

## THE BREATH OF LIFE: FIVE BASIC PRANAYAMS

The quantity, quality, and circulation of the breath creates the foundation of a vital and creative life. It is a barometer of how much energy we normally run on, and how much reserve capacity we have created for emergencies. The breath is both gross and subtle. The gross aspect is the blend of oxygen, nitrogen, and other elements that constitute air. The subtle aspect is the *prana* or vital force that energizes the mind, body, and consciousness.

Most people do not breath correctly. Breath signatures that create shallow, erratic, upper-chest breathing are common. The lack of relaxation and well-being on a personal as well as collective level, along with other factors, inhibits proper breathing. Yet, of all the positive changes a person can make, learning to breathe deeply, and completely is probably the most effective for developing higher consciousness, and for increasing health, vitality, and connectedness in one's life.

Here are five basic yogic breaths that can give you new life. Make them part of your life.

### ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

POSTURE: Sit in a comfortable position.

#### MUDRA & BREATH:

In this *pranayam*, the breath is always relaxed, deep and full. Have the left hand in Gyan Mudra. Use the thumb of the right hand to close the right nostril, and the index finger or ring finger of the right hand to close the left nostril.

Close one nostril and slowly, deeply and fully inhale through that nostril. Then close the opposite nostril and slowly, deeply and fully exhale, bringing the navel towards the spine.

Continue this pattern.

Note: Inhaling left, exhaling right: helps to make you calm and integrates unwanted negative emotions and stress. Excellent by itself before bed.

Inhaling right, exhaling left: gives clarity, and positive mood. Helps to focus on what is important.

TIME: Continue 3-31 minutes.

TO END: Inhale through both nostrils, hold, exhale. Sit quietly and still.

#### About Alternate Nostril Breathing

This simple, yet most powerful technique, is a *pranayam* that is easy to do, yet creates a deep sense of well-being and harmony on the physical, mental, and emotional levels. It is integrating and grounding, and induces the systemic functions of the entire brain by balancing the right and left hemispheres. Can be helpful in dealing with headaches, migraines, and other stress-related symptoms.

