

ORGANIC BEAUTY * ETHICAL FASHION * HOT REVIEWS * TRAVEL

YOGA[®] MAGAZINE

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JUNE 2018

**GODDESS
WARRIOR**
SEQUENCE

**SPIRITUAL
HEART**
MEDITATION

THE ART OF
**BEING
PRESENT**



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SARAH DRAI



I was living in New York working as an investment banker for a high-profile multinational. The high demands of my work started to become a little overwhelming, I wasn't happy with myself and felt the signs of depression. A friend of mine dragged me into a Bikram yoga class. This is where the love affair began!

The somatic practice along with the heat combined challenged me physically and mentally. As my practice took off, I noticeably became more grounded, and my sense of clarity returned. I realised I had a new addiction to something unquestionably life changing and good: yoga.

The second yoga milestone in my life took place when I moved to London. Slightly fed up of Hot yoga, I tripped into the class of Stewart Gilchrist at Indaba Yoga. I soon discovered I was stuck in the physical 'Anamaya' Kosha of yoga. Stewart ignited a burning fire inside of me, which got me onto my first teacher training, and my journey to becoming a teacher began.

As a yoga teacher, it is of the utmost importance to continuously evolve myself, and my practice. I have since delved deeper into the power of meditation and sound healing; the spiritual side of yoga is my third yoga milestone! This layer is so rich in wisdom, making the physical practice only the tip of the iceberg and the journey of yoga infinite.

I left the banking world to focus solely on yoga and though I am no longer making the income I was used to, I am now in love with my life! I feel so grateful to be a teacher to my students who in return are my best teachers!

Lastly, I am proud to have founded Yogi2Me, the first app providing users a way to book and choose from a carefully selected category of the best yoga teachers in and around London. Whether at work, at home, or in the park. Pick your time, date, teacher and he/she will come to you!

**For more information,
 visit www.yogi2me.com**

BEGINNERS POSE



VRKSASANA
TREE
POSE

HOW TO PERFORM

- Stand in Tadasana. Shift your weight onto the left foot, feel your left big toe, little toe and heel grounding towards the earth. You should feel the arch of your left foot lifting.

Reach down with your right hand to grab your right ankle and draw your right foot up, place the sole against the inner left thigh. Firmly press the right foot sole against the inner thigh and resist with the outer left leg. If this is a challenge place the sole of the foot at the level of your left calf.

- Make sure the pelvis is in a neutral position, with the top rim parallel to the floor.

Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor and lengthen your spine towards the sky.

Engage Mulha Bandha by squeezing the perineum, engage Uddiyana Bandha by bringing the floating ribs towards one another.

- Press your hands together in Anjali Mudra at the left of your chest and lift your elbows to create one line elbow to elbow.

Keep your chin parallel to the floor.

Gaze softly at an unmoving point in front of you. Stay focused, mind over matter.

Try to find stillness while feeling grounded and strong like a tree.

- For more challenge close your eyes and try to stay still. This will surely challenge your balance and give you a sense of gratefulness to be gifted with the power of your sight.

- Step back to Tadasana with an exhalation and repeat for the same length of time with the legs reversed.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine.
- Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders.
- Improves sense of balance and concentration.

MODIFICATIONS

- You can stand with your back braced against a wall if you feel unsteady in this pose.

CONTRAINDICATIONS AND CAUTION

- Recent knee or hip injury.
- High and low blood pressure.

INTERMEDIATE POSE



BAKASANA
CROW
POSE

HOW TO PERFORM

- Start from Malasana (Yoga Squat). Separate your knees wider than your hips and lean the torso forward, between the inner thighs. Stretch your arms forward, then place your hands on the floor and bend your elbows. Make sure your index finger is pointing forward and your knuckles are pressing downward. Curl your fingers slightly to take some of the pressure off the wrists.

