

MANDALA PRANYAMA

MANIFESTING THE ABUNDANCE OF THE CHAKRAS

According to the tradition of Gitananda Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga

Mandala Pranayama is one of my favourite practices. I have explored it extensively over the years and I have also taught it to my students, both during regular classes and as part of an intensive retreat.

This set of techniques, derived from Pranayama Yoga and Raja Yoga, combines the visualisation of simple geometric shapes — the mandalas — with specific breathing rhythms — the pranayamas.

This practice aims to restore, deepen and develop our connection with our energy centres — the chakras. To consciously connect with the chakras is to deepen our connection with the Cosmos, to better understand who we are and to perceive more clearly the place we occupy in the Universe.

In the first part, I will present the concept of Dwadasha Chakrani according to the Gitananda Yoga tradition. In the second part, I will discuss the mandalas and their correspondences with the chakras. Finally, in the third part, I will describe the sadhana of Mandala Pranayama. A table of the chakras and their correspondences, presented in the appendix, will complete this presentation.

1 - Dwadasha Chakrani

According to the tradition of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga, codified by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri, there are six lower chakras and six upper chakras, forming a set of twelve chakras known as Dwadasha Chakrani.

The six lower chakras, known as the Pinda Chakras, are connected with the physical body, while the six upper chakras, the Anda Chakras, are connected with the Cosmos.

The chakras vibrate at very high frequencies. At their most subtle frequencies, they are connected with the Cosmos; at lower frequencies, they can be correlated with different structures of our neuroendocrine system.

The chakras are generally represented in the form of lotuses with varying numbers of petals, each petal symbolising different qualities and expressions of the energy of the chakra.

Each of the six Pinda Chakras therefore has neuroendocrine correlations and is associated with one of the five Jnanendriyas, the organs of sensory perception, as well as with one of the five Karmendriyas, the organs of action. Each chakra is also connected with different psychological qualities and with specific asanas and pranayamas that allow the chakric energies to be concentrated and directed.

Finally, the chakras are also associated with the subtle elements known as Tanmattras, as well as with the Pranavayus, different expressions of pranic energy.

2 - The Mandalas of the Chakras and Their Correspondences

Each chakra has its own inner mandala, characterised by a specific geometric shape. These shapes correspond to the Maha Pancha Bhuta, the five great physical elements — Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether — to which Manas, the Mind, is added.

These elements represent different vibratory states of universal energy.

The Bhuta Mandalas and Their Correspondences

Prithvi — Earth^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Prithvi Mandala is represented by a yellow square. It symbolises stability, grounding and the solid dimension of existence. It is associated with Muladhara Chakra, “the support of the root”.

Apas — Water^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Apas Mandala takes the form of a silver crescent moon. It evokes fluidity, balance and the liquid dimension. It corresponds to Swadhishtana Chakra, “the abode of the self”.

Tejas — Fire^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Tejas Mandala is represented by a red triangle whose point is directed downwards. It symbolises transformation, power and thermal energy. It is connected with Manipura Chakra, “the city of jewels”.

Vayu — Air^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Vayu Mandala is represented by two interlaced blue triangles, forming a six-pointed star. It expresses interconnection, freedom and the gaseous dimension. It is connected with Anahata Chakra, “the sound without cause”.

Akasha — Ether^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Akasha Mandala is represented by a magenta oval. It evokes space, immensity, communication and the etheric dimension. It is associated with Vishudha Chakra, “the great purity”.

Manas — the Mind^{[1][1]}_{SEP} The Manas Mandala is represented by an orange circle. It symbolises the mental dimension, consciousness and the power of discernment and choice. It corresponds to Ajna Chakra, which means “Beyond knowledge”.

These six mandalas thus constitute a geometric representation of the different vibratory levels associated with the chakras.

3 - Mandala Pranayama Sadhana

Dr Ananda describes a specific sequence for the practice of the mandalas: 2 – 3 – 4 – 1 – 5 – 6. Beginning with the element Water, a symbol of fluidity and adaptability, allows the energy to be set in motion and makes change and transformation possible.

