAND—One of the endocrine glands

PROPHYLACTIC—Preventive

PULMONARY AILMENTS—Diseases of the lungs

PYREXIAL AILMENTS—Fevers

RESILIENCE OF SPINE—Flexibility of the spine

RESPIRATORY CATARRH—Inflammation of the breathing tubes

SACROILIAC—Pertaining to the bones of the lower part of the back

SCIATICA—Pain in legs

SENILITY—Old age

SPLENIC AND HEPATIC DISORDERS—Disorders of spleen and liver

SPLENOMEGALY—Enlargement of spleen

THORACIC CAGE—Chest cavity

TONSILLAR DISEASES—Diseases of tonsils

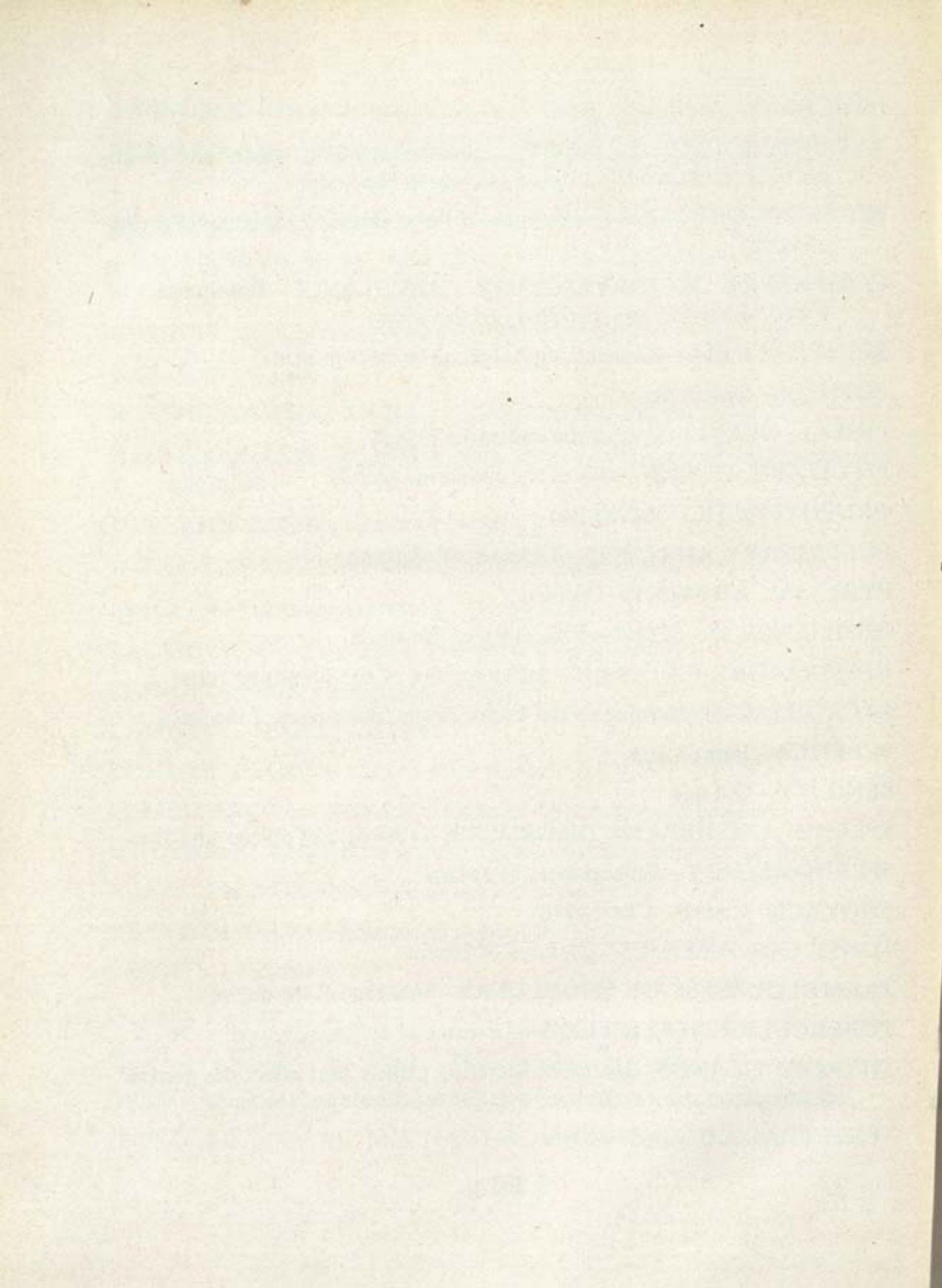
TREMULOUSNESS OF SHOULDERS—Shaking of shoulders

