



Virabhadrasana I (Warrior I)

This pose begins the favorite Warrior series dedicated to **Virabhadra**, commander of Shiva's army so the story goes. Born from a lock of Shiva's hair, Virabhadra was created to avenge Sati's death. Statues of Virabhadra are primarily found in Southern India in Shiva temples. In Kerala, **Bhadrakali**, the fierce form of Kali, is the consort of Virabhadra. And so, as with many of the yoga poses, the names reveal the essential nature of what is being stimulated by doing the pose. This is a pose that generates heat, requiring *tapasya* commonly translated as discipline, in order to scorch or destroy the seeds of *samskaras*. In this pose we stretch our arms up to the cosmos, an appeal to Shiva consciousness to send illumined wisdom down into the body and to the earth. It is for grounding, building strength and stamina or endurance – all requirements for a powerful warrior.

Guidance: Place your feet 3-4 ft apart with the front foot facing directly forward and the back foot at a 30 degree angle. The hips are squared forward. If your back knee is uncomfortable, adjust the angle of the back foot. In standing poses, we always start with our attention to the feet as the foundation and connection to earth. Put your hands on your hips and begin long deep breathing. Breathe down into the belly so it expands, on the exhale root into the earth by pressing down with the four points of the feet while lifting the inner arch of the foot. Do this until you feel balanced in the stance and then put your awareness at the ribcage. Next time you exhale, press your hands down on the hips as you lift the ribcage and feel the chest open. Watch the tendency for the shoulders to lift as you do this and consciously relax them drawing them away from the ears. Then put awareness on the throat area, a slight lift of the chin opens up the throat as you reach upwards with the crown of the head. On the exhale, bend the front knee creating a right angle – this represents the yantra of the earth. On the next exhale,

stretch the arms upwards, spreading the fingers wide to activate the heart meridian. Breathe, fingers reaching upwards as antennae and consciously draw the solar energy down into the body. Start with maybe 2-3 minutes of conscious breathing on one side and then alternate sides. Complete by standing in **Tadasana** (mountain pose) and observing the sensations in the body as the point of reflection.

Sraddhasagar