



50 HR TEACHER TRAINING MANUAL

HINDU THEOLOGY & THE
ORIGINS OF THE PRACTICE

THE GODS OF YOGA

MEGAN MULRINE

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**“YOGA HAS ITS ROOTS IN INDIAN THOUGHT, BUT
ITS CONTENT IS UNIVERSAL.
IT IS ABOUT THE MEANS BY WHICH WE CAN MAKE
THE CHANGES WE DESIRE IN OUR LIVES.”**

- TKV DESIKACHAR

Dedicated to Ibu Ati and the Pasraman Vidya Giri children's foundation
in Sidemen, Bali, Indonesia.

Terima kasih karena selalu berdoa dan menari bersama saya.

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WHY YOGA TEACHERS SHOULD STUDY THE HINDU DEITIES

Whether they know it or not, any yoga teacher who uses the Sanskrit names of asana is uttering the names of the gods every time they teach; many of the poses we know in modern yoga are named directly after the gods themselves. Though no belief in a particular god or religion is required to practice yoga, it's an undeniable fact that the practice itself was born from a rich Hindu tradition full of deeply inspiring stories.

Often, in the west, we try to disassociate the practice from its Hindu source in order to make it more palatable for people of all religions. Some western teachers are more comfortable saying, for example, that "Hanumanasana" (front splits) means "monkey pose," rather than acknowledging the monkey-faced deity, Hanuman, for whom the pose is actually named. In doing this, we miss out on the vast array of inspiration to be gained through an understanding of Hanuman as a symbolic representation of loyalty, friendship, and sacrifice. To those who do not identify as Hindu, understanding the Ramayana as a tale of love and loyalty is akin to understanding Pinocchio as a tale about honesty (sattya)—neither require a religious faith in the tales' veracity in order to be of great value.

When we attempt to whitewash the Hindu history of yoga, we commit an act of violence towards the culture that so freely gave us this life-changing practice. To avoid appropriating and capitalizing on a living, breathing culture, we must make efforts to respect and honor the belief system from which the practice was born.

In sharing these stories with students of all backgrounds, I am continually surprised by the receptivity of the students—even from those who are agnostic, atheist, or orthodox in other religions. It simply doesn't matter: these stories serve to deepen the student's practice past the physical and into the mental/emotional (and often spiritual) body, regardless of their belief system.

Though we talk of many "gods," in fact, Hindus believe that all of the deities are representations of one divine source, and all gods of all religions are manifestations of that same divinity. So no matter what your religious beliefs, they are accepted in Hindu philosophy, because in fact, all things (including you!) are of God.

HONORING THE HISTORY

Yoga is for everyone, indiscriminate of race, age, gender, size, or religion, but it wasn't always so open throughout its history.

According to the Indian Hindu tradition, this ancient system of quieting the mind's fluctuations was created and taught by the god, Shiva. The oldest recorded reference is on a cave drawing called the Pashupati Seal, from around 1800 BC. For centuries, yoga was only allowed to be practiced by religious holymen in India, with the lessons passed down orally from brahmin to brahmin (priest to priest). Most often, yoga was practiced in private, in caves, by ascetics. Even when the sage Patanjali aggregated the teachings around 400 CE to pen the "Yoga Sutras," which describe the eight limbs of the yogic process, the "asana" referred to were simply seated meditation postures—not the active, flowing movements we know today. This ancient practice described by Patanjali, passed down from the God Shiva, is sometimes referred to as "Raja Yoga" (royal yoga)—the meditation practice of yoga described in the Yoga Sutras.

THE BIRTH OF HATHA YOGA

When later, around 500 CE, tantric philosophy began to gain popularity in India, the narrative changed from the belief that our bodies were simply dirty and unimportant to the spiritual process, to an understanding that our bodies are the sacred vessels that carry our souls. Certain yogis began incorporating more and more asana, including standing asana, strengthening asana, and stretching asana, as well as mudras, bandhas, and shatkarmas, into their practice. Called the Nath Yogis, these religious elite realized that they could gain siddhis (yogic superpowers) much quicker when they took care of all five koshas (layers of the body), including the physical body. Later Nath Yogis shared these findings in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika in the 15th century.

SHIVA TEACHES YOGA TO MATSYENDRANATH

The legend behind the discovery of the more physical asana starts with the story of an unwanted infant who was thrown into the river by his mother. Similar to the Judeo-Christian epic of Jonah and the whale, this infant was swallowed by a fish and grew up in the belly of the creature. One day, the fish dove deep to the bottom of the sea, and found Shiva teaching hatha yoga to his wife, Parvati, there. The boy overheard these lessons, and began practicing yoga inside of the fish. After years of practice, the boy became so full of love that he rose from his heart out of the fish, and earned the name Matsyendranath, the Lord of the Fishes. He then taught the practice of Hatha Yoga to other yogis, who became the Nath yogis.



Matsyendrasana (Lord of the Fishes pose)

The pose, **matsyendrasana** (lord of the fishes pose), is named after Matsyendranath, because the upper body resembles the sage sitting upright, while the legs take the shape of a fish's fins. **Matsyasana** (fish pose) is also named for this story, when the practice of yoga took hold of Matsyendranath's heart so strongly that it pulled him out of the fish.



Matsyasana (Fish Pose)

Hatha yoga continued to be shared in this way, practiced only by brahmins and religious elders, until our modern era.

MODERN YOGA

Like the other brahmin, Sri Trimulai Krishnamacharya, largely considered the father of modern hatha yoga, also studied the practice in a cave for seven years with his hermetic teacher, Brahmachari, in the early 1900s.

At the time, India was suffering under its colonization by Britain, and there was a push by the Indian people to attempt to reclaim their Indian heritage. In that climate, after seven years of study, Brahmachari told Krishnamacharya that it was time for him to start teaching yoga to the masses—not just to the religious elders, but to regular Indian men of other castes. Krishnamacharya took this several steps further by teaching to the first non-Hindu students, the first foreign (western) students, and the first female students. He recognized that yoga was a practice to be shared with every individual, based on their personal needs.

*"Always teach that which is appropriate for the individual."
- Sri T Krishnamacharya*

Famous students of Krishnamacharya's include Sri Pattabhi Jois (the founder of Ashtanga yoga—who studied with Krishnamacharya as a teenager, then branded and taught those exact sequences to others), BKS Iyengar (who focused on precise alignment and heart-opening), Indra Devi (a Russian dancer and Krishnamacharya's first female student, who went on to author "Yoga for Americans"), AG and Indra Mohan (who are still teaching today, with their son Ganesh). Krishnamacharya's own son, TKV Desikachar (author of "Heart of Yoga") dove deeply into the study of yoga science and went on to teach many well-known modern teachers, including Mark Whitwell ("Yoga of Heart"), Gary Kraftsow ("Yoga for Wellness"), and Leslie Kaminoff ("Yoga Anatomy").

Essentially, all modern "styles" of yoga can be traced to the teachings of Krishnamacharya, with its ancient roots in the Tantric Hatha texts, which expanded upon Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

ENERGETIC EFFECTS OF THE ASANA

Learning the stories behind the asana names allows you to experience the energetic characteristics of the deities every time you enter the poses. Many believe the Hindu deities to be representations of the many aspects of our own spiritual beings; when striking a pose named after Shiva, the warrior, for example, you may feel more in touch with the strong, powerful aspects of yourself. When in need of greater compassion for your friends, perhaps taking a Hanuman pose will inspire those characteristics. We'll explore many of the stories behind the asana here in this text.

TRIMURTI

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

THE HINDU TRINITY: THE THREE MOST PROLIFIC DEITIES IN HINDU MYTHOLOGY.

BRAHMA: THE CREATOR. VISHNU: THE PRESERVER. SHIVA: THE DESTROYER.

THE HOLY TRINITY

The three main deities in Hindu theology together are called the Trimurti, which is the Sanskrit word for trinity. Each has a role in the cycle of life as we know it, and they are revered and worshipped to varying degrees by different Hindu traditions around the world. All of the gods are considered to be representations of one divine source—in Bali, called **Sang Hyang Widi Wasa**, or commonly referred to as “Brahman”—not to be confused with “Brahma,” (the creator god,) or “brahmin,” which means priest. The Trimurti are revered equally in Bali, and every Balinese village has three temples, one dedicated to each of the three gods. You’ll see many Balinese people wearing tri-colored bracelets; the red represents Brahma, the black is Vishnu, and white is Shiva.



Brahma

Vishnu

Shiva

Tridevi: Goddess Trinity



Saraswati

Lakshmi

Shakti

BRAHMA: THE CREATOR

Brahma is the four-faced deity responsible for the creation of the universe. His consort is **Saraswati**, the goddess of knowledge and the creative arts. In India, Brahma is rarely worshipped in his own right, as most Indian Hindus believe Brahma's job was finished once the universe was created, and they choose to devote themselves instead to either Vishnu or Shiva, the other two gods who make up the Trimurti, who are believed to have a more active role in daily life. There is only one temple in all of India dedicated to Brahma, located in Pushkar, Rajasthan. In Bali, on the other hand, every village has a **Pura Desa** (“Village Temple”) dedicated to Brahma as well as to the spirits of the village. This is the temple where most of the Balinese community activities are shared.

VISHNU: THE PRESERVER

Vishnu is the protector of the universe, and he is reincarnated often to help restore dharma (goodness) to the world. Some of his avatars (incarnations) include **Rama**, **Krishna**, and according to some, Siddhartha Gautama **Buddha** and **Jesus** Christ. Vishnu's consort is **Lakshmi**, goddess of prosperity, in her many incarnations (such as **Sita** and **Radha**). In Indian Hinduism, many align themselves with Vishnu, believing him to be the supreme God, in a form of Hinduism called **Vaishnavism**. Vishnu devotees (particularly the brahmin, or priests) are recognizable by two white vertical lines on the forehead, sometimes connecting in a U-shape between the eyebrows with a red line in the center. In Bali, every village has a **Pura Puseh** dedicated to Vishnu and to the elders and ancestors of the village.

