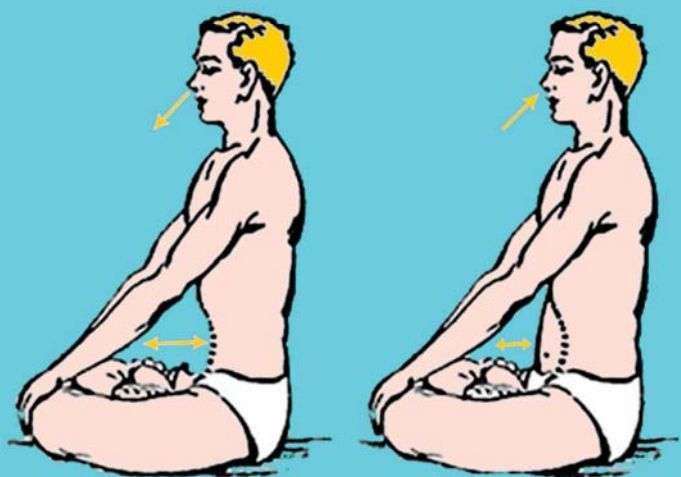


Pranayama



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BOOKS



Introduction to Kundalini and Tantra

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I have been travelling the world for the last three decades in order to pass on the message of yoga, and I find that yoga has influenced the course of human thinking tremendously. Initially of course, there was some doubt about it as many people thought that yoga was a type of religion, witchcraft or mysticism. This particularly happened because man believed matter was the ultimate point in the evolution of nature. The materialistic world did not understand yoga for some time, but as the men of science dived deep into the mysteries of matter, they came to understand and realize that matter was not the ultimate in the evolution of nature.

If that is so for one form of matter, it applies to every form of matter. This external experience, the perception you have through your senses, is a product of matter. Even your thoughts, feelings, emotions and cognitions are products of matter. Therefore, they cannot be absolute and final. This means there must be another realm of experience. And if there is another realm of experience, it must be possible to transcend the present limitations of the mind.

The mind is also matter; it is definitely not spirit. So the mind can also be transformed and made to evolve. People have begun to realize and experience this in the last few decades. And in my opinion, this marks the end of one era and the beginning of another. For those who have knowledge of science and the nature of matter, it is not difficult to understand exactly what inner experience is.

An inner experience is the manifestation of a deeper level of oneself. Dream, of course, is an experience. Your dreams may be schizophrenic but that is an expression of your own self. Thought is also a concept or expression of your own self. A piece of music is an expression of yourself, whether you compose it or just admire it. A painting or sculpture is a concept of yourself whether you create it or just admire it. That means the external world is a manifestation of your inner experience. And you can improve this experience to any extent. You can also bring about deterioration of this experience. When everything is hopeless outside, that is your experience of yourself, and if everything is beautiful outside, that is also your experience of yourself.

In the last few decades, yoga has helped millions of people improve their concepts of themselves. Yoga realizes that man is not only the mind, he is body as well. Therefore man does not experience happiness only through the mind. The body is also real and it is a part of his personality. Just by improving the condition of the body however, man will not necessarily enable his mind to experience happiness either. This is because he is not only the body and mind, he is emotion and desire as well. He is something beyond the mind or psyche. Therefore, yoga has been designed in such a way that it can complete the process of evolution of the personality in every possible direction. That is why yoga has so many branches - hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, gyan yoga, kundalini yoga, and so on.

A combined, integrated practice of yoga in one's life will definitely ensure a better quality of experience within you and without. Every seeker and practitioner on the path of yoga must remember that the various paths of yoga are to improve the quality of head, heart and hand. However, yoga does not end with the development of the personality. One level of the personality is dependent on this mind, this body and these emotions, but there is another deeper part of the personality which you have to develop with another kind of mind and emotion. This requires a special process, and that process is known as kundalini yoga.

Objective experience not the ultimate

Kundalini yoga is a part of the tantric tradition. Even though you may have already been introduced to yoga, it is necessary to know something about tantra also. Since ancient times, the wise men have realized that mind can be expanded and that experiences do not necessarily depend on an object. This means that if somebody is playing music, I can hear it, and if somebody has painted a picture, I can see it, but I can also see if there is no picture, and I can hear if there is no music. This is also a quality of man's personality which has been ignored in the last 150 to 200 years.

Tantra says that the range of mental experience can be broadened. With the help of the senses, your mind can have an experience based on an object. There can be an experience within the framework of time, space and object, but there can also be an experience beyond the framework of time, space and object. The second form of experience can happen when the present mind expands beyond its given definitions and borders, and when this experience occurs, energy is released from yourself.

For hundreds of years, people have been talking about an experience called nirvana, moksha, emancipation, self-realization, salvation or liberation, without understanding it properly. Yogis call this experience samadhi. Although many people think that in samadhi or nirvana everything is completely finished, it is definitely not a process of quitting the world. Nothing finishes, only one level of experience ends, but then another begins.

Since the dawn of creation, the tantrics and yogis have realized that in this physical body there is a potential force. It is not psychological, philosophical or transcendental; it is a dynamic potential force in the material body, and it is called kundalini. This kundalini is the greatest discovery of tantra and yoga. Scientists have begun to look into this, and a summary of some of the latest scientific experiments is included in this book. We can see from this research that science is not actually going to discover anything new in this field. It is only rediscovering and substantiating what yogis discovered many, many centuries ago.

A universal event

The seat of kundalini is a small gland at the base of the spinal cord. With the evolution of the natural forces in man, this gland has now come to a point where man can explode it. Quite a number of people have awakened this supernatural force and they have been called rishis, prophets, yogis, siddhas

and various other names according to the time, tradition and culture. In India the entire cultural setup was once organized to facilitate this explosion, but today things are a little different because materialism is a very powerful force, and for the moment, it has even stupefied the Indian minds.

For the awakening of kundalini, not only are the practices of yoga required. If this awakening is to become a universal event, then the entire social structure has to be reorganized and millions of people all over the world have to be told the purpose of their existence. The whole life from the time of conception to the moment when you leave the body, each and every thing has to be reoriented. You will see in this book how even the instinctive and emotional interaction between man and woman must be revised and refined, so that it can lead us not away from, but towards, this ultimate awakening. This reorientation has to be undertaken with the purpose of expanding the mind and opening new doors of experience.

Today we are living in a world where everyone is more or less satisfied. Man has all the comforts and everything he needs and does not need. There will come a time, however, when man will be prepared to throw off these comforts. Luxury and comfort weaken the will and keep man under constant hypnosis. Alcohol and drugs are not as dangerous as man's total slavery to luxury and comfort. He cannot pull himself away from them. It is impossible unless he has become aware of something more than what his parents and society could give him.

Formerly there were only a few seekers, but now millions and millions of people in the world are striving for a higher experience. And this higher experience is known as knowledge. When, through yoga and tantra, the awakening of kundalini takes place, a process of metamorphosis occurs in the realm of nature and in the realm of spirit. The elements of the physical body change and the elements of the mental body also.

It may be difficult for people of today to understand the whole concept, but soon humanity will comprehend it all. Matter will become unnecessary and insignificant. Behind the matter and behind the mind there is energy and there is an experience of that energy.

Proceed slowly, sensibly and systematically

Yet, you should not try to realize and experience these things abruptly. You will find here detailed instructions on the gradual preparation of your mind and body for the arousal of kundalini, and advice on elementary precautions to be observed in order to avoid unnecessary risks and obstacles. Do not try to influence your mind directly, because the mind is nothing but an extension of the body complex. Start systematically with the body, the prana, the nadis and chakras, according to the scheme outlined in this book. Then see how you evolve.

Many people, encouraged by this type of philosophy take to drugs, chemicals and other things they consider to be speedy alternatives. They are very serious people I believe, but they are not practical and systematic because they think they can transcend the role of the body in the realm of evolution. In the final evolution of mind, matter and man, you cannot ignore either the body or the mind. You cannot even ignore the nose, the stomach or the digestive system. That is why this transcendental philosophy begins with the basic considerations of diet and yogic physiology that you find discussed here.

The discovery of the great energy began with matter. Did nuclear energy descend from heaven? No, it evolved from crude matter. Where does the experience generate from? From heaven? From the sanctum sanctorum? No, from this body and this nervous system. That is how you should be practical and sensible.

This book presents a systematic and pragmatic approach to the awakening of kundalini. It begins with an expanded understanding of the true role and potential of the body and nervous system, moving through an exhaustive examination of the different methods of awakening suitable for different personalities and conditions. You will find clear and direct instructions on the actual yogic and tantric techniques to be practised towards this goal, together with a map of possible experiences you may encounter as the practices mature, so that you can sustain this great awakening and integrate it into a more conscious and creative way of life.

We have included here a systematic schedule of practice, within the context of a philosophy that is both pragmatic and transcendental, to prepare you in every way for this great adventure in consciousness.

Section I - KUNDALINI

Chapter 1

Ye Man, Tame the Kundalini

When I was six years old I had a spontaneous spiritual experience during which I became completely unaware of my body for quite a long time. Again, when I was ten, the same thing happened, but this time I was old enough to think and rationalize, and I told my father about it. At first he did not understand what had happened and he wanted to take me to a doctor, but fortunately there were no doctors in our area at that time. Had there been, perhaps I would have ended up in a mental hospital, but things being what they were, I did not have to undergo treatment and was left unattended.

My father had great regard for the Vedas and for his guru. One day this guru happened to visit my native town, so my father took me to him and asked his advice about me. The sage told him that I had had a spiritual experience and therefore should be instructed to lead a spiritual life. My father obeyed his guru and arranged for me to be trained accordingly. Thus at an early age I was dedicated to the spiritual quest.

My family was Hindu, and in Hinduism there are two traditions: one believes in the worship of idols, and the other that God is formless. My family belonged to the latter, but still I often looked at the pictures of all the different deities and wondered at them. Durga was mounted on a lion; Saraswati on a swan; Vishnu lay sleeping on a huge cobra; Kali was completely naked, standing on the body of Shiva; Tara too was naked and Shiva was drinking milk from her breast. I could not understand what it all meant. Why did Shiva ride upon a bull and have so many snakes wrapped around him; how could the Ganga flow from his hair; why was Ganesha, with his enormous elephantine head and pot belly, riding on a small rat? I thought that there must be some symbolic meaning behind all this, but I only began to understand it through kundalini yoga, which I started practising at the age of fifteen, while still at school.

Around this time I had another experience. I was sitting quietly when suddenly, without any effort, my mind turned inwards. I immediately saw the whole earth with its oceans, continents, mountains and cities, crack into pieces. I did not understand this vision until a few days later when the second world war broke out. This really made me begin to wonder. How could I have seen this future event symbolically in meditation when living in a remote area? I had neither heard nor read about it previously, nor had I any way of knowing that it was coming.

A new life begins

By the time I was seventeen, I was asking questions which nobody could answer. I wondered about things like the difference between perception and experience. I talked a lot about such topics with my maternal uncle and my younger sister, but this did not quench my thirst and I knew I had to go out and discover the answers for myself. I postponed my departure from home until one day my father pushed me out with ninety rupees in my pocket. Thus my wandering life began.

During my travels I met a very old swami who invited me to stay in his ashram. He had a wonderful knowledge of tantra and taught me many things. Though I knew I would never forget him, he was not my guru and after nine months I left his ashram and continued wandering. Soon after this I reached Rishikesh, where I heard about Swami Sivananda. I went to him and asked how to experience the highest consciousness. He told me to stay in his ashram and he would guide me. So I followed monastic life, but still, for a long time I was puzzled about the purpose of my existence. I felt that man was a seeker, yet I really did not know what I was seeking and was often left with the terrifying question that man asks himself regarding death.

The awakening of my kundalini

Sometime later I had another experience while sitting on the banks of the Ganga. I was thinking of some mundane things when my mind spontaneously started going in and out. Suddenly I felt as if the earth was slipping from under me and the sky was expanding and receding. A moment later I experienced a terrible force springing from the base of my body like an atomic explosion. I felt that I was vibrating very fast, the light currents were terrific. I experienced the supreme bliss, like the climax of a man's desire, and it continued for a long time. My whole body was contracting until the feeling of pleasure became quite unbearable and I lost complete awareness of my body. This was the third time it had happened.

After returning to consciousness I was listless for many days. I could not eat, sleep or move, even to go to the toilet. I saw everything but nothing registered. The bliss was a living thing within me and I knew that if I moved, this wonderful feeling would cease; I would lose the intensity of it all. How could I move when bells were ringing inside? This was the awakening of my kundalini.

After a week or so I returned to normal and then I started to study tantra and yoga very seriously. At first I was still a bit weak and sick, so I practised hatha yoga to purify my whole system. Then I began to explore the fantastic science of kundalini yoga. What is this power which awakens in mooladhara chakra? My interest was aroused and I put much effort into trying to understand this marvellous force.

With the awakening of kundalini, the greater intelligence is aroused from its sleep and you can give birth to a new range of creativity. When kundalini awakens, not only are you blessed with visions and psychic experiences, you could become a prophet, saint, inspired artist or musician, a brilliant writer or poet, a clairvoyant or messiah. Or you could become an outstanding leader, prime minister, governor or president. The awakening of kundalini affects the whole area of the human mind and behavior.

Kundalini is not a myth or an illusion. It is not a hypothesis or a hypnotic suggestion. Kundalini is a biological substance that exists within the framework of the body. Its awakening generates electrical impulses throughout the whole body and these impulses can be detected by modern scientific instruments and machines. Therefore, each of us should consider the importance and the benefits of awakening kundalini, and we should make a resolve to awaken this great shakti.

Chapter 2

What is Kundalini?

Everybody should know something about kundalini as it represents the coming consciousness of mankind. Kundalini is the name of a sleeping dormant potential force in the human organism and it is situated at the root of the spinal column. In the masculine body it is in the perineum, between the urinary and excretory organs. In the female body its location is at the root of the uterus, in the cervix. This center is known as mooladhara chakra and it is actually a physical structure. It is a small gland which you can even take out and press. However, kundalini is a dormant energy, and even if you press it, it will not explode like a bomb. To awaken kundalini you must prepare yourself through yogic techniques. You must practise asanas, pranayama, kriya yoga and meditation. Then, when you are able to force your prana into the seat of kundalini, the energy wakes up and makes its way through sushumna nadi, the central nervous canal, to the brain. As kundalini ascends, it passes through each of the chakras which are interconnected with the different silent areas of the brain. With the awakening of kundalini there is an explosion in the brain as the dormant or sleeping areas start blossoming like flowers. Therefore, kundalini can be equated with the awakening of the silent areas of the brain.

Although kundalini is said to reside in mooladhara chakra, we are all at different stages of evolution, and in some of us kundalini may have already reached swadhisthana, manipura or anahata chakra. If this is so, whatever sadhana you do now might start an awakening in anahata or some other chakra. However, awakening of kundalini in mooladhara chakra is one thing, and awakening in sahasrara, the highest center of the brain, is another. Once the multipetalled lotus of sahasrara blossoms, a new consciousness dawns. Our present consciousness is not independent, as the mind depends on the information supplied by the senses. If you have no eyes, you can never see; if you are deaf, you will never hear. However, when the superconsciousness emerges, experience becomes completely independent and knowledge also becomes completely independent.

How man discovered kundalini

Right from the beginning of creation, man witnessed many transcendental happenings. Sometimes he was able to read the thoughts of others, he witnessed somebody else's predictions coming true, or he may even have seen his own dreams manifesting into realities. He pondered over the fact that some people could write inspiring poems or compose beautiful music whereas others couldn't; one person could fight on the battlefield for days together and another person couldn't even get up from his bed. So he wanted to discover why everybody seemed to be different.

In the course of his investigations, man came to understand that within every individual there is a special form of energy. He saw that in some people it was dormant, in others it was evolving and in a very small minority of people, it was actually awakened. Originally, man named this energy after gods, goddesses, angels or divinities. Then he discovered prana and called it prana shakti. In tantra they called it kundalini.

What the various names for kundalini mean

In Sanskrit, kundal means a coil, and so kundalini has been described as "that which is coiled". This is the traditional belief, but it has been incorrectly understood. The word kundalini actually comes from the word *kunda*, meaning "a deeper place, pit or cavity". The fire used in the ceremony of initiation is

kindled in a pit called kunda. Similarly, the place where a dead body is burned is kunda. If you dig a ditch or a hole it is called kunda. Kunda refers to the concave cavity in which the brain, resembling a coiled and sleeping serpent, nestles. (If you have the opportunity of examining a dissection of the human brain you will see that it is in the form of a coil or snake curled up upon itself.) This is the true meaning of kundalini.

The word kundalini refers to the shakti or power when it is in its dormant potential state, but when it is manifesting, you can call it Devi, Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi or any other name according to the manifestation it is exhibiting before you.

In the Christian tradition, the terms "the Path of the Initiates" and "the Stairway to Heaven" used in the Bible, refer to kundalini's ascent through sushumna nadi. The ascent of kundalini and ultimately, the descent of spiritual grace, are symbolized by the cross. This is why Christians make the sign of the cross at ajna, anahata and vishuddhi chakras, for ajna is the center where the ascending consciousness is transcended and anahata is where the descending grace is made manifest to the world.

Whatever happens in spiritual life, it is related to the awakening of kundalini. And the goal of every form of spiritual life, whether you call it samadhi, nirvana, moksha, communion, union, kaivalya, liberation or whatever, is in fact awakening of kundalini.

Kundalini, Kali and Durga

When kundalini has just awakened and you are not able to handle it, it is called Kali. When you can handle it and are able to use it for beneficial purposes and you become powerful on account of it, it is called Durga.

Kali is a female deity, naked, black or smoky in color, wearing a mala of 108 human skulls, representing the memories of different births. Kali's lolling tongue of blood red color signifies the rajo guna whose circular movement gives impetus to all creative activities. By this specific gesture, she is exhorting the sadhakas to control their rajo guna. The sacrificial sword and the severed head held by the left hand are the symbols of dissolution. Darkness and death are by no means the mere absence of light and life, rather, they are their origin. The sadhaka worships the cosmic power in its female form, for she represents the kinetic aspect, the masculine being the static which is activated only through her power.

In Hindu mythology, the awakening of Kali has been described in great detail. When Kali rises in red anger, all the gods and demons are stunned and everybody keeps quiet. They do not know what she is going to do. They ask Lord Shiva to pacify her, but Kali roars ferociously, throwing him down and standing on his chest with her mouth wide open, thirsty for flesh and blood. When the devas hold prayers to pacify Kali, she becomes calm and quiet.

Then there is the emergence of Durga, the higher, more refined and benign symbol of the unconscious. Durga is a beautiful goddess seated on a tiger. She has 8 hands representing the eightfold elements of man.

Durga wears a mala of human heads to symbolize her wisdom and power. These heads are generally 52 in number, representing the 52 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, which are the outer manifestations of Shabda Brahma or Brahma in the form of sound. Durga is the remover of all evil consequences of life and the giver of power and peace that is released from mooladhara.

According to yoga philosophy, Kali, the first manifestation of the unconscious kundalini is a terrible power; it completely subdues the individual soul, represented by her standing on Lord Shiva. It sometimes happens that by mental instability some people get in contact with their unconscious body and see inauspicious, ferocious elements - ghosts, monsters, etc. When Kali, the unconscious power of man, is awakened she goes up to meet the further manifestation, being Durga, the superconscious, bestowing glory and beauty.

Symbolic representation of kundalini

In the tantric texts, kundalini is conceived of as the primal power or energy. In terms of modern psychology, it can be called the unconscious in man. As we have just discussed, in Hindu mythology, kundalini corresponds with the concept of Kali. In the philosophy of Shaivism, the concept of kundalini is represented by the shivalingam, the oval-shaped stone or pillar with a snake coiled around it.

However, most commonly, kundalini is illustrated as a sleeping serpent coiled three and a half times. Of course there is no serpent residing in mooladhara, sahasrara or any other chakra, but the serpent has always been a symbol for efficient consciousness. In all the oldest mystic cults of the world you find the serpent, and if you have seen any pictures or images of Lord Shiva, you will have noticed serpents girdling his waist, neck and arms. Kali is also adorned with serpents and Lord Vishnu eternally reposes on a large coiled serpent. This serpent power symbolizes the unconscious in man.

In Scandinavian, European, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries and many different civilizations of the world, the concept of the serpent power is represented in monuments and ancient artifacts. This means kundalini was known to people from all parts of the world in the past. However, we can conceive kundalini in any manner we like because actually, prana has no form or dimension, it is infinite.

In the traditional descriptions of kundalini awakening, it is said that kundalini resides in mooladhara in the form of a coiled snake and when the snake awakens it uncoils and shoots up through sushumna (the psychic passage in the center of the spinal cord), opening the other chakras as it goes (see Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power*). Brahmachari Swami Vyasdev, in his book *Science of the Soul*, describes the awakening of kundalini in the following way:

"Sadhakas have seen the sushumna in the form of a luminous rod or pillar, a golden yellow snake, or sometimes as a shining black snake about ten inches long with blood redevyes like smouldering charcoal, the front part of the tongue vibrating and shining like lightning, ascending the spinal column."

The meaning of the 3 1/2 coils of the serpent is as follows: The 3 coils represent the 3 matras of Om, which relate to past, present and future; to the 3 gunas: tamas, rajas and sattva; to the 3 states of consciousness: waking, sleeping and dreaming; and to the 3 types of experience: subjective experience, sensual experience and absence of experience. The 1/2 coil represents the state of transcendence, where there is neither waking, sleeping nor dreaming. So, the 3 1/2 coils signify the total experience of the universe and the experience of transcendence.

Who can awaken kundalini?

There are many people who have awakened their kundalini. Not only saints and sadhus, but poets, painters, warriors, writers, anyone can awaken their kundalini. With the awakening of kundalini, not only visions of God take place, there is dawning of creative intelligence and an awakening of supramental faculties. By activating kundalini you may become anything in life.

The energy of kundalini is one energy, but it expresses itself differently through the individual psychic centers or chakras - first in gross instinctive ways and then in progressively more subtle ways. Refining of the expression of this energy at higher and more subtle levels of vibration represents the ascent of human consciousness to its highest possibilities.

Kundalini is the creative energy; it is the energy of self-expression. Just as in reproduction a new life is created, in the same way, someone like Einstein uses that same energy in a different, more subtle realm, to create a theory like relativity. It is the same energy that is expressed when someone composes or plays beautiful music. It is the same energy which is expressed in all parts of life, whether it is building up a business, fulfilling the family duties or reaching whatever goal you aspire for. These are all expressions of the same creative energy.

Everybody, whether householder or sannyasin, must remember that awakening of kundalini is the prime purpose of human incarnation. All the pleasures of sensual life which we are enjoying now are intended only to enhance the awakening of kundalini amidst the adverse circumstances of man's life.

A process of metamorphosis

With the awakening of kundalini, a transformation takes place in life. It has little to do with one's moral, religious or ethical life. It has more to do with the quality of our experiences and perceptions. When kundalini wakes up your mind changes and your priorities and attachments also change. All your karmas undergo a process of integration. It is very simple to understand. When you were a child you loved toys, but why don't you love them now? Because your mind has changed and consequently, your attachments have also changed. So, with the awakening of kundalini, a metamorphosis takes place. There is even the possibility of restructuring the entire physical body.

When kundalini awakens, the physical body actually undergoes many changes. Generally they are positive, but if your guru is not cautious, they can be negative also. When the shakti wakes up, the cells in the body are completely charged and a process of rejuvenation also starts. The voice changes, the smell of the body changes and the hormonal secretions also change. In fact, the transformation of cells in the body and brain takes place at a much higher rate than normal. These are just a few observations. However, scientific researchers are still taking their first steps into this field.

Why awaken kundalini?

If you want to take up the practice of kundalini yoga, the most important thing is that you have a reason or an aim. If you want to awaken kundalini for psychic powers, then please go ahead with your own destiny. But if you want to awaken kundalini in order to enjoy communion between Shiva and Shakti, the actual communion between the two great forces within you, and if you want to enter samadhi and experience the absolute in the cosmos, and if you want to understand the truth behind the appearance, and if the purpose of your pilgrimage is very great, then there is nothing that can come to you as an obstacle.

By means of kundalini awakening, you are compensating with the laws of nature and speeding up the pace of your physical, mental and spiritual evolution. Once the great shakti awakens, man is no longer a gross physical body operating with a lower mind and low voltage prana. Instead, every cell of his body is charged with the high voltage prana of kundalini. And when total awakening occurs, man becomes a junior god, an embodiment of divinity.

Chapter 3

Kundalini Physiology

Kundalini or the serpent power does not belong to the physical body, though it is connected to it. Nor can it be discovered in the mental body or even the astral body. Its abode is actually in the causal body, where the concepts of time, space and object are completely lost.

How and where is the concept of kundalini related to the supreme consciousness? The serpent power is considered to arise from the unconscious state in mooladhara. This unconscious awareness of man then has to pass through different phases and becomes one with the cosmic awareness in the highest realm of existence. The supreme awareness or Shiva is considered to be seated in sahasrara, the superconscious or transcendental body at the crown of the head. In the Vedas, as well as the Tantras, this supreme seat is called *hiranyagarbha*, the womb of consciousness. It corresponds to the pituitary body, the master gland situated within the brain.

Immediately below this center of supreme consciousness, there is another psychic center - "the third eye" or ajna chakra, which corresponds to the pineal gland. This is the seat of intuitive knowledge. This center lies on top of the spinal column, at the level of *bhruvadhya*, the eyebrow center. Ajna chakra is important because it is simultaneously connected with the seat of supreme consciousness in sahasrara and with mooladhara, the seat of the unconscious, at the base of the spine, via sushumna, the psychic passage within the spinal column. Therefore, it is the connecting link between the lowest unconscious seat of power and the highest center of illumination within the individual.

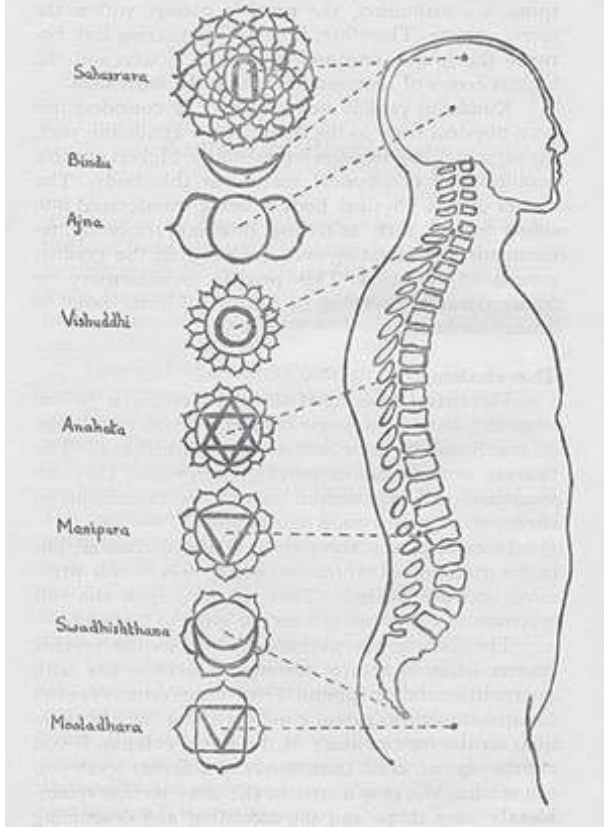
Kundalini yoga is not abstract. It considers this very physical body as the basis. For a kundalini yogi, the supreme consciousness represents the highest possible manifestation of physical matter in this body. The matter of this physical body is being transformed into subtle forces - such as feeling, thinking, reasoning, remembering, postulating and doubting, in the gradual process of evolution. This psychic, suprasensory or transcendental power in man is the ultimate point of human evolution.

The chakras

The literal meaning of the word chakra is 'wheel or circle', but in the yogic context a better translation of the Sanskrit word is 'vortex or whirlpool'. The chakras are vortices of psychic energy and they are visualized and experienced as circular movements of energy at particular rates of vibration.

In each person there are myriads of chakras, but in the practices of tantra and yoga, only a few principal ones are utilized. These chakras span the full spectrum of man's being from the gross to the subtle.

LOCATION OF THE CHAKRAS



The chakras are physiological as well as psychic centers whose structures correspond more or less with the traditional descriptions. These nerve centers are not situated inside the spinal cord itself, but lie like junctions on the interior walls of the spinal column. If you cut the spinal cord transversely at different levels you can see that the grey matter in the cross section resembles the lotus shape and the ascending and descending tracts of nerve fibers correspond to the nadis. These communicating nerve fibers control the different physiological functions of that portion of the body. Many books state that the chakras are reservoirs of power, but this is not true.

A chakra is like a centrally placed electricity pole from which electrical wires are run to different places, houses and street lights in the vicinity. This arrangement is the same for each of the chakras. The nadis which emerge from each chakra carry prana in both directions. There is a forward and backward pranic motion in the nadis, analogous to the flow of alternating current in electrical wires. The outgoing communication and the incoming reaction enter and leave the chakra in the form of this pranic flow in the corresponding nadis.

There are six chakras in the human body which are directly connected with the higher unilluminated centers of the brain. The first chakra is mooladhara. It is situated in the pelvic floor and corresponds to the coccygeal plexus of nerves. In the masculine body it lies between the urinary and excretory openings, in the form of a small dormant gland termed the perineal body. In the feminine body it is situated inside the posterior surface of the cervix.

Mooladhara is the first chakra in the spiritual evolution of man, where one goes beyond animal consciousness and starts to be a real human being. It is also the last chakra in the completion of animal evolution. It is said that from mooladhara chakra right down to the heels there are other lower chakras which are responsible for the development of the animal and human qualities of instinct and intellect. From mooladhara chakra upwards lie the chakras which are concerned with illumination and evolution of the higher man or super man. Mooladhara chakra has control over the entire range of excretory and sexual functions in man.

The second chakra is *swadhisthana*, located at the lowest point or termination of the spinal cord. It corresponds to the sacral plexus of nerves and controls the unconscious in man.

The third chakra is *manipura*, situated in the spinal column exactly at the level of the navel. It corresponds to the solar plexus and controls the entire processes of digestion, assimilation and temperature regulation in the body.

The fourth chakra is *anahata*, and it lies in the vertebral column behind the base of the heart, at the level of the depression in the sternum. It corresponds to the cardiac plexus of nerves, and controls the functions of the heart, the lungs, the diaphragm and other organs in this region of the body.

The fifth chakra is *vishuddhi*, which lies at the level of the throat pit in the vertebral column. This chakra corresponds to the cervical plexus of nerves and controls the thyroid complex and also some systems of articulation, the upper palate and the epiglottis.

Ajna, the sixth and most important chakra, corresponds to the pineal gland, lying in the midline of the brain directly above the spinal column. This chakra controls the muscles and the onset of sexual activity in man. Tantra and yoga maintain that ajna chakra, the command center, has complete control over all the functions of the disciple's life.

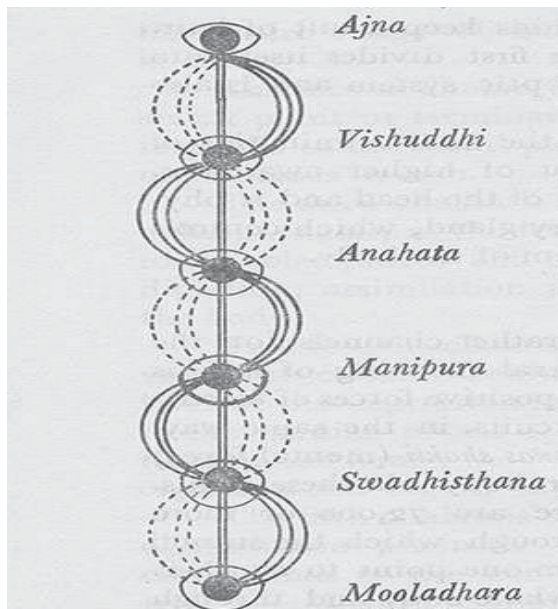
These six chakras serve as switches for turning on different parts of the brain. The awakening which is brought about in the chakras is conducted to the higher centers in the brain via the nadis.

There are also two higher centers in the brain which are commonly referred to in kundalini yoga: bindu and sahasrara. *Bindu* is located at the top back of the head, where Hindu brahmins keep a tuft of hair. This is the point where oneness first divides itself into many. Bindu feeds the whole optic system and is also the seat of nectar or amrit.

Sahasrara is supreme; it is the final culmination of kundalini shakti. It is the seat of higher awareness. Sahasrara is situated at the top of the head and is physically correlated to the pituitary gland, which controls each and every gland and system of the body.

Nadis

Nadis are not nerves but rather channels for the flow of consciousness. The literal meaning of *nadi* is 'flow'. Just as the negative and positive forces of electricity flow through complex circuits, in the same way, *prana shakti* (vital force) and *manas shakti* (mental force) flow through every part of our body via these nadis. According to the tantras there are 72,000 or more such channels or networks through which the stimuli flow like electric current from one point to another. These 72,000 nadis cover the whole body and through them the inherent rhythms of activity in the different organs of the body are maintained. Within this network of nadis, there are ten main channels, and of these ten, three are most important for they control the flow of prana and consciousness within all the other nadis of the body. These three nadis are called ida, pingala and sushumna.



Ida nadi controls all the mental processes while pingala nadi controls all the vital processes. Ida is known as the moon, and pingala as the sun. A third nadi, sushumna, is the channel for the awakening of spiritual consciousness. Now the picture is coming clear; prana shakti - pingala; manas shakti - ida; and alma shakti - sushumna. You may consider them as pranic force, mental force and spiritual force.

As sushumna flows inside the central canal of the spinal cord, ida and pingala simultaneously flow on the outer surface of the spinal cord, still within the bony vertebral column. Ida, pingala and sushumna nadis begin in mooladhara in the pelvic floor. From there, sushumna flows directly upwards within the central canal, while ida passes to the left and pingala to the right. At swadhisthana chakra, or the sacral plexus, the three nadis come together again and ida and pingala cross over one another. Ida passes up to the right, pingala to the left, and sushumna continues to flow directly upwards in the central

canal. The three nadis come together again at manipura chakra, the solar plexus, and so on. Finally, ida, pingala and sushumna meet in the pineal gland - ajna chakra.

Ida and pingala function in the body alternately and not simultaneously. If you observe your nostrils, you will find that generally one is flowing freely and the other is blocked. When the left nostril is open, it is the lunar energy or ida nadi which is flowing. When the right nostril is free, the solar energy or pingala nadi is flowing.

Investigations have shown that when the right nostril is flowing, the left hemisphere of the brain is activated. When the left nostril is flowing, the right hemisphere is activated. This is how the nadis or energy channels control the brain and the events of life and consciousness.

Now, if these two energies - prana and chitta, pingala and ida, life and consciousness, can be made to function simultaneously, then both hemispheres of the brain can be made to function simultaneously and to participate together in the thinking, living, intuitive and regulating processes.

In ordinary life this does not happen because the simultaneous awakening and functioning of life force and consciousness can take place only if the central canal - sushumna, is connected with kundalini, the source of energy. If sushumna can be connected in the physical body, it can reactivate the brain cells and create a new physical structure.

The importance of awakening sushumna

Sushumna nadi is regarded as a hollow tube in which there are three more concentric tubes, each being progressively more subtle than the previous one. The tubes or nadis are as follows: *sushumna* - signifying tamas, *vajirini* - signifying rajjas, *chitrini* - signifying sattva and *brahma* - signifying consciousness. The higher consciousness created by kundalini passes through brahma nadi.

When kundalini shakti awakens it passes through sushumna nadi. The moment awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra, the energy makes headway through sushumna up to ajna chakra.

Mooladhara chakra is just like a powerful generator. In order to start this generator, you need some sort of pranic energy. This pranic energy is generated through pranayama. When you practise pranayama you generate energy and this energy is forced down by a positive pressure which starts the generator in mooladhara. Then this generated energy is pushed upward by a negative pressure and forced up to ajna chakra.

Therefore, awakening of sushumna is just as important as awakening of kundalini. Supposing you have started your generator but you have not plugged the cable, the generator will keep running but distribution will not take place. You have to connect the plug into the generator so the generated energy can pass through the cable to the different areas of your house.

When only ida and pingala are active and not sushumna, it's like having the positive and negative lines in your electrical cable, but no earth. When the mind receives the three currents of energy all the lights start working, but if you remove the earth wire, the lights will go down. Energy flows through ida and pingala all the time, but its effulgence is very low. When there is current flowing in ida, pingala and sushumna, then enlightenment takes place. This is how you have to understand the awakening of kundalini, awakening of sushumna and the union of the three in ajna chakra.

The whole science of kundalini yoga concerns the awakening of sushumna, for once sushumna comes to life, a means of communication between the higher and lower dimensions of consciousness is established and the awakening of kundalini occurs. Shakti travels up sushumna to become one with Shiva in sahasrara.

Kundalini awakening is definitely not fictional or symbolic; it is electrophysiological! Many scientists are working on this, and Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama of Japan has developed a unit by which the waves and currents of energy which accompany the awakening of kundalini can be recorded and measured.

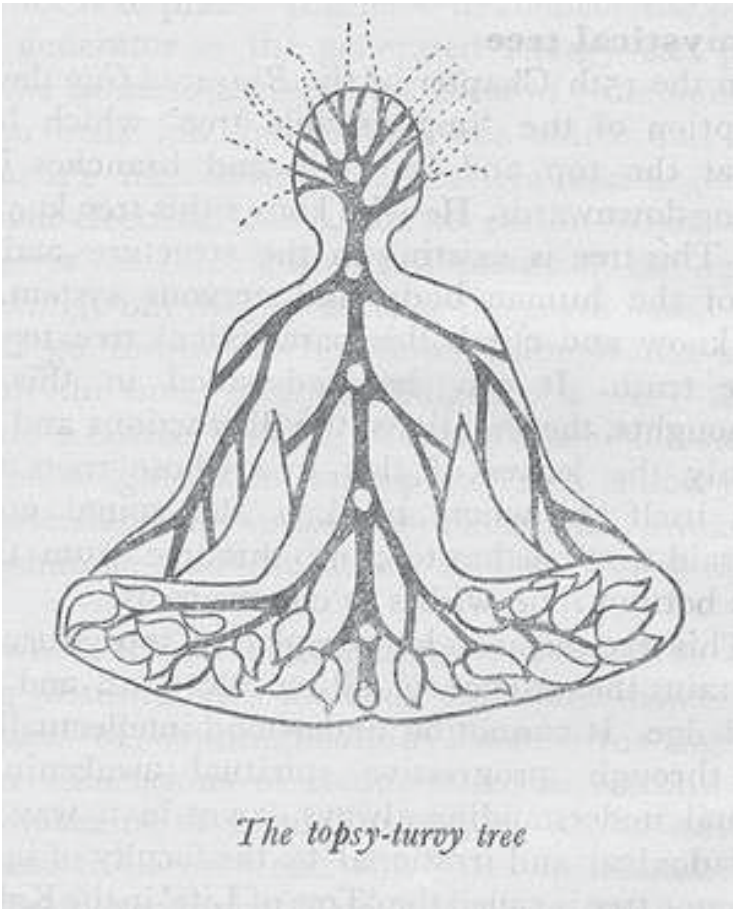
When the roots of a plant are watered properly, the plant grows and its flowers bloom forth beautifully. Similarly, when kundalini awakening occurs in sushumna, awakening occurs in all the stages of life. But if awakening only occurs in ida or pingala or in one of the other centers, it is by no means complete. Only when kundalini shakti awakens and travels up the sushumna passage to sahasrara is the entire store of higher energy in man unleashed.

The mystical tree

In the 15th Chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a description of the 'imperishable tree' which has its roots at the top and its trunk and branches below, growing downwards. He who knows this tree knows the truth. This tree is existing in the structure and function of the human body and nervous system. One must know and climb this paradoxical tree to arrive at the truth. It can be understood in this way: the thoughts, the emotions, the distractions and so on, are only the leaves of this tree whose roots are the brain itself and whose trunk is the spinal column. It is said that one has to climb this tree from the top to the bottom if he wishes to cut the roots.

This tree seems to be completely topsy-turvy, yet it contains the essence of all occult truth and secret knowledge. It cannot be understood intellectually, but only through progressive spiritual awakening, for spiritual understanding always dawns in a way which is paradoxical and irrational to the faculty of intellect. This same tree is called the 'Tree of Life' in the Kabbalah and the 'Tree of Knowledge' in the Bible. Its understanding forms the basis of both Christian and Judaic religious traditions, but unfortunately it has been completely misunderstood by and large, for a very long time.

So it is that everybody who is trying to move from mooladhara to sahasrara is climbing to the root every time, and the root is at the top, the brain, the sahasrara. Mooladhara is not the root center at all. So if you are moving from swadhishthana to sahasrara or from manipura to sahasrara, then you are climbing to the root, which is at the top in sahasrara.



Chapter 4

Kundalini and the Brain

The awakening of kundalini and its union with Shiva is immediately and intimately connected with the whole brain. The brain has ten compartments, and of these, nine are dormant and one is active. Whatever you know, whatever you think or do is coming from one-tenth of the brain. The other nine-tenths, which are in the frontal portion of the brain, are known as the inactive or sleeping brain.

Why are these compartments inactive? Because there is no energy. The active portion of the brain functions on the energies of ida and pingala, but the other nine-tenths have only pingala. Pingala is life and ida is consciousness. If a man is living but is unable to think, we say he has prana shakti but not manas shakti. Similarly, the silent parts of the brain have prana, not consciousness.

So a very difficult question arises: how to awaken the sleeping compartments of the brain? We know how to awaken fear, anxiety and passion, but most of us do not know how to awaken these dormant areas of the brain. In order to arouse the silent areas, we must charge the frontal brain with sufficient prana and we must awaken sushumna nadi. For both these purposes we must practise pranayama regularly and consistently over a long period of time.

Lighting up the brain

In kundalini yoga it was discovered that the different parts of the brain are connected with the chakras. Certain areas are connected with mooladhara chakra, others with swadhithana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna. When you want to turn on an electric lamp, you don't have to touch the lamp itself, you operate it by means of the switch on the wall. Likewise, when you want to awaken the brain, you can't deal with it directly, you have to flick the switches which are located in the chakras.

Modern science divides the dormant area of the brain into ten parts, whereas in kundalini yoga we divide it into six. The qualities or manifestations of the brain are also sixfold, e.g. the psychic powers. These manifest in different individuals according to the degree of awakening in the corresponding areas of the brain. Everybody is not clairvoyant or telepathic; some people are talented musicians. Anybody can sing, but there is a center in the brain where transcendental music expresses itself.

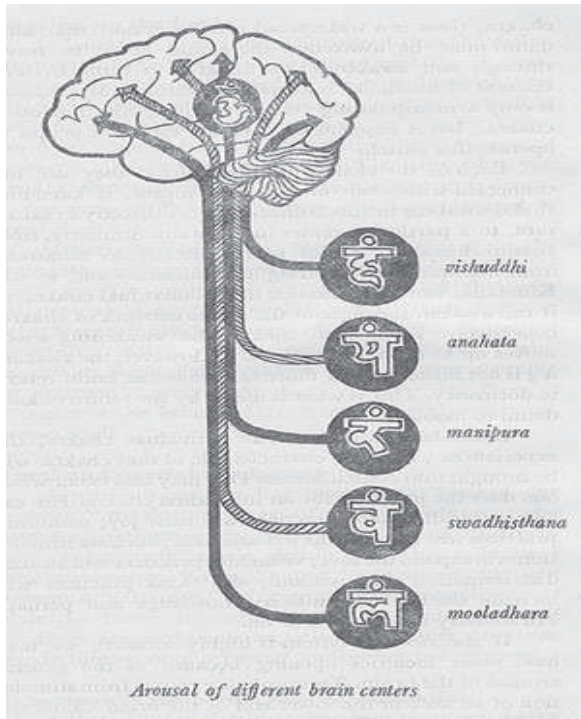
Total and partial awakening

A genius is one who has been able to awaken one or more of the dormant areas of the brain. People who have flashes of genius are those who have had a momentary awakening in certain circuits of the brain. It is not total awakening. When the total brain wakes up, you become a junior god, an incarnation or embodiment of divinity. There are various types of geniuses - child prodigies, inspired poets, musicians, inventors, prophets, etc. In these people a partial awakening has occurred.

Sahasrara is the actual seat of kundalini

Although the classical descriptions place heavy emphasis on the awakening of kundalini in mooladhara chakra, there is a widespread misconception that kundalini must be awakened there and made to travel through and awaken all the chakras in turn. In fact, the seat of kundalini is actually sahasrara. Mooladhara is only a manipulating center or switch, like the other chakras, but it happens to be easier for most people to operate this switch.

Each of the chakras is independent; they are not connected with each other. This means, if kundalini shakti awakens in mooladhara, it goes directly to sahasrara, to a particular center in the brain. Similarly, from swadhithana the shakti passes directly to sahasrara, from manipura it goes straight to sahasrara and so on. Kundalini can be awakened in an individual chakra or it can awaken throughout the whole network of chakras collectively. From each chakra, the awakening shock moves up to the top of sahasrara. However, the awakening is not sustained and those centers in the brain return to dormancy. This is what is meant by the return of kundalini to mooladhara.



If kundalini awakens in an individual chakra, the experiences which are characteristic of that chakra will be brought into consciousness. This may also occur when one does the practices for an individual chakra. For example, swadhisthana practices will raise joy; manipura practices will increase the self-assertion; anahata stimulation will expand the love; vishuddhi practices will awaken discrimination and wisdom, and ajna practices will increase the flow of intuition, knowledge and perhaps extrasensory abilities and so on.

If the nervous system is highly aroused, we may have other faculties opening because of the general arousal of the brain. This probably results from stimulation of an area in the lower end of the brain called the *reticular formation*. The function of this area is to rouse the whole brain or to relax it, as in sleep.

The reticular formation and related areas have an inherent rhythm which is responsible for our sleeping/waking cycles, but it is also largely activated by sensations from outside - by light, sound, touch, etc., and from inside via the autonomic nervous system. It is the latter which seems to account for the more general arousal caused by the kundalini practices and other powerful yoga practices such as kumbhaka or breath retention.

Kundalini - energy or nerve messages?

There are a number of schools of thought as to what kundalini really is. Many yogis say that kundalini is a flow of pranic energy along an esoteric pathway (sushumna) associated with the spinal axis. They consider that it is part of the flow of prana within the meshwork of the pranic body and that there is no anatomical counterpart. Other yogis relate their perceptions of kundalini to the flow of messages along the nerve fibers. These arise in the networks of the autonomic plexuses and ascend along tracts in the spinal cord to definite anatomical centers in the brain.

These schools of thought use different descriptions to convey the experience of kundalini, but they all agree that the experience of kundalini is a total psychophysiological event which centers around the spinal cord. Within the spinal cord there is a very important fluid, the cerebrospinal fluid. When, through practices such as pranayama, awakening occurs in mooladhara chakra, this fluid gets excited. We cannot really say what happens to it because even the scientists are not exactly sure, but by studying the experiences of kundalini awakening, one thing is apparent. When the cerebrospinal fluid moves through the vertebral column, it alters the phases of consciousness and this is a very important process as far as evolution is concerned.

It is the chitta or consciousness which undergoes evolution in man. Chitta does not have a location point in the body, it is psychological in nature, but it is controlled by the information supplied by the *indriyas* or senses. While chitta is being constantly supplied with information, its evolution is blocked, but if you prevent the passage of information from the indriyas, chitta will evolve very quickly. That is to say, if you isolate chitta from the information being relayed through the eyes, nose, ears, skin and tongue, chitta is then compelled to experience independence.

When the cerebrospinal fluid is affected during pranayama, the senses become dull and their messages are relayed to chitta very slowly. Sometimes, when the cerebrospinal fluid is highly stimulated, all sensory impulses are suspended and experiences take place within the chitta. Sometimes these

experiences are fantastic, you might see light, feel the whole earth trembling or experience your body as if it were as light as a piece of cotton. These and others are the experiences of chitta as a consequence of the cerebrospinal fluid's reactions.

One world renowned scientist, the late Itzhak Bentov, put forward the theory that kundalini is an effect caused by the rotation of nerve impulses around the cortex of the brain during meditation. He considered that this is caused by rhythmical pressure waves which result from the interaction of the heart beat, breathing, and the fluid inside the skull, thereby causing the brain to oscillate up and down which stimulates specific nerve currents in the brain.

Unlocking the storehouse of cosmic consciousness

Although there are varying views about kundalini, one thing is certain - kundalini has the ability to activate the human consciousness in such a way that the person can develop his most beneficial qualities, can enter a much more intimate relationship with nature about him, and can become aware of his oneness with the whole cosmos.

All the great miracles of the remote and recent past, and the ones yet to come, have sprung from what is known as the storehouse of cosmic consciousness, the golden egg, the golden womb, the hidden hiranyagarbha within the structure of the human brain. This particular center in us is not sleeping or inactive, but it is unconscious, only because we are not conscious of it. What came as revelation to the ancient rishis, to Newton and Einstein and to many other great seers, is existing in us also, but it came to their conscious plane while it does not come to ours. This is the only difference between the inspired artist and the common man.

The aim of kundalini yoga is not really to awaken the power of man, but rather to bring the power down to earth or to bring the power of the unconscious or higher consciousness, to normal consciousness. We have no need to awaken the consciousness, for it is ever awake. We have only to gain complete control over our higher conscious forces. By means of kundalini yoga we just try to bring the centers from mooladhara to ajna into operation so that the higher knowledge will be gradually revealed to us.

Today, man has mastered the material dimension, the energy of prakriti and discovered the mysteries of nature. Now, through the process of kundalini, man should become master of the spiritual dimension.

Chapter 5

Methods of Awakening

According to the tantras, kundalini can be awakened by various methods which can be practiced individually or in combination. However, the first method cannot be practiced, because it is awakening by birth. Of course, it is too late for most of us to take advantage of this particular method, but some of us may be instrumental in producing children who have awakened kundalini.

Awakening by birth

By a favourable birth, if your parents were highly evolved, you can have an awakened kundalini. It is also possible to be born with an awakened sushumna, ida or pingala nadi. This means that from the time of birth your higher faculties will be operating either partially or fully. If a child comes with partial awakening, he is called a saint, and if he comes with full illumination, he is known as an incarnation, avatara or son of God.

If one is born with an awakened kundalini, his experiences are very much under control. They take place in him right from the beginning in a natural way, so he never feels that something extraordinary is happening to him. A child with an awakened kundalini has clarity of vision, a high quality of thinking and a sublime philosophy. His attitude of life is somewhat unusual as he has total detachment. To him, his parents were only his means of creation, and therefore he is unable to accept the normal social relationship with them. Although he may live with them, he feels as if he were just a guest. Such a child exhibits a very matured behaviour and he does not react emotionally with anything in life. As he grows he becomes aware of his mission and purpose in life.

Many of us may wish to give birth to a yogi or an enlightened child but it is not such a simple matter. Every marriage or union of parents cannot produce a yogi, even if the man and woman practice yoga morning and night. It is only under certain circumstances that a higher being can be produced. In order to usher a highly evolved soul into this world, one has first to transform one's gross desires into spiritual aspirations.

It is very difficult to convince people of the west that a child can be born in an enlightened state, because they have the moral attitudes of a particular religion deeply ingrained in their minds and their faith. For them, the union between a man and a woman is sin. If you explain to them that a yogi can be produced as a result of the sexual union, they say, "No! How can a yogi be born out of sin?"

It is possible that a new generation of supermen will be produced in this way. Through the practices of yoga you can transform the quality of your genes. If genes can produce artists, scientists, inventors and intellectual geniuses, then why not awakened kundalini? You have to transform the quality of your sperm or ova by firstly transforming your whole consciousness. Neither drugs nor diet will transform your genes, but if you change your consciousness, you can then effect the elements of the body and ultimately change the quality of the sperm and ova. Then you will have children with awakened kundalini. They will become the yogis and spiritual masters of the house who set things right for you. They will say, "Mummy, you are not the physical body." "Papa, drinking is no good."

Those of you who enter married life should go into it keeping in mind that the purpose is not just pleasure, or to produce offspring, but to create a genius. All over the world, people who marry for progeny should try for higher quality children.

Mantra

The second method of awakening kundalini is through steady regular practice of mantra. This is a very powerful, smooth and risk-free method, but of course it is a sadhana which requires time and a lot of patience. First you need to get a suitable mantra from a guru who knows yoga and tantra, and who can guide you through your sadhana. When you practise the mantra incessantly, it develops in you the vision of a higher force and enables you to live amidst the sensualities of life with indifference to them.

When you throw a pebble into a still lake, it produces circular ripples. In the same way, when you repeat a mantra over and over again, the sound force gathers momentum and creates vibrations in the ocean of the mind. When you repeat the mantra millions and billions of times, it permeates every part of your brain and purifies your whole physical, mental and emotional body.

The mantra must be chanted loudly, softly, on the mental plane and on the psychic plane. By practising it at these four levels, kundalini awakens methodically and systematically. You can also use the mantra by repeating it mentally in coordination with the breath or you can sing it aloud in the form of kirtan. This creates a great potential in mooladhara and awakening takes place.

Closely related to mantra yoga is the awakening through sound or music - nada yoga. Here the sounds are the bija mantras and the music consists of particularly melodies corresponding to particular chakras. This is a most tender and absorbing way of awakening.

Tapasya

The third method of awakening is tapasya, which means the performance of austerities. Tapasya is a means of purification, a burning or setting on fire so that a process of elimination is created, not in the physical body, but in the mental and emotional bodies. Through this process the mind, the emotions and the whole personality are cleansed of all the dirt, complexes and patterns of behavior that cause pain and suffering. Tapasya is an act of purification. It should not be misunderstood to involve standing naked in cold water or snow, or observing foolish and meaningless austerities.

When you want to eliminate a bad habit, the more you want to get rid of it, the more powerful it becomes. When you abandon it in the waking state, it appears in dreams, and when you stop those dreams, it expresses itself in your behavior or manifests in disease. This particular habit must be destroyed at its psychic root, not only at the conscious level. The samskara and vasana must be eliminated by some form of tapasya.

Tapasya is a psychological or psycho-emotional process through which the aspirant tries to set in motion a process of metabolism that will eradicate the habits that create weakness and obstruct the awakening of willpower. 'I must do this but I can't'. Why does this difference between resolution and implementation arise in the mind of the aspirant? Why is it so great? It is due to a deficiency of will; and that weakness, that distance or barrier between resolution and execution can be removed through regular and repeated practice of tapasya. Then the willpower makes a decision once and the matter is finished. This strength of will is the fruit of tapasya.

The psychology of austerity plays a very important part in the awakening of man's latent power. It is not well understood by modern man who has unfortunately accepted that man lives for 'the pleasure principle', as propounded by Freud and his disciples. The psychology of austerity is very sound and certainly not abnormal. When the senses are satisfied by the objective pleasures, by the comforts and luxuries, the brain and nervous system become weak and the consciousness and energy undergo a process of regression. It is in this situation that the method of austerity is one of the most powerful and sometimes explosive methods of awakening.

Here the manifestations are tremendous and the aspirant has to face his lower instincts in the beginning. He confronts a lot of temptations and the assaults of the satanic and tamasic forces. All the evil or negative samskaras or karmas of many, many incarnations rise to the surface. Sometimes fear manifests very powerfully or attachment to the world comes with a great force. In some people, sexual fantasies haunt the mind for days together, while others become lean and thin, or even sick. At this juncture, siddhis can appear. One develops extrasensory perceptions, he can read the minds of others, he can suppress others by a thought, or his own thoughts materialize. In the beginning, black forces manifest and all these siddhis are negative or of a lower quality. Tapasya is a very, very powerful method of awakening which everybody cannot handle.

Awakening through herbs

The fourth method of awakening is through the use of specific herbs. In Sanskrit this is called *ausadhhi*, and it should not be interpreted as meaning drugs like marijuana, LSD, etc. Ausadhhi is the most powerful and rapid method of awakening but it is not for all and very few people know about it. There are herbs which can transform the nature of the body and its elements and bring about either partial or full awakening, but they should never be used without a guru or qualified guide. This is because certain herbs selectively awaken ida or pingala and others can suppress both these nadis and quickly lead one to the mental asylum. For this reason, ausadhhi is a very risky and unreliable method.

In the ancient vedic texts of India, there are references to a substance called soma. Soma was a juice extracted from a creeper which was picked on special days of the dark lunar fortnight. It was placed in an earthen pitcher and buried underground until the full moon. Then it was removed and the juice was extracted and taken. This induced visions, experiences and an awakening of higher consciousness.

The Persians knew another drink, *homa*, which may have been the same as soma. In Brazil and some of the African countries, people used hallucinogenic mushrooms and in the Himalayan regions marijuana or hashish were taken with the thought that they might provide a shortcut in arousing spiritual awakening. From time to time, in different parts of the world, other things were also discovered and used, some being very mild in effect and others being very concentrated.

With the help of the correct herbs, purified aspirants were able to visualize divine beings, holy rivers, mountains, sacred places, holy men and so on. When the effects of the herbs were more concentrated, they could separate the self from the body and travel astrally. Of course it was often illusory, but sometimes it was a real experience as well. People were able to enter a state of samadhi and awaken their kundalini. In this particular field of awakening, the sexual instinct was completely eliminated. Therefore, many aspirants preferred this method and have been trying to discover the appropriate herbs for many centuries.

With ausadhhi awakening the body becomes still and quiet, the metabolism slows and the temperature drops. As a result of this, the nerve reflexes function differently and in most cases the ausadhhi awakening is a permanent one. However, the ausadhhi method of awakening is no longer practiced because it was misused by the ordinary people who were neither prepared, competent nor qualified. As a result, knowledge of the herbs was withdrawn and today it is a closely guarded secret.

Everyone is craving kundalini awakening, but few people have the discipline and mental, emotional, physical and nervous preparation required to avoid damage to the brain and tissues. So, although no one is teaching the ausadhhi method of awakening today, its knowledge has been transmitted from generation to generation through the guru/disciple tradition. Perhaps some day, when the nature of man changes and we find better intellectual, physical and mental responses, the science may again be revealed.

Raja yoga

The fifth method of inducing awakening is through raja yoga and the development of an equipoised mind. This is the total merging of individual consciousness with superconsciousness. It occurs by a sequential process of concentration, meditation and communion; experience of union with the absolute or supreme.

All the practices of raja yoga, preceded by hatha yoga, bring about very durable experiences, but they can lead to a state of complete depression, in which you do not feel like doing anything. The raja yoga method is very difficult for most people as it requires time, patience, discipline and perseverance.

Concentration of mind is one of the most difficult things for modern man to achieve. It cannot be undertaken before the mind has been stabilized, the karmas deactivated and the emotions purified through karma and bhakti yogas. It is the nature of the mind to remain active all the time, and this constitutes a very real danger for the people of our time, because when we try to concentrate the mind we create a split. Therefore, most of us should only practice concentration up to a certain point.

Following the awakening through raja yoga, changes take place in the aspirant. He may transcend hunger and all his addictions or habits. The sensualities of life are no longer appealing, hunger and the sexual urge diminish and detachment develops spontaneously. Raja yoga brings about a slow transformation of consciousness.

Pranayama

The sixth method of awakening kundalini is through pranayama. When a sufficiently prepared aspirant practises pranayama in a calm, cool and quiet environment, preferably at a high altitude, with a diet only sufficient to maintain life, the awakening of kundalini takes place like an explosion. In fact, the awakening is so rapid that kundalini ascends to sahasrara immediately.

Pranayama is not only a breathing exercise or a means to increase prana in the body; it is a powerful method of creating yogic fire to heat the kundalini and awaken it. However, if it is practiced without sufficient preparation, this will not occur because the generated heat will not be directed to the proper centers. Therefore, jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandhas are practiced to lock the prana in and force it up to the frontal brain.

When pranayama is practised correctly, the mind is automatically conquered. However, the effects of pranayama are not that simple to manage. It creates extra heat in the body, it awakens some of the centers in the brain and it can hinder the production of sperm and testosterone. Pranayama may also lower the temperature of the inner body and even bring down the rate of respiration and alter the brain waves. Unless you have practised the shatkarmas first and purified the body to a degree, when these changes take place, you may not be able to handle them.

There are two important ways of awakening kundalini - one is the direct method and the other is the indirect. Pranayama is the direct method. The experiences it brings about are explosive and results are attained very quickly. Expansion is rapid and the mind attains quick metamorphosis. However, this form of kundalini awakening is always accompanied by certain experiences, and for one who is not sufficiently prepared mentally, philosophically, physically and emotionally, these experiences can be terrifying. Therefore, although the path of pranayama is a jetset method, it is drastic and is considered to be a very difficult one that everybody cannot manage.

Kriya yoga

The seventh method of inducing awakening is kriya yoga. It is the most simple and practical way for modern day man as it does not require confrontation with the mind. Sattvic people may be able to awaken kundalini through raja yoga, but those who have a tumultuous, noisy, rajasic mind will not succeed this way. They will only develop more tensions, guilt and complexes, and may even become schizophrenic. For such people kriya yoga is by far the best and most effective system.

When you practise kriya yoga, kundalini doesn't wake up with force, nor does it awaken like a satellite or as a vision or experience. It wakes up like a noble queen. Before getting up she will open her eyes, then close them again for a while. Then she'll open her eyes again, look here and there, turn to the right and left, then pull the sheet up over her head and doze. After some time she will again stretch her body and open her eyes, then doze for a while. Each time she stretches and looks around she says, 'Hmmm'. This is what happens in kriya yoga awakening.

Sometimes you feel very grand and sometimes you don't feel quite right. Sometimes you pay too much attention to the things of life and sometimes you think everything is useless. Sometimes you eat extravagantly and sometimes you don't eat for days together. Sometimes you have sleepless nights and at other times you do nothing but sleep and sleep. All these signs of awakening and reversion, awakening and reversion keep coming every now and then. Kriya yoga does not create an explosive awakening. However, it can bring visions and other very mild and controllable experiences.

Tantric initiation

This eighth method of awakening kundalini through tantric initiation is a very secret topic. Only those people who have transcended passions, and who understand the two principles of nature, Shiva and Shakti, are entitled to this initiation. It is not meant for those who have urges lurking within them or for those who have a need for physical contact. With the guidance of a guru, this is the quickest possible way to awaken kundalini.

There are no extraordinary experiences or feelings and there's no neurosis; everything seems quite normal, but at the same time, without your knowledge, awakening is taking place. Transformation takes place and your awareness expands, but you don't know it. In this particular system, awakening and arriving at sahasrara are the same event. It takes just three seconds. However, who is qualified for this path? Few people in this world have completely transcended the sexual urge and overcome their passions.

Shaktipat

The ninth method of awakening is performed by the guru. It is called shaktipat. The awakening is instant, but it is only a glimpse, not a permanent event. When the guru creates this awakening you experience samadhi. You can practise all forms of pranayama and all asanas, mudras and bandhas without having learned them or prepared for them. All the mantras are revealed to you and you know the scriptures from within. Changes take place in the physical body in an instant. The skin becomes very soft, the eyes glow and the body emits a particular aroma which is neither agreeable nor disagreeable.

This shaktipat is conducted in the physical presence or from a distance. It can be transmitted by touch, by a handkerchief, a mala, a flower, a fruit or anything edible, depending on the system the guru has mastered. It can even be transmitted by letter, telegram or telephone.

It is very difficult to say who is qualified for this awakening. You may have lived the life of a renunciate for fifty years, but still you may not get it. You may be just an ordinary person, living a non-spiritual life, eating all kinds of rubbish foods, but the guru may give you shaktipat. Your eligibility for shaktipat does not depend on your social or immediate conduct, but on the point of evolution you have reached. There is a point in evolution beyond which shaktipat becomes effective, but this evolution is not intellectual, emotional, social or religious. It is a spiritual evolution which has nothing to do with the way you live, eat, behave or think, because generally we do these things, not because of our evolution, but according to the way we have been brought up and educated.

Self-surrender

We have discussed the nine established methods of awakening kundalini, but there is a tenth way - don't aspire for awakening. Let it happen if it happens: "I am not responsible for the awakening, nature is accomplishing everything. I accept what comes to me." This is known as the path of self-surrender, and in this path, if you have a strong enough belief that your kundalini will indeed awaken, twenty thousand years can pass in the twinkling of an eye and kundalini will awaken instantly.

Effects of the different methods of awakening

When the awakening of kundalini takes place, scientific observations have revealed different effects. Those who have awakened kundalini from birth do not register any emotional changes. They are like blocks of wood. Those who have awakened kundalini through pranayama have a great quantum of electrical charges in the spinal column and throughout the body, and momentarily they could manifest schizophrenically.

Karma yoga and bhakti yoga are considered comparatively safe and mild methods of awakening, but the tantric methods are more scientific than the non-tantric methods, because in tantra there is no scope for suppression or dispersion of energy. In non-tantric methods there is antagonism - one mind wants it and the same mind is saying no. You suppress your thoughts, you want to enjoy, but at the same time you think "No, it is bad."

I am not criticizing non-tantric methods. They are the mild methods which do not bring you any trouble. They are just like beer - you drink a little bit and nothing happens, drink four to ten glasses and not much will happen. But tantric methods are like LSD, you have a little and it takes you right out. If something is wrong, it is wrong; if something is right, it is right.

Chapter 6

Preparing for the Awakening

Without a guru you can practise any form of yoga, but not kundalini. This is an extremely powerful system. Kundalini yoga does not start suddenly or with fits. You don't have to make any substantial changes in your way of life, but you must begin to practise. Do not start with advanced practices; for some time you should train and prepare the physical body, then go to the mind and gradually explore the deeper levels. Before commencing the practices which bring about the actual awakening of kundalini, you must prepare yourself step by step on the physical, mental and emotional planes. If you are patient and prepare correctly, awakening of kundalini will definitely take place.

Adequate preparation is necessary to ensure that one has the strength to bear the impact of full awakening of the mighty potential force within. Most of us do not even have control over our physical manifestations and behaviors. Supposing you were given a sleep inducing injection, you would become drowsy whether you wanted to or not. This is because you have no control over the processes and actions of your brain and you do not know how to control sleep. Similarly, if you have a headache, you are unable to exert control over it. When physical manifestations such as sleep and pain are not under your control, what would happen if other manifestations began to occur in your brain? You wouldn't be able to control them. Therefore, before kundalini awakens, it is important that you are able to manage the mind.

If you can maintain a balanced mind in the face of mental and emotional conflicts and you can endure anger, worry, love and passion, disappointment, jealousy, hatred, memories of the past, sufferings and sorrows, you are ready for the awakening. If you can still feel joy when the scales are heavily loaded against you, you are an aspirant for kundalini yoga. Before you bring into use a generator of five megawatts, you must have a factory ready to utilize the energy. In the same way, before you awaken kundalini shakti, you must be able to merge yourself with the higher spirit and you must know how to utilize the creative energy of kundalini.

Therefore, if you want to follow the path of kundalini yoga, it is absolutely essential to have a guru with whom you feel intimate. Many people say the guru is within, but are they able to communicate with him, understand him and follow his intricate instructions? If so, it is possible to proceed with this internal guidance, but few people have such a relationship with the inner guru. They need an external guru first. He will connect them with the inner guru. If you have a guru he will help you to prepare for kundalini awakening, he will be there if you need any advice and he will guide you through the crisis of awakening.

Usually, because we are religious minded people, our relationship with guru is based on a sort of formality. To us he is worshipful, respectable, superior and supreme, but at the time of awakening, all these attitudes to guru must be set aside. At this time you must evolve a more intimate attitude, as if your relationship was based on love, not merely devotion and worship. When you serve your mother you do so with an attitude of love, not respect and veneration. With this same attitude you should serve the guru, then his direct influence is upon you. Then, if there is excitement in any chakra, the relationship with guru will balance it.

The relationship between guru and disciple is the most intimate of relationships; it is neither a religious nor a legal relationship. Guru and disciple live like an object and its shadow. The guru is the best thing in spiritual life, and if you have a guru you are very fortunate. However, it is sometimes difficult to find a guru. If you haven't a guru, you can cultivate a mental picture of him, try to feel his guidance and continue practising faithfully. You will surely succeed.

The time factor

Preparation is not the job of one lifetime. Man strives spiritually life after life. In fact, this body is given to you only for that purpose. For eating, sleeping and sexual interaction a human body is not necessary, so in our lower stages of evolution we had an animal body. However, even with this human body, we still have animal in us, so these natural urges follow us. Let them, but remember, this body is not for their fulfillment alone. In this human body the consciousness is the most important point. Man is aware of his awareness and he does not only think, he knows that he thinks. The evolution of his awareness has been going on life after life. And what you have been practising for your spiritual life in the last five to ten years is in addition to what you have already done.

Supposing your children are studying in primary school and you are transferred to another city. Where will your children begin their education in the new city? Right from the beginning? No, from the point where they left their studies. The same thing happens in reincarnation. That is why, even though you may have brothers and sisters born of the same mother and father, they will be different from you. In your previous incarnation your preferences were different from theirs. May be after a few incarnations they may come to the point where you are now. So we can't say how long preparation takes, because this life is one of those milestones and you have left behind many, many milestones.

However, if you are eager to awaken kundalini and the chakras, you should not be in a hurry. Set apart twelve years of your life for this purpose. This is not to say that the awakening cannot be brought about within one, two or three years - it can be. Total awakening can even take place in a month, or the guru can give you awakening in one day, but you will be unable to hold and sustain the awakening. When one is in possession of a weak mind which cannot sustain even a little bit of cheerfulness or excitement, or bear the death of a spouse or separation from a loved one, how can he sustain the tremendous force of an awakened kundalini? Therefore, the twelve years are not for the actual awakening, but for preparation so you can hold and sustain the awakening.

Where to begin

The practices of kundalini yoga are intended to create the awareness, not necessarily to awaken kundalini. First of all we have to decide whether kundalini is already awakened. It may already be on the way and you are opening the garage and there is no car because it is already on the highway. When you go to satsang, do some kirtan or lead a yogic lifestyle, you begin to have experiences and you realize something is happening to you. Then, when you discuss kundalini and the chakras with a guru you start to understand.

The practices that you do develop your awareness and help you to remember your connection with your past evolution. They remove the veil which separates this current incarnation from the previous one. I'll give you a very gross example.

There was a boy who was the only son of a very rich man. The boy went crazy and was sent to a mental hospital. He ran away and used to go from house to house begging for food. He did not know that his parents had died and he had inherited a large estate, cars and shops and a lot of money in fixed deposits. One day his uncle found him and had him treated properly. The boy recovered from his mental illness and remembered everything about his heritage. Similarly, there is a process of remembering, and when it takes place, you know exactly where you stand.

So, practices are necessary to remove the veil in front of the consciousness which separates the two lives. Once you know that your kundalini is already in the process of transition, then practices are of no real use. If you are practising, it is because you are forced to, and if you are not practising, it is because you are forced not to. During the period of transition of kundalini the practices are not useless, but your efforts to practise them are of no use. However, if there is no awakening, if kundalini is in mooladhara or swadhisthana or in between the two, then that's the time for the practices which are enjoined in the books.

It is very important that you awaken sushumna before kundalini. This essential point has not been stressed clearly in any books, but Swami Sivananda hinted at it in his writings. If sushumna is not opened, where will the shakti go? It will pass through either ida or pingala and complications will arise.

You must also undergo purification of the tattwas or elements and purification of the chakras and nadis. Otherwise, when kundalini awakens there will be a traffic jam. Asanas, pranayama and the hatha yoga shatkarmas provide the best means of purification. Surya namaskara and surya bheda pranayama purify pindala nadi and the shatkarmas and pranayama will purify and awaken sushumna. There are specific asanas that are very important for purifying the nadis and inducing a mild awakening in the chakras. So, start with purification of the tattwas by the hatha yoga cleansing techniques. Take up asanas next and then pranayama. Later you can practice mudras and bandhas and then begin kriya yoga.

Awakening before preparation

If experience comes before you are properly prepared, you should immediately start to prepare yourself. The first thing to do is start fasting or switch to a light diet. You should also live quietly and avoid social interactions, reading books and magazines. Of course, during this period you must not take any drugs or medicines and you must guard against introducing any chemicals into the body.

If you minimize your interactions with the world outside, the experiences will subside after five or six days and you can resume your normal life. You should then start searching for someone who can give you further guidance.

Proceed to an ashram

When you know that kundalini is arousing, as soon as you can, you should retire to a congenial place. As far as I know, the only congenial place is an ashram, where you can be with a guru and like-minded people. An ashram is a community where the inmates have plenty of work, no attachments, no hatred or prejudices, a simple life, little to eat, no comforts nor luxuries, only the bare essentials. There are no social expectations and pressures in an ashram, there's no fashion, no show and no useless conversations and gossip. People don't interfere with each other.

If you live in an ashram the awakening of kundalini can be streamlined and if a mental crisis occurs, you are free to experience whatever happens. If you don't want to eat, it's o'key; if you can't sleep and you just want to sit, it's alright; if you have emotional problems or no emotions at all, people will understand and leave you alone.

