

PART II: METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA

Disclaimer of Responsibility

The techniques described herein are exposed for study purposes only and should serve as a comparison with the works of other researchers. The author hopes this work will inspire intelligent feedback. Any remarks, criticism, corrections, and/or additions are welcome. Before you begin posing all kinds of questions to yourself, read through Part II and Part III of this book so you have a thorough understanding of the matter. You'll find that as you go through it many questions will be answered.

I wish to make clear that this book is not a Kriya Yoga manual! I may write one and face the problem of dividing it into different lessons and giving all the necessary instructions for each level. However, certain delicate techniques e.g. Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama, Thokar, and Yoni Mudra cannot be learned from a manual and require the help of an expert to check their execution. Each person is different so it is not possible to predict what effects an intensive practice might have on a particular individual.

The author disclaims any responsibility in case of negative results, especially if the techniques are practiced without first having their execution checked by an expert. Those who intend to carry on this practice should do so with a due sense of sacredness and awareness of the wealth it can bring to their life. Although you should have the right and the duty to control your own destiny, securing expert counsel or guidance is indispensable.

When you go to an expert, please advise them of physical problems, such as high blood pressure, lung problems, or signs of hyperventilation If you have a particular physical problem or handicap, an expert can lead you through a very mild form of Kriya Pranayama and the corresponding Mudras – and if necessary, may recommend that you practice them only mentally.

CHAPTER 6
THE BASIC TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA FIRST STEP

Localization of the Chakras and of particular centers in the brain

The *Chakras* are subtle astral (ethereal) organs inside the spinal cord; ideal steps on a mystic ladder guiding one safely to the deepest ecstatic experience. In *Kriya* we don't try to visualize a *Chakra* but to perceive approximately its location. The practice of the different levels of *Kriya Yoga* will refine this perception. Surely it is not possible to eliminate visualization completely but if waste time in trying to recreate internally the attractive images you find on the New Age books, you could run the risk of losing the real meaning of the *Kriya* techniques. On the contrary, when certain particular conditions are established – mental silence, relaxation, an intense desire of the soul – the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* takes, so to say, the "inward route" and the Spiritual Reality manifests. You will then perceive the reality of the *Chakras* in the astral dimension. You will be able to listen to their astral vibration as well as hues of light pouring forth from their locations. You will also develop the ability to single out the different rates of vibration of each *Chakra*. The practice of *Kechari Mudra* (explained in this chapter) will foster this experience especially when the "wind" of the breath subsides.

Therefore, don't be maniacally precise about each *Chakra* location. Here you will not find instruction like: "Third *Chakra* is located at L3 (3rd Lumbar Vertebra) behind navel" or "Fifth *Chakra* is located at C7".... or instruction how to visualize their supposed specific color and the number of their petals, each one decorated with a Sanskrit letter... Too much "creative" visualization is against starting up the *Kriya* process.

The nature of each *Chakra* reveals two aspects, one internal and one external. The internal aspect of a *Chakra*, its essence, is a vibration of "light" attracting your awareness upward, toward the Spirit. The external aspect of a *Chakra*, its physical side, is a diffuse "light" enlivening and sustaining the life of the physical body. Now, while climbing the ladder of the spine during *Kriya Pranayama*, you can conceive the *Chakras* as tiny "twinkling lights" illuminating a hollow tube which is the spinal cord. Then, when the awareness is brought down, the *Chakras* are internally perceived as organs distributing energy (coming from Infinity above) into the body. Luminous rays depart from their locations, enlivening the part of the body which is in front of them.

The first *Chakra*, ***Muladhara***, is at the base of the spinal column just above the coccygeal (tailbone) region. The second *Chakra*, ***Swadhisthana***, is in the sacral region, halfway between *Muladhara* and *Manipura*. The third *Chakra*, ***Manipura***, is in the lumbar region, at the same level as the navel. The fourth *Chakra*, ***Anahata***, is in the dorsal region; its location can be felt by bringing the shoulder blades closer and concentrating on the tense muscles in the area between them or just below them. The fifth *Chakra*, ***Vishuddha***, is located where the neck joins the shoulders. Its location can be detected by swaying the head

from side to side, keeping the upper chest immobile, and concentrating on the point where you perceive a "cracking" sound.

Through the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* you will learn how to detect the seat of the *Medulla* ("Medulla oblongata" on top of the spinal cord). While centered in the *Medulla*, converge your inner gaze on *Bhrumadhya*, the point between the eyebrows, and observe a faint internal light in that region. If you come straight back about 8 centimeters from where the light appears, you have found the seat of the sixth *Chakra Ajna*. This *Chakra* is considered the "seat of the soul" or the "door to the kingdom of Spirit.". By finding stability of concentration there, the internal light in *Bhrumadhya* will expand in the experience of the spiritual eye (*Kutastha*) a luminous point in the middle of an infinite spherical radiance. This experience is the royal entrance to the Divine Consciousness immanent in our physical universe. You will experience the entire universe as your own body. This experience is also called *Kutastha Chaitanya*. [Sometimes the term *Kutastha* is utilized at the place of *Bhrumadhya*.]

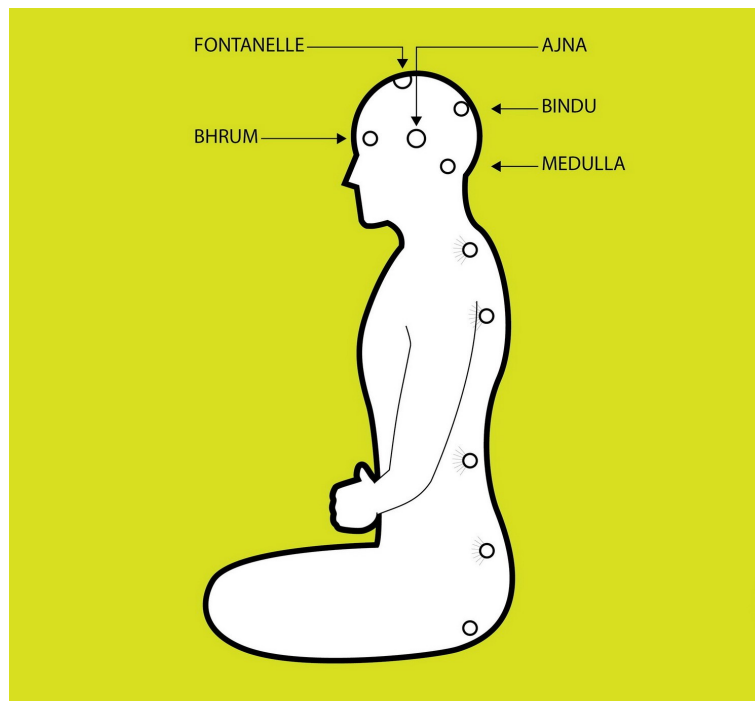


Figure 1. Location of the Chakras

The energy flowing through the *Nadi* of the tongue during *Kechari Mudra* stimulates the **pituitary gland**. The pituitary gland, or hypophysis, is an endocrine gland about the size of a pea. It forms a protrusion at the bottom of the brain hypothalamus. It is said to be the physical counter part of *Ajna Chakra*.

One of the greatest mystery of the spiritual path is the role of the **pineal gland**, or epiphysis. This is another small endocrine gland in the brain. It is shaped like a tiny pine cone (symbolically, many spiritual organizations, have used the pine cone as an icon). It is located behind the pituitary gland, at the back of the third ventricle of the brain. Having full experience of the white spiritual Light there is considered the apex of your *Sadhana* (spiritual practice.)

In the commentary on the Bhagavad Gita by Swami Pranabananda Giri there is a hint to two further spiritual centers in the brain: **Roudri** and **Bama**. *Roudri* is located on the left side of the brain above the left ear, while *Bama* is located on the right side of the brain above the right ear. We shall have the opportunity to utilize them during the practice of those *Higher Kriyas* happening in the region of the brain above the ideal plan containing *Ajna Chakra*.

Bindu is located in the occipital region. It is the **Sikha point** where the hairline twists in a kind of vortex (It is here that Hindus with shaved heads leave a lock of hair.) During the first part of *Kriya Pranayama*, the consciousness touches *Bindu* briefly at the end of each inhalation. In the higher phases of *Kriya Pranayama*, when our awareness finds tranquility in *Bindu*, we become aware of the **Fontanelle** [We mean the anterior fontanelle more properly called "Bregma".] **Sahasrara**, is at the top of the head. It is perceived as light radiating from the upper part of the cranium. The **eighth Chakra** is the highest center we are going to consider. It is located at about 30 centimeters above Fontanelle.

Position for Meditation

One should sit facing east. According to Patanjali, the *yogi's* posture (Asana) must be steady and pleasant.

Half-lotus: Most *kriyabans* are relaxed in this sitting position, which has been used since time immemorial for meditation, because it's comfortable and easily managed. The key is to maintain an erect spine by sitting on the edge of a thick cushion so the buttocks are slightly raised. Sit cross-legged with the knees resting on the floor. Bring the left foot toward the body so its sole is resting against the inside of the right thigh. Draw the heel of the left foot in toward the groin as much as possible. The right leg is bent at the knee and the right foot is comfortably placed over the left thigh or calf or both. Let the right knee drop as far as possible toward the floor. The shoulders are in a natural position. The head, neck, chest, and spine are in a straight line as if they were linked. When the legs get tired, reverse them to prolong the position.

The best hand position is with fingers interlocked as in the well-known photo of Lahiri Mahasaya. This balances the energy from the right hand to the left and vice versa. The hand position for meditation and for *Pranayama* is the same because you move from *Pranayama* to meditation without interruption. Usually you don't even realize it.

For certain health or physical conditions, it may be beneficial to practice the half lotus on an armless chair provided it is large enough. In this way, one leg at a time can be lowered and the knee joint relaxed!

Siddhasana: (Perfect Pose) is of medium difficulty. The sole of the left foot is placed against the right thigh while the heel presses on the perineum. The right heel is against the pubic bone. This leg position combined with *Kechari Mudra* closes the pranic circuit and makes *Kriya Pranayama* easy and beneficial. It is said the position helps one to become aware of the movement of *Prana*.

Padmasana: (lotus position) a difficult, uncomfortable position; the right foot is placed on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh with the soles of the feet turned up. It is explained that when this *Asana* is combined with *Kechari* and *Shambhavi Mudra*, it results in an energetic condition that produces the experience of the internal light coming from each *Chakra*. It helps keep the body from bending or falling over as it tends to do when deep *Pratyahara* is practiced. *Padmasana* is uncomfortable for a beginner because the knees and the ankles become extremely painful. I would not advise anyone to perform this difficult posture; some *yogis* have had to have knee cartilage removed after years of forcing themselves into the *Padmasana*.

Eight Basic Techniques of Kriya Yoga¹

The following techniques are usually given during the first initiation into *Kriya Yoga*: *Talabya Kriya*, *Om Japa (in the Chakras)*, *Kriya Pranayama* (often denoted simply by *Pranayama*) in four parts, *Navi Kriya*, *Maha Mudra*, *Kriya Pranayama with short breath*, *mental Pranayama* and *Yoni Mudra*.²

1. Talabya Kriya

Start with the tongue in a relaxed position with the tip lightly touching the back of the upper teeth. Press the body of the tongue against the upper palate to create a suction cup effect. Many practice *Talabya Kriya* incorrectly by instinctively turning their tongue backwards (or keeping it vertical) but this cancels the whole effect. It is important to have the tongue tip touching the back of the upper teeth before pressing its body against the upper palate.

While pressing the tongue against the upper palate (roof of the mouth), drop/lower the bottom jaw until you clearly feel the stretch in the *lingual frenulum* (the small fold of tissue under the tongue that attaches it to the base of the mouth.) Release the tongue with a clicking sound then stick it out of the mouth and point it toward the chin. At the beginning, do not exceed 10 repetitions a day to avoid straining the *frenulum*. Eventually, you want to do 50 repetitions in about 2 minutes (110-120 seconds.)

After some months of practicing *Talabya Kriya* regularly, it should be possible to insert the tongue into the nasal pharynx cavity (This is *Kechari Mudra*, described in detail in the second part of this chapter.)

¹ To check if refinements have been added to the description of the techniques, visit www.kriyayogainfo.net at least once a year.

² The technique of *Pranayama with short breath* could be considered a variation of *Kriya Pranayama* and introduced in the next chapter. There are good reasons to introduce it here. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.

Even after mastering *Kechari Mudra*, *Talabya Kriya* should continue to be practiced because it creates a perceivable relaxing effect on the thinking process. It is not known why stretching the *frenulum* reduces thought production, however, anyone practicing the technique can readily verify this.

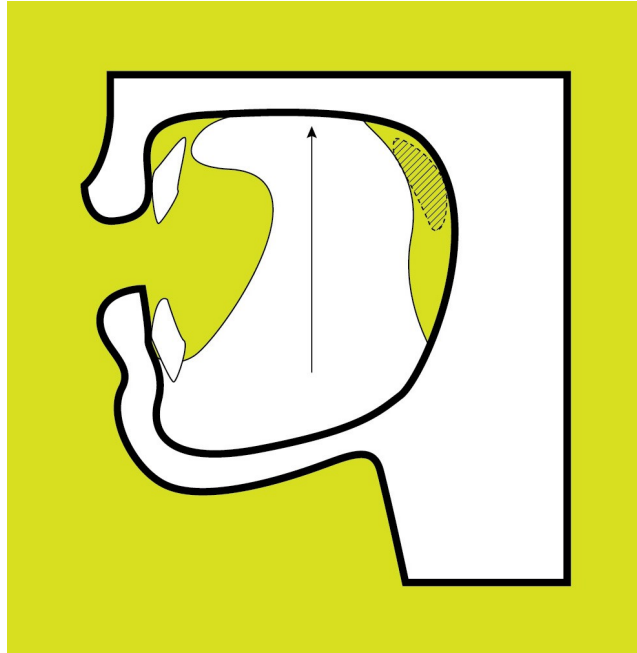


Figure 2. Key part of Talabya Kriya

Remark 1

In *Hatha Yoga* books there are different suggestions for lengthening the *frenulum*. One which is well known one is wrapping a piece of cloth around the tongue and, with the help of the hands, gently pulling (relaxing and repeating different times) the cloth both horizontally and also up, toward the tip of the nose. Lahiri Mahasaya was absolutely against cutting the *frenulum* to obtain faster and easier results. The technique of *Talabya Kriya* can be enriched by massaging both the muscles of the tongue and the frenulum with one's own fingers.

Remark 2

Talabya Kriya and *Kechari Mudra* are completely different! Open your mouth in front of a mirror during the first part of *Talabya Kriya* to see the hollow parts on each side of the *frenulum* which appear isolated from the body of the tongue; during *Kechari Mudra*, it is the uvula that comes forward and only the root of the tongue is visible!

2. Om Japa in the Chakras

Starting with the first *Chakra Muladhara*, chant the *Mantra* "Om" while concentrating on it; then do the same with the second *Chakra* and so on up to the fifth *Chakra (Vishuddha)* and then with *Bindu (Sikha point.)* During the ascent, do your best to intuitively touch the inner core of each *Chakra*. The descent

begins by chanting "Om" in the *Medulla*, then in the cervical *Chakra* and so on, all the way down to the first *Chakra*. During this descent of awareness, try to perceive the subtle radiation of each *Chakra*.

One ascent (*Chakras* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, *Bindu*) and one descent (*Medulla*, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) represent one cycle that lasts 25-30 seconds. Do 6 to 12 cycles. Do not pay any attention to the breath other than to breathe naturally. The *Om Mantra* may be chanted aloud during the first three cycles. In the remaining cycles chant *Om* mentally.

The correct pronunciation for "Om" is like the "ong" in "song" but drawn out. It must not be pronounced like the "om" in Tom e.g. "ahm." In this technique, "Om" is a pure prolonged vowel sound pronounced like the alphabet letter "o." The "m" is silent and the "o" sound is lengthened. At the end, the mouth is not completely closed – thus creating the nasal sound "ng". When pronouncing Indian *Mantras*, like *Om namo bhagavate ...* or *Om namah Shivaya ...*, the consonant "m" in "Om" is heard. Some say the correct note of *Om* is B (Si) before Middle C (Do).

This exercise, performed with concentration, makes the best form of *Kriya Pranayama* happen during your meditation routine. If one cycle lasts 25-30 seconds, then each *Om* chant last about 2 seconds, which is very good. Sure enough, a longer cycle e.g. 44 seconds, as counseled by Lahiri Mahasaya, would be very appropriate, providing one's concentration is always constant. The ideal practice is when a cycle lasts 60 seconds. But this creates boredom and many *kriyabans* would tend to skip this introductory procedure.

3. Kriya Pranayama (Spinal Breathing)

Kriya Pranayama is the most important technique. It acts directly on the energy (*Prana*) present in the body. *Kriya* teachers use different methods to introduce it. Here I describe my own didactic strategy.

First Part: long breath with strong sounds in the throat

Sit facing east. Your posture should be steady and pleasant. Maintain an erect spine. For this purpose you can utilize the trick described previously sitting on the edge of a thick cushion so the buttocks are slightly raised. The chin is little down, near the chest (your neck muscles maintain an even slight tension.) Your fingers are interlocked like in the well-known photo of Lahiri Mahasaya. *Kechari Mudra* (if you are able to do it) is applied; otherwise practice "*Baby Kechari*" – touch with the tip of the tongue the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft. This is enough to make the mind completely still. Mouth and eyes are closed. Your awareness is stable at the *Medulla* or at the *Ajna Chakra*.

In order to locate *Medulla*, raise your chin and tense the muscles of the neck at the base of the occipital bone; concentrate on the small hollow under that bone. *Medulla* is just anterior to that hollow under the occipital bone near the brain stem.

In order to locate the *Ajna Chakra*, move from that point toward the point

between the eyebrows. If you slowly swing your head sideways (a few centimeters left and right) having the sensation of something connecting the two temples, it is possible to locate the seat of *Ajna*. Focus your awareness at the intersecting point of two lines: the line connecting the hollow under the occipital bone with the point between your eyebrows and the line connecting the two temples.

Now prepare yourself for a sweet and calm abdominal breathing. This means that during inhalation, the upper part of the thorax remains almost immobile.

Have a deep breath, then another: don't worry about the length of inhalation and of exhalation. Breathe again and again and you will discover how you breath becomes naturally long and comforting. Merge your awareness with the beauty of deep breathing. Check again that breathing is mainly abdominal. During inhalation, the abdomen expands and during exhalation the abdomen is drawn in. During inhalation, the upper part of the lungs is filled two thirds full. Do NOT raise the rib cage or the shoulders.

About visualization we have already stressed that it suffice to visualize the spine as a hollow tube.

What is a Kriya breath?

It is a deep inhalation through the nose that produces an unvoiced sound (like in *Ujjayi Pranayama*) in the throat, which acts like a hydraulic pump to raise the energy (*Prana*) from the base of the spinal column up to the *Medulla*. Part of the energy comes up to *Bindu* [*Sikha point* or, more in general, occipital region] but it is perfectly natural that, as a beginner, you don't notice this detail.

A short pause of 2-3 seconds follows. The movement of the air is suspended. This helps suspend the activity of the mind as well: a state of stability appears. I repeat: no more than 2-3 seconds.

An unhurried exhalation through the nose follows. It is, more or less, of the same length as the inhalation. It could be longer. The exhalation accompanies the movement of the energy back to the base of the spinal column. During the last part of the exhalation, there is a clear perception of the navel moving in toward the spine. By refining this experience and the awareness of the navel moving inward, you will feel the action of the diaphragm muscles and become conscious of increasing heat in the navel. This heat seems to rise from the lower part of the abdomen. But this perception may require weeks or months before appearing.

Another short pause of 2-3 seconds follows. This pause is intimately lived as a moment of comfortable peace. The dynamic mind becomes static and is appeased.

Well, what we have described is one *Kriya* breath. It is recommended to practice 12 *Kriya* breaths – if possible without interruption. Reference literature says perfect *Kriya Pranayama* is 80 breaths per hour – about 45 seconds per breath. *Kriyabans* can reach this rhythm only during long sessions. You will complete 12 breaths in a natural and unhurried way in about 4 -5 minutes. In time you will 12

breaths in around 9 minutes.

Remark

The path taken by the energy gradually reveals itself during practice. No difficult visualization of energy coming up to *Medulla* is required. During the pause, the radiance of *Kutastha* appears as a blurred light or glow permeating the frontal part of the brain. You can sometimes perceive a slight sensation of crepuscular light permeating the upper part of the head. In this sweet way of starting the *Kriya* practice, the energy cannot reach either the region between the eyebrows nor *Sahasrara*; this will happen later.

Breathing during *Kriya Pranayama* is not free breathing but restricted breathing that creates a clearly heard sound in the throat. This sound while inhaling is like a quiet *schhhh /s/*. The sound is similar to the amplified background noise of a loudspeaker; there is only a slight hiss during exhalation. There are many poor Internet video clips of *Ujjayi Pranayama* with *yogis* who make a horrible sound because they are using /vibrating their vocal chords: this is not correct in *Kriya Pranayama*. Fortunately, there are also good explanations of *Ujjayi Pranayama* that I signal in my web site.

Let us consider terms like: "laryngeal contracture" or "inspiration against airway resistance." This is a clear way of explaining what is happening. I hope there is no room for misunderstanding.

To make certain the sound is correct, concentrate only on increasing the friction of the air flowing through your throat. A muffled sound will originate. Increase its frequency. If the surroundings are perfectly still, a person could hear it within a 4-5 meter radius – by no means outside it. However, do not expect sound perfection yet. When *Kechari Mudra* is eventually done correctly, the exhaling sound will be flute-like: *Sheee Sheee /ʃi:/*. The meaning and the implications of this sound are discussed later.

During inhalation, we perceive a cold current coming up through the spine. Or simply a fresh sensation. It is fresh like the inhaling air. We perceive a lukewarm sensation during exhalation. Does our energy activate the *Ida* and *Pingala* currents and we are perceiving them? Our purpose is that our energy and awareness moves inside the spiritual channel of *Sushumna*. We are practicing Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* and are proud we move our current in *Sushumna*

No, don't think in that way. Be humble and accept the fact that in the beginning the energy is NOT flowing through *Sushumna*. Consider the idea that the spine is like an onion. I mean its section is like the section of an onion: there are many layers. We begin moving along the external layers and slowly, month after month, we wear out one layer after the other until.... until something starts happening in *Sushumna*. And this is pure heaven. Very rarely this happens since the beginning. In the early stages, during inhalation *Prana* flows in *Ida*, and during exhalation in *Pingala*!

But in *Kriya* literature we read that *Prana* moves in *Sushumna* – well, if you want to think this, follow this idea, this illusion. If this inspires you, Ok. One day *Prana* will surely flow through *Sushumna*.

If you want to have a sure progress, try to practice always in a joyful mood. Enjoy the sounds, the sensations, the pauses. As for the value of the pauses, the more you became aware of them, the deeper your practice becomes.

During the first *Kriya* breaths, do not chant *Om* or another *Mantra* in any *Chakra*: you are employing a great mental intensity of awareness to follow all the points we have already described. Let weeks or months pass by before experiencing the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*.

Second Part: mentally chanting Om in each Chakra while listening to internal sounds

After some weeks you are ready to add to your 12 *Kriya* breaths another set of 12 breaths which will bring you nearer to what Lahiri Mahasaya referred to as *Uttam Pranayama*, a higher form of *Kriya Pranayama*.³

In this new set of *Kriya* breaths, during inhalation, *Om* is mentally chanted (or, more simply, "mentally placed") in each one of the six *Chakras* from *Muladhara* to *Medulla*. During the pause you can remain thoughtless or chant an additional *Om* in the point between the eyebrows. During exhalation, chant again *Om* in the *Medulla* and in all the other *Chakras* coming down to *Muladhara*.

As long as it comes natural to you, place *Om* in each *Chakra* as gently "touching" it from the back. Therefore, while coming down to *Muladhara*, visualize the energy flowing down along the back of the spinal column.

Now let me introduce a very subtle detail. Your attention should be also focused on the astral sounds that come from the *Chakras* rather than on the sound of the breath. These sounds are not physical sounds; they have nothing to do with the sound produced by the air in the throat. They appear in different forms (bumblebee, flute, harp, drum, hum like an electrical transformer, bell...) and capture a *kriyaban's* awareness leading it to greater depths without any danger of getting lost. Each chanting of the syllable *Om* should be accompanied by an unswerving will to track down the echo of this vibration until you become aware of the astral sounds. You need a continuous will to listen internally. Your listening skills will improve and you will become more sensitive.

