



### **Vrksasana (Tree Pose)**

Although autumn is traditionally the beginning of vata or windy season, the challenge of feeling scattered and ungrounded seems to be true for all seasons and doshas these days. Yoga poses that involve balancing are a way of finding centeredness at the emotional and mental levels of our being by activating the cerebellum (motor coordination, balance, attention), releasing stress and tension while strengthening the nervous system. A tree reaches into the earth (prithivi) seeking minerals and water (apas) through its roots while the trunk and the leaves reaches towards the sun (agni) for its vitality and releases oxygen (vayu). The secret to balance is a strong foundation that can weather the fluctuations of the environment, relationships and the focus of yoga-our own mind and emotions.

Guidance: Although you may feel tentative at the beginning of doing **Vrksasana** with regular practice for short periods of time, the body will quickly adapt and progress. Tree pose also works the muscles of the feet, the ankles and legs. We start in **Tadasana** (mountain pose) standing with both feet on the ground and begin long deep breathing. Breathe into the belly so that it expands and on the exhale root into the earth by pressing down with the four points of the feet while lifting the inner arch of the foot. When we breathe, we press down with the feet and we stretch up with the spine simultaneously like the tree seeking nourishment through all the elements. Shift your center of gravity over to the right leg and then lift the left leg up and press the sole of the foot on the inside of the right thigh keeping the pelvis forward. Find a place on the ground or in front of you to focus your eyes – this is known as **drishti** – a point of gaze or focus that concentrates our attention on our inner process. It is this gathering of awareness to one point that helps develop internal and subsequently external balance.

When you feel steady, bring the palms together at the heart in **namaskara mudra** which unites all duality: Shiva and Shakti, the sun and moon, spirit and matter. As you feel more comfortable, raise the arms overhead stretching the torso upwards but keeping the shoulders relaxed. Initially try standing on one leg for a minute and then alternate with the left leg. Some days will be steadier than others reflecting your nervous system and how you are handling stress. When you lose your balance easily, it is time to reflect on what brings you out of a state of harmony and balance. Use the tree as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge and go back to your roots and foundation to reconnect to your balance.

Sraddhasagar