SHIVA: THE DESTROYER

Shiva takes the role of “destroyer” in the Hindu trinity—a warrior bringing about the end and beginning of ages. His consort is **Shakti**, the divine feminine energy that drives the universe, and her many incarnations (such as **Parvati**, **Durga**, and **Kali**). In India, Shiva's devotees are recognizable by three horizontal white lines across the forehead in the **Shaivism** branch of Hinduism. In Bali, the village temples that deal with death and funeral procedures are called **Pura Dalem**, dedicated to Shiva, and frequently have large, old trees outside of them wrapped in checkered cloth, as well as statues of Balinese spirit and demon deities such as Barong.



BRAHMA

THE FOUR-FACED DEITY WHO CREATED THE UNIVERSE.

THE CREATOR

BRAHMA ASANA

- BRAHMASANA (HALF LOTUS)
- PADMASANA (FULL LOTUS)
- NECK STRETCHES

BRAHMA MANTRA

- THE AUM SOUND
- BIJA MANTRA: "BRAHM"
- GAYATRI MANTRA

BRAHMA CHAKRAS

- MULADHARA (ROOT)
- SVADISTHANA (SACRAL)

BRAHMA MUDRA

- BRAHMA MUDRA



WHO IS BRAHMA?

The creator deity is typically pictured sitting cross-legged on a lotus flower. The many hands of the gods are meant to represent their omnipotence, and Brahma is often shown holding a vessel filled with amrita (the elixir of life), a small book of the Vedas (ancient Hindu texts), a lotus flower, and mala rosary beads. But the most immediately noticeable thing about Brahma is his four heads.

FOUR FACES & THE CREATION STORY

Hindu mythology is a fascinating area of study, because the stories have been revised, rewritten, and re-told throughout the years, often passed down orally. Many sages and scholars have written their own takes on the original stories, sometimes altering them to serve a purpose or narrative. The "Creation Story" in Hinduism is no different.

THE AUM STORY

A common story describing how Brahma created the universe starts with a lotus flower, rising out of the cosmic sea, which is filled with the nectar of life (amrita). From this flower emerged Brahma, who promptly sprouted 4 heads—one facing in each of the 4 cardinal directions. And then the heads began to chant. From the south head, came the sound "Ahhh," the sound of Brahma. From the north, came "Ooh," the sound of Vishnu, and from the west, came "Mmm" for Shiva. The east head was silent, representing the uniting divinity of all things. The combination of these syllables formed a profound "aum" sound, which reverberated through the silence and churned up the sea of amrita, and from the sea rose the rest of the universe. This story is used to explain the reality of the interconnectedness of all things that we often glimpse while chanting "aum." Interestingly, modern scientists have researched what the actual "Big Bang" may have sounded like in space, and it is described as akin to a low hum—perhaps even an "aum."



"AUM" in Sanskrit



"AUM" in Balinese resembles Brahma sitting in lotus posture.

ALTERNATE CREATION STORY (SHAIVISM)

In India, most Hindus “choose sides,” between Vishnu and Shiva (Vaishnavism or Shaivism), and view Brahma’s role as being completed. A lot of mythology grew out of this division, and often to the detriment of Brahma’s reputation. One such story that emerged from Shaivism explains Brahma’s four heads as such: When he was creating the universe, the first thing he created was Saraswati, so beautiful that Brahma couldn’t take his eyes off her. So that he could always be looking at her, he sprouted four heads, one in each direction, to admire her from all angles, even growing a fifth head so he could see her when she leapt over him. Shiva saw this and was furious, asserting that this was lustful and disgraceful, so he chopped off his fifth head and punished Brahma, Shiva condemned Brahma’s four heads to chant the Vedas for all eternity, never receiving worship.

THE VEDAS AND BRAHMA’S FOUR HEADS

No matter who is telling the creation story, both stories agree that after the universe was created, Brahma’s heads took to chanting the Vedas, the most sacred of Hindu texts, said to come directly from the creator deity. Brahma has one head for each of the four Vedas: the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda.

TEACHING ASANA WITH BRAHMA

Brahma is usually depicted as sitting on a lotus flower, in either full lotus pose (padmasana) or half lotus (brahmasana). Neck stretches also form a nice metaphorical movement for Brahma’s many heads.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: “Let’s start today’s class in **brahmasana**, half-lotus pose, or **padmasana**, full lotus. We’ll set an intention today to be like the lotus flower: as Buddha said:

“As a lotus flower is born in water, grows in water and rises out of water to stand above it unsoiled, so I, born in the world, raised in the world, having overcome the world, live unsoiled by the world.”

No matter our background, we can shake the mud away, and live unsoiled. See yourself blooming like a lotus.”



Brahmasana



Lotus Pose (Padmasana)



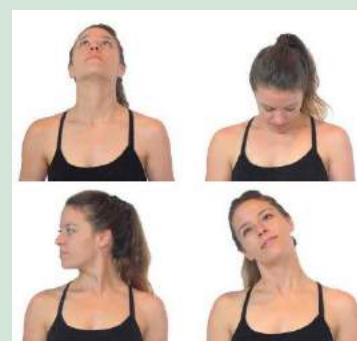
Brahma Mudra

Brahma mudra: “From lotus pose or brahmasana, let’s make Brahma Mudra with our hands, by making fists, and bringing the knuckles together, palms facing up, in our lap. This symbolizes the strength it takes to create ourselves anew. As we press the fists together, notice the interconnectedness of all things in your body. What muscles do you feel engaging to hold this mudra?”

This pose is named after the god Brahma, the deity who created the universe. He sat in this pose, on top of a lotus flower, and he sprouted four heads: from the first head, came the sound “Ahh,” from the second, “Ooh,” and from the third, “Mmm.” The fourth was silent, and in this silence, the universe was created.

Let’s chant three AUMs together, like Brahma, and feel the vibrational connection we share with each other, and with all things in creation. Aum, aum, aum.”

Neck stretches: “Now, we’ll move through our neck stretches, symbolizing Brahma’s four heads, by taking the head in four different directions: lateral, twisting, forward, and backward.”



Neck stretches

SARASWATI

THE CREATIVE FORCE

Brahma's counterpart, the goddess of knowledge and the creative arts, who flows like water. Saraswati is the ultimate teacher.

SARASWATI ASANA

- PELVIC TILTS
- SACRAL ROLLS

SARASWATI MANTRA

- "SARASWATYAI NAMAHA"
- BIJA MANTRA "AIM"

SARASWATI CHAKRA

- MULADHARA (ROOT)
- SVADISTHANA (SACRAL)
- AJNA (THIRD EYE)

SARASWATI MUDRA

- VEENA MUDRA
- SARASWATI MUDRA



WHO IS SARASWATI?

It's said that, while Brahma created the universe, it was Saraswati who gave it order. Brahma saw that his universe was in chaos, and created from himself the goddess Saraswati—the two are considered one and the same. Through her incredible intellect, Saraswati brought organization and pattern to the world. She is a teacher of all the arts, and is, in fact, the artistic energy that courses through each of us. Great teachers are often said to have "Saraswati on their tongue" when they are incredibly wise—great writers may have Saraswati flowing through the ink of their pens.

In art, Saraswati is most often depicted, like Brahma, sitting on a lotus flower. She holds a musical instrument called a "veena" in her hands, a mala, and a book of the vedas. Because Saraswati is also the goddess of all waterways, swans are symbols of her—when one is near, Saraswati is never far away.

THE SARASWATI RIVER

The Ganges and the Yamuna are the two most famous rivers in India. But at one point, there was a third: the Saraswati River. In the Rigveda, the goddess Saraswati personified this beautiful river and her endless fertility. Stories from later texts such as the Skanda Purana say that Brahma "poured" Saraswati out of his pot, sending her to earth in the form of the Saraswati River, to flow and create new life all throughout creation.

CREATIVE ENERGY

Eventually, Saraswati's creative forces were no longer needed in a physical form on earth, and the Saraswati River dried up. Some scholars say that the Milky Way is now the cosmic representation of the Saraswati River flowing through space. Whenever you find yourself in the "flow" state creatively, it's said that Saraswati is flowing through you.

"She helps to bring form to that which has not yet been made manifest: a thought, an imagining, a dream, a series of musical notes, a passion [...] She invokes a flow of fertile energy, as the artist or contemplator becomes an open vessel to allow the creative life force to flow through and spark insight, free expression, and deeply passionate inspiration; and new life as artistic expression is born."

– Dr. Saraswati Markus of the Nourishing Life Center of Health.

TEACHING ASANA WITH SARASWATI

The sacral chakra element is water, and performing sacral rolls is an amazing way to awaken the creative power of the svadisthana chakra. In this movement, we attempt to move the spine like water.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Today's class will focus on our creative energy, invoking the power of Saraswati, the creator goddess of knowledge and the arts. She resides within our sacral chakra, within our wombs, where our creative power is born. From your comfortable seated position, close your eyes and set an intention for today's class, of something that you wish to create or manifest in your life."

Saraswati Mudra: "We'll start by taking the Saraswati mudra. Place your thumb between your ring and pinky finger, and wrap your ring and middle finger over the thumb. Then touch the tips of the thumbs and tips of the pointer fingers together. Bring the pinkies up to the forehead, pointer fingers to the sky—that Saraswati may empower us with a strong imagination and powerful creative ideas."



Saraswati Mudra

Now bring the mudra down in front of your navel, pointer fingers facing down. That Saraswati may empower us with the creative ability to manifest our ideas into reality."



Later, In asana:

Pelvic tilts: "First, come to all fours and find a neutral spine. We'll move through some pelvic tilts from this position, like cat and cow, but only moving the hips. Notice the energetic space just below your navel, towards your spine as you do this—this is your sacral chakra, from where our creative energy flows with the help of the goddess Saraswati."

Sacral rolls: "Saraswati came to Earth in the form of a river to make the world more fertile, filled with creative energy, so like her, we'll move like water through some sacral rolls."

Bring your hands about one hand's distance in front of the shoulders, and making circles with the spine, inhale as the heart sweeps forward, and exhale as you round back towards the heels. Be creative with your movement: close your eyes and feel the creative energy of Saraswati emanating from your sacral chakra. Move as though you are giving birth to the universe."



Sacral rolls

In closing (after savasana):



Veena Mudra

Veena mudra: "To keep your creative energy flowing throughout the rest of your day, let's find Saraswati's veena mudra, shaped for her favorite instrument. Bring the right hand into gyan mudra below the navel, as if you were picking the strings of a guitar. Extend the left arm out to your side at shoulder height, palm facing up. Remind yourself of your intention to bring more creativity in your life, in whatever it is that you want to manifest."

