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**KAPALABHATI KRIYA  
BY CHRISTINE (CITRINĪ) WARE, Ph.D., E-RYT**

Kapalabhati Kriya is also known as Shining Breath, Shining Skull Breath, or Fire Breath. This is a pranayama (breathing) practice that can be taught to beginning students, but has great benefits to students of all levels. It is best learned in person and from an experienced teacher. Because many beginning yoga students find it to be a somewhat strange practice when they first encounter it, I thought that I would write a bit on it in this newsletter. Kapalabhati involves forced exhalations similar to those involved in coughing, sneezing, or laughing heartily, except that the mouth is kept closed, breathing occurs through the nostrils, and the exhalations are repeated at a steady rhythm.

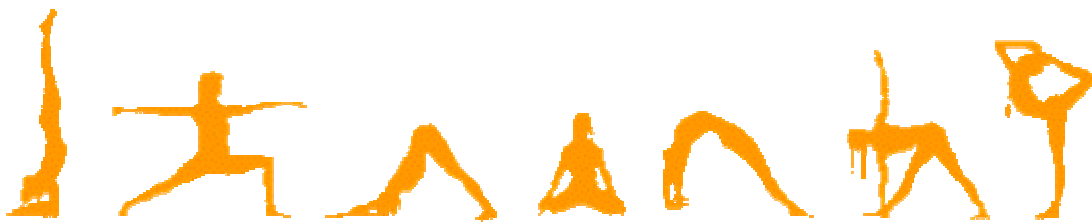
Kapalabhati means Shining Skull Breath. It is called this, or Shining Breath for short, because it oxygenates the brain, increasing the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain. As a result, some practitioners find that it can make them feel a bit lightheaded, particularly until they become more accustomed to the increased oxygen. Since the brain is the greatest consumer of blood in the body, the practice is highly beneficial. Kapalabhati is also called Fire Breath because it produces heat and, therefore energy. Due to this, it is not recommended prior to sleep or for those who feel that they have too much energy (e.g., if you've had a lot of caffeine, if you are hot, if you have manic or hypomanic tendencies). In contrast, it is quite beneficial for those who have low energy, are fatigued, are cold, are groggy or lethargic, or are feeling low or depressed. It is a kriya (purification and flowing practice) because it involves movement of air, rather than retention (i.e., asana of

breath). Kapalabhati is also used as an adjunct to more advanced breathing practices, particularly the application of locks and breath retentions, because it helps to clean residual air from the lungs, strengthens and gives control over the diaphragm and other abdominal muscles, and increases one's capacity to fully exhale and fully inhale.

Other benefits to kapalabhati include cleaning of air passages and relief of sinus congestion, strengthening digestion and assimilation (i.e., exciting the "gastric fire"), massage to the internal organs, increasing the elimination of carbon dioxide from the cells and removing of toxins and impurities from the lungs (therefore helping cells become saturated with oxygen instead), increased circulation of blood, reduction of fatty tissues in the abdominal area, an invigoration of the pineal and pituitary glands, and ultimately a calming effect on the nervous system.

If you are unsure of this practice, please ask your TriYoga teacher to explain and/or demonstrate it. We all love sharing this practice!

~ Jaya Guru Devi ~



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