The sadhana begins with the element Water (Apas) and the visualisation of the Apas Mandala, associated with a Sukha Pranayama rhythm of 6 : 6. Seated in Vajra Asana, with the eyes closed, the practitioner visualises a silver crescent moon extending from the left iliac crest to the right iliac crest. On the inhalation, the practitioner mentally traces the upper part of the crescent from left to right; on the exhalation, the lower part is followed from right to left.

The practice continues with the element Fire (Tejas) and the visualisation of the Tejas Mandala, a red triangle whose point is directed upwards. It is associated with Loma Pranayama, according to a rhythm of 6 : 6 : 6. On the inhalation, the practitioner mentally traces the first side of the triangle, from the navel towards the right breast. During the breath retention, with the lungs full, the practitioner continues from the right breast towards the left breast. On the exhalation, the triangle is closed by descending from the left breast towards the navel.

Next comes the element Air (Vayu), represented by the Vayu Mandala, a blue triangle whose point is directed downwards. The practice is associated with Viloma Pranayama, according to a rhythm of 6 : 6 : 6. On the inhalation, the practitioner mentally traces the first side of the triangle, from the right breast towards the throat. On the exhalation, the practitioner descends from the throat towards the left breast. Finally, during the breath retention with the lungs empty, the triangle is closed from the left breast towards the right breast.

The sequence continues with the element Earth (Prithvi) and the visualisation of the Prithvi Mandala, represented by a yellow square. It is associated with Sukha Purvaka Pranayama, according to a rhythm of 6 : 6 : 6 : 6. On the inhalation, the practitioner mentally traces the right side of the square, from the right hip towards the right shoulder. During the breath retention, with the lungs full, the practitioner continues from the right shoulder towards the left shoulder. On the exhalation, the practitioner descends from the left shoulder towards the left hip. Finally, during the breath retention with the lungs empty, the square is closed from the left hip towards the right hip.

The element Ether (Akasha) is then approached through the Akasha Mandala, represented by a magenta oval. It is associated with Sukha Pranayama, according to a rhythm of 6 : 6. On the inhalation, the practitioner mentally traces the oval by moving upwards from the coccyx towards the hollow of the throat along the right side of the body. On the exhalation, the movement continues by descending from the hollow of the throat towards the coccyx along the left side, thus completing the oval.

Finally, the practice ends with Manas, the Mind, and the visualisation of the Manas Mandala, represented by an orange circle. This is also associated with Sukha Pranayama, according to a rhythm of 6 : 6. Starting from the coccyx, the practitioner mentally traces, throughout the inhalation, a complete circle passing through the crown of the head in a clockwise direction. On the exhalation, the practitioner follows the same circle in an anticlockwise direction, thus returning to the starting point.

Conclusion

Mandala Pranayama remains one of my favourite practices. Very complete, it engages both the mind and the breath and constitutes, for me, a powerful means of focusing attention. Its deeply aesthetic aspect also touches me greatly.

The chakras are a subtle reality, invisible to my eyes, but nevertheless perceptible through my kinaesthetic sensitivity. I feel the energy they convey through the different planes of my being and I can testify to the benefits of this practice, as well as to a very significant increase in my level of energy during the sadhana.

Sometimes, I perceive their presence with such intensity that a profound feeling of adoration spontaneously arises within me, as if my individual self were bowing before the Higher Self. I then feel a profound love and great reverence towards Anandamaya Kosha, this dimension of being associated with bliss.

The chakras are like portals towards higher and subtle dimensions that we can discover within ourselves. As if reality were unfolding not only before our eyes, outside, but also within us, perceptible through the eye of consciousness. This inner dimension then seems to me as vast as the Cosmos stretching out before us as far as the eye can see.

The chakras must become known and consciously experienced realities, because connecting with them allows us to benefit from the healing and evolutionary energy they convey. They are also channels through which information and knowledge circulate: knowledge of oneself and of the Universe, wisdom and understanding of the Dharma.

Practising the mandalas also means seeking to balance the elements present within us. But it is also a way of connecting ourselves with the whole of Creation, which is made up of the same elemental “building blocks”.

This idea echoes the principle “Yatha Pinde Tatha Brahmande”: “What is in the macrocosm, the Universe, is also in the microcosm, the human body.” Thus, understanding our own body, our energy and our mind also means understanding the Universe.