If you stay with your family during the crisis period, they may send you off to a mental hospital. If you don't feel like eating they'll say, 'Not eating today?' And when they see you haven't eaten for a few days, they'll say, 'Something is wrong with him', and they'll try to get you to see a doctor. Or if you are married, when your behaviour seems a little strange, your partner might be ready to divorce you. So it is much better to get out of these places. That is why there are so many monasteries and ashrams all over the world.

What to practise in the ashram

In the ashram you should practise purification of the physical body through the shatkarmas, to balance the acid, wind and mucus in the body. Physical and mental purification will also take place on account of the pure and simple ashram diet. The physical body must be kept very, very light and made sattvic and entirely free of toxins.

If you are a bhakta by temperament, spend your time in prayer, kirtan or bhajan. If you are an intellectual, then read books, talk minimum, practise hatha yoga and fast from time to time. If you are a very active person, work hard and dedicate yourself to karma yoga.

It is also necessary to perfect the sitting posture, as you must be able to sit comfortably in one of the three postures: siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, padmasana or vajrasana. The best and most powerful of these is siddhasana/siddha yoni asana.

Some people think they should practise a lot of meditation or pranayama when kundalini is ascending so it will go straight to sushumna. However, I don't think meditation is necessary anymore, because when kundalini is in the process of transition, you can do nothing with your mind. If it is quiet, it is quiet,

nothing can disturb it. If your mind is agitated, you can do nothing about it because that is the effect of the awakening of kundalini. It is not the effect of your practice.

The movement of consciousness during the transition of kundalini is spontaneous, whether it is depression, a state of trance, an experience or visions a feeling or sensation in the body; you can't alter any of them. They will continue because they are forced on you, they are evolving in you because you are passing through that stage. But if you live in the non-agitating ashram environment and partake of ashram food and share in the karma yoga, there will not be disturbances in your experiences.

Regarding pranayama or kriyas, when the experience is moving onwards, pranayama happens by itself, you don't have to think what to do. Sometimes kevala kumbhaka takes place, or you automatically begin to practise bhastrika or ujjayi. Moola bandha or vajroli happen by themselves, or you begin to do asanas spontaneously. So you don't have to worry, just follow the flow of experience and take care of your environment and food, and make sure nobody disturbs you.

The role of karma yoga

Karma yoga is a very important part of spiritual life. Even if you practise austerity or mantra, use herbs, practise pranayama, undergo tantric initiation or get shaktipat, or are born with awakened kundalini, if you do not follow the path of karma yoga, your evolution will definitely be retarded at some point. If you have a good, strong automobile but the road is bumpy and covered in rocks, pebbles and marsh, try to accelerate and see what happens. It is very important that the mind is prepared and the personality is rendered ready. Samskaras, positive and negative, must be exhausted, awareness must be extended to every level, dedication or consecration must be perfected, your attachments, illusions and infatuations must be spotted, scrutinized and analyzed. All that is not possible without doing karma yoga.

Karma yoga is not directly responsible for the awakening of kundalini, but without its practice, kundalini cannot budge even one centimeter. Therefore, you can understand how important karma yoga is in the life of a disciple. You must read a lot about karma yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Perhaps that is the only philosophical and yogic explanation of karma yoga.

The need of discipline

Some people who have awakened kundalini look quite abnormal, and they behave in a peculiar way. They are very disorganized, unsystematic and totally confused, and you can't understand what they are doing. Therefore, in yoga you are advised to discipline yourself right from the beginning, so that when kundalini wakes up you remain disciplined. Otherwise you might go out to the street and just lie down there in a heap.

Sometimes I used to feel like this. When I was living in Rishikesh with my guru, I decided to visit the Ganga each morning and cross it five times, swimming through the icy cold water. One day Swami Sivananda called me and said: "Are you going to continue your swimming or am I going to put you out of this ashram?" This brought me back to my senses.

Life has to be disciplined, so that when kundalini awakens you can remain unconfused. You have to go to the office, bank, shops, and drive a car as well. Everybody cannot become a swami or stay in an ashram.

Specific recommendations

If the awakening of kundalini takes place through birth, pranayama, tantric initiation or shaktipat, you don't have to know anything. In these situations everything is beyond control; whether things go right or wrong; you are helpless. But when awakening takes place through the other methods, there are certain steps to take.

Except in tantric initiation, the sexual obligations have to be kept at bay. Food should be minimum, light and pure. One must have a guru and seek his guidance. Isolation from people is also very important.

Often when kundalini awakens in a person, he develops some sort of power. Some aspirants can materialize things, see clairvoyantly, hear clairaudiently or read the minds of others. And when you are amongst many people, it becomes a great temptation to exercise these powers. This can be dangerous. Whereas some people will not care if you can read their mind, others will feel it is a great impingement on their privacy and they may even want to shoot you. You see, people get scared at the exhibition of siddhis, so if you are facing any psychic manifestations, you will have to control them by force.

You know the great Tibetan yogi, Milarepa? He learned certain forms of magic and when he developed powers, he took revenge on his uncle and relatives. He created hailstorms that destroyed crops, huts and even lives, because he was then an ordinary man with love and hatred, friends and enemies. As long as you have likes and dislikes, you must not know what psychic powers you have. Milarepa had to perform penance for his misdeeds and suffer a lot at the hands of his guru.

Awakening by mantra and the need for seclusion

When awakening takes place by mantra, you will have to adjust your diet and retire from sexual obligations, not permanently, just for a while. From time to time it is also beneficial if you enter total seclusion. Twice a year is sufficient. In the beginning, start with one complete day. Then increase to three days, and when you are used to it, extend to a maximum period of nine days. It is preferable if you practise seclusion when it is neither too hot nor too cold.

During your first day of seclusion, observe silence and take only very light food and very little. Do not meditate or try to concentrate. From morning until evening, with a few breaks here and there, only practise your mantra on a mala. Don't do it with exertion or strain, and if you become introverted, stop it. Maintain your mental concept with the external experiences; do not aspire for an introverted meditative state. If introversion forces itself, keep your eyes open. Practise this for twelve hours, but not in one stretch. And for the last hour you must sit in meditation.

Next time you enter seclusion, go for three to nine days. During this period, devote as much time as possible to the repetition, resolution and reflection of the mantra. On the last day, at the end of the process, sit quietly for one hour of meditation.

Seclusion is actually recommended for all who are undergoing awakening of kundalini. At that time it is best to retire from active life and family environments for at least 45 days. Unless you are in semi-seclusion from the world at the time of awakening, as well as having strange experiences and hallucinations, you may have peculiar doubts, fears, anger and strong passions.

Sadhus live in seclusion because when there are interactions with people, so many thought currents move in the mind. Mixing with people, talking and gossiping create crosscurrents of love, hatred, infatuation, likes and dislikes, restlessness, worry and anxiety, desires and passions. Therefore, if you are

practising a lot of sadhana or you are facing the awakening of kundalini, do not have very much interaction with people. Then you will be spared a lot of mental turmoil.

Chapter 7

Diet for Kundalini Awakening

When the awakening of kundalini takes place it is important to have the correct diet, as food influences the mind and your nature. At the time of awakening, certain physiological changes occur in the body, particularly in the digestive system, and the digestive process is frequently disturbed, or hunger vanishes completely. Therefore, a kundalini aspirant has to be very careful about his diet.

Scientific observations have shown that the awakening of kundalini is generally accompanied by a state of nervous depression. The inner body temperature undergoes erratic changes and drops so much that it becomes much lower than the outer body temperature. Metabolism slows down and sometimes it even stops completely. Consumption of oxygen also falls. Therefore, when you are experiencing kundalini awakening your diet must be very light and easy to assimilate.

The best diet for a kundalini yogi is boiled food. Crushed wheat, barley, lentils and dal are excellent foods, particularly when they are in a liquid form. Fats and greasy foods should be avoided and protein should be kept to a minimum. This will take any strain off the liver, because when the mind undergoes a crisis, the liver is overtaxed.

It is good to increase the carbohydrates in your diet, eg. rice, wheat, maize, barley, potato, etc., because carbohydrates help to maintain the inner body temperature and they do not require much heat to digest. Eggs, chicken and other heavy foods do not produce much heat themselves, but they require heat for digestion.

The yogic diet is macrobiotic, it is simple, plain and relatively bland. From time to time, fruits and roots can also be taken, but they are not essential.

Dietary misconceptions

A great misunderstanding has taken place in the last twenty to thirty years, and that is that a yogi should only take milk, fruit and raw vegetables. On the basis of personal observations, trials and errors, I can never accept that this is correct. There are certain foods which are not meant for the human body at all. If you analyze your digestive and salivary secretions and the durability of the mucus membranes in the alimentary canal, you will find that they are not really meant for digesting meat and uncooked foods. Whereas carnivorous animals have short intestines so their food can be expelled quickly, before fermentation takes place, we have very long intestines (36 feet in length) and our food should take eighteen hours to pass through the body. Because well cooked vegetarian food is less likely to ferment, and we can keep it in our intestines for a full eighteen hours, it is the best for the human digestive tract.

Of course, this is not to say that people who take a non-vegetarian diet cannot awaken their kundalini, as history indicates otherwise. There have been many Christian, Tibetan and Sufi saints who awakened their kundalini although they took a meat diet. And we can't say what Christ, Moses, Mohammed and Buddha ate because we haven't seen. However, from scientific observations made in the event of kundalini awakening, we know what is likely to occur in our body. At certain periods we may not be able to digest raw foods and there may be days when the body cannot even accept water. Therefore, during the period of kundalini awakening, please take a diet which can be easily assimilated and eat the bare minimum for existence. Do not live to eat, but eat to live.

The essence of food

The food we eat is not merely to satisfy our taste. Every food item has an essence in it, and in yoga we call this sattva. Sattva means the ultimate essence of food, but please do not mistake this for vitamins or minerals. Sattva is the more subtle form of food. When you eat for the sake of taste or enjoyment, instead of attaining the sattva you only get the gross things. That is why the yogis and saints of all traditions have always lived on the minimum possible food during periods of sadhana.

When we overeat we create a burden for the digestive system, and when the digestive system is overburdened we are unable to extract the sattva from the food. Sattva is a substance which nourishes the thoughts and nervous system. When the thoughts are fed with sattva they are more refined and pure, and one is able to live in higher consciousness. Therefore, it is beneficial for a sadhaka to fast from time to time. When the body is kept light and pure it is far more capable of extracting the sattva from food.

The use of condiments

In the diet for kundalini aspirants, condiments have a very important role to play. Condiments such as coriander, cumin seeds, tumeric, aniseed, black pepper, green pepper, cayenne, cloves, mustard seed, cardamom, cinnamon and so on are also called digestives as they aid digestion. These substances are not spices for taste; they are condiments which have the same properties as the enzymes in the body, and by helping to break down the food for digestion, they conserve vital energy and help to maintain the body's internal temperature.

When we talk about diet, let us not talk about it in terms of puritanism. We must remember only one thing in this case, to be sure the body is capable of digesting all the food. Having made a thorough study of natural foods and having tried them on myself, I have come to the conclusion that a combination of natural and macrobiotic foods is best. I have also discovered that instead of cooking the food in your stomach, it is best to cook it properly in the pan. Five or six condiments should be added during cooking to liberate the enzymes and chemicals which enhance digestion. The combination of heat, condiments and enzymes breaks down the food into smaller and more basic components, thus making it easier to digest.

Yoga and diet are independent sciences

Although diet is an independent science, it is definitely related to every system of yoga. Of course the ideal diet varies from yoga to yoga. A hatha yogi practising shankhprakhshalana will not be able to eat lots of red peppers and black peppers or he'll die. The diet regime for a karma yogi, a bhakta yogi, raja yogi, hatha yogi and kriya yogi will not be the same.

A bhakta yogi can eat all types of sweets and confectionary, consume cheese, butter, milk, etc. and he can eat and eat because his metabolism is very fast. Similarly, a karma yogi can take cheese, coffee, raw foods or cooked food, and even a little bit of champagne, because he is working hard physically and his metabolism is also very fast. But in raja yoga and kundalini awakening, the metabolism becomes slow and you have to be very careful about your diet and how much you consume.

Over the years I have done a lot of work on food because I run ashrams where I have to manage all the affairs in relation to money, labor and the spiritual welfare of the ashram inmates. As it is not possible to provide different types of diets for the various aspirants of yoga, I have evolved two wonderful foods which suit everybody. One is for those who like rice and the other is for those who prefer wheat. You either cook the rice with dal (pulses such as lentils), vegetables and a few condiments, or you pound the wheat, add all the same ingredients to that and cook it well. I call this integrated kichari. You can add anything to it and it's alright. This is the cheapest and most nutritious of all the foods I have eaten in any part of the world. You can also eat as much kichari as you want without any fear, because it digests so smoothly. This diet is suitable for all yoga practitioners and it is ideal for those who are ranging high in spiritual life and are about to merge into the ultimate state.

For one who is serious about yoga and spiritual aspirations, diet is as important as yoga, but if you are only worried about your diet and are not practising yoga, then you are a fanatic.

Chapter 8

Risks and Precautions

The awakening of kundalini is a very important, pleasant and historical experience in the life of man. If you can see and experience something more than what you can generally see and experience through your senses, you are indeed fortunate. But at the same time, if you have such experiences without adequate preparation, you may be startled, frightened and confused. Therefore, before the actual awakening of kundalini occurs, it is better to experience some mild awakenings in the chakras first.

Nowadays, if you travel by motor car at a very high speed, you do not really feel anything unusual, but if a man did it a hundred years ago when there was no adaptation to speed, he would have felt very giddy. Similarly, if a sudden awakening takes place and you are not used to the experience, you may become disoriented. You will not be able to cope with the radical changes in perception or with the contents of the unconscious mind welling up into the consciousness. But if you have been practising hatha yoga and meditation, and have experienced slight awakenings previously, you will be better able to cope with it.

When the body in totality is purified by the practices of shatkarmas and hatha yoga, when the mind is purified by mantra, when the pranas are brought under control through the practices of pranayama and the diet is pure and yogic, at that time, awakening of kundalini takes place without any danger or accident. But with those who are in a hurry to awaken kundalini and who take to any practice in a haphazard manner without going through the preliminaries, and who do not take care of their diet, there will be some problems because they do not know how to control and utilize the fantastic energy they are unleashing.

The question of risk

There are so many whispers about the dangers of awakening and dark hints about people going crazy or developing disturbing powers. But everything in life is risky and there are far more dangers in ordinary daily life than you will encounter on the path of kundalini. Every time you walk across the street or travel by car or plane, you take a risk. In the pursuit of desires, passions and ambitions, people take great risks every day without thinking twice about it. Yet they allow the relatively minor risks of kundalini to deter them from pursuing the supreme goal of higher consciousness.

When a woman discovers she is pregnant, does she think it might be dangerous for her to have a child? She might die! She may have to have a caesarian! She may lose her figure for life! She may become seriously ill! Does a woman think like this and decide she doesn't want a child at all? No. Then why to think like this about kundalini?

Awakening of kundalini is the birth of Christ, Krishna, Buddha or Mohammed. It is one of the greatest events of human life, just as for a mother, to have a baby is one of the major and happiest events of her life, no matter what the consequences. In the same way, awakening of kundalini is one of the greatest events in the life of a yogi. It is the destiny of mankind, so why not go ahead with it?

Without involving yourself in a risk, nothing great in life can be achieved. Every great yogi, scientist, explorer and adventurer has faced risks. And so he has invented, discovered or made progress. Those people who are thinking and talking about risks are cowards, and such people should not even practise yoga. It is better that they eat, drink, be merry and die unenlightened.

Kundalini practices are certainly no more dangerous than many of the activities people engage in for the sake of thrills, sport or altered states of consciousness. The risks are not nearly as great as those associated with LSD, hashish, marijuana and alcohol, which are commonly used by many people in their everyday life. Those who practise kundalini yoga are assured of attaining states of expanded consciousness which are safer, smoother, more comprehensible and longer lasting than anything that can be obtained through the use of psychedelics.

The science of kundalini yoga has its own inbuilt safety mechanisms. If you perform asanas or pranayama incorrectly, nature will immediately send a warning and compel you to stop practising. In the same way, when kundalini awakening takes place and you are not prepared to face it, nature puts obstacles in your way. If ever you become scared and want to stop the process of kundalini awakening, all you have to do is revert to a gross lifestyle. Just revise all your passions, dreams and worldly ambitions.

Unless you are an extremely introverted person, you can proceed along the path of kundalini yoga without fear. If you are hypersensitive, have difficulty communicating with others and live within a sort of fantasy world, you will find kundalini yoga upsetting and even dangerous. Such people should not practise kundalini yoga or any techniques for exploring the inner world until they have developed the ability to strike fearlessly and confidently through the outer world. This also applies to timid and dependent people. For all these individuals, karma yoga is the way. They should lead a life of unselfish service in the world and develop non-attachment and maximum awareness.

Fear of mistakes

Some people worry about kundalini ascending through the wrong nadi, but there is no danger here, because if kundalini enters through any other nadi, the whole circuit will fuse. If kundalini has awakened but a chakra is blocked, say swadhisthana, then kundalini will only roam about in mooladhara

and all the instincts of that chakra will develop. You will become a high class animal for a while and may develop some siddhis. If there is any obstruction in the chakras beyond that, the energy will be blocked for a long time, affecting the psychological constitution. And if kundalini enters into the pranic nadi, pingala, it could set the whole brain into turmoil. However, this doesn't usually happen. Nature intervenes, and unless sushumna is clear, the chakra will not open and the energy will not be able to move further.

Mistakes do occur, but not in average individuals, because they are scared of something wrong happening somewhere. If they are practising and suddenly they feel they're going crazy, they will discontinue their practices immediately. So, every individual possesses a sort of fear. Before anything wrong can happen totally, man takes care of himself. However, there are some blockheads and very stuffy people who plod on no matter what happens. They don't care about the consequences and these are the people who generally get themselves into trouble.

Kundalini awakening and illness

If you take care of all the requirements, then no illness will come to you. However, many people are very hasty and impatient. When they want to make money, they want to make it overnight, quickly, and the same psychology is transferred into spiritual life; quick money and quick realization. With this impatience, sometimes we overstep the necessary prerequisites.

Some people develop weakness of the lower limbs because they have not trained their body through hatha yoga. Some people develop digestive disorders because they have not understood the relationship between food and the temperature of the body. Therefore, the prerequisites have to be observed. Those who suffer do so not because of the kundalini awakening, but because they have not harmonized the nervous system.

Through hatha yoga you must create a balance between the two forces in the physical body, the pranic and the mental. Even in modern times we say that a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems is absolutely essential to develop the higher faculties of the brain. When there is an imbalance between these two forces, that is, if one is predominant, the other is subservient, then you are supplying one energy in excess and the other energy is deficient. This inevitably leads to sickness.

Airing the unconscious

In the course of your practices there may be isolated awakenings in ajna chakra, in which the awareness enters the realms of the unconscious mind and you see figures, symbols and even monsters or benevolent beings. You may hear or experience many inexplicable things, but they are all simply products of your own unconscious mind and should be regarded as nothing more. With the awakening of psychic consciousness, the symbols belonging to your own personality come out. When this happens you may have a problem understanding, but just remember, these kinds of expressions are simply parts of your being which have been lying in reserve and they have to 'come out for airing'.

You should not be afraid of kundalini awakening but you must be prepared for the events that may occur. Otherwise, if you have a weak mind and are confronted by fear, it could lead to mental derangement. So, before you attempt kundalini awakening you should undergo a process of thought purification and develop understanding of your way of thinking.

When the prerequisites for kundalini awakening are followed properly, psychological and psycho-emotional symptoms do not occur. In fact, all these things happen before the actual event of kundalini awakening. But of course, when the awakening takes place, if the aspirant is not maintaining the proper discipline that is required, he is bound to get into some psychological cobwebs.

The awakening of kundalini should never be equated with obsessions or neurosis. When an explosion takes place it brings out whatever was in you. If you have a personality full of obsessions and mental blocks, that's going to explode. Therefore, before one attempts awakening of kundalini, he must have arrived at a point of purity of consciousness or clarity of mind, *chitta shuddhi*.

Purity of consciousness is not a religious terminology. You may have pure thoughts in your mind but you may not be pure at all. You may be thinking about purity, chastity, compassion, charity and generosity, but in the subterranean plane of your personality there may be conflicts or other unresolved mental problems. When the mind enters into meditation or samadhi, this subterranean level comes up to the surface. You begin to see all the debris and you feel it and enact it. This can happen at any time, when you're dreaming, when you are in a state of craziness and when kundalini is waking.

That is why a relentless effort should be made to render the mind free from all the disturbing archetypes or samskaras before you try to handle this project. An integration of karma, bhakti and raja yoga, tempered with hatha and gyana yoga, must be adopted first.

Purity and impurity

Although I recommend chitta shuddhi, I know that many people have an obsession about purity and impurity. They keep thinking they are impure and therefore they shouldn't try to awaken kundalini. But when the sun rises, what happens to the darkness? Purity and impurity are ethical and moral concepts created by society and religion. Awakening of kundalini is awakening of the great light in man. It rises like the sun, and when it can be seen on the horizon there will be no darkness, no pain, suffering, disappointment or impurity.

Siddhis and the ego factor

When one has been practising kundalini yoga for a couple of years and suddenly he starts having beautiful experiences, he tends to think he is superior to everybody else and may even consider himself as godly. To protect yourself from this, you must place yourself in the caliber of chela or disciple. A disciple remains a disciple, there is no promotion for him. Many people think that after twelve years of discipleship they will be promoted to guruhood, but this is not so.

In the path of kundalini yoga it is very important that you live the life of a disciple even after the awakening of kundalini, and not only after that, but even when Shiva and Shakti have united.

Kundalini yoga is the means for attaining supreme awareness and enlightenment, but if you get lost in the beauty of kundalini, you may not reach enlightenment. When at a certain stage the mind becomes very efficient and siddhis such as telepathy, clairvoyance, hypnotism, spiritual healing, etc. manifest, some aspirants take that to be a divine accomplishment and begin to think 'Now I am God.' Then, in the name of good to everybody, they start doing all sorts of funny magic. This feeds the ego, and in the course of time, their ignorance becomes very great.

There is extreme danger here and many aspirants get caught. Their ego becomes tremendously gross and they develop a strong feeling of grandeur. And that's as far as they get. Although there is nothing really wrong with psychic powers, those who seek them must know that they can completely

destroy their spiritual consciousness if they are not disciplined. You can become lost in these powers just as some people get lost in money, beauty, intellect and so on. These parapsychological attainments are momentary; they live with you for only a short period of time and then you lose them. They are only additional properties to be experienced and left behind in the wake of the dawning of supreme awareness. It is important to remember what Patanjali has said in the Yoga Sutras - "All these psychic manifestations are obstacles which block the free flow of consciousness towards samadhi."

Two opposing forces

In the realms of higher consciousness, there are both divine and demonical forces. Both these forces can be brought down to earth by the same techniques. Without higher awareness, when the awakening of the chakras begins, the knowledge and destructive energy of the atom bomb might be unleashed rather than the wisdom and spiritual power of the rishis. When kundalini awakens in a person with no dispassion and discrimination, who does not seek liberation and does not know the reality of this world, the consequences can be disastrous. Ultimately, that person will destroy himself, and possibly many others in the process.

Therefore, a kundalini aspirant must constantly work towards the development of higher awareness. To be conscious of the unconscious is very difficult. When your awareness is heavy and burdened with tension and confusion, it cannot survive for long in the unconscious state. But when your consciousness is light and clear, it can penetrate into the unconscious like a sharp and speedy arrow, successfully navigating past all the danger zones and emerging with higher knowledge.

Anyone who has the urge to expand his or her awareness is a pioneer. In this we are emerging from the confines of a mental prison in which the human race has been incarcerated for millennia. It is the privilege of each one of us to participate in this historic adventure, and we must be prepared for any eventuality. Kundalini yoga, if practised with dedication, patience and appropriate guidance, is the safest and most pleasant way of awakening that can ever take place in our lives.

With the awakening of kundalini, life becomes smooth. Plans and projects become clear, decisions become accurate, and the personality becomes dynamic and powerful. Therefore, do not be afraid of any risk. Once the awakening takes place, all your limitations will be overcome, because darkness can never exist in the face of light and limitations can never exist in the face of kundalini.

Chapter 9

Kundalini and Madness

Many individuals who experience the awakening of kundalini behave in a peculiar way; they think in a different style or pattern. They may see auras and visions, feel peculiar in the body, hear strange sounds and talk all sorts of nonsense. In society our brains are structured in a certain way; there is discipline and control which inhibit us from expressing ourselves freely. When the awakening of kundalini takes place, this conditioning is withdrawn and the lid is completely lifted from the mind. That is why the actions and words of those people who are undergoing kundalini awakening appear so nonsensical, deviant and oftentimes mad to the ordinary man.

During kundalini awakening and madness, people may manifest the same symptoms, but on closer examination a difference can be detected. Similarly, if you film a man laughing out of madness and a man laughing with his friends, they will look almost the same, but they are different. Most of us have probably read stories about the avadhoots and fakirs of India and the Sufi and Christian mystics. Externally, these God-intoxicated ones looked crazy, but if you were with them, they would have appeared and proved to be very clear. The inner consciousness of such people is absolutely lucid, organized and disciplined.

A great misunderstanding

Mystics throughout the ages have been persecuted for their experiences, which to the normal mundane consciousness are insanity, yet to the sage are ecstasy. Socrates was poisoned because he did not behave normally. Christ was crucified on the cross because his teachings were not understood. Al-Hallaj, the Sufi saint, was skinned alive because he spoke the truth without fear of the society. Joan of Arc and the witches of Salem were burned at the stake, as were many others. All have been persecuted and harassed by the mundane populace for their vision, which arose as a result of inner work. Due to this lack of understanding, many of the esoteric doctrines were hidden from the majority of people.

Of course, this was long ago. We live in a more enlightened world today, far from the barbarous atrocities of the past, or do we? War and poverty still exist, as do insanity and madness. People who are shown to be crazy, relative to the norms of our society, are locked up until they are 'better'. Yet, by what criteria are they judged insane? How do we know the difference between insanity and the ecstasy of enlightenment? Is it by the superficial external appearances that we sense with our limited sensory apparatus, or is it by some deeper inner fear that we are motivated to judge others insane because they do not behave like the majority? Some of the people in the west who are locked up as insane would be recognized in the east as having undergone higher spiritual experiences. Therefore, it is now up to science to determine some definite, concrete and reliable ways to differentiate between the broken, insane mind and the opening, enlightened mind.

Spiritual experiences in the east and west

Knowledge of the spiritual experience has been lost in the west. During the last few centuries, many unfortunate people whose kundalini had awakened were sent to mental hospitals and given drugs, electric shocks and other inappropriate treatments. The scientists and doctors believed that the awakening was an abnormal kind of behavior, and no one was able to accept or handle it, not even the person's immediate family or closest friends. That is why, in the last two hundred years, there have been so few great personalities in the west; they have all been committed to mental hospitals or they have remained quiet to avoid that fate.

In India the situation is quite different. There, when an individual expresses some abnormal symptoms, makes some very peculiar gestures or speaks of extraordinary dreams, it is understood that he is experiencing events beyond the mind. The Hindu belief is that the consciousness is not the finished product of nature, but is subject to evolution, and between one state of being and the next, there is a crisis. And when strange symptoms occur in

someone, they believe he is experiencing that crisis and that his consciousness is undergoing evolution. If a child's total personality is devoted to God and he can experience things beyond the mind, then his whole family is purified and such a child is universally respected.

A spiritual awakening or madness?

Though the process of spiritual awakening usually occurs without incident or interruption, it may happen that blockages and impurities in the body create symptoms which mimic various neurological and psychiatric conditions. These problems necessitate careful diagnosis to differentiate kundalini arousal and pathology.

It is actually very simple to distinguish between a mental or psychic phenomenon and a mental sickness, however much the symptoms may overlap: mental illness never develops in people who are free from conflict. If a person is undergoing a problem in his personal life, perhaps due to a death, loss of property or emotional breakdown, psychotic behavior can develop. Fantasies can take form and one's own psychological volition can manifest in the form of psychic energy. On the other hand, if there are no conflicts, anxieties or strong crosscurrents in a person's life, he cannot possibly have any mental disease. Suppose you have no apparent problems, no personal or social difficulties, but still you are having some strange suprasensual experiences. In a case like this, there should be no doubt about what is taking place.

A mad person doesn't have a constant and consistent flow of experience and his awareness is very dissipated. He is both disorganized externally and completely blinded internally. On the other hand, the awareness of a person who is awakened is constant and consistent. Whereas a person with an awakened consciousness can make accurate decisions and judgements, a crazy person cannot. Madness and spiritual awakening may both be characterized by a certain lack of control, but the spiritually awakened person is guided by a higher consciousness while the mad person is not.

When some suprasensual experience is taking place, it is important to consult an experienced person who has knowledge of illumination and also knows about madness. A guru can make the correct judgement and determine whether the brain has begun a process of regression or is actually progressing along transcendental lines. If there is some organic damage in the brain, it can be treated, but if the symptoms are spiritual, the person is initiated and given something to practise so his behavior is streamlined. He will not be forced into married life or any other social roles which are unsuitable for him. Instead, he will be exposed to saintly personalities and teachings.

If this type of guidance and support for the experience is not obtained, it is very easy to end up in a mental hospital, or even a prison. However, scientists are now broadening their description of the spectrum of human behavior and they are discovering that behavior can be psychic or spiritual in origin as well as psychological or physical. Everybody should understand one very important point. Awakening of kundalini should never be equated with abnormal psychological behavior because awakening of kundalini is a process of jumping out of the mind.

Chapter 10

Four Forms of Awakening

When we talk about awakening we should not confuse awakening of kundalini with other forms of awakening. Awakening of the chakras is completely different from awakening of kundalini. Awakening of sushumna is also quite a different event, and awakening of mooladhara chakra is not awakening of kundalini. Even if all the chakras from mooladhara up to ajna are awakened this does not mean that kundalini is awakened.

In the systematic process of awakening kundalini, the first step is to purify ida and pingala nadis and create harmony in their functioning. Next, all the chakras have to be awakened. Then sushumna nadi is awakened, and when there is a clear pathway for its ascent, kundalini can be awakened.

If the first three steps have been taken, awakening of kundalini will only have positive effects. But if they have been neglected and kundalini awakens, there will definitely be some negative results. Supposing you have awakened kundalini before sushumna awakening has taken place, then the shakti will not find a channel towards Shiva. It will remain obstructed in mooladhara chakra and will create tremendous sexual and neurotic problems. This is a negative result because you wanted to unite with Shiva and have higher experiences, whereas now you are experiencing the grosser things. And if the chakras are not awakened before kundalini, the shakti will get blocked in one of the chakras and remain stagnant, possibly for years. Some siddhis may develop and you may not be able to transcend them at all. This is also a negative effect.

Each form of awakening has its own psychic potential. Every nerve and fiber of your body is psychic; it is capable of producing psychic manifestations. There is a possibility of awakening the entire physical body. Every cell of the body is one individual. You are the macro-cosmic body for that microcosmic individual.

Step I: Disciplining ida and pingala

Ida and pingala nadis are responsible for the mundane existence. Pingala conducts the life that is in your body and ida conducts the consciousness. These two nadis respectively feed the two hemispheres of the brain which in turn control every activity of the body. It is not awakening of these nadis we aim towards, but discipline. As you know, ida and pingala function alternately and directly influence the temperature of the body, digestive and hormonal secretions, the brainwaves and all the bodily systems.

Ida and pingala function according to a natural cycle, but on account of poor eating habits and inharmonious lifestyles, the natural cycle is often disturbed. Sometimes one nadi predominates and the other is suppressed. This leads to mental and physical imbalances and generally results in disease. Therefore, ida and pingala must be disciplined or made to function according to the laws of nature. Only when there is harmony between these two nadis can sushumna be awakened.

So, through the practices of hatha yoga, pranayama and raja yoga, the nadis should be purified and disciplined. The best practice for this is actually nadi shodhana pranayama - nadi purifying pranayama.

Step 2: Awakening the chakras

From incarnation to incarnation the yoga we have been practising may have already awakened the lower chakras. Although most of us try to awaken mooladhara, swadhisthana, etc. it may not be necessary to awaken them because we may have evolved even beyond manipura on account of our efforts

in a previous life. It is even possible that kundalini may have ascended through the chakras but you don't know it because you haven't noticed any symptoms. However, in any case, it is essential that all the chakras must be awakened before we make an attempt to awaken sushumna.

If the chakras are not purified, then purification of the nadis will not serve any purpose. If the electrical junctions are not connected or properly organized, even if you have the best wiring available, how will the electrical energy be distributed? The chakras are the junctions from which the nadis, like cables, transmit the energy to different parts of the body.

Every point, speck or fiber of the body is directly related to one of the chakras. If you experience pain in any part of the body, the sensation will go to the chakra related to that particular area. This means your whole body is connected with one of the chakras. For example, the urinary, excretory and reproductive systems are fed by swadhisthana chakra. Besides this, the sexual organs are connected to mooladhara chakra. The digestive system, small intestine, large intestine, appendix, pancreas, duodenum, stomach and liver are all connected to manipura chakra. The heart and lungs are fed by anahata chakra.

However, in most people, the chakras beyond manipura are dormant. Because mooladhara chakra is the highest chakra in animal evolution, it is already functioning in most people. That is why everybody has a very acute sexual awareness and sex has become one of the most important events in man's life. Therefore, most of our social traditions are based upon this particular human requirement. The mere fact that today's society is utilizing the five tattwas of tantra (meat, fish, wine, grain and sexual interaction) in everyday life means that in most people, kundalini is somewhere between mooladhara and swadhisthana. Once kundalini leaves swadhisthana and ascends to manipura and anahata, you no longer need the five tattwas.

If you are stuck in mooladhara or swadhisthana, you will need to purify the higher chakras and bring them into operation. There are many ways of doing it. For those who are strong in mind, there are some higher practices. By concentration on bhrumadhya you can awaken one chakra, by the practice of uddiyana bandha you can awaken another, by practising mantra, your mantra or any bija mantra, you can awaken almost all the chakras one by one, and as a result of this awakening, you can have very good psychic experiences which you can easily handle. In my opinion, it is safer to awaken the chakras by the mild methods.

The asanas are intended to create mild awakening in the chakras. For example, sarvangasana will awaken vishuddhi, matsyasana will awaken anahata and bhujangasana will awaken swadhisthana. By awakening the chakras mildly, you will not have any jolting experiences. Sometimes, when a chakra awakens suddenly, you can have the experience of lower lives. This means you can be assailed by fear, anxiety, greed, passion, depression, etc.

Each chakra is symbolized by a certain animal, indicating a type of animal consciousness, and if sudden awakening of a chakra takes place, you may exhibit some of the animal emotions in either a mild or very strong way. For instance, fear is not a human emotion, nor is infatuation or violence. Of course, man is trying to expel the animal from him, but at the same time he is maintaining it. Therefore, care must be taken not to give an explosive manifestation to the awakening of the chakras.

Step 3: Awakening sushumna

In order to purify and awaken sushumna, a lot of work has to be done and you must be ready to cope with experiences that are more intense than those associated with chakra awakening. These experiences are beyond logic. They are not even real and they cannot be explained or properly understood. If the chakras are awakened, ida and pingala are balanced and the other nadis are also purified, but there is an obstruction in sushumna, then the awakening of kundalini will not fulfill its purpose.

Actually, I don't believe ida and pingala nadis are inferior to sushumna. Awakening of pingala nadi will awaken one portion of the brain and awakening of ida will awaken another portion. However, when kundalini enters sushumna, it affects the whole brain.

In the ancient texts of tantra it has been clearly indicated that it does not matter if kundalini enters another passageway. If there is an awakening in pingala, one becomes a healer or a *siddha*, one who has control over nature, matter and the mind. When there is awakening in ida, one can predict things; he becomes a prophet. But when sushumna awakens, kundalini ascends straight to sahasrara and one becomes a *jivanmukta*, a liberated soul.

So, hatha yoga and pranayama are prescribed for the awakening of sushumna. There are also other ways, but kriya yoga is the best, particularly the practices of maha mudra and maha bheda mudra. For awakening of sushumna, ida and pingala have to be suppressed. Thus you can see the importance of practising kumbhaka, breath retention. When both nadis are suppressed in kumbhaka, immediately after you'll find that both nadis are flowing simultaneously. It is at this time that kundalini should awaken.

Chapter 11

The Descent of Kundalini

Everybody talks about the ascent of kundalini, but few ever discuss the descent. When the descent of kundalini occurs, it means the lower mental plane of the human being is no longer influenced by the ordinary mind, the supermind takes over instead. This higher form of consciousness rules the body, mind and senses and directs your life, thoughts and emotions. Kundalini is henceforth the ruler of your life. That is the concept of descent.

The whole process after union

When Shiva and Shakti unite in sahasrara, one experiences samadhi, illumination occurs in the brain and the silent areas begin to function. Shiva and Shakti remain merged together for some time, and during this period there is a total loss of consciousness pertaining to each other. At that time a bindu evolves. Bindu means a point, a drop, and that bindu is the substratum of the whole cosmos. Within that bindu is the seat of human intelligence and the seat of the total creation. Then the bindu splits into two and Shiva and Shakti manifest again in duality. When ascension took place it was only the ascent of Shakti, but now, when descension takes place, Shiva and Shakti both descend to the gross plane and there is again knowledge of duality.

Those who have studied quantum physics will have a better understanding of this as it is difficult for everyone to understand from the philosophical point of view. After total union there is a process of coming down the same pathway you ascended. The gross consciousness which became fine, again becomes gross. That is the concept of divine incarnation or avatara.

The non-dual experience of samadhi

When one attains the highest pinnacles of samadhi, purusha and prakriti, or Shiva and Shakti are in total union and only *advaita* exists, non-dual experience. At this time, when there is no subject/object plus distinction, it is very difficult for one to differentiate. He may look like an idiot and not know it, or he may appear to be a great scholar and not be aware of that. Whether he is talking to a man or a woman he does not know, he sees no difference. He may even be associating with spiritual or divine people without being aware of that, because at this point of time his consciousness is reduced to a level of innocence just like a baby.

So, in the state of samadhi you are a baby. A baby can't tell the difference between a man and a woman because he has no physical or sexual distinction. He can't distinguish a scholar from an idiot and he may not even see any difference between a snake and a rope. He can hold a snake just as he holds a rope. This only happens when union is taking place.

When Shiva and Shakti descend to the gross plane, that is mooladhara chakra, they separate and live as two entities. There is duality in mooladhara chakra. There is duality in the mind and senses and in the world of names and forms, but there is no duality in samadhi. There is no seer or experiencer in the state of samadhi. There is nobody to say what samadhi is like because it is a non-dual experience.

Why Shiva and Shakti both descend

It is very difficult to understand why Shiva and Shakti both descend to the gross plane after having attained the highest union. What is the use of destroying the world and then creating it again? What is the point of transcending the consciousness if you have to come back to it again? Why bother to awaken kundalini and unite with Shiva in sahasrara if you have to come down to mooladhara again? This is something very mysterious and we can well ask, 'Why awaken kundalini at all?'

Why build a mansion if you know you will have to burn it down when it is completed? We actually create a lot of things that are ultimately going to be destroyed. So why do it at all? It seems so crazy! We do so much sadhana to transcend the chakras and ascend from earth to heaven. Then, when we reach paradise and become one with that great reality, we suddenly decide to come back down. And not all alone, we bring the great one with us. It would be easier to understand if Shakti came back alone and Shiva remained in heaven. Maybe when Shakti is about to leave, Shiva says, 'Wait, I'm coming with you.'

A new existence on the gross plane

When kundalini descends, you come down to the gross plane with a totally transformed consciousness. You live a normal life, associating with everybody and discharging your worldly obligations like other people do. Maybe you even play the game of desires, passions, cravings and such things. Maybe you play the game of victory and defeat, attachments and infatuations, but you just play a game. You know it; you do everything as an actor. You are not involved in it life and soul.

It is at this time the genius or the transformed consciousness manifests through you. You don't have to think or plan how to perform miracles. You have to remember that you have come down as a transformed quality of consciousness. You must remember that you are now connected with those areas of the brain which were previously silent. And you must also remember that you are linked with those reservoirs of knowledge, power and wisdom which belong to the realm of the higher cosmos.

Until the descent is complete, such a man lives a very simple life, unnoticed and unattended. Once the descent is complete he begins to play the game and people recognize him as a divine incarnation. They see he is something special compared to everybody else and they call him a guru. Such a person is actually a junior god.

Dealing with the issues of reality

When Shiva and Shakti descend to the gross level of awareness there is again duality. That is why the self-realized man is able to understand pain and all the mundane affairs of life. He understands the whole drama of duality, multiplicity and diversity. Sometimes we ordinary mortals are at a fix to understand how this man with the highest attainment is able to cope with the hopeless dualities of life.

When I was about thirteen, I was also puzzled by this. There was a great lady saint who was supposed to have attained the very highest state and I used to visit her with my elders. I used to hear her discussing all the mundane and ordinary things of life - "How are you? How is your child? Is he sick? Are you giving him medicines? Why do you fight with your wife?" I used to think, "If she is an enlightened lady she shouldn't talk about duality. How can she understand duality if she is in unity?"

I never got an answer, but every man has his moments of experience in life and I have not been an exception to that. I came to understand that Shiva and Shakti live on both planes and this gross plane of duality is an expression and manifestation of the correlation of Shiva and Shakti. This is precisely the reason why the great saints and mahatmas talk about charity, compassion, love, etc. However, there is a period when they don't understand these things and they don't care what happens to the world. They don't even know what is going on, who is happy and who is suffering. But finally there is a great transformation. Shakti rules the matter and Shiva rules the consciousness, and when they descend to the gross plane, Shakti continues to rule the matter and Shiva, being consciousness, gives an understanding to the whole world.

Therefore, if ever we see a self-realized person discussing the trivialities of life and dealing with the issues of reality, we should not be surprised.

Chapter 12

The Experiences of Awakening

The awakening of kundalini is like a great explosion which transports a person into another plane of being. No matter which spiritual path you follow, you must eventually reach this domain. Ordinary consciousness and transcendental consciousness cannot be maintained at the same time; it is necessary to pass through an intermediate zone of change, where perceptions, feelings and experiences undergo a transformation. The adventure is always the same; it is a journey through the border region between the known and the unknown. At this time it is very important to recognize that this explosion signals a profound alteration in consciousness. The complete process of awakening is comprised of several stages, as the kundalini rises and

passes through the various chakras. It takes quite some time to become fully stabilized, but if one has a good understanding, the transition process can be managed without any serious difficulties.

The preliminary awakening of kundalini is followed by the experience of light in bhrumadhya, the eyebrow center. Usually this develops in a very mild way over an extended period of time, and therefore does not precipitate any sudden agitation or disturbance. After some time, the appetite for food and sleep gradually decreases and the mind becomes quieter.

There is another prior warning which heralds the awakening of kundalini. In yoga and tantra it is very clearly indicated that when ida and pingala flow simultaneously for a long period of time, and sushumna begins to flow, then it is time to prepare for a spiritual event.

Therefore, one should be conversant with *swara yoga*, the science of the breath cycle, and keep a close watch over the breathing process. The breathing pattern in the nostrils normally changes every fourth day, according to the cycles of the moon, but when both nostrils have been functioning equally well for at least fifteen days, that is an advance warning of an impending spiritual breakthrough.

An onslaught of experiences

When the actual awakening occurs there is an explosion in the realm of experience and there are symptoms which are sometimes very difficult to understand. The most unique and common experience is the release of energy like an electric shock from the bottom of the spinal cord, as if it were connected to an electrical power point. This may be accompanied by a burning sensation in mooladhara chakra and energy passing up and down through sushumna. Sometimes you hear drums, flutes, bells, birds, celestial music, or you may even think you can hear peacocks singing. You may have a very momentary sensation of sitting outside in the middle of a monsoon shower, and there can also be the sensation of dark clouds in continual movement overhead and the sound of thunder.

At times your body feels so light and you may even visualize your spinal cord as a fluorescent light. It is common to feel illumination within, as if hundreds of little lights were burning inside your body. This is one side.

The other side is that all the anger, passions and suppressions come out. Sometimes you are so filled with fear that you can't sleep, sometimes for days together you have nothing in your mind but sex, at other times you can't think of anything but food. However, all these symptoms pass within a few days or weeks.

Some people obtain psychic powers. They develop clairvoyance, telepathy, clairaudience, psychokinesis, the ability to heal, etc., and this brings a lot of temptations. However, this is a phase and it will pass away.

Sometimes you don't feel like eating for days together. You may not have any appetite for fifteen to twenty days, and even if people try to force you to eat, you just can't. There is sometimes a feeling of nervous depression, and you may just want to sit, or you may feel restricted and closed in. There is a detachment from the normal emotions of life; for days together you may live a life of utter dispassion. Nothing is interesting in life and everything and everybody seems as dry as a desert. But at the same time, the mind becomes very dynamic and appears to be formless. Various sensations, poetic emotions and artistic perceptions also occur, such as visions of angels and divinities. All kinds of things can emerge from the depths of the mind. However, these are just a few of the symptoms you may experience, but all of them pass away quickly.

The storm always settles and then the yogi lives a very normal life. Externally his life seems the same as anybody else's but his inner awareness is far greater and more vast.

Headaches and insomnia

Some aspirants experience terrible headaches when kundalini is awakening, however, this does not mean that all headaches are related to kundalini. And not everybody will have headaches. Generally, those who have had married life do not have this experience. It is usually only those who have not had any kind of sexual interactions who experience headaches with the advent of kundalini awakening.

There is also another explanation about headaches. One-tenth of the brain is active and nine-tenths are not. In some cases, when the silent areas of the brain begin to wake up, the first symptom is headache. People have equated this experience with labor pain. Just as a woman experiences labor pain when she is about to give birth to a child, when the silent areas of the brain are about to become active and you are giving birth to spiritual consciousness, there is also pain.

Therefore, one has to bear with this pain for some time, but it will inevitably settle down. Of course you can reduce the pain by adjusting your diet and lifestyle, but under no circumstances should you use sedatives, aspirins or pain relieving pills.

It is also likely that an aspirant will experience insomnia. However, yogis don't call it insomnia. They say, 'Why should I sleep?' If you love a person very much and he stays with you and does not allow you to sleep, will you call that insomnia? So, all the people who do not sleep are not yogis. Only those people are yogis who do not sleep and are happy about it, because yogis have an entirely different attitude. They say one-third of life is wasted in sleeping.

So, when kundalini awakens in a yogi and consciousness is constant and consistent, and there is no waking, sleeping and dreaming, they are very happy about it. Therefore, insomnia does not usually bother a person who has awakened kundalini. However, if you are disturbed by your inability to sleep, you should never resort to sleeping pills or tranquilizers. It is also not necessary that you practise yoga to induce sleep. Just accept your sleeplessness and enjoy it. You can do japa or meditation or just do some spiritual reflection. If this is not possible, just lie down and let it happen as it will.

Experiencing the threefold awakenings

Each of the three forms of awakening - nadis, chakras and sushumna is accompanied by its own set of experiences. Many aspirants have psychic experiences and they think they indicate the awakening of kundalini, but this is not so.

When the chakras are awakening, the experiences one has are not so frightening and critical. They are usually of a fantastic nature, very pleasant, hallucinating and comfortable. Even if you have an experience of fear or terror, it does not shake your mind. When we have experiences of our ishta devata or guru, or we have some experience in meditation or during kirtan, and it feels very nice, that represents chakra awakening and not kundalini awakening. When you experience a chakra awakening it is rather beautiful and leaves a comfortable or blissful feeling. That is to encourage you to go further.

When awakening takes place in sushumna, you may feel or see a rod of light, or your spinal cord may seem to be fully illumined from within. Such experiences are described by the saints of different religions in their poems, songs and stories, which are unfortunately understood by very few people today.

The awakening of sushumna can also bring some mind exploding experiences which are sometimes very confusing. You can smell pleasant and unpleasant odors, you will hear shrieks and screams as if the ghosts are crying, and there is a feeling of heat, creeping sensations and pain in different parts of the body. You may get a high fever or manifest the symptoms of some common disease or some baffling illness which medical experts find difficult to analyze.

At the time of sushumna awakening, the quality and experience of the mind begin to change. One has the experience of depression, anorexia and loneliness. You begin to realize the inner essence. Matter appears to be nothing, and even your body feels as if it were only made up of air. Or you may feel that you are not part of this physical body, you are someone else. When you look at people, animals and the objects of nature - the flowers, trees, rivers and mountains, etc., you feel a communication with them.

At this time, you also experience prophetic vision, but your visions or forewarnings may not be clear and you only foresee the bad things - imminent perils, accidents, disasters and catastrophies. Throughout the awakening one generally has an aversion to work and can't really apply himself to anything.

It is actually best if an aspirant is near his guru at this time of awakening so he can explain what is happening. The sadhaka is not merely making a transition from one state of mind to another, he is actually jumping from one state to another. It is also very difficult for even an expert guru to handle these matters unless the disciple has totally accepted him as his guru.

Differentiating the experiences

You must remember that when you have certain visions and fantastic experiences, they do not necessarily represent the awakening of kundalini or even sushumna nadi. They may indicate chakra awakening or they may just be the expression of your archetypes or samskaras. Because of your sadhana, concentration or one-pointedness, you may be allowing an outlet for your deep-rooted samskaras to express themselves.

These experiences and those that accompany chakra awakening do not mean anything when you try to assess them. I will give you an example. Many years ago, I was meditating on the bank of the Ganga in Rishikesh and suddenly I had a very vivid experience. I saw the whole earth split into two. It was a very clear vision, and I remember it even today, but this vision had nothing to do with reality; I just had it. This was an experience of chakra awakening.

When the actual awakening of kundalini takes place, it is a great event in man's life. Every experience has a tangible proof, whether it is awakening of extrasensory perceptions or the awakening of a particular kind of genius. It may be in the form of a philosophy you are able to deliver to the people, a transformation in the physical elements of the body that you are able to materialize, or a magnetic influence that you are able to cast on the masses of people as a politician, musician or saint.

The awakening of kundalini has tangible, positive and concrete proofs. You cannot believe your kundalini is awakened if you have no proof, because when the awakening of kundalini takes place, you completely transcend the normal categories of mental awareness and the scope of your knowledge becomes greater.

A scientist who jumped beyond the mind

There was a scientist named Eddington, and he was observing the determined laws of electrons and trying to formulate a system, a law. He succeeded, the result being the law of determinancy.

However, once when he was studying the electrons, his vision changed entirely. He found that the electrons were behaving in a very anarchical manner. There was no logic, system or hypothesis behind their behavior. That was his vision, and he called it the law of indeterminacy.

Once he was asked, 'What is this law which you have discovered behind the mathematical and logical behavior of electrons?' He replied, 'It cannot be explained.' Someone asked, 'How can you say that a movement in matter cannot be explained?' Eddington answered, 'It can be explained if you can jump over the mind.'

The process of transition

There is a natural process of transition in which a man's consciousness evolves over the course of millions of years. It takes place in the same way that a baby develops into a child, a child into a young man, a young man into a middle-aged man, a middle-aged man into an old man. Suppose a child of five suddenly transformed into an old man and he found he was tall, grey haired and speaking like an old person. It would be very difficult for him to handle the situation and to connect both the areas of his life. This is what generally happens with those who awaken kundalini.

Their experiences are often imbalanced and extremely difficult to understand. Just imagine how it would be if you felt your whole body burning as if it were in flames, or you kept feeling that a snake was crawling through your body. Imagine what it would be like to look at somebody's face and instead of seeing the person you see a ghost. You'd start to think you were crazy! These are just a few of the bizarre experiences you could be confronted with. However, with the awakening of kundalini, there is also an awakening of *vairagya*, detachment. And when *vairagya* develops the turbulence settles, the awakening becomes peaceful and the transition is smooth.

Chapter 13

The Path of Kriya Yoga

Awakening of kundalini is very difficult. You can try the various yogic and religious practices that have evolved throughout the ages, but they require a lot of self-discipline and demanding austerities. There are so many do's and don't's that the average person finds unpalatable. Therefore, the rishis of the tantric tradition evolved a series of practices that could be easily adopted by every type of aspirant regardless of his lifestyle, habits, beliefs, and so on. Of course there are many practices belonging to tantra, but of them all, kriya yoga is considered to be the most powerful and suitable for the modern day man who is enmeshed in this world.

For many years, knowledge of this system of yoga was revealed to very few. The practices were mentioned in the tantric texts, but they were never clearly defined. Through a tradition, the practices were handed down from guru to disciple. They were given to both householder and monastic disciples, who soon discovered that through these techniques, kundalini became a reality and a real experience in their lives.

The ultimate purpose of kriya yoga is to create awakening in the chakras, to purify the nadis, and finally, to awaken the kundalini shakti. The kriyas are intended to awaken the kundalini in stages and not abruptly. When kundalini awakens abruptly, the experiences you have are very difficult to handle and you cannot understand what is happening to you. The techniques of kriya yoga offer a smooth and relatively risk-free means of expanding your awareness and awakening the dormant areas of the brain. Also, this system of kriya yoga provides a means whereby you do not have to tackle the mind directly. Its practices are based on hatha yoga, which aims at controlling the prana. Mind and prana interact with each other and thereby, by controlling the prana, we can gain control of the mind.

Kriya yoga offers a unique approach

Kriya yoga means 'the yoga of practice, movement or action'. Unlike the various religious, mystical or yogic practices which demand mental control, the special instruction in the system of kriya yoga is, 'Do not worry about the mind.' If your mind is dissipating or if there are distractions in your mind and you are not able to concentrate even for one second, it does not matter. You have only to continue with your practices, for even without confronting, controlling or trying to balance the mind, you can still evolve.

This is an entirely new concept in spiritual life, and most people have probably never even considered it. When they take to a religion, commence spiritual practices or go to gurus, the first thing they are told is to control the mind. 'You should think like this. Don't think like that. You should do like this. Don't do that. This is good. This is bad. That is evil. Do not sin.' And so on.

People think that the mind is the greatest barrier in spiritual life, but this is a very wrong and dangerous concept. The mind is a bridge between this and that, so how can it be a barrier? An idiot thinks it is a barrier and he tries to destroy that bridge. Then when he has destroyed it, he wonders how he'll get to the other side. This is the ironical fate of most people, and unfortunately it is the religions, ethics and morality that are responsible. The people who are less aware of ethics and morality have no mental problems. They are very good, happy-go-lucky people.

The seers and rishis of kriya yoga have said, 'Control of mind is not necessary. Just go on practising the kriyas and let the mind do what it wants. In the course of time, the evolution of consciousness will take you to that point where the mind will no longer trouble you.'

Dissipation of mind is not necessarily the fault of the mind. Distractions can be due to hormonal imbalances, bad digestion, low influx of energy in the nervous system and so many other things. Never blame the mind for its restlessness, and don't consider yourself to be an impure, bad or inferior person because your mind jumps all over the place, thinking negative things and what you consider to be evil thoughts, etc.

Everybody has negative thoughts and distractions of mind, even a compassionate and charitable person, a peaceful man, a chaste and pure person. Dozens of factors could be the cause of a distracted mind. Suppressing the mind and calling it back again and again is not the way to concentrate the mind, it is a way to the mental hospital. After all, who suppresses or calls back who? Are there two personalities or two minds in you? Is there one bad mind which keeps wandering off and one good mind which tries to bring back the bad mind? No, there is only one mind and you should not create a split by antagonizing the mind. If you do this, one part of the mind becomes the dictator and controller and the other part becomes the victim. Then you'll develop a great gap between two aspects of your mind and personality and within a very short time you'll become totally schizophrenic.

It is necessary to understand this point very well, because our religions, philosophies and ways of thinking have not been very systematic, loving and tender in their approach to the mind. We have always been led to believe that the mind is very mischievous, but this is a grave mistake. Therefore, please try to redefine the mind and approach it scientifically.

Mind is not a psychological stuff, nor is it a thought process. Mind is energy. Anger, passion, greed, ambition, etc. are waves of that energy. Through kriya yoga you are trying to harness the energies of the mind, but you should not try to suppress this energy because it will explode. And the more you suppress this energy the greater will be the ultimate explosion.

Kriya yoga is very clear in its approach to the mind. It emphasizes that you do not try to do anything with the mind. If your body protests about maintaining a fixed posture, change it. If your mind objects about closing the eyes, keep them open. But you must continue with the kriya yoga practices because they have a direct effect on the deeper processes of the body which are responsible for the state of your mind. Remember that the body affects the mind and the mind affects the body.

We should not consider the techniques of kriya yoga as practices of concentration or meditation as their aim is not mental control. The beauty of kriya yoga is that you have only to remain relaxed and let the mind move naturally and spontaneously. Inner awareness will then awaken, and in time, your mind will automatically become one-pointed.

A path for all

As you know, we are all aspirants of a different caliber. Some of us are tamasic, some are rajasic and a very small number are sattvic. Of course we are not purely sattvic, rajasic or tamasic. Predominantly we are one of these, but we retain traces of the other two gunas. The tamasic mind has traces of rajo guna, and as it evolves, it retains traces of tamas, but it is now predominantly rajasic. It also develops traces of sattva. As it evolves further, it becomes more rajasic and may or may not have traces of tamas and sattva. Next, it becomes predominantly sattvic, with traces of rajo and tamogunas here and there. And then in its fifth stage of evolution, the mind becomes totally sattvic, manifesting rajo and tamogunas very rarely.

These five stages are like rungs on a ladder, representing the evolution of chitta or the mind. The lowest rung is known as the inert mind. The second rung is the scattered mind, the third is the oscillating mind, the fourth is the one-pointed mind and the fifth is the controlled mind.

Now, if you belong to one of the first three categories, and most of us do, after practising hatha yoga, you should take to kriya yoga. If you belong to one of the last two categories, then after hatha yoga, you can take to kriya yoga if you want, or you can follow the path of raja yoga or any other path which asks you to concentrate through willpower. When you are at the sattvic level you can deal with the mind through the mind, but when you are at the tamasic or rajasic level, if you try to deal with the mind through the mind, you will cause a mental crisis.

In this world, there are very few sattvic people. Most of us have a very restless and distracted mind, and we find it impossible to focus on one object or theme for very long. You know what happens if you light a candle when the wind is blowing? The same thing happens when most people try to concentrate. The fluctuations of the mind totally annihilate the one-pointedness. So, the kriya yoga practices were designed for those people who are unable to control, concentrate or stabilize their mind and for those who cannot sit in one posture for a prolonged period of time.

Whether you are sattvic, rajasic or tamasic, the practices of hatha yoga should be taken up first. A tamasic person needs hatha yoga to awaken his mind, body and personality. A person who is rajasic needs hatha yoga to balance the solar and lunar energies in his body and mind. And a person who is sattvic by temperament needs hatha yoga to help him awaken kundalini. Hatha yoga is for everybody. And if you have been practising asanas, pranayama, mudras and bandhas consistently for two years or more, then you are ready for kriya yoga. Hatha yoga is the basis of kriya yoga.

The practices

There are many kriya yoga practices, but a combination of 20 is considered very important and powerful. These 20 practices are divided into two groups. One group is to be done with the eyes open, that is the first 9, and the other group, comprised of 11 practices, is to be done with the eyes closed. For the first group of practices, the central instruction is, 'Do not close your eyes.' Even though you feel very relaxed and have a tendency to go within, you must not close your eyes. You can blink, you can rest, you can stop the practices for a minute, but each practice must be done with the eyes open. This is a very important instruction for kriya yoga practice.

The first practice in kriya yoga is called vipareeta karani mudra. Vipareeta means reverse, karani means action, so vipareeta karani mudra is a method for creating a reverse action. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and in the tantric texts, there is a wonderful statement regarding this reverse action:

"From the moon the nectar emanates. When the sun consumes the nectar, the yogi becomes old. His body decays and he dies. Therefore, by constant practice, the yogi should try to reverse the process. The nectar which is flowing from the moon (bindu visarga) towards the sun (manipura chakra) should be reversed and sent back to the higher centers." What will happen then? *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* continues: "When you are able to reverse the flow of amrit or nectar, it will not be consumed by the sun. It will be assimilated by your pure body."

When your body has been purified by hatha yoga, pranayama and a pure diet, this nectar is assimilated by the body, and as a result of this, you experience a high mental state. When the nectar returns to its source in the higher centers of the brain, and is not consumed by the sun, you begin to feel a sort of calmness and quietness. Even if your mind was distracted, confused, wandering and vacillating a few moments before, suddenly all these activities come to an end and you feel total brightness. Your eyes are open, you can hear sounds and see everything around you, but the mind does not move. It appears as if time, space and object have ceased and the whole universe has stopped functioning.

The main hypothesis or contention here, is that you can influence the structures of the body; you can create a change in the energy forces. And by creating a change in the physical secretions, by altering the chemical proportions and the energy proportions in the body, you can create an effect on the mind which you may call shanti, dharana, dhyana or samadhi. This means that even when your mind is totally undisciplined and you cannot handle it for a second, if you are able to create the correct proportion of secretions in the different areas of the body/mind, then the higher state can be achieved.

You know what happens if you take a dose of ganja (marijuana)? Take a few puffs and see what happens to your mind. It slows down and the brain waves change from theta to beta, from alpha to delta. Suddenly you feel calm and quiet. What happened to your mind? You didn't fight with it. I'm not advocating the use of ganja, I'm just giving you a very gross example of how kriya yoga works on your mind. By infusing ganja or some hallucinogenic drug, the chemical properties of the gross body change. The heart slows down, the breathing rate changes, the brain waves alter and the mind becomes calm and still. Is it not possible to arrive at the same point through kriya yoga? Yes; this is exactly what is accomplished through kriya yoga.

The various practices of kriya yoga, particularly vipareeta karani mudra, amrit pan, khechari mudra, moola bandha, maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, etc. regulate the nervous system. They harmonize the pranic forces in the body and equalize the quantity and effects of the positive and negative ions. More than that, they help you to attain a state of peace and tranquility without beating, kicking and abusing the mind. All this is a result of having induced the flow of certain unspiced and natural chemicals of the body. Amrit is one of those chemicals and through a practice known as khechari mudra, it can be made to flow.

Khechari mudra

Khechari mudra is a simple but very important technique which is utilized in most of the kriya yoga practices. It involves folding the tongue back and placing it against the upper palate. In the course of time the tongue gets elongated and can be inserted into the nasal orifice. Then certain glands which are connected with the cranial passage and bindu visarga are stimulated, and as a result, amrit or nectar begins to flow. When amrit is released you experience a special type of 'high' or intoxication.

It might take you a few years to perfect khechari mudra and to stimulate the flow of amrit, but it is well worth the effort. When you sit for meditation the mind is perfectly still, it cannot move and you cannot think. There is *shoonyata*, an experience of total nothingness. If you are practising mantra you feel that somebody else is practising and you are only witnessing it. This is considered a very important experience because it puts you in touch with the external and internal experiences at the same time and you are completely aware of yourself. You attain a state where you are simultaneously aware of the world of mind, senses and objects, and the world of inner peace, tranquility and relaxation. When there is perfect harmony in the nervous system, coronary behavior is in inertia, body temperature is low and alpha waves are predominant in the brain, how can the mind move? This is the philosophy of kriya yoga.

Readiness for kriya yoga

If through the yoga practices you have been doing, you have reached a point where you find that although concentration has been achieved, inner peace has been experienced and you can maintain total quietness of body, mind and spirit for a prolonged period, but still you feel there is something more to achieve, you are definitely ready for kriya yoga.

Peace of mind, relaxation and proper understanding, which are the fruits of spiritual life, are not an end in themselves. The ultimate purpose of yoga is to change the quality of experience and to change the quality of the mind and its perception. What man has aimed to achieve through yoga is expansion of mind and liberation of energy, and in essence, that is tantra, and that is the ultimate goal of kriya yoga.

Chapter 14

Vama Marga and Kundalini Awakening

Sexual life has always been a problem for mankind. From the beginning of history, the primal energy has been misunderstood. Religious teachers and moralists have denounced it. But still sexual life has continued, not because man respects it, but because he needs it. He may give it up, but he cannot remove it from his mind, for this is one of his most powerful urges.

In the context of yoga and tantra the common definition of sexual life has no relevance. It is absolutely unscientific and incorrect. This definition has created a society and a nation of hypocrites. It has led thousands of young people into mental asylums. When you want something which you think is bad, all kinds of guilt complexes arise. This is the beginning of schizophrenia, and all of us are schizophrenic to some extent.

Therefore, the yogis have tried to give a correct direction to the sexual urge. Yoga does not interfere with sexual life. Normal sexual life is neither spiritual nor aspiritual. But if you practise yoga and master certain techniques, then sexual life becomes spiritual. Of course, if you lead a celibate life, that is spiritual too.

Left hand tantra

The science of tantra has two main branches, which are known as *vama marga* and *dakshina marga*. Vama marga is the left path which combines sexual life with yoga practices in order to explode the dormant energy centers. Dakshina marga is the right path of yoga practices without sexual enactment. Previously, due to the barriers in sexual life, the path most widely followed was dakshina marga. Today, however, these barriers are rapidly being broken, and the path most sought after by the people everywhere is vama marga, which utilizes sexual life for spiritual development.

According to tantra, sexual life has a threefold purpose. Some practise it for procreation, others for pleasure, but the tantric yogi practises it for samadhi. He does not hold any negative views about it. He does it as a part of his sadhana. But, at the same time, he realizes that for spiritual purposes, the experience must be maintained. Ordinarily this experience is lost before one is able to deepen it. By mastering certain techniques, however, this experience can become continuous even throughout daily life. Then the silent centers of the brain are awakened and they start to function all the time.

The energy principle

The content of vama marga is that the awakening of kundalini is possible through the sexual interaction between man and woman. The concept behind this follows the same lines as the process of fission and fusion described in modern physics.

Man and woman represent positive and negative energy. On a mental level they represent time and space. Ordinarily, these two forces stand at opposite poles. During sexual interaction, however, they move out of their position of polarity, towards the center. When they come together at the nucleus or central point, an explosion occurs and matter becomes manifest. This is the basic theme of tantric initiation.

The natural event that takes place between man and woman is considered as the explosion of the energy center. In every speck of life, it is the union between the positive and negative poles that is responsible for creation. At the same time, union between the positive and negative poles is also responsible for enlightenment, and the experience which takes place at the time of union is a glimpse of the higher experience.

This subject has been thoroughly discussed in all the old scriptures of tantra. Actually, more important than the energy waves that are created during the mutual union, is the process of directing that energy to the higher centers. Everybody knows how this energy is to be created, but nobody knows how to direct it to the higher centers. In fact, very few people have a full and positive understanding of this natural event which almost everybody in this world experiences. If the conjugal experience, which is generally very transitory, could be extended for a period of time, then the experience of enlightenment would take place.

The elements that are brought together in this process of union are known as Shiva and Shakti. Shiva represents *purusha* or consciousness and Shakti represents *prakriti* or energy. Shakti, in different forms, is present in all creation. Both material and spiritual energy are known as Shakti. When the energy moves outwardly, it is material energy and when it is directed upwards it is spiritual energy. Therefore, when the union between man and woman is practised in the correct way, it has a very positive influence on the development of spiritual awareness.

Retaining the bindu

Bindu means a point or a drop. In tantra, bindu is considered to be the nucleus, or the abode of matter, the point from which all creation becomes manifest. Actually, the source of bindu is in the higher centers of the brain. But due to the development of emotions and passions, bindu falls down to the lower region where it is transformed into sperm and ova. At the higher level, bindu is a point. At the lower level, it is drop of liquid, which drips from the male and female orgasm.

According to tantra, preservation of the bindu is absolutely necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the process of regeneration can only be carried out with the help of bindu. Secondly, all the spiritual experiences take place when there is an explosion of bindu. This explosion can result in the creation of a thought or of anything. Therefore, in tantra, certain practices are recommended by which the male partner can stop ejaculation and retain the bindu.

According to tantra, ejaculation should not take place. One should learn how to stop it. For this purpose, the male partner should perfect the practices of vajroli mudra as well as moola bandha and uddiyana bandha. When these three kriyas are perfected, one is able to stop ejaculation completely at any point of the experience.

The sexual act culminates in a particular experience which is reached only at the point of explosion of energy. Unless the energy explodes, the experience cannot take place. But this experience has to be maintained, so that the energy level remains high. When the energy level falls ejaculation takes place. Therefore, ejaculation is avoided, not so much to preserve the semen, but because it causes a depression in the level of energy.

To make this energy travel upwards through the spine, certain hatha yoga kriyas have to be mastered. The experience which is concomitant of energy has to be raised to the higher centers. It is only possible to do this if you are able to prolong and maintain that experience. As long as the experience continues, you can direct it to the higher centers. But as soon as the energy level undergoes depression, ejaculation will inevitably take place.

Ejaculation brings down the temperature of the body and at the same time, the nervous system undergoes depression. When the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems undergo depression, it affects the brain. That is why many people have mental problems. When you are able to retain the semen without ejaculating at all, the energy in the nervous system and the temperature in the whole body are maintained. At the same time, you are free from the sense of loss, depression, frustration and guilt. Retention will also help to increase the sexual frequency, and that is better for both partners. The sexual act does not have to create weakness or dissipate the energy, on the contrary, it can become a means of exploding the energy. Therefore, the value of retaining the bindu should not be underestimated.

In hatha yoga there are certain practices which must be perfected for this purpose. You should begin with asanas such as paschimottasana, shalabhasana, vajrasana, supta vajrasana and siddhasana. These are beneficial as they place an automatic contraction on the lower centers. Sirshasana is also important because it ventilates the brain so that all of one's experiences will be healthy experiences. When these postures have been mastered, shambhavi mudra is perfected in order to hold the concentration steadily at bhrumadhya. Then vajroli mudra has to be practised together with moola bandha and uddiyana bandha in kumbhaka. Practice of kumbhaka is necessary while the ejaculation is being held. Retention of the breath and the bindu go hand in hand. Loss of kumbhaka is loss of bindu, and loss of bindu is loss of kumbhaka.

During kumbhaka, when you are maintaining the experience, you should be able to direct it to the higher centers. If you are able to create an archetype of this experience, perhaps in the form of a serpent or a luminous continuity, then the result will be fantastic. So, in spiritual life, bindu must be preserved at all costs.

The female experience

In the female body, the point of concentration is at mooladhara chakra, which is situated at the cervix, just behind the opening of the uterus. This is the point where space and time unite and explode in the form of an experience. That experience is known as orgasm in ordinary language, but in the language of tantra it is called an awakening. In order to maintain the continuity of that experience, it is necessary for a buildup of energy to take place at that particular bindu or point. Usually this does not happen, because the explosion of energy dissipates throughout the body through the sexual medium. In order to avoid this, the woman must be able to hold her mind in absolute concentration on that particular point. For this, the practice is known as sahajoli.

Actually, sahajoli is concentration on the bindu, but this is very difficult. Therefore, the practice of sahajoli, which is the contraction of the vaginal as well as the uterine muscles, should be practised over a long period of time.

If girls are taught uddiyana bandha at an early age, they will perfect sahajoli quite naturally with time. Uddiyana bandha is always practised with external retention. It is important to be able to perform this in any position. Usually it is practised in siddhayoni asana, but one should be able to do it in vajrasana or the crow posture as well. When you practise uddiyana bandha, the other two bandhas - jalandhara and moola bandha occur spontaneously.

Years of this practice will create a keen sense of concentration on the correct point in the body. This concentration is more mental in nature, but at the same time, since it is not possible to do it mentally, one has to start from some physical point. If a woman is able to concentrate and maintain the continuity of the experience, she can awaken her energy to a high level.

According to tantra, there are two different areas of orgasm. One is in the nervous zone, which is the common experience for most women, and the other is in mooladhara chakra. When sahajoli is practised during *maithuna* (the act of sexual union), mooladhara chakra wakes up and the spiritual or tantric orgasm takes place.

When the female yogi is able to practise sahajoli for say 5 to 15 minutes, she can retain the tantric orgasm for the same period of time. By retaining this experience, the flow of energy is reversed. Circulation of blood and sympathetic/parasympathetic forces move upward. At this point, she transcends normal consciousness and sees the light. That is how she enters the deep state of dhyana. Unless the woman is able to practise sahajoli, she will not be able to retain the impulses necessary for the tantric orgasm, and consequently she will have the nervous orgasm, which is short-lived and followed by dissatisfaction and exhaustion. This is often the cause of a woman's hysteria and depression.

So, sahajoli is an extremely important practice for women. In uddiyana, nauli, naukasana, vajrasana and siddha yoni asana, sahajoli comes naturally.

The practice of amaroli is also very important for married women. The word *amaroli* means 'immortal' and by this practice one is freed of many diseases. The practice of amaroli over a prolonged period also produces an important hormone known as prostaglandin which destroys the ova and prevents conception.

Tantric guru

Just as in the scheme of creation, Shakti is the creator and Shiva the witness of the whole game, in tantra the woman has the status of guru and the man of disciple. The tantric tradition is actually passed on from the woman to the man. In the tantric practice, it is the woman who initiates.