A very important fact to understand is that the event of perceiving those sounds is not produced by the intensity of a unique moment of deep concentration but by the accumulation of effort manifested during daily sessions of *Kriya* (effort is the meticulous attention to any internal sound, no matter how faint).

Those who are not able to hear any internal sound should not conclude something is wrong. Maybe they have done an enormous effort whose fruits will be enjoyed during the next day's practice or some day in the future. A sign one is heading in the right direction is a sense of mild pressure, like a sensation of liquid peace above or around the head often accompanied by a certain humming

³ When, during *Kriya Pranayama*, the *Prana* enters the *Sushumna* channel and the breath disappears, this is called *Uttam* (higher) *Pranayama*. There cannot be throat sounds but only real *Omkar* sound.

in the entire occipital region.

If you perceive it, it serves no purpose wondering if this is the real *Om* because it is probably just a signal that the real experience is approaching. Just intensify your awareness of that region, especially its right part. Patience and constancy are of prime importance. One day, you will awaken to the realization that you are actually hearing a sound of "running water". Lahiri Mahasaya described it as a sound "produced by a lot of people continually striking the disk of a bell and as continuous as oil flowing out of a container". Surely, when you hear the sound of running waters or of waves breaking over cliffs, you can be sure you are on the right track.

A great experience is hearing a distant sound of a long-sustaining bell. When this happens there is no more distinction between *Pranayama* and the deepest meditation state.

Remark

Both part one and part two of *Kriya Pranayama* are important. Don't skip the first. The first part is very powerful because you devote all your attention to the sound of breath until you produce a particular flute sound. This stimulates *Kundalini* and therefore *Samadhi*. And, of course, don't skip the second part. Rather, instead of being content with the required 12 additional *Kriya* breaths, extend your effort with one or two more cycles of breaths. Lahiri Mahasaya wrote that going ahead without chanting *Om* in each *Chakra*, your *Kriya* becomes "tamasic" [of negative nature] and many kinds of useless thoughts arise. The mind won't focus on the Divine but distract you.

Third Part: centering your the awareness at the upper part of the head

This third part of *Kriya Pranayama* can be approached only when you have reached a daily number of 48 *Kriya* breaths and, possibly, when real *Kechari Mudra* is achieved. Always start your practice with the first part of *Kriya Pranayama* for at least 12 breaths; then enjoy the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* until you have completed 48 *Kriya* breaths altogether (12 of 1st +36 of 2nd.)

Shambhavi Mudra is the act of concentrating on the space between the eyebrows, bringing the two eyebrows toward the center with a slight wrinkling of the forehead. There is a higher form of *Shambhavi* that requires closed or half-closed eyelids. (Lahiri Mahasaya in his well-known portrait is showing this *Mudra*.) The eyes look upward as much as possible as if looking at the ceiling but without any head movement. The light tension perceived in the muscles of the eyeballs gradually disappears and the position can be maintained rather easily. A bystander would observe the sclera (white of the eye) under the iris because very often the inferior eyelids relax. Through this *Mudra*, all one's *Prana* collects at the top of the head.

During this *Mudra* you practice the instructions of the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* (chanting of *Om* in the prescribed places) but the center of awareness is now at the upper part of your head. Become stable in this *Mudra*

and complete the number of repetitions you have decided to practice (60, 72 or more.)

This practice is a real jewel. Time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task e.g. 108 or 144 repetitions – turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest. You will notice the breath is rather slow. You will enjoy the beautiful feeling of fresh air that seems to come up through the spine and pierce each *Chakra*, and of the warm exhaled air permeating each zone of the body from top to bottom. You will actually perceive this and it is not a figment of your imagination! Your attitude is apparently passive, in actual fact fully sensitive, and therefore active in an intelligent way. The sound of the breath is smooth and unbroken like the continuous pouring of oil from a bottle. The practice reaches its maximum power and seems to have a life of its own. You will eventually have the impression of crossing a mental state, which is like falling asleep, then suddenly returning to full awareness and realizing you are basking in a spiritual light. It's like a plane emerging from clouds into a clear transparent sky.

Fourth Part: Internal Breathing

During Initiation, it is not possible to understand all the aspects of the procedure of *Kriya Pranayama*. It is likewise difficult to master it in few months, even if the commitment is excellent.

Good teachers, who imply that their teaching stems from *Lahiri Mahasaya's* legacy, utilize different didactic strategies in order to gradually guide their disciples toward higher and higher levels of performance.

My personal strategy is to introduce *Kriya Pranayama* in four parts. By practicing the first three faithfully, one day you will reach something impossible to be rationally grasped. The four part we describe now embodies the essence of the original *Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya*. We are approaching that level of practice where the breath disappears and the current moves by itself. What you have sown now is ready to flower. Your effort is needed to admire it in full splendor.

Let us reconsider the path followed up to now. In the first part we have enjoyed a sweet and calm abdominal breathing. Fresh and warm sensation were perceived. Then *Om* was mentally chanted in each *Chakra*. Perhaps this mental vibration has revealed the more refined astral vibrations. During the third part all the *Prana* present in the body had collected at the top of your head. The breath is smooth, its sound mellifluous.

Now one practices the first three parts simultaneously, in an almost automatic way, and starts to give all his attention to a new form of exhalation.

[a] During inhalation, visualize a powerful vibration departing from the sexual zone, absorbing the energy there and guiding it into the head.

[b] Before starting the exhalation strengthen the intention of finding (or opening) an internal way to reach the cells of your body. Not one iota of vitality in the air should leave your nose; all the vitality should be directed into the body.

Let be inspired by the experience that Lahiri Mahasaya refers in his diaries when, a couple of years after his initiation in the Himalayas, wrote: "Following an excellent *Pranayama*, the breath is wholly internally oriented. After a long period, today (the purpose of my descent (on earth) has been fulfilled!" What does it mean "wholly internally oriented"? The breath has been transformed into an internal reality: a mental substance.

[c] During exhalation create a strong pressure of the awareness on the whole body. Perceive how the downward flow of energy permeates all the parts of the body: muscles, internal organs, skin, cells. Therefore infuse energy in the cells of the body as if the breath that goes down internally divided itself in a boundless number of microscopic hypodermic needles that inject energy and light in every cell. However keep your visualization simple.

[d] While during inhalation, you expand the abdomen by pushing out the navel, during exhalation you concentrate intensely on the navel which is moving toward the spine. We have learned this with the first part of *Kriya Pranayama*: now this detail is intensified at maximum. This fact has as a result that the exhalation lasts more than the inhalation. How much longer it's not important. Breath after breath you will have the impression that exhalation can be *lengthened indefinitely*. All of a sudden you will know an irresistible joy. You will find yourself near the end of this practice with the chin slightly lowered, attracted toward the navel as if it were a magnet.

Note.

My suggestion to a beginner is: wait before practicing this fourth part, but when you start, don't let it creates problems to you. I mean: don't worry about the end result. As soon as certain internal obstacle melt away (the *Higher Kriyas* are specifically conceived to wear out those obstacles) it will me more and more easy to master this procedure.

[Here ends the explanation of Kriya Pranayama (Spinal Breathing.) Let us resume the description of the other techniques (to be practiced after Kriya Pranayama.)]

4. Navi Kriya

Using the same method described in *Om Japa* and without attempting to control the breath, one's awareness slowly moves up along the spinal column. The *Mantra Om* is placed in the first five *Chakras*, in the *Bindu*, and in the point between the eyebrows. The chin is then tilted down toward the throat cavity. The hands are joined with the fingers interlocked, palms face downward, and the pads of both thumbs are touching. *Om* is chanted from 75 to 100 times in the navel (umbilicus) either aloud or mentally. The thumbs lightly press the navel for each *Om*. While doing this, a calm energy [it is called *Samana*] expands from the lower-middle part of the abdomen.

The chin is then raised as much as possible – the muscles at the back of the neck are slightly contracted. The concentration shifts first to the *Bindu* and

then to the third *Chakra* (moving downward in a straight line, outside the body). The hands are kept behind the back and joined by interlocking the fingers and the palms face upward with the pads of both thumbs touching. *Om* is chanted – aloud or mentally – approximately 25 times in the third *Chakra*. For every *Om*, the thumbs apply a light pressure to the lumbar vertebrae. By no means should the breath be synchronized with the chanting of *Om*.

The chin's normal position is then resumed and *Om* is mentally chanted in reverse order from the point between the eyebrows to *Muladhara*. This is one *Navi Kriya* (it lasts between 140-160 seconds). A *kriyaban* does 4 repetitions of *Navi Kriya*.

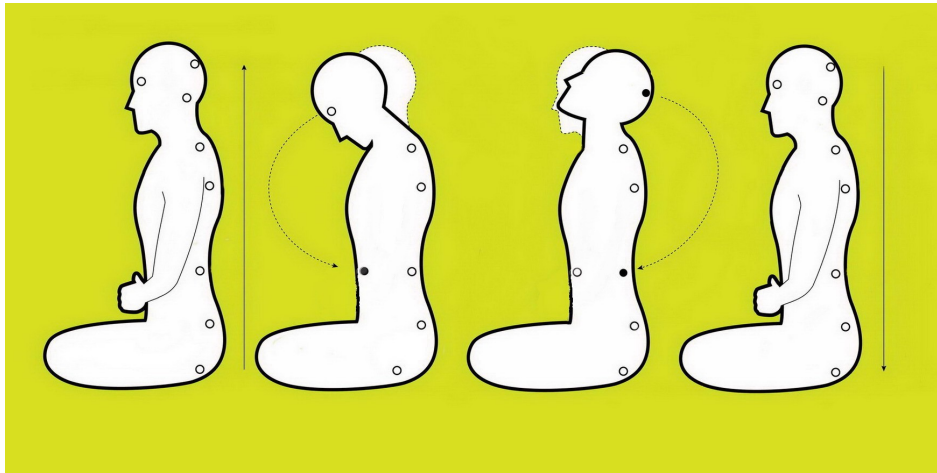


Figure 3. Navi Kriya

5. Maha Mudra

One starts by bending the left leg under the body so the left heel is as near as possible to the perineum (between the scrotum and anus for males and between the anus and cervical opening for females) with the right leg fully extended in front. Ideally, but not necessarily, you want the left heel exerting pressure on the perineum. This pressure is the best means of stimulating one's awareness of the *Muladhara Chakra* in the coccyx region at the root of the spine.

Through a deep inhalation, the energy is brought up the spine to the *Ajna Chakra*. This is a very simple and easily acquired sensation so there is no need to complicate it.

Holding the breath, stretch forward (in a relaxed way) and interlock hands so you can grasp your big toe. In this outstretched position, the chin is pressed naturally against the chest. Continue holding the breath and mentally chant *Om* in the region between the eyebrows 6-12 times. While holding the breath, return to the starting position and with a long exhalation, visualize sending the warm energy down to the base of the spinal column.

Repeat the procedure with the leg positions reversed; right heel near the perineum and the left leg outstretched. Repeat with both legs outstretched.

This is one *Maha Mudra*; it requires about 60-80 seconds. Practice three *Maha*

Mudra for a total of 9 movements.

Remark

Some schools suggest drawing the knee (or both knees, before the third movement) against the body so the thigh is as close to the chest as possible during inhalation. The interlocked fingers are placed around the knee to exert pressure on it. This helps to keep the back straight and make the inner sound of the *Anahata Chakra* audible.

Maha Mudra must be comfortable and it must not hurt! Initially, most *kriyabans* will not be able to do the forward stretch without risking back or knee injury. To avoid pain or injury, keep the outstretched leg bent at the knee until the position feels comfortable. While holding the breath in the outstretched position, contract the anal and the abdominal muscles and draw the abdominal muscles in slightly so the navel moves inward toward the lumbar center.

As we have seen, the big toe is grasped while one is in the outstretched position. Some schools insist on this detail and explain that by repeating this action on each leg, the balance between the two channels *Ida* and *Pingala* is improved. A variation is to squeeze the toenail of the big toe with the thumb of the right hand; the index and middle fingers are behind it and the left hand cups the sole of the foot. When the procedure is repeated with both legs outstretched, both toes are grasped with the interlocked hands. (A variation is that the thumbs of each hand press the respective toenails and the index and middle fingers hold the toe from behind).

Maha Mudra incorporates all the three *Bandhas*. When applied simultaneously with the body bent forward and without excessive contraction, it helps one to be aware of both ends of *Sushumna* and produces the feeling of an energetic current moving up the spine. In due course, one will be able to perceive the whole *Sushumna* as a radiant channel.

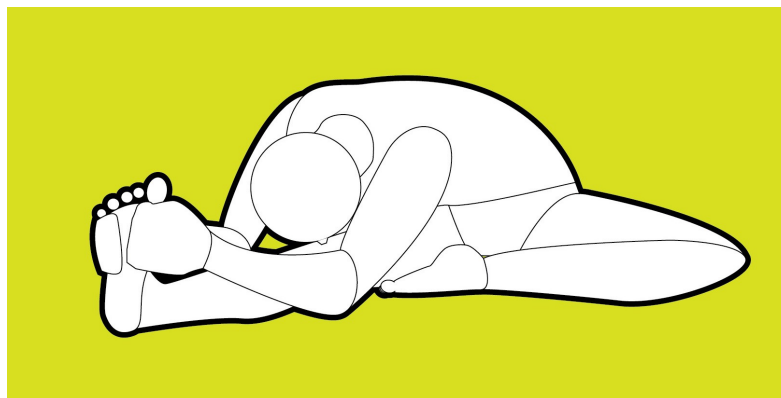


Figure 4. Maha Mudra

6. Kriya Pranayama with short breath

Your eyebrows are raised to facilitate the experience of divine Light. Concentration is upon Soul-center *Ajna*. The tongue is in *Kechari Mudra* or *baby Kechari*.

Pranayama with short breath is based upon letting the breath move freely, observing it, being conscious of each movement – pauses included – and coordinating it with a particular movement of energy. There is a loving awareness of your breathing. After having drawn three deep breaths, each of them ending with a fast and complete an exhalation like a sigh, your breath will be very calm. The breath enters through the nose and dissolves in *Ajna*. If you place your finger under both nostrils, the ingoing or outgoing breath will barely touch your finger. This is the indication that the breath is internalized .

Now, part of your awareness goes to *Muladhara*. When it feels natural to inhale, inhale only what is necessary, as quickly as per instinct (about one second), then pause an instant in the second *Chakra*. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale, and pause in *Muladhara*. When it feels natural to inhale, inhale, and pause in the third *Chakra*. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale, and pause in *Muladhara*.

Continue like that, repeating the procedure between *Muladhara* and the fourth *Chakra*, *Muladhara* and the fifth *Chakra* (then *Muladhara/Bindu*, *Muladhara/Medulla*, *Muladhara/fifth*, *Muladhara/fourth*, *Muladhara/ third* and *Muladhara/second Chakra*.) One cycle comprises 10 short breaths. Repeat the cycle until you perceive your breath is very calm – almost imperceptible.

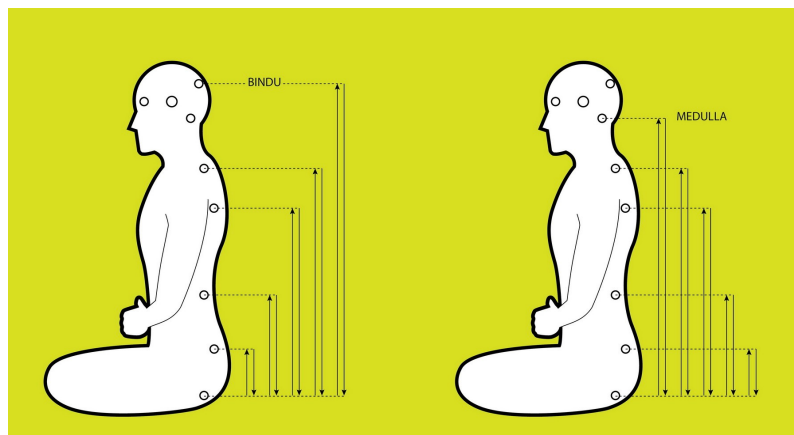


Figure 5. One cycle of Kriya Pranayama with short breath

7. Mental Pranayama

Forget totally about your breath. Move your awareness up and down the spine pausing in each spinal center. Start with the first, pause there, move to the second, pause....and so on. After ascending to the *Bindu*, begin the descent, pausing in *Medulla*, fifth *Chakra*, fourth *Chakra*, and so on. It is convenient to center your attention for 10-20 seconds on each *Chakra*. (*Om* may be mentally chanted in each *Chakra* but it is better not to disturb the mental silence.)

The secret lies in maintaining the awareness in each of them until a sensation of sweetness is felt, as if the *Chakra* were "melting". *Chakras* are like knots that can be untied if "touched" by one's concentration. Besides a melting

sensation, one may also perceive the subtle radiation of each *Chakra* in the body. Make sure that this does not become a technical detail to be applied through will and concentration. Don't disturb the sweetness of the absorption process. This is only a spontaneous realization that the *Chakras* are sustaining each part of the body's vitality.

The process of rising and descending through the *Chakras* is carried on as long as it is comfortable. (One complete round lasts about 2-4 minutes.) This is the most pleasing part of the routine. *Kriyabans* do not feel they are practicing a technique but enjoying a few moments of soothing relaxation. This is the moment when a deep *mental silence* settles in the consciousness and in the body. Tranquility, "*Sthir Tattwa*" (calm, static *Prana*) is experienced in the seventh *Chakra*. Lahiri Mahasaya called this state *Paravastha* or *Kriyar Paravastha* - "the state that comes after the action of *Kriya*". If, through sheer willpower, such a state were brought to awareness as often as possible amid one's daily activities, the results would be extraordinary.

[Here ends the main routine. Now follows the explanation of Yoni Mudra to be practiced just before going to bed.]

8. Yoni Mudra

At night, before going to bed, begin your practice by calming the psycho-physical system by a short *Kriya* routine (for example *Om Japa* in the *Chakras* followed by *Pranayama with short breath*).

Then, with a deep inhalation, raise the energy into the central part of the head. If you are able to do *Kechari Mudra*, press the tongue firmly on the highest point inside the nasal pharynx – otherwise leave the tongue in its normal relaxed position. At the same time, close every "opening" in the head – the ears with the thumbs, the eyelids with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers, the lips with the ring and the little fingers. In this way the *Prana* will "light up" the region between the eyebrows.

Throughout the practice, both elbows are parallel to the floor and pointing out to the side. Do not let them drop, prop them up somehow, if necessary. During this special light-witnessing act, the index fingers must not put any pressure on the eyes – this would be harmful and serve no purpose! You can draw the eyelids down with the index fingers and apply pressure on the upper cheekbones at the corners of the eyes.

While mentally repeating *Om* several times and holding the breath, observe the light of the "spiritual eye." The light intensifies and condenses into a golden ring. Hold the breath as long as is comfortable and until the necessity to breathe out distracts your attention. Exhale and bring the awareness down along the spine. *Yoni Mudra* is usually performed only once. Traditional instruction advises increasing *Om* repetitions by one per day up to a maximum of 200. Of course, forcing is always to be avoided.

After *Yoni Mudra*, remain concentrated as long as possible at the point between the eyebrows trying to perceive the light in *Kutastha*. Then open your eyes and stare at what is before you but do not observe anything in particular. Watch without watching. Guide your attention to fontanelle. After a while you

will become aware of a subtle line of white Light, softened, as a fog, around all objects. The Light will become progressively white and greater. Avoid thinking. Keep the gaze fix. After 5 minutes close your eyes and rest for awhile before standing.

Remark 1

Holding the breath causes discomfort. To reduce it and make it possible to deepen the practice, practice the following:

At the end of a moderate inhalation (not a typical *Kriya Pranayama* one but a shorter one), a *kriyaban* fully plugs all the head openings except the nostrils, exhales a very small quantity of air, then immediately closes the nostrils. The thoracic muscles are to be relaxed as if one intended to begin a new inhalation: this will give the sensation that the breath has become quiet in the area between the throat and the point between the eyebrows. In this situation, the repetition of *Om* several times while concentrating on the point between the eyebrows can be enjoyed to its fullest.



Figure 6. Yoni Mudra

CHAPTER 7
HOW TO ENJOY AT THE BEST THE FIRST STAGE OF KRIYA

Chapter 6 contains the description of the techniques of the *First Kriya Level*. A good use of it is to read few pages at a time, patiently familiarizing with each procedure. Don't expect to reach immediately a "perfect" practice. You will also have many questions. Many of them will be answered by the practice itself.

In this chapter 7 you will find further material about *First Kriya*. The main purpose is to encourage a more comforting and reassuring approach to *Kriya*. I know that the experience with *Kriya Yoga* can be blissful as long as one is able to conceive a personal routine, considering, if necessary, appropriate variations of the main techniques.

FIRST PART: A WORK PLAN

If you are an absolute beginner

In my opinion you should test your predisposition to *Kriya Yoga*. To this purpose, a very good routine is to practice *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* followed by *Ujjayi Pranayama*. You can find a description of these two techniques in the Appendix 1 to this chapter.

If you want to start Kriya from now on

Success in *Kriya* comes by building a solid foundation. The first step is to free your mind from "frenzies and obsessions" and study in chapter 6 one technique at a time avoiding rushing along to next one until you are comfortable with the one you are studying. You can print chapter 6 and, when you are sitting for meditation, put it on a desk in front of you like a score.

Later you could patiently take into consideration this chapter 7. It will help you to plan your personal routine.

If you have no idea of what I mean with "frenzies and obsessions" please study the Appendix 2 to this chapter.

Why variations?

There are three main traditions of *Kriya Yoga*: the Classical School; Swami Hariharananda's School and the so called Dynastic Lineage.

What I describe in chapter 6 (*First Kriya*) and in chapter 8 (*Higher Kriyas*) is based upon the Classical School. Some technical variations that I am going to discuss in this chapter 7 are based upon Swami Hariharananda's teachings; others have different origins. Some have a good connection with the *Radhasoami Sant Mat*, others with *Kundalini Yoga*; some betray the influx of the *Internal Alchemy – Nei Dan*, the central practice of *Taoism*.

I have quoted the Dynastic Lineage school. This is described only in chapter 9. Its main characteristic is that its *Higher Kriyas* are based upon the *Tribhangamurari* movement. Many are enthusiastic of this school.

My plan is to bring to your attention only the best from the secondary schools – you will see that it is really worth it.

SECOND PART: REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE TECHNIQUES & USEFUL VARIATIONS

Talabya Kriya

This is a technique the besides its utility to achieve *Kechari Mudra*, creates a perceivable relaxing effect on the thinking process. It should not be considered a simple lingual frenulum stretching process. When the tongue sticks to the palate and the mouth is opened, in that instant the energetic split between our body and the reserve of static *Prana* located in the upper part of our head is momentarily healed. This introduces you to meditation.

More in general, *Talabya Kriya* and *Om Japa* (chanting of *Om* in the *Chakras* up and down) usher a *kriyaban* into a state that is considered a real "benediction." A *kriyaban* should never overlook them. Their value in calming your mind is fantastic. A meditation session could be composed of only these two techniques followed by a few minutes of enjoying the induced calmness. Even in this short time you will taste a very deep calmness.

Oddly enough, *Talabya Kriya* doesn't require concentrating on anything, it is purely physical. Just as an attempt to justify this, we can say that merely pressing the tongue against the upper palate and maintaining the suction effect on the palate for 10-15 seconds, can, in and of itself, generate sensitivity in the *Medulla* area in a very short time. The detail of extending the tongue plays an important part too. When the tongue is fully extended, it pulls on some cranial bones and leads to decompression of the whole area. If you want to know more about *Kechari Mudra* please study the Appendix 3 to this chapter.

Remark

Some *kriyabans* do not do *Talabya Kriya* correctly. They have not understood how to make their tongue adhere to the upper palate before opening the mouth and stretching the frenulum. Sometimes, even when they are shown in person, they are still not able to do it correctly. Here I can only emphasize that the main mistake is concentrating too much on where to place the tip of the tongue. The suction effect is obtained with the whole body of the tongue: the tip of the tongue has no role!