Saraswati mantra: "Our creative powers are our direct connection with the divine, so we'll chant three times Saraswati's mantra: **"Om Aim Saraswatyai Namaha."** May your creativity flow like water, today and every day."



VISHNU

THE PESERVER

AS THE “PRESERVER” OR PROTECTOR IN THE TRINITY, VISHNU IS THE MOST ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH US MORTALS, BY FREQUENTLY COMING TO EARTH IN THE FORM OF MANY “AVATARS” TO HELP RESTORE DHARMA

VISHNU ASANA

- ANANTASANA (RECLINING VISHNU POSE)
- GARUDASANA (EAGLE POSE)

VISHNU MANTRA

- BIJA MANTRA: “DAM”
- MAHAMANTRA (HARE KRISHNA/HARE RAMA)

VISHNU CHAKRAS

- MANIPURA (SOLAR PLEXUS)
- ANAHATA (HEART)
- SAHASRARA (CROWN)

VISHNU MUDRA

- VISHNU MUDRA



WHO IS VISHNU?

Vishnu's role in the trinity is to protect and preserve life as we know it, and as such, Vishnu (or Wisnu in Bali) is possibly the most actively involved deity in earthly affairs. He is well-known for his many incarnations, called Avatars. Vishnu takes these earthly forms in critical moments to help protect and preserve dharma (righteousness) on earth—some of his greatest hits include Lord Rama from the Ramayana and Sri Krishna from the Mahabharata. Some even say that Buddha and Jesus were avatars of Lord Vishnu.

The image above may provide a more complete view of the creation story: with Brahma above on the lotus flower, connected to Vishnu (who is attached by the navel), Vishnu's consort, the goddess Lakshmi, helps him to relax. They lay on the cosmic sea of life, which Brahma's “aum” churned up to create the universe.

Vishnu holds a heavy weapon called a “gada” to show that he is willing to fight for dharma, as well as a conch shell, called a “shankha” in Sanskrit. When blowing into a conch shell like a horn, it emits a sound similar to the “aum” sound, and announces Vishnu's arrival for battle.

THE THOUSAND-HEADED SNAKE, ANANTA

Vishnu is one of the easiest deities to spot, because of the many cobra heads usually hovering above him. The thousand headed cobra is called Ananta Shesha, and he serves as Vishnu's resting place on the sea of life.

STHIRA SUKHAM ASANAM

In yoga sutra 46 of chapter 2, Patanjali explains that all asana should have the qualities of “sthira” and “sukha”—strength and stillness, as well as ease and comfort. Ananta, the snake, is used as the symbol of the sutra: he must be strong and still enough to keep Vishnu afloat (sthira), while at the same time soft and comfortable enough for him to relax (sukha).

The yoga asana **anantasana** is named for Vishnu relaxing on the snake Ananta.



GARUDA, THE EAGLE GOD

But Vishnu doesn't spend all of his time relaxing on a snake on the sea. When it's time for Vishnu to take action, his vehicle of choice is the Eagle God, Garuda, with the torso of an eagle (head, body, and wings) and the legs of a man. If you've ever seen the GWK (Garuda Wisnu Kencana) statue in Bali, you've seen Garuda. There's even an Indonesian airline named after the god.



If you've ever wondered why garudasana looks nothing like an eagle, it has to do with Garuda's incredible shape-shifting and size-changing abilities.

When Garuda was born, he emerged from a massive egg, and he was as radiant as a million suns--so brilliant, that he blinded anyone who looked upon him. So the gods begged him to reduce himself in size.

Later, when Garuda's mother was kidnapped by serpents (nagas), they told Garuda they'd free her if he brought them the nectar of immortality (amrita). But to get the amrita, Garuda had to steal it. The amrita was stored behind an obstacle course of sorts, and to steal it, Garuda performed a number of incredible feats; one of them was to shrink himself in size to fit through a spiked ring, only to emerge as large and glorious as before on the other side.

Whenever Garuda transports Vishnu from the heavens to earth, he has to metaphorically shrink as well—from a vast deity, to a size reasonable for the world, to walk amongst the mortals.

Imagine you start in tadasana--arms spread out to your sides like open eagle wings, legs standing strong like Garuda's. To find garudasana, you then compress yourself in size, wrapping arm around arm, leg around leg.

TEACHING ASANA WITH VISHNU

Vishnu's poses remind us that though we are in human form (like his avatars), we are in fact vast spiritual beings.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Samkhya philosophy, which is the foundational belief system of Yoga, Ayurveda, Hinduism, and Buddhism, says that we are all part of a divine source. Just like all the Hindu gods, we too are divine—we are vast cosmic beings having a temporary human experience. The god Vishnu, the protector, often came to Earth in human form as well, to help preserve goodness in the world. We'll find some Vishnu poses today, and set the intention to connect more deeply with our True Selves, the cosmic miracles that are our souls."

Later, from tadasana:

Garudasana: "When coming to save the day, Vishnu would ride on the eagle god, Garuda. When Garuda was born, he hatched out of an egg and was so bright that the gods asked him to shrink himself—our garudasana pose is us shrinking ourselves in size, like Garuda.

Inhale to stand tall in tadasana, and exhale to wrap one wing over the other, one leg of the other, in garudasana. Notice that though you are small, in human form, through observation of your balance, you can get in touch with your vast, brilliant, cosmic self, like Garuda. Simply become the observer of your balance."



**Eagle pose
(Garudasana)**



**Reclining Vishnu Pose
(Anantasana)**

Later, from lying supine:

Anantasana: "Lay on your side, and use your arm to prop up your head. This is a position that you often see Buddha statues in, representing the resting Buddha at the end of his life. Many believe Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu, sent to earth to alleviate the world's suffering.

We'll find a hip-opening stretch from here, named after the thousand-headed snake that protects Vishnu while he rests. Just as we humans often need to rest, so too do the gods. Exhale to lift your top leg, wrapping your peace fingers around the big toe."

In closing (after savasana):

"From seated, let's place **Vishnu mudra** on our knees, by curling the pointer and middle fingers in. Take a few moments to observe your breath—become the witness. When you can separate yourself from the impermanent, external things, you meet your true self—the divinity within each of us. Let's never forget who we truly are: divine, cosmic miracles."



Vishnu mudra

LAKSHMI

THE GODDESS OF ABUNDANCE

LAKSHMI, THE GODDESS OF PROSPERITY AND ABUNDANCE, IS THE CONSORT OF LORD VISHNU, AND BESTOWS BLESSINGS IN THE FORM OF WEALTH IN ITS MANY FORMS.

LAKSHMI ASANA

- ULUKASANA (OWL POSE)
- GAJASANA (ELEPHANT POSE)

LAKSHMI MANTRA

- BIJA MANTRA: "SHRIM"
- OM SHRIM HRIM MAHA LAKSHMI NAMAHA

LAKSHMI CHAKRAS

- SACRAL (SOLAR PLEXUS)
- ANAHATA (HEART)
- SAHASRARA (CROWN)

LAKSHMI MUDRA

- SHANKHA (CONCH SHELL) MUDRA



WHO IS LAKSHMI?

Lakshmi, also called Dewi Sri, is who to pray to when you want to strike gold; she is the goddess of wealth, prosperity, and abundance. In images, you can tell Lakshmi from the other goddesses because she is usually surrounded by and draped in gold—she wears more jewelry and more decadent clothing than the other goddesses, and often has gold raining down from her blessing hands. As Vishnu's counterpart, Lakshmi often reincarnates to be with Vishnu in his avatar forms. Whenever she did, unprecedented wealth came to the families she was born into.

As a nod to her eternal love with Vishnu, Lakshmi is often shown holding a conch shell, Vishnu's method for announcing his presence. When Lakshmi blows into the conch shell, it announces auspicious moments, and calls abundance upon whomever hears it.

Many Hindu weddings refer to the love between Vishnu and Lakshmi, as it is seen as the most prosperous kind of pairing.

THE ANIMAL WHISPERER

In all of her forms, Lakshmi shows a pure affection for animals. She is able to speak to all creatures, often communicating with them to learn news from far off lands all over the world.

ELEPHANTS AND OWLS AS SYMBOLS OF PROSPERITY

Some of Lakshmi's closest companions are elephants. In India, elephants are a symbol of prosperity and assured success. Similarly to how Lakshmi is often decked out in jewels, her elephants are usually depicted beautifully decorated. Elephant figurines are believed to invoke the power of Lakshmi, and can be kept in your home to encourage abundance and prosperity.

Similar to Vishnu riding on Garuda, Lakshmi also travels by way of bird—but her vehicle is a snowy white barn owl. These rare birds were often kept as pets by the extremely wealthy, and are seen as good omens of success and coming wealth throughout south Asia. Lakshmi's blessings of abundance are surely close by if a snowy owl is ever spotted.

The asana named for these animals are both quite rare—just like the rare, expensive jewels Lakshmi wears, and when performed, they invoke the goddess' blessings.



TEACHING ASANA WITH LAKSHMI

Just as it is rare for us to surrender to the universe's plan, Lakshmi's asana are rare movements that teach us to surrender and make room for abundance in our lives.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Today, we're going to focus on the theory of abundance. So often, we allow ourselves to be limited by our own fear and conditioning, when actually the universe has bigger dreams for us. The belief is that wealth, success, and prosperity are out there just waiting for us to surrender to the universe's plan, to allow abundance to flow into our lives. The goddess Lakshmi is the goddess of abundance, and we'll practice asana today that invoke Lakshmi, so that we can find the courage to manifest our abundance."

Set the intention to allow yourself to surrender to all the blessings the universe wants to give you. Know that you are worthy of them. And allow your heart to be grateful."



**Elephant Pose
(Gajasana)**

Later, from tadasana:

Gajasana: "To allow ourselves to access abundance, we sometimes need to stop imposing our own desire and will on every situation, so that we can surrender to the greater plan. Inhale, soften the knees and raise the arms overhead. With the exhale, allow yourself to surrender deeply into the forward fold, laying the chest on the thighs.

Now take opposite elbow in opposite hand and just allow yourself to hang, like an elephant's trunk. Elephants are a symbol of prosperity, and are always close to the goddess Lakshmi. Allow yourself to sway from side to side, surrendering to the universe."