It is only by her power that the act of maithuna takes place. All preliminaries are done by her. She puts the mark on the man's forehead and tells him where to meditate. In ordinary interaction, the man takes the aggressive role and the woman participates. But in tantra, they switch roles. The woman becomes the operator and the man her medium. She has to be able to arouse him. Then, at the right moment, she must create the bindu so he can practise vajroli. If the man loses his bindu, it means that the woman has failed to carry out her functions properly.

In tantra it is said that Shiva is incapable without Shakti. Shakti is the priestess. Therefore, when vama marga is practised, the man must have an absolutely tantric attitude towards the woman. He cannot behave with her as men generally do with other women. Ordinarily, when a man looks at a woman he becomes passionate, but during maithuna he should not. He should see her as the divine mother, Devi, and approach her with an attitude of devotion and surrender, not with lust.

According to the tantric concept, women are more endowed with spiritual qualities and it would be a wise thing if they were allowed to assume higher positions in social affairs. Then there would be greater beauty, compassion, love and understanding in all spheres of life. What we are discussing here is not patriarchal society versus matriarchal society, but tantra, particularly left hand tantra.

Path of yogis not bhogis

In tantra, the practice of maithuna is said to be the easiest way to awaken sushumna, because it involves an act which most people are already accustomed to. But, frankly speaking, very few are prepared for this path. Ordinary sexual interaction is not maithuna. The physical act may be the same, but the background is totally different.

In the relationship between husband and wife, for example, there is dependency and ownership, but in tantra each partner is independent, one unto himself. Another difficult thing in tantric sadhana is cultivating the attitude of passionlessness. The man has to virtually become brahmacharya in order to free the mind and emotions of sexual thoughts and passion which normally arise in the presence of a woman.

Both partners must be absolutely purified and controlled internally and externally before they practise maithuna. This is hard for the ordinary person to comprehend because for most people, sexual interaction is the result of passion and physical or emotional attraction, either for progeny or pleasure. It is only when you are purified that these instinctive urges are absent. This is why, according to tradition, the path of dakshina marga must be followed for

many years before the path of vama margha can be entered. Then the interaction of maithuna does not take place for physical gratification. The purpose is very clear - awakening of sushumna, raising the kundalini energy from mooladhara chakra, and exploding the unconscious areas of the brain.

If this is not clear when you practise the kriyas and sushumna becomes active, you will not be able to face the awakening. Your head will get hot and you will not be able to control the passion and excitement, because you have not tranquilized your brain.

Therefore, in my opinion, only those who are adepts in yoga qualify for vama margha. This path is not to be used indiscriminately as a pretext for self-indulgence. It is meant for mature and serious minded householder sadhakas, who are evolved, who have been practising sadhana to awaken the energy potential and to attain samadhi. They must utilize this path as a vehicle of awakening, otherwise it becomes a path of downfall.

Section 2 - THE CHAKRAS

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Chakras

The subject of chakras is not going to be an easy one. Many scientists and philosophers are confronted with a great difficulty when it comes to accepting and explaining the existence of the chakras. They do not know whether the chakras are to be found in the physical body or in the subtle body. If they exist in the physical body, where are they? And of course the subtle body is not the matter of modern anatomical science.

In the past, doctors and scientists used to ask me: 'We have witnessed many operations, why have we never seen the chakras?' At the time, the only reply I could give them was, 'Can you show me the sound waves in a transistor radio? I have opened up radios but I have never found the BBC there.' This answered their questions, but it didn't really satisfy them. Scientists want a scientific explanation, and for this, new areas of research are being developed.

An eminent Japanese scientist, Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama, has invented sensitive machines for measuring the vital energy of the body. One apparatus measures the functioning of the nadis and their corresponding body organs, and this machine is now being used in some Japanese hospitals to diagnose disease tendencies before they actually manifest. Another invention is 'the chakra machine', which records the impulses that emanate from the psychic centers in the spinal cord. On this machine it is possible to register definite impulses from these areas in individuals who have been practising yoga for many years, and who have awakened their psychic faculties. For example, when a subject practises pranayama with kumbhaka and maha bandha - contraction of the perineum, abdomen and thyroid, the machine registers changes in the impulses emanating from the psychic centers. This research shows that energy is definitely activated by the yoga practices. However, we still have a lot of research to do in order to provide more scientific explanations.

At the same time, there are quite a lot of different interpretations on the science of chakras. Of course the differences are not that great, but they are there. The thinkers of theosophical movements and their predecessors have their own interpretations of the chakras, their location points, colors, etc. The Rosicrucians and others may say something completely different and the tantric texts may present entirely different concepts.

Chakra perception

The chakras, kundalini and the mind have subtle aspects on all levels of vibration. This is extremely complicated and most of the realization of these levels must be very personal. Even then, different people see these occult aspects from different points of view. For instance, if they have realizations about the chakras, these will be colored by their own personal tendencies. Some concentrate on their more subtle mystical aspects, some on their energy and pranic manifestations, some on their functional reality, some on their psychological effects, and still others on their physical concomitants. These are usually all correct and when various authorities get together, they find that they are talking about the same things but from different points of view. If we look at a man through binoculars he looks large. If we look at him by ordinary vision he looks the usual size. If we view him through an X-ray screen we see his skeleton, and if we look through a gastroscope we see the inside of his stomach. Same man - different viewpoints.

In the same way, whereas a mystic or yogi will describe the chakras in a spiritual or symbolic way, the surgeon may describe the chakras as bunches of nerve fibers making up what he calls the plexuses, and a clairvoyant will describe the energy manifestations of the chakras in yet a different way. These people may have disagreements, but actually they are seeing the same thing from different viewpoints. Discrepancies are largely semantic due to differing cultural, educational and personal understandings. This is a common problem amongst men when they try to communicate in words any idea or experience.

Whereas I have great respect for the tantric concept, I have my own experience, and therefore, in my descriptions of the chakras I'll make references to both. However, rather than trying to understand the chakras through the written or verbal descriptions of others, you must experience them for yourself and gain your own personal knowledge. Tantra is essentially a practical science rather than an intellectual one, and only practice leads to true experience and real understanding.

Chakra symbology

If you are practising kundalini yoga or kriya yoga, you will need to know the different colors and symbols of the chakras. They are all very beautiful and form an intrinsic part of the awakening of the individual chakras. Each chakra has a particular color, mantra, situation and range of experiences associated with it.

Whereas the various esoteric cults and spiritual systems use different symbols to represent the chakras, in tantra and yoga the chakras are symbolized by lotus flowers. As a symbol, the lotus is very significant. Man must pass through three clear stages in spiritual life, which represent his existence on three different levels: ignorance, aspiration and endeavor, and illumination. The lotus also exists on three different levels - mud, water and air. It sprouts in the mud (ignorance), grows up through the water in an effort to reach the surface (endeavor and aspiration) and eventually reaches the air and the direct light of the sun (illumination). Thus the lotus symbolizes man's growth from the lowest states of awareness to the higher states of consciousness. The culmination of the growth of the lotus is a beautiful flower. In the same way, the culmination of man's spiritual quest is the awakening and blossoming of human potential.

So each of the principal chakras can be visualized as a lotus flower with a specific color and number of petals as follows:

Mooladhara	-	-	4	petalled	deep	red	lotus
Swadhisthana	-	-	6	petalled	petalled	vermilion	lotus
Manipura	-	-	10	petalled	bright	yellow	lotus
Anahata	-	-	12		petalled	blue	lotus
Vishuddhi	-	-	16		petalled	violet	lotus
Ajna	-	-	2	petalled		silver-grey	lotus
Sahasrara - 1000 petalled multicolored or red lotus.							

In each chakra six things are combined : 1) the chakra color, 2) the petals of the lotus flower, 3) the yantra or geometrical shape, 4) the bija mantra, 5) the animal symbol, 6) the higher or divine symbol. Each chakra contains an animal and divine beings. The animals represent your previous evolution and instincts, and the divine beings represent higher consciousness.

In my exposition of the chakras I may say a chakra is a particular color, but if you are a good yogic aspirant and in your concentration on that chakra you realize another color, that is the truth for you. Your experiences are just as valid as mine, but one thing is definite, as you move up through the chakras, the frequencies of the colors become more subtle and more powerful.

Chakra kshetram

In many of the practices of kundalini yoga we have to concentrate or focus our awareness on the chakra trigger points in the spinal cord. However, many people find it easier to concentrate on the chakra kshetram located on the front surface of the body. In kriya yoga particularly, the chakra kshetram are utilized in many of the practices. The kshetram can be regarded as reflections of the original chakra trigger points, and when we concentrate on them it creates a sensation which passes through the nerves to the chakra itself and then travels up to the brain.

Mooladhara does not have a kshetram, but swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna have physical counterparts directly in front of them on the same horizontal plane. Swadhisthana kshetram is at the level of the pubic bone in front of the body just above the genital organ. Manipura kshetram is at the navel, anahata kshetram is at the heart and vishuddhi kshetram is located on the front surface of the throat pit in the vicinity of the thyroid gland. Ajna kshetram is bhrumadhya, the mid-eyebrow center.

The granthis

There are three granthis (psychic knots) in the physical body which are obstacles on the path of the awakened kundalini. The granthis are called *brahma*, *vishnu* and *rudra*, and they represent levels of awareness where the power of maya, ignorance and attachment to material things is especially strong. Each aspirant must transcend these barriers to make a clear passageway for the ascending kundalini.

Brahma granthi functions in the region of mooladhara chakra. It implies attachment to physical pleasures, material objects and excessive selfishness. It also implies the ensnaring power of tamas - negativity, lethargy and ignorance.

Vishnu granthi operates in the region of anahata chakra. It is associated with the bondage of emotional attachment and attachment to people and inner psychic visions. It is connected with rajasa - the tendency towards passion, ambition and assertiveness.

Rudra granthi functions in the region of ajna chakra. It is associated with attachment to siddhis, psychic phenomena and the concept of ourselves as individuals. One must surrender the sense of individual ego and transcend duality to make further spiritual progress.

Conversion centers

Besides functioning as control centers, the chakras work as centers of interchange between the physical, astral and causal dimensions. For instance, through the chakras, subtle energy from the astral and causal dimension can be transformed into energy for the physical dimension. This can be seen in yogis who have been buried underground for long periods of time. Through activation of vishuddhi chakra, which controls hunger and thirst and enables one to subsist on subtle energy in the form of amrit or nectar, they have been able to maintain their existence.

It is further contemplated that physical energy can be transformed into subtle energy through the action of the chakras and that physical energy can be converted into mental energy within the physical dimension.

Thus the chakras are seen to be intermediaries for energy transfer and conversion between two neighboring dimensions of being as well as facilitating the energy conversion between the body and mind. As the chakras are activated and awakened, man not only becomes aware of the higher realms of existence, but also gains the power to enter those realms, and then in turn, to support and give life to the lower dimensions.

Chapter 2

Evolution through the Chakras

All life is evolving and man is no exception. Human evolution, the evolution which we are undergoing relentlessly, both as individuals and as a race, is a journey through the different chakras. Mooladhara is the most basic, fundamental chakra from where we commence our evolution, and sahasrara is where our evolution is completed. As we evolve towards sahasrara, outer experiences come our way in life, and inner experiences come to us in meditation, as different capacities and centers awaken progressively within the nervous system. This occurs as energy flows at higher voltages and rates of vibration through the different nadis in the psychic body.

Mooladhara is the first center in human incarnation, but it is the highest chakra that animals have the capacity to awaken. It is their sahasrara. The higher chakras beyond mooladhara are not present in the psychic physiology of animals and their nervous systems reflect this relative deficiency.

Below mooladhara there are other chakras which represent the evolution of the animal kingdom. They are only related to sense consciousness and not to mental awareness. When your consciousness was evolving through these chakras your mind was only associated with sense consciousness. There was no individual awareness, no ego; it began from mooladhara. These lower centers are no longer functioning in us because we have transcended them.

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In the animal body, these inferior chakras are situated in the legs, and so are the nadis. The nadis flow to their confluence point at mooladhara chakra just as the nadis in the human body flow to ajna chakra. The names of the lower chakras are *atala*, *vitala*, *sutala*, *talatala*, *rasatala*, *mahatala* and the lowest is *patala*. Just as mooladhara is the lowest chakra in the human body, *patala* is the lowest in the animal kingdom. It is the dimension which represents total darkness, where nature is not functioning and matter is completely dormant and static.

Above sahasrara there are also other chakras which represent the higher divine consciousness. So mooladhara chakra is the highest in animal evolution and the first in human evolution. Sahasrara is the highest in human evolution and the first step in the highest divine evolution.

As you read more about the chakras, you will come to realize that kundalini actually controls every affair of life. When this shakti was passing through the animal stages of our evolution, it was influencing the whole species with avidya or ignorance. On account of its influence, the animal kingdom was compelled to follow the path of eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. This represented the tamasic phase of evolution. From mooladhara onward we pass through the rajasic phase and from sahasrara onward we enter the sattvic.

Spontaneous and self-propelled evolution

Up to mooladhara chakra evolution takes place automatically. Animals do not have to practise pranayama and japa yoga. They don't have to find a guru, take sannyasa and become chelas. They don't have to do anything and they can eat whatever they want. Nature controls them completely. Because they don't think, nature is benevolently responsible for every phase of their evolution.

However, once kundalini reaches mooladhara chakra, evolution is no longer spontaneous, because a human being is not completely subjected to the laws of nature. For example, animals only mate in particular seasons. At other times, even if they live together they will not mate. But, because man is free from the laws of nature, he can mate whenever he wants.

Man has awareness of time and space, and he has an ego. He can think, he can know that he is thinking and he can know that he knows that he is thinking. This is because of the evolution of ego. If there is no ego there will not be double awareness. Animals do not have double awareness. If a dog is chasing another dog, it is under nature's compulsion. It doesn't know it is chasing and the other dog doesn't know that it is running. It runs because instinct compels it to.

So, man has a higher consciousness, and once he has it he has to work towards its evolution. That is why it is said that kundalini is sleeping in mooladhara chakra. It can't progress beyond this point unless it is pushed.

Discovering your point of evolution

Of course, when the shakti awakens suddenly in mooladhara, it cannot rise immediately. It may wake up and sleep again many times. You know how your children are in the morning; you have to wake them several times because they keep going back to sleep. Kundalini behaves in the same way. Sometimes it even ascends to swadhisthana or manipura only to return to mooladhara again to sleep. However, once the shakti goes beyond manipura chakra there is no going back. Stagnation in a chakra only occurs when there is an obstruction in sushumna or one of the chakras. Kundalini can remain in one chakra for many years, or even for a whole lifetime.

Sometimes, when kundalini gets blocked in a chakra during transit, you begin to exhibit some of the siddhis or psychic powers associated with that chakra. Then you may not have self-control and understanding of the fact that you are only on the road. When one attains siddhis he is tempted to display them. He may think he is using them for the good of humanity, but this only feeds the ego and clouds him in a thick veil of maya or ignorance, hindering his further progress.

If one is manifesting siddhis, he can assume that he has evolved to that chakra which is associated with those siddhis. However, siddhis don't usually manifest when kundalini passes through all the chakras quickly, and if they do, they will not stay long. For a few days you may be able to read the thoughts of others, but then that ability will pass away. For a few days you may be able to heal people, but that will also pass. Psychic powers usually only linger when kundalini gets blocked in a chakra.

Of course, some of our lower chakras may already be functioning without our knowledge. We are all at different levels on the scale of evolution, and therefore it may not be necessary to start the process of awakening from mooladhara. We say kundalini is in mooladhara in order to explain the whole concept, but due to your progress in previous lives, or the sadhana your mother or father may have done, you might have been born with your kundalini in manipura. If that is the case, the ascension must take place from there. However, as you can't remember your previous life, similarly you also forget about the state of your kundalini. That is why the gurus teach that it is sleeping in mooladhara. It may be in anahata, but I will always tell you it is in mooladhara and make you do the practices from mooladhara. You might not have any experience of it there. You may go to swadhisthana and manipura and not have any experiences there either. But the moment you go to anahata you suddenly start having experiences.

So, before you commence the practices of kundalini yoga, you should try to find out at which point your ascension will actually start. In order to do this, the best method is to concentrate on mooladhara daily for 15 to 30 minutes. Then swadhisthana for 15 days, manipura for 15 days and so on up to sahasrara. You will soon discover your point of evolution.

Some people will find concentration on anahata easiest, so that is likely to be their center. Others will find ajna chakra very powerful and attractive to them, whereas other people will find it easiest to relate to mooladhara, while the higher chakras seem almost impossible to locate. Ultimately you will be able to decide which is your most sensitive chakra, and you will be ready for the next step - awakening.

However, there is one important point to add. Even if a higher chakra such as anahata has awakened at random, you must try to awaken the lower chakras also. The purpose of awakening kundalini and ascending it through all the chakras is to awaken them and their related parts of the brain. Therefore, in order to awaken the whole brain, all the chakras must be awakened.

Awakening the chakras

Awakening of the chakras is a very important event in man's evolution. It should not be misunderstood for mysticism or occultism, because with the awakening of the chakras, our consciousness and our mind undergo changes. These changes have significant relevance and relationship with our day to day life.

Our present state of mind is not capable of handling all the affairs of life. Our love and hatred, our relationships with people, they are the consequences of the quality of our present mind. And it appears that our sufferings, our agonies and frustrations are not so much due to the circumstances of life, but more to the responses of our mind. Therefore, the purpose of awakening the chakras, sushumna and kundalini should be related to our day to day life.

Thousands of people are born with awakened chakras and kundalini, and these people virtually rule the whole world. I'm not talking about governing or ruling a country; I'm saying that they are superior people in every aspect of life. They are the great musicians, artists, builders, scientists, research scholars, inventors, prophets, statesmen, etc.

There are many children born with awakened chakras and kundalini and as they grow up they show different manifestations. However, our materialistic societies consider these manifestations as abnormal and those who display them are subjected to psychoanalysis and psychological scrutiny and treatment.

It is not regarded as abnormal if you undergo personal conflicts in relation to family or work events, but as your mind and consciousness expand, you become very alert and sensitive to all that is happening in your mind, your family, colleagues, society and country, and you can't ignore even the tiniest things of life. By ordinary people, this is not regarded as normal, but it is a natural consequence that follows awakening of the chakras. One's consciousness becomes very receptive because the frequencies of the mind change.

The manifestation of higher qualities

Every form, every sound and every color has a certain frequency. All sounds, colors and forms do not have the same frequency. In the same way, every thought has a frequency, some are of a low frequency and some are of a high frequency. I'll give you an example of a high frequency idea.

Once the great scientist Isaac Newton was sitting in a garden and he watched an apple fall from a tree. We may have also seen apples fall from trees and because it doesn't seem strange to us, we have not given any thought to the process. But Isaac Newton had what we could call philosophic attention. This was a quality of his mind and personality and because of it, when an apple fell before him, he discovered the theory of gravitation.

Why shouldn't you tell lies? Maybe you think there's no harm in it if you can make money, rule a nation or suppress people. The whole contingent depends on the frequency of your consciousness. At a lower frequency of consciousness you'll say there's no harm in telling lies, but when the frequency is raised the mind operates at a different level and you can't really accept that anymore. Many people say, 'Why should we not kill?' After all, when we kill an animal we may be liberating it and enabling it to get a better birth quicker.' Our attitudes and way of thinking are a result of the quality of our mind and the particular frequency at which it is functioning.

Once Lord Buddha went hunting with his cousin Devadatta. Devadatta shot an arrow at a pigeon and it fell, injured by the arrow. Lord Buddha felt the pain of that bird and immediately rushed to remove the arrow. But Devadatta did not feel the pain, he was very pleased with himself because he had struck his target. Buddha's consciousness had attained a higher frequency vibration and as a result of that he was sensitive to the bird's pain and was manifesting compassion.

Therefore, the higher qualities of a man, such as love, compassion, charity, mercy, etc. are the expressions of a mind which is influenced by awakened chakras. This is precisely the reason why so much importance is given to the awakening of anahata chakra. Of course every chakra is very important and each chakra confers certain abilities, but you will find that all the scriptural texts place great emphasis on the awakening of anahata, ajna and mooladhara chakras. Yogis emphasize ajna and mooladhara chakras and all mankind gives emphasis to anahata chakra. When anahata is awakened we have a sublime relationship with God, with our family members and with every being.

When the chakras are awakened the mind automatically changes. Your values in life also change and the quality of your love and relationships improve immensely, enabling you to balance out the disappointments and frustrations in life. Therefore you are able to live a little higher than you do now, and your attitude towards yourself and towards this life is much better.

If awakening of the chakras can bring about unbreakable unity in your family, what more do you need? Do you need a happy family or another husband or wife? Frankly, man needs a happy mind and a happy family. It doesn't matter what he does or what his children are. Does it really matter if there's little to eat? Happiness and inner contentment are above all. And as far as I can see, true contentment can only be gained by a systematic awakening of the chakras.

Chapter 3

Ajna Chakra

Our reflection on the psychic centers begins from ajna chakra. According to tradition, mooladhara is generally designated as the first chakra since it is the seat of kundalini shakti. However, there is another system in which consideration and study of the chakras commences from ajna.

Ajna chakra is the point of confluence where the three main nadis or forces - ida, pingala and sushumna merge into one stream of consciousness and flow up to sahasrara, the crown center. In mythology, these three nadis are represented by three great rivers - Ganga (ida), Jamuna (pingala) and Saraswati (a subterranean current which represents sushumna). They converge at a place called Prayag or Triveni, which is near present day Allahabad. Hindus believe that every twelve years, when the sun is in Aquarius, if one takes a dip at the point of confluence, he or she will be purified. This place of confluence corresponds symbolically to ajna chakra.

When the mind is concentrated at this conjunction, transformation of individual consciousness is brought about by the merging of the three great forces. Individual consciousness is mainly comprised of ego, and it is on account of ego that we are aware of dualities. As long as there is duality there cannot be samadhi; as long as you remember yourself you cannot get out of yourself.

Although there are experiences of trance in other chakras, there is no merger of the individual ego with the cosmic ego. All throughout you find you are trying to assert yourself behind all the experiences you are having, but when ida and pingala unite with sushumna in ajna chakra, you lose yourself completely. I don't mean that you become unconscious. Your awareness expands and becomes homogeneous. Then individual awareness falls flat and you completely transcend the realm of duality. Thus ajna chakra is a very important center, which you must experience in order to bring about purification of the mind. Once the mind is purified the experience and awakening of the other chakras can proceed.

There is a certain problem with the awakening of the other chakras. Each one contains a store of karmas or samskara, both good and bad, positive and negative, painful and pleasant. The awakening of any chakra will definitely bring to the surface an explosion or expression of these karmas, and of course, not everybody is prepared or ready to face them. Only those who have reason and understanding are able to cope. Therefore it is said that before you start awakening and manifesting the great force, it is best to purify the mind at the point of confluence. Then, with a purified mind, you can awaken the other chakras. For this reason we begin our exposition of the chakras with ajna.

The center of command

The word ajna comes from the Sanskrit root which means 'to know, to obey or to follow'. Literally, ajna means 'command' or 'the monitoring center'. In astrology ajna is the center of Jupiter, which symbolizes the guru or preceptor. Amongst the deities, Jupiter is represented by Brihaspati, the guru of the devas and preceptor of the gods. Therefore, this center is also known as 'the guru chakra'.

Ajna is the bridge which links the guru with his disciples. It represents the level at which it is possible for direct mind to mind communication to take place between two people. It is in this chakra that communication with the external guru, the teacher or preceptor takes place. And it is here that the directions of the inner guru are heard in the deepest state of meditation, when all the sense modalities are withdrawn and one enters the state of *shoonya* or void.

This is a state of absolute nothingness, where the empirical experiences of name and form, subject and object, do not penetrate. In this completely static state, the light of the mind is extinguished; the consciousness ceases to function, and no ego awareness remains. This void state is the same as the death experience, and in order to traverse it the voice or command of the guru must be heard in ajna chakra.

Of course if you are new to spiritual life you won't be facing this problem yet, but when it comes you will find it very difficult to manage. At the moment your problems are just mental - dispersion of mind, worries, anxiety, restlessness, etc., but when the night is dark and you have gone very deep in meditation, losing your individual awareness, the only thing that can guide you at this point is the instructions or command of your guru heard through ajna chakra.

It has also been called 'the eye of intuition', and it is the doorway through which the individual enters the astral and psychic dimension of consciousness. Perhaps the most common name for this chakra is 'the third eye', and the mystical traditions of every age and culture make abundant references to it. It is portrayed as a psychic eye located midway between the two physical eyes and it looks inward instead of outward.

In India, ajna chakra is called *divya chakshu* (the divine eye), *gyana chakshu* or *gyana netra* (the eye of knowledge) because it is the channel through which the spiritual aspirant receives revelation and insight into the underlying nature of existence. It is also called 'the eye of Shiva', for Shiva is the epitome of meditation, which is directly associated with the awakening of ajna chakra.

It is interesting to note that ajna chakra is more active in females than it is in males. Women are more sensitive, psychic and perceptive and they are often able to predict coming events. However, in most people this inner eye remains closed, and though they see the events of the outside world, knowledge and understanding of truth cannot be gained. In this sense, we are blind to the real possibilities of the world, unable to view the deeper levels of human existence.

The location point

Ajna chakra is located in the brain directly behind the eyebrow center. It is at the very top of the spinal cord, at the medulla oblongata. Initially it is very hard to feel the exact location point of ajna, so we concentrate on ajna kshetram, at the mid-eyebrow center, bhrumadhya. These two centers are directly connected. That is why it has always been an Indian custom to place tilaka, chandan, sindur or kumkum on the mid-eyebrow center. Sindur contains mercury, and when it is applied to the eyebrow center a constant pressure is exerted on the nerve which runs from bhrumadhya to the medulla oblongata. Maybe the original purpose for applying these substances has been forgotten by most people today, but it is not a religious mark or even a beauty spot. It is a means by which you can maintain constant conscious and unconscious awareness of ajna chakra.

It should also be mentioned here that ajna chakra and the pineal gland are one and the same thing. The pituitary gland is sahasrara, and just as the pituitary and pineal glands are intimately connected, so are ajna and sahasrara. We could say that ajna is the gateway to sahasrara chakra. If ajna is awakened and functioning properly, all the experiences happening in sahasrara can be managed well.

The pineal gland acts as a lock on the pituitary. As long as the pineal gland is healthy, the functions of the pituitary are controlled. However, in most of us, the pineal gland started to degenerate when we reached the age of 8, 9 or 10. Then the pituitary began to function and to secrete various hormones which instigated our sexual consciousness, our sensuality and worldly personality. At this time we began to lose touch with our spiritual heritage. However, through various yogic techniques, such as trataka and shambhavi mudra, it is possible to regenerate or maintain the health of the pineal gland.

Traditional symbology

Ajna is symbolized by a two petalled lotus. According to the scriptures it is a pale color, light grey like a rainy day. Some say it is white like the moon, or silver, but actually it is an intangible color. On the left petal is the letter *ham* and on the right *ksham*. Ham and ksham are inscribed in a silvery white color and are the bija mantras for Shiva and Shakti. One represents the moon or ida nadi and the other the sun or pingala nadi. Below the chakra the three nadis merge - ida on the left, pingala on the right and sushumna in between.

Within the lotus is a perfectly round circle which symbolizes shoonya, the void. Within the circle is an inverted triangle which represents shakti - creativity and manifestation. Above the triangle is a black shivalingam. Shivalingam is not, as many people believe, a phallic symbol. It is the symbol of your astral body. According to tantra and occult sciences, the astral body is the attribute of your personality, and in the form of shivalingam, it can be one of three colors, depending on the purification or evolution of your consciousness.

In mooladhara chakra the lingam is smoky and ill-defined. It is known as *dhumra lingam*, and we can compare this with our state of consciousness when we live an instinctive life. We have no real concept of ourselves or what we are. Ajna chakra has a black lingam with a very consolidated outline. It is called the *itarakhya lingam*. Here, in ajna, the awareness of 'what I am' is more sharply defined and various capacities are being awakened. In sahasrara the consciousness is illumined and therefore the lingam there is luminous. It is called the *joytir lingam*.

When a person of unevolved mind concentrates, he experiences the shivalingam in the form of a smoky column. It comes and then disperses, comes again and disperses, and so on. With deeper concentration, as the restlessness of the mind is annihilated, the lingam becomes black in color. By concentrating on that black shivalingam, the joytir lingam is produced within the illumined astral consciousness. Therefore, the black lingam of ajna chakra is the key to the greater spiritual dimension of life.

Over the shivalingam is the traditional symbol of *Om*, with its tail on top and the crescent moon and bindu above that. Om is the bija mantra and symbol of ajna chakra, and above its form can be seen the *raif*, the trace of sound consciousness. Paramshiva is the deity of ajna chakra and he shines like a chain of lightning flashes. The goddess is the pure minded Hakini whose six faces are like so many moons.

Each chakra is considered to possess a *tanmatra*, or specific sense of modality, a *gyanendriya* or organ of sense perception, and a *kamendriya* or organ of action. The tanmatra, gyanendriya and kamendriya of ajna chakra are all considered to be the mind. The mind is able to gain knowledge by subtle means rather than by the input of sense data from the various sense organs, which are the gyanendriyas of the other chakras. The mind perceives knowledge directly via a sixth or intuitive sense, which comes into operation as ajna chakra awakens. This sense is the gyanendriya of the mind.

Similarly, the mind can manifest actively without the aid of the physical body. This is the faculty of astral projection, which manifests with the awakening of ajna chakra. Therefore, mind is considered to be the karmendriya of ajna. The mode of operation of this center is purely mental and so the tanmatra is also the mind. The plane is *tapa loka*, where vestiges of imperfection are purified and the karmas are burned away. Along with vishuddhi chakra, ajna forms the basis for *vigyanamaya kosha*, which initiates psychic development.

Often, the experience one has when awakening takes place in ajna is similar to that induced by ganja (marijuana) or any other drug of that type. He who meditates on this awakened chakra sees a flaming lamp shining as the morning sun and he dwells within the regions of fire, sun and moon. He is able to enter another's body at will, and becomes the most excellent amongst munis, being all-knowing and all-seeing. He becomes the benefactor of all and is versed in all the shastras. He realizes his unity with the Brahman and acquires siddhis. Different results accruing out of meditation on the various centers are collectively realized by meditating on this center alone.

Ajna and the mind

So, ajna is essentially the chakra of the mind, representing a higher level of awareness. Whenever you concentrate on something, whether it is mooladhara, swadhisthana or manipura chakra, or you concentrate on an external object or an idea, ajna is affected, sometimes mildly, sometimes powerfully, depending on the degree of your concentration. When we visualize or when we dream at night, the inner vision that occurs is through ajna. If you are eating, sleeping or talking and you are not aware of it, then ajna is not operating. But if you are talking and one area of your awareness knows it, this knowing, this awareness is the faculty of ajna.

When you develop ajna, you can have knowledge without the aid of the senses. Normally, all knowledge comes to us by means of information the senses conduct to the brain, and a process of classification, logic and intellect that takes place in the frontal brain. However, the smaller brain, where ajna chakra is situated, has the capacity to acquire knowledge directly without the aid of the indriyas or senses. Supposing it is a very cloudy day, you can know, through logic, that it will rain. But if there are no clouds in the sky and still you know beyond a doubt that it will rain, this means your intuition and perception are very acute and ajna chakra is functioning.

When ajna is awakened, fickleness of the individual mind disperses and the purified *buddhi* (subtle intelligence or higher perception) manifests. Attachment, which is the cause of ignorance and lack of discrimination drops away, and *sankalpa shakti* (willpower) becomes very strong. Mental resolves are almost immediately converted into fruits, provided they are in accordance with individual dharma.

Ajna is the witnessing center where one becomes the detached observer of all events, including those within the body and mind. Here the level of awareness is developed whereby one begins to 'see' the hidden essence underlying all visible appearances. When ajna is awakened, the meaning and significance of symbols flashes into one's conscious perception and intuitive knowledge arises effortlessly.

This is the center of extrasensory perception where various siddhis manifest according to one's samskaras or mental tendencies. For this reason, ajna chakra is said to resemble a knot directly on top of the spinal cord. According to tantra this knot is called *rudra granthi*, the knot of Shiva. This knot is symbolic of the aspirant's attachment to the newly developed siddhis which accompany the awakening of ajna. The knot effectively blocks the spiritual evolution until attachment to psychic phenomena is overcome and the knot in consciousness is freed.

Understanding cause and effect

Up until ajna chakra awakens, we are under delusions, we view things incorrectly and we have many great misconceptions, about love and attachment, hatred and jealousy, tragedy and comedy, victory and defeat, and so many things. Our fears are unfounded, so are our jealousies and attachments, but still we have them. Our mind is functioning within a limited sphere and we can't transcend it. Just as we dream at night and our dream experiences are relative, we are also dreaming in our waking state and our experiences are relative. In the same way that we wake from a dream, when ajna awakens, there is also a process of waking up from this present dream we are living, and we can fully understand the relationship between cause and effect.

It is necessary for us to understand the law of cause and effect in relation to our lives, otherwise we are depressed and sorrowful about certain events in life. Supposing you give birth to a child and shortly after it dies. Why did it happen? This is what everybody would ask, isn't it? If a child was meant to die straight after birth, why was it born at all? You can only understand the reason if you understand the laws of cause and effect.

Cause and effect are not immediate events. Each and every action is both a cause and an effect. This life we have is an effect, but what was the cause? You have to discover it, then you can understand the relationship between cause and effect. It is only after awakening of ajna chakra that these laws can be known. Thereafter your whole philosophical attitude and approach to life changes. No events of life affect you adversely, and the various objects and experiences that come into your life and fade out of your life do not disturb you at all. You participate in all the affairs of life and you live fully, but as a detached witness. Life flows like a fast current and you surrender and move with it.

Moving on from ajna to sahasrara

To reach ajna chakra it requires sadhana, discipline, firm belief and persistent effort. With our present state of mind it is not possible to know how to reach sahasrara, but once ajna chakra becomes active, you develop superior perception and you realize how sahasrara can be reached. It's like setting out on a journey from Mungler to Marine Drive, Bombay. The most important stage of the journey is the long train trip to Bombay. Once you are there, reaching Marine Drive is no problem. It's easy to find the way, you just take a taxi and go there. So, in my opinion, it is not important for us to know how to reach sahasrara from ajna chakra, but it is essential for us to know how to awaken ajna.

Chapter 4

Mooladhara Chakra

The Sanskrit word *moola* means 'root or foundation' and that is precisely what this chakra is. Mooladhara is at the root of the chakra system and its influences are at the root of our whole existence. The impulses of life rise through the body and flower as the widest expansion of our awareness in the area known as sahasrara. It seems a great paradox that this earthiest and most basic of the chakras guides us to the highest consciousness.

In Samkhya philosophy, the concept of mooladhara is understood as *moola prakriti*, the transcendental basis of physical nature. The whole universe and all its objects must have some basis from which they evolve and to which they return after dissolution. The original source of all evolution is moola prakriti. Mooladhara, as the basis of moola prakriti, is responsible for everything that manifests in the world of name and form.

In tantra, mooladhara is the seat of kundalini shakti, the basis from which the possibility of higher realization arises. This great potential is said to be lying dormant in the form of a coiled serpent. When aroused, it makes its way upward through sushumna nadi in the spinal cord until it reaches sahasrara where the ultimate experience of enlightenment occurs. Therefore, the awakening of mooladhara is considered to be of great importance in kundalini yoga.

The location point

The seat of mooladhara in the male body is located slightly inside the perineum, midway between the scrotum and the anus. It is the inner aspect of that nerve complex which carries all kinds of sensations and is immediately connected with the testes. In the female body, mooladhara chakra lies on the posterior side of the cervix.

In both the male and female bodies, there is a vestigial gland at mooladhara chakra which is something like a knot. In Sanskrit this is known as *brahma granthi*; the knot of Brahma. As long as this knot remains intact, the energy located in this area is blocked. But the moment the knot is opened, shakti awakens. It is only when the individual awakens to the possibility of divine consciousness, to a greater force and purpose than that of instinctive animal life, that the brahma granthi begins to loosen. Consciousness begins to be liberated from the root center as the individual's aspiration awakens.

Many people feel hesitant and shy about believing kundalini is in mooladhara chakra and claim it to be in manipura, because they don't want to associate this holy kundalini shakti with the unholy sexual system. However, scientific investigation shows that this tiny gland in mooladhara chakra contains infinite energy and many psychic and spiritual experiences originate from mooladhara. Just because mooladhara is situated in the sexual region, this does not make it an impure center.

Traditional symbology

Mooladhara chakra is traditionally represented by a lotus flower with four deep crimson petals. On each petal is a letter: *vam, sham, sham, sam*, written in gold.

In the pericarp is a yellow square, symbol of the earth element, surrounded by eight golden spears - four at each corner and four at the cardinal points. These are said to represent the seven Kula mountains on the base spear of earth.

The golden yellow square, yantra of the earth element, is supported by an elephant with seven trunks. The elephant is the largest of all land animals and possesses great strength and solidity. These are the attributes of mooladhara - a great, dormant power, resting in a completely stable, solid place. The seven trunks of the elephant denote the seven minerals that are vital to physical function; in Sanskrit they are known *sapta dhatu*. The seven trunked elephant is the vehicle of the great mind, the great creativity.

Riding on the elephant's back, in the center of the square, is a deep red inverted triangle. This is the symbol of shakti or creative energy, which is responsible for the productivity and multiplicity of all things. Within the triangle is the swayambhu or dhurma linga, smoky grey in color. Around this linga, which represents the astral body, kundalini is coiled three and a half times, her luster being that of lightning. Three represents the three gunas or qualities of nature in an individual. As long as the three gunas are operating, individuality is functioning within the confinements of ego. The half represents transcendence.

In tantra this coiled serpent is known as mahakala, great or endless time. Here kundalini is lying in the womb of the unconscious, beyond time and space. When kundalini begins to manifest, it enters the dimensions of personality and individuality, and becomes subject to time and space. That is the awakening of the great serpent power within the individual form, frame and consciousness of the human being. However, in most people it is dormant. In its awakened state kundalini shakti represents our spiritual potential, but in its dormant state it represents that instinctive level of life which supports our basic existence. Both possibilities lie in mooladhara.

Resting on top of the inverted triangle is the bija mantra *lam*. Inside the bindu, over the mantra, reside the elephant deva Ganesha and the devi Dakini, who has four arms and brilliant red eyes. She is resplendent like the luster of many suns rising at the same time. She is the carrier of ever pure intelligence.

The tanmatra or sense associated with mooladhara is smell, and it is here that the psychic smells are manifested. The gyanendriya or sensory organ is the nose, and the kamendriya, organ of activity, is the anus. Mooladhara awakening is often accompanied by itchy sensations around the coccyx or anus, and the sense of smell becomes so acute that offensive odors are difficult to bear.

Mooladhara is the direct switch for awakening ajna chakra. It belongs to *bhu loka*, the first plane of mortal existence and it is the chief center of *apana*. Mooladhara is also the seat of *annamaya kosha*, the body of nourishment, connected with the absorption of food and evacuation of feces.

By meditating on kundalini in mooladhara chakra, a man becomes lord of speech, a king among men and an adept in all kinds of learning. He becomes ever free from all diseases and he remains cheerful at all times.

Balancing the nadis

Mooladhara is the base from which three main psychic channels or nadis emerge and flow up the spinal cord. It is said that ida, the mental force, emerges from the left of mooladhara; pingala, the vital force, from the right; and sushumna, the spiritual force, from the center. According to tantra, this emanation point is highly volatile. When the positive and negative forces of ida and pingala are completely balanced, an awakening is sparked off here which arouses the dormant kundalini. Usually, this state of balance between ida and pingala nadis can only be achieved sporadically and for short durations. This may be sufficient to trigger off an awakening, but only a mild one, in which kundalini rises as far as swadhisthana or manipura, and then drops back down to mooladhara again.

Therefore, the hatha yoga practices, particularly those of pranayama, are very important in kundalini yoga, because they purify and rebalance the psychic flows. Once the state of balance between ida and pingala becomes steady and ongoing, the awakening engendered in mooladhara becomes explosive, and kundalini rises with great force, overcoming all obstacles on its path until it reaches its ultimate destination in sahasrara.

Pranotthana versus kundalini

Many people have experiences in meditation when they feel the shakti rising through the spinal cord from mooladhara to the brain. However, in most cases, this is not the awakening of kundalini, but a release of pranic force called pranotthana. This preliminary awakening starts from mooladhara and ascends the spinal cord via pingala nadi, only partially purifying the chakras until it reaches the brain where it is usually dispersed.

In this type of awakening the experience of shakti is rarely sustained. However, it does prepare the aspirant for the eventual awakening of kundalini, which is something altogether different and more powerful. After the awakening of kundalini, the individual will never be the same again. Here there is an ascent of force accompanied by a psychic awakening which is permanently accessible. Even though it may fall back again, the potential will always be there.

Mooladhara and sexual expression

Awakening of mooladhara chakra is very important, firstly because it is the seat of kundalini, and secondly, as it is the seat of great tamas. All the passions are stored in mooladhara, all the guilt, every complex and every agony has its root in mooladhara chakra.

This chakra is physiologically related to the excretory, urinary, sexual and reproductive organs. It is so important for everybody to awaken this chakra and get out of it. Man's life, his desires, his actions and his accomplishments, are controlled by the sexual desires, and whatever we do in life is an expression of that lower chakra. Our lower samskaras and karmas are embedded there, as in lower incarnations, one's whole being is founded on the sexual personality. Dr. Sigmund Freud has also emphasized this point. He said that one's selection of clothing, food, friends, home furnishing and decor, etc., everything is influenced by his sexual awareness.

All the schizophrenics and neurotics and many crazy people who are ridden with guilt and complexes are people who have not been able to get the shakti out of mooladhara chakra. As a result of this, their lives are imbalanced.

Sexual fulfillment and sexual frustrations control our life. If sexual urges are removed from life, everything will change. Often we react to sexual life on account of bitter experiences and we vow not to follow the same path again. We are fed up and on account of that we say, 'No more'. But this is no solution, it's only a reaction and not the permanent structure of our mind.

Unless mooladhara chakra is purified, its corresponding center in the brain will always remain tamasic. We can live the same type of life as we do today, but we can make it much better. Sexual relationships are not a sin, but the consciousness must awaken and the purpose of the whole act must be transmuted.

It is clearly stated in tantra that the purpose of the sexual act is threefold, and these threefold purposes depend on the level and frequency of one's mind. Some people practise it for procreation, because that's where their mind is at. Others practise it for pleasure only; that's the level of their mind. And some people practise it to open the window to samadhi. They don't care for procreation or the fulfillment of passion, they are only concerned with awakening an experience and sublimating it. Through that experience they open the higher centers. So those who practise the normal sexual act must awaken mooladhara chakra first. Also, through the sexual act, a female can awaken mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras if her partner is a yogi. Generally, for these chakras to awaken in a man's body, he will have to practise kriya yoga and techniques such as vajroli.

There is another important thing we should all understand. A person who has controlled his lower impulses, a yogi who is practising higher sadhana, doesn't have to give up his or her partner and the marital relationship. If you think to be a yogi you must give up sex, why don't you also give up eating and sleeping? Yoga has nothing to do with giving up these things; it is only concerned with transforming their purpose and meaning.

The greatest mistake mankind has been making for thousands of years is that man has been fighting with himself. He wants to renounce sex but he has not been able to do it. Therefore it is important that mooladhara awakening takes place. Then you must make your mind totally free.

Managing mooladhara awakening

When awakening takes place in mooladhara as the result of yoga practice or other spiritual disciplines, many things explode into conscious awareness in the same way that an erupting volcano pushes to the surface things that were hidden beneath the earth. With the awakening of kundalini there is simultaneous awakening of things from the unconscious field of human existence which one may not have had prior conscious knowledge of whatsoever.

When mooladhara awakens, a number of phenomena occur. The first thing many practitioners experience is levitation of the astral body. One has the sensation of floating upward in space, leaving the physical body behind. This is due to the energy of kundalini whose ascending momentum causes the astral body to disassociate from the physical and move upward. This phenomenon is limited to the astral and possibly mental dimensions, and this differs from what is normally called levitation - the actual displacement of the physical body.

Besides astral levitation, one sometimes experiences psychic phenomena such as clairvoyance or clairaudience. Other common manifestations include movements or increasing warmth in the area of the coccyx, or a creeping sensation, like something moving slowly up the spinal cord. These sensations result from the ascension of shakti or the awakened kundalini.

In most cases, when the shakti reaches manipura chakra, it begins to descend to mooladhara again. Sometimes the practitioner feels that the energy ascends to the top of the head, but usually only a very small portion of the shakti is able to pass beyond manipura. Repeated earnest attempts are necessary for further ascension of kundalini, but once kundalini passes manipura, serious obstacles are rarely encountered.

However, when kundalini is ascending from mooladhara to swadhisthana, the sadhaka experiences a crucial period in which all his repressed emotions, especially those of a more primal nature, express themselves. Passions mount during this period and all kinds of infatuations ensue, making the sadhaka extremely irritable and unstable at times. He can be seen sitting quietly in contemplation one moment and hurling objects at someone the next. One day he may sleep deeply for hours together, another day he may get up at one or two in the morning to take bath and meditate. He becomes very passionate, loud and talkative, while at other times he is silent. At this stage the sadhaka often expresses a great fondness for singing.

During this period of intense psychic and emotional upheaval, the guidance of a qualified and understanding guru is essential. Although some people may regard this emotional turmoil as the indication of a great fall, the guru will assure the aspirant that it is an essential part of spiritual life which will accelerate his evolution. If this explosion doesn't take place, the same purging process will still occur, but very slowly, as problems arise and work themselves out life after life.

Mooladhara is one of the most important and exciting, but also disturbing of the psychic centers which are awakened through the practices of kundalini yoga. For this reason, the awakening of ajna chakra should always accompany mooladhara awakening. The mental faculties of ajna chakra give the

practitioner an ability to witness the events of mooladhara awakening objectively, with greater understanding. This makes the whole experience less disturbing and traumatic.

When ajna is awakened, you will find that mooladhara is the easiest of chakras to awaken. The gross mind can concentrate on this center and manipulate it with ease. As your body and mind begin to break their animal bonds, your awareness expands and you are able to envision the greater possibility of your creative potential.

Chapter 5

Swadhsthana Chakra

The Sanskrit word *swa* means 'one's own' and *adhsthana* means 'dwelling place or residence'. Therefore, swadhsthana means 'one's own abode'. Although mooladhara occupies a very important place in the scheme of the chakras, swadhsthana, which is located very near to mooladhara, is also involved in and responsible for the awakening of kundalini shakti in mooladhara. In fact, it is said that previously the seat of kundalini was in swadhsthana, but there was a fall and subsequently mahakundalini came to rest in mooladhara.

The location point

Swadhsthana corresponds to the reproductive and urinary systems in the gross body and is physiologically related to the prostatic or utero-vaginal plexus of nerves. The location of swadhsthana is at the base of the spinal column, at the level of the coccyx or tailbone. This is a small bony bulb which can be felt just above the anus. It is anatomically very close to mooladhara chakra in both the male and female bodies. Swadhsthana kshetram is in the front of the body at the level of the pubic bone.

Traditional symbology

Swadhsthana can be experienced as black in color, as it is the seat of primary ignorance. However, traditionally it is depicted as a six petalled vermilion or orange-red lotus. On each petal there is a letter: *bam, bham, mam, yam, ram, and lam*, written in the color of lightning.

The element of this chakra is water, symbolized by a white crescent moon within the pericarp of the lotus. The crescent moon is formed by two circles which engender two further yantras. The larger has outward turned petals and represents the conscious dimension of existence. On the inside of the crescent moon is a similar petalled but smaller circle with petals facing inwards. This is the unconscious dimension, the store of formless karma. These two yantras are separated by the white crocodile in the crescent moon. The crocodile is the vehicle which carries the whole phantom of unconscious life. It symbolizes the subterranean movement of the karmas. Seated on the crocodile is the bija mantra *vam*, also stainless and white.

Within the bindu of the mantra reside the deva Vishnu and the devi Rakini. Vishnu has four arms, his body is of a luminous blue, he is wearing yellow raiment and lie is beautiful to behold. Rakini is the color of a blue lotus and she is clothed in celestial raiment and ornaments. In her uplifted arms she holds various weapons and her mind is exalted from drinking nectar. She is the goddess of the vegetable kingdom, and as swadhsthana chakra is closely related to the vegetable world, the observance of a vegetarian diet is said to be an important practice for awakening this chakra.

The loka for swadhsthana is *bhuvah*, the intermediate plane of spiritual awareness. The tanmatra or sense connected with this chakra is taste. The gyanendriya or sense of knowledge is the tongue. The karmendriya or sense of action is the sexual organs, kidneys and urinary system. The chief vayu of swadhsthana is *vyana* which courses throughout the body and swadhsthana and manipura are the seat of *pranamaya kosha*.

It is said that he who meditates on kundalini in swadhsthana chakra is immediately freed from his internal enemies - lust, anger, greed, etc. His nectar-like words flow in prose and verse and in well-reasoned discourse. He becomes like the sun illumining the darkness of ignorance.

Home of unconscious

Swadhsthana is regarded as the substratum or basis of individual human existence. Its counterpart in the brain is the unconscious mind and its storehouse of mental impressions or samskaras. It is said that all the karmas, the past lives, the previous experiences, the greater dimension of the human personality that is unconscious, can be symbolized by swadhsthana chakra. Individual being takes root in the unconscious mind, and the many instinctive drives that are felt at the level of this chakra bubble up from the depths of the unconscious.

In tantra there is the concept of the animal, and the master of the animal. In Sanskrit, *pashu* means animal and *pati* means master. *Pashupati* is the master or controller of all the animal instincts. This is one of the names of Lord Shiva, and it is also one of the attributes of swadhsthana chakra. According to mythology, pashupati is the total unconscious. It has absolute control over mooladhara chakra and the animal propensities during the first milestone of man's evolution.

The unconscious principle of swadhsthana should never be considered as an inactive or dormant process. Rather it is far more dynamic and powerful than the normal consciousness. When the shakti enters swadhsthana chakra there is an overwhelming experience of this unconscious state. It is different from mooladhara, which is the manifest expression of that unconscious. In mooladhara, the karmas of the lower stages of our evolution are manifested in the form of anger, greed, jealousy, passion, love, hatred and so on. There we are working out that karma, manifesting and expressing it overtly. At the level of swadhsthana, however, there is no conscious activity or manifestation. This is hiranyagarbha, the universal womb, where everything exists in a potential state. In the *Rig Veda* it is said:

"In the beginning of creation there was hiranyagarbha, then came all the living beings, all the beings that exist, and He was the protector of all."

In the collective unconscious, the samskaras and the karmas exist in a seed state. For example, yesterday you may have had a pleasant or a painful experience. That experience has become a subconscious process or force which is acting, coloring your conscious awareness today. Like this, there are many experiences from the past which we do not consciously recall but nevertheless they are playing a part in determining our daily behavior, attitudes and reactions. There are many karmas influencing us in this way, but we remain completely unaware of them.

According to tantra each and every perception, experience and association is recorded. If you have a quarrel or bitter exchange, that is a very strong registration. However, if you happen to pass someone on the path, look at him and walk on, this is also registered. Many things come within your range of

association, and they are all automatically registered. They are not analyzed, but simply filed away in some layer of the mind. All those insignificant and unimpressive karmas, which have been registered automatically in our consciousness, form the total unconscious.

In kundalini yoga, swadhsthana is often regarded as a hindrance in the sense that these karmas lying embedded in the unconscious do not allow the rising kundalini to pass through. After the initial awakening, kundalini returns to dormancy time and time again, solely due to the karmic block at swadhsthana. These karmas are beyond the range of analysis. They have practically no form but they are a great force. To give a crude analogy, suppose there is a big water tank into which you drop all kinds of things. If you were to empty the tank five years later and examine the contents, you would no longer find those same objects which you put in. The matter would still be there but its form would have changed. The collective karma of the unconscious exists in swadhsthana as a form or force somewhat like the matter in this tank.

Therefore, the awakening of swadhsthana presents many difficulties to the sadhaka. When the explosion takes place and swadhsthana begins to erupt, the aspirant is often confused and disturbed by the activation of all this subconscious material. It is totally impossible for him to understand these impressions, which are often attributed to a disturbed mental condition.

Although the sadhaka may be duly apprehensive about entering this stage of awakening, it is absolutely necessary for his spiritual evolution. Provided he has a competent guru or guide who knows how to avoid all the pitfalls of this area, swadhsthana can be traversed safely and without problems.

Swadhsthana and purgatory

When kundalini is residing in swadhsthana chakra, the last vestige of karma is being thrown out and all the negative samskaras express themselves and are expelled. At this time you may be angry, afraid or full of sexual fantasies and passion. You may also experience lethargy, indolence, depression and all kinds of tamasic characteristics. The tendency to procrastinate is very strong and you just want to sleep and sleep. This stage of evolution is known as purgatory, and if you read the lives of many of the great saints, you will find that most of them encountered great turmoil and temptations when they were passing through this stage.

When Lord Buddha was sitting beneath the bodhi tree waiting for enlightenment, he was visited by Mara. Mara is a demonic mythological force, the same force which the Bible refers to as Satan. Just as Satan is a tempter, so Mara is a temptress. This demonic force is not external; it is an internal force which can be found in everybody. It is situated at a very great depth of our personality and is capable of creating illusion. In the Buddhist tradition Mara is represented by a big snake, a grotesque looking person with big teeth and a horrible face, or as beautiful naked women hovering around waiting to embrace an aspirant who is involved in his sadhana. These are all mythological symbols no doubt, but they are realities.

Only those who are fearless and of strong willpower can survive through the temptation. Every great man and every saint has had to undergo this peculiar experience, which is like the ultimate explosion of the seed of life. It seems that the seed of man's cycle of birth and rebirth is situated in swadhsthana chakra. And although most people confront difficulties when they're moving through the terrain of swadhsthana, if one has the grace of guru and indomitable and invincible willpower, and if he has been sincere and not hypocritical in his spiritual pursuits, if he's very clear about his goal and he understands what these purgatory experiences are, he can face the difficulties properly and overcome them.

If one fluctuates even slightly, kundalini will return to mooladhara and the real awakening will be more difficult. Therefore, in the first stages of sadhana and awakening, one must have a supreme kind of vairagya (detachment). It should not be intellectual vairagya, but the outcome of a thorough analysis of the situations of life. Where is the end to the pleasures of life? Can you ever satisfy your desires? Even when you reach the age of 80 or 90 and your body can no longer enjoy pleasures, the mind still dwells on them constantly. You can leave all the sensual pleasures, but the taste will remain in the mind.

If the sadhaka understands this truth, that desires can never be satisfied in one lifetime, or even in thousands of lifetimes, then kundalini can pass through swadhsthana safely and relatively fast, and make its way to manipura chakra. Without this understanding, swadhsthana becomes like an impenetrable iron curtain and perhaps only one in thousands can transcend it. Many people awaken kundalini quite easily, but passing the swadhsthana border is another thing; you can't get through without a visa.

The sexual crisis

I remember reading a book written by a wellknown swami who had difficulties getting through swadhsthana. He wrote: "I was sitting all night and nothing but sex and sensual thoughts came to my mind. And I dreamed of many women presenting themselves in their naked form, and my whole body was becoming hot and cold, hot and cold. Ultimately I got a headache, and at one point, I thought my heart would collapse.

"Throughout the crisis, my guru's face used to come like a glimpse. His face was stern and expressionless, and that used to bring my temperature back to normal. However, this confrontation I was having with a powerful side of my mind continued until morning. At last, when morning came I breathed a sigh of relief. But then, when I sat for meditation in the evening, I had mixed feelings. I had fear in my mind and confidence as well.

"Day in and day out the mind played its tricks on me. Then one night Parvati came to me. Parvati is the shakti of Lord Shiva, and she is the divine mother. I knew she was Parvati, but because she looked so beautiful and she was wearing almost transparent clothing, I began to desire her. Rather than remembering that she was the divine mother, my mind was more aware of the form behind the transparent apparel.

"Like a flash of lightning my guru showed his face and I regained my senses and prayed, 'Mother, withdraw your maya. I can't face these experiences. You are the giver of liberation and you are the creator of illusion. You have the power to cast me back into the cycle of birth and rebirth and you have the power to lift me from this quagmire of ignorance.'

"As I prayed, tears rolled down my face and I felt a cool breeze passing through the interior of my body. The whole panorama vanished and I understood that kundalini had passed through swadhsthana and was now heading towards manipura."

Transforming the primal energy

When no sexual desires of any kind manifest in an aspirant any more, and when there is no more personal attraction, that means kundalini has passed beyond swadhsthana chakra. However, when dealing with the subject of sex, your understanding must be very thorough. Although you may not be having any sexual awareness at the moment, that doesn't mean your desires have been exterminated. They might be in a suppressed state. There is an automatic process of suppression in the human constitution, and that is inherent in our own mental being.

Hindu rishis have stated that sexual awareness and desires can manifest at any stage of evolution. They are very acute and clearly expressed when one is in swadhsthana and having continual fantasies, but sexual awareness never really dies because it is fueled by the primal energy which is present all

throughout. Sex is only an expression of that, and therefore it can manifest at any stage, and one should never think that he has transcended it. It is even present when one is in the highest state of consciousness. The only difference is that in swadhisthana it is in a very disturbed state, whereas in the higher centers of evolution it is in a seed form. After all, what is bhakti or devotion; what is union? They are the sublimated pure form of sexual energy. Energy at different levels is known by different names. At the highest level it is called spiritual experience. On the emotional level it is known as love. On the physical level it is known as sex, and at the lowest level it is known as avidya or ignorance. So therefore, when you talk about sex, you must understand that it is only a particular formation of energy. Just as curd, butter and cheese are different formations of the one thing - milk, energy has different manifestations. Matter is the grossest manifestation of energy; in the ultimate state, matter is energy. Therefore, energy and matter are interchangeable. A thought is an object and an object is a thought. This body is consciousness and consciousness has become this body. In the same way that you understand this, you have to reanalyze and redefine sexual awareness.

The rishis say that the same energy which flows through passion, when channelized, manifests as devotion. Channelize this same energy again and it manifests as spiritual experience. That is why spiritual aspirants love God in various manifestations. Some picture him as a father, a mother, a child, a friend, husband or lover. In this way, they can sublimate the form of their emotional energy and even transform the primal energy into a divine experience.

Psychic propensities of swadhisthana

At a higher level, swadhisthana acts as the switch for bindu. This is the point where primal sound originates. Any awakening in swadhisthana is simultaneously carried up to bindu, where it is experienced in the form of the sound body, which is an important psychic attribute of this chakra. According to the tantric texts, there are many other psychic propensities gained through the awakening of swadhisthana chakra. These include: loss of fear of water, dawning of intuitive knowledge, awareness of astral entities, and the ability to taste anything desired for oneself or others.

It must be remembered that up to swadhisthana, the consciousness is not yet purified. Due to ignorance and confusion, the psychic powers awakened at this level are often accompanied by maleficent mental attributes. What happens here when the aspirant tries to manifest or express himself through the psychic medium is that more often than not it becomes a vehicle for personal and lower tendencies rather than for the divine.

The sum and substance is this - awakening of kundalini is not a difficult task, but to get beyond swadhisthana is. For that you must improve the general background of your psycho-emotional life. Once you pass swadhisthana you will not have to face any explosive traumas again, but there will be other difficulties further on. Kundalini is unlikely to descend again as it is destined to move on, but the problems you will confront will be concerned with siddhis, and they are more difficult to subdue.

Chapter 6

Manipura Chakra

Manipura is derived from two Sanskrit words: *mani* meaning 'jewel' and *pura* meaning "city". Therefore, manipura literally means "city of jewels". In the Tibetan tradition, this chakra is known as *mani padma*, which means "jewelled lotus".

Manipura is a very important center as far as the awakening of kundalini shakti is concerned. It is the center of dynamism, energy, will and achievement and it is often compared to the dazzling heat and power of the sun, without which life on earth would not exist. In the same way that the sun continually radiates energy to the planets, manipura chakra radiates and distributes pranic energy throughout the entire human framework, regulating and energizing the activity of the various organs, systems and processes of life. When deficient, it is more like the glowing embers of a dying fire rather than a powerful intense blaze. In this state the individual is rendered lifeless, vitality deficient and devoid of energy. He will be hindered by poor health, depression and lack of motivation and commitment in life. Therefore, the awakening of manipura is an important precedent, not only for the sadhaka, but for anyone who wishes to enjoy life more fully.

The location point

Manipura chakra is located directly behind the navel on the inner wall of the spinal column. The kshetram is situated right at the navel. This chakra is anatomically related to the solar plexus, which controls the digestive fire and heat regulation in the body.

Traditional symbology

Manipura is symbolized by a ten petalled bright yellow lotus. Some of the tantric texts say the lotus petals are the color of heavily-laden rain clouds. On each petal one of the ten letters: *dam, dham, nam, tam, tham, dam, dham, nam, pam and pham* is inscribed in the color of the blue lotus. In the center of the lotus is the region of fire, symbolized by an inverted fiery red triangle which shines like the rising sun. The triangle has a bhumipura or swastika in the shape of a T on each of its three sides. In the lower apex is the ram, vehicle for manipura, symbolizing dynamism and indomitable endurance. Seated on the ram is the bija mantra of manipura - *ram*. In the bindu reside the deva Rudra and the devi Lakini. Rudra is of a pure vermilion hue and he is smeared with white ashes. He is three-eyed and of an ancient aspect. Lakini, the benefactress of all, is four-armed, of dark complexion and radiant body. She is clothed in yellow raiment, decked with various ornaments and exalted from drinking nectar.

The tanmatra of manipura is sight. The gyanendriya or organ of knowledge is the eyes, and the kamendriya or organ of action is the feet. These two organs are closely linked in the sense that vision and willful action are interdependent processes.

Manipura belongs to *swaha loka*, the heavenly plane of existence. This is the last of the mortal planes. Its guna is predominantly rajas (activity, intensity, acquisitiveness), whereas the lower chakras are predominantly tamasic (lethargic and negative). The tattwa is *agni*, the fire element, which is very important in kundalini yoga. Its vayu is *samana*, which digests and distributes the essence of food to the entire system. Manipura and swadhisthana chakras are the seat of *pranamaya kosha*.

In the yogic scriptures it is said that the moon at bindu secretes nectar which falls down to manipura and is consumed by the sun. This results in the ongoing process of degeneration which leads to old age, disease and death. This process can be reversed in the human body by adopting certain yogic practices which send the pranic forces in manipura back up to the brain. Otherwise the vitality is quickly dissipated and lost in the mundane affairs of life. It is said that meditation on manipura chakra leads to knowledge of the entire physical system. When this center is purified and awakened, the body becomes disease-free and luminous, and the yogi's consciousness does not fall back into the lower states.

The center of awakening

According to the Buddhist tradition and many of the tantric texts, the actual awakening of kundalini takes place from manipura and not from mooladhara. And in some tantric traditions, mooladhara and swadhishthana are not referred to at all, as these two centers are believed to belong to the higher realms of animal life, whereas from manipura onwards higher man predominates. So mooladhara is the seat of kundalini, swadhishthana is the abode, and the awakening takes place in manipura. This is because from manipura the awakening becomes ongoing and there is practically no danger of a downfall or devolution of consciousness. Up to this point, kundalini may awaken and arise many times, only to recede again, but awakening of manipura is what we call a confirmed awakening.

To stabilize the awareness in manipura and sustain the awakening there is not easy. The sadhaka must be very earnest and persevering in his effort to bring about further awakenings. I have found that in sincere sadhakas, kundalini is mostly in manipura. If you are exposed to spiritual life, practise yoga, have a keen desire to find a guru and to pursue a higher life, side by side with the work you are doing, it means kundalini is not in mooladhara. It is in manipura or one of the higher centers.

Union of prana and apana

In tantra there is an important branch known as *swara yoga*, the science of the breath, which is used to bring about the awakening of kundalini. According to this system, all the pranas in the body are classified into five dimensions - *prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana*. At the navel region, there is an important junction where two of these vital forces - prana and apana, meet.

The prana moves upwards and downwards between the navel and the throat, and the apana flows up and down between the perineum and the navel. These two movements are normally coupled together like two railway carriages, so that with the inspired breath, prana is experienced to move up from the navel to the throat while apana is simultaneously moving up to the navel center from mooladhara. Then with exhalation, prana descends from the throat to the navel and apana descends from manipura to mooladhara. In this way prana and apana are continually functioning together and changing direction with the flow of the inspired/expired breath.

This movement can be readily experienced through relaxed breath awareness in the psychic passages between the perineal region, the navel and the throat centers in the front of the body. By gaining control through particular kriyas, the apana is separated from prana, and its flow is reversed to bring about the awakening of the chakra. Whereas the apana normally descends from manipura during expiration, the flow is reversed so that prana and apana both enter the navel center simultaneously from above and below, and are joined. This is the union of prana and apana.

It is said that when kundalini wakes up in mooladhara it begins to ascend spirally, like a hissing snake. However, the awakening of kundalini in manipura takes place like a blast, as the prana and the redirected apana meet in the navel center. It is like two great forces colliding with each other and then fusing together at this pranic junction, manipura kshetram. As they fuse together, they create heat and an energy or force which is conducted directly back from the navel to the manipura chakra within the spinal cord. It is this force which awakens manipura chakra. The force of sadhana has caused a total reorganization of the pranic flow in the body, so that mooladhara is transcended and the new base of kundalini is manipura chakra.

Manipura in perspective

Human evolution takes place through seven planes in the same way that kundalini awakens in the seven chakras. When the consciousness evolves to manipura, the sadhaka acquires a spiritual perspective. He gets a glimpse of the higher lokas or planes of existence.

From mooladhara and swadhishthana the higher planes cannot be seen. Therefore, the limitations of perception in the lower planes are responsible for the misuse of siddhis or powers which begin to manifest there. Only when the sadhaka reaches manipura is he able to visualize before him the infinite state of consciousness which is no longer gross and empirical. It stretches before him endlessly, full of beauty, truth and auspiciousness. In the face of this vision, all his views are completely changed. The personal prejudices, complexes and biases drop away as the endless beauty and perfection of the higher worlds dawn within the consciousness.

As long as the evolution is in the planes of mooladhara and swadhishthana, one has his own mental and emotional problems and he sees the whole world correspondingly. But as soon as he transcends these planes and goes to manipura, he will see all the bliss, noble views, perfect ideas and greater possibilities of human consciousness. Then, naturally, whatever he thinks and does will be influenced by this higher vision.

This is why the psychic powers that come to the sadhaka after having awakened and established the kundalini in manipura are really benevolent and compassionate, whereas those which manifest in mooladhara and swadhishthana are still tinged by the dark aspect of the lower mind.

The powers gained through the awakening of manipura chakra are the ability to create and destroy, self-defence, the acquisition of hidden treasures, no fear of fire, knowledge of one's own body, freedom from disease and the ability of withdrawing the energy to sahasrara.

Chapter 7

Anahata Chakra

In kundalini yoga, *anahata chakra* is a center of great importance. This is because although awakening from manipura is constant, kundalini has to remain in anahata for quite a long time.

It is said that in this present age the consciousness of mankind is passing through a phase of anahata. It means that in many people anahata chakra has started to function, but there is a difference between functioning and awakening. In most people, anahata is not completely active, but it functions slightly. Mooladhara on the other hand is very active and almost awake in the majority of people today.

The word *anahata* actually means 'unstruck or unbeaten'. And this center is known as such because of its relationship with the heart, which throbs, beats or vibrates to a constant unbroken rhythm. It is said in many of the scriptures that there is a sound which is non-physical and non-empirical, which is

transcendental in nature, and this sound is endless and unbroken in the same way that the heart beats faithfully and continuously from before birth up until death.

The location point

Anahata chakra is situated in the spinal column on the inner wall, directly behind the center of the chest. The kshetram is at the heart, and although anahata is known as the heart center, this should not be misinterpreted to mean the biological heart, the muscular pump within the chest. Although its physiological component is the cardiac plexus of nerves, the nature of this center is far beyond the physiological dimension.

In yoga the heart center is also known as *hriday-akasha*, which means 'the space within the heart where purity resides'. This chakra is a very delicate center, for it is directly connected with that part of the brain which is responsible for all the creative sciences and fine arts such as painting, dance, music, poetry, etc.

Traditional symbology

Although most of the tantric texts say anahata is a shining crimson color, like that of the bandhuka flower, my experience is that it is blue in color. It has twelve petals and on each a letter is inscribed in vermilion: *kam, kham, gam, gham, anga, cham, chham, jam, jham, nyam, tam and tham*.

The inner region is hexagonal in shape, representing the air element, *vayu tattva*. It is made up of two interlaced triangles, symbolizing the union of Shiva and Shakti. The inverted triangle is the symbol of creativity, Shakti; and the upright triangle represents consciousness or Shiva. The vehicle, located within the hexagon, is a black antelope, which is known for its alertness and fleetness of foot. Above it is situated the bija mantra *yam*, which is dark grey in color. Within the bindu of this mantra is the presiding deva, Isha (Lord in an all-pervading form), who is lustrous like the sun. With him is the devi Kakini (benefactress of all), who is yellow in color, three-eyed, four-armed, auspicious and exhilarated.

In the center of the pericarp of the lotus is an inverted triangle, within which burns the *akhanda jyoti*, unflickering eternal flame, representing the *jivatma* or individual soul. Some of the tantric texts say there is a shivalinga inside the triangle. It is called the *banalinga* and is like shining gold.

Below the main lotus of anahata is a subsidiary lotus with red petals, which contain the kalpa taru or wish fulfilling tree. Many saints have recommended visualization of the kalpa taru or of a still lake within the anahata hexagon. Upon this lake there is a beautiful blue lotus. You may have seen this symbol because several ashrams and spiritual missions utilize it.

Anahata belongs to *maha loka*, the first of the immortal planes. Its *vayu* is prana, which passes through the nose and mouth, and its tanmatra is feeling or touch. The *gyanendriya* is the skin and the *kamendriya* is the hands. Anahata chakra represents *manomaya kosha*, controlling the mind and emotions.

Vishnu granthi, the second psychic knot, is located at this heart center. It represents the bondage of emotional attachment, the tendency to live one's life making decisions on the strength of the emotions and feelings rather than in the light of the spiritual quest. Vishnu granthi is untied as the emotions harmonize and enhance, rather than oppose the spiritual awakening.

It is said that he who meditates on the heart lotus is foremost among yogis and adored by women. He is preeminently wise and full of noble deeds. His senses are completely under control and his mind can be engaged in intense concentration. His speech is inspired and he has the ability to enter another's body at will.

Fate and freewill

In the tantric scriptures it is said that anahata chakra is where the thoughts and desires of the individual are materialized and fulfilled. There are basically two ways of thinking - dependently or independently. Up to manipura chakra the first approach holds true, but once the shakti pierces anahata, the second approach takes precedence.

This means that as long as the consciousness is centered in the lower chakras, you will remain completely dependent on what is already enjoined for you, your fate or destiny. This is called *prarabdha karma*. Even the awakening of the lower chakras does not make much difference. Once the consciousness ascends through manipura chakra, you become master over some of the situations of life, but you are still influenced and bound by your *prarabdha karma*. You know that you can escape it, but you don't know how.

The lower chakras belong to the empirical world of body, mind and senses. People who accept their fate as inevitable have not yet transcended *mooladhara* and *swadhithana* chakras. Manipura is still considered earthly, although it lies at the boundary between mortal and immortal planes. Those who actively shape their own destiny through strength of will channelled in a positive direction, which leads to realization and achievement, are in the realm of manipura.

Anahata chakra is almost completely beyond these empirical dimensions. Here, one realizes that fate is of course real, but still one can go totally beyond it dictates. It is like throwing something into the sky. If you are able to hurl that object right out of the gravitational field, then it will no longer be pulled down by the earth's magnetic forces. Just as a rocket is launched at tremendous speed in order to go beyond the gravitational pull of the earth, so the consciousness is accelerated in anahata to the speed of freewill in order to transcend the pull of latent *samskaras*.

It is only when you reach anahata chakra that you become a yogi. Up until then, whether you are in *mooladhara*, *swadhithana* or *manipura*, you are a yoga practitioner. In anahata you become a yogi because you are completely established in yogic consciousness and you depend solely upon the power of your own consciousness rather than on anything that is external or concerning faith.

Wish fulfillment

In anahata chakra, the freedom to escape from a preordained fate and to determine one's own destiny becomes a reality. According to the tantras, at the root of anahata there is a wish fulfilling tree known as the *kalpa taru* or *kalpa vriksha*. When this tree starts to fructify, whatever you think or wish comes true.

Ordinarily, we have so many wishes but they rarely assume more than the air of a daydream. However, if they were all to become realities, we would quickly start to question whether we want our wishes fulfilled at all. Most people prefer to depend on fate rather than take responsibility for creating their own destiny, and well they should. There is a fine story which is often told to illustrate this:

Once a traveller was sitting underneath a tree. He was feeling very tired and wanted to have a drink. So he thought of a clear stream, and immediately he heard the trickle of water flowing beside him. After drinking some water, he thought he would like to have a little food to satisfy his hunger, and that appeared beside him also. Then, as he was feeling tired and thought he would like to rest, there appeared before him a nice bed, and so he went to

sleep. The foolish man did not know that he had come to rest beneath the wish fulfilling tree. In the evening when he awoke, the sun had already set and night had fallen. He got up and the thought came to his mind: 'Oh, it is terribly dark, perhaps the tigers will come and eat me', and so they did.

