

*May the waters
Where you live
Be clear and calm*

*So you may see your way
Up into the sunlight
Of your mind*

The Thoughts of Nanushka

A Kripalu Statement

"If I already knew what it was that I had come here to learn, then I would not be here. I cannot learn something that I already know. So obviously, I have come to learn something. I have come to learn something that I have not learned. This means that I have used all of my intelligence and all of my accumulated life experience to enter this moment where I am

now choosing to face the precipice of 'not knowing'. I stand on what I know to make a leap into what I do not know, trusting, that when I land, I will have learned something valuable. To the extent that I expect to learn what I already have in mind, my learning is inhibited."

The quote on the preceding pages pretty much explains how I felt when I became interested in mudras. When I first came to yoga forty years ago, the mudras were a part

of yoga I was not overly interested in, they seemed a little "airy-fairy" to me. It was some 10 years later, when I moved to Canada, that I became enlightened! It was then that I found and began to study with a Kripalu teacher who taught a more complete way of practising. This was the teacher who was to eventually lead me to retrain as a Kripalu Yoga teacher. I am ever thankful that our paths met, even though it was for a short while at least as far as teacher/student time is concerned.

The thing I really love about mudras is they can be practised anywhere and at any time. Mudras bring delight and joy. The term mudra means "to seal". By simply holding our hands we can often lift our mood when we are feeling a little down. They have a powerful affect on the mind and the emotions. Buddha is often depicted using hand mudras.

As I have suggested below, each mudra has its own intent, but as yoga practice is personal to each individual, remember they are only suggestions. These mudras are hasta (hand) mudras and are just a selection of some that are used at the Kripalu Yoga Centre. It is recommended that you hold each mudra for about 10-15 breaths whilst at the same time reciting the intent. You can change the "intent" to suit your own needs. After practice, you may find that certain mudras resonate more than others.

Perhaps like me many years ago, you are resisting this discipline. I understand, but I would encourage you to explore. This is the most natural practice of all.

So often we place our hands into a mudra without consciously knowing it. Therefore, our mind and body know what we need even though we may not be aware of it. This is what we call listening to our bodies. Think of how often in your life you use your hands to more fully communicate a deeper intention; so too with the mudras. The asanas, the pranayama, the sense of vitality in the body, these are the initial gateway to the full sense of yoga. The mudras are quiet. Listen.

Anjali Mudra Invocation

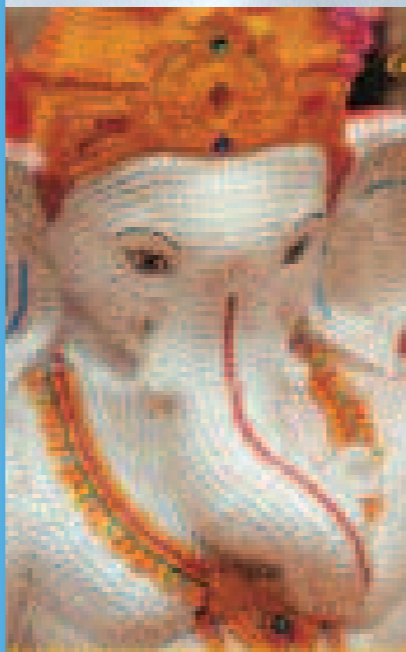
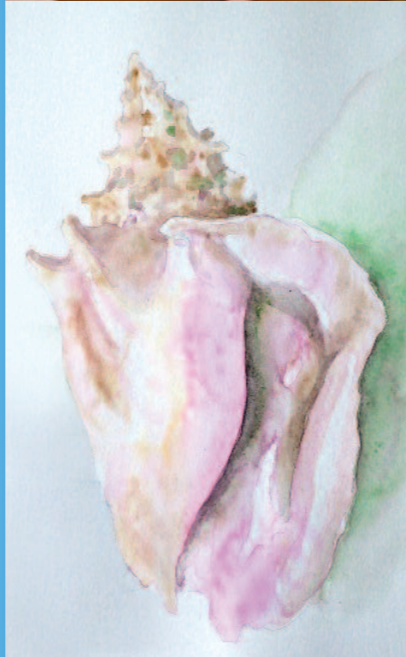
Place the hands together in front of the heart. Leave a space between the palms, but allow fingertips and the base of the palms to touch. Forearms are parallel to the earth. Anjali invokes the highest spirit within our selves. It helps us to overcome fear and anxiety, and calms the mind. Anjali mudra strengthens the immune system and is beneficial for the heart. The breath is slow. Affects the 4th, 5th and 6th chakra. The "intent" is compassion.

Shankha Mudra Conch Shell

Place the first four fingers of your right hand around the left thumb. Extend your right thumb to touch the index and middle fingers of your left hand. Wrap the fingers of the left hand around the fist to form a shell. Shankha creates a sense of safety. It comes from the deep sense of calm and protection in this mudra. Shankha calms the nervous system, and is helpful for throat and speech problems. Affects the 5th chakra. The "intent" is safety and serenity.

