"First, learn to breathe."

This is where you must begin... The Yoga apprentice must first learn to breathe without assuming any postures. He must then train himself/herself in combining breathing with asanas, beginning with the simplest... (CY pg. 137)

The ABC of Yoga is learning to breathe properly... (CY p. 110)

The practitioner of Yoga trains himself to breathe deeply, yet without any straining; to keep the air in his lungs by holding his breath; and to breathe out slowly and above all correctly. It might be said that he attends first of all to the last of these three phases. (CY p. 39)

"breather prayer"

Amongst these means, there is what is called "breathed prayer"... It consists in repeating a selected phrase in one’s mind as one breathes in and out. If possible the phrase should accentuate the symbolic import of human breathing, and serve as a channel through which man can wholly transmit himself through the medium of his breath. It can and should even marry itself to the rhythm of breathing; or rather it should form this rhythm. It helps the apprentice-yogi to breathe properly; and for the yogi, whose formation is complete, it is second nature. (CY
My God, bring a clean heart to birth within me: breathe new life, true life, into my being. I may repeat the same phrase five or ten times without wearing of it. It will form the rhythm of my breathing, and give it symbolic meaning. Tomorrow, very probably, a different prayer will accompany this munificent air in its “going-out and coming in”. I might for instance recite in my mind verses from the sequence of Pentecost which I, as a Christian yogi, love. (CY p. 144)

...But it is especially in prayer and with reference to prayer that you will feel the benefits of rhythmic or synthetic breathing, because in one and the same action it unites body and soul, the latter being in control of and following up a phenomenon that is normally automatic and purely physical. (CYAN p. 116)

Tossed around as we are, if God wishes to speak to us, his voice, small and still, will be lost in the hubbub of our daily lives; the racket and noise drowning our minds will prevent his penetration into that seclusion we call “heart”—the living witness of that life in us which is most sacred and most true: the life we call “inner” or “spiritual”. (CY p. 19)

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**Exercise**

Breathe in and out several times and then, while breathing in deeply, raise your arms and hands (palms to the front) and little in front of you and above you. There is no question of raising them to the vertical position (in a graceless “hands up” position), but hold your arms up lightly so that your hands, held open naturally, are more or less (the choice is yours) on the level of your head. (YTL p. 167)