TUBERCULAR AFFLICTIONS—Diseases of tubercular type

THYROID GLANDS—Hormone secreting glands that affect the general chemical reaction in the body and the functioning of the brain

VERTEBRAL COLUMN—Spine





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## INDEX

- Ākarṇa-Dhanurāsana (Pulled-Bow Posture), 125; effects of, 126; posture, 125  
 Ākāśa, 3, 16  
 Anhidrosis, 108  
 Anorectal disorders, 61, 83, 117, 167, 168, 209, 230, 242  
 Apāna (Vāyu), 6, 61, 62, 82, 117, 136, 153, 165, 179, 229, 241, 252, 254  
 Ardha-Matsyendrāsana (Half-Matsyendra Posture), 56, 148, 153; effects of, 13; posture, 153  
 Ardha-Padmāsana, 27  
 Ardha-Ūrdhvāsana (Half-Raised Posture), 265; effects of, 265; posture, 265  
 Arthritis, 7, 63, 64, 83, 145, 177, 192, 228  
 Arthromyalgic incapacity, 7  
 Āsanās, attainment of perfection in, 5; general instructions for, 9; importance in yogic texts, 4, 6, 7; origin of, 1; rationale of, 7, 8; types of, 1  
 Asthma, 38, 82, 146, 167, 241  
 Asthenia, 180  
 Aśvatthāsana (Holy Fig Tree Posture), 147; effects of, 147; posture, 147  
 Baddha-Padmāsana, 96, 108, 133, 266; effects of, 108, 117; posture, 108  
 Bakāsana (Crane Posture), 153; effects of, 153, 154; posture, 153  
 Bhadrāsana (Blessed Posture), 1, 2; effects of, 30; Gheraṇḍa on, 29; posture, 29, 30  
 Bhagāsana (Vulval Posture), 192; effects of, 192; posture, 192  
 Bhaktisāgara (B.S.), 17  
 Bhasmāsana see Baddha Padmāsana  
 Bhujāṅgāsana (Cobra Posture), 2, 95; effects of, 95; posture, 95  
 Bhūnamanāsana (Bowling-Down Posture), 119; effects of, 119, 120; posture, 119  
 Blood-dyscrasia, 219  
 Brahmācārya, 12, 63, 82, 128; meaning of, 12, 13  
 Brahmācāryāsana (Celebacy Posture), 133; effects of, 134; posture, 133  
 Brahmarandhra, 219  
 Cakras, 3, 148  
 Cakrāsana (Wheel Posture), 105, 263; effects of, 105; posture, 105  
 Caraṇa Dāsa, 5; on āsanās, 5; on prāṇāyāma, 17  
 Catuṣkoṇāsana (Four-Cornered Posture), 251; effects of, 251, 252; posture, 251  
 Celebacy, 7, 12, 63  
 Citrākhyā nāḍī, 12, 53



- Constipation, 54, 93-5, 118, 126, 201, 227, 263, 266, 284  
 Corpulence, 241  
 Coryza, 219
- Dermatological diseases, 62, 82, 284  
 Devadatta (Vāyu), 147  
 Dhanañjaya (Vāyu), 147  
 Dhanurāsana (Bow Posture), 1, 2, 48, 94, 126; effects of, 48, 49; posture, 48  
 Dhāraṇā, 15  
 Dhyāna, 15  
 Diarrhoea, 107  
 Diabetes mellitus, 54, 56, 94  
 Dugghaneti, 239  
 Dvihasta Bhujāsana (Bilateral Hand-Arm Posture), 189; effects of, 189; posture, 189  
 Dvipāda Bhujāsana (Bilateral Foot-Hand Posture), 168; effects of, 168, 177  
 Dvipāda-Kandharāsana (Bilateral Foot-Shoulder Posture), 191; effects of, 192; posture, 191  
 Dvipāda-Supta-Kandharāsana see Praṇavāsana  
 Dvipādavistritāsana (Spread-Out Feet Posture), 202, 209; effects of, 209; posture, 202
- Ekahasta-Bhujāsana (Unilateral Hand-Arm Posture), 189; posture, 189  
 Ekapāda Bhujāsana (Unilateral Foot-Hand Posture), 168; effects of, 168; posture, 168  
 Ekapāda-Kandharāsana (Unilateral Foot-Shoulder Posture), 191; effects of, 191, 192; posture, 191  
 Ekapādaskandhamayūrāsana see Pada-Skandharāsana  
 Elements, according to yogic texts, 16
- Fistula, 209, 219  
 Flatulence, 48, 56, 82, 252, 263, 265
- Garbhāsana (Foetus Posture), 128; effects of, 128, 133; posture, 128  
 Garimā-śakti, 18  
 Garuḍāsana (Eagle Posture), 2, 83, effects of, 83; posture, 83  
 Gazing, different positions of, 12, 16, 27  
 Gheraṇḍa, 1; on Bhadrāsana, 29; on Muktāsana, 30, 31; on Paścimottānāsana, 15; on Śavāsana, 49; on Uṣṭrāsana, 94; on Vajrāsana, 35  
 Gītā (S.B.G.), 6, 7; on āsanās, 6  
 Gomukhāsana (Cow-Head Posture), 1, 2; effects of, 38; posture, 37, 38  
 Gorakṣāsana (Gorakṣa Posture), 2, 61; effects of, 61; posture, 61  
 Gorakṣanātha, 2, 15, 28, 220; on Paścimottānāsana, 62  
 Guptāsana (Concealed Posture), 2, 53; posture, 53