Ulukasana: "Lakshmi, our goddess of abundance, rides on her companion, a rare snowy white owl. We'll take owl pose to invoke her power. Inhale the arms overhead, and exhale the hands down through heart center as you bend the knees deeply and come into a toe balance squat. Now we open ourselves to abundance by inhaling to take the knees out wide, and bring the arms out to your sides, palms up, asking for Lakshmi's blessings of prosperity."

Supta Baddha Konasana: "Lowering onto our backs, we can practice the same asana from reclined, in supta baddha konasana, reclined bound angle pose—to increase our ability to surrender to abundance. Let's prop the upper back up with a bolster, to open our hearts wide for prosperity to flow in. Inhale and let the knees butterfly open, soles of the feet together. Visualize a golden light of abundance flowing into your heart in this pose."



Owl Pose (Ulukasana)



**Reclined Bound Angle Pose
(Supta Baddha Konasana)**



Shankha Mudra

In closing (after savasana):

Shankha mudra: "We'll close by forming the conch shell mudra with our hands. When Lakshmi blows into her conch shell, it is said that prosperity will come to all who hear it. Place your right thumb across your left palm, and close the four left fingers over the thumb. Now touch the tip of the left thumb to the right pointer finger."

Let's chant three "aums" together, like the sound of the conch shell, and allow our abundance to flourish, followed by Lakshmi's mantra: **Aum Shrim Hrim Maha Lakshmi Namaha.**

RAMA & HANUMAN

THE MONKEY-FACED SAVIOR

HANUMAN ASANA

- VIRASANA (HERO'S POSE)
- HANUMANASANA (SPLITS)
- ANJANEYASANA (LOW LUNGE)

HANUMAN MANTRA

- HANUMAN CHALISA
- JAI SITA RAM
- BIJA MANTRA: "RAM"
- LOKAH SAMSTAH

HANUMAN CHAKRAS

- ANAHATA (HEART)
- AJNA (THIRD EYE)

HANUMAN MUDRA

- ABHAYA MUDRA

HANUMAN, THE VANARA (MONKEY) GOD WHO LEFT ACROSS OCEANS TO SAVE SITA FROM THE DEMON RAVANA, REPRESENTING GENEROSITY, LOVE, AND SELFLESSNESS--AND RAMA, HIS LORD.



WHO IS RAMA?

One of Vishnu's most famous avatars (incarnations) is Lord Rama, whose story is told in the epic story, The Ramayana. This story has been told and re-told with many variations, and the art created from it is endless--once you hear it, you will see shadows of it in pop culture across the world, as that's how far its impact reaches.

Rama was an exceedingly kind and gracious king who incarnated to destroy a host of demons and restore dharma to the world. Rama was married to the beautiful princess Sita, who was, of course, an incarnation of Lakshmi.

They were set to rule the kingdom happily, until Rama's jealous stepmother had them banished into the forest for 14 years, in the hopes that her son would become king instead. Rama's loving brother, Lakshmana, accompanied Rama and Sita into exile.



After years in the woods, the ten-headed demon Ravana spotted Sita and fell in love with her. As Lakshmi, Sita loved animals immensely, so Ravana had one of his demons take the form of a beautiful golden deer to trick her. Sita was amazed by the deer, and sent Rama out into the woods to catch it for her. Lakshmana stayed behind to protect Sita, but once Rama was out of their sight, the demon made a cry of pain in Rama's voice—thinking Rama was hurt, Sita demanded Lakshmana go and save him.



This is how the demon Ravana got Sita alone to kidnap her, without anyone knowing where she had gone or who had taken her.

WHO IS HANUMAN?

Distraught and not knowing what to do, Rama searched desperately for his wife. Eventually, the brothers came upon some vanaras (monkey-like deities)—one in particular, named Hanuman, was exceedingly wise, and he recognized Rama as an avatar of Vishnu. He vowed to do whatever it took to help Lord Rama find his beloved wife, knowing that he was helping God. That day, Hanuman pledged absolute love and loyalty to Rama and Sita, and he goes down in history as the most dearly beloved companion, friend, and servant of Lord Rama.



REMEMBERING OUR DIVINITY

Hanuman teaches us love, loyalty, and selflessness, but also to remember our divinity. Hanuman's father is Vayu, the god of the wind, and Hanuman has the ability to ride on the wind. As a child, he saw the sun in the sky and wanted it—so he leapt up, high enough to catch it. Surya, the sun god, struck him down, and cursed him with the inability to remember his divinity. Though he was the son of the wind God and a deity himself, he could never remember it—like us, he only got glimpses of his own divinity.

One story, from the Vaishnavist saint Tulsidas' re-telling of the Ramayana, tells the tale of Hanuman and Rama's first meeting. Having never seen a vanara before, Lord Rama gave Hanuman a quizzical look and asked, "What are you, a monkey or a man?" Hanuman, already recognizing Rama as the great god Vishnu, bowed his head reverently, folded his hands and said, "When I do not know who I am, I serve You, and when I do know who I am, You and I are One."

HANUMAN TO THE RESCUE

Had Hanuman remembered that he was the son of the wind God, he would have known his own powers. But to help Rama rescue Sita, the humble Hanuman had to act solely on faith. So Hanuman simply knelt down in prayer—the kneeling asana called **hero's pose (virasana)** is named for this moment.

After his prayer, Hanuman knew that all he had to do was take a leap of faith, and Vayu, the wind, would take him to wherever Sita was hidden.

Through his prayers, Hanuman had grown as large as a mountain. He took a massive split-legged leap (**Hanumanasana**) that took him across the ocean, from India to Lanka (modern day Sri Lanka). This was the demon Ravana's kingdom.

Hanuman was able to sneak over to where Sita was kept prisoner, to tell her that Rama would soon be coming with a whole army of vanara (monkeys) to rescue her.

With the ocean god (Varuna's) blessing, Hanuman returned and instructed the monkeys to build a floating bridge across the ocean. The entire vanara army was able to cross, with Rama and Lakshmana at their lead. An epic battle between good and evil—between the vanaras and the demons—ensued, and eventually, Ravana was killed, and Rama's beloved Sita was saved.



HANUMAN'S HEART

With Sita rescued, they returned to their kingdom, and Rama took his rightful place on the throne.

In Tulsidas' telling of the Ramayana, he describes a scene that inspired the pose **anjaneyasana** (Anjaneya is another name for Hanuman), and is depicted in many pieces of Hanuman art all around India.

The story has it that, after Sita was saved and returned safely home, Rama and Sita wanted to offer Hanuman thanks for all of his help in the battle. So they formally presented him with jewels and pearls, but instead of accepting the gifts of thanks, Hanuman began chewing on them instead (he is a monkey, after all). When asked what he was doing,

he responded by saying that he was searching for Rama and Sita in the pearls, because without their presence, they were valueless.

Those who witnessed this mocked him and said, "well, what about your own heart then? Is it valueless without their presence?"

So Hanuman knelt before them (anjaneyasana) and opened his chest to show them his heart: in some tellings, their names, "Rama and Sita" appear on his heart, and in others, their images.

In this way, the Hanuman asana inspire us to send love from our hearts to our loved ones, because they reside in our hearts always.



TEACHING ASANA WITH HANUMAN

The love and loyalty shown in the Ramayana story lends itself to a beautiful heart-opening asana class.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Today we'll focus on love, by sending metta (loving-kindness) to the world. Because we can only serve from a full cup, we'll start by sending loving kindness to ourselves."

Virasana: "Come into a kneeling position, and bring your hands together in prayer in front of your heart. This is called hero's pose, inspired by the monkey-faced deity Hanuman, known for his faith and his large heart. Bow your head, and feel the sensation of love within your heart space. Send it to yourself—to all the parts of yourself, even the hidden parts, even the dark parts."



**Hero's Pose
(Virasana)**

As a monkey, Hanuman often forgot that he was a god. As humans, we too, often forget our divinity. We'll set the intention today to connect with that sacred place of love within ourselves, so that we can better serve ourselves and others."

Later, after warming up with plenty of hamstring stretches:

Hanumansana: "From downward dog, step one leg forward into a low-lunging pose—front knee stacked above ankle, back leg internally rotating. We'll find two poses named after Hanuman, to send loving kindness to others. Inhale the arms overhead. In the Hanuman story, when Rama's wife, Sita was kidnapped by the demon Ravana, Hanuman vowed to save her—he took a leap of faith across the ocean to find her. Exhale and lower the hands to frame the foot, then shift the hips straight back, so that you can bow over the front leg."



Half Hanumansana

This pose is half Hanumansana, named for Hanuman's leap of faith—as you exhale to deepen into this pose, imagine someone in your life who you care for greatly, who you would be willing to take a leap for. Picture their face in your mind's eye. Let's flow through this pose with low-lunge: inhaling to come back into low lunge, and exhaling to half-Hanumansana. If you feel loose and open today, you can slide the front heel forward into full Hanumansana on the last repetition."



**Full Hanumansana
(Front Splits/Monkey Pose)**



**Low-lunge
(Anjaneyasana)**

Anjaneyasana: "Now rise back to low lunge pose, anjaneyasana, with your next inhale. This pose is also named after Hanuman. After he saved Sita, Rama and Sita tried to thank him by giving him gold and jewels. But Hanuman refused them—he knelt down in this pose and told them that he would gladly do anything for them, because their names were written on his heart. He opened his chest to show them, and there on his heart were their names: Sita Ram."

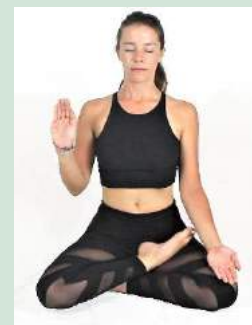
Exhale and bring your arms behind you, interlacing the fingers. Drawing the knuckles towards the ground, inhale as you open your heart. Imagine your loved one again—picture their smile, their laugh, and smile with them. And as you send love from your heart to that person, imagine that their name is written on your heart."

Repeat on the other side with another loved one in your life."

In closing (after savasana):

Abhaya mudra: "From seated, place your left hand on your left knee, open palm facing up, and your right hand facing out in blessing. Hanuman is often pictured in this mudra: from the right hand, we send loving kindness to the entire universe. From the left, we receive love, allowing universal source love to fill us—creating an energetic circle of love and kindness."

