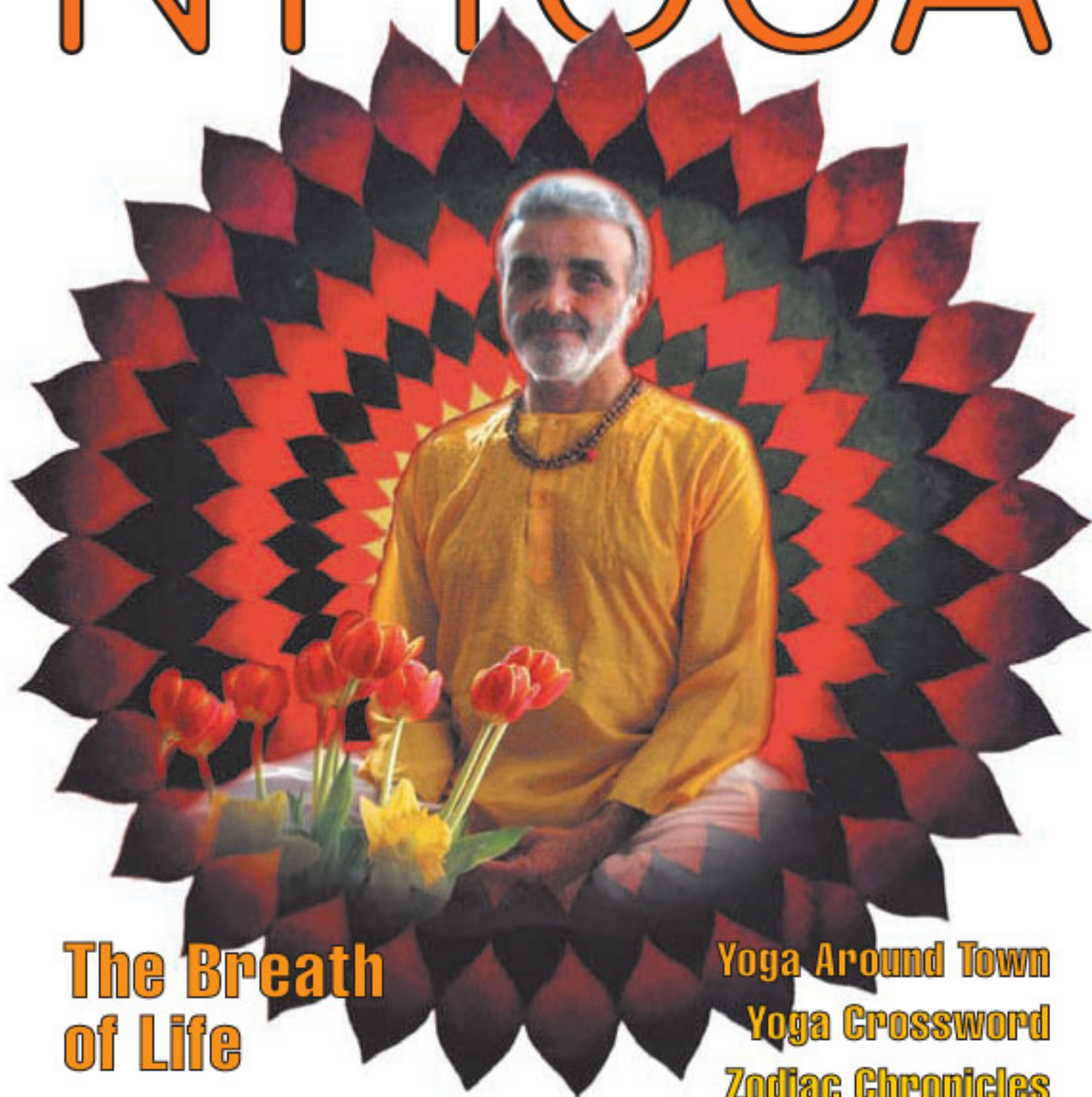


NEW YORK'S GUIDE TO YOGA AWARENESS

NIYYOGA



**The Breath
of Life
Wall Support**

**Yoga Around Town
Yoga Crossword
Zodiac Chronicles
Dear Swami**

the breath of life



THE BREATH IS LIFE AND LIFE IS BREATH. Our first inhalation begins life and a final exhalation brings completion to this life as we know it. All of our connections to the sun, moon, stars, and the entire world is made through our breath. *Prana* is the energy that permeates the entire universe at all levels. It is physical, mental, intellectual, sexual, spiritual, and cosmic energy. It is due to this force that everything is able to exist and move. *Prana* is a subtle vibration, but even thoughts need *Prana* in order to exist. Vigor, power, vitality, life and spirit are all forms of *Prana*. Without *Prana* no forms and names could even exist.

By Sri Yogi Dharma Mittra

To have the knowledge is to become the knowledge.

The Sanskrit word *Prana* is derived from the root an (to breathe) and means "breath of life" or "life energy." It is used both in regard to the all-pervasive life force and to a specific current of life energy in the human body. *Mukhya-Prana* or *Pranana* is the universal Life Force, which is an aspect of the transcendental power of *Shakti*. There are ten forms of *Prana*. Each has a different name, according to the body function that it governs. These are five primary types of life energy:

Prana

The ascending life energy seated in the heart, *Prana* is known as the "in breath" in the Upanishads. It is connected with inhalation and the region of the chest and heart. *Prana* is responsible for respiration function in the physical body.

Apana

The descending life energy seated in the anus. *Apana* is known as the "out breath," and is connected with exhalation, the

lower abdomen, and elimination function in the physical body.

Vyana

Vyana is the all pervading life energy. *Vyana* literally translates to "the pervading one" and is connected with circulation and the regulation of *Prana* and *Apana* all throughout the physical body.

Udana

Udana is the upward rising life energy that rises from the soles of the feet upward to the throat and head region. Also known as the "up breath". It is connected with speech and swallowing function in the physical body.

Samana

The middle life energy seated in the navel region. Also known as the "middle breath," *Samana* is the time between the inhalation and exhalation. It is connected to the central region of the body and the digestion function in the physical body.