Hanumānāsana, see Virāsana

Hastapādāṅguṣṭhāsana (Hand-Toe Posture), 107; effects of, 107, 108; posture, 107

Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā (H.Y.P.), 2, 11, 15, 28, 29, 37, 55; on āsanās, 4; on the importance of Siddhāsana, 3, 11, 15, 16; on Mayūrāsana, 64, 69; on Śīrṣāsana, 220

Heart diseases, 242

Helminthiasis, 56

Hepatic disorders, 108

Hernia, 94, 95, 242, 264, 297

Hyperhydrosis, 36, 202

Hypermetropia, 70

Hypertension, 82

Idā nāḍī, 166

Indigestion, 95, 96, 106, 107, 201, 252

Jābāladarśanopaniṣad, on the importance of āsanās, 4

Jālandhara Bandha, 15, 29, 36, 37, 265

Jalaneti, 239

Jalavasti, 63

Jānu-Bhūmi-Sthirāsana (Knee-Support Posture), 190; effects of, 190

Jānu-Śīrṣāsana (Knee-and-Head Posture), 165; effects of, 165, 166; posture, 165

Kākāsana (Crow Posture), 230; effects of, 239; posture, 230

Kālabhairavāsana (Kāla-Bhairāva Posture), 242; effects of, 251; posture, 242, 251

Kamalāsana see Padmāsana

Kandapīḍāsana (Root-Squeezing Posture), 148; effects of, 148; posture, 148

Karṇa-Pīḍāsana (Aural-Press Posture), 240; effects of, 240, 241; posture, 240

Kaṭicakrāsana (Lumbar-Wheel Posture), 227; effects of, 227, 228; posture, 227

Kevala kumbhaka, 3, 11, 15

Khañjanāsana (Wagtail Posture), 180; effects of, 180; posture, 180

Khecārī mudrā, 4, 11, 221

Kokilāsana (Cuckoo Posture), 252; effects of 252; posture, 252

Koṇāsana (Angle Posture), 118; effects of, 118, 119

Kṛkālā (Vāyu), 147

Kṛṣṇa, Lord, 6, 7, 276

Kukkuṭāsana (Cock Posture), 2, 70; effects of, 70; posture, 70, 71

Kumbhaka, 3, 11, 15, 95

Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, 15, 17, 53, 55, 56, 61, 71, 95, 96, 153, 165, 192, 229, 252, 254

Kuñjala, 239

Kūrma (Vāyu), 147

Kūrmāsana (Tortoise Posture), 2, 71; effects of, 70, 71; posture, 70; also see Uttāna-Kūrmāsana