Let's chant together: **Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu.** May All Beings Be Happy, and May My Happiness Raise the Happiness of Others."



KRISHNA

THE PLAYFUL, FUN-LOVING, LIGHT-HEARTED AVATAR OF VISHNU WHO STOLE ENOUGH HEARTS TO CREATE A WHOLE MOVEMENT.

THE ESSENCE OF JOY AND BHAKTI

KRISHNA ASANA

- BALASANA (CHILD'S POSE)
- GOMUKHASANA (COW-FACE POSE)
- MAYURASANA (PEACOCK POSE)
- DHANURASANA (BOW POSE)

KRISHNA MANTRA

- MAHAMANTRA (HARE KRISHNA/RAMA)
- GOVINDA GOPALA

KRISHNA CHAKRAS

- ANAHATA (HEART)
- VISHUDDA (THROAT)
- AJNA (THIRD EYE)
- SAHASRARA (CROWN)



WHO IS KRISHNA?

You've probably seen people dressed in orange robes, dancing and twirling and chanting "hare Krishna"—even on the streets of major western cities. The deity they are invoking is Sri Krishna, and their lighthearted singing and dancing fits him well.

Chronologically, Krishna was the 8th avatar of Vishnu, the next reincarnation after Lord Rama. This is why Hare Krishnas also chant "Hare Rama"—their prayers go to all incarnations of Vishnu. Devotees of Krishna have often chosen the path of bhakti yoga—one of joyful worship through art, dance, and song.

LILA: THE COSMIC PLAY

Krishna is well known for his playfulness—for singing, dancing, joking, and making love. He spreads joy everywhere he goes, and joy emanates from those who speak and sing his name. The term "lila" in Sanskrit means the cosmic play—the playfulness of life, and the understanding that this illusory life is just a game—and Krishna embodied this concept in all he did. Even those who knew he was the avatar of Vishnu often forgot, because he was so lighthearted—so different from the serious expectations of a God.

KRISHNA AND BALARAMA AS CHILDREN

One story tells of Krishna and his brother, Balarama, playing as children. The young Krishna decided to play a prank on his brother by eating a handful of mud to freak him out. Balarama went running to their mother to tell on Krishna, and for her to help get the mud out of his mouth. Krishna's mother rushed over, but when she opened Krishna's mouth, instead of mud, she could see the entire universe in his throat. Balarama ran and hid—so our child's pose is named after him (**balasana**).



KRISHNA IN VRINDAVAN

As one of the most popular modern deities, there are innumerable legends and myths about Krishna, especially during his time growing up in Vrindavan. Vrindavan was an exceedingly beautiful place filled with peacocks (this is why Krishna is always shown with a peacock feather) where Krishna was free to play music on his flute, dance, and charm the villagers. He worked as a simple cow-herder at this time, winning the affection of all the milk-maids (gopis), but most importantly, of his true love, Radha. Krishna was said to be able to multiply himself, in order to fully love all of his devotees—there are stories of him dancing and making love with all of the gopis, while still keeping Radha Rani completely happy and satisfied.

THE DIVINITY OF COWS

Cows are considered holy in Hinduism because they are symbols of Lord Krishna. This is why most Hindus are vegetarian, or at least refrain from eating beef. "Go" means cow in Sanskrit, and Krishna is often referred to as Gopala (cow herder) or Govinda (protector of the cows.)



Because Krishna always acted so calm and casual, Brahma one day decided to test him, to see if he remembered that he really was God, and to see if he was always able to keep his peaceful demeanor.

As a challenge, Brahma stole all of Krishna's cows from his field, and hid them, along with all the other cowherders, in a cave.

When Brahma returned to the field to see Krishna's reaction, he expected to see Krishna in a rage. Instead, Krishna was happily herding his cows—all of his cows, and all of the other cow-herders, were still there!

Confused, Brahma checked the cave—but the cows were there too, exactly where he'd hidden them. How could they be both places at once?

Legend has it that Krishna duplicated himself, and took the form of both the cows and the herders, so that when Brahma stole them, he actually just stole copies of Krishna, and the real cows remained at peace.

Gomukhasana, or cow-face pose, is named after this story. In cow-face pose, though the legs are in a twist, the upper body remains calm and open—the cow face is like Krishna's poker face. This pose teaches us to remain light and joyful, even when the world seems twisted and chaotic.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA & ARJUNA

After all the fun and games in Vrindavan, it was time for Krishna to fulfill the true purpose of his incarnation. Vishnu always takes the form of an avatara to ensure that dharma is fulfilled on Earth, and Krishna's story is no different. This is the tale of the Bhagavad Gita, which is part of the larger Mahabharata, one of the foundational holy books of Hinduism.

In Krishna's lifetime, the world was on the verge of battle between two opposing groups of cousins battling over their right to the throne—one group was good and holy, and the other dark and evil. Krishna's cousin, Arjuna, was the world's greatest archer, and he was on the side of good.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna serves as the charioteer for Arjuna, riding him into battle, and encouraging him whenever he became discouraged. Arjuna's heart was so pure that he began having doubts about whether he could kill his cousins, even in the name of dharma. Krishna talked him through his crisis, explaining that we often have to do difficult things in the name of peace on earth. Krishna taught him that there are many different paths that can be taken to reach divinity, but that all are divine if done as acts of love.

This is the text from where we get the understanding of the "paths" of yoga-- Karma yoga (the path of service), jnana yoga (the path of knowledge or wisdom), raja yoga (the path of meditation) or Bhakti yoga (the path of devotion or love). You can choose your path based on your nature, and all paths lead to the divine.

The **dhanurasana** poses (bow and wheel pose) are named for the archer Arjuna and the existential crisis that Krishna helped him through in the Bhagavad Gita. Like an arrow leaving the bow string, when we choose our path, we must surrender and trust that it will take us where we need to go.



TEACHING ASANA WITH KRISHNA

Krishna's asana are a opportunities to explore lila—the playfulness of life.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "The Sanskrit word "lila" means cosmic play—it refers to the idea that everything in the physical world is a game that we play—and we generally take it way too seriously. The lighthearted god Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, taught us that to enjoy the game, we must stop asserting so much of our will onto life, and instead just go with the flow, and have fun."

Balasana: "Let's come into balasana, child's pose, and set the intention to be more like children, even if just for today. In a famous story about Krishna, his brother had accused him of eating mud, but when their mother looked in his mouth, instead of mud, she saw the entire universe in his throat. Even when life gives us mud, if we can approach it with a fun-loving child's heart, we can turn mud into miracles."



**Child's pose
(Balasana)**

Later, in asana:

Gomukhasana: "Now we'll find cow-face pose, another pose named after Krishna. Cross your right leg over left at the knee. The term "maya" in Sanskrit means "illusion"—it refers to the illusion that our egos create by attaching us to our own perception of the world. Imagine the crossed legs in this pose represent that illusion, twisted and confused. Now inhale the arms out to the sides, and exhale to bend the elbows, drawing the left elbow up and right elbow down, so the fingers meet at the center of the back."

Though the legs are in a state of maya, the face and heart remain open and pure. When we can see that life is all just lila, we can see through the maya.

Let's do this again on the other side. One of Krishna's tricks was to use "maya" to take on the form of any person or animal he wanted. Cows are sacred in India, because Krishna was a cow-herder, and at times, he would transform himself into the shape of a cow. No matter what shape he took, he still remained pure—leading through life with the heart."



**Cow-Face Pose
(Gomukhasana)**



**Peacock pose
(Mayurasana)**

Mayurasana: (after warming up the wrists): "In an effort to approach life in a more fun and child-like way, we'll try peacock pose as a peak pose. Peacocks' seemingly impractical feathers are another sign of lila—stunning beauties that provide such joy when we see them. Peacocks are symbols of Krishna, and he's always surrounded by them. From all fours, turn your fingers backward, and bending your elbows, taking them as low down the belly as you can, and shifting your weight forward. See if you can start to lean your weight forward onto the elbows, and perhaps inhale to lift one or both legs off the ground. Allow yourself

to be light, like Krishna, and to have fun with a new pose."

Dhanurasana: "Poses like peacock that strongly engage the core help to prepare our bodies for backbends. Krishna's youth was filled with fun and games, but it prepared him for his true purpose in the Bhagavad Gita, which was to get the archer Arjuna through the epic battle between good and evil. Bow pose represents Arjuna's bow. By lying on your belly, exhale to bend the knees, and take hold of your ankles. With your inhale, lift the legs and the chest off the ground, opening your heart. Feel the sense of opening to your true purpose here—how being light and filled with childlike wonder can open us up to our true path."



**Bow pose
(Dhanurasana)**

In closing (after savasana):

"Let's chant together three rounds of the Mahamantra, the Hare Krishna mantra. **"Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare."**



DESTRUCTION

SHIVA

THE DESTROYER

THE WILD DEITY WHO SERVES AS THE “DESTROYER” IN THE HINDU TRIMURTI, BRINGING ABOUT THE ENDING OF TIMES, AND NEW BEGINNINGS.

SHIVA ASANA

- NATARAJASANA (KING DANCER)
- VIRABHADRASANA 1, 2, 3 (WARRIORS)
- BHUJANGASANA (COBRA)
- SURYA NAMASKAR B

SHIVA MANTRA

- OM NAMAH SHIVAYA

SHIVA CHAKRAS

- MANIPURA (SOLAR PLEXUS)
- VISHUDDA (THROAT)
- AJNA (THIRD EYE)

SHIVA MUDRA

- RUDRA MUDRA
- SHIVA LINGA MUDRA



WHO IS SHIVA?

Shiva (or Siwa in Bali) is known as the destroyer in the Hindu trinity, a title that perhaps sounds scarier than it actually is. On the spiritual path, there are many things that we may seek to destroy—fear, self-doubt, ego, addiction, cancer cells—destruction is not always a bad thing, and it keeps the world in balance and harmony. Shiva famously holds a trident (trishula), which symbolizes the destruction of three worlds—the world of the past, the physical world, and the world of maya (illusions created by our minds).

Shiva is often portrayed wearing animal skins, with long, wild hair, and a **cobra** around his neck. Cobras typically symbolize abhinivesa, the fear of death, and Shiva wearing one shows that he is a conqueror of death, immune to its inevitability. Shiva has a blue throat and wears a crescent moon in his hair—he once saved the world from being poisoned by drinking the poison himself, which left his throat blue and gave him a terrible fever, so the moon volunteered to stay on Shiva's head to help cool him down.

