

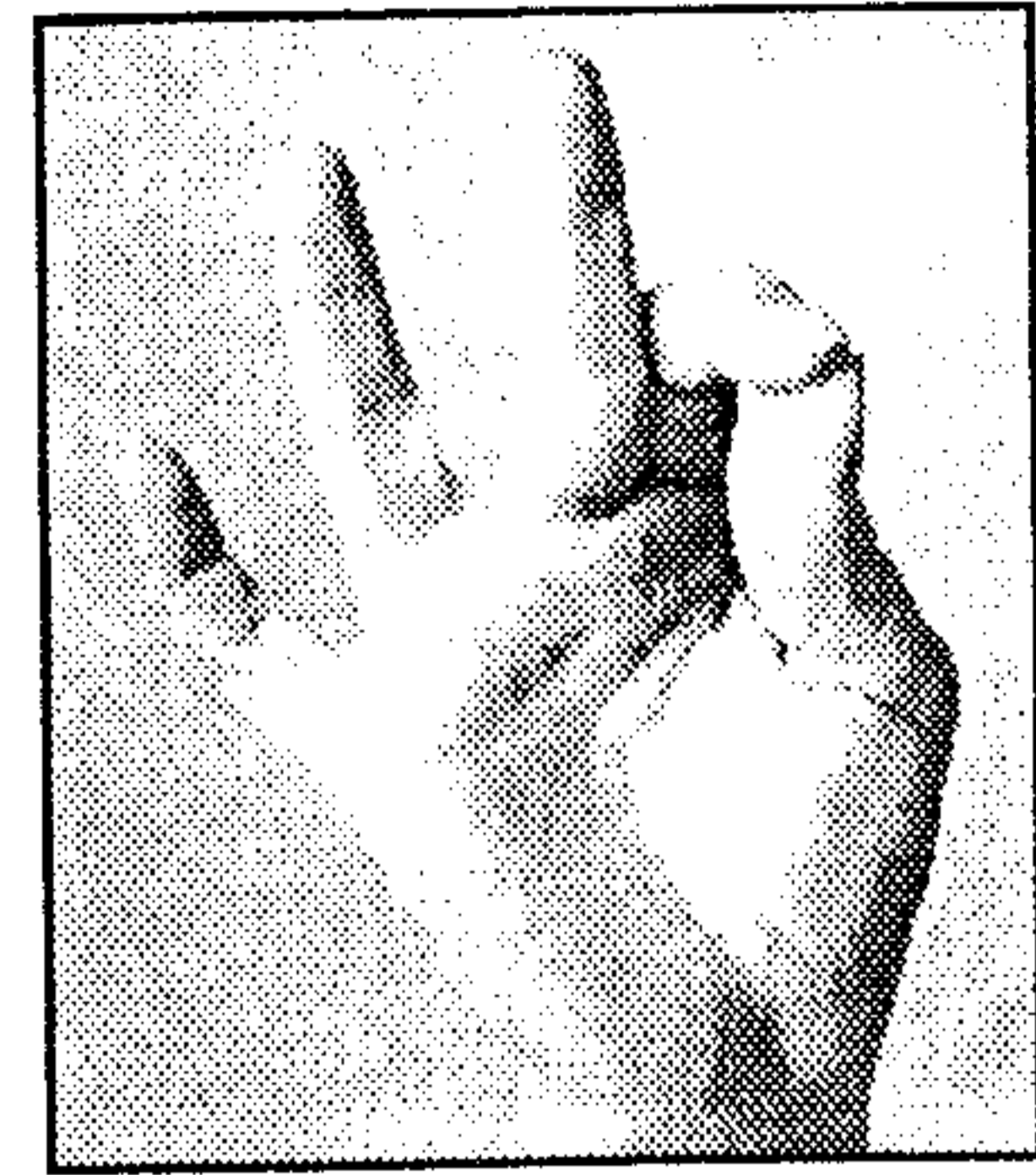
# YOGA MUDRAS

By Judith Knudson

It has been just about twenty years since I took my first Yoga class, and from that very first class yoga became part of my life. I will never forget how good I felt after the class was over, both relaxed and stretched from the asanas or yoga positions. I sure was stiff from being behind a desk most of the day, and then the hour commute did not lend itself to flexibility either, but now I found the secret elixir, and so it has been a good friend over the years. There are many different aspects of Yoga to be studied such as the breath, relaxing the mind, proper alignment, mantras, mudras, etc.