- Laghimā śakti, 18, 27  
 Lepromatous, 219  
 Lolāsana (Pendulum Posture), 239; effects of, 239; posture, 239
- Mahāmudrā, 165  
 Makarāsana (Crocodile Posture) 2; effects of, 93; posture, 93  
 Maṇḍūkāsana (Frog Posture) 2, 81; effects of, 82, 83; posture, 82  
 Maṇipūra-cakra, 93, 107, 148  
 Manovahā nāḍī, 165, 251  
 Matsyāsana (Fish Posture), 2, 54; effects of, 54; posture, 54  
 Matsyendranātha, 55, 148  
 Matsyendrāsana (Matsyendra Posture), 2, 54-6, 148; effects of, 56; posture, 55  
 Mayūra-Padmāsana (Peacock and Lotus Posture), 254; effects of, 254; posture, 254  
 Mayūrāsana (Peacock Posture), 2, 64, 69; effects of, 69, 70; posture, 69  
 Menstrual disorders, 219  
 Meru-Daṇḍāsana (Spine Posture), 241; effects of, 241, 242; posture, 241  
 Mṛgāsana (Deer Posture), 135; effects of, 135; posture, 135  
 Mṛtāsana (Corpse Posture), 1  
 Muktāsana (Liberated Posture), 1; Gheraṇḍa on, 30, 35; posture, 30, 35  
 Mūlādhāra bandha, 15  
 Myopia, 70
- Nābhi-cakra (navel-plexus), 72, 106  
 Nāda, 4  
 Nāḍīs, 11, 12, 15, 35, 53, 61, 107, 126, 148, 165, 166, 192, 229, 240, 241, 251; purification of, 117, 165  
 Nāḍīsodhanāsana (Nāḍī Purificatory Posture), 166  
 Nāga (Vāyu), 147  
 Nāṭarājāsana (Lord of the Dancers Posture), 266, 275, 276, 283  
 Naukāsana (Boat Posture), 118; effects of, 118; posture, 118  
 Nyaulī, 64
- Obesity, 167  
 Ocular ailments, 155, 230, 253
- Pādahastāsana (Foot-Hand Posture), 190; effects of, 190, 191; posture, 190  
 Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana (Big Toe Posture), 127; effects of, 127, 128; posture, 127  
 Padmāsana (Lotus Posture), 1-3, 54, 133, 134, 156; effects of, 27-9; posture, 18, 27; also see Baddha Padmāsana.  
 Pāda-Skandha-Daṇḍāsana (Foot-Shoulder Daṇḍa Posture), 228; effects of, 228; posture, 228  
 Pakṣyāsana (Bird or Aeroplane Posture), 264; effects of, 264; posture, 264

- Parvatāsana (Mountain Posture), 127; effects of, 127; posture, 127
- Pāścimottānāsana (Posterior-Stretch Posture); 2, 61, 165; effects of, 62, 63; posture, 61, 62
- Patañjali, 4; on āsanās, 4, 5
- Pavanamuktāsana (Wind Liberating Posture), 136; effects of, 136; posture, 136
- Pavana-vasti, 63
- Peptic ulcers, 242
- Phosphaturia, 239
- Phthisis, 38
- Piles, 61, 117, 155, 168, 191, 209, 227, 230, 264
- Piṅgalā nāḍī, 166
- Prāṇa, 6, 15, 61, 62, 82, 117, 147, 148, 153, 165, 179, 219, 229, 241, 254, 265
- Praṇavāsana (Praṇava Posture), 117; effects of, 117, 118; posture, 117
- Prāṇāyāma, 4, 15, 17, 27, 28, 49, 50, 81, 95, 117, 266, 284; Sūrya Bhedī Prāṇāyāma, 17
- Pretāsana (Ghost Posture), 228; effects of, 228; posture, 228
- Pulmonary ailments, 54, 118, 178
- Pulmonary tuberculosis, 146, 227, 263
- Pūrṇacakrāsana (Complete-Wheel Posture), 263; effects of, 263; posture, 263
- Pūrvottānāsana (Anterior Stretch Posture), 202; effects of, 202; posture, 202
- Pyrexial ailments, 108
- Respiratory ailments, 96, 219, 227
- Śalabhāsana (Locust Posture), 2, 84; effects of, 84, 93; posture, 84
- Samādhi, 5, 15, 117, 148, 241, 266
- Samāna (Vāyu), 6, 147
- Śaṅkara, Lord, 1, 18, 266, 275
- Śaṅkaṭāsana (Contracted Posture), 2, 64; effects of, 64; posture, 64
- Śaṅkhaṇḍaprakṣāṇa, 126, 228
- Sarpāsana see Bhujāṅgāsana
- Sarvāṅgāsana (All-Limb Posture), 120; effects of, 120, 125; posture, 120
- Śaṭkarma, 239
- Śavāsana (Corpse Posture), 2, 49, 219, 222; effects of, 49, 50, 53; posture, 49
- Sciatica, 63, 119, 177, 240, 251
- Seminal disorders, 242
- Siddhāsana (Perfect Posture), 1-3 11, 12, 15-18, 27, 35; effects of, 12, 15-18; importance of, 3, 11; position of vertebral column in, 12; types of gaze used in, 12
- Simhāsana (Lion Posture), 1, 2; effects of, 37; posture, 37
- Śirṣasāna, 50, 82, 145, 209; effects of, 219-22; posture 209, 210, 219
- Śirṣacakrāsana (Cephalic Wheel Posture), 146; effects of, 146; posture, 146