This is what can happen to anyone who awakens the wish fulfilling capacity without sufficient preparation. If the consciousness awakens in anahata, but you do not know the powers of your mind, or you possess negative, pessimistic attitudes, dark approaches to life, apprehensions, fears and many other negative mental tendencies, then you will immediately fall prey to them. If this happens, you risk the possibility of falling back from anahata. And if you fall from anahata, there is hardly any chance of making a second start. To avoid a downfall at this point, it is necessary to always remain as alert as the antelope, which is sensitive to each and every sound. The antelope is the vehicle of anahata for this reason; it is not the symbol of restlessness, but of alertness.

When whatever you wish for comes true, this makes you very happy, but at the same time, it is necessary to constantly analyze your attitude towards yourself and others. You have to be very careful of doubting thoughts. For example, if you develop a few palpitations of the heart and think: 'Perhaps I am developing angina pectoris', or a pain in the abdomen and think: 'Now I have appendicitis or gall bladder disease', such thoughts may bring many problems and disorders in their wake. You must also guard against doubts concerning others: 'Maybe that man is my enemy', 'My son is sick, maybe he will die', 'My friend has not contacted me, he must have had an accident'. It is important to have a firm and alert control over the mental tendencies and fantasies of the mind.

All sorts of thoughts concerning the body, children, wife, family, monetary, social, economic or political situations come to us all the time. If kundalini is asleep, these thoughts have no power, but when kundalini awakens in anahata chakra, all these thoughts suddenly become realities. Unless we are ever alert at this stage we will place our own destructive hand on our head.

In the tantric text *Saundarya Lahari*, this wish fulfilling process is aptly described as the *chintamani*, or wish fulfilling gem. Here *chinta* applies to the 'process of selective thought' and *mani* means 'jewel'. Therefore, *chintamani* means the 'jewel of correct and positive thinking'. In this text, anahata is described as the garden of the devas. At the center is a small divine lake inside which is the *chintamani*. It is not necessary to obtain this jewel; as long as you can realize your proximity to it that is enough, then whatever you think comes true.

Develop a new way of thinking

When anahata chakra blooms and awakens, you must have very good *sangha*, associations. You should never associate with people who depend on their fate. Rather, you should always associate with those who depend on faith. You must have unwavering faith in the power of your own will. Even in the face of tremendous odds, be unflinching. Then you will succeed. Willpower is never the outcome of suggestion. If you are ill and you say a hundred times, 'I am well, I am well, I am well...', this is called autosuggestion. It is not will. Will is something more than this. 'Even if my son is suffering from the worst disease and medical science has declared that he is about to die, I know he will not.' This is how you have to think and use your will.

The first preparation, therefore, with regards to awakening anahata is to change your entire way of thinking. If you are the type of person whose thoughts and wishes often come true, even when conditions seem to be opposed to that outcome, then it is necessary to develop a certain amount of caution along with a new way of thinking.

You must become extremely optimistic and positive, always full of hope. You must never dwell in the negativity of the mind. Physically, mentally and spiritually, you must be completely at peace with yourself, with people outside and with the whole community at large. Though the world is full of conflicts, contradictions and deep animosities, you have to always feel deep peace throughout your being. Never be negative about any situation in life. Even if you meet a murderer, hopeless gambler or a debaucher, to you he is a good man. Every situation is a good one for you and the future is always bright. In all circumstances this must be your attitude. It makes no difference whether you are amidst poverty, suffering, disease, conflict, divorce, emotional crises and discord. It is all part of the good, therefore you accept it.

You have to think only one thought resolutely, 'The whole world is in me', or 'I am in everyone'. When you are able to develop this universal sort of attitude, the kundalini will shine forth and pierce the fifth chakra - *vishuddhi*, the center of immortality. This is the importance and significance of anahata. Perhaps the best mantra for the heart center is *Om Shanti*. 'Om' is the universal cosmic vibration which permeates the whole creation and 'Shanti' means peace.

Love without expectations

Anahata chakra awakens refined emotion in the brain and its awakening is characterized by a feeling of universal, unlimited love for all beings. Of course there are many people in the world who practise kindness and charity, but they have selfishness. Their charity is not an expression of anahata chakra and spiritual compassion, it is human compassion. When you have human compassion you open hospitals and feeding centers or you give clothing, money and medicine in charity, but that is human charity.

How can we tell the difference between human charity and spiritual charity? In human charity there is always an element of selfishness. If I want to make you a Hindu by giving you things, this is a manifestation of human charity. Or if I want to make you my followers I can show you great kindness, but that's human kindness. However, when anahata awakens all your actions are controlled and ruled by unselfishness and you develop spiritual compassion. You understand that love does not involve bargaining; it is free of expectation.

Every form of love is contaminated by selfishness, even the love you have for God, because you are expecting something from him. Perhaps in this world, the love with minimum selfishness is a mother's love. Of course it is not totally unselfish, but because a mother's sacrifices are so great, her love has minimum selfishness.

The qualities of anahata chakra can be awakened by many methods. The symbol of anahata chakra is a blue lotus, and in the center are two interlaced triangles. This lotus represents the opening of man's heart. Music, art, sculpture, literature, poetry, all these are important aids to the development of anahata chakra. And when anahata opens, your understanding of all beings changes a lot. There is a story about it.

In India there is a traditional pilgrimage in which *sadhaks* go north to the source of Ganga, take some water from there and carry it across the continent to South India. Here they go to a temple and pour the holy water over a shivalingam. The distance they have to cover in this pilgrimage is almost 3,000 miles.

Once a saint had almost completed this pilgrimage and he was carrying a container full of Ganga water. As he entered the precincts of the temple where he was to bathe the shivalingam, he found a donkey which was desperately pining for water. Immediately he opened his can and gave water to the donkey. His fellow travellers cried out, 'Hey, what are you doing? You have brought this water from such a long distance to give bath to Lord Shiva, and here you are giving it to an ordinary animal!' But the saint didn't see it that way. His mind was working at a different and much higher frequency.

Here is another example: Once Lord Buddha was going for an evening walk. He came across an old man and he was greatly moved by the sufferings of old age. Next he saw a dead person, and again he was moved very much. How many times do we see old men? Are we moved like he was? No, because our minds are different. Awakening of a chakra alters the frequency of the mind and immediately influences our day to day relationships with people and our surroundings.

Love overcomes ego

Anahata chakra can be aroused and awakened by the practice of bhakti yoga, in which there is no place for egotistical consciousness. Your devotion can be for God or guru. It is easy to practise devotion to God because he does not check your ego, or even if he does, you don't know it. But when you practise devotion to guru, the first thing he does is 'egodectomy.' So when you direct your devotion to guru, you have lots of difficulties. If you only meet your guru from time to time, the problems are invisible, but if you live with him, the problems are greater. Therefore, many people think it is safer to have a guru who is no longer living.

Not only is ego an obstacle on the spiritual path, it is also the greatest barrier to harmony and cordiality in family and social life. Therefore, in order to treat the ego there are two very important paths. One is karma yoga and the other is bhakti yoga. Ego can never be removed by intellectual persuasion. It can never be subdued or eliminated unless you develop the highest form of love. Just as the sun removes darkness, love removes ego. These two can never coexist.

So, in order to induce anahata awakening we should definitely practise bhakti yoga. When kundalini is established in anahata there is absolute devotion and even a confirmed atheist will change. However, awakening of anahata is not only a way to God or guru, it is also a way to complete unity and harmony in family life. Therefore, in India, most Hindu women are initiated into bhakti yoga at a very young age. When they are four to six years old they are taught to practise devotion to Lord Shiva, Krishna, Rama, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Durga and so on, because it is easier for women to develop anahata chakra. For this reason women are also told to use anahata as their center for meditation, whereas men are generally advised to concentrate on ajna chakra. Anahata is the seat of human love and the seat of divine love. They are not two things, they are one and the same.

Psychic propensities of anahata chakra

Prior to the awakening of anahata there may be frequent pain in the chest or irregular functioning of the heart, such as accelerated pulse. However, rather than feeling ill, one feels healthy and active and requires little sleep. One obtains complete emotional balance and the ability to communicate externally as well as internally. Voices or sounds coming from other realms may be heard, and buzzing or humming sounds and the music of a flute may be experienced.

The sadhaka may become an inspired poet, artist or singer. He may manifest clairvoyant/clairaudient or psychokinetic ability, or he may be able to conquer people by the immensity of love he emits. A person who is in anahata is generally very sensitive to the feelings of others and his sense of touch is strongly developed. He also has the ability to heal others, either by touch or by generating his own spiritual energy to other people in order to effect curative changes. Many people who perform miraculous healings do so through the agency of anahata chakra.

With anahata awakening one develops non-attachment to worldly things and a constant feeling of optimism, understanding that good and bad coexist, but there is also a world beyond this duality. After ridding oneself of attachment, the mind becomes relaxed, free and peaceful. And with the discovery of true freedom, pleasures of dualistic life become meaningless.

Chapter 8

Vishuddhi Chakra

Vishuddhi chakra is known as the 'purification center'. The Sanskrit word shuddhi means (to purify), and in this chakra the purifying and harmonizing of all opposites takes place. Vishuddhi is also known as the 'nectar and poison center'. Here, the nectar which drips down from bindu is said to be split into the pure form and the poison. The poison is discarded and the pure nectar then nourishes the body, ensuring excellent health and longevity.

Vishuddhi represents a state of openness in which life is regarded as the provider of experiences that lead to greater understanding. One ceases to continually avoid the unpleasant aspects of life and seek the pleasant. Instead there is a flowing with life, allowing things to happen in the way that they must. Both poison and nectar are consumed in vishuddhi chakra, and they are understood to be but parts of a greater cosmic whole. Proper understanding and true discrimination dawn out of this equal acceptance of the dualities and polarities of life.

The more abstract aspect of vishuddhi is the faculty of higher discrimination. Hence any communication received telepathically can be tested here for its correctness and accuracy. Similarly, vishuddhi allows us to differentiate between realization coming into our consciousness from the higher levels of knowledge, and the mere babblings of our unconscious mind and wishful thinking.

Vishuddhi chakra is often treated as an insignificant chakra in the scheme of kundalini yoga. People are more concerned with mooladhara, anahata and ajna, and therefore the significance of vishuddhi is easily disregarded. In fact, the reverse attitude may even be more appropriate.

The location point

Vishuddhi chakra is in the cervical plexus directly behind the throat pit. Its kshetram is in the front of the neck, at the throat pit or thyroid gland. The physiological concomitants of vishuddhi are the pharyngeal and laryngeal nerve plexus.

Traditional symbology

Some tantric texts say vishuddhi chakra is represented by a dark grey colored lotus, however, it seems to be more commonly perceived as a purple lotus of sixteen petals. These sixteen petals correspond to the number of nadis associated with this center. On each petal one of the Sanskrit vowels is

inscribed in crimson - *am, aam, im, eem, um, oom, rim, reem, lrim, lreem, em, aim, om, aum, am, ah*. In the pericarp of this lotus is a circle which is white like the full moon, representing the element of ether or *akasha*. This ethereal region is the gateway to liberation for one whose senses are pure and controlled. Within this moon shape is a snow white elephant, also symbolic of the *akasha* element. This is considered as the vehicle of consciousness of this plane, and the aspirant may picture himself upon its back. The bija mantra is *ham*, also pure white, which is the seed sound or vibration of the etheric element.

The presiding deity of *vishuddhi* is *Sadashiva*, who is snow white, three-eyed and five-faced, with ten arms and clothed in a tiger's skin. The goddess is *Sakini* who is purer than the ocean of nectar that flows down from the moon region. Her raiment is yellow and in her four hands she holds the bow, the arrow, the noose and the goad.

Vishuddhi belongs to the fifth loka, the plane of *janaha*. Its *vayu* is *udana* which lasts till the end of life and rises upwards, and along with *ajna* chakra, *vishuddhi* forms the basis for *vigyanamaya kosha* which initiates psychic development. The *tanmatra* or sense is hearing and the *gyanendriya* or organ of knowledge is the ears. The *karmendriya* or organ of action is the vocal chords.

In *nada* yoga, the branch of *kundalini* yoga concerned with sound vibration, *vishuddhi* and *mooladhara* are considered to be the two basic centers of vibration. In *nada* yoga the ascent of consciousness through the *chakras* is integrated with the musical scale. Each note of the scale corresponds to the vibratory level of consciousness of one of the *chakras*. This scale, often chanted in the form of *mantras*, *bhajans* and *kirtans*, is a very powerful means of awakening *kundalini* in the different *chakras*.

Mooladhara is the first and *vishuddhi* is the fifth level of vibration in the scale. They produce the basic sounds or vowels around which the music of the *chakras* is constructed. These vowel sounds, pictured on the sixteen petals of the *yantra*, are the primal sounds. They originate from *vishuddhi* chakra and are directly connected to the brain.

By meditation on *vishuddhi* chakra, the mind becomes pure like the *akasha*. One becomes a great sage, eloquent and wise and enjoys uninterrupted peace of mind. *Amrit* can be felt as a cold fluid flowing into the *chakra* and the aspirant becomes free from disease and sorrow, he is compassionate, full of bliss and long lived.

Nectar and poison

In the tantric scriptures it is said that within *bindu* at the back of the head, the moon is secreting a vital fluid or essence known as nectar. This transcendental fluid drips down into the individual consciousness from *bindu visarga*. *Bindu* can be regarded in this context as the center or passage through which the individuality emerges from cosmic consciousness in *sahasrara*.

This divine fluid has many different names. In English it can be termed *ambrosia* - the nectar of the gods. It is also known as *amrit* - the nectar of immortality. In the Vedas it is known as *soma* and in the *tantras* it is referred to as *madya* (divine wine). Many of the great Sufi poets refer to the sweet wine which brings instant intoxication. The same symbolism is contained in the Christian rituals where wine is consecrated and sacramentally imbibed. In fact, every religious system and mystical tradition concerned with awakening man's higher consciousness has its own symbolism for the unspeakable and indescribable feeling of bliss.

Between *bindu* and *vishuddhi* *chakras* there is another smaller psychic center known as *lalana chakra* or *talumula*, and it is closely related to *vishuddhi* chakra. When the nectar trickles down from *bindu* it is stored in *lalana*. This center is like a glandular reservoir, situated in the back of the nasopharynx, the inner cavity above and beyond the soft palate into which the nasal passages open. When you perform *khechari mudra* you are attempting to turn the tongue up and backwards into this cavity to stimulate the flow of nectar.

Although this fluid is known as *ambrosia*, it actually has a dual nature which can act as poison as well as nectar. When it is produced in *bindu* and stored in *lalana* it remains undifferentiated, neither poison nor nectar. As long as *vishuddhi* chakra remains inactive, this fluid runs downward unimpeded, to be consumed in the fire of *manipura*, resulting in the processes of decay, degeneration and finally death in the body's tissues.

However, by certain practices such as *khechari mudra*, the *ambrosia* is secreted from *lalana* and passes to *vishuddhi* chakra, the purifying and refining center. When *vishuddhi* is awakened the divine fluid is retained and utilized, becoming the nectar of immortality. The secret of youth and regeneration of the body lies in the awakening of *vishuddhi* chakra.

There is a wonderful story from the mythology of India which concerns the nectar and poison of *vishuddhi*. It is said that in the primordial past, the *devas* and the *rakshasas*, symbolizing the forces of good and evil, were continually fighting each other. Each was seeking to dominate and destroy the other. Eventually *Vishnu* attempted to resolve the conflict. He suggested they stir up the primordial ocean (representing the world and the mind), and said they could divide the contents equally between them.

This seemed a fair solution and *Vishnu's* plan was agreed upon. The ocean was churned and many things came to the surface for sharing and distribution between the *devas* and *rakshasas*. In all, fourteen things arose, including the nectar of immortality side by side with the worst poison. Of course both the *devas* and the *rakshasas* wanted the nectar, but nobody wanted anything to do with the poison. Ultimately only the *devas* got the nectar, because if it had been given to the vicious *rakshasas* they would have become immortal. The poison could not even be discarded, for wherever it was thrown it would cause harm. A great dilemma arose and eventually *Vishnu* took the poison to *Shiva* to ask his advice. *Shiva* swallowed the poison in a single gulp. From that time onwards, one of the names of Lord *Shiva* has been *Nilakantha*, the blue-throated one, and he is often depicted in this way.

This story signifies that even poison can be readily digested when *vishuddhi* chakra is awakened. It means that at higher levels of awareness, at the level of *vishuddhi* and above, even the poisonous and negative aspects of existence become integrated into the total scheme of being. They are rendered powerless as concepts of good and bad fall away. At this state of awareness the poisonous aspects and experiences of life are absorbed and transformed into a state of bliss.

In this *chakra* it is possible that not only internal poisons but also external poisons can be neutralized and rendered ineffective. This is one of the *siddhis* associated with *vishuddhi* chakra, and many yogis have possessed this power. It depends on the awakening of the throat center and *bindu visarga* in the brain, to which it is directly connected.

The potential of vishuddhi

Vishuddhi is the center responsible for receiving thought vibrations from other people's minds. This actually occurs through a minor center which is closely connected with *vishuddhi*. It acts somewhat like a transistor radio tuning into a radio station, allowing the yogi to tune into the thoughts and feelings of people both close by and far away. The thought waves of others are also experienced elsewhere in the body, in other centers such as

manipura, but the actual reception center of thought waves and transmissions is vishuddhi. From vishuddhi they are relayed to the centers in the brain associated with the other chakras and in this way they enter into the individual awareness.

Associated with vishuddhi is a particular nerve channel known as *kurma nadi*, the tortoise nadi. When it is awakened, the practitioner is able to completely overcome the desire and necessity for food and drink. This capability has been demonstrated by many yogis in the past.

Vishuddhi is actually the legendary 'fountain of youth'. It is said that when kundalini is in vishuddhi one enjoys eternal youth. When it awakens by the practices of hatha yoga, kundalini yoga or tantra, then a spontaneous physical rejuvenation begins to take place. There is a point in life, usually in the second or third decade, when the rate of degeneration of the cells of the body surpasses the rate of regeneration. It is from that point that decay, old age, disease and death come to man. In certain disease states such as some forms of leukemia, the degenerative and destructive forces develop even more rapidly. The rejuvenation effected by vishuddhi chakra on the tissues, organs and systems of the body is in contradistinction to this ongoing ageing process, which is man's normal condition.

The powers attained through awakening vishuddhi include imperishability, full knowledge of the scriptures and also the knowledge of the past, present and future. The sense of hearing becomes very sharp, but through the mind and not the ears. One frequently experiences *shoonyata*, the void, and he overcomes all fear and attachment. He is then able to work freely in the world without being attached to the fruits of his actions.

Chapter 9

Bindu Visarga

Bindu, the source of creation, is beyond the realm of all conventional experience and therefore, even in the tantric texts, there is very little written about it. It is the storehouse of all the karmas of man from his previous life. Not only are these karmas in the form of *vasanas*, they are also in the form of memories.

The word *bindu* means 'drop or point'. It is more correctly termed *bindu visarga*, which literally means 'falling of the drop'. Bindu is represented by the crescent moon and a white drop, which is the nectar dripping down to vishuddhi chakra. It is the ultimate source out of which all things manifest and into which all things return.

".....(bindu) is the cause of the creation of word and meaning, now entering and now separating from one another."

".....from that (bindu) came ether, air, fire, water, earth and the letters of the alphabet."

Kama-Kala-Vilasa (verses 6-9)

Bindu visarga is interconnected with vishuddhi chakra in the same way that the minor centers of the digestive system are connected with manipura, and those of the uro-genital and reproductive systems with swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras. Similarly, the minor centers of the respiratory and circulatory systems are integrated into anahata chakra and so on. In each case, the connection is mediated by the particular group of nerves associated with that chakra. Bindu and vishuddhi are connected via the network of nerves which flow through the interior portion of the nasal orifice, passing through *lalana* chakra, which is found at the uvula or palate. Therefore, when awakening takes place in vishuddhi, it simultaneously takes place in bindu and *lalana*.

The ten paired cranial nerves which emerge along the brain stem from their associated centers or nuclei, are considered to actually have their initial origins within this tiny center, so that the whole visual, nasal, auditory and tasting systems are ultimately manifestations from bindu.

The location point

The seat of bindu is at the top back of the head, exactly at the spot where the Hindu brahmins leave a tuft of hair growing. Although this custom is still being followed today, its original purpose has been completely forgotten. In Sanskrit that tuft of hair is called *shikha*, which means 'the flame of fire'. Here, the word 'flame' stands for the flame of *vasanas* or the hidden karmas belonging to the previous life.

During the period of *sandhya*, when the child underwent the thread ceremony and was initiated into mantra, they used to hold and tighten this tuft as much as possible and then tie it. When the tuft was tightened and the child practised mantra, he developed a powerful and continuing awareness of this bindu point alone. He felt tightness rather than pain at that point. This is one traditional way to gain contact with bindu visarga.

Tantric physiology

According to tantric tradition, within the higher centers of the upper cortex of the brain there is a small depression or pit which contains a minute secretion. In the center of that tiny secretion is a small elevation or point like an island in the middle of a lake. In the psychophysiological framework, this tiny point is considered to be bindu visarga.

The actual isolation of such a minuscule structure within the anatomy of the brain has never been reported or verified by medical scientists. However, such a study could prove both interesting and rewarding, in the same way that modern research into the mysterious pineal gland has verified that it is the anatomical and functional concomitant of ajna chakra, as described in the tantra shastras. However, it is easy to imagine that such a delicate and minute structure as the bindu visarga would undoubtedly be disrupted during post mortem procedures. Certainly the tiny amount of fluid could hardly be expected to remain localized for easy extraction and analysis, when it is well known that other more plentiful neural and glandular transmitters and secretions degenerate and disperse into the tissues at the time of death. Nevertheless, it is certainly a possibility to be considered.

Traditional symbology

In the tantric scriptures, the symbol of bindu is a crescent moon on a moonlit night. This symbol is very rich in meaning. The crescent moon indicates that bindu is closely related to the *kalas* (phases) of the moon, as are the endocrine, emotional and mental fluctuations of human beings. The immensity of sahasrara is gradually unveiled through ardent yoga practice in the same way that the full moon is progressively revealed from the time of the new moon to full moon each month. The crescent moon offers a faint and transient view of a hill in the dead of night. The background of the night sky also symbolizes the infinity of sahasrara beyond bindu. However, sahasrara cannot be fully experienced while individuality remains.

The symbol of Om also contains the representation of bindu in its uppermost part, which is a small point above a crescent moon. Actually, all the chakras are symbolized within the body of the Om symbol, as are the three gunas or qualities of the created world: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. These chakras exist

in the realm of prakriti and its gunas. Bindu however, is placed separately from this body in the symbol to indicate that it is transcendental and beyond the fetters of nature.

Bindu visarga belongs to the seventh or highest loka of *satyam*, the plane of truth, and it also belongs to the causal body, or *anandamaya kosha*. It is said that when bindu visarga awakens, the cosmic sound of Om is heard and one realizes the source of all creation, emanating from the bindu point and crescent moon above the symbol of Om.

The seat of nectar

In many of the tantric texts it is written that bindu, the moon, produces a very intoxicating secretion. Yogis can live on this ambrosial fluid. If its secretion is awakened and controlled in the body, then one needs nothing more for survival. The maintenance of the body's vitality becomes independent of food.

There have been many reports of people who have entered into states of hibernation or suspended animation underneath the earth. This phenomenon has been verified many times under strict scientific observation. This human hibernation has been witnessed for periods as long as forty days. Not all cases have been genuine, but when authentic, they have been carried out exactly in the following manner. Initially pranayama is practised assiduously, until kumbhaka (retention of the breath) has been perfected. At this stage, khechari mudra is performed. This is not the simple form of khechari as performed in kundalini yoga sadhana, but the practice of hatha yoga in which the root or frenulum of the under surface of the tongue is gradually cut and the tongue is slowly elongated and inserted into the nasopharynx. It blocks off the passage as a cork seals a bottle. The whole practice is perfected over a two year period.

By this practice the drops from bindu fall to vishuddhi and subsequently permeate the whole bodily system. These drops of nectar maintain the nutrition and vitality of the bodily tissues while simultaneously arresting the metabolic processes of the body. When the metabolism of the cells and tissues of the body is suspended in this way, oxygen is no longer required and cellular wastes are not produced. Therefore, the person who hibernates can live without breathing for quite an extended period of time. Even the facial hair does not grow during the period of hibernation.

The poison nectar

Also, besides producing nectar, bindu is responsible for the production of poison. The poison glands and the nectar glands are almost simultaneously situated. You may wonder if by awakening bindu there is any danger in stimulating the poison glands. If bindu and vishuddhi are stimulated at the same time there is absolutely no danger, because bindu controls the nectar glands and vishuddhi has a bearing on both nectar and poison. As long as nectar is flowing, the poison can do no harm. Also, if a yogi has purified his body through hatha yoga and the practices of dhyana and raja yoga, the poison glands are utilized for the production of nectar.

The origin of individuality

Bindu is considered to be the origin of creation or the point where oneness first divides itself to produce the world of multiple individual forms. This aspect of bindu can be traced to the Sanskrit root *bind*, which means 'to split or divide'.

Bindu implies a point without dimension, a dimensionless center. In some Sanskrit texts it is termed *chidghana* - that which has its roots in the limitless consciousness. Bindu is considered to be the gateway to *shoonya*, the state of void. This void should not be misinterpreted as a state of nothingness. Rather, it is the state of no-thingness - the state of pure, absolute and undifferentiated consciousness. Bindu is mysterious. It is an ineffable focal point within which the two opposites, infinity and zero, fullness and nothingness, coexist.

Within bindu is contained the evolutionary potential for all the myriad objects of the universe. It contains the blueprint for creation. Evolution here refers to the vertical, transcendental process by which life, objects and organisms arise from the underlying substratum of existence. The evolution is not at all the same as the scientific concept of Darwinian evolution. This is but a historical trace of the changes over a period of time in the form, function or appearance of particular manifestations of individuality, such as the species of plants or animals. That evolution is a historical record over time, whereas the evolution and dissolution of consciousness into and out of individuality is in the realm of the timeless.

There is an individuating principle that generates the myriads of objects in the universe. In Sanskrit it is called *kala*, that which causes the potential inherent in the underlying consciousness to accumulate at bindu. From this point or seed an object, an animal, a human being or whatever, can arise and manifest. Each and every object has a bindu as its base. This bindu lies within the *hiranyagarbha*, the golden egg or womb of creation. That which was previously formless assumes shape through the bindu, and its nature is fixed by the bindu as well. The bindu is both the means of expression of consciousness and also the means of limitation.

Some of the centers of manifestation from bindu possess consciousness, such as man. However, most centers are unconscious, such as the elements, stones, and so on. The potential to be conscious or unconscious depends only on the nature and structure of the individual object, and this is also determined by the bindu. Man has the apparatus that allows him to be a conscious center.

Every object, conscious or unconscious, is linked to the underlying essence of consciousness through the intermediary of the bindu. Every object evolves into material existence through the medium of the bindu and every object is withdrawn back to the source via the bindu as well. Bindu is a trapdoor opening in both directions. It is the means through which conscious centers such as man can realize the totality of sahasrara.

There are essentially only two types of human beings - those who are on the *pravritti* path and those who are on the *nivritti* path. A man following the *pravritti* (outward) path looks away from bindu towards the outside world. He is almost entirely motivated by external events. This is the path of most people today and it leads away from self-knowledge and into bondage. The other path, the *nivritti* (reversed) path, is the spiritual path, the path of wisdom. On this path the individual begins to face the bindu, turning in towards the source of his being. This path leads to freedom. The path of evolution is the *pravritti* path of manifestation and extroversion. The path of involution leads back along the path that has produced your individual being. It leads back through the bindu to sahasrara. In fact, the whole purpose of yoga practice is to help direct your awareness along the involutionary path.

The power of the point

There is tremendous power ensheathed within the infinitesimal point. For example, one theory about the universe suggests that an infinitely dense point of matter exploded in a 'big bang' to form the entire cosmos. Similarly, research in subatomic physics has revealed that vast

amounts of power are found concentrated within the multitudinous different subatomic particles existing in the space/time continuum. Physics is moving into the realms of the ineffable bindu.

In molecular biology, the essence of bindu can be found in the DNA and RNA molecules, each one of which contains the complete genetic blueprint for the entire organism. This is another illustration of the great intelligence and potential which can be condensed and expressed in the confines of a tiny point. In fact, the deeper science delves into nature and the structure of the universe, the greater the power and complexity it uncovers. Within the tiny dimensions of these points vast potentials of meaning are contained.

The power of the point or bindu has been known to mystics throughout the history of mankind. In tantra, each bindu, each particle of manifested existence is regarded as a center of power or shakti. This shakti is an expression of the underlying substratum of static consciousness. The aim of the tantric system is to bring about a fusion of Shakti - the individual manifested power, with Shiva - the inert, underlying universal consciousness.

The red and white bindu

The bindu is the cosmic seed from which all things manifest and grow. It is often related to male sperm because from the tiny bindu of a single spermatozoon, joined with the minute female ovum, a new life grows. The act of conception is a perfect symbol of the principle of the bindu. In fact, bindu is explained in these terms in many of the texts of tantric kundalini yoga. In the *Yogachudamani Upanishad* it says:

"The bindu is of two types, white and red. The white is *shukla* (sperm) and the red is *maharaj* (menses)."

(verse 60)

Here the white bindu symbolizes Shiva, purusha or consciousness, and the red bindu symbolizes Shakti, prakriti or the power of manifestation. The white bindu lies in the bindu visarga and the red bindu is seated in mooladhara chakra. The purpose of tantra and yoga is to unite these two principles so that Shiva and Shakti become one. The text continues:

"The red bindu is established in the sun; the white bindu in the moon. Their union is difficult."

(verse 61)

The sun represents pingala nadi and the moon represents ida. The two bindus symbolize the merging of the world of opposites, in terms of male and female. Out of their union results the ascent of kundalini.

"When the red bindu (Shakti) moves upwards (the ascent of kundalini) by control of prana, it mixes with the white bindu (Shiva) and one becomes divine."

(verse 63)

All the systems of yoga control the prana in one way or another to bring about this union. In some cases it is through direct control, as in pranayama, while in other cases it is less direct. Nevertheless, the meeting of these two polarities, Shiva and Shakti, leads to superconsciousness.

"He who realizes the essential oneness of the two bindus, when the red bindu merges with the white bindu, alone knows yoga." (verse 64)

Chapter 10

Sahasrara and Samadhi

Sahasrara is not a *chakra* as is often thought. Chakras are within the realm of the psyche. Consciousness manifests at different levels according to the *chakra* that is predominantly active. *Sahasrara* acts through nothing and yet again, it acts through everything. *Sahasrara* is beyond the beyond (*paratparam*) and yet it is right here. *Sahasrara* is the culmination of the progressive ascension through the different chakras. It is the crown of expanded awareness. The power of the chakras does not reside in the chakras themselves, but in *sahasrara*. The chakras are only switches. All the potential lies in *sahasrara*.

The literal meaning of the word *sahasrara* is 'one thousand'. For this reason it is said to be a lotus with one thousand petals. However, while literally meaning one thousand, the word *sahasrara* implies that its magnitude and significance is vast - in fact, unlimited. Therefore, *sahasrara* should more aptly be described as a lotus with an infinite number of petals, usually said to be red or multicolored.

Sahasrara is both formless (*nirakara*) and with form (*akara*), yet it is also beyond, and therefore untouched by form (*nivikara*). It is shunya, or in actual fact, the void of totality. It is Brahman. It is everything and nothing. Whatever we say about *sahasrara* immediately limits and categorizes it, even if we say it is infinite. It transcends logic, for logic compares one thing with another. *Sahasrara* is the totality, so what is there to compare it with? It transcends all concepts and yet it is the source of all concepts. It is the merging of consciousness and prana. *Sahasrara* is the culmination of yoga, the perfect merging.

Total union and the unfolding of enlightenment

When kundalini shakti reaches *sahasrara*, that is known as union between Shiva and Shakti, as *sahasrara* is said to be the abode of higher consciousness or Shiva. Union between Shiva and Shakti marks the beginning of a great experience. When this union takes place, the moment of self-realization or samadhi begins. At this point the individual man dies. I don't mean that physical death occurs; it is death of the mundane awareness or individual awareness. It is death of the experience of name and form. At this time you don't remember the 'I', the 'you' or the 'they'. The experience, the experienced and the experiencer are one and the same. The seer, seeing and and seen are merged as a unified whole. In other words, there is no multiple or dual awareness. There is only single awareness.

When Shiva and Shakti unite, nothing remains, there is absolute silence. Shakti does not remain Shakti and Shiva is no more Shiva, both are mingled into one and they can no longer be identified as two different forces.

Every mystical and religious system of the world has its own way of describing this experience. Some have called it nirvana, others - samadhi, kaivalya, self-realization, enlightenment, communion, heaven and so on. And if you read the religious and mystical poems and scriptures of the many cultures and traditions, you will find ample descriptions of *sahasrara*. However, you have to read them with a different state of consciousness to understand the esoteric symbology and terminology.

Raja yoga, kundalini and samadhi

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali you will not come across the word kundalini, as this text does not directly deal with kundalini yoga. However, not every saint, rishi or teacher has referred to kundalini by this name. Kundalini is the subject matter of tantra. When Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras* 2600 years

ago, it was during the period of Buddha and about four centuries before the great era of philosophers. At that time, tantra had a very bad reputation in India because the gifts of kundalini, the siddhis, were being misused for petty purposes and people were being exploited. Therefore, tantra and tantric terminology had to be suppressed, and in order to keep the knowledge alive, an entirely different language had to be adopted.

In the raja yoga of Patanjali, emphasis is placed on the development of a state called samadhi. Samadhi actually means supermental awareness. First comes sensual awareness, then mental awareness, and above that is supermental awareness, the awareness of your own self. The awareness of forms, sounds, touch, taste, smell, is the awareness of the senses. The awareness of time, space and object is mental awareness. Supermental awareness is not a point; it is a process, a range of experience. Just as the term 'childhood' refers to a wide span of time, in the same way, samadhi is not a particular point of experience but a sequence of experiences which graduate from one stage to another.

Therefore, Patanjali classifies samadhi into three main categories. The first is known as *savikalpa* samadhi, that is, samadhi with fluctuation, and it has four stages - vitarka, vichara, ananda and asmita. The second category, *asampragyata*, is samadhi without awareness, and the third category, *nirvikalpa*, is samadhi without any fluctuation.

These names only indicate the particular state your mind is in during the samadhi experience. After all, the erosion in mental awareness does not take place suddenly; the normal mental awareness does not come to an abrupt end. There is development of one type of awareness and erosion of another. The normal consciousness fades and the higher awareness develops, and therefore, there is a parallel interaction between the two states.

Where does meditation end and where does samadhi begin? You can't pinpoint it because there is an interspersion. Where does youth end and old age begin? The same answer applies. And the same thing happens in samadhi as well. Where does *savikalpa* samadhi end and *asampragyata* begin? The whole process occurs in continuity, each stage fusing into the next and transforming in a very graduated way. This seems logical when you consider that it is the same consciousness which is undergoing the experience.

In tantra it is said that when kundalini is ascending through the various chakras, the experiences one has may not be transcendental or divine in themselves, but they are indicative of the evolving nature of consciousness. This is the territory of *savikalpa* samadhi, sometimes illumined and sometimes dark and treacherous.

From mooladhara up to ajna chakra, the awareness is experiencing higher things, but it is not free from ego. You cannot transcend ego at the lower points of awakening. It is only when kundalini reaches ajna chakra that the transcendence begins. This is where the ego is exploded into a million fragments and the ensuing death experience occurs. At this point *savikalpa* ends and *nirvikalpa* begins. From here, the energies fuse and flow together up to sahasrara, where enlightenment unfolds.

In tantra, sahasrara is the highest point of awareness, and in Patanjali's raja yoga, the highest point of awareness is *nirvikalpa* samadhi. Now, if you compare the descriptions of sahasrara and *nirvikalpa* samadhi, you will find that they are the same. And if you compare the experiences of samadhi described in raja yoga with the descriptions of kundalini awakening, you will find that they are also the same. It should also be noted that both systems talk about the same types of practices.

Raja yoga is more intellectual in its method of expression and is more in tune with philosophy, and tantra is more emotional in approach and expression. That is the only difference. As far as I can understand, kundalini awakening and samadhi are the same thing. And if you understand the teachings of Buddha and the other great saints and teachers, you will find that they have also spoken about the same thing but in different languages.

Section 3 - KUNDALINI YOGA PRACTICE

Introduction

The aspirant who earnestly wishes to follow the path of kundalini yoga has to approach the path of kundalini yoga with a different attitude. His whole life must become a sadhana and he must be totally devoted to his practices and his goal. He will need to live a life of moderation and higher awareness in the midst of his daily responsibilities. He or she has to be a warrior in life and must seek the guidance of a competent guru who can point the way for the spiritual quest ahead. The kundalini yogi has to be ardent and faithful to his practice and his guru's instructions. He will need to devote more time each morning to perfect the practices given in this book.

Whatever your personal aim in life, and whatever your commitments and responsibilities, kundalini yoga can definitely help you to become more efficient, more peaceful and more aware. Seek the instructions of a sannyasin or a qualified yoga teacher, learn the techniques in this book, and practise them systematically according to the amount of time you are able to spare each day. In this way, your life will be transformed into the most exciting adventure ever - the journey to inner experience and unitive life.

Chapter 1

Rules and Preparation

The following rules and regulations apply to both the specific chakra practices and to the kriya yoga techniques. They should be followed as closely as possible.

Diet

Most people who are ready for kundalini yoga will be leading a well regulated life and taking a balanced vegetarian diet. If you are still keeping late hours, drinking alcohol and eating large quantities of meat, we strongly suggest that you slowly reduce these and do some of the hatha yoga shatkarmas, such as *shankhaprakshalana*. In fact, we request you not to start the practices given in this book until you have become pure vegetarian.

Eat vegetarian food that is fresh, clean and easily digestible, and eat in moderation. Kundalini yoga is a system which purifies the whole body; if there are excessive toxins in your body then there may be a drastic purging process. The consumption of too much food will also make it difficult to do most of the techniques properly, especially pranayama and those which involve uddiyana bandha. You should use your discrimination in choosing the food that you eat. Remember, all kundalini yoga courses given in our ashrams are accompanied by compulsory food restrictions, therefore, you should adopt similar restrictions. But please do not starve yourself or become a food faddist; only try to adopt sensible eating habits.

Illness

If you suffer from any physical illness, we advise you not to start the kundalini techniques given in this book. First of all you should take steps to cure your illness by any suitable means, possibly hatha yoga. If necessary, write to this ashram, to any of our branch ashrams, or contact any competent yoga teacher for guidance.

If you suffer from any serious mental or emotional problems you should not, at present, start the practices of kundalini yoga. Practise other types of yoga to bring harmony into your life and mind, then start kundalini yoga. The kundalini techniques are very powerful, and if you do not have some degree of mental stability, they may worsen your condition. If in doubt, contact us.

Sound health is the basic requirement for kundalini yoga practice.

Yogic preparation

Before commencing the kundalini techniques given in this book, you should have practised other systems of yoga, especially hatha and raja yoga, for at least a few years. In particular, you should be proficient in the following techniques: *pawanmuktasana* (anti-rheumatic and anti-gastric), *shakti bandha asanas*, *surya namaskara*, major asanas such as *sarvangasana*, *dhanurasana*, *shalabhasana*, *bhujangasana*, *matsyasana*, *paschimottasana* and *ardha matsjendrasana*, as well as the *shatkarmas* and the basic practices of pranayama, such as *nadi shodhana*.

All of these techniques are fully described in the Bihar School of Yoga publication *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*. However, to master these techniques you will need to have the regular guidance of a qualified yoga teacher.

Time

The best time of day to do your *sadhana* (practice) is early in the morning, within the two hours before dawn. This is known as *brahmamuhurta* in Sanskrit, 'the time divine'. At this time spiritual energy is high and there are likely to be fewer disturbances, both external and internal, than at any other period of the day. However, if you are unable to practise during brahmamuhurta, choose some other time when the stomach is not loaded.

Place of practice

Try to practise in the same place every day. This will gradually build up a positive atmosphere which will be helpful for your *sadhana*.

Your place of practice should be clean, peaceful and well ventilated. It should be dry and neither too hot nor too cold. Do not practise on the bare floor; place a blanket or mat beneath you. If necessary, wrap a blanket or sheet around you. Try to avoid the use of fans, unless absolutely necessary.

Clothing

Clothing will depend on the prevailing climate, but it should be as light, loose and comfortable as possible.

Regularity

Try to practise daily at a fixed time, without fail, following the step-by-step program that we have given in this book.

On certain days, the mind may give justification for not practising, or it may be upset, disturbed or restless. Providing there is no illness, you should endeavor to do your practice as normal.

Preliminary practices

Before starting the kundalini yoga practices, try to empty the bowels and take a cold shower. If you live in a cold climate, then at least wash the face with cold water. This is essential in order to remove sleepiness.

It is a good idea to do a few asanas before commencing the kundalini practices. If time does not permit, then at least do 5 to 10 rounds of *surya namaskara*, starting slowly and then accelerating the pace. This should be followed by a short rest period in *shavasana* until the breathing rate returns to normal.

Awareness

If the mind flits here and there like a wild monkey, do not worry. Let thoughts and emotions arise without suppression. Watch them with the attitude of a witness and continue your practice. Gradually the mind will become one-pointed. Whatever happens, your practice should continue. This attitude of witnessing the mind without interfering, can be defined as awareness.

Chapter 2

Posture

Most of the practices for specific chakras and the kundalini kriyas are done in a sitting position, or meditative asana. The best sitting asana is *siddhasana* (for males) and *siddha yoni asana* (for females). Not only do these two asanas apply direct pressure on mooladhara chakra, but this pressure, when applied correctly, brings about an awakening and redirection of nervous energy and blood circulation upwards from the pelvic and abdominal regions to the brain. This extra energy is important in kundalini *sadhana*, since it keeps the voltage of prana shakti at a high level. The perineal pressure awakens the source of energy and actively distributes prana upwards to the higher centers.

Padmasana is also utilized for certain kundalini techniques such as *tadan kriya*. Though *siddhasana* is generally preferred in most of the other techniques, *padmasana* can also be used as an alternative. The disadvantage is that *padmasana* does not apply a direct pressure on mooladhara chakra.

Those who cannot sit comfortably in siddhasana can do *utthanpadasana* instead, though it is difficult to maintain for an extended period of time. In the kriya yoga practices of *maha mudra* and *maha bheda mudra*, utthan padasana can be done instead of siddhasana, and is by tradition accepted as its equal.

Another asana, *bhadrāsana*, also applies a good pressure on mooladhara chakra and can be substituted for siddhasana in many of the practices. It is also the required sitting position for *manduki mudra*, one of the techniques of kriya yoga.

In the descriptions of the kundalini practices, we have stated the best asana for each practice. Only use one of the alternative asanas if the recommended asana is not suitable.

Practice 1: Siddhasana



The accomplished pose (for men)

The accomplished pose (for men)

Sit with the legs extended in front of the body. Fold the right leg and place the sole of the foot flat against the left thigh with the heel pressing the perineum, the area of mooladhara chakra, between the genitals and the anus.

Fold the left leg and place the foot on top of the right calf.

The heel should press against the pelvic bone directly above the genitals.

Push the toes and the outer edge of this foot into the space between the right calf and thigh muscles. It may be necessary to move and replace the right leg for this. Grasp the right toes, either from above or below the left calf and move them upward into the space between the left thigh and calf.

The legs should now be locked with the knees on the ground and the left heel directly above the right heel. Make the spine steady, straight and erect, as though it were planted in the ground.

Note: Siddhasana can be practised with either leg upward. It should not be practised by persons with sciatica or sacral infections.

Other classical asanas such as *ardha padmasana* and *sukhasana* can also be used, but not as effectively. Therefore, dedicate yourself initially to the perfection of siddhasana. In the beginning it is recommended that a folded blanket or small cushion be used to raise the buttocks slightly. This will enable you to rest the knees on the ground and to achieve a balanced posture. However, the blanket or cushion should not be too thick. One or two inches in height should be enough. There must be a sustained but comfortable awareness of pressure on the perineal trigger point.

Practice 2: Siddha yoni asana



The accomplished pose (for women)

The accomplished pose (for women)

Instead of siddhasana, ladies should do siddha yoni asana.

The position is exactly the same as siddhasana, except that after folding the right leg and placing the sole of its foot against the left thigh, the lower heel is placed just inside the entrance to the vagina. The left heel presses against the clitoris.

Everything else is as described for siddhasana.

Practice 3: Padmasana



The lotus pose

The lotus pose

Sit with the legs extended in front of the body.

Fold the leg and place its foot on top of the opposite thigh.

The sole of the foot must be upward, with the heel facing or touching the pelvis.

Fold the other leg and place its foot on top of the other thigh.

The spine should be straight, the neck, head and shoulders should be relaxed and the body should be steady.

Practice 4 : Utthan padasana



The raised heel pose

The raised heel pose

Sit on the floor with both legs extended in front of the body.

Fold the right leg under the body so that you are sitting on the right foot.

The right heel should press the perineum (or the entrance to the vagina).

The left foot remains outstretched.

This asana may also be performed with the left leg folded into the perineum and the right leg outstretched.

Practice 5: Bhadrasana



The gentleman's pose

The gentleman's pose

Sit in vajrasana.

Separate the knees as far as possible and bring the big toes together so they are touching each other.

Allow the buttocks to rest on the ground (if necessary a blanket can be placed under the buttocks) so that mooladhara chakra is firmly pressed.

Place the hands on the knees, palms down, and make the back straight.

Note

If the hips, knees and ankles are not flexible enough to assume and maintain siddhasana, padmasana, bhadrāsana, etc., we suggest that you practise the pawanmuktāsana series of exercises daily, especially *crow walking*, *ankle exercises*, *knee rotation*, *half and full butterfly*. *Utthanasana* should also be practised. To improve the overall health of the body, other asanas can also be done, including *surya namaskara*.

Practices of pranayama, such as *nadi shodhana*, should also be performed to develop control over inhalation, exhalation, and inner and outer retention, so necessary for perfecting many of the kundalini techniques.

These practices can be done daily, side-by-side with the monthly practices that are given for the specific chakras.

Chapter 3

Chakra Sadhana Course

Month by month we have given specific practices for the awakening of each chakra, one after the other. These practices must be adopted systematically. For the first month you should only perform the techniques for ajna chakra. Then in the second month, add those for mooladhara. In the third month add those for swadhisthana. In the fourth month do those practices for manipura and selected practices for ajna, mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras. (By this stage, due to the number of practices, it will be necessary to omit some.) In this way, you should continue, adding the practices for each chakra, until you reach bindu visarga during the seventh month.

The first month is concerned with awakening ajna chakra and not the lowest one, mooladhara, which is treated in the second month. It may seem more logical and consistent to start with mooladhara practices, but it is a rule of kundalini yoga that first there should be awakening of ajna chakra before the other chakras. Unless this is achieved, then the awakening of the lower chakras may rock the stability of the practitioner, he may experience physical, mental and emotional shocks which he cannot bear. The awakening of ajna chakra brings a great degree of detachment, which allows one to withstand the lower chakra awakenings without excessive shock. One is able to observe chakra experiences with the attitude of a witness. This is most essential in kundalini yoga.

In the eighth month we have given some practices which influence the chakras as a whole. These should also be done for one month.

Please note that some practices influence more than one chakra, but we have only given each practice once as sadhana for the chakra it is most likely to affect. Also, it should be noted that nothing can be gained by randomly selecting one chakra sadhana program and just practising it for a day or two and then commencing another program. As each practice is a stepping-stone for another practice, the techniques should be performed systematically.

In each chapter, practices are given to locate the position of the *chakra*, and its counterpart, the *kshetram* (which is located in the front of the body). It is important that you can locate these points exactly.

All the practices given for the specific chakras are the building blocks from which the techniques of kriya yoga are constructed. As such, you should perfect them before proceeding to the kriyas. Ultimately, you will only need to practise the kriyas, but prior to this you must be prepared to devote at least one hour a day to the chakra practices for the next eight months.

Kriya yoga

In the final chapter we have given a full description of the twenty kundalini kriyas which are widely known as kriya yoga. At this stage, you can leave all the specific practices given in the previous chapters for awakening the chakras individually, or if you wish you can select a few to continue with.

The kundalini kriyas can be learned and practised one after the other, at the rate of one per week. That is, in the first week, perfect vipareeta karani mudra; in the second week add chakra anusandhana; then add nada sanchalana in the third week, and so on. At the end of twenty weeks you should be doing the entire series of twenty kriyas daily, with the traditional number of rounds for each kriya, or with a reduced number of rounds as indicated.

Chapter 4

Practices for Ajna Chakra

Month 1

Direct concentration on ajna chakra is very difficult, and for this reason, in tantra and yoga the mid-eyebrow center (which in fact is the kshetram of ajna), is used to awaken this chakra. This point is called *bhramadhya* ('bhru' means eyebrow and 'madhya' means center), and it lies between the two eyebrows in the place where Indian ladies put a red dot and pandits and brahmins put a mark of sandal paste. This eyebrow center can be contacted by various techniques.

Firstly, there is an important shatkriya (cleansing technique) called *trataka*, which will aid in the awakening of ajna. It is a powerful technique which can be defined as 'fixed gazing at one point'. If practised regularly, it develops the power of concentration, and from this concentration, the direct awakening of the latent faculties of ajna chakra is brought about.

Ajna can also be contacted by concentrating on the nadis directly. The method for this is *anuloma viloma pranayama*, which is known in English as 'the coming and going pranayama'.

You can also awaken ajna chakra by concentrating on the eyebrow center, by such practices as *shambhavi mudra*. Initially, when there is no sensation or awareness at this point, some ointment or oil such as tiger balm can be applied. This facilitates concentration. With practice, the pressure of concentration at this area increases and the sensations are carried back to the pineal gland. This brings about an awakening there in the form of visions and internal experiences.

Ajna and mooladhara chakras are closely related, and the awakening of one helps to awaken the other. Ideally, ajna should be awakened to some extent before mooladhara, in order to allow an unaffected perception of the energies manifested by mooladhara and the lower chakras. However, the awakening of mooladhara will help to further awaken ajna. In fact, the best way to bring about awakening of ajna is through the practices of *moola bandha* and *ashwini mudra* which are specific for mooladhara.

Preparatory practices

Jala and sutra neti can be practised for a few months to purify the nasal area. This will help to sensitize ajna chakra and aid in its awakening. Apart from having a profound effect on the nervous system, neti removes dirt and mucus from the nasal passages, relieving colds and sinusitis, disorders of the eyes, ears, nose and throat, as well as inflammation of the tonsils, adenoids and mucus membranes. It removes drowsiness and gives a general lightness and freshness in the head and throughout the body. At the same time, it profoundly alters psychic awareness, facilitating free flow of breath in both nostrils, so that the meditative state can be attained. It should be practised every morning before you commence your other sadhana. For complete details refer to the Bihar School of Yoga publication *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*.

Practice 1: Anuloma viloma pranayama (the coming and going breath)

Sit in a comfortable meditative posture.

Make sure the spine is erect and the body is relaxed.

The body must become absolutely still.

After some minutes, begin to develop awareness of the breath in the nostrils.

When you breathe in, your whole awareness should flow with the breath from the tip of the nose, through the nasal passages, up to the eyebrow center.

And when you breathe out, your whole awareness should flow with the breath from the eyebrow center to the tip of the nose.

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Become aware of the triangular form of the breath between the nostrils and the eyebrow center. The base of the triangle is at the level of the upper lip, its sides are the right and left nasal passages, and its apex is within the eyebrow center.

Firstly, feel the breath moving in and out of the left nostril, then the right nostril. Then be aware of the breath as it flows in and out through both nostrils together.

Once you are established in this breath awareness, begin to consciously alternate the flow of the breath between the two nostrils in the same way as nadi shodhana, except you practise it psychically. Consciously inhale through the left nostril to bhru-madhya and exhale through the right, then inhale through the right to bhru-madhya, and exhale through the left. This is one round-After completing four such rounds, inhale and exhale through both nostrils simultaneously, visualizing the passage of the breath forming an inverted V-shape. In this way you have to continue - four alternate nostril breaths, then one breath through both nostrils. Count the rounds from 100 back to zero.

100 - inhale left nostril, exhale right nostril;

inhale right nostril, exhale left nostril,

99 - repeat, 98- repeat, 97- repeat,

96- inhale both nostrils, exhale both nostrils, and so on.

Note: Accuracy in the counting is absolutely necessary, and if an error is made, the practice must recommence from 100. It is very important to keep count of the breaths, because without keeping count, anuloma viloma is altogether too powerful for many aspirants, swallowing up their awareness in the unconscious sphere- The aim of the practice is to stimulate ajna chakra on the subconscious, psychic level, and for this, awareness must be maintained.

If you sink into the unconscious sphere, you will only be aware of the vast store of impressions in the unconscious mind, and will completely lose awareness of the practice. This awareness is essential for the development of mind control and the awakening of ajna chakra to conscious accessibility. This practice can also be very well integrated into yoga nidra. (See practice chapter 2)

Practice 2: Trataka



Fixed gazing on one point

Fixed gazing on one point

Sit in a comfortable meditative asana, in a dark room in which there is no draught or breeze.

Place a lighted candle at eye level, directly in front of the eyebrow center, at a distance of approximately two feet.

Make sure that the wick is perfectly straight and that the flame is motionless.

Straighten the spine, close the eyes and relax the body.

Be aware of the physical body only. Let it become as still as a statue. From this time on you should try to keep the body absolutely motionless throughout the whole practice.

When you are prepared, open your eyes and gaze intently at the brightest part of the flame - just above the tip of the wick.

With practice you should be able to gaze at the flame for a few minutes, without blinking or moving the eyeballs.

Continue to gaze at the flame with total concentration. The whole of your consciousness must become centered in the flame, to the extent that awareness of the rest of the body and the room is lost.

The gaze should be absolutely fixed on one point.

When the eyes become tired (perhaps after a few minutes), or if they begin to water, close them and relax.

Do not move the body, but be aware of the after-image of the flame in front of the closed eyes.

Everyone has looked into the sun or a bright light, and on closing the eyes for a few minutes, has seen the clear impression of that light on the retina of the eye. Likewise, the after-image of the candle flame will be clearly visible.

You should practise trataka on this image, holding it directly in front of or a little above the eyebrow center-As soon as it begins to fade, open the eyes again and continue to concentrate on the external candle flame.

Note: The best times to practise trataka are the dark hours of the very early morning or late at night. At these times, the atmosphere becomes very still and quiet - not only the physical atmosphere, but the mental and psychic atmospheres also. In this stillness, success in trataka is readily attained.

Other forms of trataka

Trataka can be practised on a small dot, the full moon, a shadow, a crystal ball, the nosetip, an image in water, a yantra, darkness, a shivalingam and many other things.

Those who have a personal deity can practise trataka on his or her form and those who have a guru can practise on his or her photograph. Trataka can also be practised on the rising sun, one's own image in the mirror, or the eyes of another person. These should, however, be done under the guidance of a guru, as there are certain risks involved.

There are two divisions of trataka, *bahiranga* (outer) and *antaranga* (inner). The methods mentioned so far are all part of *bahiranga* trataka. Inner trataka (*antaranga*) is internal visualization, perhaps of a chakra, a yantra or your personal deity. The eyes remain closed throughout. One of the best inner objects for concentration is a tiny star or point of light.

Duration: Trataka can be practised as time permits, but 15 to 20 minutes is the usual period in the beginning.

Benefits: Trataka has many physical, mental and spiritual benefits. Physically, it corrects eye weaknesses and certain defects such as nearsightedness. Mentally, it increases nervous stability, removes insomnia and relaxes the anxious mind. When the eyes are fixed and unmoving, the mind becomes the same. The thinking process automatically ceases as concentration increases. It brings control to the tempestuous mind, and spiritually it awakens ajna chakra.

Practice 3: Shambhavi mudra with Om chanting



Eyebrow center gazing

Stage 1

Sit in any meditative pose with the back straight and hands on the knees.

Look forward at a fixed point, then look upward as high as possible without moving the head.

Focus the eyes and concentrate on the eyebrow center.

Try to suspend the thought processes and meditate on ajna chakra.

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Repeat *Om, Om, Om*, with awareness of the sound vibrations at the eyebrow center into which you are gazing. Each *Om* should be produced in a soft clear voice, with awareness of every vibration of the mantra in the eyebrow center. Each mantra should be one or two seconds in duration, and immediately followed by the next.

Practise for 3 to 5 minutes.

Stage 2

Now the eyes are closed, but the inner gaze remains in the eyebrow center.

Begin to chant the mantra more slowly, with full awareness of the sound vibration in the eyebrow center. Imagine that the sound is being emitted from within the eyebrow center itself.

Gradually and effortlessly increase the duration of each *Om*, making it long and continuous.

The sound should be steady and of an even key, ending on completion of the breath.

Then refill the lungs completely by breathing through the nose, but do not alter the position of the body or head.

Begin the next *Om*, maintaining awareness of the sound emerging from the eyebrow center.

Practise for 5 minutes.

Stage 3

Continue to chant the mantra *Om*, but become aware of the sound reverberating throughout the body.

Try to be aware of the sound only, listening to its vibration emerging from the eyebrow center and permeating the whole body.

Do not be self-conscious, but allow the sound to manifest itself fully, maintaining awareness of the vibration of the sound only.

Practise for 5 minutes.

Gradually the duration of the practice can be lengthened.

Caution: Do not strain the eye muscles; when they become tired or slightly strained, release shambhavi mudra.

Practise

This sadhana (consisting of practices 1, 2 and 3), for ajna chakra, should be continued daily for one month. Then proceed to the sadhana for awakening mooladhara chakra.

Chapter 5

Practices for Mooladhara Chakra

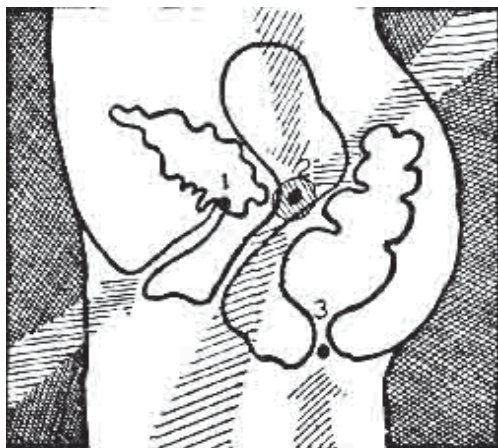
Month 2

The process of awakening mooladhara chakra is not very difficult. It can be achieved by thousands of different methods, but the easiest of all is the concentration on the tip of the nose. This is because the part of the sensory cortex which represents mooladhara chakra is connected with the nose. At the same time, mooladhara chakra belongs to the earth element, which is directly related to the sense of smell. Therefore, we shall include *nasikagra drishti* - the practice of nosetip gazing, in this section, as well as *moola bandha*, which directly stimulates mooladhara chakra. Remember that mooladhara chakra does not have a kshetram.

Difference between moola bandha, vajroli and ashwini mudras

Often there is confusion between the three practices of moola bandha (used for awakening mooladhara chakra) and vajroli mudra and ashwini mudra (both used for awakening swadhisthana chakra). The following diagrams for male and female locations will help to clarify the difference in the points of contraction.

For women:



Key to location of contraction points:

1. Vajroli or sahajoli mudra (clitoris, lower vaginal muscles and urethra)
2. Moola bandha (cervix)
3. Ashwini mudra (anal muscled/sphincters).

For men:



Key to exact location of contraction points:

1. Vajroli mudra (penis)
2. Moola bandha (between anus and scrotum; perineal body)
3. Ashwini mudra (anal muscles/sphincters).

Practice 1. Chakra location

For men :

Sit in siddhasana or any asana in which the heel is pressed into the perineum.
Close your eyes, relax completely and become aware of your whole physical body.
Move your awareness to the point of contact between the heel and perineum, midway between the testes and the anus.
Become intensely aware of the distinct pressure exerted on the perineal body.

Center yourself at the pressure point.

Now become aware of your breath.

Feel or imagine that you are breathing in and out of this pressure point.

Feel the breath moving through the perineal body, becoming finer and finer, so that it pierces the point where mooladhara chakra is located.

You will feel it as a psychophysical contraction.

Say mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Maintain awareness of the perineal body and the breath for up to 5 minutes.

For women:

Sit in siddha yoni asana or a suitable alternative.

Relax your body completely and close your eyes.

Move your awareness to the lower part of the body and focus your attention on the contact point between your heel and the opening of the vagina.

Become intensely aware of the slight but distinct pressure at this point.

Center yourself at the pressure point.

Now become aware of your natural breath.

Feel or imagine that you are breathing in and out of the pressure point.

Continue this for 10 deep breaths.

Now bring your awareness inside the body.

From the point of external pressure, move your awareness in towards the base of the spine.

Follow the natural formation of the vagina, moving up at a slight angle and back towards the spine until you come to the opening of the womb.

You are at the opening of the womb, about 2 or 3 centimeters inside the body, just below the base of the spine.

Focus your awareness at this point and begin to breathe in and out from the cervix to the point of outer pressure.

Breathe in and bring your awareness to the opening of the womb.

Breathe out and move again to the outer pressure point.

Somewhere in this area you will find your point for mooladhara chakra.

Feel it clearly and distinctly and mentally repeat, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.

Maintain unbroken awareness of this point for up to 5 minutes.

Alternative practice: Locating mooladhara chakra by touch

Men should sit in a comfortable position and press one finger onto the perineum, midway between the anus and scrotum, then contract the muscles there. The contraction will be felt. When they can contract those muscles without movement of the anus or penis, the perineal body has been successfully isolated.

Women should assume a comfortable sitting or lying position and gently insert one finger into the vagina as far as it will go. Then tighten the muscles so that the walls of the upper vagina contract and squeeze the finger. If they can do this without contracting the anus or the front part of the perineum (clitoris and urinary opening), then location of mooladhara is correct.

Practice 2: Moola bandha (the permeal lock)

Stage I:

Sit in siddhasana or any other posture which applies a firm pressure in the region of mooladhara chakra.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Inhale deeply.

Hold the breath and contract the muscles at the mooladhara chakra region.

Draw the muscles upwards as much as you are able without excessive strain.

Try to contract only the mooladhara chakra trigger point, so that the urinary musculature in front and the anal sphincters behind, remain relaxed.

Keep your attention fixed on the exact point of contraction.

Hold this contraction for as long as possible.

Then release moola bandha and breathe normally.

Practise for a few minutes daily.

Jalandhara bandha (described in chapter 9 of this section), can also be added to the practice. With breath retention, perform jalandhara bandha, then moola bandha. Before exhaling, release moola bandha, then jalandhara bandha.

Stage 2:

Contract and release moola bandha rhythmically.

About one contraction per second is reasonable, or if you wish, you can synchronize the contraction with the heart beat.

Again, ensure that the contraction is focused at the exact trigger point and at the anus.

Direct all your attention to the point of contraction.

Practise for a few minutes daily.

Stage 3:

Leave all physical contraction.

Try to feel the pulse beat at the trigger point, or try to contract the point mentally.

Direct all your attention to the mooladhara chakra area.

The practice is the same as stage 2, but without physical contraction.

Continue for as long as you have time to spare.

With practice, you will be able to locate the trigger point of mooladhara chakra exactly, merely through thought.

Practice 3: Nasikagra drishti

This practice is also called *agochari mudra* (the gesture of invisibility).



Nosetip gazing

Nosetip gazing

Sit in any meditative pose with the spine erect and the head facing forward.

Close your eyes and relax your whole body for some time.

Then open your eyes and focus them on the nosetip.

Do not strain your eyes, but try to fix your gaze on the tip of the nose.

Respiration should be normal.

When the attention of both eyes is focused on the nosetip, you will see that the double outlines of the nose merge to become a single solid outline. You should direct your gaze to the V-shaped point where the two outlines cross each other at the very tip of the nose. If you do not see a solid V-shaped outline, then both eyes are not fixed on the nosetip. It is then necessary to focus the eyes on your finger, 10 inches in front of your face, and hold the fingertip in focus as you slowly bring it to the nosetip. Eventually, you can discard this method and easily focus the eyes on the nosetip at will. At first you may find it difficult to hold your attention on the nosetip for more than a few seconds. When you feel discomfort, release the position of the eyes for a few seconds and then repeat the practice. Over a period of weeks, as the eyes become accustomed, gradually increase the duration of practice. Never strain the eyes. Once you can comfortably maintain a steady gaze for a minute or more, become aware of your breath as well as the nosetip. Feel the breath moving in and out through the nose. At the same time, become aware of the subtle sound the breath makes as it moves through the nasal passages. Try to become completely absorbed in the practice, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and external distractions. Be aware of the nosetip, the movement of the breath and the accompanying sound. Carry on in this manner for up to 5 minutes.

Practise

This sadhana (practices 1, 2 and 3), for mooladhara chakra, should be done for a period of one month. You should also continue the practices for awakening ajna chakra.

Chapter 6

Practices for Swadhisthana Chakra

Month 3

The sadhana for awakening swadhisthana chakra is solely concerned with the uro-genital systems of the body - the prostate gland and testes in the male, and the genito-ovarian system in the female. There are two very powerful practices which rechannel sexual energy and help bring about the awakening of swadhisthana. These are *vajroli* and *sahajoli mudras*. Vajroli is practised by males and sahajoli by females. There are simple forms of vajroli and also more difficult techniques which require the direct guidance of a guru. However, the practice given here can be performed by anyone who is thoroughly familiar with *shalabhasana*, *dhanurasana* and *uddiyana bandha*. When these practices are performed, vajroli and sahajoli can be perfected with reasonable ease.

Note: See the section entitled, 'Difference between moola bandha, vajroli and ashwini mudras', given in Chapter 5 of this section.

Preparatory practices

A large number of asanas have a direct effect on swadhisthana chakra and help to bring about initial purification and sensitization. We suggest that you practise *shakti bandha series*, *bhujangasana*, *shashankasana*, *dhanurasana* and *shashank-bhujangasana*.

Practice 1: Swadhisthana chakra location

Sit in a comfortable position. Move one finger down to the lowest end of the spine and feel the coccyx, the tailbone. Then move the finger up about one inch, along the sacral portion of the pelvis, and press hard for one minute. When you take the finger away, you will experience a residual sensation. About half an inch deep into that sensation is the location of swadhisthana chakra. Concentrate on it for 2 minutes or so repeating mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.

Practice 2: Kshetram location

If you feel down to the lower end of the abdomen, you will come to a bony portion at the front part of the pelvis. This is called the pubis, and is the anatomical location of swadhisthana kshetram. Press hard on this area for about one minute. Then remove the finger and concentrate on the point where your finger was and repeat mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.

Practice 3: Ashwini mudra

Sit in any meditative posture. Relax the whole body, close the eyes and breathe normally. Contract the sphincter muscles of the anus for half a second, relax them for half a second, then contract them again and continue like this. Try to feel the waves spreading up to hit swadhisthana chakra. Focus your whole attention on the lower end of the spine and feel the pressure waves.

Continue this for a few minutes.

Practice 4: Vajroli mudra (for men)

Sit comfortably in siddhasana, preferably with a thin cushion or a folded blanket beneath the buttocks.

Close the eyes and relax.

Try to draw the sexual organ upward by pulling and tensing the lower abdomen and contracting the urinary system.

This contraction is similar to that which is made when the urge to urinate is controlled.

Try not to perform moola bandha or ashwini mudra at the same time.

Contract for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds and continue this alternately.

Concentrate on the kshetram at the pubis all the time, repeating mentally, 'swadhsthana, swadhsthana, swadhsthana'.

Continue for a few minutes.

Practice 4: Sahajoli (for women)

Sit comfortably in siddha yoni asana, preferably with a thin cushion or folded blanket beneath the buttocks.

Make sure your foot is perfectly clean before you place the heel inside the vaginal entrance.

Close your eyes and relax.

Contract the muscles of the vagina and then relax them several times in succession.

Gradually increase the contraction until it becomes more intense and deep.

Hold the contraction for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds and continue like this, mentally repeating, 'swadhsthana, swadhsthana, swadhsthana'.

Continue for a few minutes.

Note: This practice is also known as *ohji mudra*.

Practise

The sadhana (practices 1-4) for awakening swadhsthana chakra, should be perfected over a period of one month. It should be kept in mind that swadhsthana is the switch for bindu visarga, and therefore, the sadhana for swadhsthana also brings about a simultaneous effect on and awakening of bindu.

You can also continue the sadhana for ajna and mooladhara chakras.

Chapter 7

Practices for Manipura Chakra

Month 4

There are several methods of awakening manipura chakra. According to hatha yoga, manipura is directly connected with the eyes. Ajna chakra and manipura chakra are very closely related to one another in the same way that vision and willful action are interdependent processes. Therefore, the practice of *trataka* brings about manipura awakening as well as ajna chakra awakening.

Although tantra is not against any particular diet, when manipura chakra is to be awakened, the diet has to be very pure, and at certain stages, fasting may be necessary as well. If manipura is awakened when the diet is faulty, harmful reactions may take place. Because manipura is the center of the digestive fire, disorders of the gastrointestinal system are corrected by manipura sadhana.

The major constituents of manipura sadhana are *uddiyana bandha* and *nauli kriya*. Uddiyana bandha is the contraction of the abdomen and the control of the muscles of the abdominal wall, as well as control over the small and large intestines and the other digestive and visceral organs. The functions of the liver, gallbladder, spleen, pancreas and stomach are brought into harmonious and controlled interaction when uddiyana bandha is perfected. However, *agnisar kriya* must be mastered before uddiyana is attempted.

Nauli kriya is the control of the rectus abdomini muscles and churning of the whole abdomen. This is a difficult practice which takes some time to perfect. However, with mastery of nauli, it is easy to create a union of prana and apana in the navel, so manipura chakra can be awakened.

Preparatory practices

The following asanas will be found useful in awakening manipura chakra: *pawanmuktasana* (anti-gastric series), *chakrasana*, *dhanurasana*, *marjariasana*, *matsyasana*, *yoga mudra*, *paschimottanasana* and *ushtrasana*.

Practice 1: Chakra and kshetram location

Stand sideways in front of a mirror.

Put one finger of one hand on the navel and one finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind.

Sit down, press firmly with the finger on the spine for one minute, then remove the finger.

As the pressure sensation continues, concentrate on the area slightly deeper in from that point.

This is the location of *manipura chakra*.

Mentally repeat the mantra, 'manipura' for a few minutes, while feeling the sensation at that point.

Then fix your attention at the navel itself.

This is the location of *manipura kshetram*.

Whilst feeling the blood pulse at this point, mentally repeat the mantra, 'manipura' for a few minutes.

Practice 2 : Manipura purification

Assume a comfortable sitting pose.

Hold the back straight and keep the eyes closed.

Breathe slowly and deeply, feeling the expansion and contraction of the navel as you breathe in and out through the navel.

Feel the breath expanding and contracting in the navel area for some minutes.

As the navel expands outward, feel that the breath is being pulled in through the navel, straight back to manipura in the spine.

As the navel contracts inward, feel that the breath flows from manipura chakra in the spine to the navel and out of the body.

Practise this for a few minutes each day while mentally repeating, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'.

Practice 3: Agnisar kriya



Increasing the digestive fire

Increasing the digestive fire

Technique 1: (simple form)

Sit in vajrasana.

Keeping the toes together, separate the knees as far as possible.

Keep both hands on the knees, straighten the arms and lean forward slightly.

Open the mouth and extend the tongue outside.

Breathe rapidly in and out while simultaneously expanding and contracting the abdomen.

The respiration should be in harmony with the movement of the abdomen and should resemble the panting of a dog.

Breathe in and out up to 25 times.

Technique 2 : (advanced form)

Assume the same pose as technique 1.

Exhale as completely as possible.

Perform jalandhara bandha.

Rapidly contract and expand the abdominal muscles repeatedly, for as long as you are able to retain the breath outside.

Release jalandhara bandha and inhale fully.

Perform the practice 4 more times, each time waiting until the breath has returned to normal.

Note: Agnisar kriya should be practised on an empty stomach early in the morning. The advanced form should not be attempted until the simple form is mastered. Sufferers of heart disease or peptic ulcer should not practise agnisar kriya, nor should pregnant women or persons who have undergone abdominal surgery in the last 6 to 9 months.

Practice 4: Uddiyana bandha



The abdominal lock

The abdominal lock

Sit in a meditative pose in which the knees touch the floor.

If this is not possible, then you can perform uddiyana while standing.

Place the palms on the knees, close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Exhale completely and keep the breath outside.

Perform jalandhara bandha.

Then contract the abdominal muscles as far as possible inward and upward.

This is a kind of sucking action of the muscles.