In a lot of art, you can also see the Ganges River flowing onto Shiva's head—legend has it that when the goddess of the Ganges decided to come down to earth from Devaloka, she was so strong and powerful that her landing on earth from heaven would destroy the world. Only Shiva was strong enough to catch her fall and lower her down gently.

As mentioned in the prologue of this text, Shiva is said to have discovered the messages of Yoga to help alleviate the world's suffering, and as such, he is often portrayed in deep meditation on top of Mt. Kailash, his home. In Bali, the volcano Mt. Agung is believed to be a representation of Mt. Kailash, and Siwa is said to reside there.

Commonly, japa mala meditation beads are made from **rudraksha seeds**, which are named after Shiva. Rudra is another name for the destroyer deity, and “aksha” means tears. When Shiva came out of a deep meditation, he was so moved that he cried, and where the tears hit the soil, the first Rudraksha tree grew. The seeds have been referred to as “Shiva's tears” ever since, and are commonly used for mantra.



SAMSARA & THE COSMIC DANCE

Shiva is also often portrayed dancing in a ring of fire that symbolizes the inevitable cycle of life and death, called samsara. Samkhya philosophy talks about purusha (the eternal source energy) and prakriti (everything else—all physical matter, but also our temporary and ever-changing thoughts, emotions, and personalities). All prakriti is subject to this cycle of life and death (anicca: impermanence), and Shiva dances through this cycle, bringing about endings and new beginnings.

You may notice him dancing on a small person, or a dwarf. The small person symbolizes the smallness of our ignorance when we mistake that which is temporary for that which is permanent.

All cycles, all endings and new beginnings, are a part of this cosmic dance, this samsara, and Shiva is its King. This is where **natarajasana** (king dancer pose) gets its name.



THE VIRABHADRA STORY

The story of the Warrior poses is an epic one.

During one particular lifetime, Shiva was in love with Sati, an incarnation of his counterpart, Shakti. But Sati's father, the king Daksha, didn't want them to be together. Even after the two were married, Daksha continued to slight Shiva whenever possible.

One day, King Daksha threw a party at his palace and invited all the other deities but Shiva. This was the final straw for Sati.

Sati showed up at the palace in the middle of the party, angry tears streaming down her face. She stood in front of her father, Daksha, and with all of his party guests watching, yelled at him for offending her husband, Shiva. In her anger, Sati burst into flames and fell to ashes at her father's feet.

At this moment, Shiva was still sitting in meditation atop Mt. Kailash. But so strong was his connection with Sati, that he could feel she had died in her father's palace, and he assumed Daksha had killed her. In his rage, Shiva ripped one of his dreadlocks out and threw it into the mountain below him. The lock of hair became a snake that slithered into the earth, tunneling until it came to just beneath the palace where Daksha sat in grief at his daughter's death. The snake rose out of the ground in front of Daksha, and as it did, it formed the shape of a fierce warrior named Virabhadra—a sword raised overhead, one leg extended behind, the front knee bent (**warrior 1** pose).

Swiftly, Virabhadra took his sword and chopped off Daksha's head (**warrior 2** pose). He then picked up the head, and in front of all the party guests, planted the head on a stake (**warrior 3** pose). This started an incredible battle.

Sati's soul, now watching from heaven, saw all of this happen, and to make it stop, she reincarnated, and told Shiva the truth: her father hadn't killed her, she had killed herself in rage!

Upon hearing his mistake, Shiva immediately replaced Daksha's head with the head of a goat, and brought him back to life.

Surprisingly, Daksha was so impressed with Shiva's willingness to do anything for Sati—even starting an epic battle—that he forgave Shiva and became one of his most devoted followers for the rest of his life.



TEACHING ASANA WITH SHIVA

When we take the shape of the Shiva poses in asana class, we feel our solar plexus chakra stimulated. This is the body's power and fire center. Just taking these poses allows us to embody Shiva's courageousness and willingness to fight for love.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Shiva is the destroyer in Hindu mythology, bringing about the end of destructive cycles. We'll find poses inspired by Shiva in today's class, including the warrior poses, which activate our solar plexus chakra, making them like "power stances" to increase our confidence. Take this moment to reflect and set an intention for class, to find the courage and strength within yourself to overcome any harmful cycles that you may notice repeating in your life. Like Shiva, we'll destroy those negative patterns, and replace them with more positive, uplifting ones."

Later, from tadasana:

Virabhadrasana 1: "When Shiva believed his love had been murdered, he summoned the warrior Virabhadra to vanquish her. Step one leg back into warrior 1 pose. This is the position Virabhadra took when he rose up out of the ground, sword in hand, to confront Sati's murderer.



Warrior 1

Warrior 2

Warrior 3

Virabhadrasana 2: Now exhale to warrior 2. This is Virabhadra chopping off his head.

Virabhadrasana 3: Inhale back to warrior 1, squaring the hips forward. Now exhale to lift off into warrior 3. This is Virabhadra planting the murderer's head on a stake for all to see.

Return to tadasana. Now, as you know, we practice ahimsa (non-harming) in yoga. But you can think of this story as symbolism for having the courage to fight for love. Let's repeat on the other side, and really feel how these poses stimulate the solar plexus chakra to help you find that strength."

Back in tadasana:

Natarajasana: "The cycle of life and death that Shiva controls is called samsara—Shiva dances through the cycle, unaffected by it, bringing about the changing of times. Like Shiva, we'll find dancer's pose, and again notice the courage and power within your solar plexus."



Dancer's Pose (Natarajasana)



Cobra (Bhujangasana)

Later, from lying prone:

Bhujangasana: "In Hindu mythology, cobras symbolize the fear of death, and Shiva wears one around his neck to show that he is the master over death. As we raise into this pose, again notice the courage of Shiva reflected within your own body, as you rise above fear."

In closing (after savasana):

Rudra mudra: For our last few shared breaths, let's take a mudra with our fingers to seal in the power of Shiva. Take the tips of your thumb, pointer, and ring fingers together, with the pinky and middle fingers extended. Place the hands on your knees, palm up, and remind yourself of your intention. What cycle in your life are you breaking? With each new inhale, feel yourself released from that cycle, and we'll chant together: **Aum Namah Shivaya.**



Rudra mudra

SHAKTI

THE DIVINE FEMININE

SHAKTI IS THE DYNAMIC FEMININE ENERGY IN US ALL. IN HER MANY FORMS (PARVATI, DURGA, KALI) SHE PERSONIFIES BOTH THE NURTURING NATURE OF THE MOTHER, AND THE FIERCE DESTRUCTIVE FORCE OF HER COUNTERPART, SHIVA.

SHAKTI ASANA

- BADDHA VIRABHADRASANA (HUMBLE WARRIOR)
- SIMHASANA (LION POSE)
- UTKATA KONASANA (GODDESS SQUAT)

SHAKTI MANTRA

- ADI SHAKTI MANTRA
- JAI JAGADAMBE

SHAKTI CHAKRAS

- SVADISTHANA (SACRAL)
- MANIPURA (SOLAR PLEXUS)
- ANAHATA (HEART)

SHAKTI MUDRA

- ADI SHAKTI MUDRA
- DURGA MUDRA
- KALI MUDRA
- SHIVA LINGA MUDRA



WHO IS SHAKTI (PARVATI)?

A hallmark of Hindu philosophy is the understanding that the world is not just black and white, good and evil, but that all shades exist in between. You can see this reflected even in the textiles of Bali, where white and black checkered fabrics represent the balance between the dark and the light. The same is true for the masculine and feminine.

Like all "consort" relationships of the dewas, Shiva and Shakti are shades of the same deity. Just as we all have some balance between our own masculine and feminine energies, Shiva and Shakti represent the masculine and feminine energies in all things. We work to keep them in balance. When the Shiva energy is over-active, it may manifest as anger, violence, and aggression—when the Shakti energy is out of balance, it may manifest as meekness, shyness, or a suffering from emotional fluctuations. Only when both are in balance can there be peace and harmony.

Shakti goes by many names and is manifested in many different incarnations, including Parvati, Uma, Durga, Sati, and Kali. Just as there are branches of Hinduism in India that consider Shiva or Vishnu to be the supreme deities, there is also a branch called Shaktism which regards the Mother Goddess as the supreme being.

THE LOVE STORY OF SHIVA AND SHAKTI

As Shiva's great love, Shakti is usually referred to as Parvati, the beautiful, soft nurturing side to Shiva's wild, fierce, destruction. Though they seem like opposites, their love is that of equals, as they are actually one in the same. This love of seemingly opposite equals teaches us to help each other grow, to teach each other to access the full spectrum of ourselves, but to love without attachment or condition. Our relationships are always changing, though the connection is eternal, so we mustn't hold on too tightly. The balance of Shiva/Shakti Love is to find deep love and connection without causing suffering through attachment or the need to control or change those we love.

Peter Clifford of Anahata Yoga teaches a style of dance-like asana he learned while living in the Himalayas. They perform a series of asana that takes a softer, more Shakti-inspired approach to warrior 1, using **humble warrior**, inspired by the love of Shiva and Shakti. In this flow, Shiva says to Shakti:

"I seek the strength to join with you. I open my heart to you without any expectation. I give you all my love without any conditions. I honor our love, and will do nothing to harm it."

The asana for this love story are included in the script in the green "Teaching Script Suggestion" box.

The beauty of this love is in both its strength and softness, the power and humility, and most importantly, the selflessness and compassion—loving without asking for anything in return.



MA DURGA

It's impossible to mention strong feminine energy without mentioning mothers. Durga is Shakti as the powerful mother warrior, who rides into battle on lions and tigers to defeat enemies of dharma.

THE MOTHER LION

The powerful Durga was first summoned with her lion to slaughter the demon Mahisashura who was wreaking havoc on the heavens.

Simha means "lion" in Sanskrit. Imagine the ferocity of a mother lion when her children are in danger; this is the powerful feminine energy of Ma Durga.

When we use **lion's breath** or take **simhasana**, we can feel the power of the mighty mother goddess, Durga.