- Śīrṣājanu Sparsāsana (Genu-Cranial Posture), 177; effects of, 177; posture, 177
- Sivani nāḍī, 11, 12, 37, 128, 134
- Spermatorrhoea, 219
- Splenic disorders, 56, 148, 266
- Splenomegaly, 108, 148
- Sukhāsana (Easy Posture), 17, 156; effects of, 156, 165; posture, 156
- Supta-Pādāṅguṣṭha-Nāsā-Sparśanāsana (Lying Toe-and-Nose Posture), 240; effects of, 240; posture, 240
- Supta-Pāda-Kandharāsana (Lying-Foot-on-Shoulder Posture), 227; effects of, 227; posture, 227
- Suptapavana-Muktāsana (Lying Wind-Release Posture), 106; effects of, 106; posture, 106
- Supta-Vajrāsana (Lying Adamantine Posture), 229, effects of, 230; posture, 229
- Supta Vṛścikāsana (Sleeping-Scorpion Posture), 177; effects of, 178; posture, 177
- Sūryanamaskāra (Salutation to the Sun), 283; effects of, 284, 295; posture, 283, 284
- Suṣūmṇā nāḍī, 15, 29, 61, 148, 153, 166, 179, 241
- Sūtraneti, 239
- Svastikāsana (Svastika Posture), 1; effects of, 36; posture, 36
- Svātmārāma, 2; on Matsyendrāsana, 55; on Mayurāsana, 69; on Padmāsana, 28, 29; on Siddhāsana, 15; on Simhāsana, 37; on Śīrṣāsana, 220
- Tādāsana (Palmyra Posture), 179; effects of, 179, 180; posture, 179
- Takiyāsana (Pillow Posture), 253 effects of, 254; posture, 253
- Tejas, 16
- Ṭiṭṭibhāsana (Lapwing Posture), 154; posture, 154
- Tolaṅgulāsana (Finger-Balance Posture), 201; effects of, 201, 202; posture, 201
- Tonsillar diseases, 145, 230, 240
- Trāṭaka, 84
- Tribandhāsana (Triple Lock Posture), 96, 265; effects of, 266; posture, 265, 266
- Tubercular afflictions, 167, 227, 242
- Tuberculosis of the lungs, see Pulmonary Tuberculosis
- Udāna (Vāyu), 6, 147
- Udarakarṣaṇāsana (Belly-Suction Posture), 201; effects of, 201; posture, 201
- Uḍḍīyāna bandha, 15, 37, 53, 63, 125, 145, 265
- Unmani mudrā, 16
- Ūrdhva-Hastottānāsana (Up-Stretched Arms Posture), 126; effects of, 126; posture, 126
- Ūrdhvasarvāṅgāsana (Shoulder-Stand Posture), 136; effects of, 136, 145; posture, 178
- Urinary diseases, 61, 83
- Uṣṭrāsana (Camel Posture), 2, 94, 125; effects of, 94; posture, 94