Hold this lock for as long as the breath can be retained outside.

Concentrate on manipura chakra in the spine and repeat mentally, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'.

Slowly relax the stomach muscles.

Release jalandhara bandha and inhale.

When the respiration has returned to normal, the process may be repeated.

Practise a few rounds and gradually increase to 10.

Note: Limitations are the same as for agnisar kriya.

Practice 5: Nauli



Abdominal churning

Abdominal churning

Stand with the feet separated by about a meter.
Place the hands on the knees and bend the knees slightly.
Perform uddiyana bandha in this position.

Stage 1 : Madhyama nauli

Contract the rectus abdomini muscles and isolate them at the center of the abdomen.
After mastering this, proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2 : Varna nauli



Left abdominal churning

Left abdominal churning

Isolate the rectus abdomini muscles at the left side of the abdomen.

Stage 3: Dakshina nauli

Isolate the rectus abdomini muscles at the right side of the abdomen.

Stage 4

The practitioner should be able to perform stages 1-3 without the slightest difficulty, before attempting this stage.

Perform uddiyana bandha from the standing position.

Isolate the rectus abdomini muscles, then try to churn or roll them so that they move from the left, to the center, to the right in one smooth motion, then from the right, to the center, to the left.

Repeat this movement in quick succession as many times as possible while retaining the breath outside.

Then relax the abdominal muscles and breathe in deeply and fully.

When the respiration has returned to normal, repeat the process, this time rolling the muscles from right to left.

Practise each round for as long as you can retain the breath.

Do up to 6 rounds - 3 times from left to right and 3 times from right to left.

Note: Nauli should not be attempted until agnisar kriya and uddiyana bandha have been perfected. Limitations are the same as for agnisar kriya. Sufferers of high blood pressure should also avoid this practice.

Practice 6: Union of prana and apana

Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.

Relax the whole body for a few minutes, bringing it to the point of absolute immobility.

Now become aware of the natural abdominal breath.

Center your awareness on the movement of the navel as you inhale and exhale.

Continue for some minutes.

Now become aware that there are two forces travelling to the navel - prana and apana.

One force (*apana*) is ascending from mooladhara to the navel, while the other (*prana*), is descending to the navel from above.

They must both reach the navel at the point of full inhalation.

When you feel that the two forces are meeting in the navel, perform kumbhaka, retention of breath, and then develop mental awareness of the single central point of force in the navel.

Do not strain.

Release the breath and continue this practice in your own natural rhythm.

The awareness of the two forces travelling and meeting in the navel center must be simultaneous.

Now, as the two forces are converging in the navel, gradually allow moola bandha to take place.

Go on contracting moola bandha as you heighten your awareness of the force which is centered in the navel. Hold your breath for as long as you can, while centralizing the force in the navel and performing moola bandha. As you release the breath, release moola bandha as well. Do not strain. Go on practising for 3 minutes or more.

Practise

Practise the techniques for awakening manipura chakra for one month and then proceed to those for anahata chakra. Nauli may be difficult for many people; do not strain or overexert. It is best not to attempt it until you have mastered agnisar kriya and uddiyana bandha.

The practices for awakening ajna, mooladhara and swadhisthana can also be continued.

Chapter 8

Practices for Anahata Chakra

Month 5

Anahata chakra can be awakened very simply through the practice of ajapa japa. Japa means "repetition" and ajapa is the repetition of a mantra until it ultimately becomes the spontaneous form of your conscious awareness.

Another important practice in anahata awakening is *bhramari pranayama*. Although it is called a pranayama, bhramari is actually a meditational practice. It is not directly related to controlling prana, as are other forms of pranayama. In the scriptures, the heart center is termed, "the center of unstruck sound" and also "the cave of bees." In bhramari, the humming sound of the bees is produced and traced towards its source. This develops deep mental and emotional relaxation and is extremely effective in cardiac disorders.

Anahata chakra is the center of bhakti or devotion. It is awakened in accordance with the degree of devotion to guru, God, or personal deity, in whatever form or non-form one may visualize or understand the spiritual intelligence of the universe. All practices of yoga, especially when done with the blessings of the guru, will automatically awaken devotion in the spiritual heart (anahata chakra). There are many excellent books on bhakti yoga which will help to inspire the aspirant to follow this path. Any biographies of saints, yogis and bhaktas will also be useful. An excellent description of the process of bhakti yoga is given in our publication entitled, *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*.

Preparatory practices

Asanas that help to purify anahata chakra include: *shalabhasana, dhanurasana, matsyasana, gomukhasana, kandharasana, baddha padmasana, sarpasana, supta vajrasana* and *sirshasana*.

Practice 1: Chakra and kshetram location

Stand sideways in front of a mirror.

Put one finger of one hand on the center of the chest.

Here you will find *anahata kshetram*.

Put one finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind the kshetram; this is *anahata chakra*.

Sit down, press both fingers firmly for one minute, and then remove the fingers.

The sensation at the chakra and kshetram will continue.

Concentrate on the sensation at the chakra and mentally repeat, 'anahata, anahata, anahata', for a few minutes.

Practice 2: Anahata purification

Assume a comfortable sitting posture.

Hold the back straight but without strain.

Keep the eyes closed.

Breathe slowly and deeply, feeling the expansion and contraction of the chest as you breathe in and out for some minutes.

Then become aware of your breath moving in and out of the anahata region.

As the chest expands, feel that the breath flows in through the center of the chest and back to anahata chakra.

As the chest contracts, feel that the breath flows from anahata chakra in the spine, through the center of the chest and out of the body.

Practise this for some minutes, mentally repeating, 'anahata, anahata, anahata'.

Practice 3: Bhramari pranayama



The humming breath

The humming breath

- Sit in a comfortable meditative pose.
- Adjust your position and relax fully for some minutes.
- Plug the ears with the index fingers.
- Face forward and hold the spine as straight as possible.
- Close the eyes.
- Relax the whole body.
- Keep the teeth slightly separated and the mouth closed throughout the entire practice.
- This allows the vibration to be experienced more distinctly in the brain.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply.
- Then, while breathing out, produce a humming sound.
- The sound should be smooth and continuous for the full duration of exhalation.
- The humming need not be loud.
- The important thing is that you hear the sound reverberating within your head.
- The exhalation should be slow and controlled.
- At the end of exhalation, stop the humming sound and breathe in.
- Keep the eyes closed and the ears plugged.
- Again repeat the humming sound with the next exhalation.
- Try to relax fully during the practice. Do not strain in any way.
- Continue for 5 or 10 minutes.

Practice 4: Ajapa japa meditation

- Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or any posture which feels completely comfortable.
- Close your eyes and relax for a few minutes.
- Now become aware of your natural breath as it enters and leaves the body.
- Do not try to control the breath, just become a witness of the natural breathing process.
- Now become aware that the sound of inhalation is *so* and the sound of exhalation is *ham*. The natural mantra of the breath is *so-ham*.
- You have only to discover it.
- Be simultaneously aware of the natural breath, coupled with the idea of *so-ham-so-ham-so-ham*.
- You must be totally relaxed in this practice.
- Do not lose awareness of the mantra or your natural breath, even for an instant. Do not be concerned with the thoughts and feelings that arise.
- Allow them to come and go as they will. Remain ever aware of the natural breath and the ongoing mantra.
- Now become aware of the psychic breath which is flowing in the front of the body between the navel and the throat, and between the throat and the navel.
- With inspiration, this psychic breath rises from the navel to the throat and its mantra is *so*. With expiration, the psychic breath descends from the throat back to the navel. Its mantra is *ham*.
- Maintain awareness of the breath passing through the psychic passageway and producing the sound *so-ham-so-ham-so-ham*.
- Continue this practice for 10 or 15 minutes more, allowing your breathing to be totally relaxed.
- Note:* Ajapa japa can be practised at any time, but it should be done for 5 to 10 minutes per day - either in the morning sadhana session or at night, immediately before sleep. It should be continued for at least one month.

Practice 5: Meditation - entering the heart space

Sit in siddhasana or any other comfortable posture.

Close your eyes and relax yourself completely for some time.

Concentrate your awareness in the throat region.

Now become aware of the breath in the throat.

Only be aware of the sensation of the breath in the throat for some time.

Now add the awareness of the ingoing breath from the throat downwards.

You are not concerned with the outgoing breath.

Your attention is occupied only with the ingoing breath in the throat.

Become aware of the inflowing breath in the throat passing within the network of the diaphragm.

Be aware of the diaphragm - the rising and falling muscular floor separating the chest and lungs above from the abdominal organs below.

With each inspiration, it drops into the abdomen a little, increasing the pressure there and causing the navel to expand.

Simultaneously, the lungs are expanding fully in the chest.

Be aware with expiration that the abdomen contracts, the diaphragm is rising and the lungs are emptying completely.

Develop awareness of the diaphragm for some time.

Now, also become aware of the *akashā*, the space within which the diaphragm is operating.

With the ingoing breath you feel this space is filling up.

Only be aware of the process of filling up the space.

This process of filling up is only a basis for the awareness of this vast space.

The process of feeling the breath is only the basis for experiencing the heart space.

Become aware of the space in the heart; take your awareness directly there.

Feel the space within the heart. It is contracting and expanding with the rhythm of the natural breath.

Breath is only the basis.

The process of filling up is only the basis.

Go on to comprehend the whole space.

Then you are aware of the space alone.

Feel the contraction and expansion of this vast space.

It is taking place on the rhythm of the natural breath.

The breath is natural and spontaneous.

Do not alter it in any way.

Do not make it longer or shorter, deeper or more shallow, faster or slower.

It has to become a spontaneous and voluntary movement of breath.

In this practice the awareness of the space in the heart is important.

If the awareness of the expansion and contraction of the heart space is constant and stabilized, after some time, many visions and experiences will manifest there.

You do not have to visualize or imagine anything. The vision will come by itself when the awareness of the heart space is constant.

The vision is of a lake and a blue lotus.

If you are able to feel the space of the heart contracting and expanding, then maintain your awareness there.

If that is not possible, then you have to feel the breath which is filling up the space. That is the first stage of the practice.

The second stage is the direct feeling of the space and its expansion and contraction on the rhythm of the breath.

The third stage is the awareness of the blue lotus and the still lake. It will come by itself.

Keep yourself ready for that experience.

Now become aware of the natural inflowing and outflowing breath in the throat.

Withdraw your awareness from the heart space and bring it to the natural breath in the throat.

Maintain awareness of the inflowing and outflowing breath in the throat for some time.

Practise for 5 or 10 minutes.

Chant *Om* 3 times.

Allow the sound to manifest fully and spontaneously from deep within.

For a few minutes, listen carefully for the inner vibration of the sound.

Release your posture and open your eyes.

Practise

Practise these techniques for awakening anahata chakra for one month and then proceed to those for awakening vishuddhi chakra.

All the practices given for awakening ajna, mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura chakras can be done if sufficient time is available. If not, then we suggest that you do a few selected techniques from each chakra sadhana as follows:

ajna - trataka and shambhavi mudra

mooladhara - moola bandha and nasikagra

mudra swadhisthana - chakra and kshetram location, vajroli or sahajoli

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manipura - chakra and kshetram location, uddiyana bandha and nauli (if possible).

Chapter 9

Practices for Vishuddhi Chakra

Month 6

Vishuddhi chakra can be directly awakened through the practices of *jalandhara bandha*, *vipareeta karani asana* and *ujjayi pranayama*, all of which are essential for eventual mastery of kriya yoga.

A minor chakra which is closely related to vishuddhi is called *lalana chakra*, which is located at the back of the roof of the mouth, at the soft palate, and it directly helps to awaken vishuddhi. For this reason, one of the kundalini kriyas, called *amrit pan*, is concerned with its direct stimulation. A simpler practice for awakening lalana is *khechari mudra*, which is described in this chapter.

Preparatory practices

Many asanas can be utilized for purifying vishuddhi chakra. The most important are: *bhujangasana*, *sirshasana*, *matsyasana*, *supta vajrasana* and *sarvangasana*.

Practice 1: Jalandhara bandha

Sit in any meditative pose which allows the knees to firmly touch the floor. Those who cannot sit like this can practise Jalandhara bandha standing. Place the palms of the hands on the knees.



The chin lock

The chin lock

Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Inhale deeply, retain the breath inside and bend the head forward, pressing the chin tightly against the chest (particularly the sternum).

Straighten the arms and lock them into position.

Simultaneously hunch the shoulders upward and forward - this will ensure that the elbows remain locked.

The palms should remain on the knees.

Stay in the final pose for as long as you are comfortably able to retain the breath.

Then relax the shoulders, bend the arms, slowly release the lock, raise the head and exhale.

Repeat when the respiration returns to normal.

Practise 5 times.

Note: The whole practice can also be performed with the breath retained outside.

* Never inhale or exhale until the chin lock has been released and the head is upright.

* Persons with high intracranial or blood pressure, or with heart ailments, should not practise without expert guidance.

Practice 2: Khechari mudra

Close the mouth and roll the tongue backward so that the normally lower surface touches the upper palate.

Try to bring the tip of the tongue as far back as possible without strain.

Keep it there for as long as it is comfortable.

If you experience discomfort, relax the tongue for a few seconds and repeat.

Alter some practice the tongue may be able to extend beyond the palate and up into the nasopharynx, where it will stimulate many vital nerve centers.

Breath: Breathe normally during this practice unless ujjayi is used.

Over a period of a few months, however, it is usual to reduce the breathing rate to 7 or 8 breaths per minute. With careful practice, preferably under expert guidance, the respiration rate can be further reduced.

Note: Advanced practitioners sometimes erode or slowly divide the frenulum membrane beneath the tongue. This is not recommended here, and should only be attempted under direct guidance from a guru.

Practice 3: Ujjayi pranayama

Practise khechari mudra.

Contract the glottis in the throat.

When you breathe under these circumstances, a very soft snoring sound should automatically come from the throat region. It is like the sound of a sleeping baby.

Feel that you are breathing through the throat and not the nose.

Try to make the breaths long and relaxed.

Practise for 2 minutes initially, then you can gradually extend the time.

Practice 4: Chakra and kshetram location and purification

Sit or stand in front of a mirror.

Place a finger of one hand on the glottis (the lump at the front of the throat).

This is the location point of *vishuddhi kshetram*.

Then place a finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind the kshetram.

This point in the spine is called *vishuddhi chakra*.

Press the spine for one minute in order to feel a sensation at the chakra area.

Then lower your hands.

Concentrate on the sensation at the chakra and repeat mentally, 'vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.

Sit in a comfortable position with the back straight.

Close the eyes and become aware of the breath.

Fold your tongue back into khechari mudra and practise ujjayi pranayama.

For a minute or so, be aware of the sound of the breath at the throat, and let your breathing become slower and deeper.

Then with inhalation, imagine that the breath is being drawn in through *vishuddhi kshetram* at the front of the throat.

Feel that the breath passes through the kshetram and eventually pierces *vishuddhi chakra* in the spine.

With exhalation, feel the breath move from vishuddhi chakra, forward through the kshetram and eventually out, in front of the body.

This is one round.

Continue for a few minutes.

Daily practice in this manner will gradually develop your sensitivity to vishuddhi chakra and kshetram.

Practice 5: Vipareeta karani asana



The inverted attitude

The inverted attitude

Lie flat on the floor with the feet together, the arms by the sides and the palms flat on the floor.

Breathe in deeply.

Using the arms as support, raise the legs over the head, keeping them straight.

Bend the arms and place the hands under the hips to support the body.

Raise the legs to the vertical position.

Breathe deeply, fixing your attention on the breath.

Eyes should be closed.

Note: Vipareeta karani asana is similar to sarvangasana, except that the chin is not pressed against the chest and the trunk is held at a 45 degree angle to the ground instead of at right angles.

* Shavasana is the counterpose and should be done for a few minutes on completion of vipareeta karani asana.

* Advanced practitioners can hold the posture for 15 minutes or even more; beginners should practise for a few seconds and add a few seconds daily.

* This asana should not be done by sufferers of thyroid, liver or spleen enlargement, high blood pressure or heart ailments.

* Vipareeta karani asana is widely used in kundalini yoga since it helps to redirect the energies of the body from the lower to the higher chakras. It is an integral part of the first of the kundalini kriyas called *vipareeta karani mudra*.

Practise

Perfect these vishuddhi chakra practices over a period of one month and then start the practices for bindu visarga.

The sadhana for the other chakras can also be continued with a few selected techniques from each chakra as follows:

ajna - trataka and shambhavi mudra

mooladhara - moola bandha and nasikagra mudra

swadhisthana - chakra and kshetram location, vajroli (or sahajoli)

manipura - chakra and kshetram location, uddiyana bandha and nauli

anahata - chakra and kshetram location, ajapa japa.

Chapter 10

Practices for Bindu Visarga

Month 7

The bindu visarga trigger point is considered to be a tiny point at the top of the back of the head, but this point cannot be located physically. It can only be found when the nada or sound of bindu has been discovered and traced to its source. Through the practice of *moorchha pranayama* and *vajroli mudra* awareness of the nada can be developed. Then, through practices such as *bhramari pranayama* and *yonii mudra*, the nada can be traced to its source.

It is not intended that you practise all the nada yoga techniques at one time. You should adopt the practice which you can perform without difficulty. It does not matter which practice you commence with, because all the techniques lead to awareness of the same subtle inner sounds.

There is a very close relationship between swadhsthana chakra and bindu visarga. This is because bindu is the point where the primal sound of creation first manifests. It is the point of origin of individuality, and swadhsthana is the source of the impetus towards reproduction and sexual function. This is the material expression of the desire to reunite with the infinite consciousness beyond bindu. Sperm and menses are the material distillates of the drop of ambrosial nectar which emerges from bindu visarga.

Note: There is no kshetram corresponding to bindu.

Practice 1: Moorchha pranayama



The fainting breath attitude

The fainting breath attitude

This practice requires a steady and firm asana - siddhasana is the best.

Hold the spine and head upright and relax the whole body.

Perform khechari mudra.

Inhale through the nostrils with ujjayi pranayama while simultaneously bending the head backward and assuming shambhavi mudra.

The inhalation should be slow and deep. At the end of inhalation, your head should lean backward, but not completely. The position of the head is as shown in the diagram.

Retain the breath inside for as long as is comfortable, maintaining shambhavi mudra, but keeping the attention at bindu.

Keep the arms straight by locking the elbows and pressing the knees with the hands.

Fix your whole awareness on bindu.

Then bend the arms and slowly exhale with ujjayi pranayama as you bend the head forward. Slowly lower and close the eyes.

At the end of exhalation your head should face forward and the eyes should be completely closed.

Relax the whole body for a short time, keeping the eyes closed.

Release khechari mudra and breathe normally.

Become aware of the lightness and calmness pervading the whole mind.

This is one round.

After some time, commence the second round.

Practice 10 or more rounds, or until a fainting sensation is experienced.

Perform each round for as long as possible, but without strain.

Note: Not for sufferers of high blood pressure, vertigo, high intracranial pressure or brain hemorrhage.

* You should practise until a state of semi-fainting is induced. If you go beyond this sensation you may become unconscious.

* This practice is very powerful in inducing pratyahara and rendering the mind free from thoughts, especially when kumbhaka is prolonged.

Practice 2: Vajroli mudra with awareness of bindu

Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.

Close the eyes and relax.

Try to draw the sexual organs upward by pulling and tensing the lower abdomen and contracting the urinary system. This contraction is similar to that which is made when the urge to urinate is controlled.

Contract for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds, and continue this alternately.

Each time you attain full contraction of the urinary and reproductive systems, bring your awareness to swadhisthana chakra in the spinal column, at the level of the coccyx. Repeat 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana', mentally.

Then draw your awareness up through sushumna passage to bindu visarga, uniting the sexual and reproductive energy with its source in bindu. Mentally repeat, "bindu, bindu, bindu".

Then return to swadhisthana and release vajroli mudra.

This is one round.

Continue this alternately for several minutes, practising up to 25 rounds.

Note: This practice should be performed immediately after moorchha pranayama, as both these practices awaken the awareness of bindu.

Practice 3: Perception of subtle inner sound

This practice should be preceded by bhramari pranayama.

In this stage no loud humming sound is produced, you only listen attentively to the inner sound.

You should keep your eyes closed and your fingers in your ears; this is necessary to block out external disturbances.

Listen for any subtle sounds within your head.

At first you may find this difficult, but keep trying.

As soon as you become aware of a sound, any sound, try to fix your awareness on it to the exclusion of other sounds.

Go on listening.

After some days or weeks of practice, you should find that one sound is very distinct, and it will become louder and louder.

Be totally aware of that sound.

This is your vehicle of awareness - let your awareness flow towards this sound, leaving all other sounds and thoughts.

Gradually, through practice, your sensitivity will increase.

Eventually you will hear another sound, a faint sound in the background; it will be almost obliterated by the main, louder sound that you are hearing, but you will hear it nevertheless.

You should now listen to the new faint sound.

Leave the other louder sound and continue to listen to this new sound. It will become more and more distinct.

This will become the new, more subtle vehicle of your awareness.

Let this sound occupy your whole attention. This will further increase your sensitivity of perception.

Eventually you will hear another faint sound emerging from behind this louder sound.

Fix your awareness on this new sound, discarding the other sound.

Continue in the same manner, allowing the new sound to occupy your whole awareness.

When it becomes loud, try to perceive a more subtle underlying sound and fix your awareness on it.

In this manner your perception will become progressively more sensitive, allowing you to dive deep into your being.

Note: It requires practice over a period of weeks and months to perceive these progressively more subtle sounds. For many weeks you may be unable to hear even the first sound.

* This is a very simple but powerful technique that will bring results if you persevere. All that is necessary is time and effort. Try to practise for as long as you have time. In the beginning, devote 15 minutes or more to bhramari and this practice together.

Practice 4: Yoni mudra

Yoni mudra is also known as *shannukhi mudra*, which means 'the closing of the seven gates'. It is so called because the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth arc closed during the practice. These are the seven doors of outer perception. It is via these doorways that one receives the sense data from the outside world. When these doors are closed, we facilitate the direction of the awareness internally; that is, into the mind.

Yoni mudra is a more advanced practice than bhramari. It is slightly more difficult as it is not preceded by a vocalized humming sound, and it is combined with retention of the breath. Yoni mudra is more suitable for those who have a reasonably harmonized mind and are not beset by distractions.



The invocation of the source

The invocation of the source

Sit in any comfortable meditative asana, preferably siddhasana.

Completely relax the body and mind.

Bring the hands in front of the face, with the elbows pointing sideways. Hold the spine and head upright.

Close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers and the mouth with the ring and small fingers placed above and below the lips respectively.

The fingers should gently but firmly close the seven doors.

Throughout the practice, the middle fingers should release the nostrils during inhalation and exhalation.

Now inhale deeply and slowly.

At the end of inhalation, close the nostrils with the middle fingers and retain the breath.

Try to hear sounds emanating from bindu at the back of the head, from the middle of the head, or perhaps the right ear.

At first you will either hear many sounds or none - it does not matter.

Just continue listening.

Hold your breath for as long as it is comfortable.

Then release the pressure of the middle fingers and slowly breathe out.

This is one round.

Inhale once more, close the nostrils, and retain the breath.

Listen to the inner sounds.

After a comfortable length of time, release the nostrils and breathe out.

Continue in this way for the duration of the practice.

During the period of breath retention, your full awareness should be directed to the perception of inner nada.

At first there may be a confused jumble of sounds, but gradually you will hear a specific sound. This may take a few days or weeks, but it will be perceived.

When you hear a distinct sound, be totally aware of it.

It will become clearer and clearer.

Keep your awareness fixed on the sound.

Listen very carefully.

If your sensitivity is sufficiently developed, you will hear another sound in the background. It may be faint, but perceptible.

Leave the first sound and transfer your awareness to the perception of the fainter sound.

In this way you will transcend the first sound.

Eventually this second sound will overwhelm your whole attention.

Again, with practice and enhanced sensitivity, you will hear a further sound start to emerge. It will be faintly perceptible behind the louder second sound.

Direct your awareness to this new sound.

Carry on in this way - perceive a sound and then discard it when you can hear a more subtle sound.

The more subtle the sound you perceive, the deeper you will delve into the depth of your being.

Continue this practice for a few minutes.

Do not expect to hear subtle sounds on your first attempt. Practice is necessary. Eventually you will be able to readily transcend the gross external sounds and then the progressively more subtle sounds.

Do not dwell on any of the sounds for too long. This is not the purpose of the practice. The aim is to leave behind each sound you discover and to go deeper.

Do not get lost or distracted by the beautiful sounds which will manifest on your journey.

Breath retention: This technique is more effective if you can retain your breath for extended periods of time. Those aspirants who have been practising nadi shodhana pranayama regularly for some months beforehand, will find yoni mudra an easy and effective means of introspection.

Awareness: The point of awareness during the practice should be fixed at the back of the head in the bindu region. However, if you hear a distinct sound in any other area, such as the right ear or the middle of the head, then your awareness should be fixed there.

Some people may find it easier to listen to the nada in the region of the heart space (anahata chakra), especially those of a devotional nature. The important thing is not so much the point of awareness, but that the awareness remains fixed on progressively more subtle sounds. Total absorption on the nada can lead to dhyana or the meditative state of awareness.

Practise

Practise the techniques for bindu visarga for one month. Then begin the techniques given in the next chapter for integrated chakra awareness.

The selected techniques for ajna, mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura and anahata chakras can also be done daily, as given in the "Practise" section of the previous chapter. For vishuddhi chakra, jalandhara bandha, vishuddhi chakra purification and vipareeta karani asana can be done. Khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama need not be done separately, since they are both incorporated into techniques given in this section.

Chapter 11

Practices for Integrated Chakra Awareness

Month 8

So far we have given a series of practices for each of the individual chakras. In this chapter we will describe practices which are concerned with overall awakening of the chakras. Of course, the awakening of one chakra cannot take place in isolation; it must have repercussions on all the chakras to a greater or lesser extent. In this respect it can be said that the techniques for specific chakras will also influence all the chakras, but the following techniques systematically help to activate all the chakras together and bring balance into the whole mind-body-chakra axis. The practices are as follows:

1. Chakra meditation
2. Musical chakra meditation
 3. Chaturtha pranayama
 4. Chakra yoga nidra
 5. Unmani mudra
 6. Bija mantra sanchalana
7. Drawing the chakras.

Practice 1: Chakra meditation

Make yourself comfortable in a meditative asana, preferably siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.

Place both hands on the knees in chin mudra (palms facing upward, thumbs and forefingers together).

Close your eyes and make the body steady throughout.

The spinal column should be absolutely upright and straight, with the back and shoulders fully relaxed.

The head should be poised comfortably on top of the spinal column.

The whole body is completely relaxed and immobile.

It is motionless like a statue.

Maintain absolute awareness of the physical body for several minutes.

Become aware of the spinal column.

Now bring your awareness to ajna chakra.

Ajna chakra is located inside the brain at a point directly behind the eyebrow center and on top of the spinal column, where the pineal gland is situated.

Try to discover a pulsation within this ajna chakra region.

Be absolutely aware of this pulsation.

Now synchronize the mantra *Om* with the pulsation in the ajna chakra region.

Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, should be the form of your awareness with the pulsation of ajna chakra.

Count the pulsation 21 times.

Now begin to practise ashwini mudra.

Do not be concerned with ajna chakra, only practise ashwini mudra - contraction and relaxation of the anus.

It should be practised at a medium speed - neither too quickly nor too slowly.

After practising like this for a few sessions, you should be able to feel the center of ajna automatically while performing ashwini.

When that happens you can begin to concentrate directly on ajna.

Until then, go on with ashwini mudra for about 4 minutes.
 Now bring your awareness to the perineal region and the psychic center of mooladhara chakra.
 Discover the precise psychic point of mooladhara chakra.
 Now try to discover a subtle pulsation there.
 Localize the pulsation very precisely in the mooladhara region and count 21 pulsations.
 Now open your eyes and adopt nasikagra drishti; gazing at the nosetip.
 Do not be concerned with mooladhara chakra, but only with nosetip awareness.
 The simultaneous awareness of mooladhara chakra will come after some time.
 Continue this practice for 3 minutes.
 Now bring your awareness to swadhisthana chakra in the region of the tail bone.
 Discover the psychic point of swadhisthana chakra.
 Try to discover the pulsation in this center.
 Count this pulsation 21 times.
 Now perform vajroli mudra - the drawing up and releasing of the genital and urinary systems.
 Continue vajroli mudra for 4 minutes.
 Then bring your awareness to the region of the navel.
 Become aware of the psychic breath from mooladhara to the navel, and from the throat to the navel.
 Both these breaths must reach the navel at the point of full inhalation.
 When the two forces meet and coincide in the navel, retain the breath there, and develop the mental awareness of the single central point offered in the navel.
 Then release the breath and continue this practice in your own natural rhythm.
 Continue for 4 minutes.
 Now take your awareness directly back to manipura chakra, within the spinal column, directly behind the navel.
 Try to isolate that point and the pulsation there.
 Count the pulse 21 times in manipura chakra.
 Now bring your awareness to the region of anahata chakra in the spinal column, at the level of the center of the chest.
 Isolate that point and try to discover a pulsation within it.
 Count the pulsation 21 times.
 Now bring your awareness to the space of the heart.
 First become aware of the ingoing breath in the throat.
 With the ingoing breath, feel the vast heart space filling up.
 Feel the heart space directly - contracting and expanding with the rhythm of the spontaneous, natural breath.
 Be aware of the vision which will come in the vast heart space.
 Allow it to come by itself.
 Continue for 2 minutes.
 Now bring your awareness to the throat pit and then take it directly back to vishuddhi chakra in the spinal column.
 Repeat mentally, 'vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.
 Try to discover the pulsation within vishuddhi and witness it for 21 pulsations.
 Now as the name of each chakra is given, move your awareness within sushumna passage so as to touch the chakra with a small imaginary flower.
 This is all that you have to feel, but your awareness of each chakra must be very precise - mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna; ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.
 Guide the consciousness through the chakras in sushumna, ascending and descending 4 more times. Now chant *Om* 3 times.

Practice 2: Musical chakra meditation

Sound is a particularly effective and enjoyable means of developing awareness of the chakras. This is why nada yoga is so powerful in spiritual awakening.

The 7 notes of the musical scale correspond to the vibration of the 7 chakras from mooladhara to sahasrara, and this is the basis for a very effective musical meditation technique. The best instrument of all is the human voice, which can be supplemented by the harmonium. However, other instruments can also be used.

Latin scale	Chakra	Sanskrit scale
Do	mooladhara	Sa
Re	swadhisthana	Re
Mi	manipura	Ga
Fa	anahata	Ma
So	vishuddhi	Pa
La	ajna	Dha
Ti	bindu	Ni
Do	sahasrara	Sa

Stage 1

At first the musical scale of the harmonium is ascended very slowly while the awareness begins in mooladhara and ascends sushumna from one chakra to the next, feeling, each note vibrating in the spinal column in the region of its corresponding chakra. When sahasrara is attained, descend the awareness with the musical scale down through sushumna to mooladhara. The consciousness ascends and descends sushumna with the scale many times, slowly speeding up as chakra location becomes quick and effortless.

Stage 2

Now the voice is integrated with the notes. The names of the chakras are chanted very precisely. The names themselves are mantras, and if intoned with the correct note and pronunciation, each center can be set vibrating, and the sushumna passage and the whole body begin to vibrate with energy. This practice is very powerful. It can be continued for 10 minutes or more.

Stage 3

In this stage the awareness still ascends and descends through sushumna with the musical scale, but the voice makes a continuous a-a-a-a-a sound (as in calm) as it ascends and descends through the chakras. In the final stage the full power of the voice is released and a tremendous energy is generated, provided the pitch is maintained accurately.

Practice 3: Chaturtha pranayama

Here is a practice that combines breathing, mantra and chakra awareness. Although it is not widely taught, it is a powerful technique that is both a pranayama and a meditation. Ghaturtha pranayama means, 'pranayama of the fourth state', or a transcendental state where words and definitions fail to reach.

This practice will lead to deeper awareness and knowledge of the chakras. It is also a preparatory technique for kriya yoga as it develops sensitivity to both the psychic spinal passage and the chakras.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditative posture.

Hold the spine erect and close the eyes.

Breathe deeply.

Let the breath become deeper and more subtle.

Fix your awareness on the rhythmical flow of the breath.

Continue for a number of rounds.

Mentally synchronize the mantra *Om* with the breath.

The sound "O" should arise with inhalation.

The sound 'm-m-m-m-m' should arise with exhalation.

This sound should only be mental.

Breathe through the nose, keeping the mouth closed.

Continue in this manner with awareness of the flow of breath and the mantra.

Now fix your attention at the eyebrow center.

Feel that you are breathing in through that center with the mental sound "O".

Feel you are breathing out through that center, mentally chanting 'm-m-m-m-m'.

Continue with awareness of the breath, mantra and psychic center.

Focus your attention on mooladhara. With inhalation and the sound "O-o-o-o-o", feel the breath passing up through the spine, piercing all the chakras - mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, sahasrara.

With exhalation and the sound "m-m-m-m-m", feel the breath and sound moving down the spine, piercing all the chakras - sahasrara, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.

Continue for a number of rounds.

Again fix your attention at the eyebrow center.

Continue the mental repetition of *Om* synchronized with the breath, but do not be aware of the breath.

Only be aware of the mantra and the psychic center.

Feel the "O" and the "m-m-m-m-m" sound.

Continue in this manner for as long as possible.

Practice 4: Chakra yoga nidra

Yoga nidra can be used very effectively to develop your awareness of the chakras. Here is an example of a yoga nidra/relaxation session which includes visualization and rotation of awareness through the psychic centers. Teachers can adopt this practice directly for their classes. For personal use, someone can lead you through the practice, or you can put the instructions onto a tape.

Stage 1: Preparation

Place a folded blanket on the floor and lie on it in shavasana.

Loosen your clothing so you feel perfectly comfortable.
If necessary, cover yourself with a blanket to keep warm, or put a sheet over you to keep insects away.
The mouth and eyes should remain closed throughout the practice.
Make sure that the spinal column is straight, in line with the head and neck, and that the hips and shoulders are fully relaxed.
Keep the feet and legs slightly apart.
The arms should be beside your body but not touching, and the palms should be facing up.
Adjust your position so that you feel perfectly comfortable.
Tell yourself firmly that you will not move your body throughout the practice.

Stage 2: Sinking of the body

Look at the space in front of your closed eyes.
Imagine that the space surrounds your whole body.
Your body is immersed in that space.
Simultaneously be aware of your body.
It feels very light, as light as a leaf falling from a tree.
Imagine that your body is slowly sinking into the space that you see in front of your closed eyes, like a falling leaf.
Your body is slowly sinking into the infinite space.
Be aware of this feeling.
Continue in this manner for a few minutes.

Stage 3: Rhythmical breath awareness

Become aware of your breathing.
Awareness of the rise and fall of the navel with each breath.
As you breathe in, imagine that you are sucking in air through the navel.
As you breathe out, imagine that you are pushing air out from the navel.
It is a rhythmical process. Do not alter the natural breath in any way, just become aware of it.

Stage 4: Sankalpa

Repeat your *sankalpa* in a short positive sentence.
It should be the crystallization of your spiritual aspiration and you should not change it.
Repeat it with feeling, from the heart, not the lips. Repeat your *sankalpa* at least 3 times.

Stage 5: Visualization - body awareness

Now try to visualize your own body.
Imagine that you are viewing it from outside.
Feel that your perception is outside and your body is an object of study.
You may find visualization difficult - do not worry, just do your best.
If you wish, you can imagine that there is a large mirror suspended over your body and that your body is reflected in it.
Look at your own reflection.
See your whole body: feet, knees, thighs, abdomen, chest, both hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, mouth, nose, ears, eyes, eyebrow center, your whole face and your whole body.
Combine your rotation of awareness with visualization of that part.
Continue in this manner for a few minutes.

Stage 6: Psychic centers - rotation of awareness

Now you have to discover the location of the chakras.
You have to develop awareness of each psychic center in the body.
Start from the base of the spine and move your awareness upward.
First become aware of mooladhara. In the male body it is situated in the perineum, between the anus and genitals, and in the female body it is located at the cervix - the mouth of the womb.
Try to feel the sensation at mooladhara. It is a very specific point which you are trying to isolate.
When you have found it, repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
Now move on to the second chakra, swadhisthana.
It is located at the base of the spine, in the coccyx.
Be aware of the sensation at that point and repeat mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.
The third chakra is manipura.
It is located in the spine in line with the navel.
Feel this point and mentally repeat, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'.
Then become aware of anahata chakra, located in the spine, directly behind the center of the chest.

Try to locate that point exactly and mentally repeat, 'anahata, anahata, anahata'.

Now bring your awareness to vishuddhi chakra, situated in the spine, directly behind the throat pit. Feel the sensations arising at that point and mentally repeat, 'vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.

The next chakra is ajna.

It is located at the very top of the spine in the region of the pineal gland, directly behind the eyebrow center.

Fix your awareness on that area and mentally repeat, 'ajna, ajna, ajna'.

Now bring your awareness to bindu, at the top back portion of the head.

Feel that tiny point as precisely as possible, and repeat mentally, 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.

Finally, become aware of sahasrara, at the crown of the head, and repeat mentally, 'sahasrara, sahasrara, sahasrara'.

Now repeat this process, slowly descending through the chakras in reverse order: sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.

This is one complete round of chakra rotation.

Start a second round: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, bindu, sahasrara; sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.

This completes the second round.

Begin a third round, this time a little faster.

As you fix your attention at each point, try to feel a slight vibration there, a tiny pulsation.

If you wish, you can chant *Om* mentally as you locate each point in turn.

Practise at least 5 rounds and as many more as time permits.

Stage 7: Psychic centers - visualization

Now try to visualize the symbols of each chakra. This is not easy, but try.

You can use your own personal system of psychic symbols or the traditional chakra symbols as follows.

As each chakra is named, try to feel that point being lightly pressed by the thumb, and simultaneously visualize the symbol.

The psychic symbol for mooladhara is a deep red, four-petaled lotus. Inside there is a smoky lingam around which a snake is coiled three and a half times with its head facing upward.

Try to visualize this symbol to the best of your ability and associate it with that particular location in the body.

Then proceed to swadhisthana chakra. The symbol is a six-petaled vermilion lotus, within which is depicted a starry night above the sea. The main focal point is the crescent moon.

Try to visualize this symbol.

Move to manipura chakra.

It is symbolized by a ten-petaled yellow lotus, and in the center is a blazing fire.

Visualize this symbol, imagining that the lotus is actually growing from manipura chakra.

Proceed to anahata chakra, represented by a twelve-petaled blue lotus.

In the center is a solitary flame burning in the darkness.

Try to visualize this symbol while feeling the exact position in the body.

Move to vishuddhi chakra, symbolized by a sixteen-petaled purple lotus.

In the middle there is a pure white drop of nectar. Visualize this location in the body.

Then proceed to ajna chakra which is symbolized by a two-petaled silver-grey lotus.

On the left hand petal is the full moon and on the right hand petal, a glowing sun. In the center is a black lingam and an *Om* sign.

Create a mental image of this symbol and its exact location.

Move on to bindu. It is symbolized by a tiny white drop of nectar.

Visualize this symbol at the top back of the head. Finally, move to sahasrara, the fountainhead of all the chakras.

It is represented by a thousand-petaled lotus. In the center is a white lingam.

Visualize this symbol at the crown of the head.

Now visualize all these symbols in the reverse order: sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.

This is the end of one round.

Spend a few seconds visualizing each center.

Do a few more rounds according to the amount of time available.

Stage 8: Eyebrow center awareness

Fix your attention at the eyebrow center.

Feel your pulse at this point.

Become aware of its continuous rhythmical beat.

Mentally synchronize repetition of the mantra *Om* with this pulse.

Continue for a few minutes.

Stage 9: Sankalpa and close

Repeat your sankalpa 3 times with full emphasis and feeling.

Become aware of your natural breath.
Become aware of your whole physical body.
Become aware of the outer sense perceptions.
Slowly begin to move your body.
When you are fully returned to the external world, slowly sit up and open your eyes.

Practice 5 : Unmani mudra

The word *unmani* means, 'no mind' or 'thoughtlessness', and refers to the state which arises during meditation. Therefore, unmani mudra means, 'the gesture of thoughtlessness'.

Unmani mudra is an excellent practice for developing awareness of the chakras in the spine, from bindu down to mooladhara. It is also an integral part of many of the kriya yoga practices (nada, pawan and shabda sanchalana, maha mudra and maha bheda mudra), and therefore it should be mastered before attempting to learn and practise these techniques.

Unmani mudra is easy to learn, but not so easy to perfect. The technique is as follows:

Sit in any comfortable pose, with the back straight.

Open the eyes wide, without focusing on anything external.

First of all, fix your awareness at bindu.

Breathe in deeply.

Then as you breathe out, imagine your breath going down the spine.

Simultaneously, let your awareness descend the spine, passing through all the chakras : ajna, vishuddhi, atiahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara, one after the other.

At the same time, the eyes should close slowly synchronized with the breath and the descent of awareness.

Though your eyes are open during the practice, your attention should be internalized on the chakras and breath; that is, the eyes are open, but you are looking inside.

The eyes should have closed at the end of exhalation and by the time your awareness reaches mooladhara chakra.

This is one round.

Breathe in and start the second round.

Do 11 rounds.

Note: While practising, you should not try too hard. Let it happen spontaneously. The practice is more mental than physical. Though the eyelids are slowly closed, the important thing is to feel the process mentally, and when the eyes are open, you should not perceive anything outside.

Practice 6: Bija mantra sanchalana

The word *bija* means "seed", *mantra* means "mystic sound" and *sanchalana* means "conduction". Therefore, this practice can be called "the conduction of the seed sound". It is one of the techniques of kriya yoga, but is not normally one of the twenty kriyas that we teach.

The practice is concerned with mentally repeating the bija mantra of each kshetram and chakra, one after the other, whilst simultaneously moving the awareness through each.

Psychic passages

In the following kriya, bija mantra sanchalana, as well as in a number of practices of kriya yoga, you will be required to move your awareness through two psychic passages called *arohan* and *awarohan*. The path of these passages is as follows :

Arohan, the ascending passage, goes from mooladhara chakra, forward to swadhisthana kshetram in the pubic area, then follows the curve of the belly to manipura kshetram, upward to anahata kshetram and vishuddhi kshetram in the front of the throat, then in a straight line to bindu at the top back of the head.

There is also another pathway for the arohan psychic passage that has been taught by tradition throughout the ages. On the ascent from mooladhara, swadhisthana kshetram and onwards, the awareness is taken from vishuddhi kshetram to lalana chakra in the palate, then to the nosetip, to the eyebrow center, and following the curvature of the skull through sahasrara at the top of the head, to bindu at the back of the crown, where there is a little whorl of hair. In this book we will refer to the arohan passage as connecting vishuddhi kshetram directly to bindu, however, you can experiment with both passages and use whichever one suits you best.

Awarohan is the descending passage which starts at bindu, travels forward to ajna chakra, then down through sushumna in the spine, passing through all the chakras in turn to finally terminate at mooladhara.

In the following practice you will have to familiarize yourself with these two psychic passages, and this will also be useful as a preparation for the kundalini kriyas.

Bija mantras

The bija mantras for each kshetram and chakra are as follows:

mooladhara *lam*
swadhisthana *vam*

mianipura	<i>ram</i>
anahata	<i>yam</i>
vishuddhi	<i>ham</i>
ajna	<i>om</i>
bindu	<i>om</i>

Technique

Sit in any comfortable position, preferably siddhasana.

Keep your back straight and eyes closed.

Throughout the practice there is no physical movement; the kriya is done mentally.

Bring your attention to mooladhara chakra.

Repeat the mantra *lam* mentally, once, and try to feel the vibration at mooladhara chakra.

Then ascend through arohan.

Let your attention jump to swadhisthana kshetram and repeat the mantra *vam*, feeling the vibration at that point.

Jump to manipura kshetram and repeat the mantra *ram*.

At anahata kshetram, *yam*.

At vishuddhi kshetram, *ham*.

At bindu, *Om*.

Then descend through awarohan.

Repeat *Om* at ajna, in the center of the head.

Repeat *ham* at vishuddhi chakra in the spine.

At anahata chakra, *yam*.

At manipura chakra, *ram*.

At swadhisthana, *vam*.

Then return to the starting point, mooladhara, and begin the next round by repeating the mantra *lam*.

Your awareness should jump from one center to the next.

Do 9 rounds, or more if you have time.

Note: This is an excellent preparatory practice for kriya yoga sadhana. You may also practise by spending some time (e.g. 5 minutes) at each kshetram or chakra, chanting the mantra aloud on a low key and feeling it vibrating at the chakra.

Practice 7: Drawing the chakras

Drawing of mandalas, such as the chakras, is an important part of tantra. Many of the practices require that the correct mandalas be constructed first of all. The creation of a chakra diagram should be done with absolute awareness and concentration, and its measurements and dimensions must be exact. You should try to ensure that you will be undisturbed for at least an hour, and approach the exercise as you do meditation. In some Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, mandalas are drawn and painted as part of the daily sadhana, as is the practice in several Greek Orthodox monasteries, where icons are painted in minute detail as daily meditation.

Make sure you have all the necessary materials; pencils, pens, rubbers, ruler, compass, colors or paints, so that you will not have to disturb your concentration once you have started. If you have a sadhana room, then that is the best place to create your mandalas. A good size for drawing the chakras on art paper is about 9" square, as this size is most useful for visual display and concentration practices. Larger and smaller sized chakras can be made for other purposes.

By first using only a black pen, one can plainly see the simple yet subtle lines and formations, and discover the hidden symbology as it becomes visually clearer in the mind. The next step is to color it, according to the traditional colors described in the text. In this way, mandalas of each of the seven chakras can be completed over seven or more sessions.

This practice is very relaxing and enjoyable. You may like to create more subjective and artistic impressions of the chakras, with your own colors and symbols, as you come to understand them in a personal way. This expands your awareness to the many possibilities of experiencing not only the chakras, but life itself.

The chakras should not be interpreted on just one or two levels, but in many dimensions. After drawing and painting the chakras successfully, you can then take the next step and create the chakras in a three-dimensional form. For this you can use any number of materials such as clay, plasticine, wire, fiberglass, copper or stone.

You must remember, however, that the traditional drawings are as subjective as your feelings and experiences of the chakra. Therefore, use these experiences to express your deeper and inner spiritual aspects on paper, in clay or stone. Through this you will find a clarity of vision arising out of what once seemed a confused and blurred picture of life.

Practise

You will not have time to do all the practices given in this chapter. Therefore we suggest that you practise the following for one month: Chakra meditation, chaturtha pranayama, chakra yoga nidra, immani mudra and bija mantra sanchalana daily.

Musical chakra meditation and drawing the chakras, can be done if you have the time and the inclination. They can be omitted without any detriment to arousing kundalini.

Practices for each individual chakra can be done as follows:

ajna - shambhavi mudra

mooladhara - moola bandha and nasikagra mudra

swadhisthana - vajroli (or sahajoli)
manipura - uddiyana bandha
anahata - ajapa japa
vishuddhi - jalandhara bandha and vipareeta karani asana
bindu - yoni mudra.

Then after one month you can start to learn kriya yoga, having first of all taken the advice of an experienced yoga teacher, or by writing to Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India.

Chapter 12

Your Sadhana Program

The practices of kundalini yoga must be adopted systematically. We suggest that you practise and perfect the sadhana for each chakra for one month or more, before moving on to the next chakra sadhana. In this way, the sadhana will continue for eight months, as outlined below:

Month

1: Practices for ajna chakra

- Anuloma viloma pranayama
 - Trataka
 - Shambhavi mudra with Om chanting

2: Practices for mooladhara chakra

- Chakra location
 - Moola bandha
 - Nasikagra drishti

3. Practices for swadhisthana chakra

- Chakra location
- Kshetram location
- Ashwini mudra
 - Vajroli (or sahajoli) mudra

4: Practices for manipura chakra

- Chakra and kshetram location
 - Manipura purification
 - Agnisar kriya
 - Uddiyana bandha
 - Nauli
 - Union of prana and apana

5: Practices for anahata chakra

- Chakra and kshetram location
 - Anahata purification
 - Bhramari pranayama
 - Ajapa japa
 - Meditation - entering the heart space

6: Practices for vishuddhi chakra

- Jalandhara bandha
 - Khechari mudra
 - Ujjayi pranayama
 - Chakra and kshetram location and purification
 - Vipareeta karani asana

7: Practices for bindu visarga

- Moorchha pranayama
 - Vajroli mudra with bindu awareness
 - Perception of subtle inner sound
 - Yoni mudra

8: Practices for integrated chakra awareness

- Chakra meditation
 - Musical chakra meditation
 - Chaturtha pranayama
 - Chakra yoga nidra
 - Unmani mudra
 - Bija mantra sanchalana

Drawing the chakras

Chapter 13

Kundalini Kriyas of Kriya Yoga

The following *tantnc kriyas* provide what is possibly the most efficient method for systematically evolving man's consciousness that has ever been developed. They are said to have been the teachings for the transcendental sadhana which Lord Shiva gave to his disciple and wife, Parvati.

By tradition, kriya yoga was never taught publicly. The kriyas were always communicated verbally from guru to disciple. It is only in recent years that these kriyas have been published in accordance with the needs of this era.

These kriyas are rather advanced and too powerful for the average aspirant. Before an aspirant takes up their practice, he should have a thorough familiarity with and practical experience of all the preliminary practices included in the book. Additionally, it is advisable that he takes up these kriyas only under the guidance of a guru, who can see that the aspirant is fully prepared for them and that any obstacles which arise while the aspirant is practising, do not cause him harm in the way of disease, mental imbalance or psychic dislocation.

If possible, try to make arrangements to come to an ashram for one month for full initiation into the higher practices of kriya yoga.

Preparation

All the rules and regulations which were enumerated at the beginning of this practice section also apply to all aspirants who wish to learn and practise kriya yoga. It is essential that one has developed sensitivity to the positions of the chakras and kshetram by practising the techniques given for the individual chakras (chapters 4 to 10), and also the techniques for integrated chakra awareness (chapter 11). This sensitivity should be such that you can feel them both physically and mentally.

You should also know the position of the two psychic pathways known as *arohan* and *awarohan*. They are explained in the practice called "Bija mantra sanchalana" in chapter 11.

The following techniques are integral parts of the 20 kriyas:

Name	Chapter
vipareeta karani asana	9
ujjayi pranayama	9
siddhasana (or siddha yoni asana)	2
unmani mudra	11
khechari mudra	9
ajapa japa	8
utthan padasana	2
shambhavi mudra	4
moola bandha	5
nasikagra drishti	5
uddiyana bandha	7
jalandhara bandha	9
bhadrasana	2
padmasana	2
yonni mudra	10
vajroli mudra	6

These practices are all fully described in the chapters indicated and it is essential that you master them. If you try to learn kriya yoga without first of all perfecting them, then you will find the actual kriya techniques very difficult to follow and you will get very little benefit from them.

Mode of learning the kriyas

It is not possible to learn all the kriyas at once. Therefore, we suggest that you learn each kriya sequentially, spending at least one week mastering each kriya, and progressively adding each new kriya to those already learned. That is, in the first week learn and master kriya no. 1 - vipareeta karani mudra. Then in the second week, learn kriya no. 2 - chakra anusandhana, and do both no. 1 and 2 daily. In the third week, learn kriya no. 3 - nada sanchalana, and do it daily, together with the previous two kriyas. In this way, all the kriyas can be systematically and thoroughly learned in a period of twenty weeks. However, it may take many months of regular practice before the kriyas are perfected.

Length of practice

As you progressively add more and more kriyas to your practice program, the time required for daily practice will increase. Eventually, after mastering all the kriyas, your daily practice of the 20 kriyas, with the required number of rounds, will take between 2 and 2 and a half hours.

If you can spare this amount of time every day, then you will get maximum benefit. However, most people, no matter how sincere, will not be able to devote this length of time to their practice. Therefore, for those who wish to practise kriya yoga, but have less spare time, we suggest that you reduce the number of rounds per kriya as follows:

Kriya technique	Full	Reduced
1. vipareeta karani mudra	21	11
2. chakra anusandhana	9	9
3. nada sanchalana	13	5
4. pawan sanchalana	49	11
5. shabda sanchalana	59	11
6. maha mudra	12	6
7. maha bheda mudra	12	6
8. manduki kriya	1-3 min.	1-3min.
9. tadan kriya	7	7
10. naumukhi mudra	5	5
11. shakti chalini	5	5
12. shambhavi	11	5
13. amrit pan	9	9
14. chakra bhedan	59	11
15. sushumna darshan	-	-
16. prana ahuti	1 min.	1 min.
17. utthan	2-3 min.	2-3 min.
18. swaropda darshan	2-3 min.	2-3 min.
19. linga sanchalana	2-3 min.	2-3 min.
20. dhyana	-	-

This daily program containing all the kriyas, with a reduced number of rounds, will take a total of about 1 to 1 and a half hours. The benefits may be slightly less than when you do the complete number of rounds per kriya, but still you will reap much fruit from your practice.

While learning each kriya, you should do the full number of rounds, but this can be reduced as you integrate the next kriya.

Hints on practice

The following suggestions will help you to master the kriyas and gain maximum benefit:

1. Do not strain physically or mentally under any circumstances, or you may experience negative side-effects. This applies particularly in the case of kriyas such as maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, tadan kriya, naumukhi and shakti chalini. Regular daily practice will gradually bring such changes into the mind and body, that after some time, you will be able to practise the kriyas almost effortlessly.

2. Do not hold your breath for longer than is comfortable. In many of the kriyas, such as maha mudra and maha bheda mudra, most people will initially find difficulty in completing a full round in one respiration cycle without strain or suffocation. In the beginning, it may be necessary to break in the middle of each round, or to take a short rest at the end of each round and take a few normal breaths. As you develop the capacity to hold the breath for longer periods, and to control inhalation and exhalation, this concession may be disregarded.

3. After long inner breath retentions, it is best to breathe in slightly before breathing out. In many of the kriyas, such as maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, naumukhi and shakti chalini, where the breath is held inside for prolonged periods, there is a tendency for the lungs to lock. The best way to overcome this problem and release the lungs, is to breathe in slightly before breathing out. This will make the kriyas much easier to do.

4. While learning each kriya, check that you are doing all the steps and that they are being done correctly.

Chapter 14

The Kriya Yoga Practices

By tradition there are a total of 76 kundalini kriyas of kriya yoga. We present the following 20 main practices, which are sufficient for the daily practice of any sincere sadhaka.

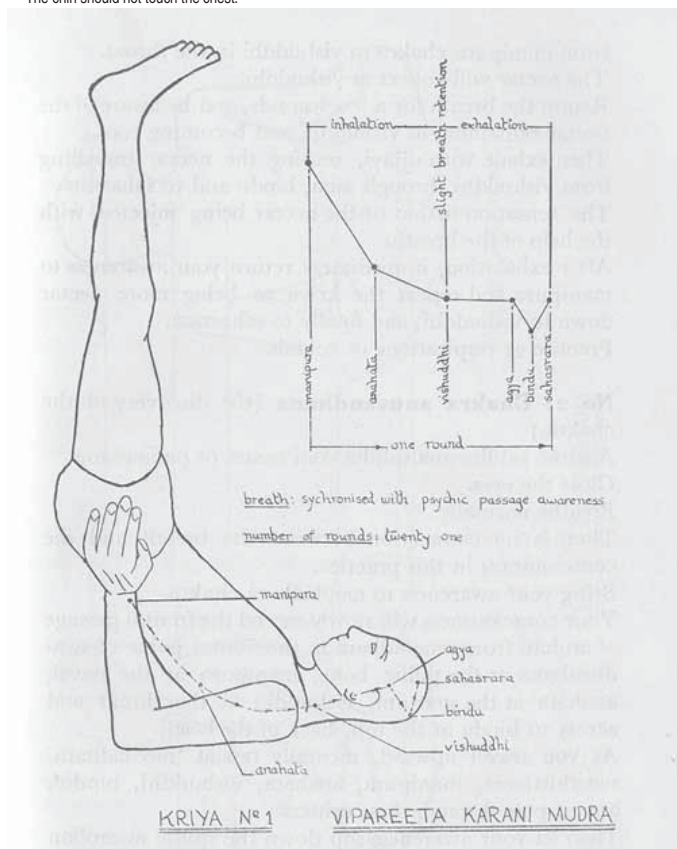
The practices are divided into three groups: those which induce pratyahara, those which induce dharana, and those which induce dhyana. It should be noted that these three states are actually a continuity of evolution, that is, the consciousness flows from one to the next without any apparent dividing point - so these practices should be done in an unbroken sequence. Of course, from the first day, the practice of these kriyas will not necessarily lead to such exalted states of awareness, but if they are practised properly with correct guidance, by an aspirant who is ready for them, then most likely, one day they will. It will be at that stage that the constant, unbroken progression of awareness will become essential. Remember, you should learn one kriya per week.

PRATYAHARA PRACTICES

№ 1: Vipareeta karani mudra (the attitude of inversion)

Assume vipareeta karani asana (described in chapter 9).

The chin should not touch the chest.



Kriya №1 Vipareeta Karani Mudra

Practise subtle ujjayi pranayama.

Be sure that your legs are completely vertical.

Close your eyes.

Inhale with ujjayi and simultaneously feel a hot stream of amrit or nectar flowing through the spinal passage from manipura chakra to vishuddhi in the throat.

The nectar will collect at vishuddhi.

Retain the breath for a few seconds, and be aware of the nectar remaining at vishuddhi and becoming cool.

Then exhale with ujjayi, sensing the nectar travelling from vishuddhi through ajna, bindu and to sahasrara.

The sensation is that of the nectar being injected with the help of the breath.

After exhalation, immediately return your awareness to manipura and repeat the kriya to bring more nectar down to vishuddhi, and finally to sahasrara.

Practise 21 respirations or rounds.

№ 2: Chakra anusandhana (the discovery of the chakras)

Assume siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Close the eyes.

Breathe normally.

There is no connection between the breath and the consciousness in this practice.

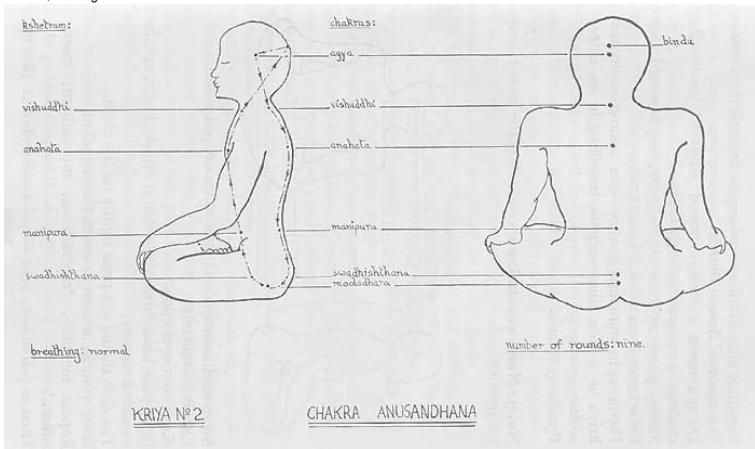
Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra.

Your consciousness will slowly ascend the frontal passage of arohan from mooladhara to the frontal point of swadhisthana at the pubic bone, manipura at the navel, anahata at the sternum, vishuddhi at the throat and across to bindu at the top, back of the head.

As you travel upward, mentally repeat "mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, bindu", as you pass through these centers.

Then let your awareness slip down the spinal avarohan passage from bindu to mooladhara, mentally repeating "ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara" as you pass through these centers.

From mooladhara, immediately start ascending in the frontal passage as before, mentally reciting the chakra names as you ascend, starting with swadhisthana.



Kriya №2 Chakra anusandhana

Continue this rotation of awareness through the chakras in a constant flow of rounds.

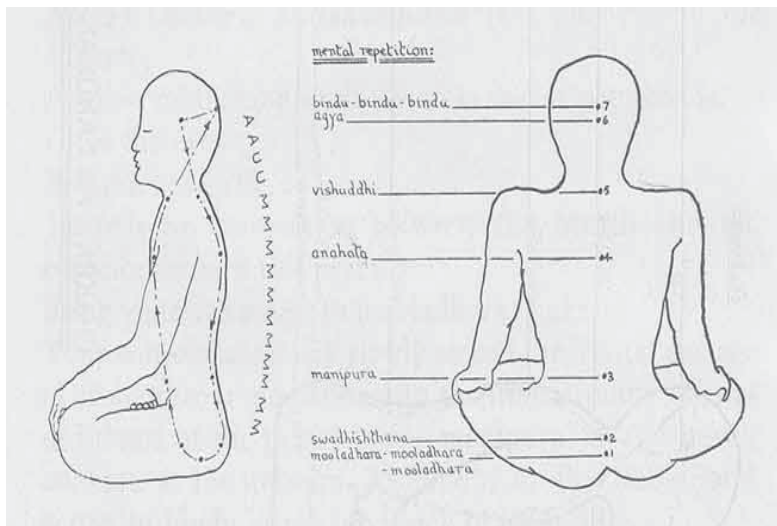
Do not make a serious, tensed effort to locate the chakras as you pass through them.

Merely glance at them as you go by, as you would view the scenery from a fast moving train.

If you wish, you can visualize your awareness in this kriya as a thin silver serpent travelling in an ellipse within your body.

Practise 9 rounds.

№ 3: Nada sanchalana (conducting the sound consciousness)



Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Exhale completely.

Keep your eyes open.

Bend your head forward, so that it drops downward in a relaxed manner.

The chin should not press tightly on the chest.

Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra.

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Then as you inhale, your consciousness should rise up through the frontal passage of arohan to bindu.

Have a clear awareness of swadhishthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi, as you pass by them on your way to bindu, and mentally repeat their names.

As your awareness is travelling from vishuddhi to bindu during the last segment of your inhalation, your head will slowly rise and tilt back slightly into a position facing about 20° above the horizontal.

With the breath stored inside you and the awareness at bindu, mentally repeat, "bindu, bindu, bindu."

The power of the awareness will build up as you are repeating the word "bindu" and it will explode into the vocal chant of Om, which will carry you down through the spinal passage of avarohan to mooladhara.

The "O" sound of Om will be explosive and sudden.

The "m" sound will be long and drawn out, culminating almost in a buzz as you approach mooladhara.

As your awareness descends in the spine, your eyes will gradually close in unmani mudra.

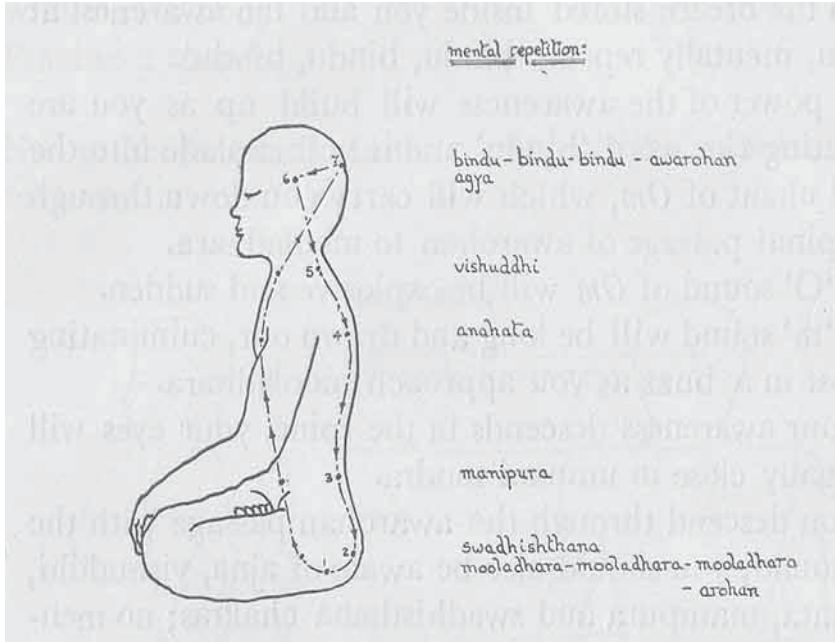
As you descend through the avarohan passage with the Om sound, you should also be aware of ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura and swadhishthana chakras; no mental repetition.

When you have reached mooladhara, drop your head forward and open your eyes.

Mentally repeat, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara", with the breath retained outside and start on the ascent as before, with inhalation and repetition of the chakra names as you pass through them.

Practise 13 full rounds or breaths and end after the last "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara."

№ 4: Pawan sanchalana (conducting the breath consciousness)



Sit in padmasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, and keep your eyes closed.

Practise khechari mudra throughout this kriya. Exhale completely and bend your head forward as in nada sanchalana.

Become aware of mooladhara and repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'. Then mentally say 'arohan' once and begin your ascent through the frontal passage with a subtle ujjayi inhalation.

As you ascend, be aware of the chakras as you pass through them and repeat their names mentally.

As your awareness moves from vishuddhi to bindu, your head should slowly rise until it leans slightly backward as in nada sanchalana.

At bindu mentally repeat, "bindu, bindu, bindu".

Then say "awarohan" mentally and descend through the spinal passage with ujjayi exhalation, mentally reciting the name of each chakra as you pass through it.

As you descend, your eyes will close very gradually to form unmani mudra, the attitude of drowsiness.

At mooladhara they will be closed.

Then open your eyes and bend your head forward.

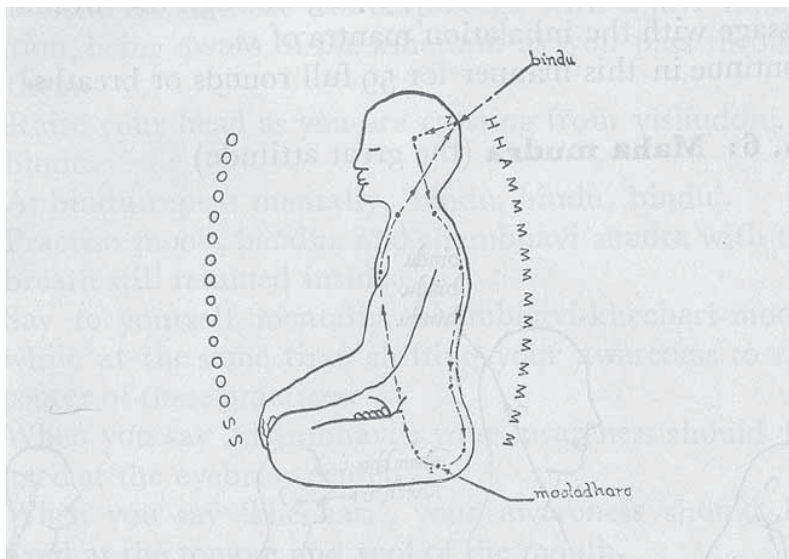
Repeat mentally "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Again begin your ascent with ujjayi inhalation, as before.

Practise 49 rounds or complete breaths.

After the last "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara", open your eyes and end the practice.

No. 5: Shabda sanchalana (conducting the word consciousness)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana. Keep your eyes open and practise khechari mudra throughout the kriya.

Exhale completely, bend your head forward and become aware of mooladhara chakra for a few seconds.

Inhale with ujjayi and ascend the frontal passage.

As you ascend, be aware of the sound of the breath which takes the form of the mantra so.

Simultaneously, be aware of each kshetram, without mental repetition.

As you travel from vishuddhi to bindu, the head will move upward as in pawan sanchalana and nada sanchalana.

Then, with the breath retained inside, be aware of bindu for a few seconds.

Then descend the spinal passage doing unmani mudra and being simultaneously aware of the natural sound of exhalation and the mantra ham.

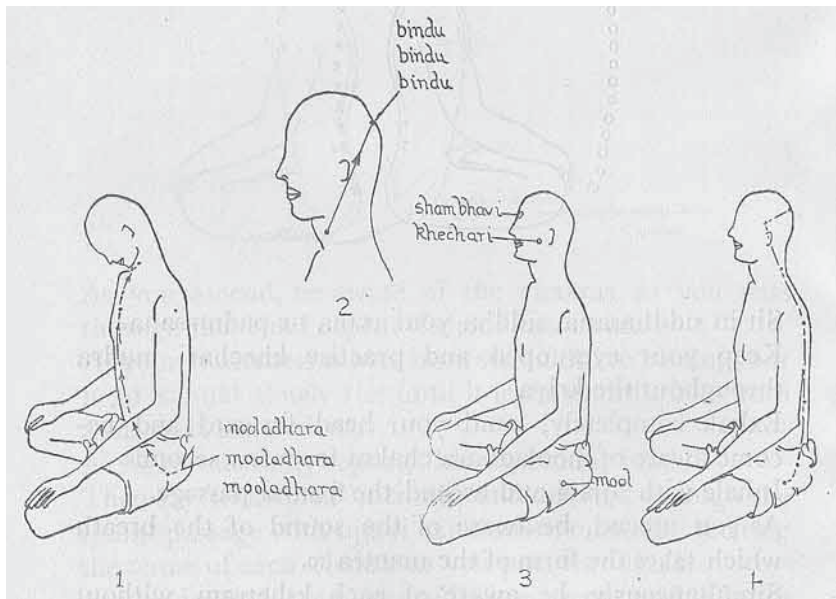
Be aware of each chakra without repetition of its name.

After reaching mooladhara, open the eyes and lower your head.

Begin your ujjayi inhalation, rising through the frontal passage with the inhalation mantra of so.

Continue in this manner for 59 full rounds or breaths.

No. 6: Maha mudra (the great attitude)



This kriya can either be practised in perfect siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, or in the asana known as utthan padasana. If maha mudra is to be practised in siddhasana, then it should be done as follows:

Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, with the heel of the lower foot pressing firmly in towards mooladhara chakra.

Practise khechari mudra, exhale completely and bend your head forward.

Keep your eyes open.

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Ascend through the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation, being aware of the kshetram as you pass through them.

Raise your head as you are crossing from vishuddhi to bindu.

At bindu repeat mentally, "bindu, bindu, bindu".

Practise moola bandha and shambhavi mudra with the breath still retained inside.

Say to yourself mentally, "shambhavi - khechari - mool", while at the same time shifting your awareness to the center of these practices.

When you say "shambhavi", your awareness should be fixed at the eyebrow center.

When you say "khechari", your awareness should be fixed at the tongue and roof of the mouth.

When you say "mool", your awareness should be fixed at mooladhara chakra.

Beginners should repeat this shifting of awareness 3 times. Advanced aspirants can rotate their awareness up to 12 times.

Then, first release shambhavi mudra, then moola bandha.

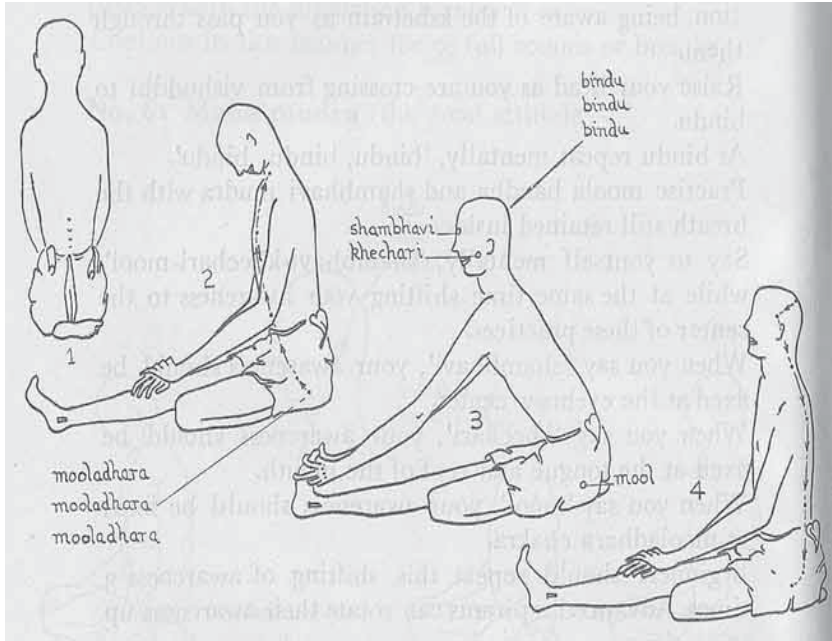
Bring your awareness back to bindu and travel down your spinal passage to mooladhara, with ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra, and be aware of the chakras as you pass through them.

On reaching mooladhara, bend your head forward.

Then repeat "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara" and ascend the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation, as before.

Practise 12 rounds or breaths and end after the last "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Alternative practice in utthan padasana



When practising maha mudra in uththan padasana, a slight change must be made in the technique.

After ascending to bindu, repeat "bindu, bindu, bindu".

Lean forward and hold the big toe of your extended foot with the fingers of both hands, to form uththan padasana.

The stretched knee must not bend.

Now practise moola bandha and shambhavi mudra.

Repeat, "shambhavi - khechari - mool" from 3 to 12 times, passing your awareness to the seats of these practices as you repeat their names.

Release shambhavi, then moola bandha, then uththan padasana, and place your hands back on your knee.

Bring your consciousness back to bindu, and then descend the spinal passage with the ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra.

