

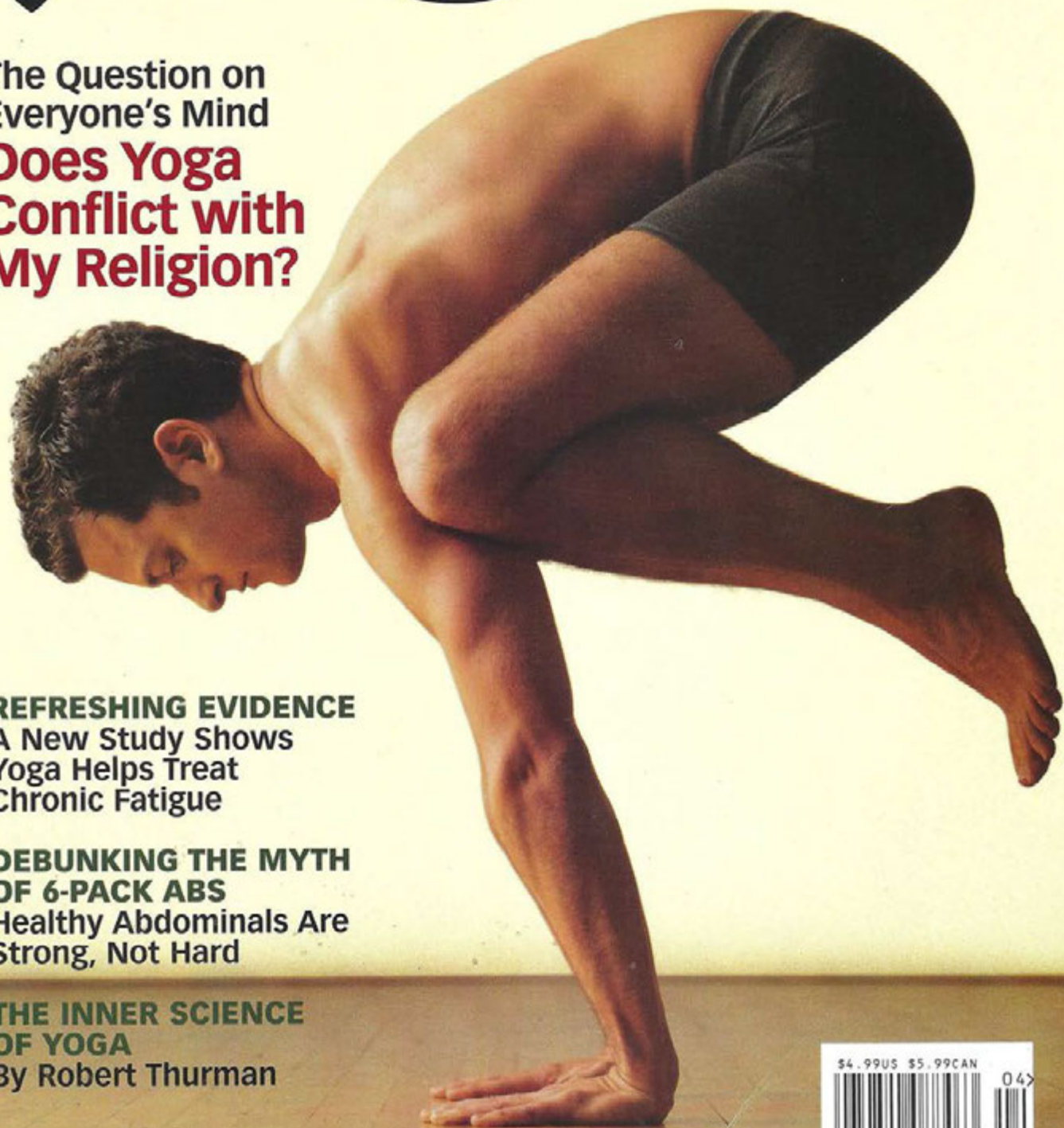
yoga

JOURNAL

ANNUAL TRAVEL GUIDE
HIMALAYAN TREKS,
WOMEN-ONLY
RETREATS & MORE

The Question on
Everyone's Mind

Does Yoga Conflict with My Religion?