Om Japa in the Chakras

Let us consider some useful variations

VAR

Other bija Mantras instead of Om

Some schools teach to chant (loudly or mentally) *Vam* or *Bam* or *Hrom* at the place of *Om*. Especially *Hrom* (a sustained Hrooooooom) turns out very effective in flooding with euphoria those who practice.

Utilizing the breath

When you mentally chant *Om* in a *Chakra*, you can emphasize the effect of this action by inhaling "in" it and exhaling "from" the same. To be more clear, focus your awareness on the *Muladhara Chakra* and breath deeply visualizing the air coming in and out from that point. Repeat this for each *Chakra*.

With a strong focus in Medulla

Focus your awareness in *Medulla*. Become aware of the first *Chakra*, mentally chant *Om* three times there. Utilize a delicate form of *Aswini Mudra*. You will feel a quiver of energy at first *Chakra* location.

From *Medulla*, bring part of your awareness in the second *Chakra*. Repeat *Aswini Mudra*, feeling the quiver of energy at second *Chakra* location. Let the same happen in the third *Chakra*, then in the fourth, fifth, *Medulla*. Then *Medulla* again, fifth, fourth, third, second, first *Chakra*. This is one cycle. Six cycles are enough.

Remark

Aswini Mudra means contracting repeatedly the muscles at the base of the spine with the rhythm of about two contractions per second. While learning the technique, a *yogi* contracts the buttock muscles, perineum or even the entire pelvic region also; with time, the contraction involves only the sphincter muscles.

Aswini Mudra is different from *Mula Bandha*. In *Mula Bandha* we have only one long contraction and not a series of contraction and release as we have in *Aswini Mudra*. Both in *Mula Bandha* and in *Aswini Mudra* you mentally exert a pressure on the lower part of the spine.

Kriya Pranayama (Spinal Breathing)

The division of *Kriya Pranayama* in four parts that you have found in chapter 6

embodies only my didactic strategy. It is clear that one can start directly from the fourth part (Internal Breath.) The first part (with strong sounds in the throat and no *Om* chanting in the *Chakras*) is in my opinion the most natural and easy. It is very effective and has the power of activating *Kundalini*. The second part introduces you to the *Omkar* sound experience, but if your breath is too short and you are not able to chant *Om* six times during inhalation and another six times during exhalation, you can chant one single *Om* during inhalation and the same during exhalation: focus on exerting a continuous will to listen internally. About the third part, forget time and numbers. Enjoy it fully: let it gradually become mental *Pranayama*. Be lost in Eternal Tranquility.

As for the fourth part, it is difficult to apply, however remember that we shall consider it again (chapter 12) therefore don't worry.

VAR

With Long exhalation and Kumbhaka

There are those who find that the ratio 2:3 for inhalation and exhalation is more comforting and natural than 1:1. [2:3 means that if inhalation lasts 12 seconds, exhalation lasts 18 seconds.] In time you can add *Kumbhaka* after inhalation. Starting with 4 seconds you can hold your breath for a time equal to inhalation. [For instance: 12 seconds inhale, 12 seconds hold, 18 seconds exhale.]

Kriya Pranayama (1st part) with Aswini Mudra

Practicing *Aswini Mudra* continuously during *Kriya Pranayama* is worth a test. During inhalation and exhalation of the first 12 *Kriya* breaths, *Aswini Mudra* should be strong; subsequently, it should decrease in intensity and become like a slight internal contraction of the inferior part of the spine (it is clear that the spine cannot be contracted: this is just a sensation.)

This practice creates the condition for *Kundalini* awakening. As you know, *Kundalini* awakens only when *Prana* and *Apana* unite. Now, through *Aswini Mudra*, you gently push the *Apana* current upward to the navel region where it meets *Prana*. If this procedure may seem annoying and disturbing, it is essential to be unshakeable and go ahead with it. At a certain point you will have the certainty that something positive is happening. You perceive a pleasurable shiver in the spine. The day after this practice, a diffuse joy will permeate your activities and even the most simple *Kriya* routine will fill you with joy.

Kriya Pranayama (1st part) with Mula Bandha

During the last instants of inhalation of a *Kriya* breath, visualize the current reaching *Bindu*, then "rotating" left, coming down a little bit and entering the *Medulla*. It is in this moment that *Mula Bandha* is practiced intensely, the breath is held and the eyebrows are raised. The sensation is that the energy is pushed from *Medulla* into *Kutastha*. When the exhalation starts, the tension is released and the energy goes down to *Muladhara*. If you practice *Kechari Mudra*, during *Mula Bandha*, push the tongue (inside the nasal pharynx) upward and forward.

Kriya Pranayama (1st part) with particular perception of rotating energy

What I am going to describe, comes out very easily to those who have practiced the two previous instructions. After some days of successful practice of *Aswini Mudra* or *Mula Bandha* during *Kriya Pranayama*, the spinal path of the energy is perceived as an helix. In a nutshell, starting from the base of the spine, the energy comes up rotating counterclockwise along the spinal channel. Then the energy comes down along the same path, hence rotating clockwise. You will experience a strong sensation of physical immobility; your spine will be felt as a steel bar. Great bliss ensues.

Kriya Pranayama (2nd part) with particular Chakra stimulation

What we are going to describe concerns only the exhalation of the 2nd part of *Kriya Pranayama*. It comes out easily to those who have practiced the previous instructions.

During exhalation, realize that it is not difficult to give a particular "jerk" at each *Chakra* location. Each *kriyaban* has such power. When you give a jerk, it is impossible to tell if you have a short pause of the breath or, quite the reverse, there is a short emission of breath. What you feel is an intensification of awareness of each *Chakra*. The final jerk in *Muladhara* at the end of exhalation creates an intense outburst of joy.

While progressing in this practice, you can experience an *internalized* exhalation. *Internalized* exhalation is not accompanied by the exit of the air through the nose. This is one of the mysterious facts of *Kriya*, difficult to understand with the sheer logic. You will experience this in particular when you give a jerk to *Medulla*: the physical breath will disappear immediately.

So Ham Kriya Pranayama

Try to realize that the bright current of *Prana* that enters the spine along with the inhaling air vibrates as a long: "Soooooo...." Then we have the pause; then the current goes down in the whole body with the vibration of a long "Haaaaammm...." These sounds are not strong and clear as other audible sounds. Nevertheless, they can be perceived in a silent environment. If you succeed in constantly maintaining the awareness of this, you will calm breath and mind in a definite way.

When the physical location of the six *Chakras* is clearly established in the mind, the *Kundalini* energy can be stimulated creating a strong mental pressure on them. While you visualize the air coming up with Sooooo...., the pressure of the *Prana* contained in the air surrounds, winds and tights around each *Chakra*; while you are exhaling, the subtle vibration of Haaaaammm. fills, section after section, each part of the body from top down. Repeating many, many times this action, increasing the pressure upon each *Chakra* and on the whole body, you will reach the breathless state. Therefore this technique is also called *Kevala Kumbhaka*.

Kechari Mudra and Kriya Pranayama. *Kechari Mudra* enables a *kriyaban* to take a giant step toward perfecting *Kriya Pranayama*. During *Kriya Pranayama*

with *Kechari Mudra*, the exhalation arising in the nasal pharynx has a fine flute-like sound like a faint whistle. Some schools call it the *Shakti Mantra*. It has been likened to the "flute of Krishna". Blowing gently on the edge of a sheet of paper approximates the sound. Lahiri Mahasaya described it as "similar to blowing air through a keyhole". He described it as "a razor which cuts off everything related to the mind". It has the power to cut out any external distracting factors including thoughts, and comes at the maximal point of relaxation. When distraction and anxiety arise, the sound vanishes.

Practicing *Kriya Pranayama* in this way and enjoying its aftereffects is an enchanting and astonishing experience, one of the best moments in a *kriyaban's* life. Cultivating the perfection of this sound and concentrating firmly on it, means creating the best basis to arouse the *Om* sound in a way stronger than can be achieved through the practice of the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*. Literature on *Kriya Yoga* explains that when this event happens, the *Omkar* experience acquires the dynamism of *Kundalini*; the soul travels through the spinal cord and burns in the joy of *Samadhi*. Modesty is always welcome but when this result is achieved, the positive euphoria is so overwhelming that it cannot be contained (like finding Aladdin's magic lamp.) In *Kriya* literature, it is said that those who realize a perfect *Pranayama*, can achieve everything through it. Well, if we dream of a faultless *Kriya Pranayama*, then what we have described matches the ideal of perfection.

Is Kechari Mudra indispensable? *Kriya* literature affirms that *Kechari Mudra* is decisive to receive initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*. There is nothing unusual that a *Kriya* teacher wants the student's mouth opened in front of them and see the tongue disappear into the nasal pharynx.

However great the effect of *Kechari Mudra*, I firmly believe it is important but not indispensable. The affirmation that I have often heard: "Until one is established in *Kechari Mudra*, one cannot achieve the state of Eternal Tranquility" is false!

Those who are depressed because they are not able to achieve *Kechari Mudra*, should remember that many mystics who experienced the Divine never heard of *Kechari Mudra*. There are many who have practiced *Thokar* with enthusiasm and with admirable commitment, who have benefited from its remarkable effects but who have not realized this *Mudra*.

But the crucial point is that we cannot conceive that the achievement of *Kechari* was intended to create a sharp division among people. Confined to a lower class are those poor little fellows who will never get the *Higher Kriyas* just because they don't succeed in realizing something physical that doesn't depend on their efforts but on their constitution. They will never succeed in speeding up their spiritual path like those *kriyabans* that nature has endowed with a longer bridle or with a nasal pharynx more accessible to the tip of the tongue.

P.Y.'s decision to allow initiation into the *Higher Kriyas* to those unable to practice *Kechari Mudra* should have our full praise. Considering Lahiri Mahasaya's attitude to partake of our imperfection and suffering, I believe he too behave similarly – although we don't know for certain.

Navi Kriya

Navi Kriya as exposed in chapter 6 is somehow boring. Now you will understand why it is so helpful [I would say "providential"] to know some technical variations. I would bet that if you try the second variation, you will never return to the basic technique ...

VAR

Chanting Om alternatively between Kutastha and navel

All the details of the standard *Navi Kriya* given in chapter 6 up to the forward movement of the head remain unchanged. The *Om Mantra* is mentally chanted in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel (*Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *Om* in the navel, *Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *Om* in the navel... and so on).

The most useful way of doing it is to synchronize the breath with the *Om* chanting. Visualize a tiny silver cord that comes out from the point between the eyebrows bends slightly and goes down to the navel. When it comes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale (only what is necessary), visualize the movement of air rising, through the visualized duct, from the navel to the point between the eyebrows, pause an instant there just chant *Om* mentally. When it comes natural to exhale, exhale, visualizing the movement of air going down into the navel, pause and chant *Om* mentally in the navel. By repeating this, you will markedly feel that your breath begins to subside and disappear. When this happens, go on mentally chanting the *Om Mantra* in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel and moving the focus of your awareness between these two points, without ceasing being aware of the "silver cord". Carry on.

When *Om* is chanted about 75 times, bend your head backwards and repeat a similar procedure by chanting *Om* in alternation between the *Bindu* and the third *Chakra*. Visualize another tiny silver cord that connects (outside your body) the *Bindu* to the third *Chakra*. Let your breath – if there is still a trace of breath – flow freely through that cord. When *Om* is chanted about 25 times, resume the chin's normal position and chant mentally *Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *Medulla*, *Chakras* 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. This is one *Navi Kriya*. The optimum is to have 4 cycles of *Navi Kriya*.

Navi Kriya coming down through four directions ⁴

The following variation of *Navi Kriya* is the one that many *kriyabans* like the best.

During the basic form of *Navi Kriya*, a *kriyaban's* awareness goes slowly up along the spinal column placing the syllable *Om* in the six *Chakras*. Then the chin is brought down toward the throat cavity.

Now, a short inhalation (two seconds maximum, without concentrating on the *Chakras*) is followed by a very long exhalation, during which, the energy is

⁴ The *Dantian* can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter. Its center is located about one and one-half inches below the belly button and about two and one-half inches inside.

felt descending from the frontal part of the brain, along a path outside the body to the navel, reaching through it the *Dantian* region.

During this long exhalation, *Om* is chanted mentally, rapidly, 10-15 times, accompanying the descent of energy throughout the path. After a short pause in the *Dantian*, the head resumes its normal position.

Now each detail is repeated but the descent of the energy happens through a different path. A short inhalation draws the energy into the head again. The head bends but not in the front: it bends toward the *left* shoulder, without turning the face. A long exhalation (with the same chanting of *Om, Om, Om...*) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the brain's left side and moves along a path outside the body at its left side (as if shoulder or arm would not exist). The energy comes down to the waist, cross it and moves toward the *Dantian*.

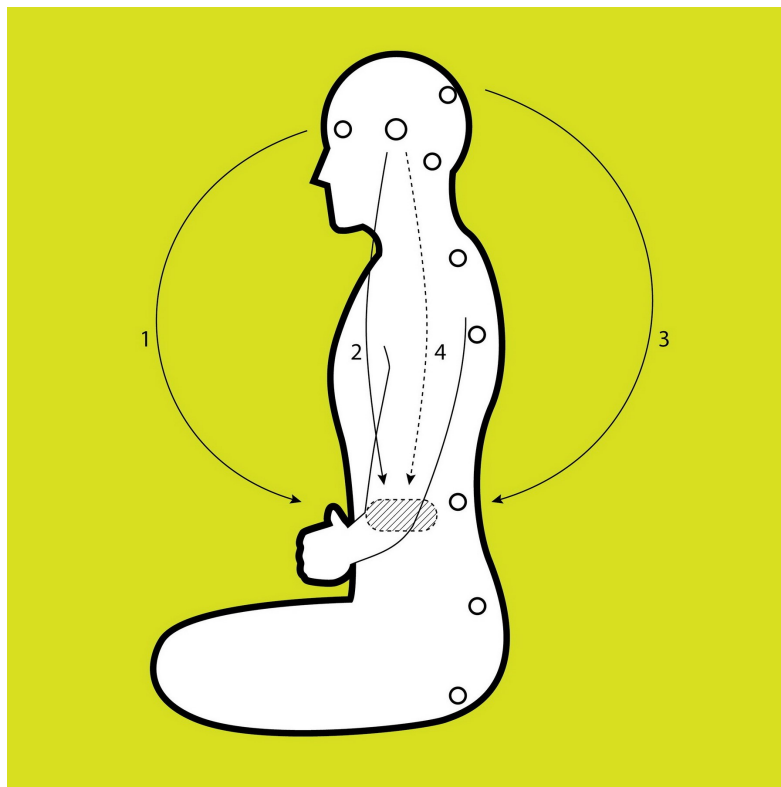


Figure 7. Important variation of Navi Kriya: the energy enters the *Dantian* along four directions

The head moves back into its normal position. After a short inhalation, the head bends backwards. A long expiration (with the same chanting of *Om, Om, Om...*) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the occipital region and moves (outside the body) down to the waist where it bends, pierces the third *Chakra Manipura* and moves toward the inside of the abdominal region (*Dantian*). The procedure is repeated likewise on the *right* side.

This last exhalation concludes a mini cycle of four exhalations accompanied by four descents of energy towards the waist and, crossing it, towards the region of low abdomen. This mini cycle is repeated 9 times. In conclusion we have had

4x9 = 36 descents of energy. After these exhalations, the procedure ends with a mental chanting of *Om* in each *Chakra* from *Ajna Chakra* to *Muladhara*.

What we have described lasts 8-10 minutes and is equivalent to 4 repetitions of the basic form of *Navi Kriya*.

Remark

As the practitioner proceeds with the rotations and the effects of the technique become more and more perceptible, the movements of the head become less marked – the process internalizes. One phenomenon is remarkable: at the very moment the order to exhale has been imparted by the mind, it feels as if the lungs cannot move. Some instants later comes the awareness of something subtle descending into the body. A new kind of exhalation is enjoyed, like an internal all-pervading pressure. It brings about a peculiar feeling of well-being, harmony, and freedom. One has the impression one could remain like that forever. Logic implies that breath is coming out of the nose, yet you would swear it doesn't. This may be considered the first experience of *Pranayama with internal breath* (also called *Kriya of the cells*) that we are going to discuss in chapter 12.

Navi Kriya with Kumbhaka

Inhale, hold the breath and intensify the concentration on the navel through the three *Bandhas* (*Mula Bandha*, *Uddiyana Bandha* and *Jalandhara Bandha*). In this position, with the chin tilted down, mentally chant *Om* 12 times in the navel exerting a continuous mental pressure upon it. Then exhale unleashing the *Bandhas* and raising the chin with a slight tension.

With the chin raised, inhale through the nose. While holding the breath, focus the concentration on the third *Chakra Manipura*. Mentally chant *Om* 18 times in *Manipura* exerting a form of mental pressure upon that center. Then exhale keeping the chin in the normal horizontal position. Part one & part two are one *Navi Kriya*. Repeat four times.

Maha Mudra

It is very wise that a *kriyaban* practices *Maha Mudra* before *Kriya Pranayama*. It is good to feel the difference between *Kriya Pranayama* with and without *Maha Mudra*. The most serious schools of *Kriya* recommend that for every 12 *Kriya Pranayama*, one should perform one *Maha Mudra* – three remains the minimum number. (To make it clear, those who practice 60 *Kriya Pranayamas* should perform *Maha Mudra* five times, while those who practice 12 or 24 *Pranayamas* should perform it three times.) Unfortunately, having listened to different *kriyabans*, I dare say it would be a miracle if *kriyabans* regularly practiced even the three required repetitions. Others believe they are practicing *Kriya* correctly without ever practicing one single *Maha Mudra*! There is no doubt that if you regularly skip this technique and lead a sedentary life, the spinal column will lose its elasticity. One's physical condition deteriorates over the years and it becomes almost impossible to maintain the correct meditation position for more than a few minutes – that is why *Maha Mudra* is so important for *kriyabans*.

There are reports of *yogis* having achieved fantastic experiences using

only this technique. According to their accounts, the perception of *Sushumna* has increased tremendously. There are *kriyabans* who have set aside all the other *Kriya* techniques and practiced 144 *Maha Mudra* in two sessions daily. They consider *Maha Mudra* the most useful among all *Kriya Yoga* techniques.

I vividly recommend to study the variation of *Maha Mudra* that I will describe now. It comes from the school of Swami Hariharananda. This school does not explain everything (*Kechari Mudra* proper, *Navi Kriya*, *Thokar with Kumbhaka*.... are not given) but *Maha Mudra* is given with unsurpassed care, making *Omkar* realization almost tangible even to a beginner. By considering the following variation of *Maha Mudra*, your personal *Kriya* routine will surely benefit. The listening to the astral sounds and *Omkar* sound will happen during and after this practice without the need of closing the ears.

VAR

Maha Mudra – first part

Sit on the pavement in the half-lotus position or on the heels. Exhale. Concentrate on *Ajna* in the center of your head. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in *Kriya Pranayama*) visualize the breath coming from the physical location of *Muladhara* up the spine until you complete the breath at *Ajna*. Hold your breath. Bend at the waist and preferably touch the floor with your head. (The head is placed in the region between the knees. Use your hands freely in order to achieve this position comfortably.)

Gently breathe out and let the breath free. After touching the forehead to the floor, twist first to the right, nearing the right earlobe to the right knee. The head comes near the right knee, the face is turned toward the left knee so that it is possible to perceive a pressure on the right side of the head; a sensation of space is perceived inside the left side of the brain. Remain in this position for 3 to 30 seconds. Move head back to center until forehead touches ground. Then repeat the same exercise with the other side of your body, reversing the perceptions. Move your head until your left ear is directly over the left knee. Try to experience internal pressure in the left-side of your head; a sensation of space is perceived inside the right side of the brain. Remain in this position for 3 to 30 seconds. Then the head is placed in the region between the knees again, the face turned downward. A pressure is felt on the forehead. A sensation of space is perceived inside the occipital region. During this delicate process you are breathing normally and your awareness is mainly at *Ajna* while your eyes are focused on *Kutastha*. Then sit up straight, inhaling deeply. Through a long exhalation let the energy go down from *Ajna* to *Muladhara*.

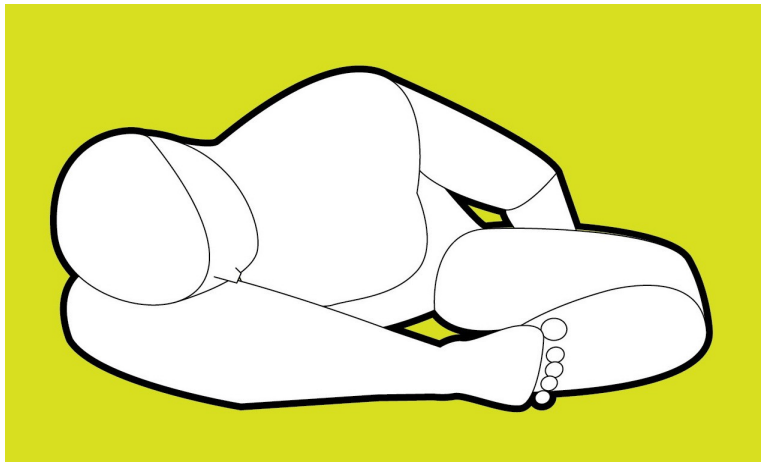


Figure 8. Forward bent. First position

Through a deep inhalation visualize the breath coming from the physical location of *Swadhisthana* up the spine until you complete the breath at *Ajna*.... Repeat all the previous process. Then repeat the same process for *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Vishuddha* and *Medulla*. In this way you will enjoy six bows.

Note

To increase the power of this procedure, you can hold your breath when you are down. You will get a very strong sensation of energy rising up and intensifying in the point between your eyebrows. Breath retention is a powerful *Kundalini* stimulator. If you are not ready for the power generated by this procedure, if you feel like "spaced out" after your meditation or if you feel too much irritable, don't hold your breath.

When you bend your body left, your right nostril will open. When you bend your body right, your left nostril will open. When you bend your body in the front, you get equal pressure of flow of breath inside your nostrils. You get balance of the mind and calmness in your body. Your spinal chord passage will open.

The lunar channel of *Ida* is situated at the left side of the spine; the solar channel of *Pingala* is situated at the right side of the spine. Both chords cling to each other. By repeating the previous procedure, they are separated and, as a consequence, an hollow passage is opened between the two. The opening of the spiritual passage within the spine (*Sushumna*) is the starting point of the practice of meditation.

Maha Mudra – second part

Bend the left leg under the body so the left heel is near to the perineum. Draw the right knee against the body so the thigh is as close to the chest as possible. The interlocked fingers are placed just below knee applying pressure to your internal organs. Take 5 to 6 very deep breaths with moderate pressure applied to knee. Then inhale deep and hold, extend the right leg, bow down, breath normally and massage the right leg from the foot to the thigh and hip. Then grasp the right foot in this way: the right hand grabs the right toes while the left hand grabs the inner

side of the middle part of the right foot (the arch of the foot). The face is turned to the left. You perceive a sensation like an inner pressure on the right side of the head. It contrasts with the free space sensation in the left side of the brain. Chant *Om* six times in the point between your eyebrows. Then inhale and hold, sit back up onto your left foot with right knee folded into your chest, then exhale into normal conscious breathing.

Practice the whole procedure by reversing the perceptions and the position of the legs. I won't repeat everything – don't forget the chant of *Om* six times in the point between your eyebrows.

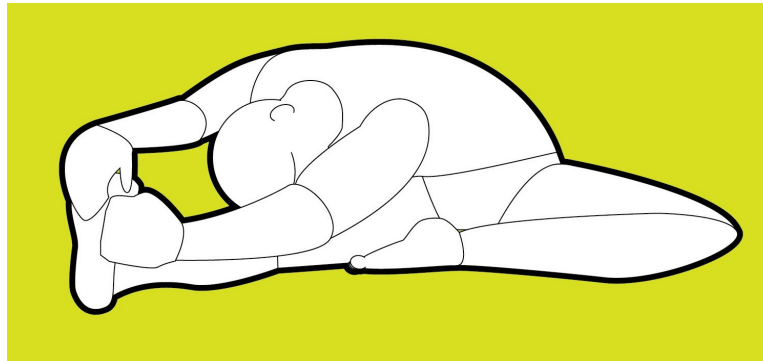


Figure 9. Variation of Maha Mudra: notice the position of the hands and of the head

Now, draw both knees against your body. Extend both legs, bow down, breath normally and massage both legs from feet to thighs and hips. Then grasp both feet: right hand to right toes, left hand to left toes. Breathe normally, flex feet 4 or 5 times then relax with the head down as near to knees as possible. Experience internal pressure on the front part of the head. A sensation of space is perceived inside the occipital region. Chant *Om* six times in the point between your eyebrows. Then inhale and hold, sit up and massage toes, then fold legs back to chest and exhale. As usual, this exercise is repeated three times.

