

Garudasana

The *garuda* is a mythical bird and the pose resembles the shape of this eagle-like creature. In the previous two columns, we presented first the arm position, followed by the leg position. Practice of the first stage brings freedom to the shoulders, arms and wrists. The second stage creates strength and suppleness in the ankles and hips. This final stage requires balance and determination and brings physical, mental and emotional stability.

- 1) Stand straight with the feet together (*Tadasana*).
- 2) Place the hands on the hips. Bend the knees and cross the right leg over the left. With practice you will be able to wrap the right foot behind the left calf. Keep the hips and trunk facing forward and the spine erect. If balance is difficult, stand in front of a wall and place your fingers on it for stability.
- 3) Maintaining your balance, stretch the arms apart in line with the shoulders and open and expand the chest as you pull the arms apart.
- 4) With an exhalation, swing the left arm over the right and cross the upper arms above the elbow.
- 5) Now entwine the forearms and bring the palms together. The thumbs should now point towards the face as in the photograph.
- 6) Breathe evenly through the nose as you lift the elbows to the height of the shoulders. Raise the chest up and spread the area of the upper back, between the shoulder blades.
- 7) Learn to hold the pose without wavering. Notice that the buttocks will stick out; instead, lengthen the buttocks down to the floor to help keep the lift of the chest. Breathe evenly and deeply through the nose without strain. Develop stability so the mind becomes quiet.
- 8) Stay for a few breaths and then do to the other side, where the left leg will be over the right leg and the right arm will be above the left arm.



Garudasana develops poise and balance.