REFRESHING EVIDENCE
A New Study Shows
Yoga Helps Treat
Chronic Fatigue

**DEBUNKING THE MYTH
OF 6-PACK ABS**
Healthy Abdominals Are
Strong, Not Hard

**THE INNER SCIENCE
OF YOGA**
By Robert Thurman



Asana

BY BARBARA BENAGH

Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend)

Benefits

Tones abdominal organs and kidneys

Stretches legs and spine

Calms the nerves

Quiets the mind

Contraindications

Lumbar disc injuries

Sacroiliac strain

Acute depression

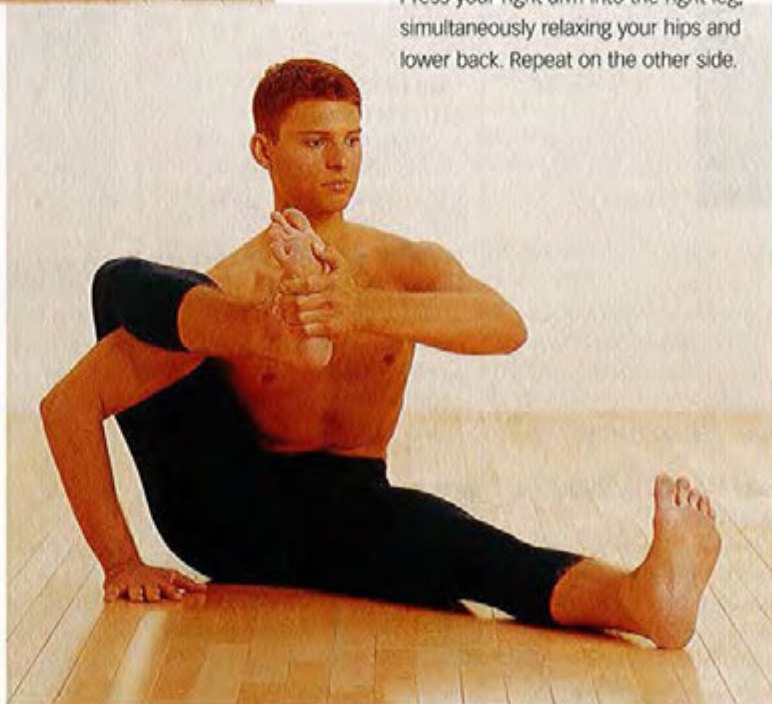
If pregnant, position legs wider apart

1 Janu Sirsasana Variation. Stretch your left leg forward and bend the right, planting the sole of the foot against the inside of the left thigh. Rolling onto the outside of your left leg, raise the right hip and leg off the floor and put your hands on the floor to the outside of your left leg. Roll your lower abdomen further toward the left hip joint with each exhalation, softening resistance in your hip. Repeat on the other side.