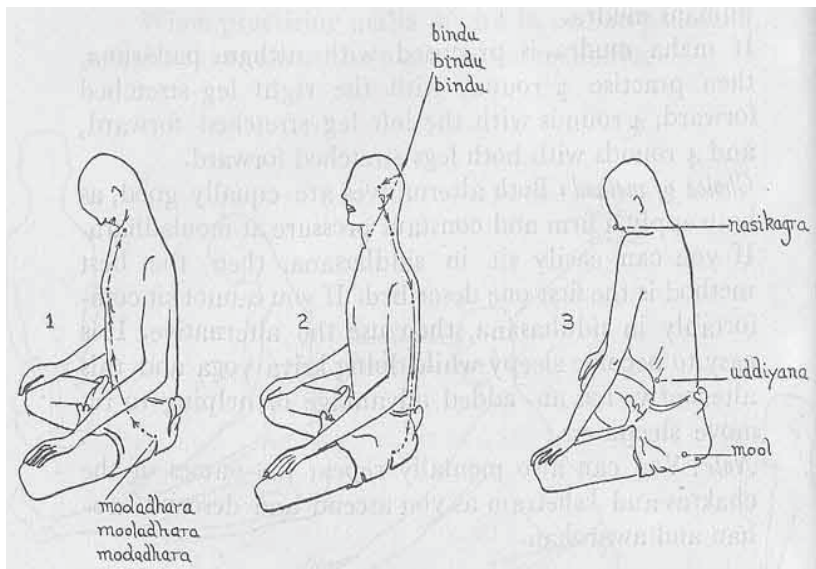
If maha mudra is practised with uththan padasana, then practise 4 rounds with the right leg stretched forward, 4 rounds with the left leg stretched forward, and 4 rounds with both legs stretched forward.

Choice of method: Both alternatives are equally good, as both apply a firm and constant pressure at mooladhara.

If you can easily sit in siddhasana, then the best method is the first one described. If you cannot sit comfortably in siddhasana, then use the alternative. It is easy to become sleepy while doing kriya yoga and this alternative has an added advantage of helping to remove sleepiness.

Note: You can also mentally repeat the names of the chakras and kshetram as you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan.

No. 7: Maha bheda mudra (the great piercing attitude)



This mudra can either be practised in perfect siddhasana, siddha yoni asana, or in utthan padasana, as with maha mudra. If practised in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, the technique is as follows:

Practise khechari mudra and keep your eyes open and head down.

Exhale completely.

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Inhale with ujjayi as you ascend the frontal passage to bindu.

As you ascend from vishuddhi to bindu, raise your head.

Repeat mentally, "bindu, bindu, bindu", and then descend the spinal passage to mooladhara with ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra.

Be sure to notice the chakras as you pass through them.

Then practise jalandhara bandha with the breath retained outside.

Practise moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and nasikagra drishti.

Repeat mentally, "nasikagra-uddiyana-mool", while simultaneously placing your awareness at the seats of these practices in turn.

Repeat this cycle of awareness 3 times if you are a beginner, or up to 12 times if you are experienced.

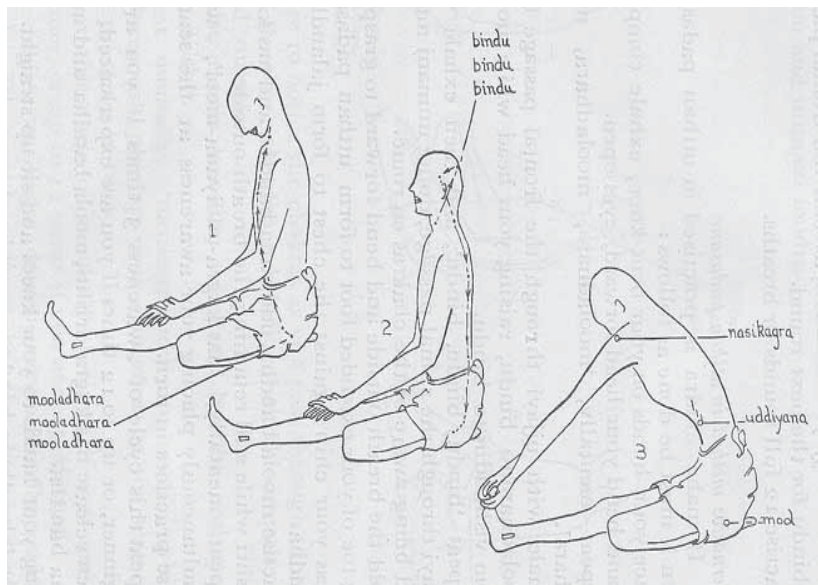
Then release nasikagra drishti, moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha, but keep the head down.

Bring your awareness back to mooladhara. Repeat the mantra "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara", mentally.

Then with ujjayi inhalation, ascend the frontal passage to bindu for the next round.

Practise 12 full rounds or breaths.

Alternative method in utthan padasana



If maha mudra is practised in uththan padasana, then it must be done as follows:

Place your hands on your bent knee, exhale completely and bend your head forward, eyes open.

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Inhale with ujjayi through the frontal passage from mooladhara to bindu, raising your head while moving from vishuddhi to bindu.

Repeat "bindu, bindu, bindu", and then exhale with ujjayi through the spinal passage, doing unmami mudra and being aware of the chakras en route.

Hold the breath outside and bend forward to grasp the big toe of your extended foot to form uththan padasana.

Press your chin against the chest to form jalandhara bandha.

Practise moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and nasikagra drishti while still retaining the breath outside.

Repeat mentally, "nasikagra - uddiyana - mool", while simultaneously placing your awareness at the seats of these practices in turn.

Repeat this cycle of awareness 3 times if you are a beginner, or up to 12 times if you are experienced.

Then release nasikagra drishti, moola bandha and uddiyana bandha.

Bring your hands to your knees and sit up straight. Release jalandhara but keep your head bent down.

Bring your awareness back to mooladhara.

Repeat the mantra "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara", and then ascend the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation.

Practise in this way for 4 full rounds or breaths with your right leg extended, then practise 4 times with the left leg extended, and finally 4 times with both legs extended.

After the fourth time in each position, ascend once to bindu with ujjayi inhalation. Repeat the bindu mantra, descend to mooladhara and repeat its mantra, relax and then change legs.

Note: The rotation of awareness through nasikagra, uddiyana and mool is done with outside retention of the breath at mooladhara. You are advised to practise only 3 rotations at first, slowly increasing one rotation per week until you can complete 12 rotations.

* Make sure that all the bandhas are performed correctly and in the right sequence. At first you will have to pay special attention to this, but with regular practice the bandhas will lock and tighten automatically, without effort and at the right stages of the kriya.

* Nasetip gazing helps to tighten the lock of the bandhas. Make sure that nasikagra drishti and the bandhas are practised simultaneously and that you do not omit any of them while rotating awareness through the centers. Do not strain.

* If you are feeling pain or discomfort in the eyes, stop nasikagra drishti but continue the bandhas and rotation of awareness. Slowly increase the duration of nasikagra as the eye muscles adapt to the practice.

* You can repeat the "mooladhara" mantra 3 times before applying the bandhas as well as repeating "mooladhara" 3 times at the beginning of a new round.

* Also, the names of the chakras and kshetram can be mentally repeated as you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan.

No. 8: Manduki kriya (the frog attitude)

Sit in bhadrasana, the gentleman's pose.

Your eyes should remain open.

The area of your body below mooiadhara chakra must touch the ground. If it doesn't, then use a cushion to exert pressure on this point.

Place your hands on your knees and practise nasikagra drishti.

Become aware of your natural breath flowing in and out of your nostrils.

With inhalation the breath flows through both nostrils and merges at the eyebrow center. As you exhale the two flows diverge from the eyebrow center and move out through both nostrils.

The breath follows a conical or inverted V-shaped pathway. Feel this.

Simultaneously, be aware of all smells.

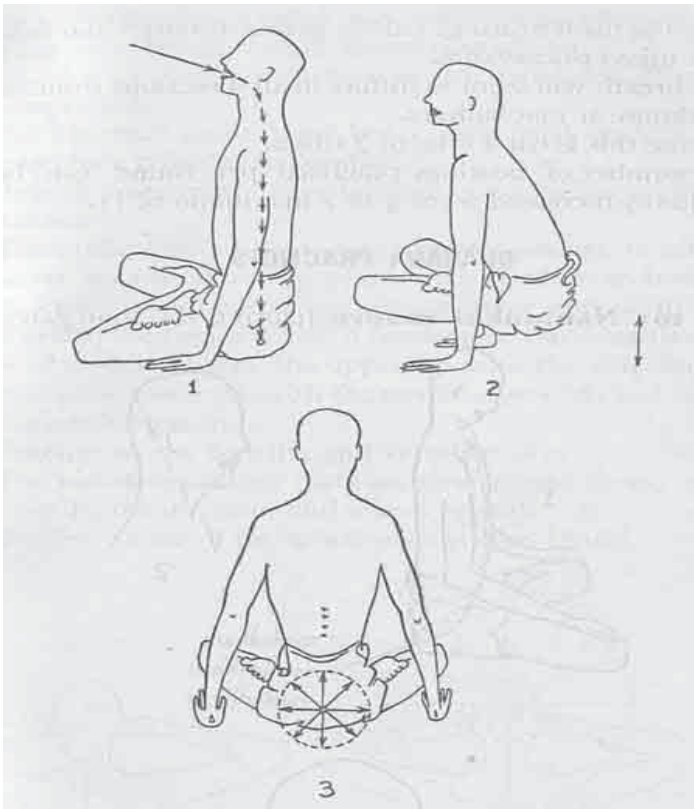
The point of this kriya is to smell the aroma of the astral body which has a scent like that of sandalwood.

If your eyes become tired, close them for some time and then resume nasikagra drishti.

Practise this kriya until it becomes intoxicating.

Do not carry it so far that you become totally absorbed in it and do not wish to end the practice.

No. 9: Tadan kriya (beating the kundalini)



Sit in padmasana with the eyes open.

Place your palms on the floor at the sides of your body, next to your hips, with the fingers pointing forward.

Tilt your head slightly backward and practise shambhavi mudra.

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Inhale through your mouth in audible ujjayi pranayama.

As you inhale, feel the breath travelling downward through a tube connecting the mouth to mooladhara chakra. The breath will collect at mooladhara chakra.

Hold the breath, keep your awareness at mooladhara and practise moola bandha.

Using your hands, lift your body off the ground.

Then drop your body lightly so that mooladhara is gently beaten.

Repeat this beating a few times.

Do not practise this quickly or harshly.

After the third beating, exhale gently through the nose with ujjayi pranayama.

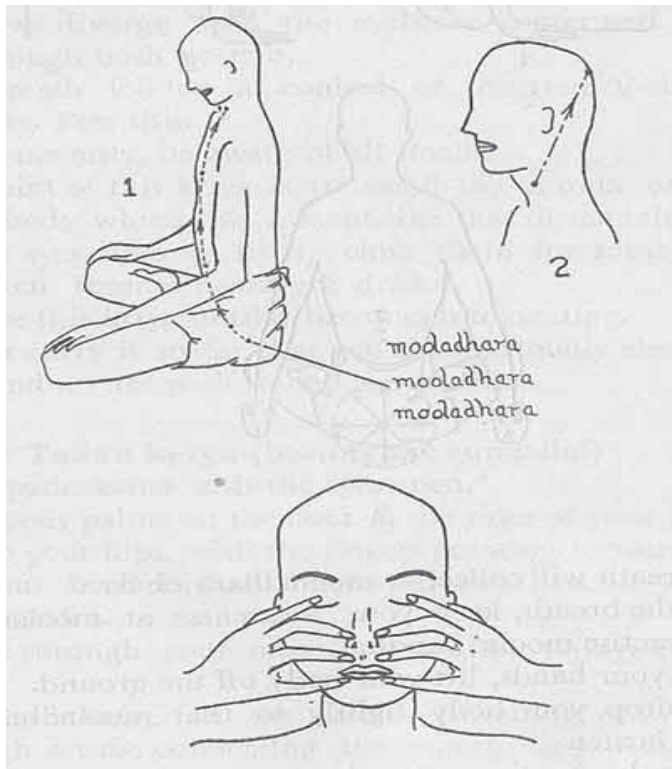
The breath will seem to diffuse in all directions from its storehouse at mooladhara.

Practise this kriya a total of 7 times.

The number of beatings practised per round can be gradually increased from 3 to a maximum of 11.

DHARANA PRACTICES

No. 10: Naumukhi mudra (closing the nine gates)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Your eyes should remain closed throughout.

If necessary, use a cushion to ensure that mooladhara is compressed.

Do khechari mudra and bend your head slightly forward (not jaiandhara bandha).

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara".

Then inhale with ujjayi up the frontal passage to bindu.

Raise your head as you pass from vishuddhi to bindu, practise yoni mudra by closing your ears with the thumbs, the eyes with both forefingers, the nostrils with your middle fingers, the upper lip with the ring fingers and your lower lip with the small fingers (do not apply too much pressure).

Practise moola bandha and vajroli mudra.

The nine gates of the body are now closed (eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, anus and sexual organ).

Become aware of the spinal passage and bindu.

Now visualize a shining copper trident (trishul), rooted in mooladhara with its stem in the spinal cord and the prongs extending upward from vishuddhi.

The prongs are very sharp.

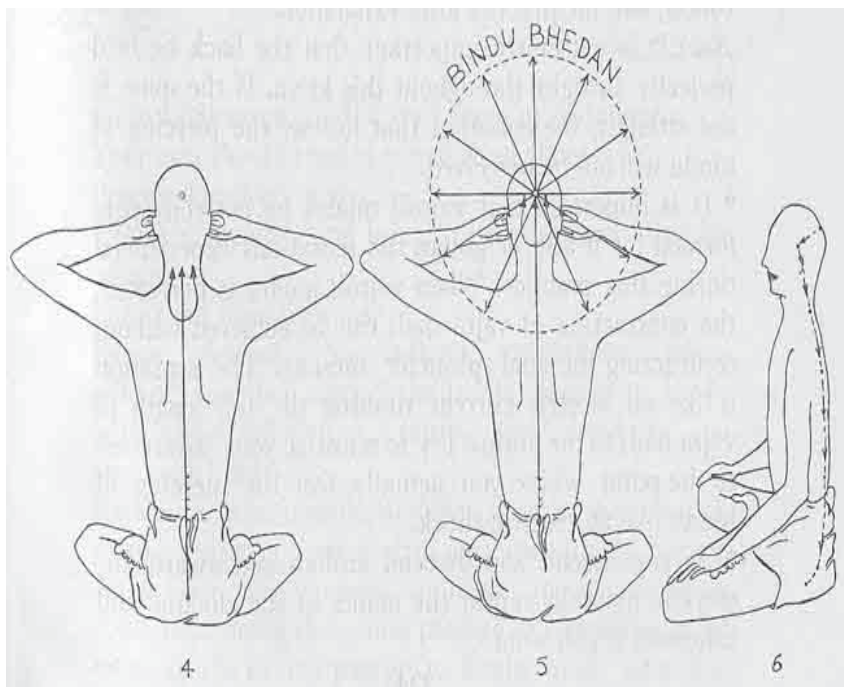
The trishul will slightly rise a number of times of its own accord and it will pierce bindu with its central prong.

As it pierces bindu, repeat the mantra 'bindu bhedan', which means 'bindu piercing'.

After some times release vajroli mudra and moola bandha.

Open the upper gates and bring your hands down to your knees.

Exhale with ujjayi through the spinal passage from bindu to mooladhara.



Mentally repeat "mooladhara" 3 times.

Then inhale through the frontal passage up to bindu to repeat the kriya.

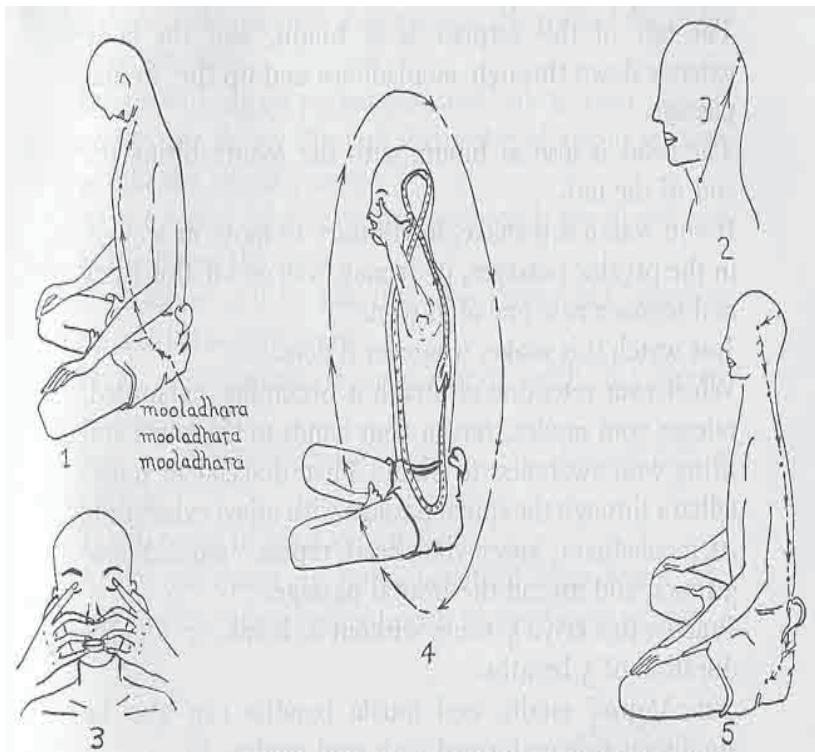
Practise 5 full rounds or breaths, and after the fifth round, end the practice after exhalation.

Note: It is extremely important that the back be held perfectly straight throughout this kriya. If the spine is not straight, the sensation that follows the piercing of bindu will not be perceived.

* It is important that vajroli mudra be correctly performed for it also heightens the sensations experienced during this practice. When vajroli mudra is perfected, the contraction of vajra nadi can be achieved without contracting the anal sphincter muscles. The sensation is like an electric current running the full length of vajra nadi to the brain. Try to sensitize your awareness to the point where you actually feel the piercing of bindu like an electric shock.

* As you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan, you can mentally repeat the names of the chakras and kshetram if you want.

No. 11: Shakti chalini (conduction of the thought force)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Your eyes should remain closed throughout.

Practise khechari mudra.

Exhale completely and bring your awareness to mooladhara.

Bend your head forward.

Repeat mentally, "mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara", and then ascend the frontal passage to bindu with ujjayi inhalation, raising your head as you approach bindu.

Retain the breath inside, and then practise yoni mudra, closing your ears, eyes, nostrils and lips with the fingers.

Allow your consciousness to rotate in a continuous cycle, descending the spinal passage to mooladhara and rising up the frontal passage to bindu in an unbroken loop, while you keep the breath retained inside.

Visualize a thin green snake moving through the psychic passageways.

The tail of this serpent is at bindu, and the body extends down through mooladhara and up the frontal passage.

The head is also at bindu, with the mouth biting the end of the tail.

If you watch this snake, it will start to move in a circle in the psychic passages, or it may even go off this track and follow a new one of its own.

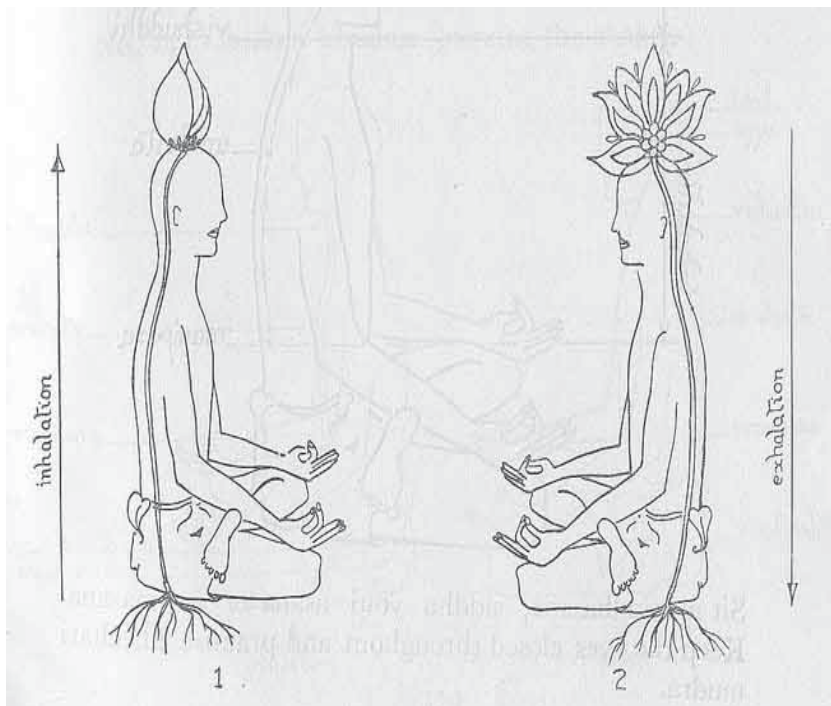
Just watch this snake, whatever it does.

When your retention of breath is becoming exhausted, release yoni mudra, return your hands to the knees and bring your awareness to bindu. Then descend to mooladhara through the spinal passage with ujjayi exhalation. At mooladhara, lower your head, repeat 'mooladhara' 3 times, and ascend the frontal passage.

Practise this kriya 5 times without a break, or for the duration of 5 breaths.

Note: Vajroli mudra and moola bandha can also be simultaneously performed with yoni mudra.

No. 12: Shambhavi (Parvati's lotus)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Close your eyes and practise khechari mudra.

Visualize a lotus flower with a long thin stem extending downward.

The roots of the lotus are white or transparent green.

They spread out from mooladhara chakra.

The thin green lotus stem is in your spinal passage.

The lotus flower is at sahasrara, and it is closed like a bud.

At the bottom of the bud are a few light green immature petals. The main petals of the flower are pink with fine red veins.

Try to see this lotus clearly. You visualize it in chidakasha, but you feel it in your body.

Exhale and take your awareness to the root of the lotus at mooladhara.

Inhale with ujjayi pranayama and allow your awareness to rise slowly through the center of the lotus stem, within the spinal passage.

At the end of inhalation, you will reach the closed bud at the top of the stem.

Your ascent will be like that of a caterpillar, climbing up inside the thin stem.

Hold your awareness at sahasrara with the breath retained inside.

You are inside the lotus, but you can also see it from outside.

It will begin to open very slowly.

As the bud opens out into a beautiful lotus flower, you will see the yellow pollen-tipped stamens in its center.

Then it will slowly close again, to open again almost immediately.

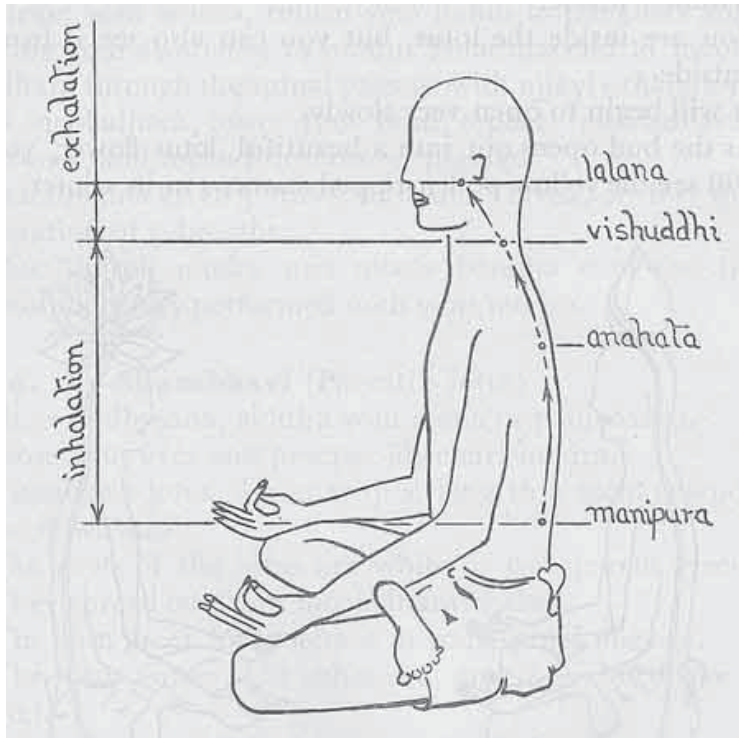
After the lotus has ceased to open and close, and it remains sealed, then slowly descend through the stem to mooladhara, drifting down on the wave of your ujjayi exhalation.

Remain at mooladhara for a few seconds, visualizing the roots spreading out in all directions.

Then once again, ascend the stem with ujjayi inhalation.

Ascend and descend 11 times and then end this kriya.

No. 13: Amrit pan (the quaffing of nectar)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Keep the eyes closed throughout and practise khechari mudra.

Bring your awareness to manipura chakra, where there is a storehouse of a warm, sweet liquid.

Exhale fully with ujjayi.

Inhale with ujjayi, drawing a quantity of this liquid up to vishuddhi chakra through the spinal passage with the suction power of your breath.

Remain at vishuddhi for some seconds.

The nectar which you have raised from manipura will become icy cold at vishuddhi.

Then with ujjayi, exhale up to lalana chakra (at the back of the soft palate), through the nectar passage.

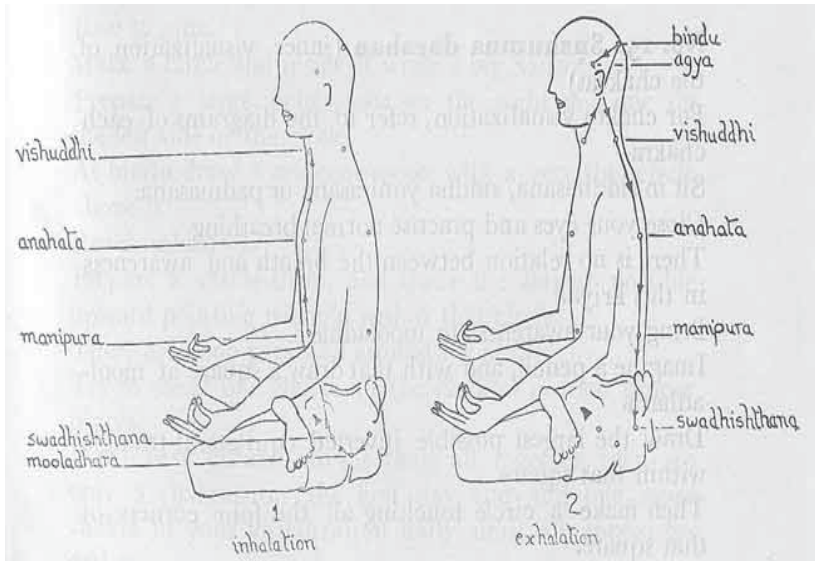
Blow the cool nectar up to lalana with the breath.

Your breath will immediately disperse by itself once you have reached lalana. Immediately return your awareness to manipura chakra.

With another ujjayi inhalation, continue the upward transfer of liquid.

Practise 9 times in all.

No. 14 Chakra bhedan (piercing the chakras)



Assume siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Keep your eyes closed throughout.

Practise khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama.

Breathe without any break between inhalation and exhalation.

Exhale and bring your awareness down to swadhishthana chakra at the base of the spine.

Inhale and direct your consciousness first to mooladhara and then up the frontal passage.

At about the level of vishuddhi kshetram, the breath will run out and you will immediately start exhalation.

Exhale from vishuddhi kshetram to bindu and then down the spine from ajna to swadhishthana chakra to complete one round.

This kriya should actually be practised for 59 rounds, but if introversion starts to occur before you have completed the rounds, discontinue the practice and go on to the next kriya.

Note: If desired, mental repetition of chakras and kshetram can also be done.

No. 15: Sushumna darshan (inner visualization of the chakras)

For chakra visualization, refer to the diagrams of each chakra.

Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Close your eyes and practise normal breathing.

There is no relation between the breath and awareness in this kriya.

Bring your awareness to mooladhara.

Imagine a pencil, and with that draw a square at mooladhara.

Draw the largest possible inverted equilateral triangle within that square.

Then make a circle touching all the four corners of that square.

Prepare 4 petals, one for each side of the square.

Bring your awareness to swadhishthana.

Prepare a circle there with the same radius as the one at mooladhara.

Draw 6 petals around the edge of the circle, and a crescent moon inside the bottom of the circle.

Now come to manipura.

Draw a circle, and then make the biggest possible inverted triangle to fit this circle.

In the center draw a ball of fire.

Make 10 petals around the circle.

Raise the consciousness to anahata.

Draw 2 triangles there, one pointing upward and the other inverted. They are interlaced, both crossing each other.

Surround them with a circle having 12 petals.

Then come to vishuddhi.

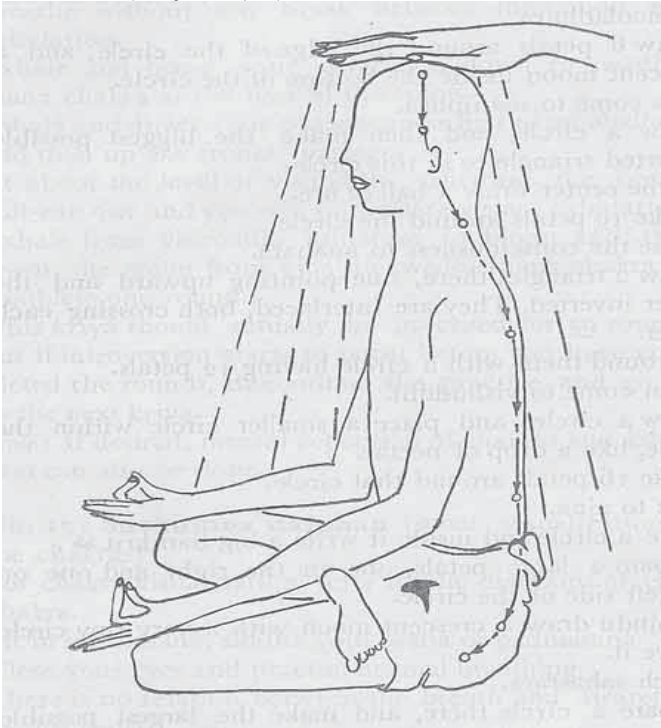
Draw a circle, and place a smaller circle within the circle, like a drop of nectar.
Make 16 petals around that circle.
Rise to ajna.

Make a circle and inside it write a big Sanskrit *Om*.
Prepare 2 large petals, one on the right and one on the left side of the circle.
At bindu draw a crescent moon with a very tiny circle above it.

Reach sahasrara.
Prepare a circle there, and make the largest possible upward pointing triangle within that circle.
There are 1000 petals all around the circle.
Try to see at one glance all the chakras in their proper places.

If it is very difficult to see them all together, then see only 2 chakras on the first day and add one more chakra to your visualization daily until all appear together.

No. 16: Prana ahuti (infusing the divine prana)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Close your eyes and breathe normally.

Feel the soft touch of a divine hand lying on your head.

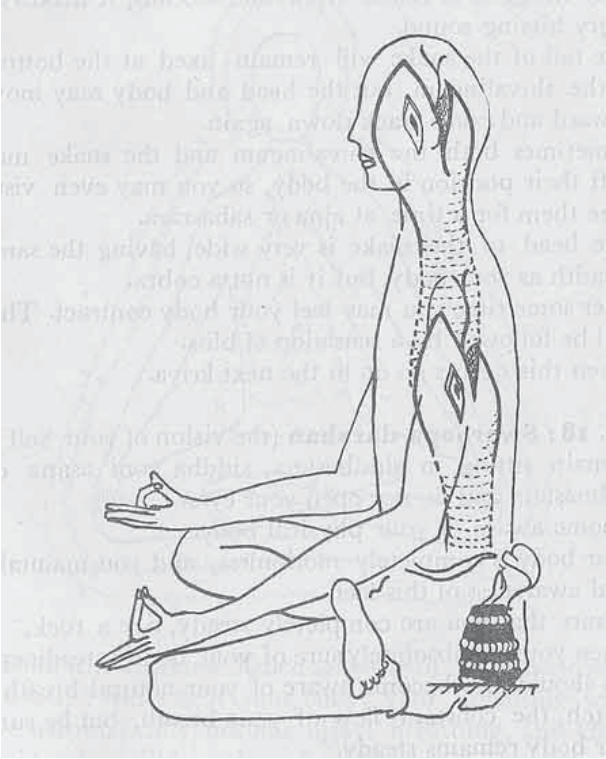
The hand is infusing subtle prana into your body and mind and the prana is travelling down from sahasrara through the spinal passage.

You may experience it as a wave of cold, heat, energy, electric current, or as a stream of wind or liquid.

Its passage will result in vibrations, shocks, jerks or tickling sensations which course through you.

When the prana has reached mooladhara, then immediately go on to the next kriya without waiting to experience the prana a second time.

No. 17: Utthan (raising the kundalini)



Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana.

Keep your eyes closed throughout.

Again the breathing is normal in this kriya.

Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra.

Try to visualize it clearly and notice all details.

You will see a black shivalingam made of a smoky gaseous substance.

The bottom and the top of the lingam are cut off, and circled around it is a red baby snake.

This red baby snake is trying to uncoil itself so it can move upward through sushumna.

As it struggles to release itself and ascends, it makes an angry hissing sound.

The tail of the snake will remain fixed at the bottom of the shivalingam, but the head and body may move upward and come back down again.

Sometimes both the shivalingam and the snake may shift their position in the body, so you may even visualize them for a time at ajna or sahasrara.

The head of the snake is very wide, having the same breadth as your body, but it is not a cobra.

After some time you may feel your body contract. This will be followed by a sensation of bliss.

When this occurs go on to the next kriya.

No. 18: Swaroop darshan (the vision of your Self)

Remain sitting in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or padmasana and do not open your eyes.

Become aware of your physical body.

Your body is completely motionless, and you maintain total awareness of this fact.

Be sure that you are completely steady, like a rock.

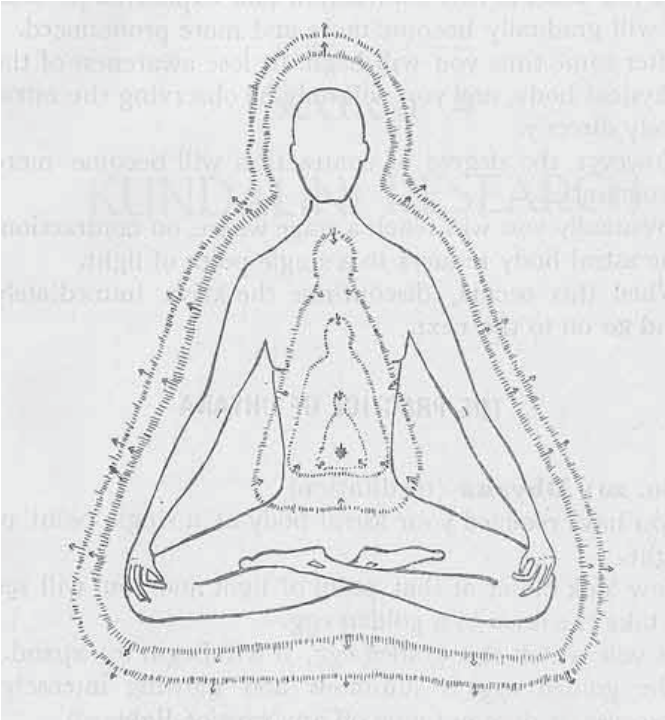
When you are absolutely sure of your bodily steadiness, you should also become aware of your natural breath. Watch the constant flow of your breath, but be sure your body remains steady.

Your body will start to become stiff.

As it becomes stiffer, your awareness will shift completely to your breathing; however, the body will continue to become stiffer and stiffer of its own accord.

When your body has become as rigid as a stone, and it is beyond your control to move it even if you tried, then go on to the next kriya.

No.19: Linga sanchalana (astral conduction)



Remain still in your stiffened asana with the eyes closed.

Due to the stiffness of your body, your breathing will have automatically become ujjayi breathing, and khechari mudra will have been formed.

Be totally aware of your breathing.

You will notice that with each inhalation your body seems to be expanding.

And with each exhalation your body appears to be contracting.

It is peculiar though, because your physical body is not moving; it is still and as stiff as a statue.

It is your astral body that you experience expanding and contracting.

As you observe this contraction and expansion process, it will gradually become more and more pronounced.

After some time you will begin to lose awareness of the physical body, and you will only be observing the astral body directly.

However, the degree of contraction will become more pronounced.

Eventually you will reach a stage where, on contraction, the astral body reduces to a single point of light.

When this occurs, discontinue the kriya immediately and go on to the next.

THE PRACTICE OF DHYANA

No. 20: Dhyana (meditation)

You have realized your astral body as a single point of light.
Now look closer at that point of light and you will see it take the form of a golden egg.
As you watch this golden egg, it will begin to expand.
The golden egg is luminous and glowing intensely; however, it does not give off any rays of light.
As the golden egg becomes larger, it will begin to take on the same shape as that of your astral and physical bodies.
This form, however, is not a material or even a subtle form.
This form is glowing light.

It is your causal self.

Section 4 - KUNDALINI RESEARCH

Chapter 1

Introduction

This section is a compilation of various pieces of research that have been collected and correlated at the IYFM Research Coordinating Center at Munger, Bihar, India. Over the last few years, under the guidance of our guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, we have seen time and again that the words and teachings of many of the yogis, saints and sages from all ages have been recently verified by modern science. It has been our function to fit together the bits and pieces of researches and to point out:

1. the overlap between what modern science and yogis have been saying,
2. how the various pieces fit together to give us an expanded concept of man,
3. what directions research can take in order to design and analyze research in the light of yogic psychophysiology.

One of the great traps in attempting to research yoga is to design experiments without a thorough knowledge of yoga itself. This is like looking at only a small part of the whole, just as the six blind "wise" men who each examined a different part of an elephant and pronounced their judgements based on these limitations, could never understand the whole elephant and how it looked. Yogic training requires many years and the skilled guidance of a master to discover its basic principles, its mode of application, and to prepare oneself for the experiences which arise from this training.

The totality of man

Perhaps the outstanding feature of yoga is its ability to give us a more total picture of who we are, to put the various elements into a simpler and at the same time more sophisticated and more expanded perspective. Yoga also teaches us that within us all there is a vital power, a basic essence, whose thread can be seen running through all of life, unmeasurable by even the most sophisticated machines, but palpable and motivating our living, breathing, thinking, body and mind. We can see its effects and measure the various forms and changes of this subtle energy as it enters and interacts with the physical domain, in the nerves, in the chemical and intracellular processes and in the flows and pressures of the body. However, the energy itself is still undefined scientifically.

Through yogic sadhana we can experience the subtle energy which underlies all matter, called prana or kundalini. This is a transformative experience which makes the subtle more tangible and real than the material and so-called solid, physical universe. It shifts our perspective, broadens our awareness and awakens our consciousness, our higher and greater self. It awakens us to the fact that within us is an immortal and eternal essence, full of knowledge, bliss and truth.

The very fact that such an experience exists alters our direction and purpose. We see that we are here not only for sensual and mundane satisfaction, but for a higher and greater destiny. This ultimate goal of yoga must always be remembered when we are researching yoga, for we know that yoga can give us relaxation, alter our brain waves and hormonal secretions, endow us with health, induce concentration and better memory, help us to develop better human interrelationships and to enjoy everything we do, to have fun and fulfill ourselves in a balanced healthy way. However, we must see that these things, though they are all worthy and good in themselves, are not the ultimate goal of yoga, but are side-effects of our pursuit of higher awareness and deeper knowledge of the truth of our existence. To pursue these things in themselves is another trap, a trick of the mind. For they do not exist by themselves but are the outcome of a complete process of living. The yogic process of total development of body, mind and spirit, ida, pingala and sushuma, is the most systematic way to attain these things and more.

Yoga is not a science of healing and does not need to look into the negative side of existence. The teachings tell us to practise and emphasize the good, positive and healthy in us and automatically we will be healthy and happy. There is nothing difficult to understand in this. If we emphasize exercise, moderation, good lifestyle, relaxation, meditation and self-discipline, then we are sure to achieve something worthwhile in life. Research into relaxation, meditation, asana and pranayama, continue to demonstrate that yoga exerts real changes in the body and mind, that it can only be a worthwhile addition to our lives if performed under guidance and done correctly. However, we must remember that it is much more than that, and that all our achievements are ultimately, and in the last analysis, useless if we do not transform the quality of our awareness.

Yoga tells us to awaken our minds, to develop the energy within ourselves so that we can attain a much greater, fuller and more total existence. Evidence is piling up to show that there is a psychic side to our lives, that the mental and intangible is far from imaginary, but is powered by an energy, a subtle force which can be tapped and developed and which can totally change and transform the more physical side of our lives. There is also evidence that awareness and consciousness can be independent from the body and this is coming from studies into physics and the nature of energy in our universe.

Purpose of this section

In this section we are more concerned with delineating the research into energy than into consciousness. We are concerned with the research into kundalini rather than with the awareness side of things. We must take it for granted that awareness exists. Research into the energy side of yoga shows us that there is a physically based energy in the body which also has a psychic dimension. This fits the yogic description of prana, whose ultimate and maximum form is that of kundalini.

Many times we have been amazed to hear the stories of yogis and saints and have been awed by reading the ancient and universal teachings of yoga, to realize that they are applicable even today. Often we have wondered how yogis developed this science in the first place. Obviously it has come from a profound and unusual experience, beyond the capacity of normal man to achieve or even understand without yoga practice.

Swamiji is one of those who has reached transcendental heights and come back to tell us about kundalini in scientific terms. Many times Swamiji has spoken about the kundalini phenomenon and has laid down the fundamentals of kundalini yoga in a succinct, precise, profound and yet easily understandable and systematic manner, as has been done in this book. In the past few years he has told us many things about the functions of the body, for example, that the right nostril connects to the left brain, and the left nostril to the right brain, which have been beyond our understanding at first and which have only recently, in 1983, been verified by researchers at the Salk Institute in America (see chapter entitled "Controlling the Nadis and the Brain"). Through his own internal experiences he has seen that most of us do not use our potential and that within the brain there are unused areas of potential energy, psychic awareness and total knowledge. It is actually possible to experience the brain from inside. The source is within us, however, we have not connected the various centers and circuits to the main switches and the main generator. The way to do this, Swamiji tells us, is through kundalini yoga.

Often Swamiji has referred to the works of researchers as a means of validating and expressing the kundalini experience in easily understandable scientific terms and to show that there are many people working on this most important aspect of life. Many of their researches are outlined here in simple terms. These researches represent pioneering efforts to delineate the broader function of man. No doubt, in the future, new machines and methods will have to be developed, for we are seeing only the bare beginnings of yogic research at this time. However, the efforts of these researchers will be remembered and will set the course for more sophisticated, scientifically acceptable research.

One thing is sure, science and yoga have been running parallel and in the same direction and are now beginning to converge towards a meeting point which promises to transform society. The concept of kundalini and the higher sciences is becoming more widely known and respected and more and more people are taking up its practice. This book and this section are an offering to help you to see kundalini in a more total and easily understood manner, to give researchers guidelines and perspective, and to help you achieve kundalini as a reality in your own life.

Chapter 2

Kundalini, Fact not Fiction

"As one opens the door with a key, so the yogi should open the gate to liberation with the kundalini. The great goddess sleeps, closing with her mouth, the opening through which one can ascend to the brahmarandhra... to that place where there is neither pain nor suffering. The kundalini sleeps above the kanda... she gives liberation to the yogi and bondage to the fool. He who knows kundalini, knows yoga. The kundalini, it is said, is coiled like a serpent. He who can induce her to move is liberated." Hatha Yoga Pradipika v. 105-111
With our present limited state of consciousness, bound by sense experiences which become dull and monotonous through endless repetition, and unable to break out of our tensions, problems and anxieties, modern man is facing both a material and spiritual crisis. This crisis is a two-edged sword, Kundalini both binds and liberates. On the one hand it is 'bad', for it creates anxiety and depression and has precipitated a plague of psychosomatic disease and suffering unparalleled in former times. On the other hand, it is 'good', a blessing in disguise which is forcing us to change and grow, to evolve ourselves at individual and social levels.

We are witnessing a tremendous upsurge of interest in yoga, meditation and spiritual values. There has been a revival of the yogic lifestyle and knowledge. Yoga and its related sciences are now recognized as valuable tools within the healing professions and have added tremendous depth and height, a new dimension to psychology and philosophy. Scientists have been inspired to probe deeper into the mysteries of yoga, to investigate the means by which it works and to make the teachings of the ancient rishis and yogis more readily understood and expressed in modern scientific terminology. We are seeing that science is not actually discovering anything new but is substantiating the ancient knowledge of the yogis.

Scientific investigation into yoga and the allied sciences has made this knowledge more accessible by incorporating it into a whole new set of therapeutic techniques and new methods to develop our potential, for example, biofeedback, autogenic training, mind control techniques, psychic healing, and a myriad of other similar processes. New branches of medicine have come into being, and the recognition of mind, begun by Freud in the early part of this century, has finally filtered down into common acceptance. Stress medicine and psychosomatic medicine are examples of our deeper understanding of this interaction of energy, mind and body, an understanding developed through our rediscovery of yoga.

In an effort to penetrate the mysteries of prana shakti, the physical side of psychic energy, and chitta, the mental side of psychic energy, a few respected and eminent pioneers, honoring the rigorous demands of the scientific method, have accumulated a solid core of evidence which explains in scientific terms the phenomenon of psychic energy and validates the teachings of yogis. Science has substantiated the yogic knowledge that a subtle energy exists which is body-based and has both physical and psychic properties. This energy, which powers our awareness and transforms and expands our conscious dimensions, is not just a myth or idea; it is not a metaphysical concept, but a fact. Kundalini is defined as the ultimate, most intense form of this energy, which lies dormant within each and every one of us.

Parapsychology

Phenomena such as telepathy, psychic healing, psychokinesis (the moving of matter by mind power), dowsing, telegnosis (psychic reading of history and association of objects), and other paranormal events, are receiving serious attention from the more pioneering members of the international science community as a means of understanding the relationship of energy and consciousness.

Hard-headed scientists in the USA, UK, Germany, Holland, Scandinavia and Australia, are taking the lead from the scientists of the Soviet Union, many of whom are financed by their governments. Called *bioelectronics* or *paraphysics* in some circles, this field of study is generally known as *parapsychology*.

In Czechoslovakia it is known as *psychotronics*, and one of the leading Czech researchers in this field is Dr. Zdenek Rejda, whose association with Swami Satyananda began in the early seventies when he stayed at the Bihar School of Yoga. Speaking in Japan at the fifth annual conference of the International Association for Religion and Parapsychology in 1976, Dr. Rejda defined psychotronics, and therefore, the whole field of parapsychology as, "the science which, in an interdisciplinary fashion, studies the distant interactions between living organisms and their environment, internal and external, and the energetic processes underlying these manifestations in order to supplement and widen man's understanding of the laws of nature."

Psychic energy

Psychic energy has been found to affect a whole range of laboratory equipment, from voltmeters to Geiger counters to magnetometers. Yet this does not mean that psychic energy is electrical, magnetic or radioactive. Rather, it seems to both encompass and go beyond these properties. Most researchers agree with the Soviets who state that psychic energy may have its origin in electrical activity, but the nature of the energy is entirely different. However, yogis state that prana is the substratum of our material universe, interpenetrating and organizing all matter and being the common ground for all energy. They see prana from a different and higher perspective.

It is also generally accepted by scientists that psychic energy, most widely known as *bioenergy*, is body-based and affects both the physical and mental spheres as indicated by yogis. It has also been measured as a force field surrounding the body up to a distance of twelve feet by Yale neuropsychiatrist, Dr. Leonard Ravitz. (1) This seems to support the yogic concept of the subtle pranic body which interpenetrates and is interdependent with the physical structure, motivating it to function.

There is considerable support for this hypothesis, gathered from the monitoring of the physiological changes experienced by psychics during laboratory tests of paranormal events. For instance, as part of his usual experimental procedure, Dr. Grenady Sergeyev of the A.A. Utkomskii Physiological Institute (a Leningrad military lab.), took readings of the brain waves, heartbeat and pulse rates of Neyia Mikhailova during her numerous demonstrations of psychokinesis. (2) He found that while Mikhailova was causing objects to move without touching them, his instruments recorded a tremendous vibration throughout her body and its surrounding force field which pulsed in the direction of her gaze. Her heart and brain waves also pulsed in unison with this energy vibration, indicating that the energy Mikhailova used in her psychic feats is intimately connected with her whole body. Reports go on to state that:

"After doing these tests, Mrs. Mikhailova was utterly exhausted. There was almost no pulse. She'd lost close to four pounds in half an hour. The EEG (brain wave pattern) showed intense emotional excitement. There was high blood sugar and the endocrine system was disturbed. The whole organism was weakened as if from a tremendous stress reaction. She had lost the sensation of taste, had pains in her arms and legs, couldn't coordinate and felt dizzy." (3) At one time, after making a seven hour film of her abilities, Mikhailova was temporarily blind. Other Soviet investigators have recorded changes in brain wave patterns which coincide with the reception of telepathic signals, and researchers in the USA have shown that the volume of blood in the body alters during telepathic interactions.

This evidence leaves no doubt that psychic energy, or bioenergy, is from the body and is the same energy that activates every aspect of our metabolism, from the functioning of the glands, to the brain and heart. It is the power behind the emotions and the operation of the senses. At the same time, prana, though based on and affecting the physical structure and function, has a wider range of properties and is associated with clairvoyance, clairaudience and other forms of extrasensory perception. It has a mental or psychic component and it is both gross and subtle.

Psychic energy can affect matter without any apparent physical intermediary or medium. There is some undetectable energy at work which we cannot measure though we can see its results. It can even be used in healing. Sister Dr. Justa Smith in America, has demonstrated that psychic energy affects enzymes. (4) She has found that trypsin, a digestive enzyme which is damaged and decreases activity when exposed to ultraviolet light, increases activity when exposed to a high intensity magnetic field. When a water damaged trypsin solution was held in the hands of a recognized psychic healer for 172 minutes, trypsin increased its activity.

R. Yaeger has shown that when a practitioner of kundalini yoga performed certain pranayama techniques and then sat next to an onion for 15 minutes with his hands in a fixed position, about two feet from the experimental plant, cell division, and therefore metabolic energy increased by 108%. (5) A control subject sitting in the same position, but without doing pranayama, had no effects on the plant.

We have a clear evidence from these experiments that there is a new kind of psychic physiological energy that fits the description of prana and kundalini as set forth in the yogic texts and verbal traditions.

Summary

Modern science has been able to ascertain that psychic energy is a real and physically-based phenomenon. Though it does not fall into the known categories of modern science, its effects can be experienced and recorded repeatedly. No one really doubts its existence. What it is and how it functions, its relationship to our body and mind and its potential use as an evolutionary tool require further research from scientists who will find guidelines in the perspectives and experiences of dedicated yogis.

This research will soon be under way at Bihar School of Yoga where we intend to investigate these phenomena in all their varied aspects. Through this, we will be better able to understand the relationship of mind and body and this will have tremendous repercussions on studies in to psychosomatic medicine, psychology and other important fields. As we ourselves learn to appreciate that great joy and good health that come from developing and being sensitive to psychic energy, a large and forgotten area of our being, we will extend our possibilities, develop our innate potential and speed up our spiritual evolution.

1. Ostrander, S. & Schroeder, L., *PSJ - Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*, Abacus, London, 1977, pp. 88-89.
2. Ibid, pp. 88-99.
3. Ibid, p. 398.
4. Ibid, p. 237.
5. Yaeger, R., "The Effect of Kundalini Yoga on Onion Root Cells Mitosis", Unpublished paper, California State College, 1979. Quoted in *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment*, White, J. (Ed.), Anchor-Doubleday, New York, 1979, p. 266-267.

Chapter 3

Defining the Nadis

Yoga and tantra lay down one of the most complete systems for a practical understanding of the human condition. Tantra supplies the philosophy, the theoretical approach. Yoga supplies the techniques by which we can validate this philosophy through our own personal experience and thus attain higher knowledge. Tantra is therefore a living philosophy and not just a system of endless intellectual speculation unable to deliver the truth and leaving more

questions unanswered than answered. It is also a very potent method by which we can realize ourselves in totality, and attain union, ultimate freedom and fulfillment.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of tantra to the modern world will be its ability not just to define the mind and put it into perspective, but to deliver techniques by which we can experience the mind itself and eventually transcend it through the awakening of kundalini. Modern medicine and psychology, for example, will greatly benefit from tantra's systematic and succinct approach to man's fundamental, basic components of body, mind and spirit - pingala, ida and sushumna. These flows of energy make up our total human personality and are derived from the ultimate polarity of our macro-cosmic universe into Shiva and Shakti, consciousness and energy.

In trying to understand the manifestations of these forces in our body, and for research purposes, in trying to prove the reality of the existence of the nadis, we have to understand that they are not physical, measurable, dissectable structures within our physical body, but are the basic energies which underlie and motivate life and consciousness.

It is important to understand exactly what nadis are before we either try to prove their existence or disprove it. When we achieve certain states of consciousness we can see that nadis are, as yogis described them, flows of energy which we can visualize at the psychic level as having distinct channels, light, color, sound and other characteristics. At the same time, however, these nadis underlie and can be seen mirrored in all bodily functions and processes. There is no separation between the nadis, the body and the mind; they are one and the same thing.

The duality of life

In many of the oriental philosophies, the entire universe is seen as a separation into two great, polarized forces, Shiva and Shakti, which are interdependent and opposite, but complementary. The universe hangs as a kind of web of interacting energies, suspended and functioning within the framework of tensions developed by the fundamental polarity. Carl Jung stated, "Natural processes are phenomena of energy constantly arising out of a 'less probable' state." (1) This apparent dualism is actually a unified, holistic process from another level of consciousness, but at our own level we see it from a fragmented, limited and partial perspective.

We see polarity everywhere we look, in nature, within ourselves and within our mind. Moving from macrocosmic to microcosmic to atomic, at every level, two great principles or forces can be seen at work motivating our universe; light and dark, positive and negative, male and female. All other forces are seen to be an outcome of these two main forces. It seems amazing to us that things can be so simple and yet so profound, however, to the enlightened mind, the universe and man is just so.

All of life, therefore, has two main aspects upon which all of our perception, activity and experience are based. Our mind and body are the outcome of two main forms or modes of energy interacting and creating endless manifestations in the universe of our body. For example, we have a right and left brain, a parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system, an anabolic and catabolic metabolism, a conscious and unconscious mind. We are poised between life and death and our whole existence is a struggle to retain balance between these two forces.

Ida and pingala

Yogis realized the existence of these forces and understood their relationship. They said that man has three main flows of energy, which they called the nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna, and which have been roughly translated as body, mind and spirit. The third flow is the result of the balanced interaction of the first two. They also said that man functions mainly in the first two areas of body and mind, pingala and ida, the third aspect being dormant until it is stimulated by yoga or some other discipline.

Ida and pingala are roughly translated as mind and body. Though this is true at one level, when we are discussing the polarization of the total individual, the body and mind are themselves each polarized. We have to understand, however, that the nadis are not structures but are functional relationships and are really different sides of the same coin. Yogis did not describe the nadis in terms of structures, though structure exists to handle them. They described them in terms of energy, *prana*, vital and life-giving for pingala, and *chitta*, conscious and knowing for ida. The attributes of the nadis are summarized below:

Pingala can be denned as the dynamic, active, masculine, positive, yang energy within our personality. It has a physical and mental side. Its material qualities are light, heat, solar, energy accumulating, creative, organizing, focused (centripetal) and contractive. The positive, dynamic mental side within Freud's system is Eros, the pleasure principle, and in Jung's system is the conscious personality, the rational, discriminating side. We can say that pingala is psychosomatic energy, outwardly directed, mind acting on body to motivate the organs of action, the karmendriyas. It is the basic energy of life.

Ida is the energy within the personality which is passive, receptive, feminine, negative, yin. At the physical level it is dark, cold, lunar, energy dissipating, disorganizing, entropic, expansive (centrifugal) and relaxing. At the mental plane Freud called it Thanatos, the death instinct, and Jung called it anima, the unconscious, female within, emotional, feeling, intuitive and non-discriminating, the background on which the differences can be seen and which unifies. This is the somopsychic aspect of man, where energy is inwardly directed, and body acts on the mind. Ida controls the sense organs or gyanendriyas and therefore gives us knowledge and awareness of the world we live in.

The third force

Another force exists in nature which is little understood or even appreciated, but which is of vital importance to man. It is a fact that when two opposing forces are equal and balanced a third force arises. Strike a match on a matchbox and you create fire, bring positive and negative currents together and you can work machinery, unite body and mind and a third force called sushumna, spiritual energy, arises. This is one of the aims of yoga, because only when sushumna awakens can the super power of kundalini, this maximum force, ascend safely to fuel, power and create cosmic consciousness. Sushumna is a high tension power line and ida and pingala carry the domestic lines to power the basic necessities.

Carl Jung outlined the tantric view when he described the driving force of self-realization, which he called "individuation", as a dialectical interaction between the opposites, beginning with conflict and culminating in synthesis and integration. When perfect balance is achieved, stabilized and perfected a state of dynamic peace is achieved, which is a paradox, a union of opposites, the synthesis of doing and not doing, a totally new way of perceiving and experiencing life.

Few of us realise this third, spiritualized state and most of us oscillate from one state to another. Every 90 to 180 minutes ida and pingala alternate their dominance and only for a few seconds or minutes does sushumna come into potential being. It is the goal of all yogic techniques to balance and

harmonize ida and pingala, life force and conscious awareness, so that they join at ajna chakra to create the inner light of knowledge and bliss and reveal the truth.

In order to balance the flows of energy, yoga prescribes various techniques, asana, pranayama, shatkarma and meditation, which activate either ida, pingala or sushumna. This does not mean we are activating one structure but are, via yoga, able to manipulate the energies underlying the three possible modes of existence.

The functional modes

Nadis are flows of energy which move through each and every part of our body, the subtle counterpart of the physical flows such as nervous energy and blood. All of the thousands of nadis in the body are based on ida and pingala which spiral around the spinal cord. These are the basic two modes of function on which all of our bodily and mental processes work. Sushumna is the royal road which takes us to higher awareness and transforms the function of ida and pingala.

Each and every cell of our body, every organ, the brain and mind, everything is polarized and interconnected at both the physical and subtle levels, and this allows us to think, speak and act in a concerted, balanced, synchronous manner, every part working to help every other part. There are two basic systems in the body that control this, ida and pingala, and if we stimulate any component of one system we turn on the whole system. This is how asana, pranayama, meditation, and the whole armamentum of yogic techniques work, and this is what is meant when we say that yoga affects the nadis.

Arthur Deikman of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado Medical Center, USA, describes the two main modes of man's being from the perspective of modern psychology. At the same time he describes the nadis ida and pingala using modern psycho-physiological jargon. He states, "Let us begin by considering the human being to be an organization of components having biological and psychological dimensions of organization: an 'action' mode and a 'receptive' mode.

"The action mode is a state organized to manipulate the environment. The striated muscle system and the sympathetic nervous system are the dominant physiological agencies. The EEG shows beta waves and baseline muscle tension is increased. The main psychological manifestations of this state are focal attention, object-based logic, heightened boundary perception, and the dominance of formal characteristics over the sensory; shapes and meanings have a preference over colors and textures. The action mode is a state of striving, oriented toward achieving personal goals that range from nutrition to defense to obtaining social rewards, plus a variety of symbolic and sensual pleasures, as well as the avoidance of a comparable variety of pain." (2)

Deikman describes ida, the receptive mode as organized around intake of environment rather than its manipulation. The sensory-perceptual system is dominant and parasympathetic function predominates. The EEG tends to alpha waves, muscle tension decreases, attention is diffuse, boundaries become hazy, and so on. It is a state of not doing.

The epitome of the active mode is the state of body and mind a taxi driver would be in while driving through peak hour traffic. The epitome of the receptive mode is the deep relaxation of yoga nidra, or the introverted state of formal meditation. The true meditative state, which few scientific researchers really appreciate but which is the main aim of yoga, is an example of the third mode, or sushumna functioning, in which active and passive are fully balanced. Someone in this state is simultaneously externally and internally focused. For example, we should be driving a taxi and at the same time be in a state of total relaxation or "not doing". Or we would be sitting absolutely still and be filled with the dynamic energy of shakti so that we are fully awake and active internally. This is a very difficult state to describe.

We know that our active mode is designed to ensure survival and the passive mode is designed to ensure rest and recuperation of energy in the endless struggle for life and existence. Telepathy and psychic phenomena in general fit into this picture and we can hypothesize that telepathy is also designed to ensure survival. For example, we know that under conditions of extreme stress and in emergencies, people have sent psychic calls for help to close friends or relations; the emergency somehow powering this previously latent faculty. Many "primitive" peoples also utilize these powers and take them for granted wondering why it is that "civilized" man makes such a fuss about them.

Yogis also tell us that when we practise yoga, purify our nadis and become stronger and more aware, siddhis, powers, must manifest as part of our spiritual development, though these are only side-effects and not the main aim of our practice of yoga. This, it seems, is because we develop a more synchronized functioning of all the components of our body and mind and awaken areas which have been dormant.

The need for balance

Though ida and pingala and their modes of activity are opposite, they are complementary and must be balanced for total health and peace of mind. More than this though, balance can open the door to the transcendental and to a new mode of functioning.

Most of us spend our lives in an unbalanced state. We tend to increasingly longer periods of the active mode as we grow out of our childhood and find it difficult to relax into the receptive state. This is probably a major factor in the spiralling incidence of psychosomatic disease today. Deikman's research emphasizes the fact that our imbalance is reflected in every activity as well as in our social, cultural and political organization. He stresses that the often devalued ida, receptive, feeling, intuitive mode is far from inferior or regressive and is in fact an essential component in our highest abilities.

Such research suggests that there is a very deep and urgent need for the reintroduction of concepts such as ida and pingala at the grassroots level of society and that the recent explosion of interest into yoga, meditation and esoteric philosophy is the result of deep-rooted pain and tension resulting from imbalance in the nadis. It points to the fact that our whole approach to ourselves, our science, society and culture will require complete review and revision from the more total yogic perspective.

It is time we realized that the subtle and intangible aspects of human existence are as important as the tangible, solid and easily measurable materialistic side. It is because of our reliance purely on technology, the solid facts, and the external, pingala side of our universe that we have not found happiness, real and lasting security or peace of mind, because these things lie within us and are of the mind - ida, and are subtle. Yoga offers the techniques to bring about balance in our lives, to not only realize the subtle, but, through a science of enhanced intelligence, intuition and creativity, to make the subtle side of life a practical reality and experience, a valid and important part of our lives as individuals and within society.

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2. Deikman, A.J., "Bimodal Consciousness", *Archives of Gen. Psychiat.*, 25 : 481-9, Dec. 1971.

Chapter 4

Controlling the Nadis and the Brain

The human brain is truly one of the most awesome and amazing of creations. Housed within the skull, it contains some 12 thousand million cells, and each of these cells has an estimated 5 hundred thousand possible interconnections; there may be even more that we do not know about. When the mathematics are computed there are more possible interconnections in the brain than there are atoms in the universe.

The brain has an almost infinite capacity, and all within the two kilograms or so of amorphous, pinkish grey brain matter with the consistency of jelly or cold oatmeal porridge. How this quivering, pulsating, jelly-like substance remembers, thinks, analyzes, feels, discriminates, intuitively decides, creates and directs all the countless functions of the body, integrating the whole so that we synchronize action, speech and thought, is something that each of us should contemplate daily.

Meditation on this miracle of creation, and any attempt to understand how the brain and mind function, can lead to an understanding of the total process of kundalini awakening. Indeed, many of our theories of how kundalini works are based on the brain, and this research can help us to better understand the basis for kundalini awakening, the nadis and chakras. This is because the brain, housing as it does the master control systems for the body within its unlimited circuitry, must contain the physical circuits for the nadis and chakras.

The brain is also the interface between the body and the mind. All sensory information travels to the brain via the gyanendriyas, the sense organs of knowledge, and is then fed into the mind, and all decisions in the mind are then translated into the body via the karmendriyas, the organs of action, in a continuous, synchronous, dynamic process. Thus within the workings of the brain we can see the workings of the nadis as described by yogis, and research is deepening our understanding of this. Yogic techniques utilize this knowledge to stimulate the body so as to achieve higher and better states of being.

The nadis in the brain

Important research from neuroscience has shown us that the brain fits into the dual nadi model of man's personality as handed down to us by yoga. In a radical and last ditch attempt to cure severe, unremitting epilepsy, Roger Sperry and his associates divided the brains of their patients down the midline structure linking the two brain hemispheres, the *corpus callosum*. To their surprise, not only did the epileptics cease seizures, but they came up with startling new findings which are radically altering our neurophysiological understanding of how the brain works and are revolutionizing our whole concept of man.

We have always known that the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, and vice versa. Sperry's findings, though still in the initial stages and requiring more research, show us that each side of the brain handles a completely opposite but complementary mode of consciousness. This finding is extremely important as it verifies the yogic viewpoint.

Yogis and scientists, using different terminology and different approaches, have come up with the same conclusions, that man is divided into two main modes of functioning. The circuits of the brain are based on ida and pingala, consciousness or knowledge, and action or physical energy. We see ida and pingala at all three major levels of the nervous system :

1. *Sensory-motor nervous system (SMS)* : all electrical activity in the body moves in one of two directions, into the brain (afferent), ida, and out of the brain (efferent), pingala. Yogis called the sensory nerves which are governed by ida, gyanendriyas, and motor nerves, governed by pingala, karmendriyas. These nerves are concerned with perception of and activity in the world.

2. *Autonomic nervous system (ANS)* : the autonomic nervous system is divided into the outward directed, stress handling, energy utilizing, pingala dominant, sympathetic nervous system, or the inwardly directed, rest handling, energy conserving, ida dominant, parasympathetic nervous system. These two systems control and regulate all the automatic body processes: heart, blood pressure, respiration, digestion, liver and kidney and so on.

3. *Central nervous system (CNS)* : this consists of the brain and spinal cord and contains the controls for the SMS and ANS. The brain contains much more than this though, for it is a huge, ultimately complex computer, which stores and integrates information and puts our decisions into action in a superbly synchronized and orchestrated performance. Its functioning is definitely much more than its parts. Within the infinite circuitry of the brain resides more potential than we can realize in one lifetime, however, the techniques of yoga systematically clear and strengthen these circuits with regular practice.

This is what yogis have been telling us, that the circuitry for nadis and chakras exist within the CNS, along the spine and in the brain. If we can tap, purify, strengthen and reconnect these circuits via the various yogic techniques, we can totally transform our mind/ body complex. The basis for yogic techniques lies in the fact that there is a nadi/chakra system which can be seen, at the physical level, as being the sum total of the input and output of the various sections of the nervous system and the parts of the body which connect to it. This total body/mind complex functions on the power of the three basic types of energy- ida, pingala and sushumna. We can therefore begin to understand why so many yogic techniques are specifically aimed at balancing the ida/pingala flow and increasing our awareness of its fluctuations.

Left versus right

Scientific study of the hemispheres of the brain by Sperry, Myers, Gazzaniga, Bogen and later researchers, has shown us that the left side of the brain is usually concerned with speech, logic, analysis, time and linear function, whereas the right side is silent, dark, intuitive, feeling, spatial, holistic in function, and does not require linear, structured analysis for its knowledge, though how it does know is a mystery. The right side of the brain is the physical side of ida nadi, and the left brain, of pingala. Thomas Hoover, a researcher comparing Zen with the latest neurological discoveries, sums up the situation when he states, "The hemisphere that speaks does not know; the hemisphere that knows does not speak."

A number of word opposites have been used to describe and help us understand the new view of brain function. Though the situation is not so simple, and each hemisphere must work in an integrated fashion, there is a definite trend to separate modes of function :

Left	Brain	(Pingala)	Right	Brain	(Ida)
analysis					understanding
verbal					spatial
temporal		"here	and		now"
partial					holistic
explicit					implicit

argument
intellect
logic
thinking
active

passive

experience
intuition
emotion
feeling

And we could also add light versus dark, conscious versus subconscious, talkative versus silent, solar versus lunar, positive versus negative, mathematics versus poetry, rational versus mystical, law versus art, objective versus subjective, digital versus analog, and many other adjectives to aid our understanding.

Emotions in the split brain

Research by Marcel Kinsbourne, neurobiologist and neuropsychologist, director of the Department of Behavioral Neurology at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center for Mental Retardation in Waltham, Massachusetts, throws light on brain functioning which points to the fact that the brain has two main modes of emotional activity. (1) He has found that the two halves of the brain support different emotional states.

Research indicates that the left hemisphere governs happiness and positive feelings and the right brain governs sadness and negative feelings. In the abnormal situation, patients with right brain damage are often cheerful, elated and indifferent to their abnormal state. Left brain damage, on the other hand, can lead to a gloomy outlook on life and unjustified anger, guilt and despair. Most of us fluctuate from one state to another even in the normal situation, though not to the extremes found in brain damaged subjects. Still the experience of fluctuation can be distressing if we are not balanced and healthy.

The fact that the left brain is associated with bright, cheerful thoughts and the right with sad and depressing thoughts, Kinsbourne theorizes, points to the conclusion that this dual action of the brain is designed to handle our likes (pingala) and dislikes (ida). The things we like are handled by the left brain, which focuses on and then approaches the object or situation. This fits in with our active mode, the concept of the externally directed pingala nadi. The things we dislike we try to avoid or withdraw from and we tend to be much more concerned with the overall picture in this situation. This is handled by the right brain and fits in with our receptive mode, introversion and ida nadi concept.

The necessity of the right brain

The brain has two major modes or systems which must work together and be harmonized if we are not to lose the essentials of our human existence. The nadis must be balanced for optimal functioning, for sushumna to function, and for us to maximize our human elements and potential. Unfortunately, few of us are really balanced and most of us, especially men, tend towards the purely external, materialistic and technological pingala side rather than the subtle, intuitive, feeling ida side. When imbalance between the nadis is minor we may not even notice its effect, though it must manifest in our personality, behavior, relationships and so forth, in ways that are baffling to us, and which can make our lives miserable. What happens in the normal situation can be better understood when we look at an extreme example.

Howard Gardener and his colleagues studied people with severely damaged right brains (ida) and found that they become robot-like, minus their essential human understanding. (2) He has found that only when both hemispheres of the brain are working together can we appreciate the moral of a story, the measuring of a metaphor, words describing emotion, or the punch line of a joke.

Without the right brain we lose our understanding and take things very literally. For example, someone might say that he has a broken heart and the right brain damaged person will ask, "How did it break?" They see the explicit, the facts, but cannot understand what has been implied. These people also tell jokes at the wrong moment, their sentences become meaningless and they confabulate - make up things. The important points in their sentences are lost and are submerged or flattened, becoming part of the background. There is just a stream of words without meaning or purpose. They also accept the bizarre and argue with what should normally be accepted. It is obvious then that the right brain, which yogis called ida or the receptive mind, is vital in the appreciation of relationships, of seeing how the parts fit together as a whole, in understanding.

There is also evidence to show that the right brain is not only important for normal understanding, but also holds the key for intuition and higher experience. Eugene D'Aquili, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, feels that split brain research indicates that the circuits which underlie higher mental states, from flashes of inspiration to altered states of consciousness, lie within the right brain, ida, and are powered by the emotions. (3) D'Aquili has formulated a neurological description of "the intuitive perception of God" in which one sees reality as a unified whole, experiencing a feeling of oneness with the world. He feels it is a product of the parietal-occipital lobe on the right, "non-dominant" side of the brain which somehow takes over the brain's functioning. Time is experienced as standing still and a sense of absolute and complete unity of self with the cosmos is felt. Both are features of right brain function and this experience is long lasting and totally transforms people's lives so that they find new motivation and a healthier, more fulfilling perspective of their relationship with life.

This research indicates that unless we begin to take more notice of and develop the right brain, we cannot partake in the experience of higher consciousness. According to yogis, the right and left brain, ida and pingala, must be balanced for such experience to take place.

The necessity for balance

Most of us fluctuate according to our inner biological rhythms, moving from left to right brain, right to left nostril, active to receptive mode, every 90 to 180 minutes. These biological rhythms are well documented though their actual role and significance is not well understood and understanding of how things fit together is still in its infancy.

From the yogic point of view this rhythmic, or in the case of disease, arrhythmic swing, indicates that we are unbalanced and that one mode, one side of our nature is constantly becoming predominant. We rarely experience the more desirable state in which both sides become equal and balanced. According to yoga, when both the sad and happy hemispheres are balanced for a certain length of time, a new state arises which unites logic and intuition, transforms our emotions and enables us to power a greater range of neurological activity.

We have to understand the necessity for attaining equilibrium and that the resultant state is a better and more pleasant and puissant experience. Einstein is an example of a natural yogi who used both sides of his brain. Meditating on what it would be like to ride on a ray of light, he had a sudden and powerful flash of intuition, piercing insight into the mysteries of the universe, indicating right brain function, and was able to harness his left brain to

construct a theory of energy and matter conversion which totally revolutionized science and replaced the several hundred year old paradigm of Newton. Einstein stated, "The real thing is intuition. A thought comes and I may try to express it in words afterwards." Yogis would say that Einstein had not only experienced the awakening of Shakti in his nadis, but that this initial awakening had also led to activation of a chakra. This powerful experience transformed and enriched not only his life, but many other lives as well.