PINDA CHAKRAS

	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna
Literal translation	Support of the root	Being established in oneself	City of jewels	That which has no cause	Great purity	Beyond knowledge
Qualities	Stability, ease, security, cohesion, consolidation, solidification, integration, connectivity	Balance, equanimity, diplomacy, self-esteem, fullness of who we are, fluidity.	Motivation, passion, creativity, power, strength, radiance, prosperity.	Deep and authentic relationship. Unconditional love, compassion, empathy, desire to serve, feeling of fullness, self-giving, sense of camaraderie.	Purity at all levels: mental, emotional, social, universal. The highest degree of freedom. Active listening, freedom of expression.	Inner intuition, power of choice, viveka, power of discernment, power of objectivity, responsibility. Response versus reaction, change of consciousness, quantum leap, concentration
If there are blockages	Insecurity, instability	Nervousness, anxiety	Aggressiveness, being negatively impacted.	Insensitivity, selfishness, superficial relationships, volatility, possessiveness.	Accumulation of negativity, many blockages: samskara, klesha.	Grip of subconscious and primitive tendencies, prisoner of the senses and their objects
Endocrine gland correlations	Gonads and ovaries	Adrenal glands	Pancreas	Thymus	Thyroids	Pituitary gland, hypophysis and the corpus callosum
Nerve plexus correlations	Sacral plexus. It supplies the lower limbs and the reproductive organs.	Hypogastric plexus. It is linked to the sympathetic nervous system.	Solar plexus. Supplies the digestive and excretory system.	Cardiac plexus. Linked to the cardiorespiratory system.	Pharyngeal plexus. Correlated with the glossopharyngeal nerve.	Cavernous plexus
Physical area	Base of the spinal column	Pelvic region	Navel area	Heart area.	Throat region	Between the eyebrows Bhramadhya Bindu
Jnanendriya	The nose and the sense of smell.	The tongue and the sense of taste.	The eye and the sense of sight	The skin and the sense of touch.	The ears and the sense of hearing.	Super-sense of the mind.
Karmendriya	The feet and the sense of locomotion.	The hands and the sense of dexterity	The organs of excretion	The sense of reproduction.	The sense of communication and speech.	
Mahabhuta	Prithvi. Earth element. Solid aspect.	Apas. Water element. The liquid aspect.	Tejas. Fire element. The thermal aspect	Vayu. Air element. The gaseous aspect.	Akasha. Ether element. The etheric aspect.	Manas. Mental element. The mental aspect.
No. of Dalas (Petals and energy flow)	4	6	10	12	16	2
Asana	Seated asanas: vajra asana, sukha asana, padma asana, siddha asana.	Supta vajra asana, matsya asana and its variations.	Dharmika asana.	Vakra asana, brahmananda asana.	Sarvanga asana, nirlamba asana.	Shirsha asana, kapala asana
Bija Mantra	LANG	VANG	RANG	YANG	HANG	ANG
Deities	Lord Ganesha	Brahma	Vishnu	Ishvara, Rudra	Shiva	Ardha Narishwara
Symbolic animal	Black elephant	Leviathan	Ram / goat	Antelope	White elephant	
Svadyaya (questions to oneself)	Do I feel safe within myself? Am I stable?	Am I a balanced or nervous / anxious person? With my hands, am I someone who grasps or someone who gives and shares?	How do we digest information, experiences, food, relationships, life?	Am I connected to my inner guide? Do I give in my relationships so that they flourish? Are my relationships authentic?	Do I communicate with kindness and attention (intrapersonal communication -with oneself; interpersonal -with the other; transpersonal -with God.	When faced with a situation, do I react or do I respond? Am I responsible for my actions?
Bhuta Mandala	Prithvi mandala: Yellow square	Apas mandala: Silver-coloured crescent moon	Tejas mandala: Red triangle, point downward	Vayu mandala. Two interlaced blue triangles.	Akasha mandala. Magenta oval	Manas Mandala. Orange circle.
Mandala Pranayama	Sukha purvaka pranayama	Sukha pranayama	Loma pranayama	Viloma pranayama	Sukha pranayama	Sukha pranayama
Breathing rhythm	1 : 1 : 1 : 1	1 : 1	1 : 1 : 1	1 : 1 : 1	1 : 1	1 : 1
Other practices	Ashvni Mudra, Mulabandha.		Agni sara, nauli kriya, udhyana banda.	Pranava aum, anjali mudra, nada bhavana, shuddhi, kriya.	Jalandhara banda, mayuri mudra, simha asana, nada yoga, shabda kriya.	Prana kriya Polarization techniques: Anuloma Viloma Kriya, Aloma viloma pranayama, Bhramadya bindu, Ajna bindu
	Beginning of our journey back home, the source.	A beautiful feeling of interpersonal harmony	We are solar beings, connected to the solar system	Doing for pleasure without expecting recognition.	Speak the pleasant truth, speak the unpleasant truth gently.	From instinct to the intuitive We have transcended primitive and subhuman tendencies to become human