Pranayama is the science of harnessing

and directing the *Prana* in order to restore and maintain optimal health. By gaining control over the Breath, one learns how to gain control over *Prana* (life force energy). Furthermore, the breath and mind are directly related, and by controlling the breath, one is able to control the mind and tune in to the more subtle vibrations of the universe. *Pranayama* encourages the respiratory system to function at its best, automatically calming the nervous system and improving the circulatory system, without which the processes of digestion and elimination would suffer.

There is an integral relationship between the state of mind and the breath. When one is calm and quiet, the breath is calm and quiet, and the breath rate is approximately 16 breaths per minute. But when a person is emotional, under stress, or depressed, this breath rate will climb proportionally with his/her state of mind. So, to start, by controlling the breath, one is able to control his/her state of being at all times.

Pranayama practices help to create strong lungs, which increases our breathing capacity, increasing oxygen intake. It helps eradicate pain, tension, and other illnesses.

Our state of mind is closely linked to our breath and *prana*. The more content a person is and the better he or she feels, the more slow and rhythmical the breath is; the more disturbed a person is, the faster and more irregular the breath is. We make use of these ancient techniques so that we have optimal intake of *prana*. In the *Sutras* it is said that when we practice *Pranayama*, the veil is gradually drawn away from the mind and clarity comes. The mind becomes ready for deep meditation. To have the knowledge is to become the knowledge.

Join a class with Sri Dharma Mittra as he moves into his 70th year. He teaches regularly at the Dharma Yoga Center on 23 Street and 3rd Avenue. New students may come to the Maha Shakti program on Thursdays at 6:30pm for beginner level. Or join Meditation & Breathing on Fridays, 7:30-8:30pm, Level 1 Spanish and English, Mondays, 3:30-4:30pm, DMY Gentle Yoga, Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:30pm and Fridays, 3:30-4:30pm, or our Life of a Yogi Teacher Training at Omega Institute Rhinebeck, New York, August 23-September 3, 2009. For more information go to www.dharmayogacenter.com