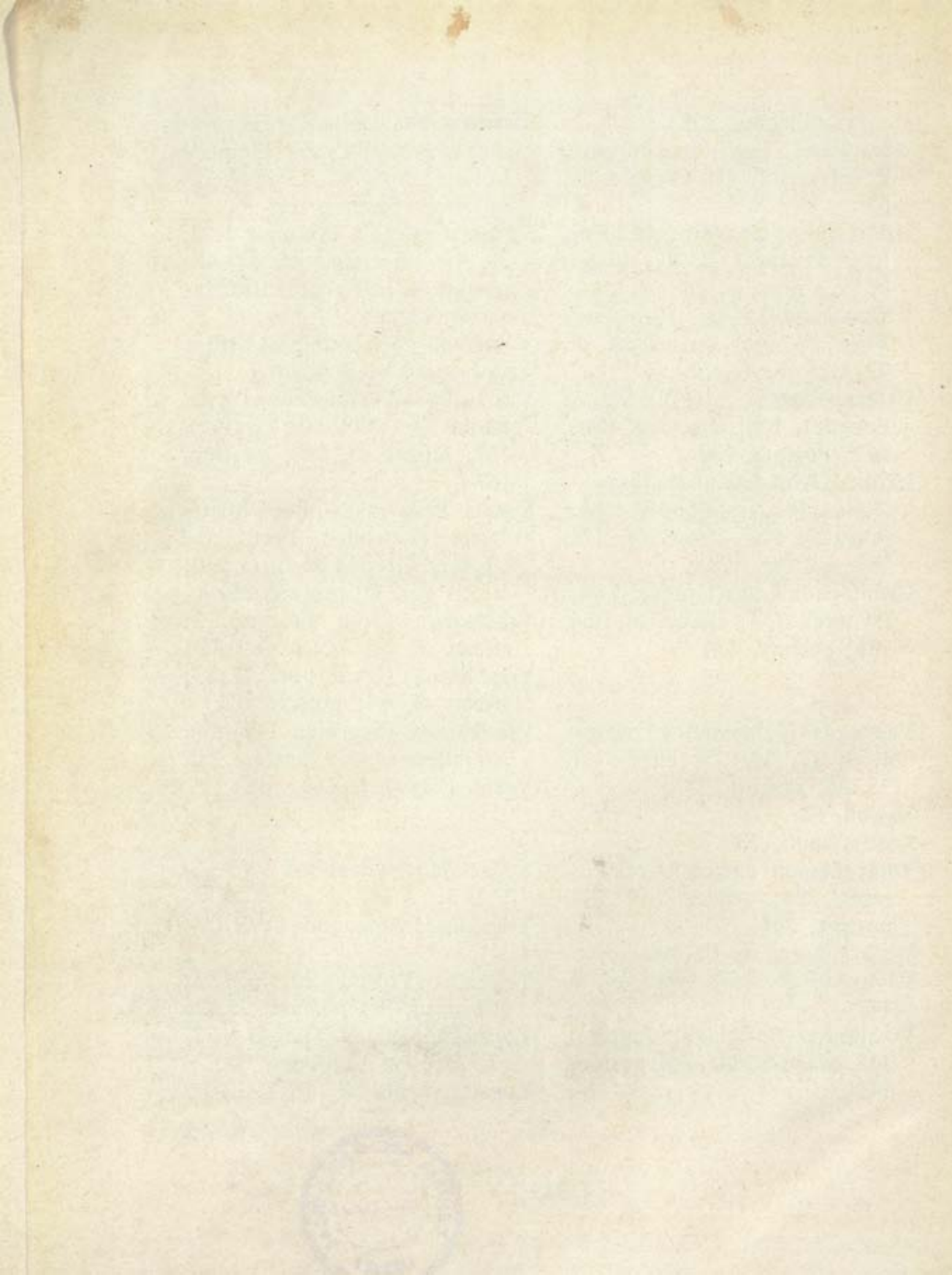
Uterine ailments, 133  
 Utkatāsana (Squatting Posture), 2; effects of, 63, 64; posture, 63  
 Uttānakūrmāsana (Stretched Tortoise Posture), 2, 72; effects of, 72; posture, 72  
 Uttānamaṇḍūkāsana (Stretched-Frog Posture), 2; effects of, 72, 81; posture, 72  
 Uttānapādāsana (Foot-Stretch Posture), 106; effects of, 106, 107; Posture, 106  
 Utthita-Dvipāda-Kandharāsana (Raised Bilateral Foot-Shoulder Posture), 178; effects of, 178, 179; posture, 178  
 Utthitapadmāsana (Uplifted Lotus Posture), 134; effects of, 134, 135; posture, 134  
  
 Vajrāsana (Adamantine Posture), 1, 3, 17, 18, 35; effects of, 35, 36; posture, 35  
 Vajrolī, 63  
 Vastradhauti, 239  
 Vātāyanāsana (Ventilator Posture), 264; effects of, 264; posture, 264  
 Vāyuyānāsana see Pakṣyāsana  
 Vāyus, 6, 16, 147; types of, 6, 147  
 Vikatāsana (Formidable Posture), 145; effects of, 145, 146; posture, 145