Mudras are what I would like to share with you. A mudra is a hand posture. In the ancient science of hand postures it is acknowledged that there is a tremendous flow of energy in our hands and each finger represents one of the five elements – the thumb is agni (fire), the forefinger is vayu (air), the middle finger is akash (ether), the ring finger is prithvi (earth) and the little finger is jal (water). Many yogis feel that the roots of all diseases lie in an imbalance of one of the five elements and can be corrected with medicines, willpower and mudras. Mudras are for everyone. They can be practiced sitting in the cross-legged position on the floor for a half-hour daily or even strolling with your hands casually tucked in your pockets folded in a particular mudra. It is the kind of thing you can do almost anywhere.

Mudras never generate an excess of energy; they simply seek an optimal balancing of prana (life force), much like a thermostat. There are many mudras to be practiced and with a little research you can find a mudra to balance any difficulty you may be experiencing. The following are just a handful.



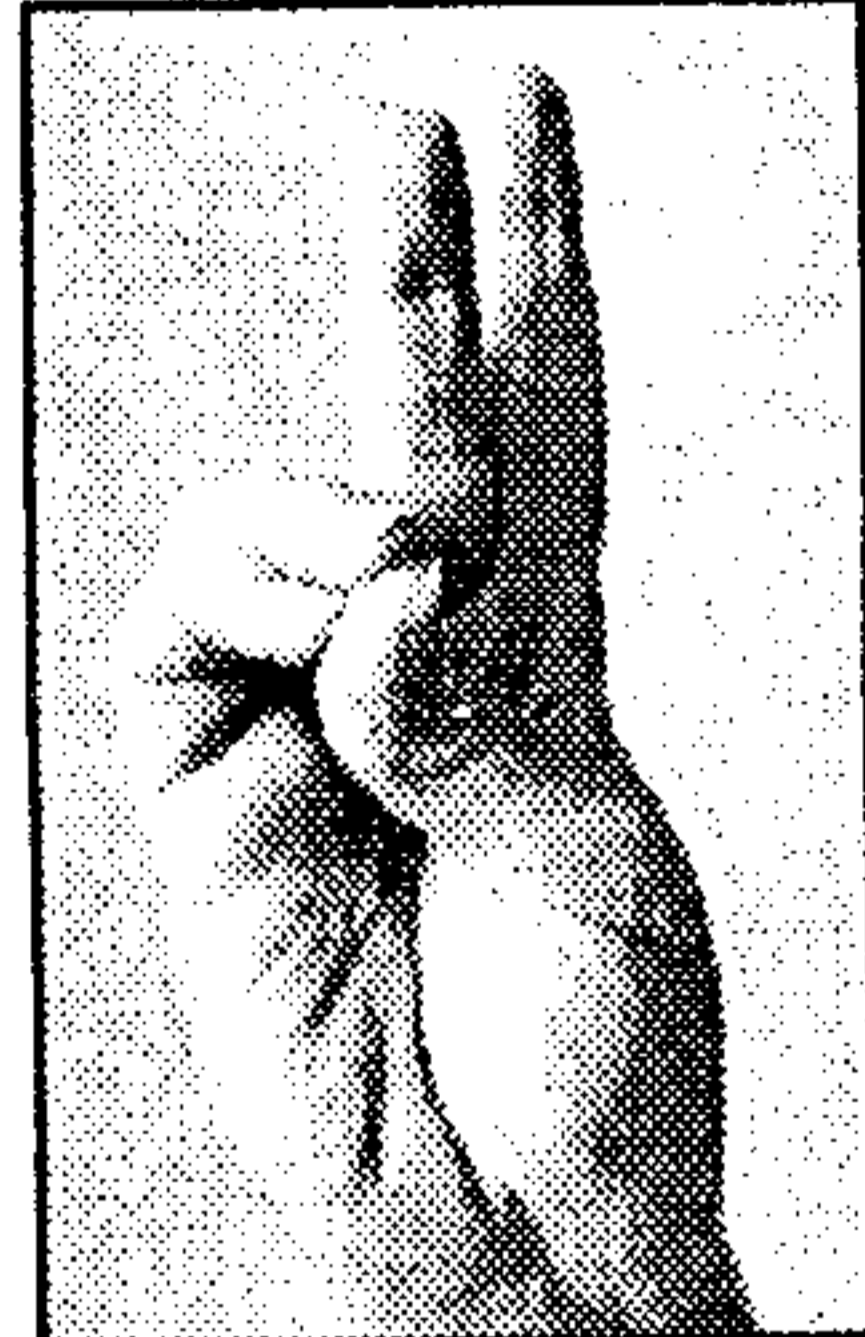
**Gyan Mudra**

The thumb and the index finger are brought together in gentle contact, not pressing hard, while all other fingers are kept upright. The mudra most people are familiar with. Great thinkers such as Buddha, Mahavir, Christ and Guru Nanak are generally depicted in this pose. Its practice ensures mental peace, concentration, sharp memory and spiritual feelings. It cures insomnia and mental disorders, and dissipates tension, depression and drowsiness. This is a must for those who aspire to develop telepathy or wish to acquire extrasensory abilities.