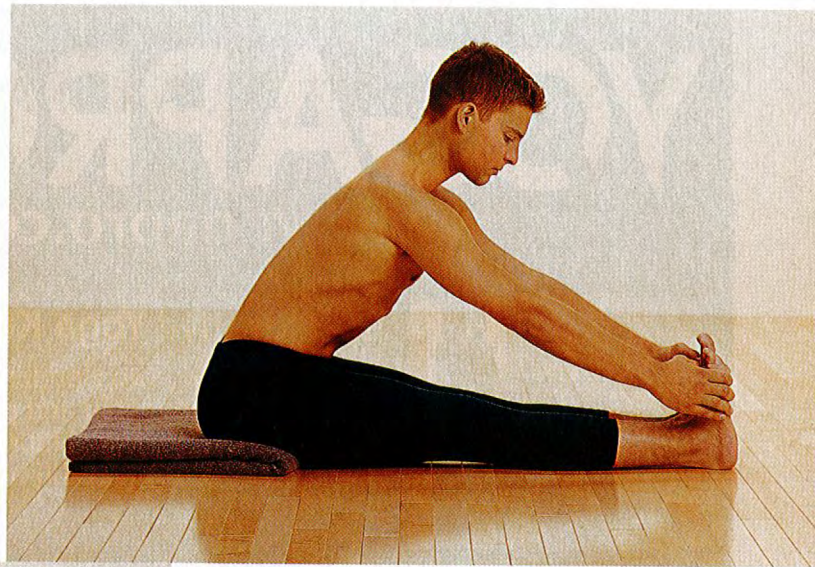


2 Leg-over-Arm Pose. Sit erect, with both legs stretched out in front of you. Raise your right leg, bend the knee, and reach your right arm on the inside of the leg to hold your calf. Next, grasp your right foot with your left hand, exhaling and relaxing your spine as you raise the leg higher. Work your upper right arm under your knee as close to the shoulder as possible and place that hand on the floor. Press your right arm into the right leg, simultaneously relaxing your hips and lower back. Repeat on the other side.

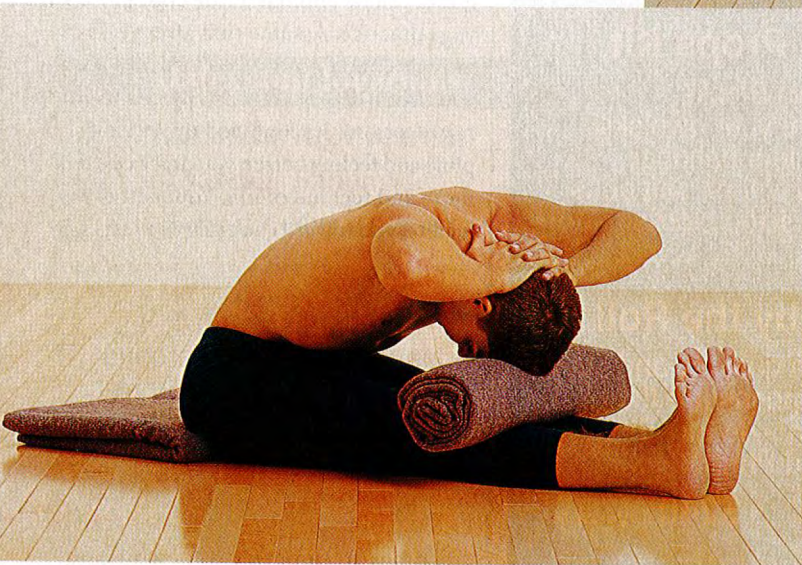
AS YOGIS, WE HAVE learned that a disciplined practice yields positive results. We've also learned that we can usually produce specific results by doing certain poses or practicing a particular method. Some asanas will help an aching back, others relieve depression; one method builds strength, another is meditative, and so on. Since such benefits are both real and often predictable, you can be lulled into believing that the results are guaranteed, that you can "take" poses like a pill. Such a simplistic approach trivializes yoga and inevitably leads to disappointment and confusion, partly because it disregards the influence of individual variables like constitution and personality, but especially because it disregards the continuous fluctuations of each human mind.



3 Easing Forward. Sit erect, with both legs stretched out in front of you, and lean forward by rotating your pelvis over your legs. Hold your outer feet with your hands, without rounding your back. If this isn't possible, place a folded blanket under your tailbone and slightly bend your knees. If your back still rounds excessively, hold a strap looped around your feet. Relax your upper thighs, lifting and extending your torso away from your pelvis. Hold the pose and try to relax until it feels comfortable and easy.



4 Bolstering Your Practice. Deepen your forward bend from your hips, keeping your head at shoulder level in line with your spine. Relax and breathe steadily to melt your pelvis over your leg bones, nestling your abdomen into your inner thighs. A blanket roll under your head (or a bolster under your torso, if you're less flexible) can help you release. To free your upper back, cup your hands behind your head, pressing your head up and spreading your elbows. After a few breaths, release elbows, chest, and head back toward the floor, grasp your feet again, and continue to settle into the pose.



5 Paschimottanasana. As your pose deepens (perhaps over years), remove your props and rest your abdomen, chest, and head on your legs. Continue to grip your feet while softening your upper thighs and releasing tension from your hip and back muscles. When you feel completely at ease, relax your arms onto the floor. Maintaining a steady focus on your breathing and making as little muscular effort as possible, hold the pose as long as you wish.