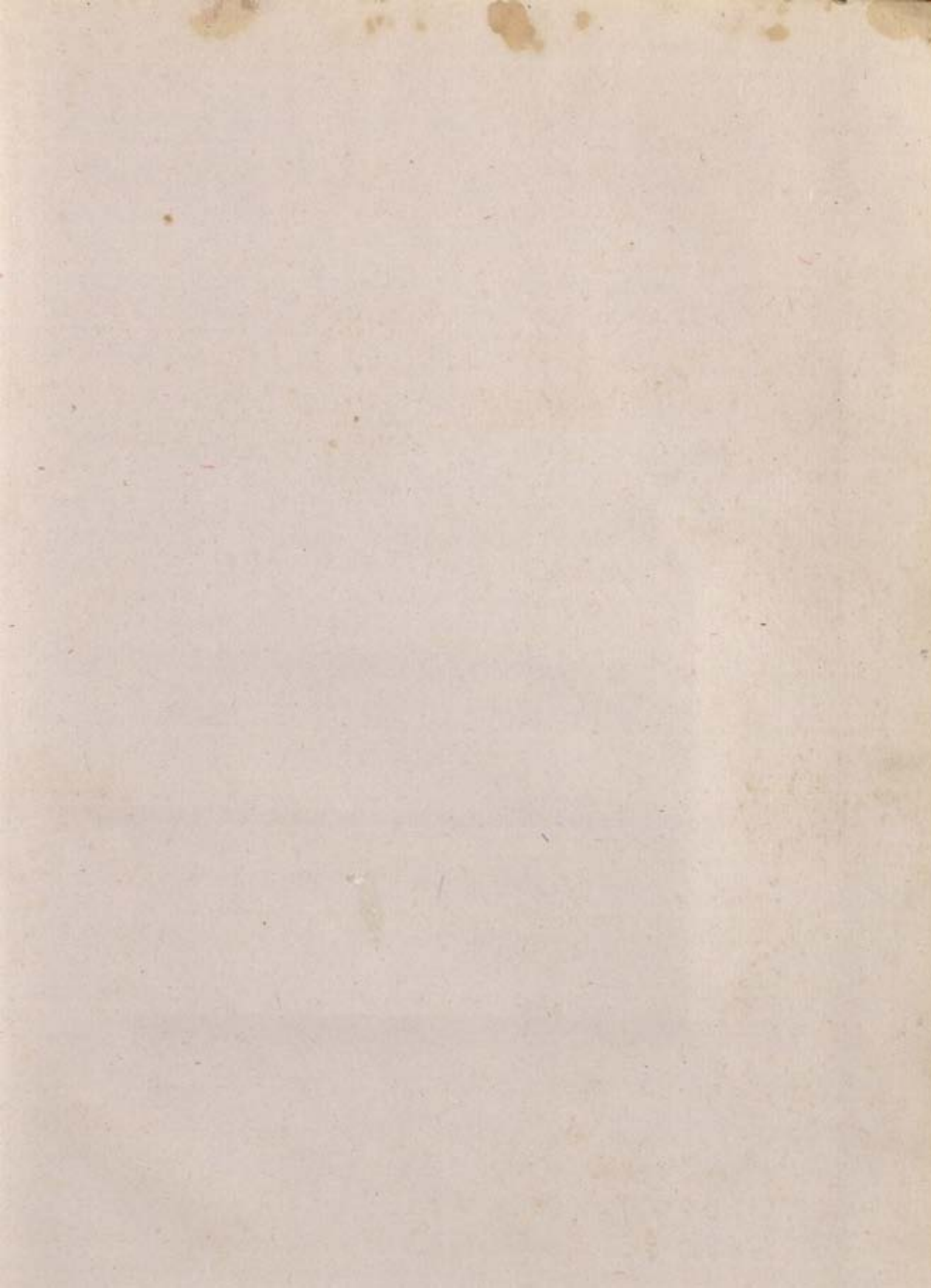
Viparita-Śirṣa -Dvihadā - Baddhāsana (Reversed Cranio-Manual-Locked Posture), 155; effects of, 155; posture, 155  
 Virāsana (Hero's Posture), 1, 2, 38, 47, 48; effects of, 47, 48; posture, 47; reference in Rāma-carita Mānasa, 47  
 Viryavahā nāḍī see Sivani nāḍī  
 Vishwayatan Yogāshram, 9  
 Viśṛta Pāda-Sarvāṅgāsana (Spread-out Feet All Limbs Posture), 167; effects of, 167; posture, 167  
 Viśṛta Pāda-vakṣa-Bhūmi-Sparśāsana (Extended Feet and Chest on Ground Posture), 230; effects of, 230; posture, 230  
 Vṛkṣāsana (Tree Posture), 2; effects of, 81, 82; posture, 81  
 Vṛśabhāsana (Ox Posture), 2, 83; effects of, 84; posture, 83  
 Vṛścikāsana (Scorpion Posture), 252; effects of, 253; posture, 252  
 Vyāna (Vāyu), 6, 147