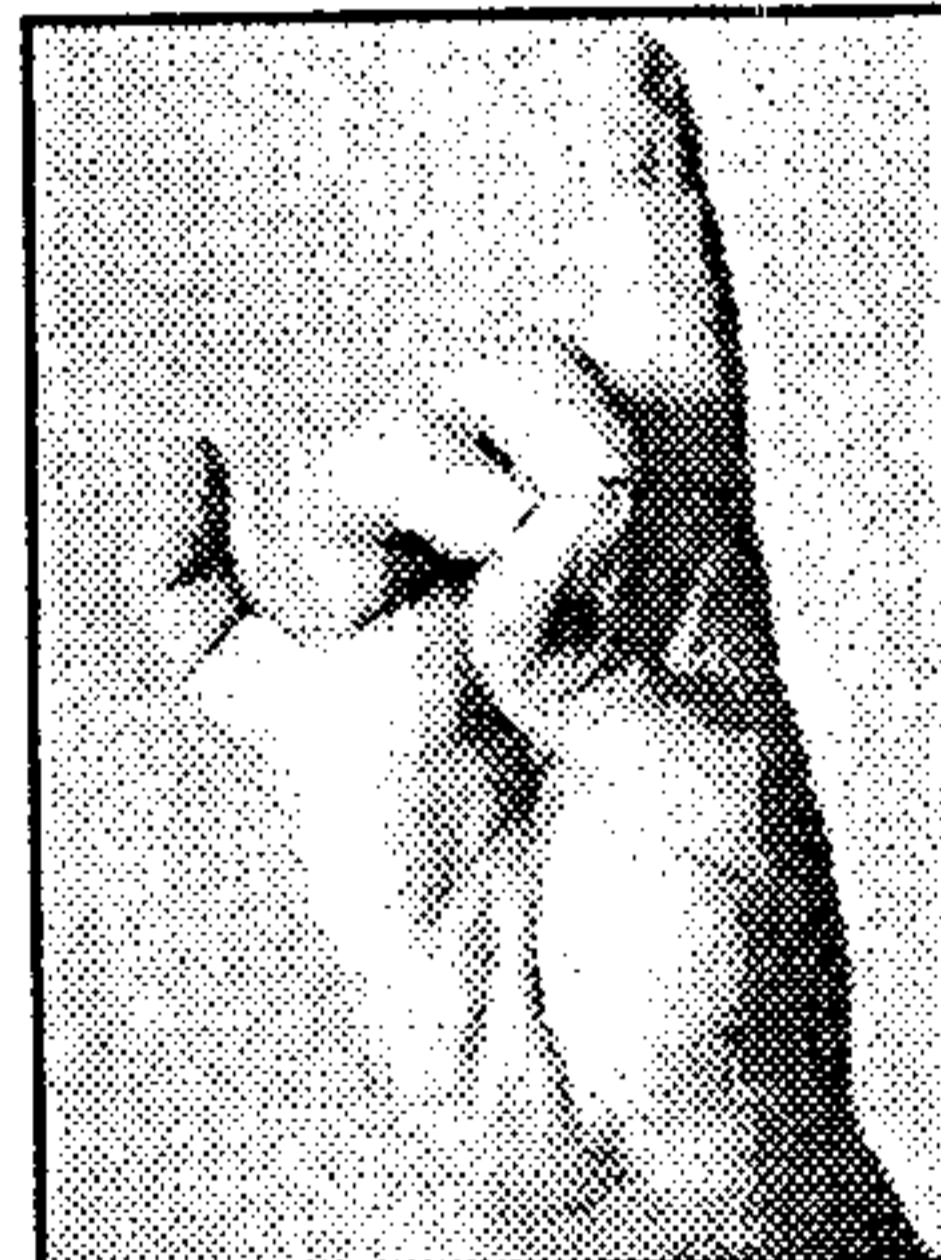
**Apan Vayu Mudra**

Fold the forefinger down and touch the mound of the thumb. The little finger should be held erect. It regulates complications of the heart. In a severe heart attack, if administered as a first aid measure within the first two seconds, it provides instant relief.