KALI

In her fiercest form, the warrior goddess Durga becomes Kali, the blood-thirsty demon slayer. This happens only when Shakti is pushed to the edge, filled with a ferocity necessary to return dharma (goodness) to the world.

THE DEMON-SLAYER

Wild with rage, Kali's tongue hangs out of her head as she wields her sword in battle.

Usually portrayed as dark blue or black, Kali wears the skulls of the demons she's slayed around her neck. We invoke Kali to help kill our own inner demons, or to destroy our egos.

In one famous story, Kali manifested to slaughter a particularly pesky group of demons who were tormenting the people of earth. She killed so many that eventually Shiva came down to stop her, to ensure she didn't upset the natural balance of good and evil. As she rampaged, Shiva laid down amongst the corpses, and Kali accidentally stepped on him. When she realized she had stepped on her love, she snapped out of her rage and became the sweet and loving Parvati once again.

Our **goddess squat**, *utkata konasana*, is named for the goddess Kali, as *utkata* means "fierce."



SHAKTI RISING

The phrase "Shakti Rising" is used more and more in the modern day to refer to the cultural shift away from patriarchy towards greater equanimity. Rising Shakti energy is not just about women becoming more empowered, but also men finding greater access to the Shakti energies within themselves as well. As both men and women become more balanced in their Shiva and Shakti energies, the world as a whole will become more harmonious. The collective consciousness experiencing a Shakti Rising allows for greater peace and understanding among all beings.

TEACHING ASANA WITH SHAKTI

A class inspired by Shiva and Shakti may incorporate a number of opposing movements: backbends to forward folds, side-to-side laterals and twists, to show the principles of balance and harmony.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "Today's focus is on balance: between light and dark, masculine and feminine, soft and strong. In yoga, there is an understanding that the world is not just black and white, but that all opposing forces work in balance. The deities Shiva and Shakti represent the divine masculine and feminine, and we try to find balance between those two energies within ourselves."

Adi Shakti mudra: "Wrap the pointer and middle fingers around the thumb. Then bringing your hands together in front of your heart, touch the tips of the ring and pointer fingers together. This is Shakti mudra. We'll honor the goddess Shakti today by raising our divine feminine energy to find balance and harmony in our lives."



Adi Shakti Mudra

Later, from *tadasana*:

Humble Warrior Flow: "The love between Shiva and Shakti is an example for us all of how balancing the energies within ourselves can produce unconditional love. This flow represents that love, so notice the energy of the heart chakra as we flow through."

First, step one leg back, planting the heel to 45 degrees. Now inhale to raise the arms and bend the front knee, Warrior 1 pose. Now exhale, bring the arms wide behind you, and interlace the fingers. Inhale, and point the pointer fingers down to the ground, drawing the shoulder blades together and opening the chest.

Now exhale and fold forward, leading with the chest in humble warrior. Inhale, release the fingers and rise back to warrior 1. We'll repeat this a few times with the breath, until you get used to the flow.

(On 4th and 5th repetition):
"This is Shiva's love poem to Shakti. Shiva says:

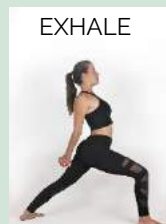


Goddess Squat
(Utkata Konasana)



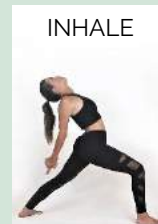
INHALE

"I seek the strength to join with you."



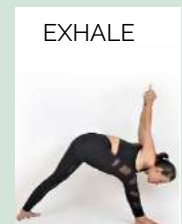
EXHALE

"I open my heart to you without any expectation."



INHALE

"I give you all my love without any conditions."



EXHALE

"I honor our love and will do nothing to harm it."

Goddess Squat: "Now step both legs wide, feet pointed out. Shakti's feminine power also manifests as the fierce demon-slayer Kali. Inhale the arms overhead, interlace the fingers and point the index fingers: this is **Kali mudra**, representing Kali's sword. Now exhale and bend the knees, coming into goddess squat. Feel the strength in this pose, and imagine yourself slaying your own demons—whatever causes suffering in your life."

In closing (after *savasana*):

Simha Breath: "Shakti also takes the form of the powerful mother goddess Durga, who rode into battle on a lion. Let's close our class by finding a few deep, cleansing lion's breaths. From kneeling, we can bring our hands into **Durga Mudra**, by making a fist with the thumb between the pointer and middle finger. Bring your mudra to your knees, palms facing up. Now inhale deeply, then stick out your tongue and let the head drop back as you exhale loudly like a lion. Repeat 3 times."



Durga Mudra

Lion (Simha)



Shiva Linga

Shiva Linga Mudra : Now take the left palm to face upward near your belly, and place your right fist in the palm, right thumb facing the sky. The left hand symbolizes Shakti and her nurturing, supportive nature. The right fist is the strength of Shiva, and together, this mudra helps us balance those two energies within us. Let's chant the **Adi Shakti Mantra:** *Adi Shakti, Adi Shakti, Adi Shakti, Namō Namō.*"

GANESHA

THE ELEPHANT DEITY, SON OF SHIVA & SHAKTI, WHO REMOVES ANY OBSTACLES FROM OUR SPIRITUAL PATH.

THE REMOVER OF OBSTACLES

GANESHA ASANA

- ARDHA CHANDRASANA (HALF MOON POSE)

GANESHA MANTRA

- BIJA MANTRA: GAM
- OM GAM GANAPATAYE NAMAHA

GANESHA CHAKRAS

- MULADHARA (ROOT)
- SAHASRARA (CROWN)

GANESHA MUDRA

- GANESHA MUDRA



WHO IS GANESHA?

Ganesha, the elephant-faced deity, is the remove of obstacles. He is invoked whenever there appears to be a barrier on our spiritual path. We are often cautioned to be careful what we remove, because a void is left in its place—if Ganesha removes an obstacle from our path, we must consider what should replace it.

Ganesha is usually depicted holding an axe, as a weapon for cutting away obstacles. He usually has a bowl filled with offerings of sweets, and a big belly to match. Ganesha is always missing one tusk—it's believed that the sage Vyasa dictated the "Mahabharata" story to Ganesha, who used his tusk as a pen to transcribe it. He also has a mouse at his feet—as Durga rides on a lion, Ganesha rides a mouse. Though he is a vast spiritual being, heavy and filled with sweets, he is light enough to balance on just a small mouse—in this way, Ganesha is particularly inspiring to people in Bali, where you'll see his statue everywhere, because he represents the balance between earthly pleasures and spirituality.

THE ELEPHANT HEAD

Ganesha is the son of Shiva and Shakti, and he didn't always have an elephant head. While Shiva was away for a long meditation, Parvati (an incarnation of Shakti) modeled Ganesha out of clay to be their son, and to protect her while she was alone. Ganesha took his duty as protector seriously: even when Shiva returned, Ganesha stood in his way, and would not let him see Parvati. Not knowing that Ganesha was his son, Shiva chopped off his head (a recurring bad habit of his). When Parvati saw what happened, she demanded Shiva make it right—again, the Shakti feminine energy balancing the Shiva masculine. So, just as he replaced Daksha's head with a goat's, he replaced Ganesha's with an elephant's.



THE PHASES OF THE MOON

One evening, Ganesha was riding home on his mouse after eating all of his sweets and cakes. A snake slithered across the road and scared the mouse, and Ganesha fell off. When he hit the ground, his belly broke open, sweets scattering everywhere. The moon God, Chandra, glowing in the sky, had a good laugh at this, which angered Ganesha. While reaching to pick up his lost sweets, Ganesha furiously broke off his tusk and reached up to stab the Moon—one hand to the earth, one to the sky, balanced on one leg: our **Ardha Chandrasana** (half moon) pose. This legend is used to explain the moon's largest crater, as well as the origin of the phases of the moon: by stabbing the moon, Ganesha extinguished its light, which meant that the sun shone at full brightness for 24 hours a day, and everyone became restless. The gods begged Ganesha to make amends with

Chandra, so eventually they came to the agreement: the moon could shine again, but only at full light once a month—the full moon. At all other times, the moon is waxing and waning.

TEACHING ASANA WITH GANESHA

As the remover of obstacles, Ganesha gives us an opportunity to release whatever no longer serves us, and to find the resulting balance in what remains.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Intention for class: "For class today, we'll focus on releasing what no longer serves us on our path. You may have seen the elephant god Ganesha before. He is said to be the remover of obstacles, to clear our path from any blockages, so that we can more easily find peace and contentment.

Take this moment to reflect on anything that you see as an obstacle on your path: often, it's our own fear or self-doubt. But it could be anything.

Take an inhale and hold it for one count. Now let the air out very slowly. As you exhale, imagine the obstacle is leaving your life with the breath. Repeat that three times, watching the obstacle move further away from you.

Now imagine that obstacle is gone. What would you replace it with? If you let go of fear, maybe you're inviting in courage. If you release self-doubt, maybe you're acquiring self-love. As we move through our practice today, set the intention for each exhale to remove the obstacle from your life, and each inhale to invite in your fresh, new intention."

Later, from tadasana:

Ardha chandrasana: Ganesha removes the obstacles from our lives in order to maintain balance. Ganesha is even responsible for maintaining the balance of the moon's phases, and half-moon pose is named after Ganesha.

Step one leg straight back, and exhale to come into pyramid pose. In the story of the moon's phases, Ganesha was reaching down to the ground for some sweets he had lost.

Now inhale to lift the back leg off the ground, pressing back through the heel—take an exhale to see if you can find your balance here.

The moon god, Chandra, saw Ganesha grabbing his sweets, and laughed at him, so Ganesha broke off his tusk, reached up, and stabbed the moon. Inhale to reach one arm up to the sky, squaring the hips to the side. Imagine that, like Ganesha, you are stabbing all of the obstacles out of your life.

By stabbing the moon, Ganesha cursed it to only shine at full brightness once a month: for the full moon. So it's said that Ganesha controls the phases of the moon."

In closing (after savasana):

Ganesha mudra: "To close our class today and ensure all obstacles are removed, let's find Ganesha mudra, by taking the left hand in front of the heart, palm facing outward, and the right hand facing inward, gripping the fingers together. Imagine that obstacle is between your fingers—draw your elbows away from each other, as if you were trying to pull the fingers apart, crushing the obstacle between your fingers. Stay and breathe here, feeling the tension build.