- Come on the ball of your feet, lifting your tailbone towards the sky. Imagine your body as a 'Lego' and snuggle your knees in your armpits or as close as possible to the arms pits. This requires hamstring flexibility!

- Hug your elbows inwards towards one another and lean forward (more than you think you need to!) In Bakasana, you consciously attempt to contract your front torso and round your back completely by engaging the upper back muscle aka the rhomboid.

- Lean forward even more onto the backs of your upper arms, to the point where the balls of your feet leave the floor. Now your torso and legs are balanced on the backs of your upper arms.

- Point your toes and lift your heels until you feel your big toes touching one another. Keep your knees glued to your armpits and your elbows hugging in.

The head is in a neutral position and your drishti is forward... Don't look down to prevent going down!

MODIFICATIONS AND PROPS

- If this is challenging or scary at first use a block for your forehead, placing your forehead on the block making sure to keep the neck long (aka the block is usually more forward than you first think).
- Once your toes are up hug your elbows in and try to slowly lift your forehead off the block. You may want to use a big pillow once you are comfortable with the block but not ready to go free style!

BENEFITS

- Strengthens arms and wrists.
- Stretches the upper back.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles.
- Opens the groins.
- Tones the abdominal organs.

CONTRAINDICATIONS AND CAUTIONS

- Carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Pregnancy.

ADVANCED POSE

PINCHA
MAYURASANA
**FEATHERED
PEACOCK**
POSE



HOW TO PERFORM

- From Downward Facing Dog, drop your elbow on the floor. Aim to keep your elbows directly under your shoulders in a vertical line keeping the shoulder width distance. Keep your forearm parallel or bring the hands together making a triangle shape with your arms. Curl your fingers slightly so you can use the tips of your fingers as breaks when you balance.

Walk your feet to your elbows to come in to dolphin pose.

- To prepare yourself in this inversion firm the shoulder blades and pull them towards your tailbone. Engage the elbows towards one another. You can rotate your upper arms outwards to keep the shoulder blades wide.

One of the challenges is to prevent collapsing on your shoulder. Bring the ribs inwards and the belly button towards the spine.

- Lift one leg up to the sky engaging the muscle of the leg and pointing the toes. Take a few practice hops each time pushing off the floor a little higher. Make sure to keep the lifted leg active to maintain control and balance. It may take some practice to find the balance keeping both legs up, hips over shoulder.

- When both legs are up, keep the hips over the shoulders and squeeze the outer legs together to roll the thighs in. As you bring the knees together, counterbalance by keeping your hips open and your ribs in to find a straight line.

MODIFICATIONS AND PROPS

- Use a belt to keep your elbows shoulder width apart. To find the balance at the start you will find it easier balancing with split legs.
- Use the wall but move away from the wall not letting fear win the battle.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens the shoulders, arms, and back.
- Improves sense of balance.
- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression.

CONTRAINDICATIONS AND CAUTIONS

- Back, shoulder, or neck injury.
- Headache.
- Heart condition.

THE GODDESS WARRIOR FLOW

The aim of the sequence is to awaken the Goddess Warrior we all have within us.

It has been designed to increase your confidence, through visualisation, meditation and asana practice so you can tackle anything life throws at you and realise the powerful woman you are.

This routine is inspired by the principle of Goddess, Durga. She's one of the main forms of Goddess Shakti. Her goal is to combat any force that threatens peace, and transmute any form of lack into an expanding energy of abundance and prosperity.

You begin, seated on the mat visualising yourself as Durga. Her fierce, feminine form is carried by the protective force of the 'mother'. She was compassionate and fearless, and had many weapons, carried in her eight hands. Imagine the trident, bow, and sword to just name a few. Her most precious weapon, however, was patience and detachment, represented by the lotus flower at her feet. As you focus on the lotus flower, see yourself seated in her grace. You're like a diamond: strong outside and soft inside.