Perhaps the best known example of non-analytical creative genius is that of Leonardo da Vinci who in 1490 invented a spring-driven car, a helicopter, as well as many other things which came into common usage centuries after his time. His achievements extend into many more fields, and apparently he used his right brain intuition to create an idea, because most of his work is in the form of drawings and visual images rather than in written words.

Of course, there are times when we only require the left brain, for example, while doing a mathematical equation, working on a factory production line, or implementing management policy. However, these things quickly become boring if the right brain is not being used, and such monotonous, repetitious activity can lead to atrophy of our right brain capacities, and even to disease situations, because such a lifestyle lacks creativity and is meaningless for us. It is minus the right brain's capacity to see meaning in the things we do.

There comes a time when we must bring intuition into our lives, though this does not mean that because we use intuition we will become another Einstein. Intuition is as commonplace and necessary as eating and breathing. If our lives are to be happy and creative we must bring it into action more. Most situations, in fact, demand it for their proper outcome even though we do not realize it. Even simple situations require intuition, for example, knowing when to shift gears in a car, knowing when a cake in the oven is baked, knowing when it is the right time to say something nice to a friend, or how much strength is required to turn a screw. We have to feel what is required using our right brain. There is no book and no one who can give us this information. There can be no linear-structured analysis of what must be a non-verbal, intuitive knowledge that springs from within, the intuitive flash has no time dimension and defies logic. Within less than a second a total picture can be presented to our mind, the key to unlocking the mysteries of sciences is gained and the seeds for hours and years of inspired work and research may be planted.

For many people intuition is an unknown and unknowable commodity. Years of unhealthy living, lack of direction, purpose and meaning, consistent overstimulation of our sensory nerves, leading to dulling of our senses and an inability to find contentment and satisfaction, plus unresolved, ongoing mental tension and anxiety (unhealthy ida), added to lack of exercise, sedentary lifestyle and overeating (unhealthy pingala), all contribute to damaging the intuitive apparatus in the right side of the brain and may even damage the logical, reasoning capacity of the left side. We may find it very difficult if not impossible to repair and reinstate function by the normal methods of medicine and psychotherapy. Though yoga possesses the techniques by which we can rebalance, reintegrate, regenerate and rejuvenate our body/mind complex by bringing about balance in the nadis, even then it may be too late for some people.

The balanced view

Most of us fluctuate from one side of our brain to the other in well documented 90 minute cycles of rest (ida) and activity (pingala). A study by Raymond Klein and Roseanne Armitage of the Department of Psychology at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia found that performance of tasks involving left and right brain activity comes in 90 to 100 minute cycles. (4) For 90 minutes, subjects could do well on right brain tasks and then switch over to doing well in left brain related tasks. This also corresponds with the 90 minute fluctuation in nostril dominance and points to agreement with the yogic theory that there is an intimate relationship between the breath and the brain and their cyclical activity.

If we are unhealthy then our brain cycles may become abnormal in rhythm, duration, quality of function, or in some other way. Our whole life is disturbed and this situation actually occurs much more than any of us, even medical science, has previously realized. Yogis diagnosed dysfunction of brain rhythm by examining the flow of air in the nostrils.

Yogis have repeatedly asserted that there is a strong link between not just the nostrils and the brain but between the eyes and ears and all body organs. Of course, today we know from our anatomy and physiology that this is so, however, yogis were saying the same thing thousands of years ago. In meditative experience they could feel the flows of energy in the nerves moving into and out of the brain and the rest of the body. They were able to perceive even more subtle levels of their being because they invented techniques which developed a great deal of sensitivity and strength. These techniques also allowed them to assert control over the nadis, the brain and all body processes.

Shambhavi mudra and trataka are two of the most powerful techniques of kundalini yoga, designed to awaken ajna chakra by balancing ida and pingala. If this is so, and if the nadis described by yogis are in the brain, then it means that yogic techniques can balance the brain hemispheres. Research from split brains is revealing that this is so. We know that in normal people, pictures appearing on the left side of our viewing field and sound in the left ear, both transmitted to the right brain, are less agreeable than when they are presented to the other side, according to Kinsbourne. Other research shows us that when we are gloomy we tend to gaze to the left, affecting the right hemisphere, whereas happiness causes the opposite to occur. (5)

This research indicates a definite relationship between eye position and hemispheric dominance. It also indicates that shambhavi mudra and trataka balance brain hemisphere activity because the eyes are held steady at the center of the forehead, crossed in shambhavi and straight ahead in trataka. Even when we practise these techniques we may feel a very powerful stimulation and pressure within the center of the head, ajna chakra activation, and the subjective experience is that of simultaneous extroversion and introversion. Shambhavi is the more powerful technique and induces an almost immediate effect. Centralized focusing of awareness appears to affect both nadis simultaneously.

Balanced breathing

Even more conclusive evidence of yoga's ability to control the nadis in the brain has emerged in relation to our ability to control the brain via the nostrils. David Shannahoff-Khalsa of the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences in the USA has shown that even a simple breathing exercise can enable us to alter short term brain hemisphere dominance at will. (6) Whereas the previous research has been implied and theoretical, this study shows a definite relationship between brain activity, the nasal cycle and our capacity to control our personality.

Shannahoff-Khalsa found that when one nostril has dominant air flow the opposite hemisphere of the brain is dominant. Forceful breathing through the more congested nostril awakens the less dominant hemisphere. This is an extremely important finding. The EEG responses consistently showed a relationship between nasal airflow and brain hemisphere dominance for all four types of brain waves, beta, alpha, theta and delta.

Shannahoff-Khalsa states that, "The nose is an instrument for altering cortical activity." (7) He suspects that the nasal cycle is also linked to the basic rest/activity cycle, which includes within the sleep cycle, the rapid eye movement (REM) phase and the non-REM phase, because right nostril/left hemisphere dominance corresponds to phases of increased activity (pingala), and left nostril/right hemisphere dominance corresponds to rest phases

(ida). This research verifies what yogis have been telling us and will require more experimentation to repeat the findings and reveal the ramifications in terms of medicine, psychology and our lives in general. It also reveals that buried within the brain are undreamed of capabilities and potentials which can transform our lives if we can tap them.

While scientists search for wonder drugs, external stimuli to probe the deeper aspects of man, yoga provides a concise and precise theoretical framework, within the nadi/chakra system, for a deeper understanding of the total human range of existence and the techniques by which to manipulate our internal environment, to stimulate internal secretions and to maintain balance, optimal health and higher awareness.

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Chapter 5

Evidence for the Existence of Nadis

Of major importance for scientific acceptance of the existence of the whole science of kundalini yoga, is the proof for the existence of the psychic network of energy flows called nadis. The whole process of kundalini yoga rests on the premise that within the human body there exists a system of nadis, flows of energy, which conduct energy, both physical and mental.

There are three main nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna and there are said to be thousands and thousands of nadis spread throughout the whole body. Though these nadis are body-based they are not physical structures but rather appear to be functional. They are dynamic, alive, moving, powering the body and mind, intimately linked with nerves, blood vessels and all our body organs. While there is no known physical structural support system for them, yogis maintain that they definitely do exist and have even mapped their pathways in the body and their effects on the mind.

Correspondence of yoga and acupuncture

One man who has been working consistently to prove the existence of nadis and acupuncture meridians, as well as the chakras, is Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama, President of the International Association for Religion and Parapsychology. (1-9) A graduate from the Tokyo University of Education with Ph.D. degrees in philosophy and clinical psychology, he was recognized by UNESCO in 1974 as one of the world's ten foremost parapsychologists. He has even invented his own equipment in order to elucidate the science of yoga and to make this knowledge scientifically clear and acceptable. He states:

"By studying a number of books about the nadis and chakras of yoga over the last two years, I have been able to establish that asana, mudra, pranayama and dharana were ingeniously evolved on the basis of knowledge of the nadi system."

Motoyama states that acupuncture and the yogic concept of nadis have the same foundations and have affected each other for over 2000 years. That is, we are dealing with systems that have been in operation for millennia. This in itself is reason to believe that there must be something firm and solid at their foundations for people to have accepted and followed their theories for so long. Systems which do not give results are usually quickly discarded.

As an example of the correspondence of acupuncture and yoga, Motoyama points out that the concept of the *triple heater meridian* in acupuncture and the five pranas of the body in yogic physiology are almost identical. In acupuncture the lower heater, the area below the navel, corresponds to apana, the middle heater corresponds to samana between the diaphragm and navel and the upper heater corresponds to the prana between the throat and the diaphragm.

Yoga also states that the chakras act as transducers, converting psychic energy into physical energy and vice versa. They distribute this energy to the body via nadis. Several acupuncture meridians lie in the areas attributed to the chakras and nadis, for example, the *governor vessel* in the spine corresponds with sushumna nadi and the *conception vessel* running along the front midline of the body is used in kundalini kriyas. Several meridians start or finish in chakra locations.

Proof of nadis

One of the machines Motoyama has developed in order to prove the existence of nadis and meridians is the AMI, or 'Apparatus for Measuring the Functional Conditions of Meridians and their Corresponding Internal Organs'. This is an instrument designed to measure electrical currents in the body. It measures the steady state current that exists all the time, as well as the current in the body in response to an electrical shock from DC voltage. He uses it to measure the charge at special acupuncture points alongside the base of the fingernails and toenails. These are called *sei* (spring, well) points and are said to be the terminals for meridians, where psychic energy either enters or exits from the body.

In an experiment designed to substantiate the existence of acupuncture meridians and nadis, Motoyama placed electrodes on seven acupuncture points lying along the left *triple heater meridian* which runs along the back of the left arm and the front of the body, as well as a random electrode on the right palm, a point far from the area to be electrically stimulated- He then gave the subject a painful 20 volt shock to the "sei" or beginning point of the *triple heater meridian*, at the tip of the fourth fingernail. A few milliseconds later he recorded an overall and equal physical reaction in all electrodes caused by excitation of the sympathetic nervous system in response to pain.

To prove that nadis do exist he then gave a very mild, painless and sensationless shock to the same point and two to three seconds later recorded an electrical response only in those specific points said, since ancient times, to be connected to the *triple heater meridian*. No response was recorded on the palm electrode or in any other part of the body. It is an interesting fact that the greatest response was found in the electrode at the other end of the meridian, just below the navel. No physiological or neurological connection is known to explain this phenomenon, however, the yogic and acupuncture explanations are validated by this experiment.

It is very important to realize that the effect of stimulating the meridian electrically is not a neurological process because the movement of energy in the nadi and meridian is much slower than we find in nerves. The energy we are dealing with is something else, some other form that we have as yet not understood. This fact is substantiated by Dr. Nagahama at the Chiba University Medical School in Japan who showed that the time it took for

the sensation to pass along the meridian was hundreds of times slower (15 to 48 centimeters per second) than nerve conduction (5 to 80 meters per second). Therefore we have to postulate the existence of some other channel of transmission and nadis fit this description exactly.

In another experiment, Motoyama coated the arm of a subject with a special paint consisting of liquid crystals which react to changes in temperature by changing color. When the "sei" point of an acupuncture meridian was stimulated by heat for from two to five minutes, the liquid crystals in certain subjects changed color in a band along the meridian being stimulated. This not only further supports the above research but also substantiates another claim of yoga, that one of the characteristics of prana is that it generates heat in the body.

Motoyama has been able to visually demonstrate and measure subtle changes in the body that point to the fact that there is a flow of some kind of energy in the body which does not fit in with our present day knowledge of body mechanisms, such as in neurophysiology, yet which has a physical counterpart which can be recorded in laboratories. The exact nature of this flow of energy, the connections between the subtle and gross physical structures, the method by which prana acts on the body, these things await further clarification. What we do know is that we are dealing with a new phenomenon, and a very important one which has tremendous relevance to our present day needs in terms of understanding the body and mind and the relationship between energy and consciousness.

The nadis and disease

Motoyama's experiments have also shown that the energy he is measuring is not just a peripheral phenomenon, some byproduct of electrical and chemical processes, but of primary importance to our health. He has developed a system by which we can use our measurements of the electrical state of the nadi system to know about our body's state of health and even of each individual organ.

The AMI is supersensitive, able to record minute changes in activity. It measures three different states of the nadi system. The first is the baseline reading or steady state value, that which exists in our body all the time. This tells us about our general long term constitution. Secondly, it measures the body's reaction to a very mild and sensationless electrical stimulation, which tells us how we react to events. And thirdly, it records the aftereffects of the stimulus, which gives information on the temporary functions of the body and basic tissue resistance.

Thousands of such readings have been recorded and it has been found that most of us fit into a "normal" range of values. If the value recorded is more than normal, the meridian is overactive relative to most people, while a low value indicates an underactive nadi. For example, one man whom Motoyama studied at Stanford University in America had lung cancer. Instead of the normal value of 1000, this man had a value of only 150, showing great depletion of energy in that area, and indeed, he was very sick. A number of hospitals in Japan are using Motoyama's AMI machine to screen patients and the Kanagawa Rehabilitation Center in Japan is comparing the results of X-rays and biochemistry with it. So far the results have been very favorable.

Motoyama has also worked out that by measuring values of electrical skin resistance at acupuncture points in response to a small electric stimulus on both sides of the body, and then comparing the values from the left and right sides, any imbalance in the readings indicates that disease is present in the organ linked to the meridian being measured. He found that any percentage difference greater than 1-21 indicated disease. For example, when the heart meridian value on the left was more than 1.21 times greater than the right, the EGG might show an abnormal rhythm. One patient who was found to have imbalance in the liver, gall bladder and stomach meridians, but who only had symptoms of stomach upset was found on X-ray to have gallstones. One of Motoyama's laboratory assistants showed a large difference between the left and right bladder and kidney values shortly before being diagnosed as having cystitis.

It is interesting to note that yogis are also found to have abnormally high readings, but without disease, and Motoyama states that this indicates a greater range of activity of the nervous system as a result of yogic techniques.

These findings are very important because they indicate that pranic energy, or *ki*, which yogis have experienced as flowing in the nadis, is real. Yogis state that an imbalance in the nadis, especially ida and pingala, will cause disease and that yogic techniques can rectify this situation by action on the nadis. Motoyama's work substantiates this. It points to the fact that not only is prana real, physical and measurable, but that its balanced activity is vital to our health and that we can use our measurements of pranic activity in the various organs of the body to diagnose impending or existing disease and thereby either prevent or treat the condition before it becomes too far advanced.

Such research is paving the way for new diagnostic techniques in medicine. We are beginning to absorb the subtler aspects of our existence into our modern scientific understanding of the body and are utilizing this knowledge in our armamentarium against disease to better our lives and to uplift society.

Imbalance in the nadis

Motoyama's research supports the claim by yogis that within our body are flows of energy with physical and psychic properties. Yogis also tell us that the nadis are intrinsically related to the flows of breath in the nostrils. The breath in the right nostril is related to pingala function (left brain), and in the left nostril is related to ida function (right brain). This fact is the basis for swara yoga, the science by which we can know about the state of our body and mind in relation to the outer environment by watching the flow of breath in the nostrils.

The fact that the nadis are related to the nostrils is the basis for the science of pranayama, one of the most important and basic ingredients in kundalini yoga. For it is by manipulating the flows of breath that we can learn to control the deeper and more subtle aspects of our body and mind, to release energy and to send it to areas of the body that we wish to energize, heal and awaken. This relationship between the flow of breath and the nostrils has been demonstrated by research from Rumania.

Dr. I.N. Rige, an ear, nose and throat specialist from Bucharest, Rumania, studied nearly 400 patients suffering from one-sided nasal obstructions due to distortion and deviation of the nasal septum. (10) He found that 89 percent of cases breathed more through the left nostril and were more prone to certain types of respiratory diseases such as chronic sinusitis, middle and inner ear infections, partial or total loss of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, recurrent pharyngitis, laryngitis and tonsillitis, and chronic bronchitis.

He also found these left nostril (ida) breathers were more likely to suffer from one or more of a wide variety of more distant disorders, such as amnesia, intellectual weakening, headaches, hyperthyroidism, heart failure, poor liver function, gastritis, colitis, peptic ulcer, constipation and reproductive problems, such as decreased libido and ovarian irregularities.

Patients whose breath flowed predominantly through the right nostril were predisposed to hypertension. Riga found that correction of nasal deformities helped to relieve the disease situation.

Riga's research supports the yogic theory of nadis and indicates that the nostrils and the flow of breath in them are much more important than we previously realized, having many neurological and psychic connections whose function we have not yet appreciated. It supports Motoyama's work which

shows that imbalance in the nadis is related to disease states and points to the fact that the nostrils are, as yogis have said, windows into the state of our body and mind, a fact which medical science can utilize in diagnosing many disease situations.

More than this though, the nostrils and the science of pranayama allow us to influence the body and mind by influencing the nervous system and psychic energy at the more subtle levels of our being. The nostrils are switches which can do more than merely alleviate disease. By controlling the speed, rate, rhythm, length and duration of the breath, by altering the ratio of inhalation to exhalation in the nostrils and by stopping the breath, we can activate or tone down neurological and mental processes so as to achieve heightened awareness and altered states of consciousness.

Yoga is a science of self-regulation which is a priceless gem in today's disease and worry-ridden world. It bestows knowledge about internal flows of energy and thereby mastery over the inner processes of our being and autonomy, independence and confidence in our ability to deal with the constant demands and pressures of modern living. In the long run, regular, sincere practice and proper guidance by a competent master balances the nadis and eventually awakens kundalini.

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Chapter 6

Neurophysiology of the Chakras

The chakras can be interpreted from many points of view, for example, the physical, psychological, behavioral, psychic, symbolic, mythical, religious, scientific, evolutionary, spiritual and more. They have both a microcosmic aspect within the human framework and, at the same time, a macrocosmic aspect which totally encompasses our perception and experience of life. At whatever level we examine them, they represent a hierarchical, interlocking and interdependent series of mandalas which, when superimposed on one another, make up a total picture of the human personality.

Each of us stands at a certain point along the line of evolution that ascends the chakras and this will determine how we see the world. Someone who lives at swadhisthana sees the world in terms of gratification of his desires, for example, at manipura in terms of gratification of power instincts, at anahata in terms of compassion and love for all humanity. The degree of evolution of the chakras depends to a great extent on the activity within our nervous system and our state of consciousness. Someone at a lower level cannot understand someone at a higher level whereas the person at a higher level has been at the lower level before, has a wider range of experience, and more importantly, he has more circuits awakened or activated for handling life's experiences, for perceiving at different levels, and for interpreting and acting on the demands of life.

Even within the same chakra there are different levels of evolution, balance and activity, so that someone living at manipura might be more aware than someone else at manipura, their center being more balanced and awakened, so that, for example, they use their power drives constructively to help people rather than destructively and for their own personal ego gratification. An adult generally has a more evolved manipura chakra than a child, protecting the child from danger while the child pulls the wings off butterflies or gaily stamps on ants and insects. Of course, this is relative and varies from individual to individual.

Each level in the chakra system is the sum total of various physical, emotional, mental, psychic and spiritual elements. Each chakra has its own neurological plexus and endocrine gland and these link up to various organs and systems in the body. They in turn are connected to the controlling mechanisms of the brain, each of which has emotional, mental and psychic components. The chakra is like a transducer, a linking point between the various levels of our being and it converts and channels energy either up or down to the various levels.

In trying to understand the chakras, therefore, we can think of each level in the spinal cord as controlling a different segment of the body, and at the same time, representing a level of functioning in the nervous system and mind. Ajna chakra, for example, is a much more complex center than mooladhara, or any chakra for that matter, controlling as it does the intuitive and higher mental faculties related to the most evolved circuits in the cerebral cortex. Ajna chakra has as its symbol the two-petaled lotus, and we can think of this as representing the two hemispheres of the brain with the pineal gland as its main focusing central point. Mooladhara, on the other hand, controls very deep, powerful, primitive, animalistic, unconscious urges and instincts which are related to very simple and primitive neurological circuits at the bottom of the brain common to all animals, reptiles and even birds.

The chakras within the brain

Recent discoveries in neuroscience, precipitated by fantastic advances in technology, measuring capacity, surgical technique and pure pioneering perspicacity, promise to revolutionize our concept of man and propel us into new and better techniques in medicine, psychology and living in general. Like Einstein's discovery of relativity, the ramifications of these discoveries take time to percolate down into common usage.

The brain is one of the hardest of all areas to research because of the inaccessibility and delicacy of the area to be studied. There is also an inherent and almost insoluble problem in studying the brain. Man is using his brain to study and understand his own brain. This is like trying to understand the mind with the mind, or grasp the hand with the same hand, or see the eye with the same eye. We cannot know ourselves objectively as we can an external object or person, for we are the knowledge itself. Besides this, few people are keen to let doctors open their skulls and look inside.

Neurosurgeons and yogis share common ground because both aim to know the truth and reality of themselves. It is the approach which differs. While scientific researchers have approached the brain objectively and have attacked and dissected it with knives, probed it with electrodes, photographed and X-rayed it, stimulated and drugged it in order to mechanically and externally manipulate its circuits into giving up their secrets, yogis decided to scientifically discover the secrets of the brain by experiencing it directly through meditation. Their findings agree with those of modern science.

Yogis discovered through meditation that within their bodies were circuits and centers with both physical and psychic components that they called nadis and chakras. Though we take this for granted now, we must remember that these studies were made thousands of years ago without the aid of modern microscopes. Not only did yogis achieve a wonderfully complete and practical system of techniques, but way back then they also based their techniques on solid scientific research, the discovery that there are six major primary centers in the body, the chakras, in a hierarchical, interconnected network within the spinal cord. They also saw that each chakra had its own definite physical, psychological and behavioral characteristics, connected to the brain by a network of energy flows, all of which did not necessarily correspond to purely physical structures. They also discovered many secondary centers which were subsidiary to the primary ones.

The chakras in the spinal cord were found to be points manipulated by focusing attention, mental and psychic energy, breath and body postures, so as to derive certain physical and psychic experiences. The techniques allow us to learn to control the most basic and vital instincts and needs of body, emotions, mind, psyche and spirit. Recent discoveries from neurophysiology and anatomy show that vital nerve plexes and endocrine organs exist within the body, spine and brain and correspond to the levels described by yogis. These findings support the claims of yogis that their system is more than just mere exercises and relaxation. It is a method supplying the tools to control our body, mind, metabolism and personality.

The triune brain

Dr. Paul MacLean, neurophysiologist and head of the Laboratory of Brain Evolution and Behavior at the National Institute of Mental Health, USA, has demonstrated that the brain of man is functionally divided into three main areas, three interconnected biological computers, each with its own special intelligence, subjectivity, sense of time and space, memory, motor and other functions. (1) Each brain corresponds to a separate evolutionary step and is distinguished neuroanatomically and functionally, containing strikingly different distributions of the main neuro chemicals in the brain, dopamine and serotonin. If we look carefully into these levels and compare descriptions of neuroscientists and yogis we see that both were saying the same thing.

The three levels are called the reptilian, mammalian and human levels: (See figures 1 & 2.)

Figure 1

OUTER SURFACE OF THE BRAIN

Figure 2

INNER SURFACE OF THE BRAIN

1. *The reptilian complex* includes the very topmost spinal cord and the lower areas of the brain, including the medulla oblongata and part of the reticular activating system, that part responsible for our waking, conscious state. This area contains the basic neural machinery for self-preservation and reproduction, including regulation of the heart, blood circulation and respiration. It controls mating, social hierarchies, insistence on routine, obedience to precedent and ritual, and slavish imitation of fads and fashions.

According to MacLean, the R-complex plays an important role in aggressive behavior, territoriality, ritual and the establishment of social hierarchies. This area corresponds to the *description of the mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, because yogis have told us these centers maintain our most basic and primitive, animalistic drives and instincts; basic living, eating, sleeping and procreating within a dark and primitive, monotonous and repetitious existence, minus joy, love and self-awareness.* They are related to our deepest unconscious and subconscious mind.

MacLean and his co-workers have found that this area dominates the lives of most people, which agrees with the statement by yogis that most people live in mooladhara and swadhisthana, though their function is modified by the higher centers. We spend most of our time controlled by and stimulating the lower chakras within the blinding limitations of our daily rituals.

MacLean has also shown that this is true neurologically. Removing the cerebral cortex from hamsters a day or two after birth and leaving only the R-complex and limbic system, MacLean found that the hamsters grew up normally, gave birth and displayed every form of behavior normal for hamsters. They could even see without a visual cortex. Leaving only the R-complex in birds, he found that they could function normally and carry on most kinds of communication and day-to-day routines. This research indicates that our day-to-day functions are controlled by these primitive areas and that we do not really need much more of our brain to handle the basic problems and demands of a neatly ordered, socially accepted lifestyle. We rarely stimulate our higher centers, and in fact find it hard to cope with any demands out of the ordinary. This is why yogis tell us to practise yoga so as to develop our inner unused capacity, some nine-tenths of the brain or more, and to stimulate the growth and development of our higher centers.

Psychology also tells us that beneath the sane facade of any human being there lurks a primitive creature, instinctive and irrational, a Mr. Hyde composite of all that is animalistic and forbidden. Freud called this the *id*, an unconscious area from which arises our desires, passions and the energy underlying our emotions and sense of who we are. Yogis call this mooladhara and swadhisthana and tell us that the unconscious and subconscious areas have two centers controlling them, one located in the perineum and the other in the spine behind the pubic bone controlling sexuality and all its related behavior. Both psychologists and yogis tell us that most of us spend most of our time trying to gratify and fulfill these basic urges for food (survival) and pleasure. Much of our time, for example, is organized for making our daily "bread", a slang term for money, by which we can buy food, shelter, clothing and pleasure. Few of us realize that there is much more to life than this.

By practising yoga we learn to balance and control these centers physically and also at the level of their instincts and drives, freeing their energy from primitive, compulsive ritual and rechanneling it up sushumna to the higher centers for the awakening of higher consciousness.

2. *The mammalian structures* are under the control of the limbic system, which controls emotion, memory and other behavior which is less ritualistic and more spontaneous. It is also thought to control playful behavior, exhilaration, awe and wonder and the subtler, more human emotions such as love. MacLean has found that damage to areas of this part of the brain results in deficits in maternal behavior and absence of play.

Within the limbic system are the behavioral centers for rage, fright, fear, feelings of punishment, anxiety, hunger, desire, pleasure, pain, sex, joy and love. This area is thus related to manipura and anahata functioning. If we stimulate the areas of the spinal cord behind the navel and heart associated with the chakras, we will send energy into the brain to turn on the various components at the physical, mental and behavioral levels associated with the chakras.

3. *The human side* of the brain is the most recently evolved neocortex, the seat of intelligence and many of the characteristic human cognitive functions. It is here that, with amazing speed and precision, the various faculties are integrated and synchronized. The cortex makes possible: thinking, calculation, analysis, discrimination, intuition, creativity, use of symbols, planning, anticipation of the future, artistic and scientific expression, and myriad other highly evolved and purely human faculties.

We know that the frontal lobes of the brain are especially important, being the most recently evolved part of the brain. Some researchers think that this part of the brain, in connection with the other sections, is responsible for the very human capacity of self-awareness and knowledge of this self-awareness; we know that we know, and we know that too.

We know that patients with severe frontal lobe damage or who have had frontal lobotomies, operations which sever the frontal lobes from the rest of the brain, are incapable of planning for the future and lack a continuous sense of self. They cannot see what effect a certain action will have on the future. Such people become dull, slow, cease to care for themselves or others, or about what they say or do. They are friendly, cooperative vegetables with a serious lack of imagination and loss of interest in life. They may be suffering from intense pain and not even care about the fact.

The frontal lobes are therefore said to be responsible for planning and discrimination, for anticipation of the future and, therefore, for the purely human emotion of anxiety. This differs from fear which is related to an actual event. Anxiety is a mental event, related to some future occurrence. It is valuable for our survival and evolution as individuals and as a species, for caring for the family unit and for society; for our compassion. More than this it is the force responsible for motivating the formulation of laws and economic and political systems, for motivating the development of the arts and sciences, for religions and a system of ethics, for all philosophies, and for the development of materially and spiritually secure cultures. As we developed the capacity to plan, the frontal lobes freed our hands for the manipulation of tools, drawing, writing and other bases for human cultural development.

Knowledge of death and the anxiety it engenders spurs us on to make the most of life and to develop religious or spiritual systems which help us to cope with the thought of death. It has also led to the yogic sciences which liberate us from death and take us to immortality.

David Loye believes that not only are the frontal lobes involved in anticipation, but are actually involved in seeing into the future. (2) He states that when, for example, a car is rapidly approaching us, the frontal brain alerts both right and left hemisphere components to process all the information from the rest of the brain, agreements and disagreements, so that we can discriminate and decide what will most likely happen. He found in two separate studies that people who tended to use both sides of the brain were better able to predict the outcome of events than either right or left-brain dominant people. This supports the yogic view that both sides of our nature must be balanced for proper function, fuller living and the development of our inner potential.

Ajna chakra

All of these intellectual, intuitive, creative and expressive functions are said by yogis to be characteristic of ajna and vishuddhi chakras. We know that, yogic techniques are especially aiming at stimulation of ajna chakra, which lies at the pineal gland, midway between the hemispheres.

Yogis state that ajna chakra and the pineal gland as its physical center, is the master control chakra, the guru chakra. We know from physiology that just in front of the pineal gland lies the thalamus, at the top of the limbic system. The thalamus has been found to be one of the main centers regulating the interaction of our senses and motor activity (ida and pingala), the pre-frontal cortex, which includes the right and left sides of the brain (ida and pingala), the hypothalamus, which integrates and expresses emotion and regulates the ANS and the endocrine glands, and the cerebellum, which helps to control movement. It therefore integrates senses, thought, emotion and action. It is also important in the recognition of pain and other sensory modalities, such as variations in the degree of temperature and touch, the size, shape and quality of objects contacting the sense organs. An interesting fact is that it is involved in the control of movement and especially the degree of squeezing and contracting of muscles and joints.

We see, therefore, that the pineal/thalamic area fits the description for ajna chakra, the area where senses and emotion, both ida functions, and motor and intellect, both pingala functions, meet. **Yogis tell us that fusion of ida and pingala at ajna is one of the definitions of yoga.** It leads to an explosion within the nervous system which somehow fuels and activates a much larger number of circuits within both hemispheres and the limbic system than would normally occur. It is as though our nervous system suddenly becomes charged with a high tension electric line, which yogis called sushumna.

Yogis also tell us that ajna is involved in intuition and perception of the subtle and psychic. If the thalamic area handles degrees of perception and motor activity, making it possible for us to experience the subtle things of life, then yogic techniques may allow us to develop our sensitivity in this area so as to be able to expand and **extend our normal capacities in order to sense the psychic quality of matter**, an "extra" sense or common sense, occurring at the meeting point of all the senses, the thalamus.

The chakras in perspective

Yogis tell us that the chakras lie along the spinal cord, that mooladhara lies in the perineum and the other chakras move upward towards sahasrara at the apex of man's evolution and consciousness. Ajna chakra is the highest center in which man feels that he exists separate from the universe. Union or cosmic consciousness takes place in sahasrara. Ajna is the controlling chakra, the guru center where commands are heard.

Neurophysiology points out that there are centers in the brain, stretching upward from the medulla oblongata to the pineal/thalamic area which correspond to the classical description of the chakras as told by yogis. We can say that within the brain all these fall under the control of ajna, that they are layers of evolution within ajna, and as each chakra awakens in the spine, it affects the level of conscious awakening and activity in ajna. The pineal/thalamic area would represent that part of the brain which is most awakened and fully activated by total ajna chakra awakening, while the medulla oblongata area is that part which corresponds to the mooladhara chakra area. This would explain the close link between mooladhara and ajna; that the awakening of one consequentially awakens the other.

In most people, ajna chakra, the thalamic/pineal area is dormant. Living in mooladhara and swadhisthana for most of the time would mean that ajna chakra functions mainly from the medulla oblongata, the reptilian brain. Only when we stimulate and awaken the centers by yoga do we jump levels in our nervous system and consciously awaken the higher, pineal/thalamic areas and their concomitant levels of consciousness. When ida and pingala fuse in ajna, energy flows from mooladhara up to ajna, from the medulla oblongata to the pineal/thalamic area.

There are many techniques which can work on ajna chakra, such as shambhavi mudra, trataka, mantra japa, nadi shodhana and bhramari pranayama, to name a few. When we say these techniques are stimulating ajna chakra we are really stating that somehow they stimulate the integrating and centrally located pineal/thalamic area and thereby awaken our normally dormant, higher intellectual/emotional, logical/intuitive functions. They stimulate the higher elements of ajna and raise our consciousness up out of the lower, reptilian medulla oblongata. The techniques balance the functioning of our total brain/mind complex, ida and pingala, by focusing on the central, stimulating area and set the stage for the awakening of kundalini.

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Chapter 7

Evidence for the Existence of Chakras

Kundalini yoga teaches us techniques to influence our nervous system and mind so as to bring about total balance and reintegration at every level of our being. It is an expanded concept of man, a method of developing creative awareness and, more than this, of putting the knowledge gained to use via a system of experiential techniques. It helps us to develop a new outlook on life and ourselves. The chakras and their interaction within the totality of our personality, stretched between ida and pingala, balanced in sushumna, open up new dimensions for our mind and understanding to explore and develop.

The techniques of kundalini involve **kriyas, combinations of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, rotation of breath and consciousness through psychic passages and subtle spaces, repetition of mantra and the piercing of psychic centers** in order to heat up the psychic and physical energies of man and to activate and awaken the chakras to our conscious level of experience and control. The techniques are also designed to bring about balanced purification and activation of all the chakras, but with the **gentle accentuation of one or two important centers**. Certain techniques, such as **ajapa japa**, achieve this, creating a psychic friction which ignites the spark of higher consciousness.

When conditions for ignition reach the required temperature and pressure, energy is liberated within the body and mind, transforming our total personality. This energy must be real and actual; though perhaps as yet undefined and not qualified. It is measurable at both the physical and psychic levels if we have the correct conditions, equipment and understanding of the phenomena. In this regard, several researchers have begun to pioneer exploration into the uncharted depths of the human psyche and are devising techniques and equipment to assess, measure and scientifically prove the existence of the chakras as the primary controlling points for different levels of our being.

Measuring the chakras

One man who has helped to pioneer scientific research into yoga and the phenomena of kundalini and chakras is Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama. He states, "Fascinated... I too began physiological experiments about fifteen years ago to try to determine if chakras actually exist and their relationship to the autonomic nervous system and internal organs... Through various examinations we have been able to determine that there are significant differences in the physiological function of the organ associated with the chakra that the individual subjects claimed to have awakened. Therefore, this research has led to the conclusion that chakras do, in fact, exist." (1)

In his search for the existence of chakras, Motoyama has developed his own machinery. One of these is the 'chakra instrument' which is designed to detect the electromagnetic field of the body and any changes which take place in it due to chakra stimulation and activation. Looking like a telephone booth and enclosed in a light-proof, lead-shielded room, the machine was designed to detect energy generated in the body and then emitted from it in terms of various physical variables such as electrical, magnetic and optical energy changes. Copper electrodes are positioned at the top and bottom of the cage and a sliding, square panel with electrodes on all four sides (left, right, front, back), is free to traverse up and down the frame structure so as to be positioned at any part of the subject's body. An electromagnetic field is set up between the electrodes and any vital energy ejected from the body affects this very sensitive field.

A copper electrode and a photo-electric cell are positioned 12 and 20 centimeters in front of the subject, level with the classical position for a given chakra. The location is monitored for changes as the individual concentrates his mental energy at the chakra point, and measurements are made for 3 to 5 minutes before, during and after concentration on the chakra. Because of its powerful pre-amplifier (impedance near infinity), even the most subtle energy ejection can be picked up and recorded. Information recorded is sent to various amplifiers, computerized analyzers and oscilloscopes and is recorded on a highly sensitive chart recorder. Other equipment is also used: to monitor respiration, autonomic nervous system (galvanic skin resistance), changes in blood flow (plethysmograph), heart (electrocardiograph), subtle vibrations in the skin (micro-tremor), so as to measure other effects of chakra stimulation on the body and to make comparisons and interpretations.

Motoyama has used his equipment extensively to determine diseases in the body. (2) In one case he measured a woman who was to have a uterine tumor removed a week later. Measurements on his AMI machine (refer to the chapter entitled "Evidence for the Existence of Nadis") showed imbalance in the related meridians. The pattern of energy measured by the 'chakra instrument' in front of the uterus (swadhisthana chakra) was much greater and quite different than normal. Motoyama's research indicates that there is a definite correspondence between physical disease and disturbance in the energy of the chakra traditionally said by yogis to control that part of the physical body.

Activity in the chakras

Motoyama has also measured chakra activity in normal subjects and recorded and compared readings in subjects practising yoga versus untrained, control subjects. (3) He found that in an untrained subject concentrating on ajna chakra there was no change recorded by the electrodes. The lines on the recording paper remained flat before, during and after concentration.

A subject who had been practising stimulation of swadhisthana chakra for some time showed a great deal of activation of that center, and much greater than in the control subject who showed none at all. Large amplitude waves were seen before, during and after concentration, indicating activation,

however, there was no change during the period for concentration, indicating lack of control over the center. This compares with another subject who had been practising yoga for five years and who evidenced a marked rise in electrical activity from ajna chakra but only during the time of concentration. The results indicate that he had developed control over his ajna chakra.

'Chakra instrument' studies have been made with several yogis. (4) Dr. A.K. Tebecis, a former professor of Canberra University, Australia, who had studied yoga throughout Asia and who claims to have experienced astral projection due to the awakening of kundalini, was tested on the 'chakra instrument'. Dr. Tebecis concentrates on anahata chakra during meditation and also has a chronic digestive disorder. The AMI revealed instability in the nadis involved in digestion, manipura chakra, and also in those related to the swadhisthana area. When the 'chakra instrument' was used to measure manipura and anahata, no change was found at manipura. Anahata concentration revealed considerable intensification of energy during the period of concentration.

Two unusual findings have also been reported by Motoyama. In one case, not only did the subject develop a more intense electrical reading during concentration on manipura, but also had the subjective experience that psychic energy was being ejected from manipura. During this time the positive electrical potential vanished, but only during the time of her subjective sensation, and would reappear again as soon as the feeling of emission vanished. Motoyama states:

v'One might surmise that the psi energy generated a negative electrical potential which neutralized the positive electrical charge. However, it is also possible to postulate the creation of a new physical energy. In fact, it is my opinion that the psi energy emitted from R.B.'s manipura chakra actually extinguished the surrounding physical energy. I take this stand because the positive potential was precisely neutralized and because there was never any appearance of a negative potential.' (5)

The second case involves a subject who concentrated on anahata chakra. As the subject relaxed, the chakra area was seen to be activated. She was then asked to concentrate on the anahata area and it was arranged that any time she had the subjective experience of psi energy emission she was to press a button which caused a mark to be made on the chart. It was found that when this mark appeared the photoelectric cell signalled the presence of a weak light being generated in the light-proof room. Her chakra monitor also detected electrical energy of high potential and frequency.

Motoyama states that these findings imply that psychic energy working in anahata chakra may be able to create energy in the physical dimension (light, electricity, etc.). It appears that whatever energy is being produced in a developed and refined chakra circuit is capable of extinguishing or creating energy in the physical dimension, which supports the **yogic view of chakras as transducers, converting psychic energy into physical energy and back**. Motoyama feels that if further research substantiates his findings, then the Law of Conservation of Energy, as one of the basic foundation stones of modern physics, will have to be revised.

The verification of an energy at the psychic plane which, though of unknown source and substance, can influence matter, has been long claimed by yogis. It is also thought to be the basis of healing and of all sciences in which mind is used to control matter. **Yogis even state that the world is a manifestation of mind**, a view which is now being supported more and more by physicists, especially those working with the subatomic particles that make up all of matter and which lie midway between matter and pure energy (prana).

Motoyama states, "I feel that the continuation of research into the nature of psi energies, by many others as well as myself, will lead to considerable change in our views of matter, of mind and body, of human beings, and of the world itself." (6)

The psychic level

Objective evidence for the existence of the chakras also appears to have been found by kinesiologist Valerie Hunt and her associates at UCLA in America. (7) Assisted by Rosalyn Bruyere, a psychic "aura reader", Hunt used a number of measurements in order to study the body's field emission when it is being stimulated by deep muscle massage (Rolfling). This was prompted by an earlier observation that after Rolfling and meditation there was an increase in the electromyographic baseline.

Hunt and associates utilized electromyographic equipment (EMG) which measures the steady, low voltage of muscular activity plus several other instruments. Electrodes were attached to eight sites, including chakra locations such as the crown (sahasrara), eyebrow center (ajna), throat (vishuddhi), heart (anahata), base of the spine and acupuncture points on the foot and knee. The sites for the electrodes were in places where muscle activity was minimal and, therefore, electrical readings would indicate energy from a different source. The electrodes were placed on the body in consultation with the "aura reader".

The individual being experimented on was given Rolfling (deep muscle massage), designed to liberate deeper subconscious tension, and, therefore, theoretically able to affect chakra activity. As the massage progressed the EMG readings were recorded on one track of a two-tracked tape recorder. Simultaneously, while isolated in another room and oblivious to the EMG and subject's reports, Bruyere recorded on the second track her observations of psychic activity in terms of color change at the various centers. Hunt was able to question the aura reader via a separate audio system so that no clue as to what the subject was experiencing or what was going on at the EMG level could be detected by the psychic.

At the same time the subject related his experience which was tape recorded using a second microphone, and any similarity between his experience, the symptoms of chakra activation and the EMG recording were noted.

It was quickly evident in the central monitoring room where Hunt was sitting, that the EMG changes and the distinctive wave forms being recorded correlated with the colors reported by the sensitive, as did the experience of the subject. Later analysis, whether by wave form, Fourier-frequency analysis or sonogram, produced consistently the same pattern of results.

Hunt acknowledged that the possible interpretations of this data are staggering. The radiations were taken directly from the body surface, quantitatively measured in a natural state and were isolated by scientifically accepted data resolution procedures. The study concluded that there had been direct correspondence in every instance throughout all recordings between the distinctive wave form and the psychic's description of the color emanating from the chakra. For example, every time a medium-large, sharp deflection with single or double peaks at the top occurred, the psychic reported the color blue, while red corresponded to large, sharp clumps of regular and irregular spikes of short duration interspersed with plateaux. Yellow was a broad, smooth wave resembling an uneven sine wave.

The relationship between the emotional states and the colors was also accurate. Emotions, imagery, interpersonal relations and the state of resiliency and plasticity of the connective tissue are related to the color, and the state of the aura as seen by the psychic.

It is an interesting fact that in early Rolfling sessions the chakras appeared to be uneven, small, low in frequency and amplitude and with indiscriminate or dark primary colors. As the technique continued the chakras became large, even in size, and of lighter color, while the wave forms were of higher amplitude and frequency. Some chakras which had been closed, opened, producing kaleidoscopic color effects, such as dark blue, yellow, red-orange

Recent developments in neurophysiology and meditation research have outlined a possible explanation for kundalini which unifies both its physical and psychic aspects. This research outlines a comprehensive approach to understanding how meditation can release energies within our nervous system, unlocking latent capacities and speeding up our evolution at both the physical and consciousness levels. This allows us to perceive the universe from a new and broader perspective, to see things from a more total point of view and to understand more about life and ourselves.

The physio-kundalini syndrome

One researcher who developed an ingenious method to measure bodily changes during meditation and the awakening of kundalini, is Itzhak Bentov. In his book *Stalking the Wild Pendulum* he has set out an original and very yogic understanding of consciousness and matter, one which can very neatly explain kundalini from the point of view of physics. He also discusses a model by which we can understand the kundalini experience in physiological terms.

Bentov states that "the human nervous system has a tremendous latent capacity for evolution. This evolution can be accelerated by meditative techniques, or it can occur spontaneously in an unsuspecting individual. In both cases, a sequence of events is triggered, causing sometimes strong and unusual bodily reactions and unusual psychological states. Some of those people who meditate may suspect that these reactions are somehow connected with meditation. Others, however, who develop these symptoms spontaneously may panic and seek medical advice... Unfortunately, however, western medicine is presently not equipped to handle these problems. Strangely, in spite of the intensity of the symptoms, little or no physical pathology can be found." (1)

Bentov estimates, on the basis of discussions with psychiatrists, that as many as 25 or 30 percent of all institutionalized schizophrenics belong to this category, a tremendous waste of human potential. There is a vast area of the human psyche which we are totally ignorant of, which we do not experience consciously in our lives, and which we are therefore helpless to deal with adequately if something goes wrong. Bentov feels that symptoms do not occur in the healthy, relaxed state but only when energy reaches tensions in the body. This agrees with the yogic view that we must prepare ourselves for awakening by a long period of preparatory sadhana to avoid unpleasant results.

Bentov states that we urgently need modes that will allow us to understand kundalini in terms which make sense to us. As a result of this need Bentov has delineated a unique and brilliant model of the meditation/kundalini process so that doctors, psychiatrists and psychotherapists can become aware of this possibility and develop more benign methods of dealing with this situation. More knowledge about the physical basis of spiritual knowledge is required in medical and scientific circles in order to expand our concept of man.

Measuring the waves in the brain

As we start to practise meditation we initially experience its calming, relaxing and stabilizing effects. Prolonged practice, and especially the more vigorous forms of meditative practice take us far beyond these preliminary changes which many modern researchers have been stressing as the main aim and effect of meditation. After some time, actual psychophysiological changes take place and amongst these there is a change in the mode of functioning of our nervous system.

In order to measure these changes Bentov used a modified ballistocardiograph, a machine which measures small body motions accompanying the motion of blood through the circulatory system. (2) "A subject sits on a chair between two metal plates, one above the head and one under the seat, 5 to 10 centimeters from the body. The two plates of the capacitor are part of a tuned circuit. The movement of the subject will modulate the field between the two plates. The signal is processed and fed into a single channel recorder which registers both the motion of the chest due to respiration and the movement of the body reacting to the motion of the blood in the heart-aorta system." (3)

Bentov states that the spinal cord can be thought of as a spring which, during meditation, reacts to the movement of blood into the heart and circulatory system. The heart pumps blood into the large blood vessel called the aorta. The aorta is curved on top (at the level of the bottom of the neck) and bifurcated at the bottom (in the lower abdomen). Every time blood enters the aorta it moves upward towards the head and this gives a minute upward push to the upper part of the body. The blood then moves downward to strike the bifurcation of the aorta, gently pushing the body downward. This movement is called micromotion and the movement recorded on the ballistocardiograph is only in the order of 0.003 to 0.009 millimeters, a very minute amount.

This gentle upward and downward movement has the tendency to oscillate the whole body, spine and skull up and down. The natural rhythm of this oscillation is 7 cycles/second (7 Hertz, Hz). Of course in the normal situation we do not feel such minute micromotion, however, in the deep stillness of profound meditation even the slightest and most subtle movement of the body or thought creates ripples within the nervous system which, to our inverted consciousness, become magnified and disturb inward progress.

Yogis have always stressed that the most important preliminary ingredient for meditation is to develop a straight and strong spinal cord through asana and to gradually develop stillness of the body, nervous system and mind through pranayama. Through Bentov's model we can now see that this is because immobility of body, breath and mind sets the stage for the production of rhythmic waves within the spine, skull and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

When subjects are in a deep meditative state, Bentov's machine measures an almost pure, regular, S-shaped sine wave of large amplitude and moving at approximately 7 cycles/second. This is opposed to an irregular wave in the baseline resting state before and after meditation. Something happens in meditation which does not normally occur in most of our waking, dreaming or sleeping lives. At the same time we enter a hypometabolic state in which our breathing rate slows down and the oxygen need of our tissues lessens. We should note that it is also possible to produce a sine wave on the ballistocardiograph by stopping our breath, however, we quickly develop oxygen deficiency and have to overbreathe to restore balance. In meditation, however, this does not occur; we are balanced at all levels.

The oscillating circuits

The up and down movement of the body produced by the heart during meditation affects the brain which is floating in its protective bony and fluid casing, the cranium and CSF. According to Bentov, this micromotion up and down sets up acoustical and possible electrical plane waves reverberating in the skull. Mechanical stimulation may be converted into electrical vibrations.

The acoustical plane waves are focused within the third and lateral ventricles, small cave-like, CSF filled structures deep within the brain. The plane waves activate and drive standing waves into the ventricles. While the body stays in meditation, the frequency of waves within the ventricles of the brain

will remain locked to the heart/aorta pulsation. Bentov felt that these vibrations within the brain are responsible for the sounds yogis hear in meditation. This aspect of meditation is called nada yoga, listening to and following the inner sounds, and is said to herald the coming of kundalini.

The loop circuit

According to Bentov the standing waves in the ventricles are within the audio and superauditory ranges. They stimulate the cerebral cortex mechanically, eventually resulting in a stimulus travelling in a closed loop around each hemisphere. The lateral ventricle lies just under the corpus callosum, the part of the brain connecting the two cerebral hemispheres. The roof of the lateral ventricle acts as the taut skin on a drum which moves rapidly up and down and thereby produces mechanical waves in the ventricles which stimulate the sensory cortex lying just above the corpus callosum.

We can understand the effect of this stimulation by looking at the diagram of the cross section of the brain (see figure 3). Waves would commence at number 1 and travel down to number 22 and back to number 1 again creating a loop circuit. As the current returns to the starting point it stimulates the pleasure centers in the various areas of the brain which surround the lateral ventricle, such as in the cingulate gyrus, lateral hypothalamus, hippocampus and amygdala areas, all part of the limbic system, and this may give rise to the bliss and ecstasy reported by meditators whose shakti awakens. The sensory current travels around the cortex at about 7 cycles per second.

Figure 3

Gross section of the brain revealing the sensory cortex and indicating the areas of the body as mapped along the post central gyms. This is called the sensory homunculus - the symbolic man lying within the brain. After: Penfield and Rasmussen, *The Human Cerebral Cortex*, MacMillan, New York, 1950.

1.		toes
2.		ankles
3.		knee
4.		hip
5.		trunk
6.		shoulder
1.		elbow
8.		wrist
9.		hand
10.	little	finger
11.	ring	finger
12.	middle	finger
13.	index	finger
14.		thumb

15.			neck
16.			brow
17.	eyelid	and	eyeball
18.			face
19.			lips
20.			jaw
21.			tongue
22.	larynx		

Bentov theorizes that stimulation of the corpus callosum will in turn stimulate the sensory cortex to produce the sensations of something moving in the body from the feet, up the spine, up over the head and then down the abdomen and pelvis. It is this experience which many people associate with the awakening of kundalini.

The experience of movement in the spine and body has been reported in many cases of the awakening of shakti or energy within the nervous and nadi systems. From areas as far apart as India, China, Africa and America, the symptoms are often similar if not the same. Energy is felt to rise upward and these sensations must be handled in progressive sequence in the sensory cortex. We can also theorize that if we sit in padmasana (lotus pose) or sidhasana (adept pose) that we may short-circuit the sensations in the legs so that we subjectively experience the movement as commencing in or near mooladhara.

In normal situations, motor and sensory impulses usually travel in straight lines, either into or out of the brain and via the thalamus. However, in meditation we introvert and cut ourselves off from outside stimulation (pratyahara). This also tends to develop a loop circuit.

We should note that sensory signals come to the cortex through the thalamus, the area of the brain in front of the pineal gland that we can associate with the highest functioning of ajna chakra. And it is said that ajna chakra must be stimulated if kundalini is rising because of its direct connection to mooladhara.

Bentov felt that the movement of waves through the cortex is responsible for the effects of the awakened kundalini and for internal experience. From our point of view this may not be the actual kundalini experience, which transcends all bodily sensations, but would correspond to the awakening of prana shakti which ultimately leads to the kundalini experience. The gradual development of the brain may take many years before the loop circuit and the various connections develop, and enough energy can be generated to actually stimulate all the circuits involved and required.

Psychic circuits

As a result of the circular currents in the brain, Bentov states that a pulsating magnetic field is produced in each hemisphere of the order of 10 minus 9 gauss. On the right side of the brain the field is from front to back, north to south, and on the left side south to north. This would correspond to ida and pingala at this level of body energy. Bentov feels that the interaction of these waves with the environment may be responsible for the psychic experiences which are often felt as a byproduct of systematic and deep yogic sadhana. He states, "This magnetic field - radiated by the head acting as an antenna - interacts with the electric and magnetic fields already in the environment. We may consider the head as simultaneously a transmitting and receiving antenna, tuned to a particular one of the several resonant frequencies of the brain. Environmental fields may thus be fed back to the brain, thus modulating that resonant frequency. The brain will interpret this modulation as useful information."⁽⁴⁾

It is interesting to note that the rhythmic magnetic pulsation of the brain which is set up in meditation at 7 cycles/second is almost the same as Earth's magnetic pulsation whose doughnut-shaped field has a strength of 0.5 gauss. These extra low frequency (ELF) waves have a predominant frequency of about 7 1/2 cycles per second, and this is called the Schumann resonance. Another interesting point is that the brain wave frequency of 7 cycles/second is the region between alpha waves and theta waves. This is the borderline between waking and sleeping, where we are most relaxed, and if we can stay awake in meditation, sets the brain up for creativity and intuition. It is the time we are most psychically receptive. Professor Michael Persinger of the Laurentian University Psychophysiology Laboratory hypothesizes that ELF waves may serve as the carriers for information connected with psychic phenomena. (5) This fits in with Bentov's theory that our brain's magnetic pulse of 7 cycles/second resonates with the environment to either transmit or receive information.

The five oscillating systems

Up to this point Bentov tells us there are five oscillating systems tuned to each other:

1. *the heart-aorta system* producing an oscillation in the spine and skull of 7 cycles/second which accelerates
2. *the skull and brain up and down*, producing acoustical plane waves (KHz frequencies) which create
3. *standing waves within the ventricles* of the brain in the audio and above ranges which stimulate
4. *a loop circuit in the sensory cortex* at 7 cycles/second which result in
5. *a magnetic field of opposite polarity*, pulsating at 7 cycles/second, and interacting with the environmental fields, especially the ELF field resonating at about 7 1/2 cycles/second.

As we meditate over a prolonged period, we begin to progress and lock in more and more of these systems so that eventually all the systems of the brain begin to harmonize and resonate at around the same frequency. We can speculate that this ultimately unifies the whole brain and results in unlocking of our dormant potential, a quantum leap to a new field of experience that yogis tell us is powered by the explosive release of kundalini. **Yogis state that if we can sit still for three hours, completely immobile and aware, we will awaken our internal energies and enter into samadhi.** Bentov's model explains this.

Another interesting point is that Bentov feels that these changes in the brain most probably start in the right hemisphere, because many meditative practices develop the non-verbal, feeling, intuitive, spatial, right brain, balancing out the almost constant dominance of the logical, reasoning, rational, linearly-thinking left brain in our day-to-day extrovert, tension-filled, energy-demanding existence. He came to this conclusion because many meditators he talked to felt their experiences started on the left side of their bodies which is governed by the right brain. (6) This agrees with the work of D'Aquili who posits that inner experience is governed by activity in the right brain (7)

Kindling the kundalini

We know that a log on a low flame is likely to blaze up suddenly on its own, even after the original fire goes out. A threshold point is reached and internal reactions take over spontaneously. The same mechanisms are thought to occur in the nervous system to lead up to a series of events analogous to the kindling of wood. Scientists are using this model to explain such diverse phenomena as everyday learning memory, epilepsy, the radical mood swings of manic depression and kundalini.

The kindling phenomenon was first identified by C. V. Goddard and his associates at Waterloo University in Canada in 1969. (8) They observed that repeated, periodic, low-intensity electrical stimulation of animal brains leads to stronger brain activity, particularly in the limbic system, the part of the brain that handles emotions. For example, stimulating the amygdala (part of the limbic system) once daily, for half a second, has no effect at first, but after two or three weeks, produces convulsions. Goddard also observed that kindling can cause relatively permanent changes in brain excitability. Animals can have seizures for as long as a year after the initial kindling period.

According to John Gaito of York University, over a period of time the bursts of electrical activity kindle similar patterns in adjacent brain regions. (9) Also the threshold is progressively lowered so that smaller doses of electricity trigger convulsions.

It should be understood that mild continuous electrical stimulation does not cause kindling, rather it causes adaptation and tolerance. The stimulation must be intermittent, preferably every 24 hours, to be effective. Robert Post found that kindling can also be induced by drugs such as cocaine or other anesthetics which stimulate the limbic system. (10) He found that using these stimulants led to changes of behavior such as increased aggression.

Apart from providing a model for epilepsy, which we know is sometimes associated with mystical insight, and psychosis, which can be thought of as prematurely awakened kundalini activity in one of the chakras, kindling can explain how meditation exerts its effects on our brain and psyche. According to Marilyn Ferguson, "Analogies of the kindling effect and meditation effects - especially of the dramatic kundalini phenomena - are interesting. Obviously, most human subjects don't perceive their experiences as pathological, although they may be somewhat unnerving. The effects typically occur after a history of regular meditation and in an unthreatening setting. There is no onset of seizures in the classic sense, and the nervous system effects appear to be positive over the long run." (11)

Bernard Gluek of the Hartford Institute of Living speculates that mantra meditation might set off a resonance effect in the limbic brain. (12) Mantra repetition is the most obvious form of meditation to be analogous to kindling, however, if we look at Bentov's model, any form which involves sitting absolutely motionless and developing introspection will do the same.

According to Bentov, the loop circuit in the sensory cortex set up by sitting immobile in meditation may stimulate the pleasure centers in the amygdala, the part of the brain most amenable to kindling. This would, over a period of time, lead to permanent changes within the nervous system in an ongoing and progressive manner. This is the aim of meditation and all masters of yoga and the inner arts and sciences tell us that for success, the most important ingredient is regularity of practice and persistence. Whether our experiences in meditation are good or bad is of no consequence. They are all just steps on the way to higher experience, part of the process of preparation for kundalini awakening.

Two important points should be noted about kindling. The first is that it induces relatively permanent changes and the second is that it increases activity in the brain. It steps up the energy processes. This fits in with the theory that meditation can energize the nadis so as to send energy to various centers to awaken higher functions within those centers in order to take them to a higher octave of activity by supplying them with a better energy source.

Meditation and the brain

When studying kundalini we must remember that there are as many methods to awaken it as there are people practising, in fact there may be more methods than people. **The four basic methods studied by modern research are raja yoga, kriya yoga, zazen and transcendental meditation.** Basically these techniques involve one or more of the following: **sitting, breath awareness, and mantra.** Yogis normally divide meditation into either the relaxation type or concentration type of practice. However, we also know that whichever technique we choose we will have to first develop relaxation and then allow the internal process to unfold.

Most of the brain research into meditation has focused on brain waves, which are divided into four main groups and which can be generalized as follows :

1. *beta*: extroversion, concentration, logic-orientated thought, worry and tension.
2. *alpha*: relaxation, drowsiness.
3. *theta*: dreaming, creativity.
4. *delta*: deep sleep.

The majority of meditation techniques have shown that meditators, however, usually develop relaxation in meditation, with alpha waves being predominant and occasional runs of theta waves, which are different to those seen in sleep, occurring in more advanced meditators. (13-15) This result, the basis of meditation's use in such psychosomatic diseases as high blood pressure and in anxiety, has probably arisen because of either the use of relaxing techniques or because the meditators were mainly novices.

Occasionally, in the laboratory, a researcher stumbles on findings which seem to run contrary to the claims of meditation as a relaxation method. In this situation the meditator moves through the usual relaxation process, sinking into alpha and theta. However, at this point something startling happens. He again develops beta waves, despite the fact that he is introverted, and these are usually big, rhythmic, synchronized high amplitude waves, unlike the normal small amplitude found in the random chaotic brain waves of normal subjects.

This occurrence was first seen in 1955 by Das and Gastant who studied kriya yoga. (16) It was later seen and confirmed by Banquet, who studied transcendental meditation and found that after the theta waves, rhythmic beta waves were produced, present over the whole scalp and "the most striking topographical alteration was the synchronization of anterior and posterior channels." (17) The whole brain was pulsating synchronously, rhythmically and in an integrated fashion. This was subjectively experienced as deep meditation or transcendence.

Banquet states that, "We must deduce, therefore, that the EEG changes of meditation are independent of the interaction between the subject and the outer world but produced by the specific mental activity of the practice. The initiation of the loop between cortex, thalamo-cortical coordinating system and subcortical generators... could account for the different alterations." (18) This agrees with Bentov's theory of a loop circuit being responsible for the kundalini experience.

Levine, studying transcendental meditation, confirmed Banquet's findings of coherence and synchronization of brain waves, both within each cerebral hemisphere from front to back and between both hemispheres. (19) Corby and his associates found that using tantric meditation there was arousal of the nervous system rather than relaxation. (20) The episode of sudden autonomic nervous system activation was characterized by the meditator as

approaching the yogic ecstatic state of intense concentration. Corby's subjects experienced: rushes of energy; chills, laughter, changing and varied emotions; early life flashes; total energy absorption; yearning to be one with the object of ideation; a great sense of merger and understanding of experience and its meaning. (21) Corby's meditators meditated, on the average, for more than three hours per day and used more advanced techniques than usually studied in the laboratory.

Kundalini in the laboratory

Though it may be difficult, if not impossible, to record the actual kundalini experience in the laboratory (either because such advanced meditators do not usually talk about their experiences, or because the laboratory setting and environment is not correct, or because our machinery might interfere with or explode under the force of the actual experience), the research findings do tend to support Bentov's and the kindling model for kundalini.

In the studies of meditation in which activation of the nervous system was found, there was generalized coherence and integration of the brain and/or blissful, ecstatic experiences. The experiences of awakening of shakti recorded within the laboratory setting and their physiological correlates agree with the yogic theory that awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra and travels up to ajna chakra, affecting the deep, primitive, animalistic and energizing circuits within the R-complex and limbic system of the brain, near the medulla oblongata. Energy flows from here to the thalamus to stimulate all the areas of the cerebral cortex simultaneously and thereby creates a loop circuit which gradually awakens latent and unused activity within other areas of the brain. The whole brain begins to pulse as a single unit as energy pours into the central controlling area of ajna chakra.

We can understand that as we progress in meditation, we set the stage for the eventual awakening of shakti within the nadis, chakras and brain. An explosion occurs as we reach the threshold required for kindling to take place. Once we reach this concentrated, integrated state, neurological circuits take over and spontaneously begin to stimulate themselves so that the energy liberated awakens new centers in the brain, creating a transformed state of awareness and being at a new and higher level of energy. The process of awakening of shakti has begun. From this point on, as long as we continue our practice, the process of unfolding continues because once kindling has taken place the effects are relatively permanent. We develop more and more purity and strength, so that we can handle the internal experiences as they arise for longer and longer periods of time, until final awakening of kundalini takes place.

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Chapter 9

Cross-cultural Evidence

Kundalini is a transcendental phenomena, one which lies outside of time and space. We cannot understand how powerful the experience of kundalini awakening really is, but we can see its effects on our lives and the effect that awakening has had in terms of changes and functioning of society and various cultures. For example, the effect of kundalini awakening is said by many researchers and yogis to be at the basis of the experiences had by Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Rama and other great religious and spiritual figures from history.

While researchers continue to scientifically probe the phenomena itself, its components, its related events and ramifications and its ability to affect machines, another type of researcher is examining the phenomena in its social setting and anthropologically. As a universal phenomena we can see kundalini everywhere, in every culture and at all times. John White states:

"Although the word kundalini comes from the yogic tradition nearly all the world's major religions, spiritual paths and genuine occult traditions see something akin to the kundalini experience as having significance in divinizing a person. The word itself may not appear in the traditions, but the concept is there nevertheless, wearing a different name yet recognizable as a key to attaining a God-like stature." (1)

Altered states

Kundalini induces an altered state of consciousness (ASC), that is, it takes us to realms of inner experience beyond those normally accessible to modern man. Arnold M. Ludwig writes, "Beneath man's thin veneer of consciousness lies a relatively uncharted realm of mental activity, the nature and function of which have been neither systematically explored or adequately conceptualized." (2)

Ludwig and other ASC researchers cite daydreaming, sleep and dreams, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, psychosis, hysterical states of dissociation and depersonalization, pharmacologically induced mental aberrations, sleeplessness, fasting and meditation as examples of ASCs. Anything can induce an ASC, any place or event can trigger a change in consciousness, however, usually we have to manoeuvre ourselves or use some agent to bypass the so-called "normal" functioning of the brain. We can say that our normal state of consciousness is the one in which we spend most of our waking lives.

There are many people, however, who believe that the state of consciousness most people exist in is very limited and fixed, itself a retarded, degenerate and unhealthy state which induces fear of change, neurosis and disease. In terms of our inner experiences we are like **retarded dwarfs**, like the flea kept under a glass who, after hitting its head on the glass a number of times, ceases to jump hundreds of times its own height but rather, even when the glass is removed, continues to hop at a reduced capacity far below its innate potential. **Yogis claim that we are like the flea, pathetic shadows of our former selves and far less than our potential, confined by vague fears and illusions, ghosts and memories in the mind. We are much more than we think we are.**

The kundalini experience is at the peak of human evolution. It is the absolute and final state attainable by man, the experience in which he realises and merges with his pristine glory; the ultimate ASC. All other experiences fall short of this and are mere stepping-stones on the way, making up the repertoire of our lesser human lives. The real yogi or swami is the master of all realms of consciousness and can move into and out of any state he wants at will, depending on the degree of his skill and mastery. Various cultures have developed ways and means to attain these different realms of consciousness, each varying in its capacity to do so.

According to Erica Bourguignon, an anthropologist at Ohio State University, 90% of human societies practise some kind of institutionalized ritual to achieve altered states of consciousness. (3) For example, there is the solitary-vision quest of Sioux warriors, the hallucinogen-powered flights of South American shaman, the dream oracles of the Senoi people of Malaysia, the tribal dances of the Samo people of New Guinea, and the whirling dances of the Sufi dervish, to name but a few of the better known societies.

In the west we use alcohol and drugs, revival meetings, rock concerts and discotheques with their mind and logic numbing, trance-inducing, megadecibel music and "tribal" dance. Are we so far from "primitive" societies? Bourguignon wonders. "The fact that they are nearly universal must mean that such states are very important to human beings." **The need for attaining higher states of consciousness seems to be as basic as the need for eating or sleeping.**

Somewhat we have forgotten at our conscious, normal level of consciousness, that we have immense potential and that we can achieve bliss, knowledge and inner experiences which are more satisfying than the monotonous, humdrum existence we lead at present. Somewhere in our subconscious minds, at another level of consciousness, we know that something is missing and this knowledge nags at us. We want to get away from it all, to have a holiday (from the root for Holy day). From this there arises an instinctive and irrepresible urge and drive to fulfill ourselves and to attain higher and better states and experiences, though we may often fail to achieve them or real inner satisfaction. The alcohol ritual is one example of a self-defeating and destructive attempt to achieve true joy and inner bliss.

It appears that our methods are incorrect for attaining inner fulfillment, satisfaction and security. We have lost the keys and can no longer gain access to the higher and transcendental. We have been thrown out of the garden of Eden. It is for this reason that so many people have turned to yoga, meditation and the transcendental sciences for the means and techniques to enlarge their repertoire of experience and to attain insight into themselves and reality.

Kundalini, a universal phenomenon

Reports have come from all over the world indicating that there is a psychophysiological phenomenon which exists outside of the barriers of social, cultural, religious, geographical and temporal boundaries and which resembles the phenomenon called kundalini by the yogis and sages of India.

In Northwest Botswana, Africa, the *IKung* people of the Kalahari desert dance for many hours to heat up the *nilum* so that the *Ikia* state can be obtained. This state of transcendence resembles that in many yogic texts on kundalini in which states of consciousness beyond the ordinary and participation in eternity are described. One tribesman reports that, "You dance, dance, dance, dance. Then the *nilum* lifts you in your belly and lifts you in your back, and then you start to shiver... it's hot. Your eyes are open but you don't look around; you hold your eyes still and look straight ahead. But when you get into *Ikia* you're looking around because you see everything..." (4)

Judith Cooper writes about the *IKung*: "In one of the darker corners of the Dark Continent the *IKung* people of the Kalahari keep in touch with the gods. Two or three nights a week the men dance around a fire, graceful as leopards, to the sonorous drone of the women's chants. Soon the mood turns solemn, and the night air swells with unseen presences. Sweat rolls down the dancers' bodies like sweet rain, as the *nilum*, the healing power, starts to boil. The moment of transcendence is painful. When the inner fire shoots from their bellies up their spines, the dancers shiver and tremble, fall to the ground or go rigid as stone. Some of them dance into the fire and out again, perfect as gods, their feet unburned. They can see into the essence of things now, even into the insides of other people, where malignant ghosts feed on diseased livers or prevent the conception of sons. Laying their healing hands on the sick, they bid the *nilum* to drive out the forces of darkness." (5)

In the Chinese Taoist tradition it is said that when *prana* or *chi*, the vital principle, has accumulated in the lower belly, it bursts out and begins to flow in the main psychic channels causing involuntary movements and sensations such as pain, itching, coldness, warmth, weightlessness, heaviness, roughness, smoothness, internal lights and sound and the feeling of inner movement. It may cause the body to brighten and even illuminate a dark room. Yin Shih Tsu reported that he felt heat travel from the base of the spine to the top of the head and then down over his face and throat to his stomach. (6)

These kinds of reports tally exactly with the experiences of yogis who describe kundalini as travelling up the spine with heat and light or with the surging energy of a snake preparing to strike. A classical description of kundalini from the yogic tradition comes from Swami Narayananda:

"There is a burning up the back and over the whole body. Kundalini's entrance into sushumna occurs with pain in the back... One feels a creeping sensation from the toes and sometimes it shakes the whole body. The rising is felt like that of an ant creeping up slowly over the body towards the head. Its ascent is felt like the wiggling of a snake or a bird hopping from place to place." (7) This also sounds very much like the description of the so-called "primitive" people of the *IKung* tribe in the Kalahari desert in Africa.

In medieval Spain, St. Theresa of Avila described her experience, which yogis call the awakening of *nada*, the manifestation of transcendental consciousness as sound. "The noises in my head are so loud that I am beginning to wonder what is going on in it... My head sounds just as if it were full

of brimming rivers... and a host of little birds seem to be whistling, not in the ears, but in the upper part of the head, where the higher part of the soul is said to be; I have held this view for a long time, for the spirit seems to move upward with great velocity." (8)

Conclusion

All of the above are classical kundalini type experiences, but they have occurred in different geographical locations and different times in history, because kundalini is not dependent on time and space. However, few cultures have documented the kundalini experience so well or consistently as the sages in India. The Indian culture seems to have been ripe to allow the yogic sciences to be preserved, cultivated and revered. As a result, a sublime philosophy has emerged and has been recorded in many books, a few of which have come down to us through the ravages of time and history. Books such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the yogic texts such as *Yoga Vashishta* and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, and the sublime beauty of the books of the Upanishads and Vedanta, which have inspired many of the great men and women of history from all over the world, are testaments to the existence of a once great culture. Sophisticated maps of consciousness, charts to allow us to enter the sublime bliss of altered states of consciousness and meditative experience, myriad techniques and processes and untold words and books for guidance have emerged and have been handed down over thousands of years. Nowhere else has the kundalini experience been so well, richly or scientifically recorded in all its sublimity and variation.

Swami Vivekananda sums up the whole question of kundalini as a universal phenomena when he states, "When by the power of long internal meditation, the vast mass of energy stored up, travels along the sushumna and strikes the chakras, the reaction is immensely more intense than any reaction of sense perception. Wherever there was any manifestation of what is ordinarily called supernatural power or wisdom, there a little current of kundalini must have found its way into the sushumna."

We see then that an experience exists which is one but which has had a vast impact on society and culture wherever it has occurred. The experience is one but the names are many. Yogis call this the awakening of Shakti or kundalini and have developed a vast, intricate, systematic and progressive science by which they can awaken this power which lies dormant in each of us and one which can evolve ourselves and society to new and undreamed of heights of experience and achievement.

1. White, J. (Ed), *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment*, Archer, New York, 1979, p. 17.
2. Ludwig, A.M., "Altered States of Consciousness", in *Altered States of Consciousness*, Tart, G. T. (Ed), Doubleday Anchor, New York, 1972, pp. 11-22.
3. Hooper, J., "Mind Tripping", *Omni*, Oct. 1982.
4. Katz, R., "Education for Transcendence : Lessons from the IKung Zhu Jwasi", *J. Transp. Psychol.*, Nov. 2, 1973.
5. Hooper, J., op. cit.
6. Luk, G., *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, Samuel Weiser Inc., New York, 1972.
7. Narayananda, Swami, *The Primal Power in Man*, Prasad & Co., Rishikesh, India, 1960.
8. *Interior Castle*, tr. & ed. E. Allison Peers, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1961, pp. 77-78.

