****Shalabhasana (Locust pose)**

1)

# *Pronounced shuh-luhb-haah-suh-nuh the word ‘shalabha’ means ‘locust or grasshopper’ in Sanskrit*

This balance is called the locust as the legs are lifted higher than the torso resembling the image of a locust.

**Teaching Points:**

*Stage one*

* Start in a prone position with legs togther or parallel at hip width.
* Place both arms just beneath the body so lower arms run along tops of thighs, can press palms into the floor or make fists with both hands, possibly with wrists crossed.
* Check to see if chin or forehead to the floor is preferable.
* On an inhale raise the right leg from the ground, keeping the leg straight, toes pointing away as the leg arcs upwards – the height of the lift is not paramount
* Ensure the lower left hip is kept to the ground, avoiding using the left knee to aid the lift. (i.e. ensuring the hip extensors and back are being fully utilised)
* Stay if possible for several breaths and then lower the leg with control to the start position
* Can rest for a few moments with toes touching head to one side then practice to the other side

Stage two

* Now if possible lift both legs simultaneously
* As before, keep length throughout the body and lift and lower with absolute control

**Benefits:**

Strengthens the back, esp. low back

Strengthens the hip extensors

(hamstrings & gluteus maximus)

Tones visceral organs, massages waist

Aid digestion

Increases blood circulation

Rejuvenates mind

**Cautions & possible modifications**

* Abdominal complaints e.g. hiatus hernia: caution, take an alternative if needed e.g. Tiger/Sunbird pose
* Pregnancy: take an alternative e.g. Tiger/Sunbird Pose
* Cardiac conditions/HBP: caution, practice gently without overexertion, use an alternative if needed
* Can place a folded blanket across hips, with thighs off, to reduce depth of back bend and provide comfort for prominent hip bones

#### Other variations



2)

Lift both arms and legs into a shallow locust, keeping whole body extended

Keep hands to either side of ribcage

3)

**Variations continued…..**

* Arms fully flexed out in front, lift one arm & one opposite leg at same time
* Arms fully flexed out in front, leg both arms & both legs at the same time
* Arms out to sides into cross shape as lift both arms and legs
* Arms and legs in star shape

For all of these ‘shallow’ locust poses ensure that awareness is raised regarding the position of the head and neck, ensuring we keep length in the neck, whether we look downwards or forwards.

Also we can stay for several breaths in each pose lifting a little higher as we breathe, as Donna Farhi says as if drawing the organs at the front of the body towards the back of the body which is a good subtle teaching point.

**Note:** an interesting way of gradually increasing back strength is to initially have arms bent, perhaps raised arms in a cactus shape either side of the body, then gradually straighten both arms out to side, and then moving them in an arc to the front, staying at the correct level; slowly increasing the leverage of arms works very well.

**Developments**

###### Sailing boat

Here once the upper leg has been lifted we place the lower foot upon the thigh as a support. This can however only be done once the upper leg can lift high enough. It is an interesting development to do, although we must ensure the lower back/neck remains comfortable.

4) 



5) 

###### Vertical lift and Beyond

6) 

It is possible to lift the legs vertical and from here we can flex both knees placing feet upon the head. This requires great flexibility and strength and is largely self-regulating!

#### Exploration

If lying on the belly with both arms and legs raised we can see if it is possible to stay for a few breaths without rocking, i.e. we will have to allow the abdomen to relax into the floor which can help to release the diaphragm.

**References for Images:**

1) <http://bikramyogadallas.com/locust-pose> (accessed 16.7.16)

2) <http://www.a2zlifestyles.com/articles/shalabhasana-the-locust-pose/> (accessed 16.7.16)

3) http://www.harrogateyoga.com/tag/body-mind-centering/(accessed 16.7.16)

4) to 6) http://download.rbuap.com/public/training/training%20deutsch/%DCbungen%203

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