Take a deep inhale, and we'll chant to Ganesha together: "**Om Gam Ganapataye Namaha.**" Now take one last deep inhale, and with the exhale, like a sigh of relief, release the hands, sending the obstacle far away from you.

Breathe in deeply your intention, and let guide you through the rest of your day."



**Half Moon Pose
(Ardha Chandrasana)**



Ganesha mudra



GURUS & GUIDES

SAGES & SAINTS

AND ARM BALANCES GALORE

MANY MODERN ARM BALANCING POSES ARE NAMED DIRECTLY AFTER VARIOUS SAGES, RISHIS, AND SAINTS IN HINDU MYTHOLOGY.

VASISTHA

Vasistha was a great sage and teacher of King Rama. When Rama was young, before he met Sita, he was feeling depressed and disillusioned with the world, so his father enlisted Vasistha's help. Vasistha taught him that the feeling of hopelessness is what often leads one to their spiritual awakening. Their conversation is written in the Yoga Vasistha.



VASISTHASANA: SIDE PLANK POSE

The pose goes from the closed-off, introverted plank, to a heart open side plank, the transformation from disillusionment to mukti, liberation.

VISHVAMITRA

Once, while Vasistha was meditating in the woods, the greedy king Vishvamitra appeared with his entire army. The kindly Vasistha provided food for all the men—an endless amount, produced by his magical cow. When Vishvamitra saw the cow, he challenged Vasistha to a battle, wanting to claim the cow as his own. But the yogi easily beat the King, and the King was inspired to study yoga to attain superpowers. Even though he gained many siddhis, Vishvamitra remained cruel and greedy, until he realized that each time, it set him back on his spiritual journey. Eventually, he realized his faults, and dedicated himself back to his studies, becoming a virtuous sage who even earned the respect of his former enemy, Vasistha.



VISHVAMITRASANA: FLYING SIDE PLANK SPLIT

This pose, which resembles Vasisthasana but with the lower leg raised in a split, is named for Vishvamitra because of the symbolism of picking yourself up after you fall—just as the top arm holds up the bottom leg. It also emphasizes the importance of dedicated sadhana, or spiritual practice.

ASTAVAKRA

Even in his mother's womb, the sage Astavakra was already so wise, that when he would hear his father mispronouncing mantras and Vedas, it would make him cringe so hard he twisted his body into 8 different angles, and he was born crippled; one wrong angle in the chest, neck, both hands, both feet, and both knees. When he grew up, he went to visit King Janaka's assembly (Janaka is the father of Sita from the Ramayana), as he was known for hosting men of great character and knowledge. When he arrived, everyone laughed at the sight of him. In sorrow, he lectured them all on their vanity, saying that they could never be great yogis. They were so embarrassed that King Janaka bowed down and became Astavakra's student.



ASTAVAKRASANA: EIGHT ANGLE POSE

In this arm balance, the body purposely takes on many unusually angles—the body is twisted, bent, and crossed in every way possible, representing the 8 angles of Astavakra.



KOUNDINYA

When the Buddha was born, his parents, the king and queen, had many sages come to predict his future. All predicted power and wealth, except for their most trusted sage, Koundinya, who said that Siddhartha would renounce the kingdom and all earthly goods, to lead more people than imaginable without ever sitting on a throne. Fearful of this prospect, Siddhartha's family shielded him from the world, hoping he wouldn't notice the suffering. Of course, he did, and when he did, he left and sought out Koundinya. Koundinya tried to teach him to be an ascetic, but the Buddha found the "middle way" instead, balance between worldly pleasure and asceticism, to alleviate suffering, and thus Buddhism was born. When he found Koundinya again, Koundinya immediately recognized him as the Enlightened one and began following him.



KOUNDINYASANA: FLYING SPLITS

In this pose, the split legs represent the way of the earthly pleasures and the way of asceticism, and we must find the balance between the two.

NATURE DEITIES

THE GODS WE CAN SEE AND FEEL

SOME OF THE MOST ANCIENT GODS WERE OBSERVED IN NATURE.



SURYA

The god of the Sun. **Surya Namaskar** (Sun Salutations) is a moving prayer to Surya.



CHANDRA

The Moon god. In Bali, the moon is considered a female goddess, but a male god in India. **Chandrasana**, high lunge, is an ode to the crescent moon.



VAYU

Vayu is the god of the wind Vayu is also the word used in yoga to describe the **movements of prana** within the body, because the energy circulates like the wind.



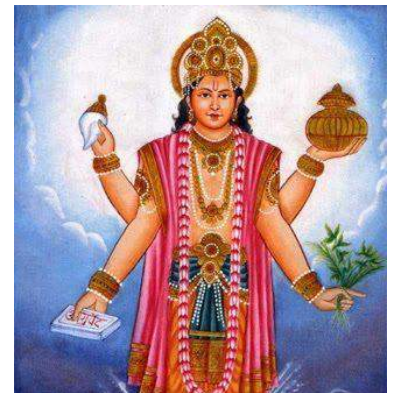
INDRA

The god of the heavens, rain, and weather.



VARUNA

The god of the ocean.



DHANVANTARI

The god of healing, plants, and herbal medicine, said to have founded Ayurveda.



AKASHA

Father Sky, another name of Indra.



BHUMI (PERTIWI)

The Mother Earth goddess.



AGNI

The god of fire.



INVOCATION OF PATANJALI – THE WRITER OF THE YOGA SUTRAS

“Yogena Cittasya
Padena Vacam
Malam Sarirasya Ca Vaidyakena
Yopakarottam Pravaram Muninam
Patanjalim
Pranajailiranato’smi”

- *Yogena*: science of yoga, *cittasya*: to purify the mind (*citta*); *pada*: words, & *vacca*: speech; *malam*: impurities, *sarirasya ca*: of the body (*sarira*); *vaidyakena*: science of health; *yopakarottam*: the expert at removing (*pakara*); *pravaram*: most exalted; *muninam*: sage; *Pranajali*: upright seated posture with folded hands, *anato’smi*: head bowed
- **“With the science of yoga to purify the mind, words, and speech, and the science of medicine to remove impurities from the body, He is the remover of impurities, and we bow to the most exalted sage Patanjali.”**

GURU STOTRAM – PRAISE TO THE TRINITY

“Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu
Gurur Devo Maheshwarah
Guru sakshat Para Brahma
tasmai Shri Gurave Namaha”

- *Gurur*: Guru; *Brahma*: Creator; *Vishnu*: Protector; *Devo*: the divine; *Maheshwarah*: the Destroyer; *Guru Sakshat*: the Guru is verily; *Para-Brahma*: the transcendental divinity (which is the very basis of all the three); *tasmai*: to that; *Shri*: glorious; *Guruve*: Guru; *Namaha*: my salutations.
- **“Our gurus, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, are one in transcendental divinity. Glory unto them.”**

GAYATRI MANTRA – PRAISE TO ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

“Om Bhur Bhuva Svah
Tat Savithur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
Dhyo Yo Nah Prachodhayat”

- *Om*: The primeval sound; *Bhur*: the physical; *Bhuvah*: the life force/mental realm *Suvah*: the soul/spiritual realm; *Tat*: That (God); *Savitur*: the Creator; *Varenyam*: adore; *Bhargo*: divine light; *Devasya*: supreme Lord; *Dhimahi*: meditate; *Dhiyo*: the intellect; *Yo*: May this light; *Nah*: our; *Prachodayat*: illumine/inspire.
- **“We meditate on that most adored Supreme Lord, the creator, whose divine light illumines all realms (physical, mental and spiritual). May this divine light illumine our intellect.”**

MAHAMANTRA (HARE KRISHNA) – PRAISE TO ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF VISHNU

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama Rama, Hare Hare”

- *Hare*: praise (to Krishna and Rama, avatars of Vishnu)

SARASWATI MANTRA – FOR CREATIVITY

“Om Aim Saraswatyai Namaha”

- *Aim*: Saraswati's seed mantra, *Saraswatyai*: Saraswati; *namaha*: word of praise
- **“Praise to Saraswati, goddess of knowledge and the arts.”**

LAKSHMI MANTRA – FOR PROSPERITY

“Om Shrim Klim Maha Lakshmi Namaha”

- *Shrim*: honored, *klim*: Lakshmi's seed mantra; *Maha Lakshmi*: supreme Lakshmi; *namaha*: word of praise
- **“Praise to supreme Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance and prosperity.”**

BABA HANUMAN – PRAISE TO HANUMAN, FOR GENEROSITY

“Jai Sita Ram, Jai Hanuman
Jaya Bajarangabale Baba Hanuman
Sankata Mochan Kripa Nidhan
Jai Sita Ram”

- *Jai/Jaya*: victory to; Sita and Ram are the prince and princess from the Ramayana, and Hanuman is the monkey god; *bajarangabale*: he who crosses over, *sankata*: danger; *mochan*: reliever of; *kripa*: grace, *nidhan*: wealth
- **“Hail to Sita, Rama, and Hanuman. He who crosses over, wise Hanuman, relieve our troubles, lead us to abundance and grace. Hail Sita and Rama.”**

LOKAH SAMASTAH – LOVING KINDNESS TO ALL

“Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu”

lokah = universe, *samastah* = all beings, *sukhino* = joy, *bhavantu* = may it be so, in unity

- **“May all beings in the universe be happy, and may my happiness increase the happiness of others.”**

JAI JAGADAMBE – PRAISE TO THE DIVINE FEMININE

“Jai Jai Jagadambe, Jai Ma Durga
Ma Kali Durgay Namoh Namah”

- *Jagadambe*: mother of the universe; *Durga*: goddess mother; *Kali*: demon-slaying goddess.
- **“Praise to the mother of the universe, the divine feminine in all her forms.”**

GANESHA MANTRA – TO REMOVE OBSTACLES IN OUR PATH

“Om Gam Ganapataye Namaha
Sharanam Ganesha”

- *Gam*: Ganesha's seed mantra; *ganapataye*: Ganesha' name in his youth; *sharanam*: shelter us
- **“May Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, protect us.”**

SHIVA MANTRA – TO DESTROY WHAT NO LONGER SERVES

“Om Namaha Shivaya”

- **“Praise to Lord Shiva, the destroyer.”**



YOGATROTTER



OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI
HARE OM