Yogacūḍāmaṇyupaniṣad (Y.C.-U.), 3  
 Yogakuṇḍalyupaniṣad (Y.K.U.), 3  
 Yogāsana (Yoga Posture), 2, 95; effects of, 96; posture, 95, 96  
 Yogaśikhopaniṣad (Y.S. U.), 12, 17, 275; on Vajrāsana  
 Yogatattvopaniṣad (Y.T.U.), 2

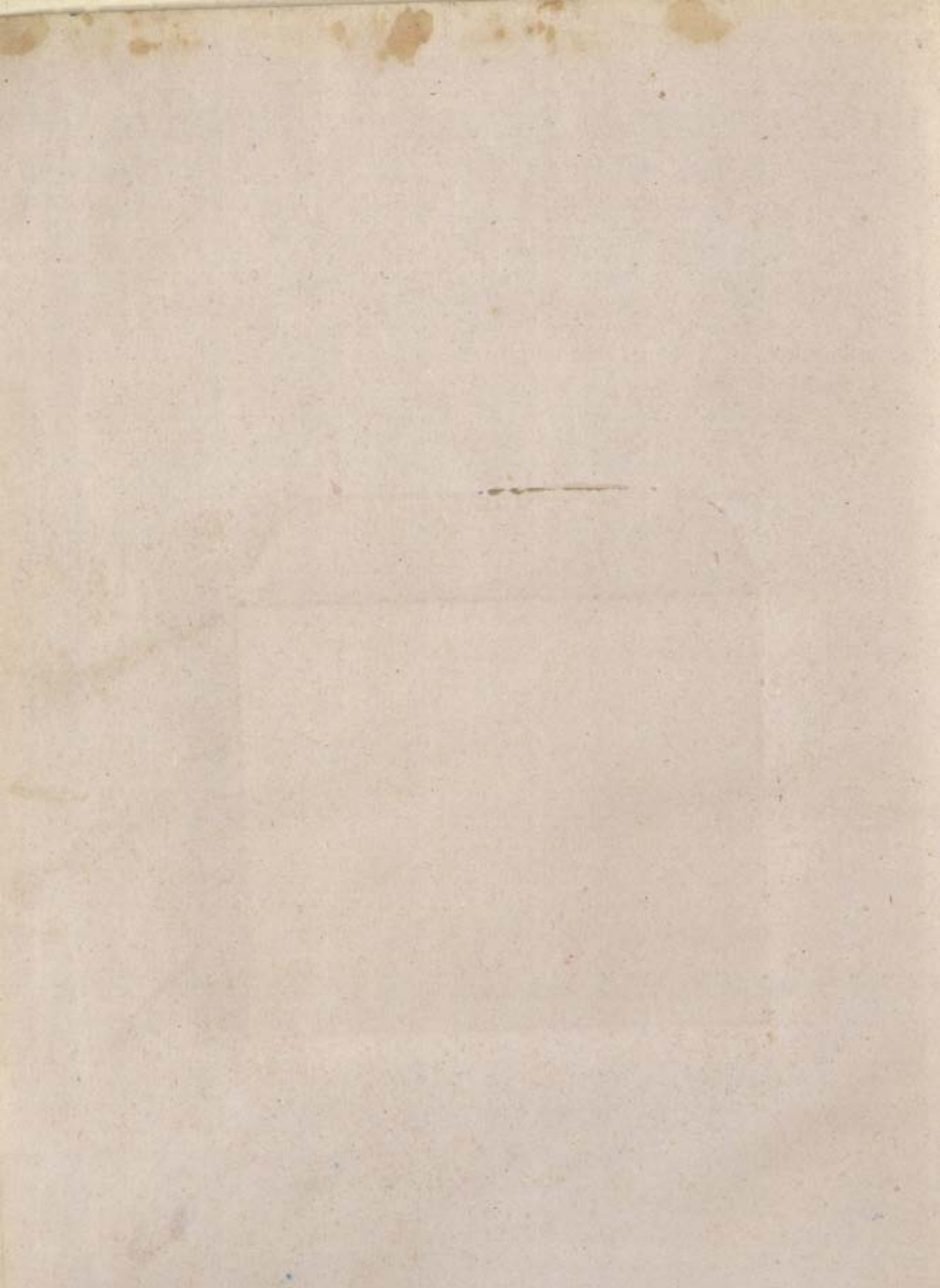












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