After this intense form of *Maha Mudra* you can use your hands like in *Yoni Mudra*, close only left ear and listen to the internal sounds. Then close only the right ear and listen. Then close both ears and listen. Then try to listen without closing ears.

The final note at the explanation of the Forward bendings applies also to this form of *Maha Mudra*.

Kriya Pranayama with short breath

This procedure, even if not belonging to the basic *Kriyas*, is introduced in the previous chapter since it allows to make some definite steps in mastering *Kriya* by those people who have a too short breath. There are people, especially elderly, that lament they remain without breath when they try to have a long inhalation chanting *Om* in each *Chakra*. It is wise to teach them this *Pranayama with short breath* adding: "From now on, this it is your *Kriya Pranayama*. Forget definitely

basic one and be busy only with it *Pranayama with short breath*."

Instead, for those people that don't have problems with *Kriya Pranayama*, this technique is very useful to invite the *Prana* present in the body to enter the spine. Therefore it magnificently closes the cycle of the preceding techniques and prepares you to mental *Pranayama*.

VAR

The *Kriya Pranayama with short breath* is such a beautiful practice that I am happy to introduce here a variation as it was taught by Swami Hariharananda.

With the tip of the tongue turned upwards, touching the center of the palate and the center of attention in *Ajna*, allow that part of your attention goes down in the *Muladhara*. Thanks to a short inhalation, this *Chakra* is ideally raised in *Ajna*. Thanks to a short exhalation, this *Chakra* is ideally brought back into its seat at the bottom of the spine. Part of the attention is it now placed on the second *Chakra*. Thanks to a short inhalation, this *Chakra* is ideally raised into *Ajna*. Thanks to a short exhalation, this *Chakra* is ideally brought back into its seat. The same happens to the *Chakras* 3, 4, 5 and *Medulla*. Then, you repeat all in reversed order (breathe again from the *Medulla* to *Ajna*, from the cervical *Chakra* to *Ajna*...) 12 breaths is one cycle. Go ahead repeating the whole cycle at least three times. The breath is short and becomes shorter and shorter as we proceed. Between the inhalation and the exhalation and between the exhalation and the inhalation some enjoyable pauses start to appear; they must always be encouraged.

Mental Pranayama

One day during *mental Pranayama*, the breathless state will surprise you. But the breathless state will not appear if you practice wrongly.

Consider the sentence (chapter 6): "The secret lies in maintaining the awareness in each of them until a sensation of sweetness is felt, as if the *Chakra* were melting." This is the key to success.

Please remark the difference between *Om Japa* and *mental Pranayama*. *Om Japa* is designed to stimulate the *Chakras*. You make a short pause in each and vibrate the *Om Mantra*.

During *mental Pranayama*, you are more willing to perceive than to stimulate. The pause in each *Chakra* is longer. When your awareness stays for some seconds in a *Chakra*, and you are relaxed there comes the perception of a pleasurable sweet sensation and your breath slows down noticeably. Some inner sounds as well as hues of light in the screen of *Kutastha* deepen your contact with the *Omkar* dimension.

Some people lament they get nowhere with mental *Pranayama*. If you verify the reason of such despondency, you realize that they have not understood the meaning of this technique. They keep on exerting a mental and even physical pressure on each *Chakra*, unable to relax and catch the sweetness that emanates

from them. They embellish the teaching with various details like contracting the muscles near each *Chakra*... therefore all the sweetness is dispelled...

Yoni Mudra

There are some schools that state that *Yoni Mudra* should not be practiced during the day. You can actually practice it! However the technique is best done in the deep calmness of the night, when silence is all around and one is totally and perfectly relaxed. If the main routine is practiced at night, you can simply add *Yoni Mudra* at the end. Otherwise, during the main routine avoid *Yoni Mudra*, while at night create special conditions for enjoying its full power. *Yoni Mudra* generates such a concentration of energy at the point between the eyebrows that the quality of the ensuing sleep changes for the better. In other words, after crossing the subconscious layers, your awareness may succeed in reaching the so-called "super conscious" state.

Some find that this technique is disagreeable, unpleasing. Therefore it is interesting to study a couple of variations:

VAR

Pressure on the whole spine

Create, during inhalation, a great mental pressure on the spine. Then, while holding your breath and closing the openings, you increase this pressure by applying *Mula*, *Vajroli*, *Uddiyana* and *Jalandhara Bandha*.

Vajroli means working with the muscles which control the passage of urine. You have to observe first what muscles are acting when passing urine and suddenly cause the flow to stop. By repeatedly doing this you will learn to exercise the proper muscles only. As for *Jalandhara Bandha*, you rotate the face left and right and then lower the chin as far as it is comfortably. During these movements, you let your fingers stay in place, closing the openings. It is easy to feel the stretching of *Sushumna* from the third eye to the root.

Hold your breath for a time that does not create discomfort. The internal pressure upon the spine becomes the only focus of your concentration. In other words you don't chant *Om Om...* in *Kutastha*. During *Kumbhaka* you focus on this column of light from *Muladhara* to the fifth *Chakra*. Exhale smoothly, relaxing each tension, and you will discover how sweet and comforting is the focus on *Kutastha* that ensues consequently. You will practice only three of these *Yoni Mudra*.

Lift each Chakra separately

Start your practice by closing the openings. Become aware of *Muladhara Chakra*. Contract the muscles near *Muladhara*: the back part of the perineum. You can keep the contraction until the abdomen and spine vibrate. Then lift this

Chakra through an inhalation to the point between the eyebrows. Hold the breath for as long as you feel comfortable (about 10 -15 sec) while trying to perceive the particular light of *Muladhara* in *Kutastha*.

Relax the physical tension and exhale. Breathe out with "huh-huhhhhhhh" and ideally place *Muladhara Chakra* back down to its original position. Then make a "leap of awareness" to the second *Chakra Swadhisthana* and contract the muscles of the sex organ and the sacrum. You can practice *Vairoli Mudra* (contract and relax both the urethral sphincter and the muscles of the back near the sacral center.) Then do exactly what you have done with the *Muladhara Chakra*...

When *Swadhisthana* is again in its initial position, with a "leap of awareness" focus on the third *Chakra Manipura*. Tighten the muscles of the abdomen at the level of the navel: quickly contract and relax the navel, the abdominal muscles and the lumbar area of the spine. Then do exactly what you have done with the previous two *Chakras*...

Repeat the same scheme for *Anahata Chakra*. Expand the chest. Bring the shoulder blades together and concentrate on the spine near the heart. Feel the contraction of the muscles near the dorsal center. Then do exactly what you have done with the previous three *Chakras*...

Focus on the fifth *Chakra Vishuddha*. Move your head quickly from side to side (without turning your face) a couple of times, perceiving a grinding sound in the cervical vertebrae. This is only to localize the cervical center. Now contract the muscles of the back of the neck near the cervical vertebrae. Then lift this *Chakra* through an inhalation to the point between the eyebrows. Hold etc.

Medulla: raise the chin, tense the muscles near the *Medulla* (under the occipital region), clench the teeth, and see the light at the point between the eyebrows. Feel that you are offering your *Ajna* center to the light of the spiritual eye in *Bhrumadhya*. Exhale and release all contraction.

To end the procedure, put the palms of your hands over the eyelids and remain there seeing a white light for 2-3 min. When the light disappears, lower your hands.

Remark

Many find the following technical detail very useful: before raising a *Chakra*, let the inhalation ideally start from its "frontal" component, come towards its location in the spine and then come up to the point between the eyebrows. The Perineum is the frontal component of *Muladhara*, the pubic area is the "frontal" part of *Swadhisthana Chakra*; *Manipura* is linked with the navel; the central region of the sternum is the "frontal" part of *Anahata*; the upper front part of the throat is linked with *Vishuddha*.

How to conceive a simplified Kriya routine

The complete routine, which we have already implicitly given by numbering the techniques from 1 to 7 (+ 8 at night), might be perceived as too long for a beginner. You can simplify it, but pay attention it has three essential parts: preparation, central part where you keep your awareness moving up and down the spine and, finally, the meditation phase.

As a simple **introductory practice**, you can utilize *Talabya Kriya* and *Om Japa* or practice *Maha Mudra* and *Navi Kriya*, in order to avoid techniques requiring movement after *Kriya Pranayama*. However the point is this: experiment and choose.

The **central part** is *Kriya Pranayama* but in particular occasions you can utilize *Kriya Pranayama with short breath* at its place. We have clarified that occasionally e.g. during a longer meditation once in a week, you can add more repetitions to *Kriya Pranayama*; in that case, enjoy the third part of *Kriya Pranayama* also. Don't utilize only the third part of *Kriya Pranayama*! A routine totally based on a strong concentration on the *Sahasrara* is not appropriate for beginning or medium level students. Developing a strong magnet in *Sahasrara* through the third part of *Kriya Pranayama* is the most powerful way of stimulating the *Kundalini* awakening. This implies bringing up a lot of information from the subconscious mind to the surface. You might experience an entire range of negative moods.

As for the last part (**meditation**), for sure it does not consists of the elaboration of lofty thoughts supported by fervid imagination. Not in the least! ⁵ Rest in calmness, enjoy your calm breath: *mental Pranayama* is all in all. A good choice is to lengthen the practice of *mental Pranayama* to occupy 1/3 of the whole time. Giving the highest importance to the soothing phase of *mental Pranayama* is the key to success in *Kriya*.

Mental Pranayama has a divine beauty. Without *mental Pranayama*, *Kriya Yoga* risks becoming a self-imposed torture, a nightmare. I bet that without it one unfaithfully gives up *Kriya Yoga*, unless one is sustained by the excitement and expectations created in him by a heavy process of indoctrination.

A *Kriya* routine that does not end with *mental Pranayama* is like an orchestra going on stage, unpacking the instruments, tuning them and then leaving at once! It is this phase that brings everything together; the ripples in the mind's lake are stilled, the awareness becomes transparent, and the *Last Reality* is revealed. It is a diffuse calmness; the mind is at rest and silent and gains the energy necessary to be more acutely alert. It is like a spiral which gradually and systematically takes care of all the levels of one's being: it is a healing process.

If the practice happens in the right spirit, then it gives birth to one of the

⁵ "What do you meditate about?" Often we hear this question. People find it difficult to understand that the prescribed subject/object of contemplation in the practice of *Kriya Yoga* is the *Omkar reality* that manifests during *mental Pranayama*.

rare moments in the day where you can utilize your meditation born intuition for effective handling any issue that arises from life. Therefore the value of *Mental Pranayama* becomes apparent when important decisions have to be taken. One has the impression that nothing can get in the way and that even the greatest difficulties will dissipate. Inside the perfect transparency of an inner order, all problems are solved. One is born to *Kriya* through the engaging practice of *mental Pranayama*: it projects us into sheer heaven and its beauty overflows our lives.

"... it's hard to stay mad, when there's so much beauty in the world. Sometimes I feel like I'm seeing it all at once, and it's too much, my heart fills up like a balloon that's about to burst... And then I remember to relax, and stop trying to hold on to it, and then it flows through me like rain and I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my stupid little life. (From the movie *American Beauty*; 1999) "

Example of a simple Kriya routine	
Introductory practice	Hariharananda's variation of Maha Mudra (First and Second parts)
Central part	Kriya Pranayama 36 repetitions (First and Second part) & Pranayama with short breath
Meditation part	Mental Pranayama

Final counsels:

[I] Learn and to enjoy the *First Kriya* by studying and applying chapters 6 and 7 of this book.

[II] Then read what you can find about *Japa*, from any source: book, videos and obviously what you find in the third part of the book. Start to practice *Japa* during the day.

[III] Devout one day a week the deepen the *Omkar* experience. The chant of *Om* in each *Chakra* is the starting point of this blissful experience. While listening to the sounds emanating from the *Chakras* (the astral sounds of the first three Chakras should become audible) your awareness will be spontaneously absorbed in a dimension that lies beyond the material life.

Besides chanting of *Om* in each *Chakra* during *Om Japa* or during *Kriya Pranayama*, there is a great opportunity of losing oneself in that dimension by following a counsel given by Swami Hariharananda: "If you want to make

remarkable spiritual progress, you should engage yourselves in being aware of at least 1728 breaths (during one single *Kriya* routine.)" This happens by practicing the technique of *Pranayama with short breath* for about three hours.

You will listen to the sound of a "bell" in *Anahata*. This will change into the sound of "many waters" and the state of peace will become solid. Go ahead listening to it and each part of your psyche will be harmoniously affected.

[IV] Create an ideal pause in your life. You have learned, now you must practice. No further techniques. Simplify and enjoy what you have learned and create your routine.

Appendix1 – If you are an absolute beginner

Nadi Sodhana Pranayama: It is important to clean the nostrils before beginning the exercise so the breath can flow smoothly. This can be done with water or inhaling eucalyptus essence and blowing the nose. If one of the nostrils is permanently obstructed, that is a problem that needs to be solved medically. If the obstruction is due to a severe cold, no *Pranayama* exercise should be practiced.

1. The mouth must be closed.
2. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and inhale through the left nostril slowly, uniformly, and deeply for 6-10 seconds.
3. Pause for a mental count of 3 after each inhalation.
4. Close the left nostril with the right little finger and ring finger of the same hand.
5. Exhale through the right nostril with the same uniform and deep rhythm.
6. Change nostrils.
7. Keep the left nostril closed, inhale through the right nostril.
8. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and exhale through the left nostril slowly, uniformly, and deeply for 6-10 seconds.

This corresponds to one cycle. Begin with 6 cycles gradually working up to 12 cycles. Use a mental count to make sure the time is the same for both the inhalation and the exhalation. Do not overdo the breathing to the point of discomfort. The nostrils can be closed with the fingers in different ways depending on the preference of the practitioner.

Ujjayi Pranayama: The technique consists of breathing in and out deeply through both nostrils while producing a sound/noise in the throat. After a few days' practice, the respiratory action is lengthened without effort. This exercise is normally practiced 12 times. Mentally count to ensure that the inhalation and the exhalation have the same duration. Concentration on the comfort and the induced calmness is important: this allows the concentration to become deeper.

Concentration exercise: Remain perfectly immobile and relaxed for at least 5 minutes. The breath is natural and calm, the attention intensely focused on the point between the eyebrows.

After an initial period of practice, the *Bandhas* are added during *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*. Let us define the *Bandhas*: In *Jalandhara Bandha*, the neck and the throat are slightly contracted, and the chin tilts down toward the breast. In *Uddiyana Bandha* (in a simplified form) the abdominal muscles are slightly contracted; the perception of

energy inside the abdominal region and in the spinal column is intensified. During *Mula Bandha*, the perineum muscles – between the anus and the genital organs – are contracted in an attempt to lift the abdominal muscles in a vertical way, while pressing back the inferior part of the abdomen.

During *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*, after having inhaled (either through the left or through the right nostril) the *yogi* closes both nostrils; during the ensuing short pause the three *Bandhas* are applied simultaneously. Practicing with intensity and strength of concentration, you'll feel a sensation of energetic current sliding up along the spinal column – an almost ecstatic internal shiver.

Later, if it is comfortable, one can vary the time ratio of inhalation, retention (*Kumbhaka*), and exhalation. The exhalation should last twice the time necessary for the inhalation and the pause after the inhalation should be four times as long. This scheme will be denoted as 1:4:2. During the long pause, the three *Bandhas* are applied simultaneously. Time can be measured through mental chanting of *Om*. Inhale for a slowly count of 3 *Om*. Hold the breath for a count of 12 *Om*. Exhale for a count of 6 *Om*.

Those who undertake constant practice of this routine will start to perceive the flow of energy that moves up and down the spine. It goes without saying that students who do not succeed in practicing such an elementary routine regularly for at least 3 to 6 weeks should not even consider the idea of practicing *Kriya Yoga*.

Some books quote scientific research endorsing the benefit of *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*. It should be practiced first because it balances *Ida* and *Pingala* currents. *Ida* (feminine in nature, tied to introversion and to the state of rest) flows vertically along the left side of the spinal column, while *Pingala* (masculine in nature, tied to extroversion and to the state of physical activity) flows parallel to *Ida* on the right side. *Sushumna* flows in the middle and represents the experience halfway between the two: the ideal state to be achieved right before beginning the practice of meditation. An imbalance between *Ida* and *Pingala* is responsible for a lack of introversion-extroversion harmony in many people. Over-functioning of the *Ida* channel results in introversion, while predominance of the *Pingala* leads to a state of extroversion.

There are times when we feel more externalized; others when we are more internalized. In a healthy person, this alternation is characterized by a balance between a life of positive relationships and a serene contact with one's own depths. Excessively introverted persons tend to lose contact with external reality. The consequence is that the ups and downs of life seem to gang up against them in order to undermine their peaceful composure. Excessive extroverts betray frailty in dealing with their unconscious feelings and might face unexpected distressing moments. Now, the exercise fosters an equilibrium between *Ida* and *Pingala* and in due time, between a tendency to introversion and a tendency to extroversion.

There are four types of brain waves. During deep sleep, delta waves are predominant (1-4 oscillations per second), and in a doze, the theta waves (4-8 oscillations per sec.) dominate. The brain waves that interest us are the alpha waves (8-13 oscillations per sec.). They are mostly present when the person has closed eyes, is mentally relaxed but still awake and able to experience. When the eyes are opened, or the person is distracted in some other way, the alpha waves are weakened, and there is an increase of the faster beta waves (13-40 oscillations per sec.).

The amount of alpha waves shows to what degree the brain is in a state of relaxed awareness. EEG measurements prove that alpha waves increase during

meditation and the amount of alpha waves in each brain half balance out. Now, the more we practice *Nadi Sodhana*, the more the alpha waves tend to become equal. *Nadi Sodhana* creates that perfect balance which is the best condition to enter the meditation state.

Ujjayi is the very foundation of *Kriya Pranayama*. Those who practice it and pay due attention to the natural throat sound of the breath will discover that the core phenomenon of *Kriya Pranayama* happens spontaneously.

For many students, the combined practice of *Nadi Sodhana* and *Ujjayi* becomes such a joyous discovery of well-being and joy that they may develop an "addiction" to it. Even if they won't "upgrade" to *Kriya*, a minimal practice of these two techniques will always be part of their life.

Appendix 2 – "frenzies and obsessions"

There is a frenzy that accompanies a traditional *Kriya* initiation where all the practical instructions are transmitted hastily in one single lesson! This is what happens with mass initiations. Within a few days, almost all details are forgotten and one goes through a crisis. The teacher is no longer there and the other fellow *kriyabans* dismiss their fraternal duties by stating they are not authorized to give counsels.

Receiving *Kriya* during a one to one session is the best alternative. People who had this privilege usually remember the words of their teacher, with the same voice inflection, for all of their lives.

In certain circumstances, a student is introduced to the *Kriya* techniques a bit at a time so that they can experience them without any tension.

If you have this blessing, please don't call your teacher every other day with tortuous and bizarre questions. Don't believe that something valuable can spring only from an impeccable execution of the "magic recipe" of *Kriya*. Realize how important it is to enjoy the practice as it comes out naturally. Work on refinements only afterward: the practice itself will help you.

Those who pour into their *Kriya* path a remarkable commitment, but get nothing in return are those whose expectations are a shield that prevents the genuine beauty of *Kriya* from entering their life. Usually they are soon tired of asking questions and will eventually abandon everything.

Some *kriyabans* exacerbate the previous obsession for technical details by not trusting the sheer employment of a technique, even it is done correctly, unless it is coupled with toilsome psychological work.

They want to build brick by brick, by the sweat of their brow, as if it were a highly complex project of adding new structure to old structure, the majestic building of their redemption. They think that only by tormenting their psychological structure is it possible to uproot any deeply ingrained bad habit and the very roots of iniquity and egoism. Often they impose upon themselves useless privations and attempt unnatural renunciations. They do not understand what the spiritual dimension of life is. Their idea is that the Divine resides outside our human dimension and therefore we can progress only if we start a strenuous fight against our instincts. Religious conditioning can be very strong, fatal in certain cases.

Some entertain the thought of retiring from active life in order to live a life of self-denial. The few who have the opportunity to achieve this (not necessarily entering a convent but for example quitting their job and living by a modest lifetime annuity) are

doomed to discover that this sudden leap into this so ardently longed-for condition does not fulfill their desire for perennial peace coupled with ardent mystical inspiration. The initial feeling of total freedom from worldly engagements breeds good results in meditation but not so deep as imagined. They suffer from an inexplicable drastic diminishing of the sharpness of their concentration. They are fully aware of how insane this is, yet they cannot justify why their free time, instead of being devoted to a deep practice of *Kriya* or to *Japa* or whatever spiritual activity they choose, is depleted in too many useless occupations.

Do not impose on yourself perfect chastity. There are famous books on *Yoga* demanding impossible things. How precious would be a book that teaches how to use one's own intelligence and to think with one's own head!

Avoid any compulsive process of self analysis. Do not try to discover exact grounds on which to justify continuous fluctuations between feelings of well-being and joy during *Kriya* and periods where there will be nothing pleasurable or exciting. The best attitude is to let *Kriya* enter your life and bring all the possible benedictions without tormenting yourself because you feel unworthy. Blessed are those who have the courage to go ahead unswervingly, in spite of their failures, worthlessness and unsuitability!

Behave like a dedicated maid who does her daily duties with patience and circumspection. She prepares the daily meal, taking care of all the details from the tedious task of peeling potatoes to the final art of putting on the finishing touches. The awareness of having completed her job well is her gratification.

In time there is a greater reward for those who practice *Kriya* conscientiously even if they see no apparent result. Something tremendously vast will manifest and crush down any dichotomy of worthy/unworthy, pure/impure. It is not only a matter of astral sounds and light, cosmic expansion, or basking in endless joy – your very perception of Reality will change. Some will rediscover an almost forgotten potentiality of aesthetic enjoyment (as if they had eyes and heart for the first time); others will be deeply moved by the significance of their family, by the value of lifelong friendship and will be surprised by the intensity of the responses of love from their heart.

At the onset of their *Kriya* path, some students are far from abiding by not only Patanjali's moral rules but also common-sense guided health rules. Often there is a clear split between the new interest in meditation and other well-rooted social habits.

It's a good rule for a teacher to pretend not to notice problematic delusive student behavior. Undoubtedly after months of practice, some changes in a *kriyaban's* temperament and habits will appear, but they will be unstable. A teacher values the constancy of the practice of meditation and avoids censorial attitudes. Often, to help a *kriyaban* get free from a harmful habit, you need only to give him a glance and a smile. The point is that beginners are not able to realize they are slaves to bad habits. Let us take for example the problem of smoking. How many have a clear vision of the real situation? Paradoxically, it is easier to quit smoking because of a new ecological vogue than as a result of a lucid vision of one's addiction to nicotine.

Appendix 3 – guide to Kechari Mudra

A great event in the *First Kriya Step* is the achievement of *Kechari Mudra*. Lahiri discovered the importance of connecting the tongue with the great deposit of energy in the brain. Usually our tongue is normally unable to touch the uvula and, consequently, enter the nasal pharynx. Because of this, we are not kept connected with that reservoir of energy.

When you are sure to practice *Talabya Kriya* correctly, after several months of regular practice of it, try to attempt *Kechari Mudra*. The test is whether the tip of the tongue can touch the uvula. If so, then for a few minutes a day use the fingers to push the base of the tongue inward until the tip goes beyond the uvula and touches the pharynx behind it. Go ahead in this way for weeks.