APAS MANDALA

Sukha
Pranayama
1:1



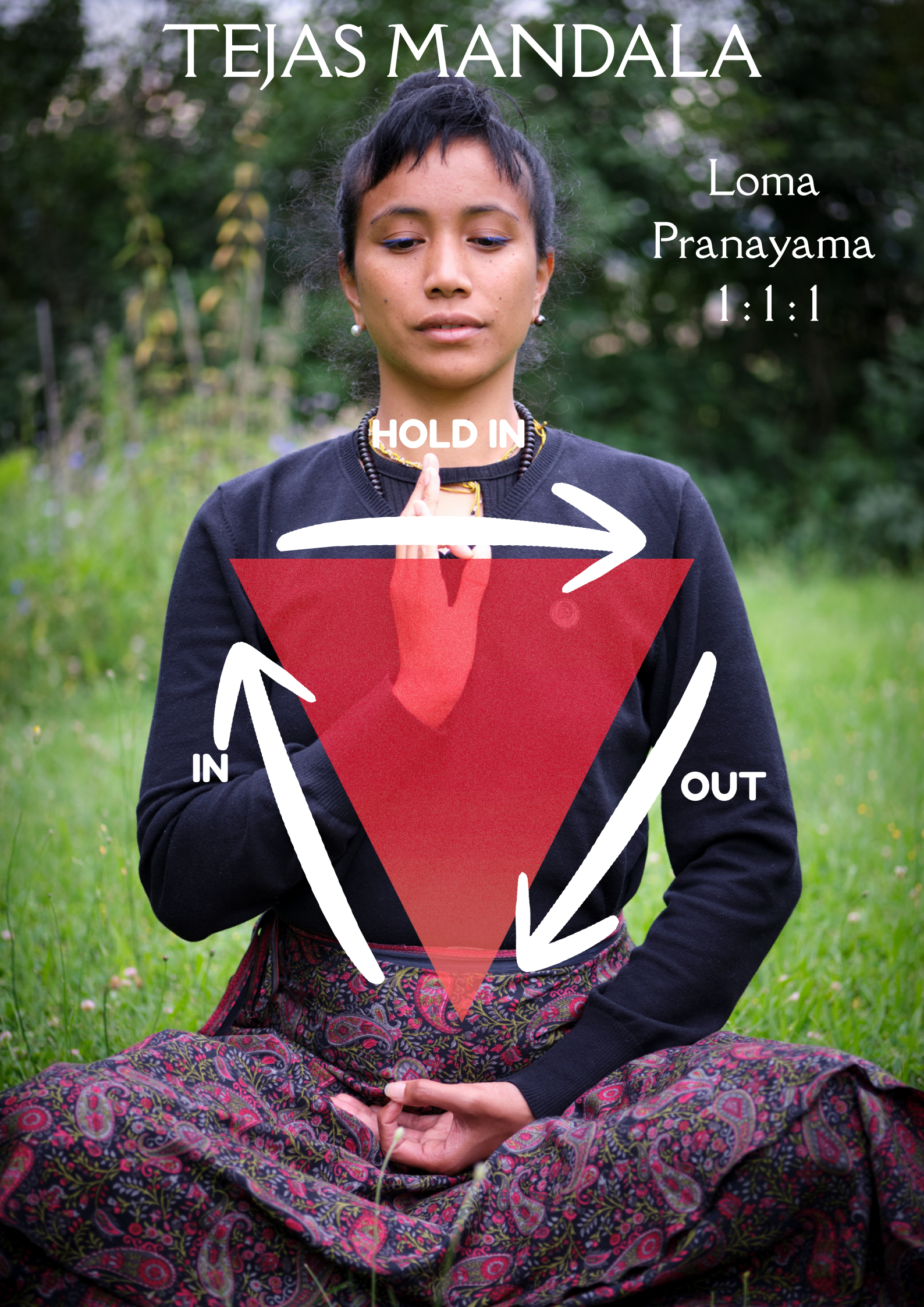
TEJAS MANDALA

Loma
Pranayama
1:1:1

HOLD IN

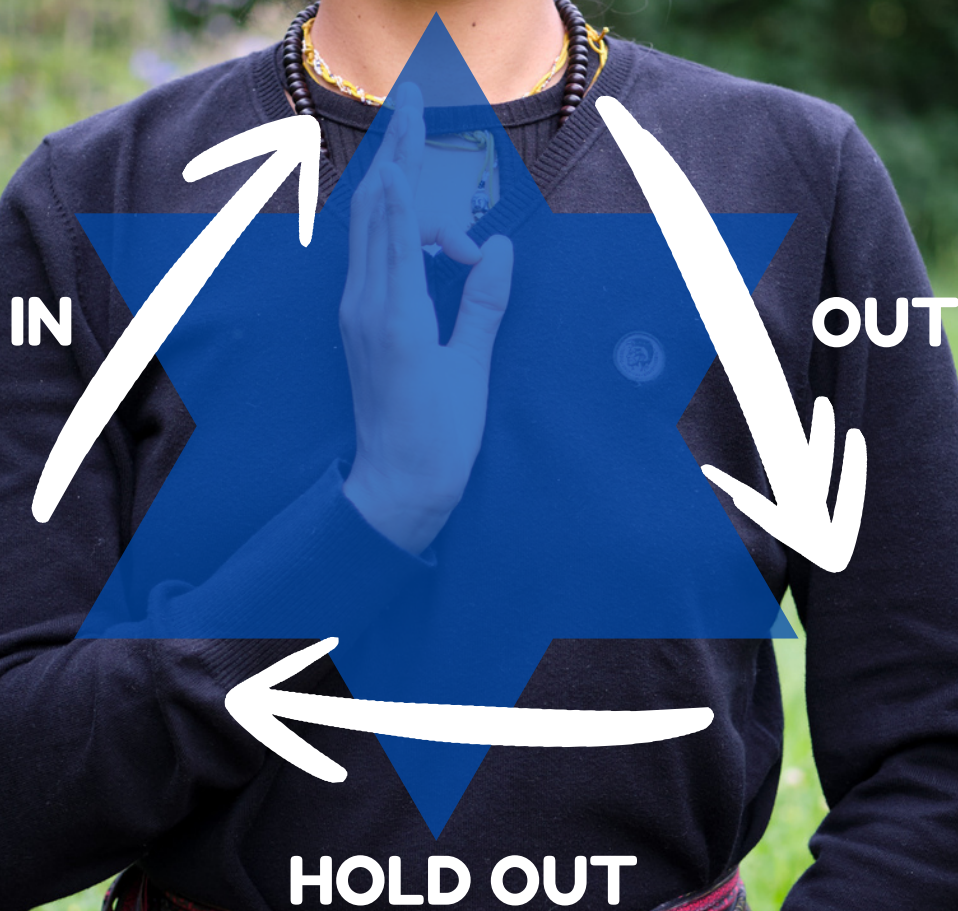
IN

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VAYU MANDALA

Viloma
Pranayama
1:1:1



PRITHVI MANDALA

Sukha Purvaka
Pranayama
1:1:1:1

HOLD IN

IN

OUT

HOLD OUT



AKASHA MANDALA

Sukha
Pranayama
1:1



MANAS MANDALA

Sukha

Pranayama

1:1

OUT

IN