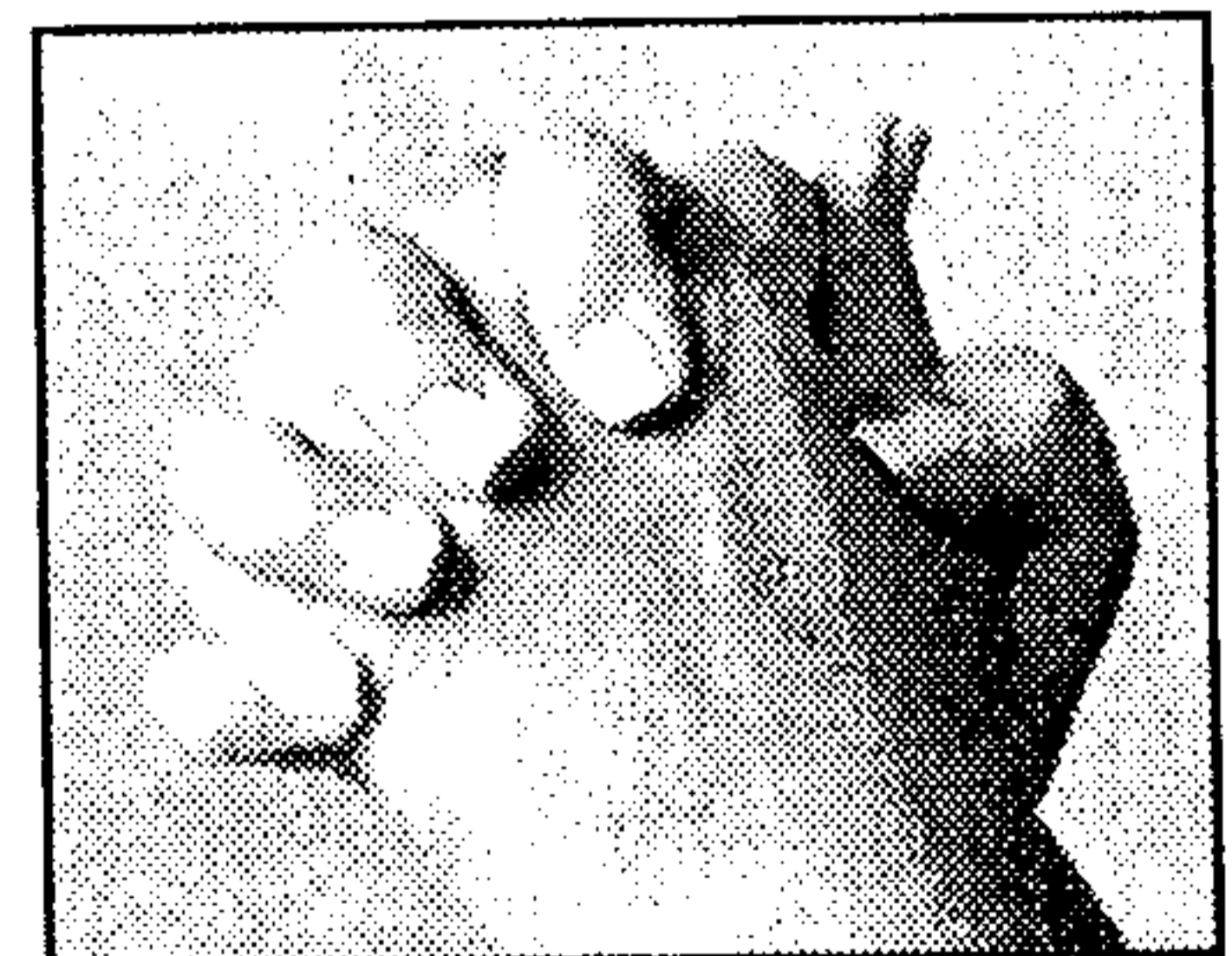
**Pran Mudra**

Touch the points of the little finger and the ring finger to the tip of the thumb lightly. This is a life-giving mudra; it energizes the body and improves vitality. It helps to improve eyesight, and a must for those who feel nervous, tired and weak.



**Apan Mudra**

Join the middle finger and the ring finger with the tip of the thumb; the forefinger and the little finger should be held upright. Provides relief in urinary problems and eases difficulty in labor and delivery. It facilitates the discharge of waste matter from the body and purifies the system.