Figure 10. Position of the tongue in the first stage of Kechari Mudra proper

One day, the tip of the tongue will enter a centimeter or so into the nasal pharynx but slip out when the fingers are removed. But, after some more days, on removing the fingers, the tip of the tongue will remain "trapped" in that position. This happens because the soft palate (the part from which the uvula hangs) is soft, movable and acts like an elastic band and creates a hook. This prevents the tongue from slipping out and returning to its usual flat position. This is the turning point. By striving each day to practice at least 6-12 *Kriya Pranayama* with the tongue in this position – despite some discomfort such as an increase in salivation, swallowing, and occasional interruptions to reestablish the position – its practice becomes easy and comfortable. The sense of irritation and the increase in salivation are soon left behind. After about three weeks of practicing in this way, you should be able to reach the same position without using the fingers. The tongue will be able to insert itself into the nasal-pharynx cavity. There will still be enough space left in the cavity to inhale and exhale through the nose.

Kechari Mudra has a remarkable effect upon our psycho physical system: we notice a quieting of all useless, unwanted thoughts and intrusive mental processes. *Kechari Mudra* causes the life force to be withdrawn from thought processes. Bypassing the mind's energy system and changing both the path and the direction of *Prana* flow, *Kechari* connects our awareness with the Spiritual dimension whose seat is in the upper part of the brain. The internal chatter ceases; silence and transparency become the features of one's consciousness. The mind works in a more restrained way and enjoys an essential rest; each thought becomes more concrete and precise. When, during the

daily activities *Kechari Mudra* is practiced, moments of pure calmness and mental silence fill one's entire being! Sometimes, mental silence turns into an explosion of inner joy. The only problem might be that during the first three weeks of *Kechari Mudra*, you experience "dizziness" and fogged up mental faculties. Be prepared for this eventuality and consider abstaining from driving and any work involving a significant proportion of risk during this time.

After several months of tireless practice, your tongue will reach the junction of the nasal passage inside the hole in the palate. The soft tissue above the holes in the internal part of the nostrils is alluded to in *Kriya* literature as the "uvula above the uvula". The tip of the tongue reaches this small area and remains "stuck" there comfortably.

According to *Kriya* literature, the tongue can be pushed even farther up. Any good anatomy book will reveal that the tongue cannot extend any farther when it fills up the nasal pharynx. That assertion should therefore be understood as a hint to what a normal person thinks is happening. Actually, by extending the tongue to its limit, it is possible to experience a great attraction toward the region between the eyebrows along with the sensation of having reached, with the tip of the tongue, a higher position.

Amrita experience. Literature affirms that through *Kechari Mudra* we close a circuit between the fifth *Chakra* and the *Medulla: Amrit* ("Nectar", the elixir of life - a sweet tasting fluid) begins to trickle down through the tongue into the spine and then in the whole body. This brings about a rekindling of the vital force in the body.

To have this experience, the tip of the tongue should touch three points in sequence: the uvula, a small asperity on the roof of the nasal pharynx under the pituitary gland, and the soft tissue above the nasal septum. The tip of the tongue should rotate on each of these spots for at least 20-30 seconds; then, in the manner of sipping a liquid or testing a food, an essence will be savored on the tongue's surface. The exercise should be repeated several times during the day. ⁶

⁶ I'm unable to comment on the importance of sipping the nectar since I haven't had the experience nor, I admit, have I even tried to have it. I'm sharing this information for the sake of accuracy and completeness. It may fascinate a *kriyaban* but after an initial period of intense excitement, it is forgotten.

CHAPTER 8
THE HIGHER KRIYAS

This chapter is for those students who have shown a passionate commitment to the practice of *Kriya Yoga*. The right moment to study it is 6-12 months after practicing *Kriya* daily, when a good level of balance between *Ida* and *Pingala* is established and the coarseness of the breathing process has decreased. About the necessity of having achieved *Kechari Mudra* before practicing *Thokar*, consider the related note in the previous chapter. In my opinion what is essential is the genuine longing to deepen the meditation experience.

The *First Kriya Step* described in chapters 6 and 7 contains all what is necessary to enter the meditation state. The breath is lengthened, the *Prana* is pacified in all the body, the mind enjoys tranquility. In time, tranquility becomes stable. This comes from the balance created between the tendency to introversion and the opposite tendency to extroversion.

After your *Kriya* routine, if you close your eyes, you feel an inner radiance and you have no doubt about the purpose of life: to fully enjoy the spiritual dimension. During the day, you find that your perception of things has changed. You become more and more aware that all matter and all living beings are made of the intelligent energy.

In this chapter we are going to learn:

- [1] *Omkar Pranayama*
- [2] *Elementary form of Thokar*
- [3] *Advanced form of Thokar*
- [4] *Micro Thokar*
- [5] *Gayatri Kriya*

Omkar Pranayama is a very subtle variation of the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*; the *Elementary form of Thokar* is a technique based on directing, through a particular movement of the head, the calm *Prana* – collected in the head through *Kriya Pranayama* – towards the location of the heart *Chakra*.

The *Advanced form of Thokar* is an acceleration of the *Elementary form of Thokar* – the action of *Thokar* is repeated while holding the breath. In *Kriya* literature it is explained that the heart knot is struck by the *Elementary form of Thokar* and then cut by the *Advanced form of Thokar*. The procedure of *Interiorization of the practice of Thokar* is a wonderful way to deepen the concentration in the heart *Chakra* or in each *Chakra*. The procedure of *Gayatri Kriya* completes the spiritual path guiding a *kriyaban* towards the full stability of his/her consciousness in *Kutastha*.

The "heart knot" is considered a great obstacle because it keeps the mood continuously influenced by superficial fleeting emotions and, consequently, the mind always restless.

You understand the difference between superficial emotions and deep sentiments. Restless emotions are lethal if they become the propulsive force in taking crucial decisions. Destructive violent actions are born from them.

The incremental routine of *Thokar* (as counseled) will teach you how to meditate without mental pollution, and without imaginings. After mastering it, you are, so to say, restored to health from an evil that we frail human beings brought with us since adolescence. "Emotional Maturity" is the first glaring effect of the long and deep practice of *Thokar*. People around you will notice your transformation. The first effect of *Thokar* is a healthy relationship with one's emotions and instincts.

But the most precious effect is the development of a particular joy in the heart as if you were going around with a burning brazier in your heart. This will develop in a *Bhakti* whose intensity will surprise you. You will learn to practice the presence of God and carry out your daily duties in His presence.

[1] OMKAR PRANAYAMA

First part: with fragmented breath

This particular form of *Pranayama* is to be practiced after at least 24 *Kriya Pranayama* breaths.

The hands, with fingers intertwined, rest on the abdomen. Inhalation and exhalation are fragmented into 6 + 6 parts. Starting with your chin on the chest, inhale, moving your awareness upwards along the spinal column. Simultaneously, slowly raise the chin as if to accompany the energy and push the energy up. Differently from *First Kriya Pranayama*, during your inhalation you should slightly contract abdomen and stomach.

The muscles at the base of the spinal column should be also slightly contracted. This contraction is maintained not only to the end of the inhalation but also throughout the ensuing pause; then it is released and the exhalation begins. (This detail should be introduced gradually so it does not disturb the general harmony.)

The syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*) are mentally placed in each *Chakra* location, while making a short pause in each. During the first "sip" of inhalation, the concentration is on the *Muladhara*, where the syllable *Om* is ideally "put"; during the second "sip", the concentration is on the second *Chakra*, where the syllable *Na* is ideally put ... *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu* (*medulla* is not ideally hit.) Now the inhalation is completed and the chin is horizontal.

The exhaling breath too is divided into six punctuated parts or pulses. While lowering the chin at a slow pace, the awareness comes down along the spinal column. The syllable *Te* (usually is the final "e" is lengthened: *Teeeee*) is placed in *Medulla*, *Va* in the fifth *Chakra*... and so on ... *Su*... *De*... *Va*, until *Ya*

(lengthened: *Yaaaa*) is mentally chanted in the *Muladhara*.⁷ While coming down, don't be in a hurry, become familiar with the abdominal expansion.

As soon as it is comfortable, add a pause of 2-3 seconds both at the end of inhalation and of exhalation. During the pause after inhalation, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn along the crown of the head. ["Counterclockwise" in this book is always intended as if viewing from top]. During the pause after exhalation, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn around the *Muladhara Chakra*. The rotation above happens inside the brain, under the cranial bone, starting from the occipital region, over *Bindu (Sikha point)*, and coming back to it; the head accompanies this inner movement with an almost imperceptible rotating movement (tilting back slightly, then to the right, the front, the left, and finally to the back). The rotation of the awareness around *Muladhara* does not require physical movement.

You have probably read that in a deep *Pranayama*, the energy crosses the *Chakras* just like the thread of a necklace passes through the pearls. Do not force the visualization of a similar hypothetical event because this does not happen. Actually, the "thread" of energy envelops each "pearl". The counter clockwise rotation of awareness around the crown shrinks while coming down, just like a vortex, winding around the *Medulla*. When exhalation begins and you mentally chant *Teeee*, you can use the starting instants of exhalation to intensify the psychic pressure around the *Medulla*. This internal action is extended in a natural way to the other *Chakras*. The path of descent is a "helix" that surrounds and creates pressure around each *Chakra*. Go slowly and do not be in a hurry and let the process proceed at its own pace.

The timing of one *Omkar Pranayama* depends on the individual: usually it is approximately 20-30 seconds but from a certain point onwards, the speed of each repetition of *Omkar Pranayama* slows down. The breath is "sucked in" and seems to be dissolved. From that moment onwards, all the physical details are only hinted.

Remark 1

As you have noticed, this procedure is similar to the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*. This similarity has led some teachers not to teach this technique of *Omkar Pranayama* at all. This choice is disputable because *Omkar Pranayama* prepares to the art of *Thokar*. Each fragment of breath creates a pressure on a different *Chakra*. Great bliss is gradually built up.

Remark 2

Moving from one *Chakra* to the next, a *kriyaban* begins to notice the change of the light vibration in the region between the eyebrows. Being absorbed in listening to astral sound creates inner bliss, putting aside – at least momentarily –

⁷ I am sure the reader knows the correct pronunciation of the *Mantra*; phonetic symbols are not included. Notice that in the *Bindu*, we don't mentally verbalize *Va* but *Ba*: this convention has established itself over the years.

our Ego consciousness. This is the moment when the *Omkar reality* is revealed. Without this revelation, the practice of *Omkar Kriya* is deprived of its own essence.

Second part: with calm breath

The breath is natural (as in *mental Pranayama*.) In each *Chakra* we shall mentally repeat its associated syllable many, many times.

In *Muladhara* repeat *Om, Om, Om, Om, Om...* a minimum of 36 times. (Do not use *Mala* to count – remain immobile.) The speed at which you chant the syllables is about two per second. Visualize that *Chakra* as a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately one inch. Visualize these syllables moving on the surface of the disk in counterclockwise direction, near the circumference. After the first round, another comes, inside the previous and so on ... Usually those rounds come more and more near the center of the disk.

Then focus on the second *Chakra* where you will do exactly the same action, utilizing the second syllable of the *Mantra*, namely: *Na, Na, Na, Na, Na...* about 36 times.

Then focus on the third, repeating *Mo, Mo, Mo, Mo, Mo....* about 36 times. Then focus on the fourth, repeating *Bha, Bha, Bha, Bha, Bha ...* then on the fifth (*Ga, Ga, Ga, Ga, Ga*), then on *Bindu* (*Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba*). Then rotate the awareness many times around the crown while mentally remaining silent. Then focus on *Medulla* repeating many times *Tee, Tee, Tee, Tee, Tee ...*

Then you will focus on the fifth *Chakra* utilizing *Va, Va, Va* then fourth.... third second *Muladhara*.

Going up this way from *Muladhara* to *Bindu* and coming down from crown to *Muladhara* is one round: the time required is approximately 4-6 minutes. Repeat 3-4 times and then be lost in the meditative state – the "absorption state" is very strong indeed.

When you are familiar with the practice of *Omkar Pranayama*, you can consider practicing the "*Elementary form of Thokar*."

[2] ELEMENTARY FORM OF THOKAR

[In many schools this procedure is called Second Kriya]

Just as in *Omkar Pranayama*, the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*) are to be placed mentally in each *Chakra* location.

With the chin resting on your chest, inhale while simultaneously raising your awareness along the spinal column. Touch each *Chakra* with the first six syllable of the *Mantra* (*Om* is placed in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second, *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu*.) Raise the chin as if following the inner movement. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed on the navel area to create a mental pressure on the first three *Chakras*. Contract moderately the muscles at the base of the spine. The breath produces only a

slight, weak sound in the throat or it comes out soundless. When the chin is up and horizontal, the inhalation ends, and the awareness is in *Bindu*.

Hold your breath. Hold the muscle contraction at the base of the spine. The head begins its rotation by moving to the left shoulder (left ear moves slightly toward the left shoulder, the face does not turn left or right and the movement is free of all bouncing); *Teeee* is thought in the *Medulla*. The head tilts back a little and in a sweeping arc reaches the right shoulder, (the right ear coming near the right shoulder), the syllable *Va* is thought in the cervical *Chakra*. The rotation proceeds, the head bends forward just a little and moves left until the left ear is near the left shoulder (the face is not turned to the left).

From this position, the chin is tilted down diagonally as if to strike the center of the chest, while simultaneously *Su* is intensely vibrated in the heart *Chakra*. A kind of hitting is felt in the heart *Chakra*. A short pause follows: just what is needed to be enraptured in the radiation of energy emanating from that *Chakra*. The contraction at the base of the spinal column is eased off; via a very subtle exhalation the remaining syllables of the *Mantra* are "placed" in the first three *Chakras* – *De* into the third one, *Va* into the second one, and *Yaaaa* into the first one. While doing this, the head is usually kept down.

If you want to practice with more intensity you can keep the duration of the exhalation longer than the duration of the inhalation, then at the moment of the strike at the heart *Chakra* with *Su*, while applying all the three *Bandhas* (*Mula*, *Uddiyana*, and *Jalandhara*), continue to hold the breath there for an extra few seconds before raising your head. A warm sensation will be felt around and inside the fourth *Chakra* region.

The duration of this process is about 24 seconds. Repeat the procedure 12 times. Traditionally, one begins with 12 rotations and increases by one every day up to a maximum of 200 repetitions.

Thokar is practiced after *Kriya Pranayama* if possible with the tongue in *Kechari Mudra*. At the end of this practice, relax by enjoying 12 repetitions of the *Omkar Pranayama* (only first part) then practice *mental Pranayama* (optionally preceded by *Kriya Pranayama with short breath*.) Then pause with the awareness centered both in the heart *Chakra* and in the light manifesting at the point between the eyebrows.

Remark 1

Do not allow the weight of the head to be the sole force pushing the chin toward the chest: letting your head simply drop would definitely be harmful. A mindful physical effort is needed to lower the chin.

When you practice over 50 repetitions, the movements of the head should be only hinted at: the chin does not come close to the chest and the striking of the fourth *Chakra* is mainly achieved by the sheer power of mental concentration. If you have any difficulty whatsoever, stop and do not try at any cost to reach the 200 repetitions.

The presence of physical problems (the cervical vertebrae are indeed vulnerable) may require practicing on alternate days. It is better to add more cycles over time rather than face the prospect of experiencing continuous head and neck pain throughout the entire day!

Remark 2

As you have read, a *kriyaban* is guided to perform this technique 12 times a day, then to gradually increase the number of repetitions of one a day. The goal is to achieve 200 repetitions.

Instead of increasing the number of repetitions of one a day, you can add six repetition per week. In this way it is more easy to remember the number of repetition you are supposed to do. During the first week practice 12 repetitions each day. Then consider the practice of 18 repetitions each day et cetera.

If there are problems, practice this technique every other day. The third week (just to give you an example) you can practice 24 repetitions on alternate days. It is not necessary to practice every day; rather it is wise to work three days a week on the average. When you reach a consistent number of repetitions (more that 60) the effects are very strong. Therefore be very careful.

Introduction to Reversed Breathing

The *Reversed Breathing* is a way of practicing *Pranayama* which is usually discussed in Taoist Internal Alchemy. The point is that if we want to practice the *Advanced form of Thokar* in the best of the ways, we must fully learn and perfect this form of breathing. Therefore do not overlook the present explanation: it consists in an important clarification that usually *kriyabans* do not receive.

In the previous procedures of *Omkar Pranayama* and *Elementary form of Thokar* we have partially used the reversed form of breathing: during inhalation we have contracted abdomen and stomach.

In *Kriya Pranayama* we use the abdominal breathing. During inhalation we expand our belly creating more room to hold the air in. Abdomen and stomach expand as we breathe in, contract as we breathe out. This relaxes, calms down the mind and gives an increase of energy from the fresh air entering our body. *Internal Alchemy* calls this breathing: "Post-Birth breathing" because it is the breathing pattern we use after our birth.

The *Reversed breathing* is the opposite of abdominal breathing. Abdomen and stomach contracts as we breathe in, expand as we breathe out. *Internal Alchemy* calls this breathing: "Pre-Birth breathing" explaining that it produces an intake of pure energy through the navel. Receiving nutrients by a fetus from its mother via the umbilical cord, reminds what happens in this new breathing process.

Always keep in mind that:

[1] *Kriya Pranayama* is always to be practiced with abdominal breathing; then in *Navi Kriya* we create something particular in the navel region and it is with this "something" (they call it *Samana* current) that we are going to practice any possible *Higher Kriya*. Only after deep relaxation and balance of *Prana - Apana*, the "Fire path" opens during inhalation and the substance originated from the mixture of *Prana* and *Apana* enters *Sushumna* burning any obstacle and lifting our spirit toward the Divine.

Therefore increase the "element" of "fire" in the body ["Fire" is the *Tattwa* of the third *Chakra*.] During inhalation, feel the navel region coming inside. The *Prana* comes up slowly from the first to the second *Chakra*, from the second to the third. The upper part of the lungs is almost filled completely with air; the rib cage is expanded. Hold the breath.

[2] These two breathing patterns cannot be mixed up at will. It is wrong to think that the first can be neglected to practice only the second. The Reversed breathing can take place only after a certain amount of abdominal breathing (a minimum of 20 abdominal breaths should always come before the practice of Reversed breathing.)

[3] If we want to fully master the procedure of *Thokar*, we have no other choice than to master the Reverse breathing procedure – otherwise our travel along the path of *Kriya* ends with unfruitful attempts to cope with the *Advanced Form of Thokar*.

This most difficult form of *Thokar* involves practicing a great number of cycles of the head movements unhurriedly, without breathing. This seems an impossible task. Actually many *kriyabans* reach a certain number of repetitions (markedly under 60) with undeclared discomfort and get bogged down at this point – unable to go forward, having achieved nothing, disappointed.

[3] ADVANCED FORM OF THOKAR

[In many schools this procedure is called Third Kriya]

After inhaling (with *Om, Na, Mo...*) and raising the *Prana* to the upper part of the lungs, partially relax the muscles of the thoracic cage as if you were going to begin a new inhalation. The act of sealing the lungs (trachea) as when diving, should be avoided. In this relaxed mood, repeat numerous cycles of the head movements unhurriedly. Consequently the mental chanting of *Te* in *Medulla*, *Va* in the cervical and *Su* in the heart *Chakra* is done several times (*Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su ...*) while holding the breath. Stop the procedure and exhale

when feeling discomfort!

Then slowly exhale and place the syllables *De, Va, Ya* in *Chakras* three, two, one respectively. While doing this, keep your head down. This practice is done rigorously once a day.

As for the repetition of *Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su...*, as soon as you feel your attention totally focused on the heart *Chakra*, put not only the syllable *Su* but also the two previous ones, *Te* and *Va*, in the heart *Chakra*. From that moment onwards, the syllables *Te, Va* and *Su* are mentally placed only in the heart *Chakra*.

To give an idea of the speed of the movements, the entire process from inhalation to exhalation with 12 repetitions of the rotation of the head (each rotation concluding with the movement of the chin toward the chest) lasts around 70-80 seconds. Traditionally, one begins with 12 cycles of the head movements unhurriedly during one single breath and increases by one every day up to 200 repetitions. This *Kriya* is considered mastered when one reaches 200 rotations without interrupting the *Kumbhaka* state.

Important counsels

During the *Advanced form of Thokar*, if you come at a standstill, if you cannot increase the number of rotations, far from the goal of 200 rotations, avoid at all costs any attempt to accomplish a high number of rotations, doing them quickly. This is violence against your body. Rather consider the two practical counsels I am sharing with you now.

[1] Make *Prana* pervade the rib cage and become calm and stable there.

Focus your attention on the upper part of your rib cage. A part of this attention goes to the base of the spine. Mentally chant *Om, Om, Om...* rapidly (about two chants of *Om* per second) feeling your awareness like an ant, crawling up the innermost channel of the spine millimeter by millimeter from *Muladhara* upwards.

After no more than 4-6 seconds, you'll have reached the heart *Chakra*; go up further, in the region between the fourth and the fifth *Chakra* (the region related to the upper part of lungs and chest.) You will perceive a real, tangible freedom from the breath. In this mental and physical state you will practice the *Advanced form of Thokar*. You will discover how beautiful and comforting is the experience of rotating your head (with *Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su...*) while the breath seems frozen in the thorax region. Remain stable in this state, without ever letting the abdomen and the rib cage relax. *Prana* should always remain in the higher part of the lungs.

The action of mentally chanting *Om, Om, Om...* really draws energy in the spine from all the body and guides it toward the spine, but you must put the distilled experience of years of *Kriya* in this action of mentally chanting. If your body condition is perfect (if you are moderate with eating and you are on an

empty stomach) you will notice that your breath is dissolved in some inexplicable way in the body.⁸

[2] Simplify the dynamic and the physical intensity of the movements. Move the chin toward the chest before completing the head rotation. Namely, after rotating your head from left to right, let your chin "fall" toward the chest from the right side, then lift it to left side and continue with the rotations. By increasing the rotations, the movements of the head should be only hinted at and the chin should not come close to the chest.

When you feel you have neared your limit holding your breath, while keeping the chest expanded and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm contracted and immobile, let a minimal (almost imperceptible) sip of air go out whenever the chin is lowered toward the chest and let an imperceptible sip of air enter whenever the chin is brought up.

Do not do any specific act of inhaling or exhaling: relax and allow the phenomenon we have described to happen of its own accord. The sensation will always be that of not breathing at all.

Yes, this is an unorthodox way of practicing *Thokar*, but if you go ahead with this and repeat it a sufficient number of times (usually it's a matter of a couple of months), one day you will make a beautiful discovery: this strategy is no more necessary!

Thanks to the effect of this practice upon the ganglia exerting an influence on the central cardio-respiratory mechanisms, the practice happens in better and better conditions, until one day you will be able to complete the 200 rotations without breathing, without hurry, while experiencing a state of consciousness characterized by heightened feeling of freedom from physical laws. It is a matter of inner realization – an instinct which is discovered in time.

This is the moment where the most important part of the practice happens: the revelation of the secret point of the heart.

"Know that there is a physical Heart in each body. There is a spiritual Heart in each Heart. There is a Secret in each spiritual Heart. There is a Hidden in each Secret, and there is a Most Hidden in each Hidden. I am in that Most Hidden."
(*The Secret of Islam* 274, by Henry Bayman)

The secret point is the door of the subtle spinal channel (Sushumnadwara.) Actually this door and the star of *Kutastha* are one and the same thing. When this effulgent point [this is the real *Bindu*] appears to your inner vision, you are in an ecstatic state immobilized by the radiance of it, fully aware of the Divine presence behind it.

⁸ The suggestion of the "ant crawling up the spine" comes from a *Kundalini Yoga* technique. The complete technique is the following: Inhale from the 3rd eye and follow the internal breath/energy down the *Chakras* all the way to *Muladhara*. At *Muladhara*, hold the breath, practice *Mula Bandha* while expanding the chest and the ribcage a little further. At this point come up inside the spine continuously repeating mentally *Om-Om-Om-Om-Om-Om* ... all the way to *Kutastha*. Having actually reached *Kutastha*, release *Mula Bandha* and exhale into the space of *Kutastha*. Repeat.

When this realization does not happen, breathe deeply and complete the practice of *Thokar* with *mental Pranayama* or the *Micro Thokar* that now we are going to describe. If you have a lot of time at your disposal, enjoy the procedure of *Gayatri Kriya*.

