***Pronounced pruh-saah-ree-tuh paah-doht-taahn-aah-suh-nuh the word prasarita means to extend or spread in Sanskrit***

**Prasarita Padottanasana (standing spread leg pose)**

It is rather like uttanasana, the standing forward bend, but with legs spread wide apart which is generally a little easier for the hamstrings.

**Teaching Points:**

Figure 1

 **Placement**

* From Tadasana take both feet apart feet facing forwards, ideally so ankles are beneath wrists when arms are held out at shoulder height. Notice how the inner knees feel, if there is any discomfort at knees then feet can be closer together.
* Check that the feet have not been inverted where we have fallen onto the outer edges of the feet, weight spread evenly through feet, i.e. using pada bandha
* Can have feet slightly turned inwards if it gives more stability

 **Entrance**

* Inhaling lift arms outwards to shoulder height, connecting core to fingers, engaging core muscles
* Exhaling fold at hips, lifting both sits bones so pelvis tilts forwards & the whole spine moves as one; arms still out to sides, looking downwards as lower down; can bend knees to release the pull of tight hamstrings or lower back
* Place hands to the floor or upon blocks, ideally the floor comes up to meet the hands but if necessary keep the knees bent if that releases discomfort in the lower back or hamstrings, allowing for an anterior pelvic tilt

 **Stay**

* Inhaling lift and lengthen the spine, opening the chest
* Exhaling contract abdomen as fold down more deeply into the pose, lifting buttocks
* If legs are straight make sure **hips are aligned with heels**
* Let the head and neck be relaxed
* When ready to stay still use the breath to make subtle adjustments, noticing how the breath subtly moves the body, surrendering into the pose

 **Exit**

* Ensure your weight is equally distributed between both feet, engaging both quadriceps making legs active, with an awareness of the core
* Inhaling lift arms out to sides as lift the torso up, the spine & pelvis moving as one long length, reach out again from core to fingers
* Exhaling lower the arms down to sides.

Note: Sometimes students take legs too far apart to get the head to the floor but there is more opening if legs are a little closer as this can give more room for the extension of the spine. Also in some traditions students start by inhaling the spine into a small arch and this is perfectly acceptable.

**Cautions & possible modifications:**

* Heart conditions, high blood pressure, mature diabetic: work dynamically, resting as necessary; if staying still then keep head at heart level only descending into a half forward bend, hands to a support or to hips.
* Hamstring problems or low back conditions, sacroiliac problems and sciatica: can bend knees or stay halfway with hands to a support.
* Low blood pressure: go slowly through the levels could stay halfway hands to a support
* Hyperextension at knees: soften knees, makes sure weight evenly distributed within feet.
* General inflexibility & weakness: bend knees or go halfway with hands to a support

#### Possible Staging: where the whole class will do each stage and those that need to can stay at a suitable stage

1. Hands to hips, inhale lift & lengthen spine and exhale lower **to hip height**, hands to a support/knees bent if needed; could stay at this stage: *learning to use pelvic tilt to keep spine moving as one unit*

2. Go further lowering the whole way down with hands to hips bent knees if needed, hands to floor or small support

3. Arms to sides as lift and lower

4. Arms flexed overhead as lift and lower; requires much more strength

**Possible modifications:**

Bend knees

Alter hand position e.g.hands to hips

Halfway - hands to chair

Halfway – hands to blocks

**Variations:**

Hands walked forwards to spread leg downward facing dog

Hands clasped with arms lowered behind the head

Clasp big toes

Walk hands between legs

#### Adjustments:

* Here we can help students by placing a hand lightly upon the neck or shoulders to remind them to relax them.
* If weight is too far forwards or backwards we can verbally cue them to check weight distribution in feet, or physically gently move them with hands lightly at hips.
* If toes are lifting or the in-step has excessively raised we can smooth over the top of the foot or indicate how the instep should lower using verbal guidance and hand movement
* Hand to sacrum to encourage connection to ground & hand between shoulderblades to encourage sense of lengthening spine – ensure no pressure downwards is exerted however!

**Benefits:**

* Tones the legs giving strength and flexibility
* Stretches hamstrings and adductors
* Releases back muscles
* Calms mind and body

Figure 1: [www.ihanuman.com](http://www.ihanuman.com) (accessed 19.03.16)

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