**Linga Mudra**

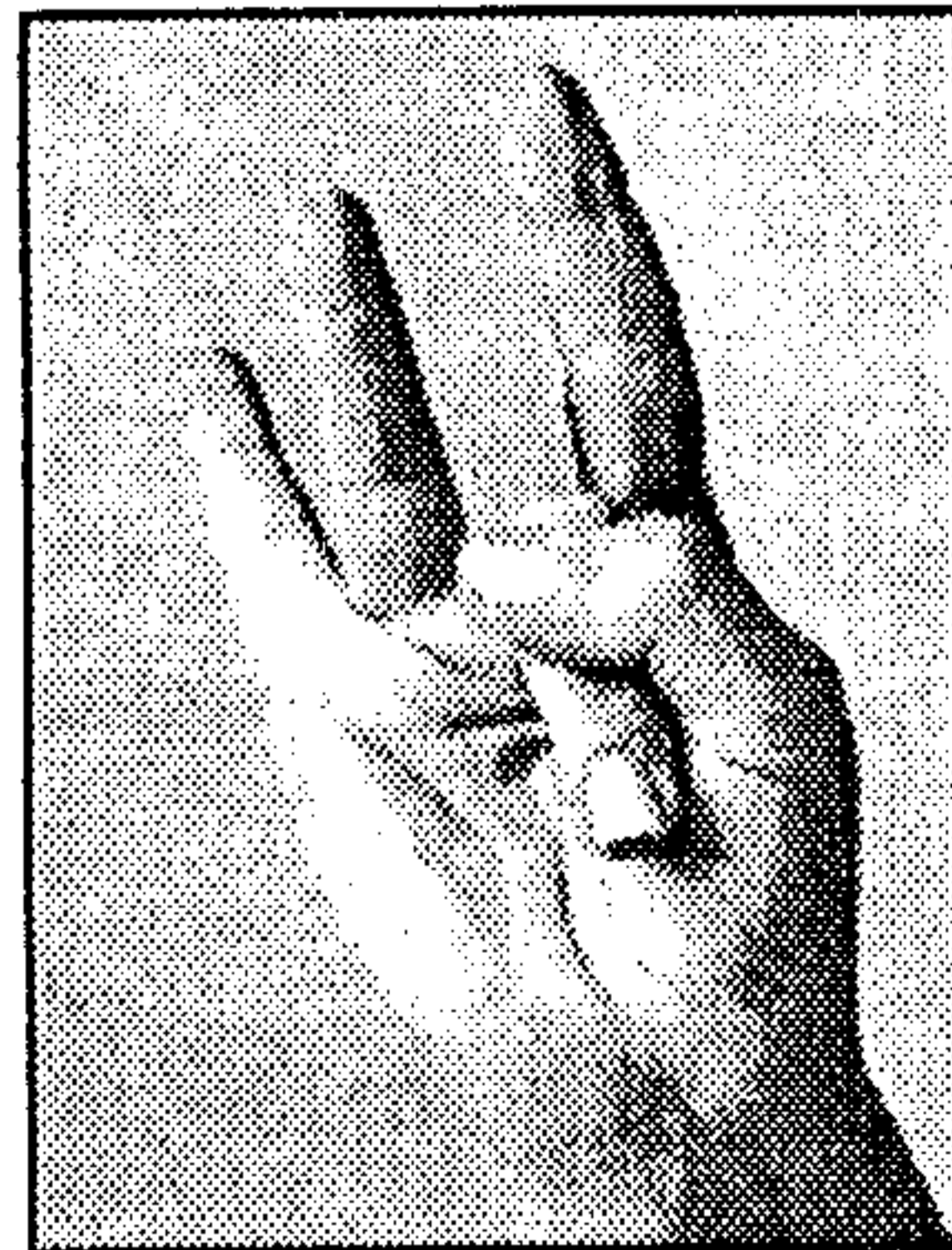
Join both the palms and lock the facing fingers together, keeping one thumb upright. The upright thumb must be encircled by the other thumb and the index finger. Makes the body resistant to colds, coughs and chest infections by generating heat in the body and destroying accumulated phlegm in the chest. It helps in weight reduction too, but has to be practiced with restraint. The intake of at least eight glasses of water, and butter and ghee as cooling agents in sufficient quantities is a must.

Due to the heat it generates, it may not be possible to practice this mudra with as much ease and flexibility as the other mudras. It might prove taxing and result in a feeling of lethargy.



**Varuna Mudra**

A bit like the Gyan Mudra – touch the tip of the little finger with the tip of the thumb while the other fingers are kept upright. Regular practice ensures an optimum level of water in the body and heals all ailments connected with dehydration.



**Shunya Mudra**

Bring the middle finger down to touch the palm and bring the padding of the thumb on top of it, keeping the other fingers straight up. Do this for 40 minutes a day. This mudra is ideal for ailments of the ear, and also helps those of the nose and the throat. Even five minutes of this mudra will help an earache.

*continued on page 13*