[4] MICRO THOKAR

After having completed a comfortable number of rotations of the *Advanced form of Thokar* we breathe freely. The fourth *Chakra* is visualized as a horizontal disk having a diameter of approximately one inch. Let us learn how to perceive an inner movement sensation on its surface. To this purpose we go ahead with the head movements, but only hinting at them. While the head is moving left, we perceive in the heart *Chakra* a weak internal movement to the left. We mentally chant the syllable *Tee*. When the head moves right, we perceive a movement rightward. We think the syllable *Va*. When the head bows forward (it is a not marked movement), we perceive that the inner movement reaches the center of the fourth *Chakra*. We vibrate there the syllable *Su*. We go ahead repeating: *Te Va Su, Te Va Su....* while taking care that each physic movement (of the head) is only hinted and gradually disappears. After a couple of minutes, your attention is totally introverted and the breath imperceptible.

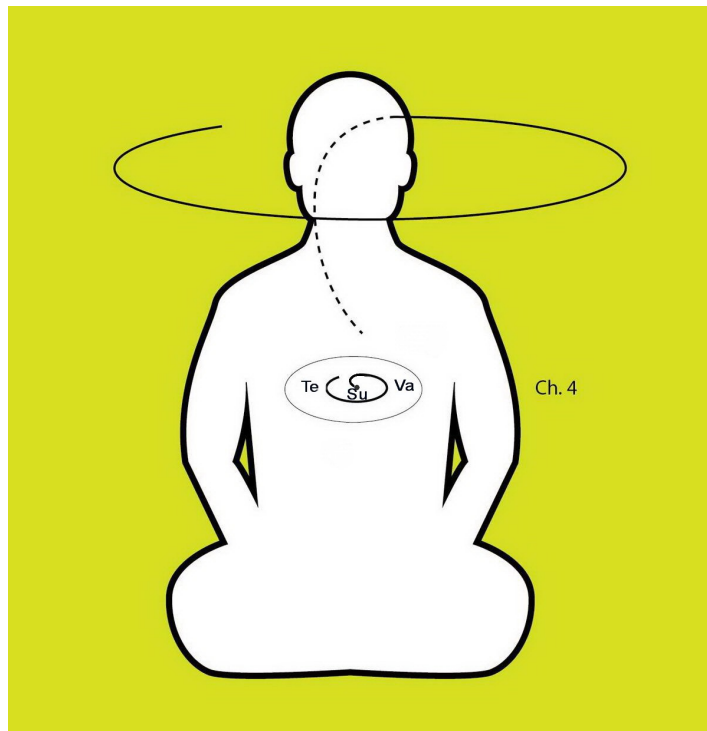


Figure 11. Micro Thokar as is perceived in Chakra 4

Become receptive to your heartbeat. Go ahead with the repetition of *Te Va Su* synchronizing the three syllables with the pulsation. Sooner or later you will enter the state of ecstasy. Nothing will exist except a gilded light that becomes a

white splendor that all pervades. It is endless Beauty and incommensurable Good. The answer of your heart is a giant wave of pure Divine Love (*Bhakti*). The strength of this Love intensifies around the fourth *Chakra*, as if a mighty hand were squeezing the chest region.

Remark

The described practice can inspire you to recall it in every moment of the day, even during your nights when you awaken from sleep and desire to turn your mind to God. You can utilize whatever *Mantra* or Prayer, experiencing it in your heart. This lofty practice is commonly known as the "Prayer of the heart." Chapter 11 is dedicated to it. There we shall reflect upon the right attitude necessary to practice *Thokar*, *Micro Thokar* and the Prayer of the heart. Now, let me say that it is necessary to abandon entirely the idea that this practice may give you the control upon the physical heart. If you entertain this thought, how can you realize the *Dhyana* state where you contemplate the meaning of the syllables while letting the devotion grow?

Without the right attitude, a safe and reliable result is not possible. I think that this is the reason why few persons have received initiation in the *Fourth Kriya level*. The "right attitude" is total of "surrender" to God, being free from all expectations.

Extension of this procedure to the other Chakras

The *Micro Thokar* procedure can be extended to each *Chakra*. This encourages *Kundalini* to come up *Chakra* after *Chakra* up to *Kutastha* and find there stability. A very enjoyable practice is to perceive the *Micro Thokar* three times in each *Chakra*, up and down for at least three complete rounds. Another good way of utilizing the *Micro Thokar* is to complete one round, going up and down, with 36 repetitions in each *Chakra*.

Among the debris of past illusions, such experience open the doors of the spiritual realization. This internal movement embodies the deeper aspect of the *Omkar* reality. Perceiving it means to annihilate any form of duality present in the *Chakras* and therefore, in your awareness. It is as if the center between the eyebrows become one with each lower *Chakra*, fusing them in a unique reality. This will lead you out of time and space. A burning aspiration towards the Divine is born from this.

INTRODUCTION TO FOURTH KRIYA

In *Kriya* literature you read that the *Fourth Kriya* procedure is spontaneously revealed. Hence some students delight in imagining the strangest scenario: a voice coming from beyond that instructs you.... or a sudden vision of a *yogi* practicing that technique in a way that you guess its mechanism....

The best explanation I have heard is the following:

Let us consider the *pranic* effects obtained in the heart *Chakra* through the practice of the *Advanced Form of Thokar*. This *pranic* experience can be had in each other *Chakra* making a full intuitive experience of each of the five *Tattwas*. Lahiri Mahasaya has named this process "*Dhyana Kriya*." It will accelerate the experience of opening the door of the spinal channel (Sushumnadwara) – or rather, of penetrating the star of *Kutastha*.

Each procedure which goes in this direction can be called *Fourth Kriya*. A well known example is *Gayatri Kriya*.

[5] GAYATRI KRIYA

This technique is very ancient and existed before Lahiri Mahasaya begun his mission of spreading *Kriya*. Its structure is well known in India and is considered the subtlest way of using the *Gayatri Mantra*. This *Mantra* is considered to be a supreme vehicle for gaining spiritual enlightenment. The purest form of *Gayatri Mantra* is *Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargho Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodayat*. (Oh, great Spiritual Light who has created the Universe, we meditate upon Your glory. You are the embodiment of Knowledge. You are the remover of all Ignorance. May You enlighten our Intellect and awaken our Intuition.)

This *Mantra* is prefaced with either a short or a long invocation. The short invocation is: *Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha*. The terms *Bhur, Bhuvah, Swaha* are invocations to honor the three planes of existence (physical, astral, and causal respectively) and to address their presiding deities. The long invocation is: *Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om Tapah, Om Satyam*. This invocation is more complete since it recognizes that there are more planes of existence: the seven *Lokas*. *Mahah* is the mental world, the plane of spiritual balance; *Janah* is the world of pure knowledge; *Tapah* is the world of intuition; *Satyam* is the world of Absolute, Ultimate Truth. We can be satisfied with the explanation that these sounds are used to activate the *Chakras* and connect them to the seven spiritual realms of existence. In our procedure, we use only the opening long invocation in its complete form and not all the parts of the *Gayatri Mantra*. The *Kriya* tradition we are following here links *Manipura* with *Om Mahah* and *Anahata* with *Om Swaha*. The reason is that

the world of thinking, evoked by *Om Mahah*, is more appropriate to the nature of the third *Chakra*, while the causal world of pure ideas, evoked by *Om Swaha*, is related to *Anahata Chakra*.

Become aware of the *Muladhara Chakra*. Contract the muscles near its physical location: the contraction can be repeated two-three times. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in *Kriya Pranayama*) visualize the *Muladhara Chakra* coming up into the point between the eyebrows, where you perceive it as a full moon. You don't come up "touching" the other *Chakras*. Now they don't exist. Hold the breath and focus on the "inner space" between the eyebrows. This comes out easily with *Kechari Mudra*.⁹ On the screen between the eyebrows, a particular color experience happens – this color is different for each *Chakra*. Mentally chant at least three times the specific *Mantra* for the *Muladhara Chakra*: *Om Bhur*

Then, through a long exhalation, ideally lower this *Chakra* from the point between the eyebrows to its proper location in the spine. Now you know what to do with each other *Chakra*.

The *Mantras* to be utilized are:

Om Bhur for *Muladhara*;
Om Bhuvah for *Swadhisthana*;
Om Mahah for *Manipura*;
Om Swaha for *Anahata*;
Om Janah for *Vishuddha*;
Om Tapah for *Medulla*

Add a particularly intense concentration at the point between the eyebrows. Hold your breath; raise your eyebrows, become aware of the light. Repeat *Om Satyam*.

Now complete the "round" by lifting *Chakras* 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, always using the contraction, the chanting of the *Mantra*, being aware of any particular Light experience in *Kutastha*. If possible repeat the procedure 6 to 12 rounds.

In *Kriya* tradition, the *Chakras* are related to the five *Tattwas*: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Offering each *Tattwa* individually to the light of the "spiritual eye" gathering and intensifying in the region between the eyebrows is the highest action ever conceived to dispel the last shell of illusion.

The experience of the changing colors in the spiritual eye means to perceive the particular vibration and light frequency of each *Chakra*. By familiarizing with these frequencies leads you to the realization that all the universe exists in *Kutastha*.

⁹ "Ke-chari" is literally translated as "the state of those who fly in the sky, in the ether". A particular "space" is created in the region between the tip of the tongue and the point between the eyebrows and is perceived as a "vacuum", although it is not a physical void. By merging into this empty space, it is easier for a *kriyaban* to perceive the rhythms of each *Chakra* and distinguish them one from another.

If you persevere (refusing the scruple that this procedure doesn't come out with tangible effects) and give this technique a fair trial, you will experience a definite transformation of your state of consciousness. In whatever way you look at it, the contribution of this technique in removing the last internal obstacles blocking our efforts to enter *Sushumna* is exceptional.

In time it will be possible for you to mentally repeat "*Om Bhur*" 36 times holding your breath. This gives you the power to tune with earth-*Tattwa* experiencing the peculiar "vibration" of the *Muladhara Chakra*.

At the same time, by repeating the *Mantra* "*Om Bhuvah*" 36 times it will be possible to tune with water-*Tattwa* having its seat in the second *Chakra*.... then comes the turn of the fire-*Tattwa*...

Familiarity with the breathless state gives you the ability to stop at each *Chakra* (like a bee on a flower), bathing for a precise time in the *Tattwa* linked with that *Chakra*. The ideal time is what is required to do 36 repetitions of the related *Mantra*. Stay with the number 36 to resist the tendency to lose yourself in a state of bliss arising from each *Chakra*. The *Tattwa* related to a *Chakra* tends to entrap one's attention, resulting in an indefinite pause on a *Chakra* with nothing being accomplished. The 36 repetitions of the *Mantra* will help you to have full experience of each *Tattwa* but, at the same time, go beyond it. The meaning of the *Gayatri Kriya* is exactly this: tuning in with each *Tattwa*, one after the other, up and down along the spine.

CHAPTER 9

IMPORTANT TEACHINGS TO HELP THE PRACTICE OF THE HIGHER KRIYAS

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TRIBHANGAMURARI TEACHING

[I] HOW TO PREPARE THE ACTION OF THOKAR

[I.a] Variation of Omkar Pranayama

First part: with fragmented breath

Inhale as you have learned in *Omkar Pranayama*. The inhalation is fragmented into 6 parts. The syllables *Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba* are mentally placed in each *Chakra* location, while making a short pause in each ... When the inhalation is completed hold your breath and practice the following:

The chin bends **forward** towards the throat cavity; then resume the normal position of the head. Bend your head toward the **left** shoulder, without turning the face; then resume the normal position. Then the head bends **backwards**... then toward the **right** shoulder, without turning the face. To close the round, the chin bends **forward**, then resumes its normal position. Fragmented exhalation follows.... Repeat 6-12 times.

Second part: without controlling the breath

Focus on *Muladhara Chakra*. Repeat *Om Om Om Om Om Om* different times. Then focus on *Swadhisthana* and repeat *Na Na Na Na Na Na*.... many times... Then *Mo Mo Mo Mo Mo Mo* in *Manipura*, *Bha Bha Bha Bha Bha Bha*... in *Anahata*, *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga*.... in *Vishuddha*, *Ba Ba Ba Ba Ba Ba* ... in *Bindu*.

Now practice the five bows of the head but in a much more slow and conscious way.

The head bends **forward** towards the throat cavity: the divine Light flows down from above the head (seat of the Eternal Tranquility) into the occipital region of the brain (therefore in the part of your head that now is higher) then into the spine and into the body. After feeling this for about 10-20 seconds, resume the normal position.

Bend the head slightly toward the **left** shoulder, without turning the face. The previous experience of the divine Light infusion happens again. Divine Light flows down from above the head into the right part of the brain, then into the spine and into the body. Remain in this position for about 10-20 seconds, then resume the normal position. Now the head bends **backwards**: the same experience happens and divine Light flows down into the frontal part of the brain...

Bend your head toward the **right** shoulder, without turning the face. The same experience happens and divine Light flows down into the left part of the brain.... To close the round, the chin bends **forward**, towards the throat cavity: the same experience happens.... The head then resumes its normal position.

Now focus on *Bindu* and repeat: *Te Te Te Te Te Te*, then on *Vishuddha* and repeat *Va Va Va Va Va Va* and so on... until you repeat *Ya Ya Ya Ya Ya Ya* ... in *Muladhara*.

Repeat at least three times the whole process.

Well, what is the point, what is the difference with the canonical technique? Swami Hariharananda explained that after many repetitions of this procedure, the upper part of the brain will remain ideally in the space, separated from the physical body. He said that this procedure ends in "cracking the coconut." The coconut is the head, whose upper part is detached from the lower part.

You must actively cooperate to reach this result. You must induce, invite the divine energy in each part of the head. The spiritual Light will gradually pervade the upper part of the head.

Third part: Chakras radiating Light

In this practice you visualize each *Chakra* radiating Divine Light through its petals. Visualize the number of petals assigned by yogic tradition in counterclockwise direction.

Start by calmly focusing upon *Muladhara*. Feel that each of the four petals radiate white light. Visualize each petal while mentally chanting *Om*. Repeat some rounds: *Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, Om* Go ahead at least for about 40 seconds.

The same happens in *Swadhisthana* but utilize the second syllable of the Vasudeva Mantra (*Om Na Mo Bha*.....) Remember that now the petals are six. Therefore you focus upon *Swadhisthana*. Feel that each of the six petals radiate light. Upon each petal you mentally chant the syllable *Na*. Therefore go ahead for some rounds repeating: *Na Na Na Na Na Na* Go ahead at least for about 40 seconds.

The same you do in *Manipura* but utilize the third syllable of the *Vasudeva Mantra*. Remember that now the petals are ten. Repeat *Mo Mo Mo Mo Mo Mo*.... many times... Go ahead at least for about 40 seconds.

- *Bha Bha Bha*.... in Anahata... 12 petals
- *Ga Ga Ga*... in Vishuddha... 16 petals
- *Ba Ba Ba*... in Bindu... no petals, just repeat *Ba Ba Ba*...
- *Te Te Te*... in Medulla... 2 petals
- *Va Va Va*... in Vishuddha
- *Su Su Su*... in Anahata
- *De De De*... in Manipura
- *Va Va Va* ... in Swadhisthana
- *Ya Ya Ya*... in Muladhara

After this complete round, now visualize that each petal is in the crown. In this way, the spiritual Light will radiate from the upper part of the head.

The syllables *Om Om Om*... *Na Na Na* *Mo Mo Mo* *Bha Bha Bha*.... (each one repeated more or less the same number of times, at your discretion) are spiraled around the cranium, activating the perception of white Divine Light. Starting from *Bindu (Sikha point)*, make different counterclockwise tours. 6 to 12 rotations is a good choice. The good effects of this procedure are easily to be perceived and therefore this procedure is perceived as "heaven sent."

[I.b] Circulation of energy in the upper part of the brain

First of all, you learn to perceive a circular movement of energy around the center of the brain, the so-called *Cave of Brahma* (third ventricle of the brain.)

The breath is natural, not controlled. Practice *Kechari Mudra* to the best of your ability. Bend your head forward. Feel the energy present in the frontal region of your head and mentally vibrate **Bha** there. Without raising your chin to normal position, guide slowly your head in the position in which the head is bent toward the left shoulder – as if you try touching the left shoulder with your left ear. Feel the energy present in the left side of the brain (over your left ear) and mentally vibrate **Ga** there. From this position, guide slowly both your head and the flow of energy backwards in the occipital region of the brain. Mentally vibrate **Ba** there. Slowly guide your head in the position in which the head is bent toward the right shoulder – as if you try touching the right shoulder with the right ear. Mentally chant **Tee** on the right side of the brain (over your right ear.) Always feel the flow of energy moving to each position. Slowly return to initial position with the head bent forward. Mentally vibrate **Ba** there.

Now, slowly straighten your head and return with chin parallel to the ground while your attention moves toward the central part of your brain (the *Cave of Brahma*) under *Fontanelle*. Mentally vibrate **Su** there. This completes the first round. Repeat this practice 12 times, adding 12 breaths each month, until you reach 108 repetitions. At the end of each session, inhale deeply, focus all your attention in *Fontanelle* and listen to the internal sound of *Om*.

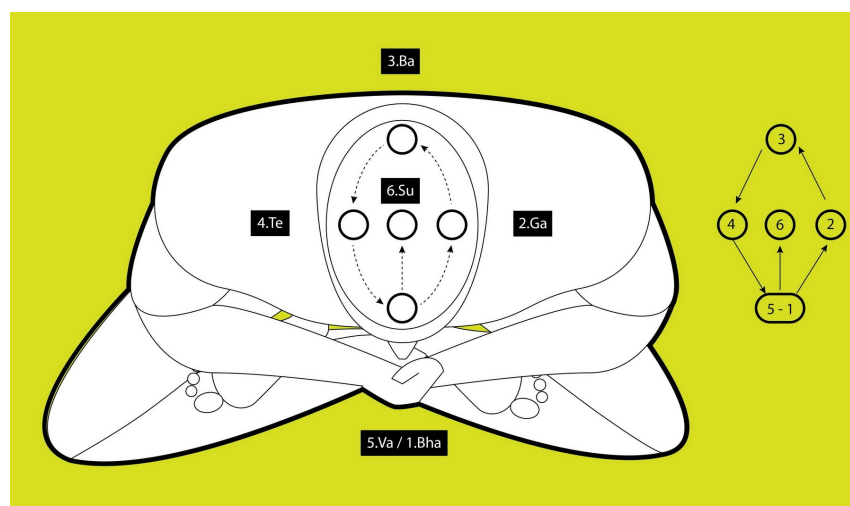


Figure 12. Circulation of calm Prana in the upper part of the brain

This rotation of energy is, by some teachers, called *Thokar Kriya*. The reason is that during this practice the energy moves *with pressure* through the brain substance. Reflect: *Thokar* has not the unique meaning of "blow" but also that of "touching with pressure." This internal pressure, this friction (which will reach its peak during the next technique), creates the Divine Light manifestation. The experience of this Light comes coupled with that of the *Omkar* internal Sound.

After having completed the required number of rotations, it is not difficult to move to this last part in which the energetic movement happens in immobility.

Repeat mentally, without hurry and without moving your head, the syllables *Bha, Ga, Ba, Te, Ba, Su* trying to perceive the same energetic movement you have previously induced. A ball of Light is turning inside your brain. After each round, this Light comes internally from the point between the eyebrows into the cave of *Brahma*. The pituitary and the pineal gland are enlivened and stimulated. Practice about 36 rounds during each *Kriya* routine.

Then deepen your concentration in the "Cave of Brahma." This is the seat of resonance with the ocean of cosmic *Om* vibration. When the soul rests here without thoughts, experiencing the Divinity of creation through *Om*, then *Kundalini* starts her journey upwards.

Important remark

If this practice makes you feel unfocused or spacey – as if you were under the influence of drugs, experiencing a state of too much euphoria – then it is wise to complete the practice by focusing upon the *Chakras*, namely practicing the *mental Pranayama*.

[III] HOW TO COMPLETE THE ACTION OF THOKAR

To complete the action of *Thokar* you can utilize some techniques of classic *Hatha Yoga*.

Bhastrika Pranayama

The classic technique of *Bhastrika Pranayama* can be utilized during the long sessions to guide the *Prana*, which tends to be dispersed in the body, into the dorsal region, around the fourth *Chakra*.

You know that *Bhastrika* consists in forced rapid deep breathing, done with the diaphragm only. After a moderate number of breaths, a peaceful *Kumbhaka* follows. During each phase, the focus is always on the heart *Chakra*.

You breath through the nose, about one complete breath per second, being aware of what is happening in the spine. You can begin with six repetitions. By focusing behind the heart *Chakra*, you feel the energy oscillating approximately 3 centimeters below and above it. It is like cleaning vigorously the area behind this *Chakra*. You will feel warm in that region. Then you inhale deeply, hold your breath and feel the warm sensation increasing there. Exhale intensifying that sensation. Increase gradually the repetitions of this technique.

Nabhi Kundalini

Nabhi Kundalini is a breathing process that intensifies the *Samana* current in the navel region and then guides it to cross the heart *Chakra*. The action of *Thokar* is thus ideally completed.

The *Mantra* utilized in this practice is *Bha-Ga-Ba-Te-Ba-Su*, the central part of the *Mantra* utilized in *Second Kriya* ("*Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba Te Ba Su De Va Ya*"). This *Mantra* resonates as "*Bhagavan Tat Tvam Asi*" whose meaning is: "The Divine you have worshiped is your higher Self. You are that Divine Being!"

Bha, Ga and *Ba* are mentally chanted following air and *Prana* coming down from *Kutastha* into *Manipura*; *Te, Va* and *Su* are mentally chanted following air and *Prana* rising up from *Manipura* to the head.

Inhale in three portions. Through the first portion of inhalation, draw breath and energy from the point between the eyebrows into *Medulla* where you vibrate the syllable *Bha*. Through the second portion of inhalation, draw breath and energy from *Medulla* into the cervical *Chakra* where you vibrate the syllable *Ga*. Through the third portion of inhalation, draw breath and energy from the cervical *Chakra* into heart *Chakra* where you vibrate the syllable *Ba*.

Abiding by the principles of *Reversed Breathing*, during each part of the inhalation continuously contract the abdomen. Now make a short pause (3-6 seconds, holding your breath) intensifying the pressure upon the navel-third *Chakra* region (*Dantian*.)¹⁰

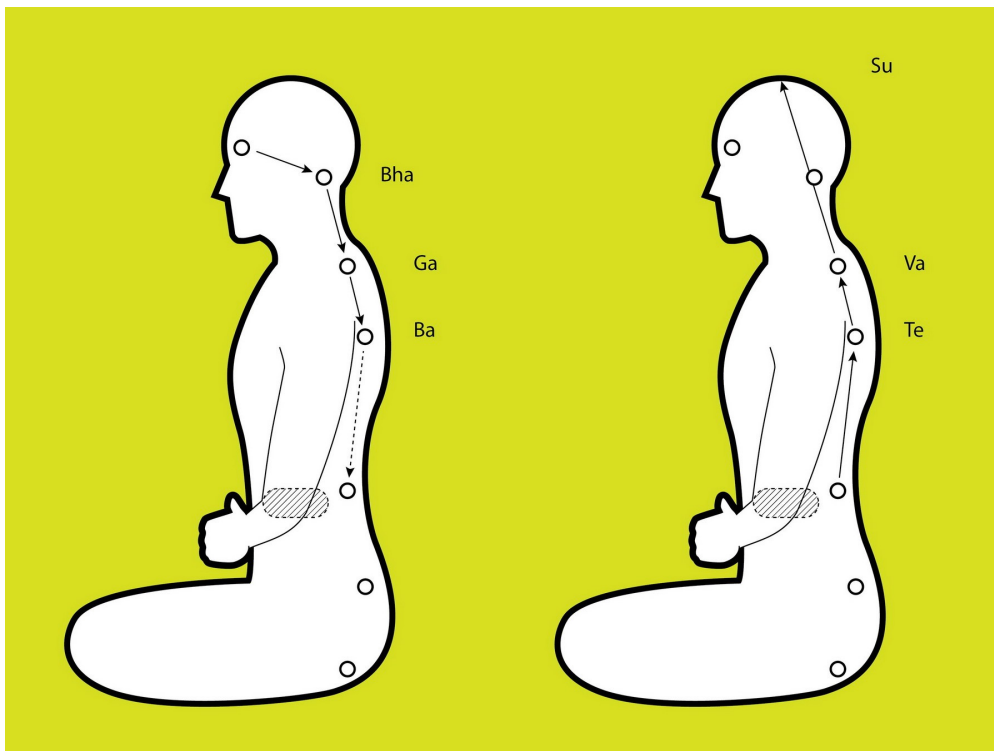


Figure 13. Nabhi Kundalini

After the pause, exhale in three portions. During the first portion of exhalation,

¹⁰ The *Dantian* can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter. Its center is located about one and one-half inches below the belly button and about two and one-half inches inside.

feel the energy from the *Dantian* rising into the heart *Chakra* where you vibrate the syllable *Tee*. During the second portion of the exhalation feel the warm energy rising from the heart *Chakra* into the cervical *Chakra* where you vibrate the syllable *Va*. Through the last portion of the exhalation guide the energy from the cervical *Chakra* into the sixth *Chakra* vibrating the syllable *Su*. Repeat this practice 12 times.