After embodying these aspects of the goddess, we move onto the physical asana practice. As she is the symbol of the divine force, known as the divine Shakti, and femininity, we begin this routine on the left leg, which is the feminine side of the body.



**ADHO MUKHA
SVANASANA**

Start your practice in Downward Facing Dog. Hands are shoulder width apart, feet hip width apart with your toes slightly in.

Spread your fingers wide index finger facing forward. Engage the knuckles of your hands towards the earth. Legs are fully engaged and your heels are rooting down.

Engage your Bandha, first mulha bandha (squeezing of the perineum) then Uddiyana Bandha (ribs in, navel up).

Stay here for 5 deep breath using the breath from the back of your throat, making the sound of wave, using your nostril only as a passage way: Ujjayi Pranayama

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CAMATKARASANA

Lift the left leg up and back stacking the left hip on top of the right, staying here for a breath and feeling the deep stretch on the left side of the ribs. Then slowly and with control, roll on the outer edge of your right foot and bring the left leg behind the right staying on the ball of the left foot to push your hips up. Extend the left arm towards the front of the room to extend that deep stretch on the left side. Bring your left thumb on your left index for chin mudra. Stay here for 5 deep Ujjayi breaths.



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VASISTHASANA WITH KNEE TO CHEST

Using the outer edge of your right foot as support as well as the fingertips of your right hand to keep the balance, bring the left knee to chest. Make sure your right shoulder is stacked over the elbow and the right wrist to make a straight line. Keep your ribs in (always) and hold this pose for another 5 breaths.



Then slowly bring the left foot in front of the mat, aim for your left heel to land before your toes, maybe even without moving your right hand from the mat. Keep the right heel high (imagine you are wearing those amazing 12-inch heel shoes) to allow for the right hip to come forward and align with the left. With grace, drop the right knee on the mat; keep your back toes tucked and hips squared. Bend your elbows 90 degrees for goddess arm variation, take a mild backbend and lift your heart towards the sky, the stars and the moon. Relax your jaw and your face, slowly bring your drishti towards the space in between your eyebrows, the third eye, Ajna chakra. Stay here focused on your third eye for 5 deep breaths.

LOW LUNGE WITH GODDESS ARMS



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HIGH LUNGE

As you inhale, ensure mulha bandha is on and use the power of your breath and Bandha to transition the high lunge by lifting that right knee of the mat, keeping the back heel high and the back leg fully engaged. Extend your arms to the sky adopting chin mudra again with both hands. Double-check your alignment, left knee over ankle in line with your second toe. Breathe deeply for 5.



With control drop the right heel down 90 degrees, in line with the back of your mat. Keep the left knee over your ankle facing forward, hips open aligned to the side of the mat. Your left hand comes up to the sky use again chin mudra, right hand slide behind your back. Maybe you can grab your leggings or even your inner thigh with your right hand. Check your alignment, your shoulders are aligned with your hips and the side of the mat. Your legs are fully engaged, the left foot is pushing backward and the right foot is pushing forward.



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REVERSE WARRIOR II



7

GODDESS AND WARRIOR II

(REPEAT 5 TIMES)

Repeat the words 'goddess' and 'warrior' out loud, as you practise these postures to embed and root them in your mind. This part of the practice is dynamic, as you move breath after breath from your Goddess to your Warrior form on the right side, back to Goddess and Warrior on the left side. You will gather fire energy and awaken the rajastic energy within. Start repeating at least five times, double it each time you repeat this sequence. When I teach this sequence to my students we aim for 20 reps.

Once done, get back to Downward Dog and repeat the initial sequence on the right side.

SUKHASANA

To wind down, rebalance and digest the transformation of this sequence, close the practice by sitting down. Find ourselves back where you started, in our grace, as the goddess with the eternal lotus flower of wisdom seated at our feet. Close your eyes, looking inward, focusing on your life force, the breath. Allow this time to sit, heal and rebirth yourself back into the world before opening our eyes.



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