Ganesha Protection

Interlace all the fingers in front of the chest. Extend the middle fingers and wrap the index fingers around behind them. Place the thumbs together at the base of the middle fingers. Ganesha helps us to remove obstacles and blockages. This mudra stimulates breath and metabolism throughout the entire body. It helps with digestion, respiration and circulation. This mudra affects all seven chakras. The "intent" is discernment.



Padma Mudra Lotus Flower

Start in Anjali mudra, keep the tips of the baby fingers and thumbs together as well as the base of the palms. Separate the ring, middle and index fingers wide apart to form the shape of a lotus opening its petals. Padma opens and integrates the body, mind and spirit. It helps us to heal the heart and all the wounds that life brings us. The respiratory, immune and nervous system are improved. Affects the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th chakras. The "intent" is integration, clearing and union.



Kali Goddess Transformation

Interlace all the fingers and the thumbs in front of the chest. Extend the index fingers and press the pads gently against each other pointing upward. Kali represents purification and transformation. Emotions and thoughts become clearer. The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th chakras are affected. The "intent" is letting go.



Garuha Balance

Cross the arms in front of the chest, with the left arm in front of the right arm and the palms facing the heart. Hook the right thumb in front of the left thumb to form the shape of dove's wings. Fingers open. Garuda brings balance and a sense of freedom from harsh boundaries, inflicted by others or the self. It stimulates the endocrine and nervous system. Affects 4th and 5th chakra. The "intent" is balance and freedom.





Jnana Mudra Wisdom

Assume a comfortable position. Join the thumb to the index finger and extend the other three fingers out. Palms facing upwards. Jnana brings wisdom and releases negative emotions. Allow yourself to be centered with this beautiful mudra. Breathe. Affects 4th, 5th and 6th chakra. The "intent" is wisdom.

Bhairava Mudra Bliss

Assume a comfortable and meditative position. Head and spine straight. Eyes closed. Rest your cupped left hand onto your lap. Rest the cupped right hand into the left hand. Allow the shoulders to relax, the body to rest. Bhairava is to surrender and meditate. Affects 1st and 2nd chakra. The "intent" is to calm the mind and the body.

Yoni Mudra The Womb

Place the palms of the hands together with the fingers and thumbs straight, pointing away from the body. Keep the pads of the index fingers together; turn the little, ring and middle fingers inwards so the back of the fingers is touching. Interlock the little, ring and middle fingers. Bring the thumbs towards the body and join the pads of the index fingers together to form the shape of the womb. The word Yoni means womb. Yoni is the source of all creation. Affects all seven chakras. The "intent" is concentration. and awareness.

Mantras

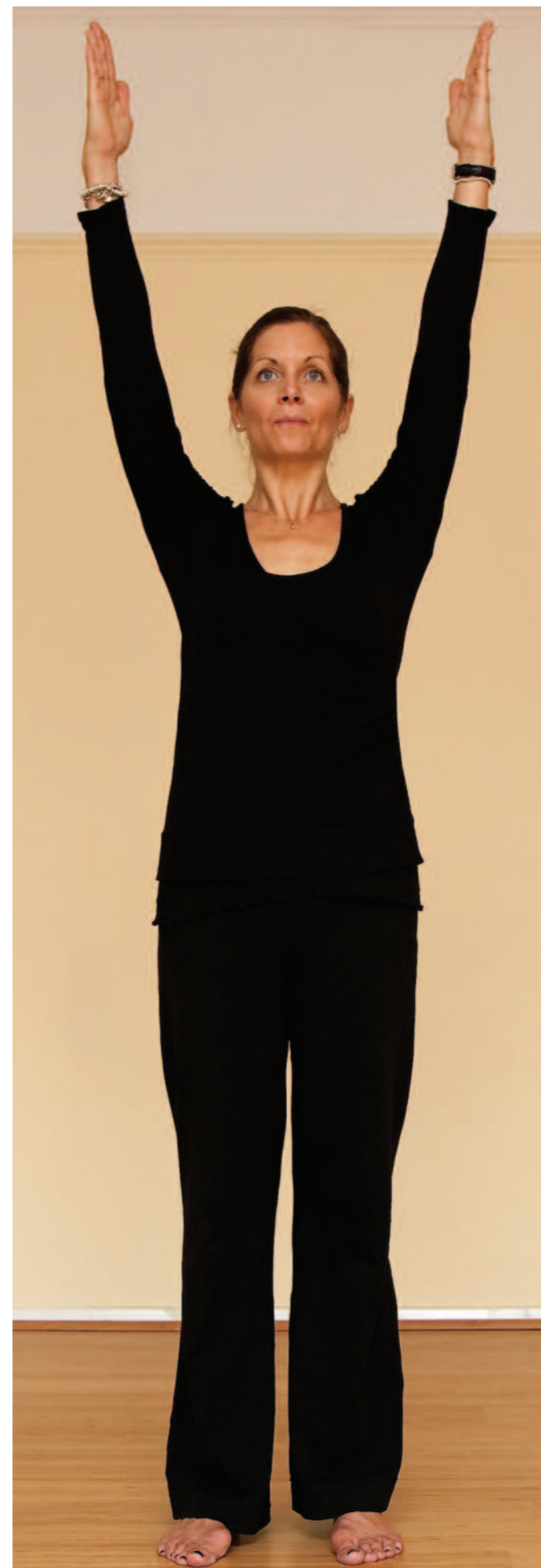
An expression, a sound charged with power. The word mantra is derived from the words manana (thinking) and trana (liberation).