After some weeks of practice, intensify the procedure.

At the end of inhalation, make a longer pause, adding *Uddiyana Bandha*, *Jalandhara Bandha* and *Mula Bandha*. The chest is relaxed, the pressure is upon the navel-*Manipura* region (*Dantian*.) Push down gently with your diaphragm in order to firmly compress the energy brought down from above.

The air energy is completely locked in, compressed both from above and below. Go ahead holding your breath for at least 12 mental counts – increasing with time as long as it is comfortable. Feel warmth increasing and brimming over into the surrounding abdominal region.

During exhalation (in three portions putting *Tee*, *Ba* and *Su* in the related centers, coming up with your chin) feel the pressure of *Prana* crossing the heart *Chakra*.

After ten breaths you will feel that *Anahata Chakra* is warm, pervaded by the internal flame. After about another ten breaths it is the turn of *Vishuddha Chakra* to become warm. After another ten breaths, the "fire" reaches the upper part of your head. Reach this result with gradual increments of repetitions. You can start with 36 repetitions, then there is an increase of 12 each two weeks, until you reach 200 repetitions. This procedure means a tremendous step forward in your spiritual path.

Note

If in your *Kriya* routine you practice *Thokar*, this *Nabhi Kundalini* should come after *Thokar*. Between the two (*Thokar* and *Nabhi Kundalini*) you can have a short practice of *Kapalabhati Pranayama*:

Perform inhalation and exhalation rapidly; exhalation should be done by contracting the abdominal muscles forcibly and quickly, resulting in a backward push. Exhalation and inhalation alternate with equal lengths and occur about two times per second. The navel acts as a pump and it's almost like using the abdomen as bellows. The most important point to remember is that inhalation is passive: as soon as the air is thrown out, the abdominal muscles are relaxed and inhalation comes automatically. The sound slightly resembles blowing one's empty nose. During each expulsion, *Prana* is sent to the navel. After 15-20 of these short exhalations, there is a pause and the breath resumes its normal rhythm. Then practice two more cycles of 15-20 short breaths.

[III] VARIATIONS OF THOKAR

[III.a] Two variations of Thokar (elementary form)

Sweet variation

Consider the *Elementary form of Thokar*. Start with your chin parallel to the ground. After inhaling with *Om* in *Muladhara*, *Na* in the second *Chakra*, *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu*.

The chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity: a certain internal pressure is felt on frontal part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and then bends slightly toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. The same experience happens: a certain internal pressure is felt on the left part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and tilts backwards: the same experience happens and pressure is felt on the back of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and bends slightly toward the right shoulder, without turning the face: the pressure is felt on the right part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position, then the chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity... pressure is felt on the frontal part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position.

During these five bends, holding the breath, no *Mantra* is needed. Then the exhalation guides the awareness through the *Chakras* to *Muladhara*. The syllable *Tee* is vibrated in *Medulla*, *Va* in the fifth *Chakra*.... and so on....*Ya* is vibrated in *Muladhara*.

The time involved for this *Thokar* depends on the individual; usually it is approximately 20-25 seconds, but it can be longer. The procedure is repeated at least 12 times. It should be noted that the different pressures on the heart *Chakra* are more similar to a supply of energy flowing down in a tranquil way from a region above the head than the typical tapping of the *Thokar*.

Strong Variation

Consider the *Elementary form of Thokar*. Let us suppose you are at the end of inhalation, with chin parallel to the ground. Bend your head forward and touch your chin to your chest. Hold your breath. From this position, move your head to the left turning your face to the left and raising your chin until it is over the left shoulder and parallel to the floor. Then start a slow rotation of your head back in counterclockwise direction. When your head is centered between the shoulders and your chin is up as much as possible (and the muscles at the back of your neck are contracted) chant *Te* inside the heart *Chakra*. Release the contraction and continue the counterclockwise rotation of your head so that your right ear moves toward the right shoulder (this means that you don't turn your face to the right.) Do not make a pause there but continue the circle until your chin is again centered, touching your chest. Without pausing there, continue the motion by

moving your head to the left, turning your face to the left and raising your chin until it is over the left shoulder. At that point, slightly raise your chin, contract the cervical muscles and chant *Va* inside the heart *Chakra*. Release the contraction and continue the rotation, but this time when you reach the midpoint between the shoulders (chin is not forcefully up like in the previous round), gently tilt the head forward, bring the chin to the chest, and chant *Su* in the heart *Chakra*. Now raise your chin until it is again parallel to the floor and start the exhalation. Chant *De* at *Manipura*, *Va* at *Swadhisthana*, and *Ya* at *Muladhara*.

Remark

The above description of the motion of the head is divided into parts. But the complete movement should be smooth and without breaks.

[III.b] Thokar upon the first four Chakras

Simple procedure

Start by practicing the *Advanced form of Thokar*, thus acting upon the heart *Chakra* but only 12 times. Then exhale (with *De*, *Va*, *Ya*).

Now repeat the procedure of the *Advanced form of Thokar* but each time you lower your chin, you will vibrate the syllable *Su* in a different *Chakra*, in this order: third *Chakra*, second, first, first again, second, third, fourth. As you direct your stroke toward a *Chakra*, the muscles near that *Chakra* can be slightly contracted, just to help the process.

At the end of these 7 repetitions of *Te Va Su*, exhale and focus on the irradiation that departs from the third *Chakra* when you chant *De*, from the second *Chakra* when you chant *Va*, from the first *Chakra* when you chant *Ya*.

You can repeat this variation of *Thokar* for a reasonable number of times. At the end of it, focus on the energy that rises like waves of a tide from *Muladhara* growing higher and higher, reaching a *Chakra*, then again falling down and moving from the base of the spine to a higher center and so on, until you feel the energy in the heart *Chakra* and in the head.

Remark

This procedure requires great care because it affects the person's behavior during daily life. You could excessively react to trivial impediments and irrational behavior. In short, some sharp personality traits of yours might surface with a force that in some cases could be "destructive." Obviously, they do not appear out of nothing, they are not caused by the technique – they express what you had held within you for a long time.

Stronger procedure

An experienced *kriyaban* practices *Thokar* directing the stroke repeatedly upon a *Chakra* UNTIL there is a definite result: I mean experiencing the *Tattwa* related to that *Chakra*. A good order is to practice upon heart *Chakra*, then third, second, first, again second, third and fourth. The *Samadhi* state is often experienced at the end of the practice provided that the *kriyaban* is able to regain complete

mental and physical immobility.

Often the effects of this practice are difficult to metabolize. The process tries to the limit your psychological soundness (for this reason it is not commonly taught.) It is not surprising that some *kriyabans* reach the conclusion that this procedure generates effects which are essentially negative. They have also reported to feel drained of any devotion, motivation and joy. Some hint at the "dark night of the soul" described by mystics. This is surely an exaggeration. In my opinion the best solution is to conclude the routine by resuming the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*, second part, for a great number, until the breath seems to disappear. Concluding with *Navi Kriya*, *Maha Mudra* and *Yoni Mudra* is also advisable.]

[IV] VARIATION OF FOURTH KRIYA

[IV.a] Opening the Muladhara knot

The full meaning of *Kechari* – roaming in the space – is fully realized now. Therefore practice *Kechari Mudra* to the best of your ability. Focus on the 1st *Chakra*. Apply the teaching of the *reversed breathing*: inhale deeply and ideally raise the *Muladhara Chakra* in the central part of the brain, under *Sahasrara*, over *Ajna Chakra*. Visualize it as a disk large as the circulation of energy that you have previously created in the upper part of your head. Feel that the air is squeezed from the abdomen and stored in the upper part of the lungs. Hold your breath and start to put into motion the rotation of the energy in the head just as you have learned to do previously. The rotation of the energy happens in the head but, at the same time, it happens also around the real location of the *Muladhara Chakra* at the base of the spine. Hence, two rotations of energy happen at the same time: it seems difficult but it will become natural. [Remember also that at the end of each circle, the flow of energy is directed inside toward its center.] This practice induces the experience of the *Omkar* sound. You will focus only upon it and won't need *Mantra* chanting.

The ideal number of rotations associated with each *Chakra* is 36 but a beginner is contented with a smaller number. Usually the need to breathe will disappear. Exhale when you need to exhale and guide the *Muladhara Chakra* back to its location at the base of the spine.

Inhale raising the second *Chakra* and repeat the procedure. Repeat the procedure for each *Chakra* up to *Ajna*. Repeat it again for *Ajna* and then for all the other *Chakras* down to *Muladhara*. The practice ends by breathing freely, putting all the attention in the *Fontanelle*. Peace, internal joy, breathless state, listening to internal sounds, perceiving the spiritual Light... this is what you will experience. Your practice of *Kriya* will become a love story with Beauty itself. Be sure, be confident: after a certain period of time, a remarkable experience of

Kundalini awakening will happen. It will overcome you when you rest in the supine position. Without experiencing any start of surprise, you will find yourself ferried from a sweet dream to an authentic heaven; you will return to daily life with tears in your eyes – tears born of endless devotion.

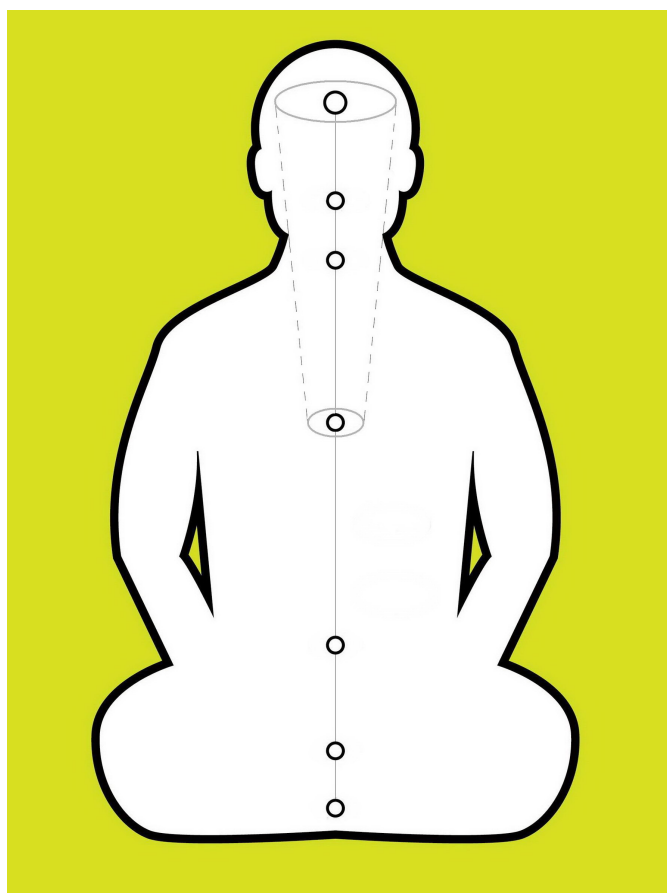


Figure 14. Procedure to open the Muladhara knot. The figure shows the moment in which the Fourth Chakra is lifted. You see the circulation of energy in the upper part of the head and, at the same time, around the heart Chakra

When you master this procedure – when effortless *Kumbhaka* stabilizes and you are able to experience 36 (complete) rotations of *Prana* in your brain for each *Chakra*, namely 432 rotations of energy during 12 *Kumbhaka* – then you will perceive the entire universe filled with the effulgence of Divine Light.

Remark

It is perfectly natural to approach this practice by slightly rotating your head (and also by mentally chanting the six syllables of the *Mantra*.) Although this is not required, this might be useful for beginners. If this happens, try to move gradually toward physical immobility and toward listening to actual *Omkar* Sound.

The effect is that during the day, a state of never before experienced clarity of mind will surprise you. The foundation of your consciousness will be perceived as a continuous joy, having no reason whatsoever.

[IV.b] Dhyana on the Divine Light

Through this practice a *kriyaban* has full experience of Divine Light. The state of TAT TVAM ASI manifests: Thou and I are One, and always have been One. During this time of divine oneness, one is devoid of body consciousness and unaware of one's surroundings. To ordinary people it is a death-like state, but for an advanced practitioner it is divine ecstasy.

The *8th Chakra* is the door that puts you in contact with your astral body. Its opening involves the cleansing of what holds you to the cycle of death and rebirth, namely worn-out psychological patterns. It is the center of spiritual compassion and spiritual selflessness. A *kriyaban* who realizes the essence of this *Chakra* becomes completely selfless and lives with compassion rather than judgment.

Some *Kriya* or *Kundalini Yoga* teachers explain that this *Chakra* is located 5-6 cm. over Fontanelle. Other locations are given: 8 cm., 30 cm., 60 cm. We must trust our perception. Let us sweetly swing our trunk and head from side to side with the focus of attention over our head until we feel this *Chakra*. That is the right location!

[I] In the breathless state focus on the 8th Chakra

If at the present moment you have not obtained the breathless state, try the following procedure. Inhale, slowly drawing *Prana* from *Muladhara* to the *8th Chakra*, 30 centimeters above the *Fontanelle*. During this procedure, don't focus on any other *Chakra* in the spine. Move up feeling distinctly that the energy crosses the *Fontanelle* and reaches the *8th Chakra*. Concentrate there and enjoy the equilibrium state between inhalation and exhalation. Exhale sweetly, letting *Prana* descend from the *8th Chakra* to *Muladhara*. Feel distinctly that the energy, coming down, crosses the *Fontanelle*. In *Muladhara*, concentrate on the equilibrium state between exhalation and inhalation. When you feel the need to inhale repeat the procedure. Repeat again and again until the state of your consciousness is totally changed and your breath is very subtle, almost non-existent.

Inhale sweetly from *Muladhara* to the *8th Chakra*, raising breath and *Prana*. Concentrate on the equilibrium state between inhalation and exhalation. Exhale sweetly from the *8th Chakra* down the spine, *but do not come down intentionally to the Muladhara Chakra*. You will see that the exhaling current reaches spontaneously a certain point in the spine. This point is not necessarily one of the different *Chakras*. Wherever this point is, it is fundamental to feel it clearly

inside the spine. This point *becomes the starting point of the next inhalation*. Inhale then from this new starting point into the *8th Chakra*. The current comes up through the spine: now the length of the path is obviously shorter. Concentrate on the equilibrium state between inhalation and exhalation. Exhale sweetly down the spine: probably the exhaling current makes a shorter path, shorter than the previous. This is the new starting point. Inhale from this new position upwards...

By repeating this procedure, you will reach a particular mental and physical condition in which you will remain breathless, *with total focus on the 8th Chakra*. If, after a long pause, the breath appears again, repeat the process from the beginning (inhaling from *Muladhara*). Go ahead patiently, unperturbed. The point is to make the breath cease, entering a dimension where it is no longer necessary.

[II] *Circulation of Light around the 8th Chakra*

Rotate your awareness around the *8th Chakra*. Perceive a ball of Light that makes a circulation around your *8th Chakra* and then touches the center of this *Chakra*. Repeat many times this perception without any mental chanting of *Mantra*. During the next days increase the number of rotations (108 is a reasonable goal.)

[III] *Guide the Light toward the Cerebellum*

Let the ball of Light do not come inward after tracing one circle but come down, piercing the Fontanelle at an angle. While the ray is coming down raise your chin and feel the ray of Light reaching your Cerebellum after piercing the Fontanelle. Remain immobile for a few seconds, wholly immersed in the intensity of the dazzling white Light shining from there to the whole brain. Lower your chin without losing the concentration upon the Light. Rest a moment there, and then repeat the procedure. Gradually during the next days repeat the experience more and more times (108 is a reasonable goal.) The Divine Light becomes stable at the Cerebellum.

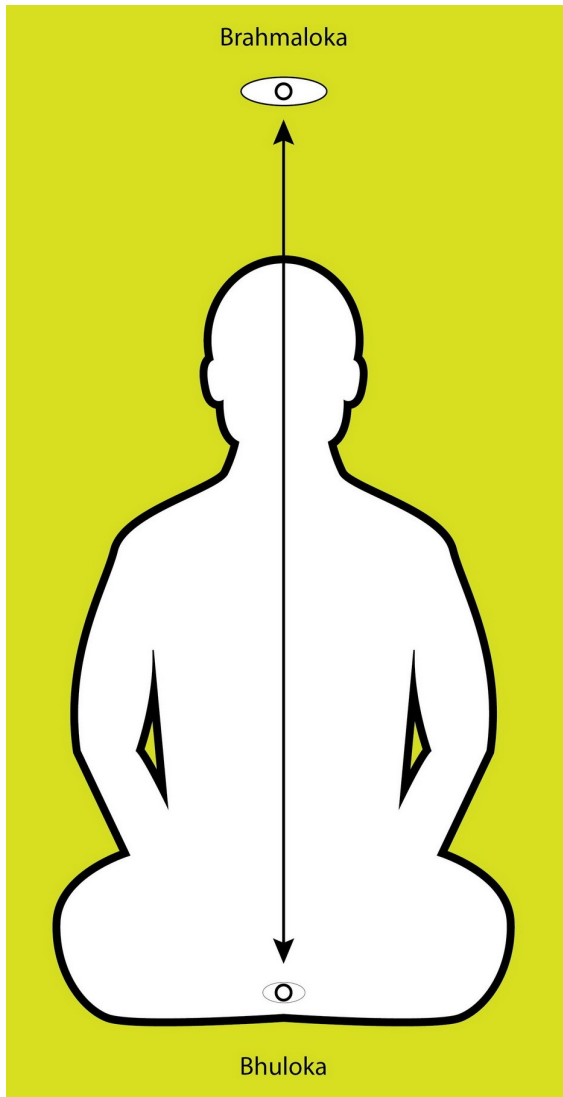


Figure 15. The breath moves between Bhuloka and BrahmaloKa and then dissolves

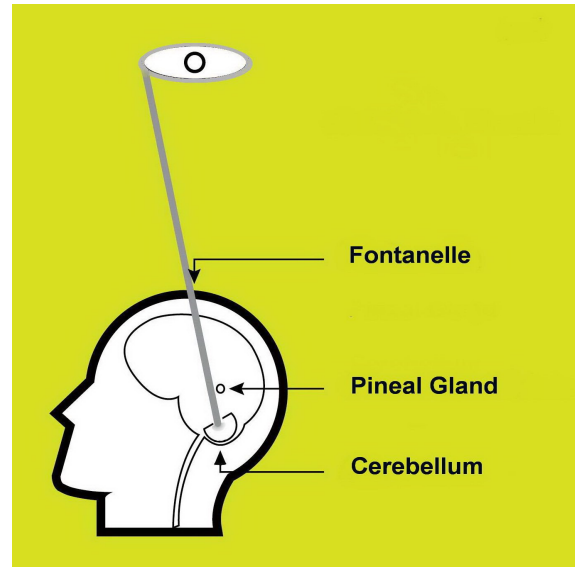


Figure 16. The Light moves from the 8th Chakra to Cerebellum

[IV] Concentration on the Pineal gland

Perceiving constantly the Divine Light in Cerebellum is a very high state, but you must learn how to go beyond it. Our goal is to learn to locate your Pineal Gland and enter it.

When you are fully immersed in the experience of Light, very very slowly raise your chin (only a few millimeters) and your inner gaze to a 60° angle. Intuitively condense all the Light and direct it toward your Pineal Gland. The *Pineal Gland* is located above and behind the *Ajna Chakra* – white in color. Intuitively direct all the Light toward this point.

The only information you need is that this point is very near the Cerebellum, but slightly forward and above it, along a line forming a 60° angle (with the pavement.)

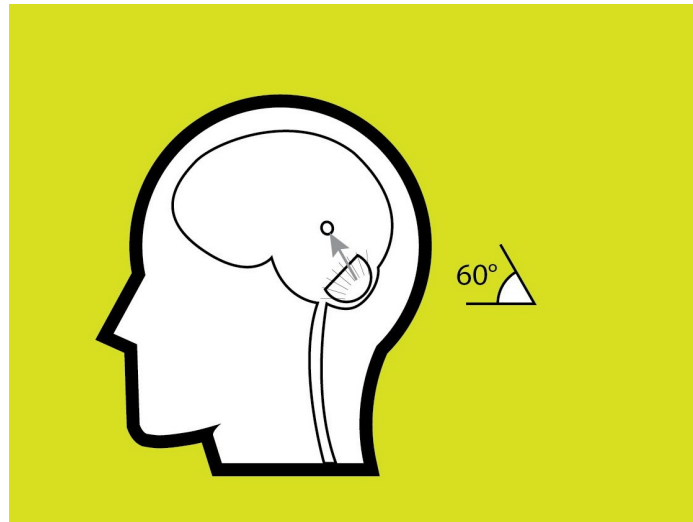


Figure 17. The Light moves from the Cerebellum to the Pineal gland

Repeat and repeat your attempt until you succeed in entering the Pineal Gland. Here the union with the Divine takes place. It can take months or even years to complete successfully this procedure.

After the Omkar sound ceases to exist
the Effulgent Form appears.
Nothing exists except the Sun of the Soul.
I, Shama Churn, am that Sun.
*Lahiri Mahasaya*¹¹

¹¹ Lahiri Mahasaya is Shama Churn – Shyama Charan. This sentence is contained in Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries. Many sentences from the diaries are to be found in the book *Purana Purusha* by Dr. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee

[V] VARIATIONS OF MICRO THOKAR

[V.a] Micro Thokar with Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su

The rotation of the energy previously experienced in the higher part of the brain, is now experienced in smaller dimensions in each *Chakra*.

Visualize each *Chakra* as a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately one inch. Start with *Muladhara Chakra*. Visualize the syllables of the Mantra “*Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su*” inside it. Start from the frontal part of the *Chakra* where you place *Bha*, then go to its left where you place *Ga*, then back where you place *Ba*, right where you place *Te*, front again where you place *Va* and finally focus on the center of the *Chakra* where you place *Su*.

With great calmness and no hurry at all, repeat two more times this experience. Then go to the second *Chakra* where you have the same experience of rotation of energy three times. The same happens in Chakra 3, then 4 , then 5 and in the upper part of the brain.

Then come down and have the same experience in *Medulla*, cervical *Chakra* and finally heart *Chakra*. Here you remain, repeating many, many times the experience of rotating energy.

You can also become receptive to the heart pulse. Let your *Mantra* resonate harmoniously with the beating of the heart.

Realize that what you are perceiving happens not only in each *Chakra* but, at the same time, in *Kutastha* – the spiritual eye.

[V.b] Utilization of Micro Thokar to stimulate particular centers in the brain

Inhale from *Muladhara* into the **Medulla**. Hold your breath. Oscillate slowly your head left – right – return to center, keeping the focus of concentration in *Medulla*. Mentally chant *Te* when you move to the left, *Va* when you move to the right, *Su* when you return to the center. Repeat three times, always holding your breath. A calm exhalation follows.

Now inhale from the second *Chakra* into the **Cerebellum**. Hold your breath. Repeat three times the same oscillations of the head with *Te*, *Va*, *Su*, focusing all your attention on the Cerebellum. Exhale and come down to the third *Chakra* location.

Inhale from the third *Chakra* into the **Pons Varolii** (to perceive it, come from the cerebellum toward the center of the head, over *Medulla* – a few centimeters forward). Hold your breath. Repeat the procedure with *Te*, *Va*, *Su* three times, focusing all your attention on this center. Exhale and come down in the fourth *Chakra*.

Inhale from the fourth *Chakra* into the **Thalamus**. To perceive it, slightly swing your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from the point between the eyebrows backwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the *fontanelle*. The Thalamus is the point of intersection of the two lines. When you have it, repeat three times at that point the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale and come down in the fifth *Chakra*.

