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POSE OF THE MONTH

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Purvottanasana – Intense East Stretch – *Purva* means “east” and refers to the front side of the body *Uttana* means “intense stretch”

This pose is complementary to Paschimottanasana, the forwarding bending posture that precedes it; counterposing the extreme forwarding bending action required with both legs extended. This pose/counterpose keeps the spine balanced and healthy, stretching one side of the body while strengthening the other and then reversing it. Purvottanasana stretches the entire front of the body while strengthening the back of the body and legs. Other benefits include:

- ☯ Nervous system, spine and third chakra (Manipura) are stimulated
- ☯ Strengthens and stretches the heart and lungs
- ☯ Stretches fronts of shoulders, chest, and upper abdomen helping to correct poor posture
- ☯ Strengthens lower back, hamstrings, Achilles tendon, and wrists

Alignment:

From downward facing dog, hop through have a seat in Dandasana.

- ☯ Exhaling take your hands about 1' behind your hips with your fingertips pointing toward your toes
- ☯ Extend your legs, feet together, point your toes, lift your chest arching your back—Inhale press down through heels and hands to lift hips upward, internally rotating thighs and reaching bottoms of feet toward the floor –Hold for 5 breaths
- ☯ Pay attention to lift your chest higher than shoulders if possible. However do not strain to do this, tightness in the chest and/or shoulders, or hip flexors may make this lift challenging, as always breathe into the posture using your breath to take you into the pose and to guide you on the depth that is correct for you (if you lose your breath you are pushing too hard).
- ☯ Allow your head to drop completely back and rest on upper trapezius muscle. If this is uncomfortable, then bring your head completely forward—chin toward chest. Holding the head anywhere in between can cause strain to your neck muscles.
- ☯ Exhaling lower your hips to the floor and prepare for vinyasa.

Purvottanasana is a heart opening pose—it requires us to remove the “shield” of rounded shoulders and collapsed chest and to expose our heart. This can be challenging! Many of us are required to sit at a desk for long periods working over a computer, this position causes us to slump, round our spines and collapse our chest and shoulders leaving us with poor posture. Purvottanasana corrects that, it turns our face upward making us shine ☺