I love to use mantras. If you allow yourself time to listen to your inner self – your core, you will find directed to the mantra you need. However, there are hundreds of choices already written which have been handed down through the ages. A mantra is beautiful and inspiring. Sitting quietly, meditating on a mantra brings peace – it is like talking to the ancients.

We use mantras at the Kripalu studio when we are practising meditation and when we are practising the asanas – espe-

cially when we have a Cikitsa (long holding) workshop. Mantras allow the mind to remain focused. During yoga nidra we use a sankalpa (an affirmation) – a short mental statement which impresses onto the subconscious mind. Mantras are very similar.

I have included 4 mantras to use with suggested yoga postures (asanas) which you might like to try for yourself. Remember to listen to your body and stay in the asana only as long as you feel comfortable. Never force or strain. I would suggest you begin by holding for 5-7 breaths (dirgha – 3 part breaths) and then gradually increase if it feels comfortable to do so.



Prepare for Mountain – Tadasana. The Mantra is Ma-Ra-Ha

- Stand with your feet parallel, hip width apart (if you place your fist between your knees, this is about hip-width apart) arms at your side. Press down through the soles of your feet. As you breathe in, engage core lift – lifting the abdominals in and up.
- Elongate your spine, lifting out of the waist, pressing up through the crown of your head. With an inhalation extend through your arms, slowly raising them from your side to overhead.
- Bring your hands into temple position – fingers interlaced pointing upward. Press up through your fingertips, straightening your arms as they come alongside your ears. Lower your shoulders and open your chest.
- Now repeat the following mantra as you breathe 5-7 dirgha breaths: Ma-Ha-Ra – Image for calm and strength.



Prepare for Warrior 2 – Virabhadrasana 2. The Mantra is Di-Ri-Ha.

- Stand in mountain. Press down through the soles of your feet, at the end of an exhalation engage core lift – lifting the abdominals in and up.
- Step out wide, to your legs length apart, bringing your arms out to the sides at shoulder height, hands even. Lift your kneecaps and engage your quadriceps. Turn your right toes out to the right and your left toes slightly in toward centre.
- Bend your right knee and sink down through your sit-bones, bringing your right thigh to horizontal. Face your right hand. Align your right knee over your ankle. Keep your left thigh muscles (quadriceps) engaged and press down through the outside of your left foot.
- Breathe deeply: Bring your left hip into alignment by pressing your left hip-bone slightly backward without introducing strain.
- Now repeat the following mantra as you breathe 5-7 dirgha breaths. (Repeat on the left side.) Di-Ri-Ha – Evoking strength, sometimes bring up emotions.

**Prepare for Lotus – Padmasana.
The Mantra is Sha-Ma-Ya.**

Lotus symbolises our spiritual evolution. Padmasana is the classic posture for meditation and pranayama. If you can come into this pose with ease then do, however, many people struggle with Lotus, because they have sore ankle/knees or tightness in the thighs and hips. For this reason we use “easy pose”.

- Sit with your spine lengthened and cross your legs. If this is not comfortable try sitting on a rolled blanket or cushion.
- Place your left hand across the centre of your chest over your heart chakra and place your right hand over your left hand.
- Now repeat the following mantra as you breathe 5-7 natural breaths. Sha-Ma-Ya – Translates to saying “I Love You”. It is the sound of the heart – the image of Peace.



**Prepare for the Corpse Pose – Shavasana.
The Mantra is Waha Guru.**

Take as much time as you need to prepare for Shavasana. Get a blanket and cushions if you need them. You might like to use a bolster or pillow under your thighs if you have low-back pain.

- Lie flat on your back. Place your arms down by your sides, slightly away from your torso, palms facing up, with your legs comfortably apart, heels in, toes out.
- Allow the head to roll gently from side to side a few times then come to rest in the centre. Allow the eyes to close.
- Awareness of breath – just watch the breath without changing it as it flows in and out. Release all willful control of the

breath and feel the effect it has on the body and mind.

- Now repeat the following mantra. Waha Guru. Turn your head to the left as you say mentally Waha, turn your head to the right as you say mentally Guru.
- Repeat this on each side 7 times. This mantra is for when you feel the world has gone crazy and you feel as though you are surrounded by confusion!

*Breathe. Relax. Feel.
Watch. And Allow.*