Inhale from the fifth *Chakra* into a point **midway between Thalamus and Fontanelle**. To perceive it, swing slightly your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from *Bindu (Sikha point)* forwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the *fontanelle*. This center is the point of intersection of the two lines. Repeat three times in that point the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale and come down in *Medulla*.

Inhale from *Medulla* into **Fontanelle**. Repeat three times in that point the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale remaining in *Fontanelle*.

Inhale into *Fontanelle*, exhale from *Fontanelle* into the point midway between Thalamus and Fontanelle.

Inhale into *Fontanelle*, exhale from *Fontanelle* into the Thalamus.

Inhale into *Fontanelle*, exhale from *Fontanelle* into the Pons Varolii

Inhale into *Fontanelle*, exhale from *Fontanelle* into the Cerebellum.

Inhale into *Fontanelle*, exhale from *Fontanelle* into the Medulla.

Remain with your awareness in the Medulla or practice the following procedure devoted to stimulate the crown of the head.

Let us consider the technique of *Omkar Pranayama*. We have seen that at the end of inhalation there is a pause where the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn along the crown of the head. This rotation happens inside the brain, under the cranial bone. One starts the round from the *Sikha* point in the occipital region and comes back to it.

The section of the brain containing the *Sikha* point (*Bindu*) and extending horizontally to the upper part of the frontal region of the brain is very important in the practice of the *Higher Kriyas*. Emphasis is given to experience the energy through the brain substance – this movement happens with a particular *internal pressure*. Well, now we are going to practice the *Micro Thokar* along the same path!

Inhale from *Muladhara* into the occipital region of the brain (*Bindu*.) Focus in this part of the brain, hold your breath and go through the experience of the Micro movement 3 times (by repeating *Te Ba Su* 3 times.) Exhale calmly.

Inhale from the second *Chakra* into the adjacent part, to the right of *Bindu*. Focus in this part of the brain, hold your breath and go through the experience of the Micro movement 3 times (by repeating *Te Ba Su* 3 times.) Exhale calmly.

Inhale from the third *Chakra* into the part of the crown over your right ear. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from the fourth *Chakra* into the part of the crown adjacent to the previous part along the counterclockwise

direction of our movement. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from the fifth *Chakra* into the part of the crown over the eyebrows point. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from *Medulla* into the central part of your brain under *Fontanelle*. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Repeat this last action of inhaling from *Medulla*... Inhale from the fifth *Chakra* into the part of the crown over the eyebrows point. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath...

Now we move our awareness into the left part of the brain in order to complete the round and return to the occipital region of the brain (*Bindu*.) Inhale from the fourth *Chakra* into the part of the crown adjacent to the previous part along the counterclockwise direction of our movement. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from the third *Chakra* into the part of the crown over your left ear. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from the second *Chakra* into the adjacent part. ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath... Inhale from *Muladhara* into the occipital region of the brain (*Bindu*.) ... 3 *Micro Thokar* holding your breath...

This is one round. After two or three rounds, a sudden bliss manifests and one is no longer able to mentally chant anything. The procedure ends in ecstatic absorption.

Remark

The described procedures create a very strong effect. In a merciless way you become aware of the ego's subtle tricks that drive human actions. The reason for many wrong decisions appears with a definitive clarity, free of all covering veils. The ego is a very complicated mental structure: it is not possible to destroy it, but it can be made transparent. There is a price to pay: there might appear (hours after the practice) inexplicable waves of fear, the sensation of not knowing where you are and where you are directed to. This is a natural reaction coming from some subtle layers of the brain you have touched.

[V.c] Utilization of Micro Thokar to enter the breathless state

After some Kriya breaths, focus your attention on the *Muladhara Chakra*. Vibrate (think with emphasis) "*Te Va Su*" in *Muladhara*. Do it once. The *Micro Thokar* works in a formidable way to bring your consciousness inside *Sushumna*, calming significantly your breath. Feel the oscillatory movement created by "*Te Va Su*" inside *Muladhara*. When you think to "*Su*" in the center of the *Chakra* you should feel an ecstatic feeling.

Now, when it comes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale only what is necessary, pause an instant and concentrate on the second *Chakra*. Hold the breath gently and vibrate "*Te Va Su*" in the second *Chakra*. Exhale when you feel natural to exhale, concentrate on *Muladhara*, vibrate "*Te Va Su*" there. When it becomes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale only what is necessary, pause an instant and concentrate on the third *Chakra*. Hold the breath gently and vibrate "*Te Va Su*" in the third *Chakra*. Exhale when you feel like exhaling, concentrate on *Muladhara* and vibrate "*Te Va Su*" there.

Go on like that, repeating the procedure between *Muladhara* and the fourth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* and fifth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* – *Medulla*; *Muladhara* – fifth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* – fourth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* – third *Chakra*; *Muladhara* – second *Chakra*. As you see, one cycle is made of 9 short breaths. Repeat more than one cycle, increasing your concentration until your breath is almost nonexistent. Go ahead until you realize that your body is sustained by internal energy. Go ahead not only feeling the *Chakras* but also the whole body. One day your breath will stop completely: it will be like a miracle.

"No me pidáis que lo explique. Tengo el fuego en las manos"
(*Garcia Lorca*)

TRIBHANGAMURARI TEACHING

This variation of *Thokar* is so important that deserves a special analysis. It would be most correct to say that this is not even a variation of the procedure of *Thokar* but is a completely different teaching. [This is the essence of the Dynastic lineage school.]

Actually it is taught in three separate sessions: between the first and the second and between the second and the third, there is usually one year of lapse. When you practice the procedure of the second session you practice the procedure learned in the first session plus some new detail that makes the whole thing more intense. The same happens when you practice the last stage. The initial practice has grown into a powerful instrument.

Through this procedure, *Kundalini* is invited to rise through *Sushumna*. In the beginning, only a minimum of *Prana* is able to enter the *Sushumna* and move upward – this is due to mental restlessness. But sooner or later, *Kundalini* enters the spine and comes up to the head. This technique helps greatly this achievement. During each round, coming down from head to *Muladhara* following the three-curved path *Tribhangamurari*, three main knots (*Grantis*: tongue/*Medulla*, heart, and coccyx) are cut. ¹²

Amantrak

Amantrak means "without the use of a *Mantra*." Practice the following technique after the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* and of *Navi Kriya*. Your tongue is stable in *Kechari Mudra* or at least *baby Kechari*. It is supposed you practice with a very calm breath which may disappear in certain moments of internalization toward which the technique naturally leads. At the end of this practice, remain with the awareness centered in the light of *Kutastha*.

After a deep breath, forget it wholly. Very slowly raise *Prana* and awareness through the spinal channel, from *Muladhara* to the *Sikha* point (*Bindu*) – half a

¹² Tri-bhanga-murari = three-bend-form

minute is required. Do not pause in any *Chakra*. Then let *Prana* and awareness come slowly downwards along the *Tribhangamurari* path and reach *Muladhara*. Another half minute is required.

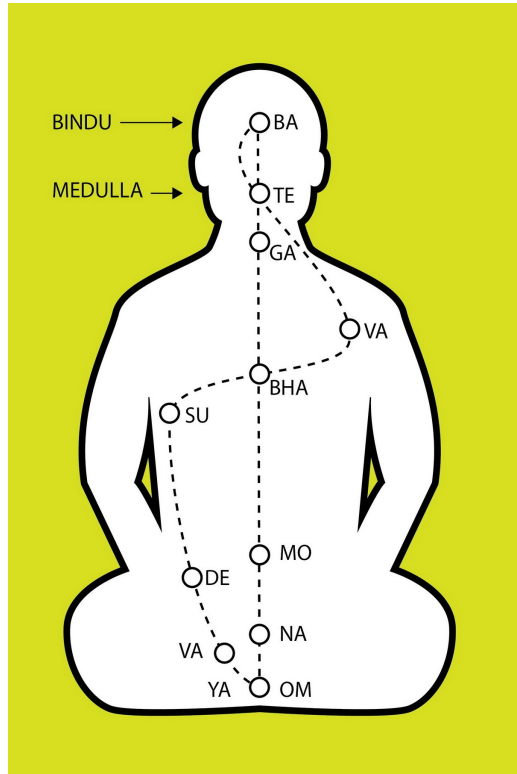


Figure 18. Tribhangamurari path as seen from the back

The *Tribhangamurari* path starts from *Bindu*, bends to the left, descends into the seat of *Medulla*, crosses it, and continues toward the right side of the body. Once a particular point in the back (5-6 centimeters above the right nipple) is reached, it curves and moves leftwards to cross the heart knot. After reaching a point in the back that is 5-6 centimeters under the left nipple, it changes its direction again and points toward *Muladhara*, the seat of the last knot. One round of *Amantrak* lasts one minute. If you experience it in a shorter time, let us say 45/50 seconds, it does not mean the procedure was executed too quickly. However, resolve to reach the exact timing.

For two weeks, repeat this technique 25 times, once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times once a day; then for another two weeks 75 times and so on up to 200 times each day for two weeks. Only at this point you are supposed to practice the following instruction.

Samantrak

Samantrak means "with the use of a *Mantra*." The perception of the *Tribhangamurari* current is intensified by mentally chanting the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*. *Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga*, are vibrated into the first five *Chakras*, *Ba* in *Bindu*. *Tee* is chanted in a particular way in *Medulla*: *Tee* (with prolonged eee ...) is a long sound whose reverberation touches the point between the eyebrows. The syllables *Va, Su, De, Va* are put in the four new centers outside the spine; *Ya* is vibrated in *Muladhara*.

These four new centers are four "vortexes" inside the main flow of the current – they are not a new set of *Chakras*. Each syllable when vibrated is like a mental *Thokar* (hit): since the technique is performed slowly, there is plenty of time to make this stimulation very effective.

We have now described one round of *Samantrak*, which lasts one minute. If you realize it is shorter, let us say 45/50 seconds, again, it does not mean the procedure has been done too quickly. However, make a resolution to reach the exact timing.

For two weeks repeat this technique 25 times, once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times, once a day; then for another two weeks 75 times and so on up to 200 times each day for two weeks. Then apply the following final instruction.

Tribhangamurari Thokar

Forget the breath. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed on the navel area so as to push the abdominal region upward, thus creating a physical pressure on the first three *Chakras*. Starting with the chin on the chest, move the energy and awareness very slowly along the spinal column from *Muladhara* to *Bindu*. Your chin comes slowly up following the inner movement. "Touch" internally each *Chakra* with the syllables of the *Mantra* (*Om* is placed in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second ...). When energy and awareness are at *Bindu*, the chin is parallel to the ground.

Now the descent of the energy begins. The movement of the head follows millimeter by millimeter its downward energetic flow along the *Tribhangamurari* path, from *Bindu* to *Muladhara*, crossing the three knots and touching the four new centers outside the spine. All this happens in a fluid way and within 30 seconds or less. The following description of the movements of the head may seem complicated at first but with a minimum of patience, the right movement of the head will be learned: you need only to understand that it is conceived as a logical and effective way of intensifying a particular snakelike downward flow of the energy. Let us now begin to describe the movements of the head.

Without turning the face, bend your head sideways a couple of centimeters to the left. Raise the chin as much as possible (contract the neck's back muscles) and return to the middle. Realize how this simple movement accompanies perfectly the descent of energy from *Bindu* to *Medulla* along the first curve of the *Tribhangamurari* path. Remain only an instant in this position, with the chin raised and vibrate the syllable *Tee* in the *Medulla*. Perceive how this vibration reaches the point between the eyebrows.

From this position, slowly turn the face to the right and as far as possible. Only the face moves, not the torso. During this SLOW movement (do not be influenced by the dynamics of the technique of traditional *Thokar* learned in chapter 7), the inner flow of energy moves from *Medulla* to the eighth center.

Here the first of five psycho-physical blows happens: the chin touches the right shoulder for an instant and the syllable *Va* is vibrated in the eighth center. The shoulder also makes a small upward motion to make contact with the chin easier. But be careful: if you feel you're forcing it, STOP! Those who are not able to have this contact with the right shoulder, should content themselves with coming as close to the shoulder as possible and stimulate the eighth center with sheer mental strength.

Then the face turns very slowly to the left, accompanying, millimeter by millimeter, the internal flow of energy from the eighth to the ninth center, and crossing the fourth *Chakra*. If possible, place the chin over the left shoulder. The second blow takes place when the syllable *Su* is vibrated in the ninth center and the chin for an instant touches the left shoulder, which makes a small motion upward to make contact with the chin easier.

Two more blows happen when the syllables *De* and *Va* are put in the tenth and eleventh centers. The procedure is the following: The chin slowly moves toward the middle of the chest while grazing the left collarbone. During this movement, two light blows are given to the left collarbone in intermediate positions. The blows are given of course in the moment in which the syllables of the *Mantra* are vibrated. Finally, a last blow is given on the chest (central position) when the syllable *Ya* is vibrated in *Muladhara*.

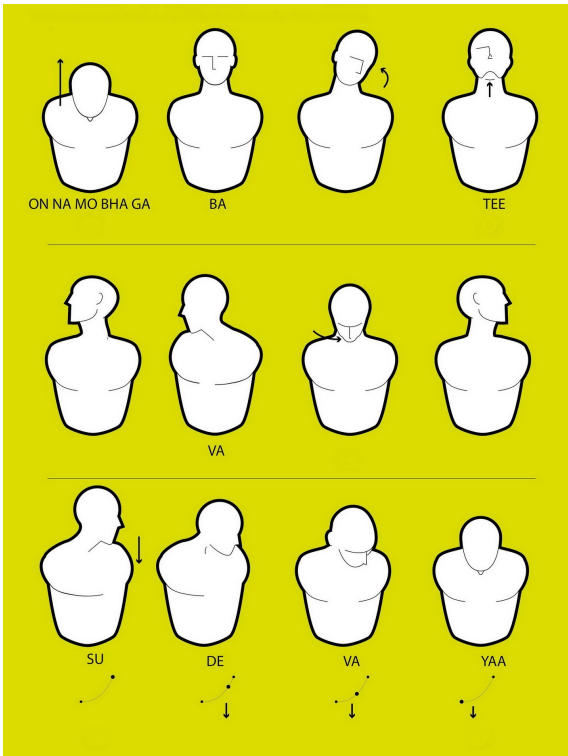


Figure 19. Thokar Tribhangamurari as seen from the front

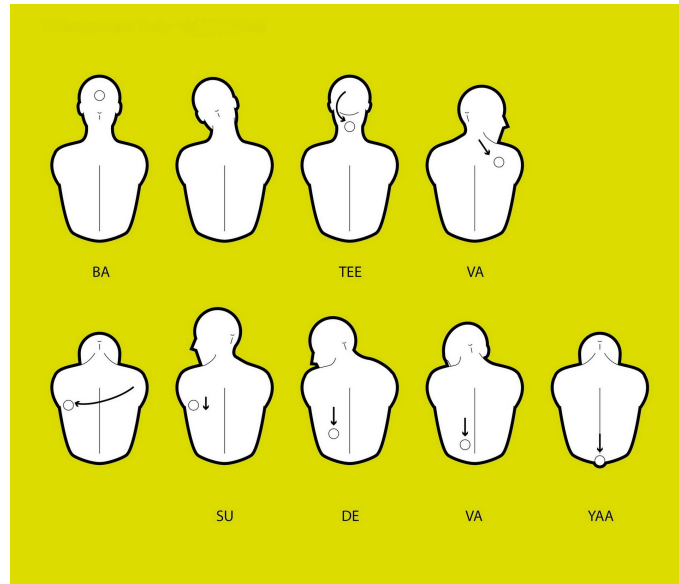


Figure 20. The same movements (only the descent) as seen from the back

The essence of this particular form of "*Thokar*" consists not only in the five strokes but mainly in a constant intensification of the mental pressure along the whole circuit. Considering the action of squeezing an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last bit out gives you a good idea of what happens during this procedure. When the movements of the head are slow and enriched by a great strength of concentration and will, there is no limit to the increase of the internal energetic flow along the *Tribhangamurari* path.

Repeat the procedure 36 times. After completing the programmed number of rounds, calm the system with a minimal practice of *Samantrak*, then relax by practicing a simple *mental Pranayama*.

The supervision of an expert helps to avoid any problems – I am referring to stress and pain in the cervical vertebrae and in the muscles of the neck. Abrupt movements should be avoided; instead use a deep intensity of mental concentration. For the first couple of weeks do not practice every day but every two or three days.

As soon as possible, begin the incremental routine of this procedure by practicing: 36x2, 36x3,..... 36x35, 36x36. Be careful to allow always one week to elapse between one stage and the next.

To those who have the time and good will to complete it, I recommend this routine as a very important feat. A minimum of 8-10 months is required to complete it.

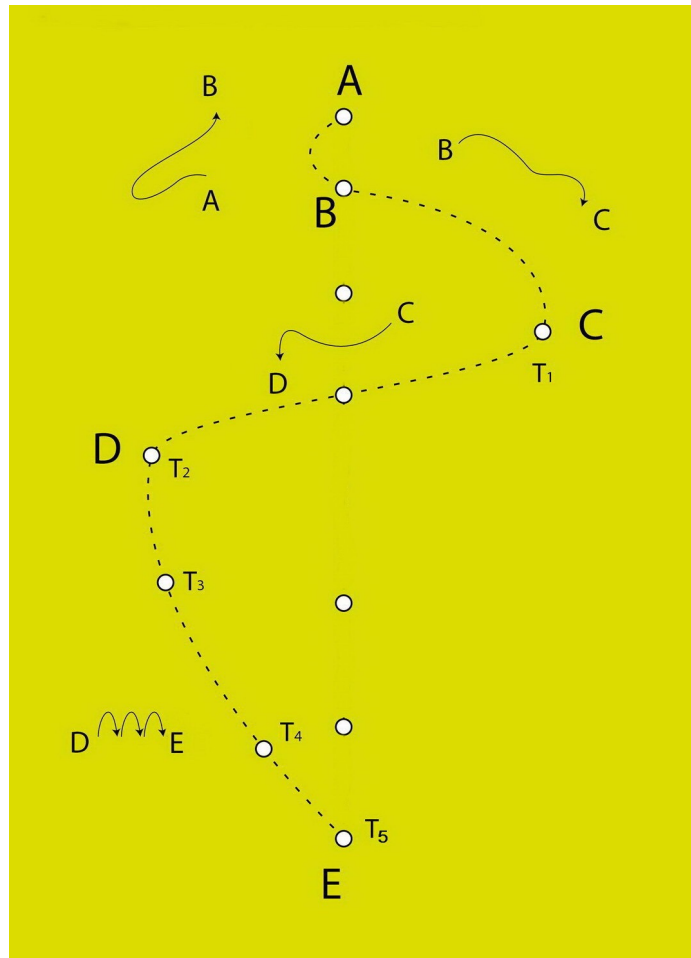


Figure 21. Descent phase of Thokar Tribhangamurari. Dotted line is the movement of Prana and awareness. Continuous line gives an idea of the movement of the chin. Note that all is seen from the back!

After the Macro movement *Tribhangamurari* we consider the Micro movement *Tribhangamurari*

Micro Tribhangamurari

After a minimum of 12 rounds of *Thokar Tribhangamurari*, you learn now to experience the movement *Tribhangamurari* in smaller dimensions inside the 12 centers of the *Macro Tribhangamurari* path.

Through a short inhalation, raise the *Prana* from the *Muladhara Chakra* into the spiritual eye between your eyebrows. Gently lower your chin, hold your breath and look "down" at the *Muladhara Chakra*. Visualize it as a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately one inch. On that disk perceive the *Tribhangamurari* movement in reduced dimensions.

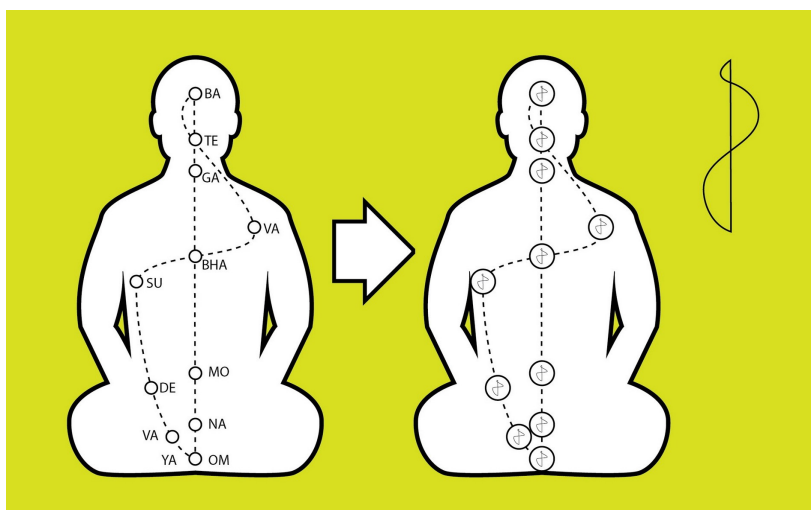


Figure 22. Tribhangamurari micro movement in each of the 12 centers

Don't worry about the required time: it may be short, it may be long it doesn't matter. Exert a moderate but continuous pressure on the disk as if you had a pen and were drawing a clear continuous mark. Repeat two more times. Your breath is held effortlessly; the *Prana* remains totally in *Ajna Chakra*. After three perceptions of the Micro movement, you can relax and let *Prana* come down. A subtle exhalation happens but you may not be aware of it.

Move to the second *Chakra* and repeat the same procedure. Repeat it for *Chakras* 3, 4, 5, then for *Bindu*, then for *Medulla*, then for the four centers outside the spine, and finally for *Muladhara*.

This is round 1: practice two more rounds. Be faithful to this practice for at least six months before starting to increase the mental pressure upon each center employing the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*.

Micro Tribhangamurari with Mantra

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. Through a short inhalation, raise the *Prana* from the *Muladhara Chakra* into the spiritual eye between your eyebrows. Forget the breath and look "down" at the *Muladhara Chakra*. Mentally utter the syllables "Om-Na-Mo-Bha-Ga-Ba-Te-Va-Su-De-Va-Ya". Do this *Japa* without hurry. Perceive the micro-movement *Tribhangamurari* and realize how the mental chant of the 12 syllables add a greater "pressure" to it.

Remain immobile with no movement at all of the spinal column or of the head. Here all the power of pressure has to be obtained with the sheer repetition of the syllables of the *Mantra*. These syllables are like mini "thrusts" or "pulsations".

The duration of one round is determined by the speed of the chanting of the *Mantra*. For many people, the chanting of the *Mantra* and consequently, the micro-movement lasts about 10-12 seconds. Remember that Lahiri Mahasaya's recommendation was "Don't be in a hurry!" Observe the difference between

going slowly and with speed. If you go slowly, you will perceive a tremendous power.

Repeat the *Vasudeva Mantra* three times. *Prana* remains totally in the head. After three perceptions of the micro-movement, repeat the same procedure in *Chakras* 2, 3, 4, 5, then in *Bindu*, then in *Medulla*, then in the four centers outside the spine, and finally in *Muladhara*. This is one round: practice 3-12 rounds. At the end of this practice, remain with the awareness centered in the light that you will perceive in the upper part of your head.

FINAL WORK PLAN

At the end of chapter 7 we have discussed a plan of work. The idea was to fully enjoy the *First Kriya* set of techniques and, gradually, add *Japa*. Having taken this as a basis, the *Omkar* experience appears during *Kriya Pranayama*, *Mental Pranayama* and of course through other special efforts, like for example: "Being aware of 1728 breaths" during one single day, once in a week.

[I] Now we have studied the *Higher Kriyas*. With a pacified heart, utilize your intuition to add or subtract what you feel appropriate in your routine. Ameliorate it continuously. Keep a spiritual diary.

[II] When you feel you have assimilated the essential go to chapter 10. Reflect upon the importance of the goals listed there. After facing two important incremental routines (*Navi Kriya* and *Kriya Pranayama*) complete the incremental routine of the *Elementary form of the Thokar*. While increasing the repetitions of that technique, it is possible to achieve the breathless state.

[III] Then deepen the practice of *Japa* and study the subject of: "The Prayer of the heart."

[IV] Study the great religions (Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Hinduism...) and what they have in common. Realize how *Kriya Yoga* embodies the very nucleus of each great religion.