

Brahmari The Bee Breath or Humming Breath

This is an excellent breath that can be used as a pranayama but is also good as a preparation for mantra. It is named after the bee due to the sound produced which resembles that of the bee. The H.Y.P. says that Brahmari on the inhalation is like the male bee and Brahmari on the exhalation is like the sound of a female bee.

Stage One

We inhale through both nostrils and then our exhalation is performed through the nostrils whilst producing a soft deep humming sound. We continue in this manner for between 12 and 24 breaths. It has a deeply calming effect on the mind and can reduce irritation and anger. If possible, we can also hum on the inhale, although this can be challenging.

Stage Two

Once we are comfortable with stage one, we can add the index fingers as a partial form of Yoni Mudra, so as we inhale the hands are to the knees or thighs then as we exhale we place the index fingers in the ears as we hum the breath out, replacing hands to thighs again as we inhale. This stage can also help to develop heightened sensitivity and is an excellent form of pratyahara or sense withdrawal.

Stage Three

Eventually we can adopt the full yoni mudra where we close the mouth with the little and ring fingers, close the nostrils with the middle fingers, close the eyes with the index fingers and the ears with the thumbs. This constitutes a very powerful form of pratyahara or sense withdrawal.



So, to practice we keep the fingers as directed above then lift the nostril middle fingers to inhale through the nose, momentarily holding the breath, then lifting them again for the exhale as we hum on the out breath.

When using Yoni Mudra we focus our attention upon inner vibrations as we hum.

This stage takes a little time to master, and we must perform it slowly with ease.

As before it is possible to hum on both the in breath and the out breath, although humming smoothly on the inhale takes a little practice and can at first sound like a distressed bee!

Precautions & Prohibitions

There are no specific contraindications except those relating to the use of breath retention (kumbhaka) of which there are many.

Bhastrika “The Bellows Breath”

The word ‘bhastra’ means ‘bellows’ which is indicative of how this breath fans the internal fire, bringing heat to the physical and subtle bodies. For this breath air is drawn in and out of the nose very quickly creating a bellows like action in which large amounts of stale air are expelled.

To perform this breath we need to sit upright and focus upon the movement of the abdomen. As we exhale we contract the abdominal muscles forcing the air out of the nostrils and as we inhale the abdomen relaxes and expands and the air is drawn into the nostrils.

Very importantly the **inhalation and the exhalation are of equal length** unlike for kapalabhati where as a shatkarma the exhalation is the active part of the breath. At first we work for about ten breaths then take several ordinary breaths, performing around 3 to 6 rounds.

Benefits: The rapid, rhythmic abdominal contractions are said to stimulate cardio-vascular and respiratory processes. The quickened blood circulation increases the rate of gaseous exchange for each cell producing heat and a cleansing effect as waste gases are removed more efficiently. Bhastrika also massages all of the viscera and is said to stimulate the production of cerebro-spinal fluid. This is a very dynamic and revitalizing pranayama that strengthens the nervous system and harmonizes our emotions.

Precautions & Prohibitions

This is a heating breath which increases internal pressure so it should not be practiced if suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease, brain disorders, vertigo, stomach or intestinal problems, eye/ear problems or diarrhoea (indicative of excessive internal heat). We must always desist if dizziness or the production of sweat is experienced.

We must take care to avoid hyperventilation, which can happen if we do not exhale sufficiently and never aim to make speed the principal aim.

After bhastrika a cooling breath such as sitali is necessary if the internal or external environment is particularly warm.

