

SIX**THE POWER OF CREATIVITY****Practice 02: YOGA SEEDS – Salute to the Sun (Surya Namaskar)****#6: Cobra (Bhujangasana)**

Creativity is our sixth Power and rests in the Sixth chakra, bringing us in the seven-power sequence to Cobra position – Bhujangasana. The position does not have a direct formal relationship to Swadhisthana, the Sacral chakra, but you can call up consciousness of the energy of the sacral area while you're doing Bhujangasana, because you are working on your spine, and your spine starts at the sacrum.

Part III of the introduction section, on Yoga Seeds (p??) explains why we are matching a yoga position from Surya Namaskar (the Salute to the Sun) to each chapter, gives a general look at the ways in which adoption of a mild yoga habit underpins and strengthens your awakening of the Ecology of the Soul, and goes into the techniques in more detail.

Bhujangasana – Cobra: The Asana

Remember that you are always feeling and hearing your breathing sound at the top back of your nasal passage, making a hollow echo in your head which in itself is creating your calm, inner focus. Remember also that every move you make is done on an exhalation.

‘Success’ in yoga asanas – feeling the benefit, feeling you are making some progress – depends on being able to create a strong, muscular framework with some parts of your body so that you can let go other parts (usually the spine) and open them to the flow of Pran, the Ch’i, the Life Force. The trick is to be conscious of those parts enough to separate them out. You put your awareness into different parts of your body, like a conductor telling the violins to go fortissimo and the woodwind to rest. In Cobra/Bhujangasana, your arms are locked solid and you’re pushing through your spine hard down at the coccyx, and then forward and up from there in a kind of dynamic curve. Within that strong frame, you’re letting your spine go, making space between each vertebra and allowing your spine to lengthen, extending its curve in radius and height so your head goes further and further up and back.

Start lying on the floor face down, legs stretched out behind you, toes extended, and arms bent so your hands are flat on the floor directly under your shoulders. Come up onto your straight arms so that your hands are positioned flat on the floor the same width apart as your shoulders but a little forward of them. Stretch your legs out behind you, keeping your elbows locked and your arms rock solid and straight. As your body straightens out as if you were going to Plank (Chaturanga dandasana), relax and let go in your sacral area so that your hips and lower abdomen rest their weight on the floor. Your feet point and stretch out backwards. Let your weight sink down onto your pelvic area and start the push through your coccyx, which since your spine is already curved, follows through from down to forward to up. Your arms are still straight as

a die, and they will be beginning to feel the strain. Lock them and push down harder, making them longer to accommodate your lengthening spine. Shuffle your shoulders back a little so that your chest opens, and as you keep your arms locked, rotate them outwards slightly in their sockets to allow your chest to open more.

It doesn't look like it from outside, but this is a dynamic position. As your spine lengthens, it will knot up here and there because the opening process, like a creaky door, goes easier in some parts than others. Identify the spots where it's knotting up, and with a combination of push from your coccyx and 'let go' from your mind, find the space between those vertebrae. You will also quite likely come up against compression of vertebrae and muscles just between the tops of your shoulders, where your thoracic (chest) vertebrae turn into your cervical (neck and head) ones. The curve can kink here and restrict the flow. Re-establish the strength in those arms and widen your shoulders at the base of your neck. Open it out some more. Feel the flow up into your head, find more space between those vertebrae, and let your head fall farther back.

And here's the really tricky part. While you're doing all this, see if you can let go in your neck and throat. Relax those muscles and the tension will also go out of your tongue, which itself is no more or less than a muscle. I'm not pretending this is easy, but you will find as your practice develops that letting go of your throat and tongue automatically quietens the mind. You cannot think chattery thoughts when your tongue is relaxed. As it relaxes it shrinks, so you feel more space inside your mouth and throat. Start thinking again, the tongue swells up, the saliva glands kick in and you're back to the chatter.

How long should you hold it? Don't overdo it; be gentle with yourself. And most importantly, don't count seconds while you hold a pose, count breaths. It keeps your attention on your

breathing, and allows you to let go a little more on each outbreath. If you're at beginner level, five complete in-outs, as long as they are slow and contemplative and felt in that top back of your nasal passage, will be enough. Maybe more than enough, if you're stiff. As you gain flexibility you can lengthen your practice, but don't paint yourself into a corner where you now can't afford the time for a Salute to the Sun in your busy morning schedule. If it's the weekend or you're on holiday, perhaps you can make a bit more time. Or, perhaps you can just give yourself a rest day.

Now. Tell me you don't feel centred, energised, vitalised, strengthened, and good and ready for anything the day can throw at you. Did you plant your Power Seed yet?