

THE GODS OF YOGA

THE DEITIES FOR WHOM THE YOGA ASANAS GOT THEIR NAMES - **PART 1**



VISHNU on his snake **ANANTA**



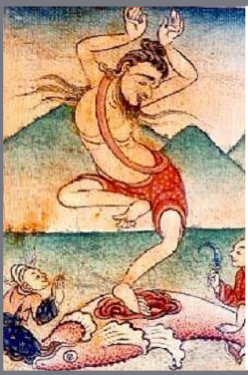
PATANJALI

PATANJALI

Born from Vishnu's snake, Ananta

- **LORD VISHNU**, the god who often comes down to earth to help restore dharma, lays in rest on his thousand-headed cobra, Ananta
- When a woman was praying for a child, Vishnu sent his snake Ananta down to fall ("pata") into her praying hands ("Anjali" mudra) to help teach the world Raja Yoga (the eight limbs). She named the half-snake, half-human child **PATANJALI**
- Sage Patanjali went on to compile the **Yoga Sutras**

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 1 Video**)



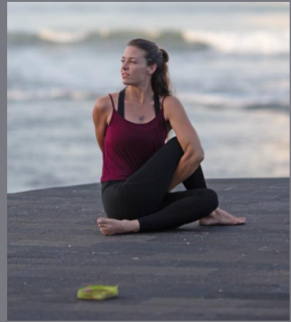
MATSYASANA : Fish Pose

SAGE MATSYENDRA

Lord of the Fishes

- **Matsyendra** was abandoned in the river as a baby, where he was eaten by a fish
- He grew up in the belly of the fish
- The fish one day took him to the bottom of the river, where he overheard **SHIVA** teaching hatha yoga to his goddess, **PARVATI**
- He started practicing yoga in the belly of the fish, until his heart grew so big that he was pulled out of the fish by his heart
- He then went on to be the first teacher of Hatha Yoga, leading the Nath Yogis
- **MATSYASANA**: named for the moment that Matsyendra was pulled out of the fish by his heart
- **MATSYENDRASANA**: The top of the body represents Matsyendra's open heart, and the legs represent the fishes fins

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 2 Video**)



MATSYENDRASANA : Lord of the Fishes Pose

THE TRIMURTI

The Holy Trinity



BRAHMA, VISHNU, & SHIVA

- The Trimurti (the holy trinity of Gods in Hinduism) is made up of:
- **BRAHMA**: the four-headed **creator**
- **VISHNU**: the **preserver** who rests on a 1,000 headed snake, and
- **SHIVA**: the **destroyer** who carries a trident and wears tiger skins

- The Tridevi (the holy trinity of Goddesses) is made up of:
- **SARASWATI**: the goddess of **knowledge** who plays a veena (stringed instrument)
- **LAKSHMI**: the goddess of **abundance** who is shown with gold pouring from her hand
- **SHAKTI/PARVATI**: the **divine feminine** mother goddess who is often shown with a lion or tiger

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 3 Video**)



LAKSHMI, SHAKTI, & SARASWATI



BRAHMASANA: Brahma's pose

BRAHMA

The Creator

- One Hindu creation story says that as **Vishnu** laid in rest on the cosmic sea, **Brahma** arose from his navel on a lotus flower, and sprouted four heads in each of the four cardinal directions
- The first said **Aa**, the second, **Uu**, and the third, **Mm**, and the fourth was silent. The **AUM** sound vibrated through that silence, churned up the sea, and the entire universe arose from it.
- **AUM** is the vibration of creation and our sound of interconnection with the universe.
- **BRAHMASANA:** named for the half-lotus position of Brahma sitting on the lotus flower
- **BRAHMA MUDRA:** neck stretches in all four directions with the fists together in front of the sacral chakra, representing Brahma's four heads

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 4 Video**)



BRAHMA MUDRA: 4-Way Neck Stretches



SARASWATI: Goddess of Knowledge

SARASWATI

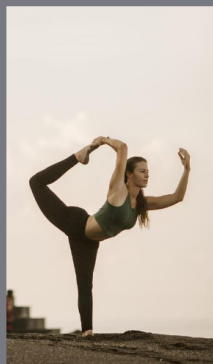
The Goddess of Knowledge

- Brahma's goddess consort, **SARASWATI**, the goddess of knowledge, the arts, music, and wisdom. She carries a veena and is represented by swans, depicting her water element of creativity and the sacral chakra.
- She saw that Brahma's creation (earth) was in disorder, so she asked Brahma to send her down to earth in the form of the Saraswati River.
- As the river, she flowed to earth and brought vitality and creativity to the land.
- **CHAKRAVAKASANA:** golden goose flow (inhaling to cow, then exhaling through cat down to child's pose) represents her swans and water element

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 4 Video**)



CHAKRAVAKASANA : Golden Goose Flow



NATARAJASANA: King Dancer Pose



VIRABHADRASANA : Warrior Poses

SHIVA

The Destroyer

- Shiva is the destroyer of the Hindu trinity. He brings about endings and new beginnings in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth called **samsara**.
- Shiva dances through this cycle of samsara in a depiction called the **SHIVA NATARAJA**, in a dance of bliss.
- In one story, when Shiva believed that his beloved wife, Sati, had been killed by her father, he sent a warrior called **VIRABHADRA** to avenge her death.
- **NATARJASANA:** Lord of the dance pose is named for Shiva dancing through the cycle of samsara
- **VIRABHADRASANA 1, 2, & 3:** the warrior poses are named for the warrior Virabhadra that Shiva sent to kill his father-in-law. Warrior 1 is Virabhadra rising up in front of the king's throne, Warrior 2 is Virabhadra chopping off his head, and Warrior 3 is Virabhadra planting the head on a stake.

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 5 Video**)



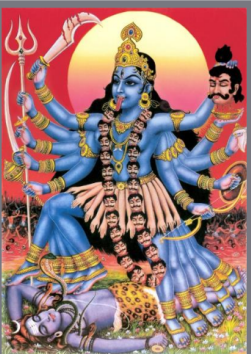
SIMHASANA: Lion's Pose

SHAKTI/PARVATI

The Divine Feminine

- Shakti has many forms, including Shiva's loving wife and the mother of the universe, Parvati, and her warrior forms:
- **DURGA** rode into battle on a lion to kill a demon who believed he was invincible because he had a superpower that he could be killed by no man, whether human or god. So the divine feminine goddess killed him.
- **KALI** is the fiercer form of Durga, who went into battle against a demon who would multiply whenever a drop of his blood hit the ground. Kali licked up his blood and became blood thirsty, eventually turning back into Parvati only when she accidentally stepped on her beloved husband, Shiva.
- **SIMHASANA:** represents Durga's lion
- **UTKATA KONASANA:** represents the fierce goddess Kali

(full story in Module 6: Gods of Yoga: **Lesson 6 Video**)



UTKATA KONASANA : Fierce Goddess Squat