Chapter 10

Analysis of the Chakras from a Psychophysiological Viewpoint

A discussion with the swamis of BSY Mungler

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

Swami Shankardevananda: What are the psycho-dynamics of the chakras?

Swami Vivekananda: From a physiological viewpoint there are aspects of the chakras that deal with mood, with the mind, aspects dealing with experiences on the psychic plane and also aspects concerned with the energy turnover of the body and mind.

The brain, which is divided up in terms of its emotions and cognition, can also be divided into the aspects of the different chakras. It seems to me that from the physiological and anatomical point of view, the chakras are the sum total of the input and output of the different segments of the body. The throat (vishuddhi) section deals with perception, especially the voice. Many of the psychic aspects of this chakra are actually telepathic out; that is, communication. The chest (anahata) deals mainly with the love aspect. The upper abdomen (manipura) deals with the assertiveness and drive aspect. The lower abdominal or upper pelvic area (swadhisthana) deals with the pleasure aspect. The lowest segment (mooladhara), according to Freud and many yogis who went before him, deals with security, possessions and material sorts of things. Consider manipura chakra. It deals with hunger and it is directly connected with hunger centers in the hypothalamus. It is closely related to the next chakra down, swadhisthana, which deals with pleasure. The hunger and pleasure centers are adjacent in the posterior part of the hypothalamus. They are so close to each other that some of the cells actually intertwine and it is hard to separate which is which. It is interesting to note that when people are sexually tense and sexually dissatisfied, they start reaching for sweet things - they get hungry, start putting on weight and all that. This indicates the close interconnection of these two chakras.

There are also what we can call energy circuits involved in these interconnections. These energies can be directed up or down. If the instincts or desires related to specific areas are not actually satisfied, then there is a tendency for the energy to build up. We see it especially in relation to the sexual impulse, which is connected mainly to swadhisthana, and also partly to mooladhara and manipura. An unfulfilled sexual life at swadhisthana level tends to redirect energy either into the desire for power and dominance at manipura or the neurotic craving for possessions at mooladhara. Energy is built into this chakra system and all of its connections with the hypothalamus and the limbic system. The limbic system, amongst other things, generates a continuity of emotions, and emotions of course motivate action. If there is, for example, competition, then anger is stirred up within the solar plexus, stomach areas and related organs, including the adrenal glands. The adrenals, of course, activate a person to fight if it is over territory or food. Also, adrenalin increases the sugar content in the blood by breaking down glycogen in the liver, so it keeps the animal going even though it is hungry and short of food. If necessary, adrenalin will supply the bloodstream with sugar, so that it can win the fight and get food.

It seems to me that a lot of the physiological energy that is inherent in all these chakra circuits is this sort of energy. I do not really believe it is energy per se, but I think it is nerve impulses, for instance in the case of manipura chakra, stimulated by a block in blood glucose which then activates the stomach and the hunger centers in the hypo thalamus, which then activates these mechanisms.

Swami Shankardevananda: So you do not believe in a specific localized energy, but a total body functioning within that circuit. And one circuit becomes dominant if it is neglected or overactivated.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes. It can be constitutionally dominant in a person too. You see people who are all manipura chakra - a lot of drive, ambitions and right in there. They are not sexual people (swadhsthana motivated) and they might not even have a security drive (mooladhara motivated). I have known many business people and lawyers who dabble here and there and do it only for the fun of the game. They are just very competitive people. Everyone says to their wives, 'Well, it must be great to be married to a guy like that', and she says, 'Ugh' - he has little swadhsthana (sex) or anahata chakra (love) working. He is a bad husband, but makes a very good provider (manipura).

Swami Shankardevananda: In a study of sociopaths and those people who are fearless, they found that there is in fact very little difference between them. People who are testing jetplanes and rocketships and climbing mountains without ropes etc., have fundamentally the same character as sociopaths.

Swami Vivekananda: If a person's behavior is accepted by society, then he is a hero. If it is unacceptable he is a psychopath. It reminds me of the old joke that you can murder someone if the government approves of it. This is interesting because these people have that same kind of drive. They are driven by an overactive manipura chakra.

Mooladhara chakra deals principally in security, swadhsthana principally with pleasure, manipura principally with assertiveness, courage and personal power, anahata with love, vishuddhi with communication out and also the ability, mainly because of the perception of our external environment, to feel at home virtually anywhere. It is a state of consciousness that is inherent in vishuddhi chakra. When it develops to a certain point you can be sitting on a pile of garbage and still everything is just right. Ajna chakra of course, deals with intellect, intuition and psychic power (siddhis) such as telepathy.

As well as these qualities within the different chakras there is another parameter, which is the degree of evolution. Each one of us has these circuits constitutionally energized to different degrees. One person may have a lot of energization of swadhsthana chakra; that person is very much pleasure bent, and has perhaps less development at manipura or anahata.

Swami Shankardevananda: This would be very much a hormonal thing depending mainly on the drive from the hypothalamus.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. I have not thought very much about what governs the constitutional factors of it. Each one of us is proportionately energized differently in different chakra circuits. Each one of us strikes a different chord. There is a different frequency of energization of the chakras. There are individual differences between each one of us, because each one of us has different degrees of evolution of the quality of the manifestation of each of the chakras. A sociopath who goes round beating up old ladies to steal their handbags, and an astronaut, may have the same chord. They may be identical in the level of activity of each of the chakras, but the guy who is an astronaut, hopefully, has a higher degree of evolution in most of his chakras. So these are two important parameters which define the qualities of the chakras - percentage of activity and degree of evolution. These define the character of each person.

Swami Shankardevananda: You mentioned that there are chakras which express energy and certain chakras which take in energy.

Swami Vivekananda: No, what I was saying is that we know these circuits exist in anatomical form, that there are whole areas down there in the body which do not only trigger off something up here (in the brain), but are also triggered by something up here. And we know that there are, for instance, the hunger and the sensual centers in the hypothalamus. We know that they are directly connected with the relevant organs in the body. As the hunger builds up, more neuronal activity builds up within those circuits. And if an emotional component comes into it, it's very likely that other parts of the limbic system will start generating energy too. You will go rushing around to get something to eat as quickly as possible. This implies that there is an increased neuronal activity within that circuit.

People talk about energy within those circuits, and they are certain it is an energy. They say these circuits are energized because when they start getting activated, you can feel throbbing, shaking, etc. But is it energy like electricity running through a wire, or is it in actual fact only a message like the electricity running through a telephone wire? The mere fact that a person shakes can mean that it is a message that is being transmitted to the muscles and the muscles do all the shaking.

I tend to prefer the physiological point of view which says that it is neuronal activity; that is, the nerves and circuits conduct impulses and the muscles create the shaking and energy.

Swami Shankardevananda: But there is energy even in neuronal activity.

Swami Vivekananda: Well, there is, but the energy is produced secondarily to the neuronal activity. The primary object of the circuit is to convey an impulse. The message is carried and it uses energy as a carrier in the same way as a telephone uses energy. You would not get a telephone wire and try to light a 100 watt bulb, because there is just not enough energy there. Telephone wires run only on about 2 volts; it is not primarily an energy transmission, but primarily a message transmission; the energy is a secondary issue and comes from another source.

Some people, by their nature, have some of these circuits much more activated and "energized" than others. There are some people who are very much more into the whole manipura thing. They eat a lot and have big muscles; they are all manipura chakra. You get anahata people who are very paternal and loving and always sensing other people's feelings, everywhere they go. The same applies to the other chakras.

Chakra types can be easily seen at a party where there are a whole lot of people around and you do not know anybody. Then you will see the person who's very much into feelings will start picking up all over the place who is kind and who is not kind. That is what he perceives in the environment. He is predominantly an anahata type. A person who's into the intellectual trip will listen to all the conversations going on and if there is a good intellectual tone, he will fit into that circle. If a group is talking about football or something like that, he will go straight past. He will be the vishuddhi/ajna type. Then you will get the manipura chap who will notice first of all who's in the power scene and he will start associating with that. If there is no obvious power position, it usually develops towards the end of the night. Sometimes you will go into a place and say "that is it". It is a special chair and a special place. Now if you are on a power trip you go and sit there.

The emotional person, when he perceives the scene, is perceiving the feelings around the place, the swadhsthana chap will be seeing other things such as food, sexual encounters, etc. Each one of us has a preference in these things, and that preference seems to be to be driven by energization or activation of those particular circuits which may be predominating. And some people are balanced and versatile and will fit into any situation. These are the yogic types.

I think there is an inbuilt rhythm and activation of these particular circuits within the body. I somehow suspect that we go along on a number of different levels of consciousness at the same time. Sometimes we have dreams of total experiences of something that is going to occur in three or four months time. That means time, instead of being a longitudinal thing, is a vertical thing. How do we explain that in our neuro-physiological framework? There are a lot of experiences that are difficult to explain scientifically. But I don't think that necessarily means that a physiological explanation is invalid.

These days it is possible to measure certain physical manifestations of chakras and the dissociated chakras. Maybe you could get a personality break of a person who was obviously into a certain chakra and test the activation of that chakra. I think the energy around the chakra is easily explainable in that it is the energy that would be given off by the activated field.

Swami Shankardevananda: In terms of circuits, certain of the chakras have more receptive properties, especially in mooladhara and ajna, whilst certain chakras seem to be more expressive, such as swadhishthana and manipura.

Swami Vivekananda: Probably it is associated with the gyanendriyas and kamendriyas (sensory and motor nerves).

Swami Shankardevananda: All the chakras must have a dual purpose: there must be a receptive and an active side to them. It would seem, for example, that ajna is receptive to psychic and intuitive energy, but it also transmits at the subtle, telepathic level. Vishuddhi expresses and communicates that intuition at the verbal level, and at the same time expresses compassion felt through anahata, and also expresses the experiences felt through manipura and swadhishthana. All chakras have a two-way channel and that is because of ida and pingala.

Swami Vivekananda: I think that vishuddhi expresses the qualities of the other chakras only as an agent of their quality, because the other chakras will express energy in a different way. If you are with a person who is loving, especially if you get close, you can feel the love pouring out. Therefore, anahata is expressing in that way, but I think that anahata would use vishuddhi chakra to say the words that go with it.

Swami Shankardevananda: Yes, the energy flows through the other chakras, so the activation of one chakra affects all the other chakras and modifies them according to its major harmonic, but in its own way, so then manipura and swadhishthana become love dominant if anahata becomes active. All the other chakras would then line themselves up with anahata chakra.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, I suppose manipura chakra is an expressive chakra and if you feel high in manipura, then it would tend to flow out love more than feel the experience of love, which is anahata. It gets a bit complicated and it gets into an area which I had not thought of.

Swami Shankardevananda: There is a definite connection between mooladhara and ajna. Also, there appears to be a connection between swadhishthana, vishuddhi and bindu, a very direct connection, and lalana, which is a sub-chakra of vishuddhi. Then it seems that manipura and anahata are also related. This intimate connection between the chakras is symbolized by the seven candles on the Hebrew candlestand (menorah). This is a representation of how chakras are interacting, but actually it is a much more complicated diagram in which all chakras interact with each other. We can regard mooladhara and swadhishthana as being tamasic chakras, manipura and anahata as being predominantly rajasic, and vishuddhi and ajna as being sattvic. These pairs function together. Vishuddhi and ajna, for example, are connected on a receptive, expressive merger, one being active and the other being receptive.

Swami Vivekananda: But I see rajasic and tamasic qualities being in each of the chakras and I see the chakras as being horizontal rather than a vertical ladder form. I just see that they have qualities all the way through them from rajasic, right through to sattvic.

Swami Shankardevananda: That is also true. Some people think the word tamasic carries moralistic connotations.

Swami Vivekananda: In evolution, is the bliss that the yogi experiences any different to the bliss of orgasm? It might be at a more highly evolved level. Is the selfish love of mother for child, to the exclusion of all other children, anything more than just a lower level of transcendental love?

Swami Shankardevananda: In his article on kundalini, Carl Jung says that from above manipura chakra you leave the whole sphere of the earth behind, the individuality, and the diaphragm which lies at the manipura level could be an important anatomical separating component as far as the chakras are concerned. And the movement away from individual love towards universal love takes place at that point just above the diaphragm; anahata chakra.

Swami Vivekananda: It is very likely that these different opinions are all right. The mountain looks different from different angles, but from above you see all the people looking at the same mountain. The problem comes when you go back down to earth and talk to all the individual people. It is very difficult to describe what you experienced when you saw the whole mountain. This is why we get so many different opinions, philosophies and religions.

MOOLADHARA & SWADHISTHANA CHAKRAS

Swami Shankardevananda: Can you discuss the nerve complexes associated with mooladhara and swadhishthana chakras?

Swami Vivekananda: Well, for all of these segments there are somatic nerves, which deal with the sensory input and the voluntary motor output, and also there are the autonomic nerves, divided into sympathetic and parasympathetic. And usually there is an appropriate endocrine gland for each segment, like the pineal, pituitary and thyroid. The exception is muladhara, and to date, medical science has not found an endocrine gland associated with it. This of course does not mean that one will not be discovered in the future.

Let us try to work out the psychophysiological aspects of mooladhara. In the male it is actually associated with the base of the penis and with the female, the cervix. So it has a very deep-rooted sexual link.

If you repeat a mooladhara chakra mantra and you concentrate in that area somewhere, you will feel a certain vibration occurring. Now what is the mantra doing? Is it stimulating some physiological organ, or is it some sort of occult stimulation? Is it stimulating a physical organ or is it activating a lot of energy which seems to appear in a certain place which we call a chakra? I think it is perhaps the last one of these.

Swami Shankardevananda: I believe that the mooladhara trigger point and the place of actual experience may be different, but the general location of mooladhara chakra is certainly in the perineum; it is clearly felt in that area. If it is felt higher, then it is not mooladhara chakra it is swadhishthana. Either the mantra is wrong or the vibration is stimulating something else which is more receptive and reactive.

Swami Vivekananda: Is there a physiological basis for this? It is quite possible that the repetition of a mantra is stimulating the spinal cord. You can certainly feel it in the area being stimulated and it is not only there, because all the fibers that are coming out from the body are stimulated. So no matter at what level you stimulate your spinal cord, no matter what chakra is stimulated, you are going to collect the fibers from so-called mooladhara chakra. At swadhishthana you will also get the mooladhara chakra fibers; at manipura you get the mooladhara fibers back to swadhishthana and manipura as well - and all the way up. Mooladhara chakra is always there in the act because its fibers come from the lowest part.

Swami Shankardevananda: Gould we consider the sexual energy of mooladhara and its possible transmutation?

Swami Vivekananda: This basic sexual energy that Gopi Krishna has written about is actually the sattvic or subtle essence which can be perceived when the consciousness becomes very sensitive. This is the essence of the kundalini experience, the sublimation of sexual energy, the basic life force which is the source of all generation, regeneration and reproduction. Gopi Krishna felt that what he was seeing was semen being converted into energy and distributing itself throughout the body. I feel that what he was perceiving was a clairvoyant view of energy given off by the simple nerve fibers in those organs he was talking about. But he identified it as semen because that is what is written in the scriptures. I do not know what women are supposed to have, he did not mention that and I do not think the scriptures do either. I sometimes have a funny feeling that women did not exist until about 20 years ago.

Swami Nischalananda: The *Hatha Toga Pradipika* and certain tantric texts do talk about women, however, generally that side has been neglected. According to yoga the sexual energy in men and women is sublimated and transmuted into the ascent of the kundalini. The starting point, the trigger, is mooladhara. For some reason, the Buddhists say that the ascent commences at manipura, not mooladhara. How is it that the enlightened Buddha completely bypassed the two lower chakras? Actually the whole concept of where kundalini lies is a matter of experience. I don't think that Buddha actually said that kundalini starts in manipura; more likely he stated that real spiritual evolution starts from manipura. Swamiji has said many times that only when the kundalini reaches manipura is it stabilized. It starts in mooladhara but stabilizes in manipura.

I think this apparent discrepancy comes because of the philosophy of Buddha who was a gyani, and he didn't get much into kundalini yoga. Vajrayana, on the other hand, which was an offshoot of Buddhism at a later date, is very much concerned with mooladhara. But let us get back to the functioning of mooladhara.

Swami Shankardevananda: Mooladhara chakra has two basic modes of function, one is energy depleted and the other is energy activated. Within that system there is a sick and a healthy mooladhara. What are the symptoms of these different states of mooladhara chakra? It is simple - you are either sick or healthy, balanced or unbalanced. If you are unbalanced you are going to have ida over or under active or pingala over or under active. You are going to have physical and mental symptoms, fear, insecurity and all those things. Freud said that everyone who denies mooladhara becomes constipated and hoards money. Every miser is constipated. These symptoms may be mild or very extreme. In the fully awakened state they are either going to rip you to pieces or take you to a higher awareness. So what is the basic quality of a well functioning mooladhara chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: Renunciation.

Swami Shankardevananda: We can say that security and renunciation are interchangeable in the mooladhara system. We can say that in this chakra basic security is the key. Renunciation obviously implies security and if you are secure within yourself you don't need any external security.

Swami Satyadhama: When awakening of mooladhara takes place then there is no such problem as insecurity.

Swami Vivekananda: Of course this is the state of consciousness of an awakened mooladhara. A low energized mooladhara chakra generally means low vitality, emotional insecurity, fear of the future. I also think low self-esteem is involved in this. It almost forms the syndrome of depression, although you don't necessarily have to get the joylessness of the low energized swadhisthana chakra. If there is low evolution and high drive in mooladhara, then you get the ambitious person out to collect as much as he can. He can be a multimillionaire and still accumulate stuff because he still feels insecure. The security is a state of consciousness, not a physical reality. As mooladhara chakra starts to evolve the person attains security, which is totally unrelated to circumstances.

You can see varying degrees of renunciation not only between sannyasins and the community, but within the community of sannyasins as well.

Swami Satyadhama: When energies pool at mooladhara, do they stimulate or aggravate the chakras? What is the difference between stagnation of energy and activation of the chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: Well, I just see that the mooladhara circuit in some people is sometimes poorly energized; the whole circuit itself has low energization. This varies between people and varies within people, depending upon cosmic events, the position of planets, the weather and all sorts of things, including psychological factors such as disappointments, hurts and threats to one's security. It varies with each of us. Some people are very much in mooladhara; hooked on the basic sexual aspect of mooladhara in which case they are very much involved in money and possessions. If they are low energized, they will still think about these things but they will not do anything about it.

I think you need a certain amount of energization to produce the drive that is inherent in each chakra; the basic sexual hunting drive in swadhisthana chakra, the territorial and dominance drive in manipura and the nurturing drive in anahata chakra. Remember, there are two parameters, the amount of energization of each chakra and the degree of evolution.

It seems that yoga practices balance the energy inherent within each of the chakra circuits, and by virtue of eliminating the blockages (samskaras), evolve the quality of the chakras at the same time. And of course, if you have the grace of the guru you are on the express line.

Swami Satyadhama: So does pooled energy act to block or can it be used to activate the chakra? For example, if a person has a lot of pooled energy in mooladhara, would that be an energy block or could that pooled energy be utilized to activate and awaken a chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: It can be used to activate if the psychological blockages are eliminated.

Swami Shankardevananda: I think there is a difference between storage and blockage. The ability to hold or store energy takes place consciously, whilst having an unconscious or subconscious blockage leads to repression.

Swami Vivekananda: And repression of a highly energized chakra can produce all sorts of physical symptoms, such as muscle tension, malfunctioning of internal organs, etc., as well as emotional problems.

Swami Shankardevananda: What are the psychological effects of mooladhara awakening?

Swami Vivekananda: As I have already said, renunciation.

Swami Shankardevananda: The feeling of separation, the beginning of your individual awareness; awakening to the fact that you are separate from something else.

Swami Nischalananda: Primal alienation or something like that.

Swami Shankardevananda: Do you think that the basic energy at mooladhara is anxiety, fear, or is it insecurity?

Swami Vivekananda: The basic emotion? Well, it depends on the energization of the circuit. If there is not much energy it will tend to be depression and hopelessness. But if there is a lot of energy it will then depend upon the evolution of the chakra. If it is little evolved, then there will be intense insecurity, which is anxiety. If it is highly evolved there will be a sense of oneness and complete security. Generally mooladhara is blocked to some extent in most people and blockages may manifest as muscle tension.

Muscle tensions are manifestations of the circuits of mental blockages, samskaras. It is the samskaras that keep down the evolution of the quality of consciousness that is within these chakra circuits. I think that low evolution, muscle spasms and the maladjustments of the organisms that are supplied by that part of the autonomic nervous system are due to psychic tensions.

Swami Shankardevananda: These psychic and personality tensions are due to various events in the environment.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. The inner unconscious conflicts coming into conflict with events in the environment. For example, if a man feels very insecure and someone steals a valuable possession from him, he may go into an absolute frenzy. This is opposed to the reaction of someone else who does not have the same sort of conflicts and insecurities.

If a person cannot express the feeling that is involved at mooladhara, that feeling can express itself in somatic problems such as spasms of the muscles, in autonomic problems, blood pressure, constipation, and who knows what else, maybe functional urethritis, cystitis, colitis, rectitis, dysmenorrhea, etc.

PSYCHOSIS

Swami Shankardevananda: Would you associate a highly energized, low evolved mooladhara problem as the cause of manic depression?

Swami Vivekananda: I think manic depression is an ida/pingala thing. I think we are in another dimension there, because a manic person will undergo all manifestations of a very highly energized and controlled chakra. He will be rushing around gambling all his money away, trying to get more, getting into all sorts of sexual exploits, going round pushing other people around - the rajasic aspect.

Swami Sambuddhananda: Would you say that schizophrenia and paranoia are related with ida and pingala imbalance?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, there are people who are stuck in ida. Ida is very much overactive. It is interesting that research shows that the taking in of negative aspects of the environment through the right hemisphere (ida) is paranoia. This is what paranoia is all about. A lot of people, some of them quite highly evolved people who have specialized much in ida are a bit paranoid. The ida seems to have a negative aspect about it. Even if you come into it at a high level of consciousness, it seems to have a bit of a negative pull. If you are going to activate your chakras you have to make sure your ida and pingala are balanced.

Swami Shankardevananda: But manic depression, psychosis and other mental problems relate to either mooladhara or ajna because it is only at these two points that you have the fusion of ida and pingala. Therefore, psychosis, manic depression and all these things would seem to relate very much to the mooladhara/ajna circuit. If ida and pingala are coming out of mooladhara chakra then what would be the mechanism dealing with psychosis?

Swami Vivekananda: I think that ida and pingala are only related to the activities of the cerebral hemispheres.

Swami Shankardevananda: But the whole body is controlled by the hemispheres. The whole body gets the energy. Arteries and veins, sensory and motor nerves, right and left hemispheres are all reflections of the ida and pingala process.

Swami Vivekananda: I see ida and pingala anatomically up here in the brain, not crossing down the spine. I believe that ida and pingala crossing each other is a concept and a symbol of experience.

Swami Satyadhama: I think that awakening of mooladhara is the beginning of psychic awareness. That is why with mooladhara awakening, people often become disturbed.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes. They can get caught in the psychic consciousness, which is the consciousness in which you have hallucinations, etc.

Swami Satyadhama: It is much more powerful than anything they have ever experienced before.

Swami Vivekananda: We slide in and out of it twice a day anyway, even if we are not doing any formal closed eye meditation techniques. I think if you hold the awareness at the psychic level, and you can do it with yoga nidra, you will experience a state in which there is thought blocking - what is called thought disorder - you know, where one thought leads on to another one that is unrelated to it and it just goes off into the distance. Paradoxical thinking - where two paradoxical things can exist together, hallucinations, voices talking to you, you see things and so forth.

Swami Shankardevananda: So therefore we assume that pingala is blocked and ida is flowing. All that stuff is coming out through ida from mooladhara; basic subconscious material.

Swami Vivekananda: At the same time there is psychic withdrawal.

Swami Shankardevananda: Yes, so what does that imply?

Swami Vivekananda: If there is a psychic withdrawal, then even though we appear to be in communication with the outside, in actual fact we are still inside from the psychic point of view. Paradoxical thinking, suspicious feelings, voices and all these things, and not being able to keep your thoughts together on one topic for any more than a couple of seconds - all these come from a psychic, inner plane.

PHYSICAL DISEASES

Swami Shankardevananda: What about physical disease associated with mooladhara chakra problems? We have already talked about constipation; this of course brings about things like hemorrhoids.

Swami Vivekananda: There are a lot of other types of constipation involved too - of energy, emotions, of information - yes, all inherent in mooladhara chakra as hoarding of any type.

Swami Gaurishankar: What about disease ?

Swami Vivekananda: Statistics involved in diseases in this area also tend to relate to the manipura and anahata areas, and the diseases of hypertension, heart problems, peptic ulcers and all that sort of thing. I would assume all sorts of diseases of the lower excretory and reproductive organs are associated with a malfunctioning mooladhara.

Swami Shankardevananda: Cancer?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, of the rectum and bladder.

Swami Shankardevananda: The helplessness associated with it too?

Swami Vivekananda: I don't know if it is all cancers we are talking about now. I don't know if they would be segmental or what. Hypertension, for instance, appears to be a generalized condition. It is mainly related to the manipura chakra circuits. Cancer may well be a generalized condition that is related to one of the chakras, perhaps mooladhara.

Swami Paramananda: How far can you take the relationship between the chakras and the physical organs like the heart? If the heart is not functioning well and it affects the anahata chakra which is love, can that also mean that there is a lack of love going through that person and physically it comes out in anahata chakra and the heart as disease?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, it can be in both. If a person has a need for love coming from outside and it is not coming, and/or that person has imbalanced constructions of love, then anahata problems can arise in the form of cardiac problems such as angina, palpitations, etc.

Swami Paramananda: Do you think that applies to all the chakras? If you find a particular organ not functioning in a sick person, does it mean there is a deficiency of the qualities of the chakra related to that part of the body?

Swami Vivekananda: As a general rule, yes, but you can get other problems as well. For instance, you can get an activation of manipura chakra, which activates the sympathetic nervous system which produces restriction of the coronary artery.

There is interreaction between the different chakras, and this is the beauty of a well taught yoga class - it balances all these qualities, and balance is the key to the whole thing. Rather than trying to work on one area, which is a more specific medical style, yoga therapy works on the whole human structure.

Swami Muktibodhananda: How do the physical organs relate to the chakras and spiritual evolution?

Swami Vivekananda: Consider hysterectomy. Let us assume the wrong woman is wheeled into the operating theater and she has a hysterectomy. This will then cut off the end organ for a lot of nerve fibers and the atrophy will run up the nerves and eliminate the brain centers involved in that. That is an example of a deficiency in the organ producing changes in the centers involved, the circuit. Does that make it any more difficult for her to realize higher aspects of swadhsthana chakra?

Swami Shankardevananda: Depends how much of the centers is lost. If she just loses the uterus and not the ovaries, for example, all the hormonal secretions will be maintained. Anyway, after the age of forty most women have a natural hysterectomy.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, but they don't lose the nerve endings. When the uterus is removed, because the nerve endings are useless, they atrophy. Does this affect the associated chakras?

Swami Nischalananda: Swamiji says it does not make any difference if there is a vasectomy, because it is only the physical body. I think, as regards swadhsthana for example, that if they are already on the spiritual path and have developed some psychic awareness, then that operation would definitely not affect them much, if at all. If they had no background of yogic practice, then probably the destruction of that organ would slightly hamper progress, because initially you depend upon those organs to stimulate something, especially in the practices of hatha and kriya yoga. If you follow the path of bhakti or gyana yoga, of course, it makes no difference.

Swami Shankardevananda: If you lose one center or two centers physically I think it does not hinder you because a lot of other centers are left. There are tons of potential left within the brain.

Swami Vivekananda: To sum up, we function on physical, emotional, mental, psychic and spiritual levels. The chakras span all these levels. The purpose of yoga and tantra is to stimulate the chakras at all these levels. Then, and only then, can we become healthy human beings.

MENTAL PROBLEMS

Swami Sambuddhananda: What is the cause of depression?

Swami Vivekananda: I think low activation of the swadhsthana circuit is the prime cause of depression.

Swami Shankardevananda: I thought it was due to low activation in mooladhara.

Swami Vivekananda: Well, the qualities in both these chakras are very close.

Swami Shankardevananda: So what is the difference between mooladhara and swadhsthana?

Swami Vivekananda: You can see the different qualities in the various types of anxiety you see in different people. In psychiatry, the various forms of anxiety all come under the name of anxiety, yet they are all different syndromes, and they are also related to different chakra circuits. People with a low energized mooladhara chakra are not just apprehensive about the future, they also feel insecure about the present. They simply don't feel that this is a secure world, and the state of consciousness they have at any time is that things are sort of dangerous.

There is another type of depression which I perceived in a little woman who was a Piscean, forty-five years of age. Her husband had left her when she was about thirty five, and she led a very quiet life, as Pisceans tend to do. But she was still pretty energized in swadhsthana chakra, as Pisceans tend to be. She was describing this anxiety that she had. Through empathy I started to experience what she was describing. It was a sort of quivering vibration going on in the pelvis. It was a quivering all around the area of swadhsthana chakra, not specifically genital, but all around the upper part of the pelvis. It really was a type of anxiety.

I gave her the general swadhsthana practices like shalabhasana, etc. She improved a lot. I don't really know what the yogic practices did, but they seemed to deactivate her pentup emotion. I think it was just sexual tension that she had in that area and she was perceiving it as anxiety. She also had a fear of it because she did not know what it was.

There is another case of depression which is a well known one - butterflies in the stomach, accompanied by palpitations, which is just activation of the sympathetic nervous system. One case I saw was a taxi driver who had a minor accident in his cab. He got this phobia and he couldn't get in his taxi without experiencing butterflies. In Aruba (South America), where he lived, taxi fares are minimal so that the taxi drivers are really hard up. This man had to employ someone else to drive his cab for him and he was losing money. He had been off work for six weeks. Every time he went up to his cab he would get this terrible churning in the stomach and he developed hypertension. He was a very dynamic Aries.

So I thought, "What to do?" I taught him kunjai in order to get all that energy out of manipura chakra. He did it once in the ashram and then immediately went out and got in his cab. This type of anxiety and depression is obviously a manipura overactivity.

There is another type of anxiety which arises through too much thinking; "Wouldn't it be terrible if such and such happened, and if that happens maybe something else will happen, and if that happens maybe..." People with this problem just think and think and think, until that preoccupation produces a fear within them which is not necessarily contained in the symptoms. That is dealt with by practising bhramari pranayama. So within this diagnosis of anxiety there seems to be these four types. There may be others related to the other chakras, but I have not yet noticed them.

Swami Nischalananda: Maybe stuttering, loss of voice and things like that, related to vishuddhi, can be cured by simhasana.

Swami Vivekananda: Exactly, tightening up of the throat. It seems to be more related to a lack of self-confidence rather than the feeling of anxiety. Simhasana works wonders.

When I was in general practice, I used to do a lot of spinal adjustments and manipulation, and after a while I specialized in spinal problems. I did a lot of backs at that stage. I found that patients came in clusters. I would get a lot of people with an upper cervical lesion, migraine headaches, tightness in the neck region, with all the symptoms of chronic sinusitis and all the other things related to upper cervical tension. I found that all the people with upper cervical problems were coming in when the moon was full, all the people with lumbar/sacral problems were coming in when the moon was new, and in between all the others were spread out. This is interesting, because it is related to chakra activation. Almost before the patient told me, I could pinpoint the exact spinal segment in which he would be having problems. I knew according to the moon phase. This relationship became obvious to me, especially towards the end of the time I was manipulating, because I used to take on the symptoms of my patients.

Swami Shankardevananda: This means that we need a whole set of asanas working on all the segments of the spine.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, we have them, for example, surya namaskara. In Australia we used to use the leg lock posture for mooladhara chakra, shalabhasana and bhujangasana for swadhsthana chakra. Actually these asanas are supposed to be for manipura chakra, but so many people have such stiff backs that they activate swadhsthana chakra instead. Then paschimottanasana and dhanurasana for manipura; for anahata, supta vajrasana and matsyasana; for vishuddhi, sarvangasana; and for ajna, sirshasana and ashwa sanchalanasana. Halasana also activates because the inflection is brought right up to the upper cervical area. However, people who have a stiff upper cervical spine should not do any of those upper spine flexion practices, because the discs are very tiny at that part and these asanas can be too much.

Swami Nischalananda: Khandharasana is good for this area. It's not so strong because a lot of the body weight is taken by the feet.

Swami Gaurishankar: Let us get back to the subject of depression.

Swami Vivekananda: I think there are different qualities in the thing that we call depression. The dread of the future is one of the symptoms of depression and I think it is a mooladhara chakra problem. But the dejection, lack of joy and loss of sense of humor that you find in many people is due to a low energized swadhsthana. With a low energized manipura comes loss of appetite and low emotional activity.

In depression there is a vicious circle; the whole mechanism, the whole noradrenalin/dopamine mechanism seems to slow down. It involves hormones. Most of the anti-depressants act upon this noradrenalin/dopamine system.

Swami Shankardevananda: I would also imagine that depletion of testosterone, excessive sexual activity, depletion of adrenalin, excessive fear and anxiety, etc., all lead to a depressed state.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. I have often suspected too, that when the moon is new for instance, then people tend to function to some extent on the energy of the lower chakras. The other ones are functioning too, but it is the lower chakras that are carrying a lot of the energy. And actually, the normal person experiences a depressed feeling lasting a couple of days during that phase. Then the moon starts activating the other chakras and the person comes out of it.

Swami Nischalananda: This relationship is also indicated by the fact that some people go crazy at the time of full moon. It means that energy comes up to and accumulates at ajna chakra. The high energy affects the mind.

Swami Vivekananda: It is strange that the medical profession denies that the full moon has any effect on the mental state of people, and there are very comprehensive statistics from psychiatric hospitals to show that the admission rate is no higher at the time of the full moon than it is at the time of new moon. To this I say that there are different conditions for which people are being admitted at the time of the full moon and at the time of the new moon; this is most clearly seen.

Swami Shankardevananda: In hospitals, all the nursing staff know that when the full moon comes there are going to be problems. There will be more road accidents, more crazy people coming in and people going off their heads, etc.

Swami Muktibodhananda: What is the difference between fear, anxiety and phobia?

Swami Vivekananda: Fear is a normal response to a threatening situation. If a tiger came into this room, nine people would be frightened and that would be a natural response. Anxiety, on the other hand, is really a collection of symptoms which go on for a long time, usually not provoked by an external situation.

Phobias are immediate responses, just like fear, but the responses are to a non-threatening situation. A mouse a hundred yards down the corridor, for instance, would not affect any of us, but someone with a phobia about mice would panic.

Swami Shankardevananda: Phobias are actually a displacement from an original object on to a different situation.

Swami Vivekananda: That is the ego-defence mechanism that Freud used to talk about. Freud used to talk about anxiety, psychic complexes and all that, but the man in the taxi who had butterflies in the stomach did have an accident which may have activated some old samskara somewhere, which turned into a full fear of getting into his taxi. But the whole thing was cleared so quickly; it was not deep-seated. Sometimes I believe these things just build up in a susceptible moment rather than in a susceptible person. They build up from a small bit of anxiety to a bigger anxiety on the basis of a vicious circle. You break that vicious circle anywhere and the whole thing just dissolves.

Swami Shankardevananda: The longer it is sustained the more difficult it is to break.

Swami Vivekananda: Each chakra has its own work to perform and if one center is blocked or diseased, then another center takes over its work. Because this work or function is being done by another center, it becomes perverted. This happens a lot if a person is inhibited in swadhsthana chakra. Manipura will take over the work and then the sexual activities will be just a power play, competition and that sort of stuff- completely perverted.

This perversion also occurs if manipura chakra takes over the job of anahata. It is seen in do-gooders, those people who come and force you, almost by threats of violence, to let them help you.

Swami Shankardevananda: Another example is of those persons who get involved in a sexual encounter to fulfil the anahata center, and of course they don't get that fulfillment. This can lead to problems in marriage and all the things you were saying about perversion of normal function.

Swami Vivekananda: So the purpose of yoga is to balance the functioning of the chakras and at the same time to awaken the associated energies. Then and only then can we function as joyful, spontaneous human beings, without depression, psychosis or physical problems. Only when we balance and awaken all the chakras can life become meaningful.

Section 5 – APPENDIX

Chapter 7

Evidence for the Existence of Chakras

Kundalini yoga teaches us techniques to influence our nervous system and mind so as to bring about total balance and reintegration at every level of our being. It is an expanded concept of man, a method of developing creative awareness and, more than this, of putting the knowledge gained to use via a system of experiential techniques. It helps us to develop a new outlook on life and ourselves. The chakras and their interaction within the totality of our personality, stretched between ida and pingala, balanced in sushumna, open up new dimensions for our mind and understanding to explore and develop.

The techniques of kundalini involve **kriyas, combinations of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, rotation of breath and consciousness through psychic passages and subtle spaces, repetition of mantra and the piercing of psychic centers** in order to heat up the psychic and physical energies of man and to activate and awaken the chakras to our conscious level of experience and control. The techniques are also designed to bring about balanced purification and activation of all the chakras, but with the **gentle accentuation of one or two important centers**. Certain techniques, such as **ajapa japa**, achieve this, creating a psychic friction which ignites the spark of higher consciousness.

When conditions for ignition reach the required temperature and pressure, energy is liberated within the body and mind, transforming our total personality. This energy must be real and actual; though perhaps as yet undefined and not qualified. It is measurable at both the physical and psychic levels if we have the correct conditions, equipment and understanding of the phenomena. In this regard, several researchers have begun to pioneer exploration into the uncharted depths of the human psyche and are devising techniques and equipment to assess, measure and scientifically prove the existence of the chakras as the primary controlling points for different levels of our being.

Measuring the chakras

One man who has helped to pioneer scientific research into yoga and the phenomena of kundalini and chakras is Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama. He states, "Fascinated... I too began physiological experiments about fifteen years ago to try to determine if chakras actually exist and their relationship to the autonomic nervous system and internal organs... Through various examinations we have been able to determine that there are significant differences in the physiological function of the organ associated with the chakra that the individual subjects claimed to have awakened. Therefore, this research has led to the conclusion that chakras do, in fact, exist." (1)

In his search for the existence of chakras, Motoyama has developed his own machinery. One of these is the 'chakra instrument' which is designed to detect the electromagnetic field of the body and any changes which take place in it due to chakra stimulation and activation. Looking like a telephone booth and enclosed in a light-proof, lead-shielded room, the machine was designed to detect energy generated in the body and then emitted from it in terms of various physical variables such as electrical, magnetic and optical energy changes. Copper electrodes are positioned at the top and bottom of the cage and a sliding, square panel with electrodes on all four sides (left, right, front, back), is free to traverse up and down the frame structure so as to be positioned at any part of the subject's body. An electromagnetic field is set up between the electrodes and any vital energy ejected from the body affects this very sensitive field.

A copper electrode and a photo-electric cell are positioned 12 and 20 centimeters in front of the subject, level with the classical position for a given chakra. The location is monitored for changes as the individual concentrates his mental energy at the chakra point, and measurements are made for 3 to 5 minutes before, during and after concentration on the chakra. Because of its powerful pre-amplifier (impedance near infinity), even the most subtle energy ejection can be picked up and recorded. Information recorded is sent to various amplifiers, computerized analyzers and oscilloscopes and is recorded on a highly sensitive chart recorder. Other equipment is also used: to monitor respiration, autonomic nervous system (galvanic skin resistance), changes in blood flow (plethysmograph), heart (electrocardiograph), subtle vibrations in the skin (micro-tremor), so as to measure other effects of chakra stimulation on the body and to make comparisons and interpretations.

Motoyama has used his equipment extensively to determine diseases in the body. (2) In one case he measured a woman who was to have a uterine tumor removed a week later. Measurements on his AMI machine (refer to the chapter entitled "Evidence for the Existence of Nadis") showed imbalance in the related meridians. The pattern of energy measured by the 'chakra instrument' in front of the uterus (swadhisthana chakra) was much greater and quite different than normal. Motoyama's research indicates that there is a definite correspondence between physical disease and disturbance in the energy of the chakra traditionally said by yogis to control that part of the physical body.

Activity in the chakras

Motoyama has also measured chakra activity in normal subjects and recorded and compared readings in subjects practising yoga versus untrained, control subjects. (3) He found that in an untrained subject concentrating on ajna chakra there was no change recorded by the electrodes. The lines on the recording paper remained flat before, during and after concentration.

A subject who had been practising stimulation of swadhisthana chakra for some time showed a great deal of activation of that center, and much greater than in the control subject who showed none at all. Large amplitude waves were seen before, during and after concentration, indicating activation, however, there was no change during the period for concentration, indicating lack of control over the center. This compares with another subject who had been practising yoga for five years and who evidenced a marked rise in electrical activity from ajna chakra but only during the time of concentration. The results indicate that he had developed control over his ajna chakra.

'Chakra instrument' studies have been made with several yogis. (4) Dr. A.K. Tebecis, a former professor of Canberra University, Australia, who had studied yoga throughout Asia and who claims to have experienced astral projection due to the awakening of kundalini, was tested on the 'chakra instrument'. Dr. Tebecis concentrates on anahata chakra during meditation and also has a chronic digestive disorder. The AMI revealed instability in the nadis involved in digestion, manipura chakra, and also in those related to the swadhisthana area. When the 'chakra instrument' was used to measure manipura and anahata, no change was found at manipura. Anahata concentration revealed considerable intensification of energy during the period of concentration.

Two unusual findings have also been reported by Motoyama. In one case, not only did the subject develop a more intense electrical reading during concentration on manipura, but also had the subjective experience that psychic energy was being ejected from manipura. During this time the positive electrical potential vanished, but only during the time of her subjective sensation, and would reappear again as soon as the feeling of emission vanished. Motoyama states:

"One might surmise that the psi energy generated a negative electrical potential which neutralized the positive electrical charge. However, it is also possible to postulate the creation of a new physical energy. In fact, it is my opinion that the psi energy emitted from R.B.'s manipura chakra actually extinguished the surrounding physical energy. I take this stand because the positive potential was precisely neutralized and because there was never any appearance of a negative potential." (5)

The second case involves a subject who concentrated on anahata chakra. As the subject relaxed, the chakra area was seen to be activated. She was then asked to concentrate on the anahata area and it was arranged that any time she had the subjective experience of psi energy emission she was to press a button which caused a mark to be made on the chart. It was found that when this mark appeared the photoelectric cell signalled the presence of a weak light being generated in the light-proof room. Her chakra monitor also detected electrical energy of high potential and frequency.

Motoyama states that these findings imply that psychic energy working in anahata chakra may be able to create energy in the physical dimension (light, electricity, etc.). It appears that whatever energy is being produced in a developed and refined chakra circuit is capable of extinguishing or creating energy in the physical dimension, which supports the **yogic view of chakras as transducers, converting psychic energy into physical energy and back**. Motoyama feels that if further research substantiates his findings, then the Law of Conservation of Energy, as one of the basic foundation stones of modern physics, will have to be revised.

The verification of an energy at the psychic plane which, though of unknown source and substance, can influence matter, has been long claimed by yogis. It is also thought to be the basis of healing and of all sciences in which mind is used to control matter. **Yogis even state that the world is a manifestation of mind**, a view which is now being supported more and more by physicists, especially those working with the subatomic particles that make up all of matter and which lie midway between matter and pure energy (prana).

Motoyama states, "I feel that the continuation of research into the nature of psi energies, by many others as well as myself, will lead to considerable change in our views of matter, of mind and body, of human beings, and of the world itself." (6)

The psychic level

Objective evidence for the existence of the chakras also appears to have been found by kinesiologist Valerie Hunt and her associates at UCLA in America. (7) Assisted by Rosalyn Bruyere, a psychic "aura reader", Hunt used a number of measurements in order to study the body's field emission when it is being stimulated by deep muscle massage (Rolfing). This was prompted by an earlier observation that after Rolfing and meditation there was an increase in the electromyographic baseline.

Hunt and associates utilized electromyographic equipment (EMG) which measures the steady, low voltage of muscular activity plus several other instruments. Electrodes were attached to eight sites, including chakra locations such as the crown (sahasrara), eyebrow center (ajna), throat (vishuddhi), heart (anahata), base of the spine and acupuncture points on the foot and knee. The sites for the electrodes were in places where muscle activity was minimal and, therefore, electrical readings would indicate energy from a different source. The electrodes were placed on the body in consultation with the "aura reader".

The individual being experimented on was given Rolfing (deep muscle massage), designed to liberate deeper subconscious tension, and, therefore, theoretically able to affect chakra activity. As the massage progressed the EMG readings were recorded on one track of a two-tracked tape recorder. Simultaneously, while isolated in another room and oblivious to the EMG and subject's reports, Bruyere recorded on the second track her observations of psychic activity in terms of color change at the various centers. Hunt was able to question the aura reader via a separate audio system so that no clue as to what the subject was experiencing or what was going on at the EMG level could be detected by the psychic.

At the same time the subject related his experience which was tape recorded using a second microphone, and any similarity between his experience, the symptoms of chakra activation and the EMG recording were noted.

It was quickly evident in the central monitoring room where Hunt was sitting, that the EMG changes and the distinctive wave forms being recorded correlated with the colors reported by the sensitive, as did the experience of the subject. Later analysis, whether by wave form, Fourier-frequency analysis or sonogram, produced consistently the same pattern of results.

Hunt acknowledged that the possible interpretations of this data are staggering. The radiations were taken directly from the body surface, quantitatively measured in a natural state and were isolated by scientifically accepted data resolution procedures. The study concluded that there had been direct correspondence in every instance throughout all recordings between the distinctive wave form and the psychic's description of the color emanating from the chakra. For example, every time a medium-large, sharp deflection with single or double peaks at the top occurred, the psychic reported the color blue, while red corresponded to large, sharp clumps of regular and irregular spikes of short duration interspersed with plateaux. Yellow was a broad, smooth wave resembling an uneven sine wave.

The relationship between the emotional states and the colors was also accurate. Emotions, imagery, interpersonal relations and the state of resiliency and plasticity of the connective tissue are related to the color, and the state of the aura as seen by the psychic.

It is an interesting fact that in early Rolfing sessions the chakras appeared to be uneven, small, low in frequency and amplitude and with indiscriminate or dark primary colors. As the technique continued the chakras became large, even in size, and of lighter color, while the wave forms were of higher amplitude and frequency. Some chakras which had been closed, opened, producing kaleidoscopic color effects, such as dark blue, yellow, red-orange and olive green. By the fifth hour of Rolfing all subjects had a clear blue aura. By the seventh and eighth hours the colors were predominantly light and blended, for example, peach, pink, ice blue and cream. Higher frequencies were associated with pleasant experiences.

Developing our psyche

Hunt's research is important at several levels. It firstly supports the claims of yogis and psychics that other levels of perception, more subtle and yet intimately connected with the physical body, do in fact exist. Though it has been called extrasensory perception it appears rather to be an extension of the normal range of perception of physical events into the more subtle.

According to yogis, development of ajna chakra and the pineal/thalamic area of the brain, plus relaxed concentration of mind, allows us to see things which most of us miss because of gross physical and mental tensions and a dissipated, distracted state of mind. There is nothing miraculous, abnormal or supernatural about psychic phenomena. **Most of us just do not look at things long enough to allow the subtle to register in our brains.** We see something and are immediately distracted, thinking that there is nothing else to see or learn from a situation. But if we take our time we can learn, much more.

We know that vision is our major information processing system and therefore tied into many other neurological systems. Defects in the visual system are now linked to other problems such as allergies, anxiety, insomnia, postural problems, and a whole range of physical and psychological problems. (8) Connecticut optometrist Albert Shankman is quoted as saying "The skill of seeing relationships is a principal object of visual training. Visual training is essentially brain training." (9) Shankman and others have observed that visual flow and flexibility are associated with a more flexible, creative thought style.

Yoga follows the same principle, for example in trataka, an essential component of kundalini yoga. Trataka teaches us to gaze at things without preconceptions and to allow the information to impinge on our brains, to allow the connections time to come together and the inner knowledge, the processed information within the brain, time to formulate itself fully and rise up to the conscious plane. This is what yogis mean when they say that yoga balances the external and the internal, the right and left sides of the brain, ida and pingala, and awakens faculties that lie dormant within us all but which we do not know exist and which we do not develop.

Psychic vision, a side-effect of kundalini yoga and part of the awakening of intuition, inner vision and inner knowledge, is one of these capacities. All it means is that we are relaxed and we take our time to look at things without preconception. Hunt's research verifies that this faculty is not a myth and not confined just to yogis practising sadhana for years in isolation in the Himalayas, but is also verifiable within the confines of a laboratory.

Verifying the chakras

The work of Motoyama and Hunt points to the fact that within the physical body there are locations which, though they may not have any obvious physical or structural demarcation, have definite functional characteristics which differentiate from other parts of the body. It verifies the fact that the yogic descriptions of these points correspond to physical emanations in the case of Motoyama's research and psychic emanations in the case of Hunt's research.

Anandamaya kosha: transcendental dimension; personal and collective unconscious.

Annamaya kosha: the physical body or level of existence; the conscious aspect.

Aorta: largest artery of the body, which takes oxygenated blood from the heart for distribution throughout the body.

Apana: vital energy in the lower part of the body, below the navel.

Asana: a steady and comfortable position of the body.

Ashram: yogic community where the inmates live and work equally under the guidance of a guru.

Astral body: the subtle, psychic body; finer than the physical body.

Atman: the pure self, beyond body and mind.

Atma shakti: spiritual force.

Aushadi: awakening of spiritual power through the use of herbs or plant preparations.

Autogenic training: psychotherapy that works with the body and mind simultaneously; learning to manipulate the bodily functions through the mind.

Avatara: divine incarnation.

Avidya: ignorance.

Awareness: the faculty of conscious knowing.

allistocardiograph: machine which measures small body motions accompanying the movement of blood through the circulatory system.

Bandha: psychomuscular energy lock which redirects the flow of psychic energy in the body.

Bhajan: devotional song.

Bhakta: one who follows the path of bhakti yoga.

Bhaktiyoga: the yoga of devotion.

Bhruvadhya: the eyebrow center; kshetram or contact point for ajna chakra.

Bija mantra: seed sound; a basic mantra or vibration which has its origin in trance consciousness.

Bindu: the psychic center situated at the top back of the head; a point or drop which is the substratum of the whole cosmos, the seat of total creation.

Brahma: the divine spirit, Hindu god; creator of the universe.

Brahmacharya: control and redirection of sexual energy towards spiritual awakening.

Brahma granthi: knot of creation. Psycho muscular knot in the perineum which must be released for kundalini to enter and ascend through sushumna nadi. It symbolizes the blockage posed by material and sensual attachment.

Brahmamuhurta: the time between 4 and 6 am. This is the sattvic time of day, best suited to yogic sadhana.

Brahman: absolute reality.

Brahma nadi: the most subtle pranic flow within the sushumna nadi.

Brahmin: a member of the highest Hindu caste, namely the priestly caste.

Buddhi: the higher intelligence, concerned with real wisdom; the faculty of valuing things for the advancement of life and conscious awareness.

Causal body: the body you experience in deep sleep and in certain types of samadhi.

Central canal: the hollow passage within the spinal cord. In the subtle body, this is the path of sushumna nadi.

Cerebral cortex: grey matter on the surface of the brain responsible for higher mental functions.

Cerebrospinal fluid: (CSF) cushion of fluid protecting the brain and spinal cord.

Cervical plexus: autonomic nerve plexus in the neck associated with vishuddhi chakra.

Cervix: the circular opening leading into the womb; seat of mooladhara chakra in the female body.

Chakra: literally 'wheel or vortex'; major psychic center in the subtle body, responsible for specific physiological and psychic functions.

Chela: disciple.

Chitta: mind; conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of the brain.

Cingulate gyrus: a convolution of the brain, part of the limbic system.

Coccygeal plexus: small nerve plexus at the base of the spine behind the pelvic cavity, related to swadhisthana chakra.

Consciousness: the medium of universal and individual awareness.

Corpus callosum: fibers connecting the two hemispheres of the brain.

Deity: a form of divinity, a divine being having subordinate functions.

Devata: divine power.

Devi: a goddess; a manifestation of Shakti.

Dharana: concentration; continuity of mental process on one object or idea without leaving it.

Dharma: duty; code of harmonious living; spiritual path.

Dhumra lingam: smoky (obscured) lingam; the symbol of Shiva as manifest in mooladhara chakra.

Dhyana: meditation, in the sense of intense meditation for an extended period of time.

Diksha: initiation into spiritual life by a guru.

Dopamine: chemical involved in the excitatory systems of the brain.

Durga: Hindu goddess; a personification of Shakti, pictured riding upon a tiger, to whom personal ambition is rendered.

Dvaita: the philosophy of dualism in which man and God are considered to be separated.

EGG: electrocardiogram. Tracing of electric current produced by nerve cells in the brain.

EMG: electromyography. Recording of electrical properties of muscles.

Epiglottis: flap of cartilage at the back of the throat which integrates the swallowing and breathing processes.

Frontal lobe: anterior portion of the brain containing the motor area.

Ganga: the river Ganges, the longest and most sacred river in India.

Gauss: measurement of intensity of a magnetic field.

Granthis: the three psychic knots on the sushumna nadi which hinder the upward passage of kundalini - brahma granthi, vishnu granthi and rudra granthi.

Gunas: the three qualities of matter or prakriti - tamas, rajas and sattva.

Guru: literally, 'he who dispels darkness'; the spiritual master or teacher.

Guru chakra: another name for ajna chakra, the eye of intuition; through which the inner guru's guidance manifests.

Gyanayoga: path of yoga concerned directly with knowledge, self-awareness.

Gyanendriyas: the organs of knowledge or sensory organs such as eyes, ears, skin, etc.

Hatha yoga: a system of yoga which specially deals with practices for bodily purification.

Hippocampus: an elevation on the floor of the lateral ventricle, part of the limbic system.

Hiranyagarbha: the golden egg; womb of consciousness, the seat of supreme awareness in the crown of the head; known as sahasrara chakra.

Hridayakasha: the etheric space visualized within the heart; the heart space.

Hypo-metabolic state: state of lowered metabolism, for example, decrease in respiratory, circulatory and secretory rates.

Hypothalamus: portion of the brain that integrates temperature, sleep, food intake, development of sexual characteristics and endocrine activity.

Ida: major psychic channel which conducts manas shakti, mental energy, located on the left side of the psychic body; the 'ha' of hatha yoga.

Indriyas: sense organs.

Ishta devata: one's personal symbol, form or vision of God.

Itarakhya lingam: symbol of Shiva in ajna chakra.

Jalandhara bandha: chin lock. It compresses the prana in the trunk of the body and thereby helps to control psychic energy.

Japa: repetition of a mantra until it becomes the spontaneous form of your conscious awareness.

Jivanmukta: liberated soul, one who has attained self-realization or moksha.

Jivatma: the individual soul.

Jyoti lingam: the symbol of Shiva in sahasrara chakra. This lingam is of pure white light, symbolizing illumined astral consciousness.

Kabbalah: text dealing with the esoteric mysticism of the Judaic religion.

Kali: form of Shakti who arouses terror and fear, destroyer of ignorance in her devotees.

Karma: actions, work, the inherent subconscious imprints which make a person act.

Karma yoga: action performed unselfishly, for the welfare of others and the fulfillment of dharma.

Karmendriyas: organs of action, e.g. feet, hands, vocal chords, anus, sexual organs, etc.

Kevala kumbhaka: spontaneous breath retention.

Khechari mudra: mudra of hatha yoga and tantra, in which the tongue passes back into the pharynx to stimulate the flow of amrit from lalana chakra, activating vishuddhi chakra.

Kirtan: repetition of mantras set to music.

Koshas: sheaths or bodies.

Kshetram: contact centers for the chakras. They are found in the front of the body.

Kumbhaka: breath retention.

Kurma nadi: (tortoise nadi) nadi associated with vishuddhi chakra. Its control brings the ability to live without physical sustenance.

Lalana chakra: minor chakra in the region of the back wall of the pharynx, where amrit is stored from bindu and released to vishuddhi.

Limbic system: group of structures in the brain associated with certain aspects of emotion and behavior.

Lingam: symbol representing Lord Shiva; the male aspect of creation; symbol of the astral body.

Loka: world, dimension or plane of existence or consciousness.

Lord Shiva: archetypal renunciate and yogi who dwells in meditation high in the Himalayas; Hindu god; destroyer of the universe.

Madya: wine; also refers to spiritual intoxication resulting from drinking the nectar of immortality, amrit.

Mahakala: great or endless time.

Mahatma: great soul.

Maithuna: literally 'sacrifice'; sexual union with a spiritual purpose.

Mala: a rosary-like string of beads used in meditational practices.

Manas: one aspect of mind; the mental faculty of comparing, classifying and reasoning.

Manas shakti: mental force.

Mandala: tantric diagram used for meditation.

Manic depression: psychosis marked by severe mood swings.

Manomaya kosha: mental dimension; conscious and subconscious aspects.

Mantra: sound or series of sounds having physical, psychic or spiritual potency when recited in a certain prescribed manner.

Marga: path.

Matra: unit of measure.

Maya: principle of illusion.

Moksha: liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Moola bandha: yogic practice of stimulating mooladhara chakra for the awakening of kundalini. It is practised by contracting the perineum in males, or the cervix in females.

Mudra: a psychic attitude often expressed by a physical gesture, movement or posture, which affects the flow of psychic energy in the body.

Nada: sound, especially inner sound.

Nadayoga: the yoga of subtle sound.

Nadis: psychic channels for the distribution of prana in the astral body.

Neti: hatha yoga cleansing technique in which warm saline water is passed through the nasal passages; one of the shatkarmas.

Nirvana: enlightenment, samadhi; harmony between the individual consciousness and the universal consciousness.

Nivritti marga: the path leading back in towards the source from which we have first come.

Nuclear fission: the process of extracting energy from matter by splitting the atom.

Om: the underlying sound of creation; the mantra from which all others have come.

Paranoia: chronic mental disorder characterized by delusions or hallucinations.

Parasympathetic nervous system: division of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system concerned with restorative processes and relaxation of the body and mind.

Pashu: the instinctual or animal aspect of man's nature.

Pineal gland: small pine-cone shaped endocrine gland in the midbrain directly behind the eyebrow center; the physical correlate of ajna chakra.

Pingala: the conductor and channel of prana shakti or vital force, located on the right side of the psychic body; the 'tha' of hatha yoga.

Prakriti: the basic substance or principle of the entire phenomenal or manifest world, composed of the three gunas (triguna) or attributes.

Prana: the life force in the body; bioenergy in general; the vital energy which operates in the region of the heart and lungs; the psychic equivalent of the physical breath.

Pranamaya kosha: energy dimension; conscious aspect.

Prana shakti: pranic or vital force.

Pranayama: yogic practice of manipulating and controlling the flow of prana in the subtle body by controlling the respiratory process.

Pranotthana: the impulses which pass up sushumna nadi to the higher centers of the brain when a chakra is transiently aroused. These impulses purify the sushumna passage in preparation for sustained kundalini awakening.

Pravritti marga: the path of expansion outwards into greater and greater manifestation, further away from the source of our origin.

Psi: psychic phenomena.

Psyche: the total mental aspect of man.

Psychosis: major mental disorder characterized by loss of contact with reality.

Purusai consciousness: the spirit or pure self.

Raja yoga: eightfold path of yoga formulated by Patanjali. It begins with mental stability and proceeds to the highest state of samadhi.

Rajo guna: the guna of prakriti characterized by restlessness, activity and ambition.

Rakshasa: demon; negative or self-defeating force.

Reticular activating system: (RAS) that part of the brain-stem especially concerned with arousal from sleep and maintenance of the alert, waking state of consciousness.

Rishi: seer or sage; who realizes the truth directly.

Rolfing: structural integration. Deep massage to rebalance the body structures.

Rudra granthi: (also known as Shiva granthi) the knot of Shiva. This is the psychic knot within ajna chakra, which symbolizes attachment to siddhis or higher mental attributes which must be transcended before full awakening of kundalini can occur.

Sacral plexus: nerve plexus in the back wall of the pelvis associated with swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras, and responsible for the functioning of the urinary and reproductive systems.

Sadhaka: a student of spiritual practices.

Sadhana: spiritual discipline or practice.

Sadhu: a holy man.

Sahajoli: the form of vajroji mudra practised by women; contraction of the urito-ovarian system.

Sahasrara: the thousand petalled lotus or chakra manifesting at the top of the head; the highest psychic center; the threshold between psychic and spiritual realms which contains all the chakras below it.

Samadhi: state of being above mortal existence; all-knowing and all-pervading state of being; the fulfillment of meditation; state of union with the object of meditation and the universal consciousness.

Samana: vital energy operating in the region of the navel.

Sumkhya: the ancient scientific philosophy of India which classifies all that is known without reference to an external power (God).

Samskara: past mental impression; archetype.

Sandhya: ritual worship conducted at dawn, noon and evening.

Sangha: associations, company, acquaintances.

Sankalpa: spiritual resolve. S

Sankalpa shakti: the power of will.

Sannyasa: total renunciation, perfect dedication.

Satsang: spiritual instruction, discussion and guidance from an illumined being or guru.

Sattva: one of the three gunas of prakriti; the pure or equilibrated state of mind or nature.

Saundarya Lahari: tan trie prayer of Adi Shankaracharya.

Schizophrenia: severe mental/emotional disturbance characterized by hallucinations and disconnection between thoughts, feelings and actions.

Schumann resonance: magnetic resonance of the earth - 7 cycles/second.

Shabda: sound or word; the materially creative principle.

Shaivism: philosophy of Shiva worship, perhaps the most ancient faith in the world.

Shakti: power, energy; the feminine aspect of creation; the force expressed through all manifested phenomena.

Shambhavi mudra: mudra named after Shambhu (Shiva); focusing the eyes on bhrumadhya.

Shankhprakshalana: a method of cleansing the entire alimentary canal.

Shanti: peace.

Shastras: scriptures.

Shatkarmas: the six cleansing or purifying techniques of hatha yoga.

Shiva lingam: oval-shaped stone which is the symbol of Shiva, consciousness or the astral body.

Shoonya, shoonyata: the state of absolute nothingness or void; mental vacuum.

Shuddhi: purification.

Siddha: adept, yogi; one who has control over nature, matter and the mind.

Siddhi: perfection; one of the eight occult powers; a psychic power associated with awakening of chakra functions.

Solar plexus: intersection of a group of nerves in the abdominal region; the physical manifestation of manipura chakra.

Soma: amrit; a plant used by the rishis of ancient India for the purpose of spiritual awakening and immortality.

Sushumna nadi: the most important psychic passageway. It flows in the central canal within the spinal cord.

Swadhisthana chakra: the psychic center corresponding to the coccyx or pubic region.

Swami: literally 'one who is master of his own mind'; sannyasin disciple initiated into sannyasa by a guru; one who has renounced mundane experiences as goals in life.

Swarayoga: the science of the breath cycle.

Swagambhu: self-created.

Sympathetic nervous system: division of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system responsible for maintaining physical activity of the organ systems and expenditure of energy.

Tamas: darkness; inertia; one of the three gunas of prakriti.

Tanmatra: the sense activities - sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, and also inner intuitive perception via the subtle organ of mind, which is the sixth sense.

Tantra: the ancient science which uses specific techniques to expand and liberate the consciousness from its limitations.

Tantra shastra: scriptures of the tantric tradition devoted to spiritual techniques, in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Shakti. These texts outline a code of living which includes ritual, worship, discipline, meditation and the attainment of powers.

Tapasya: the practice of austerity; conditioning of the body for the removal of impurities and for overcoming the deficiencies and weaknesses of the body, mind and senses.

Tattwat: elemental nature or quality, e.g., fire, water, air, earth, ether.

Thalamus: area in the brain which receives most sensory stimuli and integrates most incoming and outgoing information. Also the center for appreciation of pain, touch and temperature.

Trataka: the meditational or hatha yoga technique which involves steadily gazing at an object.

Trishula: trident; three pronged implement held by Lord Shiva and carried by many holy men and renunciates. The three prongs symbolize the three main nadis.

Udana: the vital energy operating above the throat.

Uddiyana bandha: literally 'flying upward'; a yogic practice of pranic manipulation utilizing the abdominal muscles and organs.

Vairagya: non-attachment; state where one is calm and tranquil in the midst of the tumultuous events of the world.

Vajra nadi: the nadi which connects the expression of sexual energy with the brain and is concerned with the flow of ojas, the highest form of energy in the human body which is concentrated in the semen.

Vajroli mudra: contraction of vajra nadi.

Vasana: the desires that are the driving force behind every thought and action in life.

Vayu: air.

Vedanta: the ultimate philosophy of the Vedas.

Vedas: the oldest known religious texts of the Aryans, written more than 5000 years ago.

Ventricles: cavities in the brain where the GSF is formed.

Vigyanamaya kosha: intuitive or astral dimension; subconscious and unconscious aspects.

Vishnu: Hindu god; preserver of the universe.

Vishuddhi chakra: the psychic center located in the throat region.

Vritti: a modification arising in consciousness, likened to the circular wave pattern emanating when a stone is dropped into a still pool of water.

Vyana: vital energy which pervades the whole body.

Yantra: a symbolic design used for concentration and meditation; the visual form of a mantra.

Yoga: union; the methods and practices leading to union of individual human consciousness with the divine principle or cosmic consciousness.

Yoga nidra: psychic sleep; a yogic practice in which one can raise himself from the mundane state of body consciousness.

Yoga Sutras: text written by Patanjali, delineating the eightfold path of raja yoga, the systematic path of meditation which culminates in the samadhi experience.

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.

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*.]

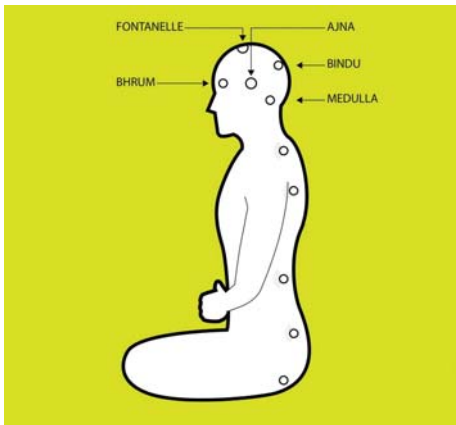


Figure 1. Location of the Chakras

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 Yoga ¹

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 an *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* /ʃ/. 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*.

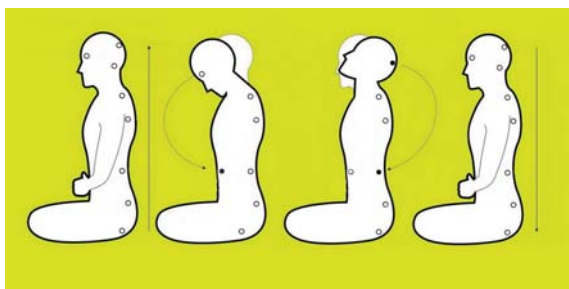


Figure 3. Navi Kriya

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.

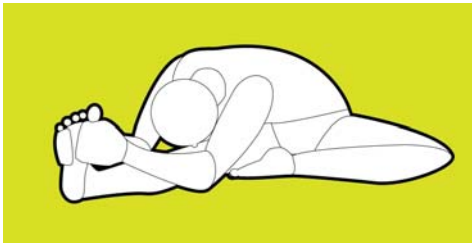


Figure 4. Maha Mudra

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.

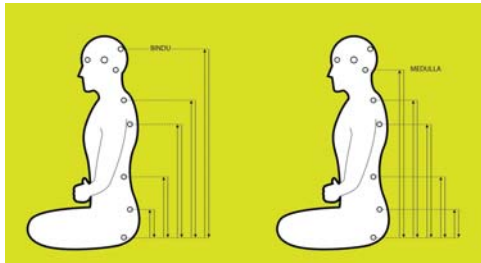


Figure 5. One cycle of Kriya Pranayama with short breath

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.

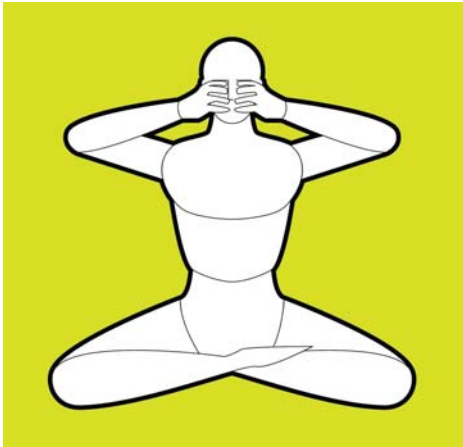


Figure 6. Yoni Mudra

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 *Tribhagamurari* 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 you 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: " Sooooooooo...." 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*.

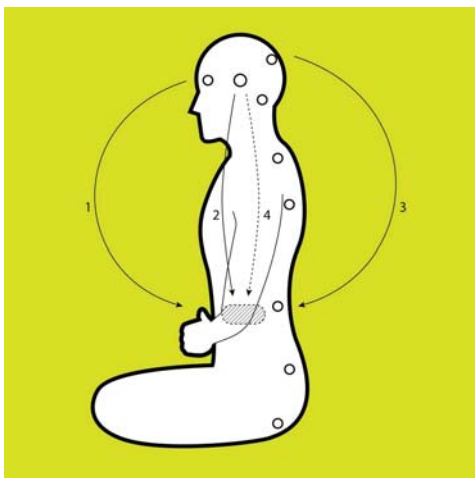


Figure 7. Important variation of Navi Kriya: the energy enters the *Dantian* along four directions

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*.

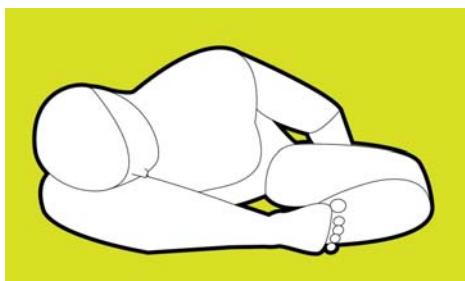


Figure 8. Forward bent. First position

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.

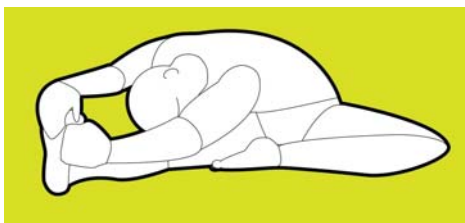


Figure 9. Variation of Maha Mudra: notice the position of the hands and of the head

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-huhhhhhhhh" 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 unfailingly 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 or 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 if 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: *Teeee*) 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 your 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.

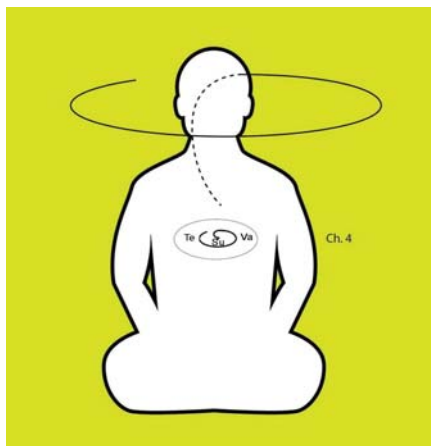


Figure 11. Micro Thokar as is perceived in Chakra 4

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 or 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 opens 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 becomes 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 began 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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- [III] VARIATIONS OF THOKAR
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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 *Swadhsthana* but utilize the second syllable of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Na Mo Bha.....*) Remember that now the petals are six. Therefore you focus upon *Swadhsthana*. 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 Swadhsthana
- *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*.

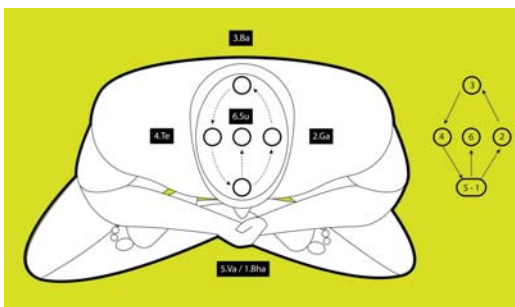


Figure 12. Circulation of calm Prana in the upper part of the brain

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 breathe 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

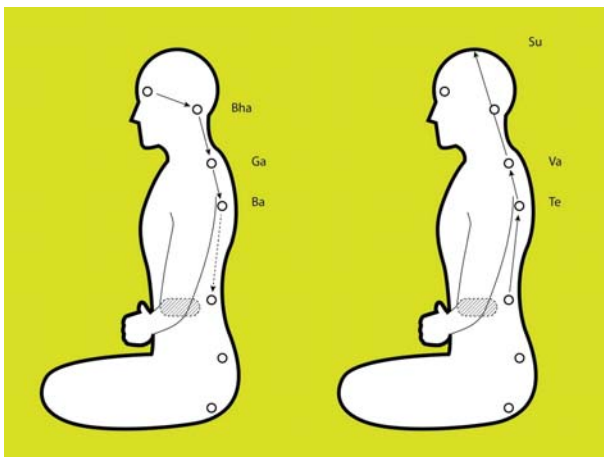


Figure 13. Nabhi Kundalini

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 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.

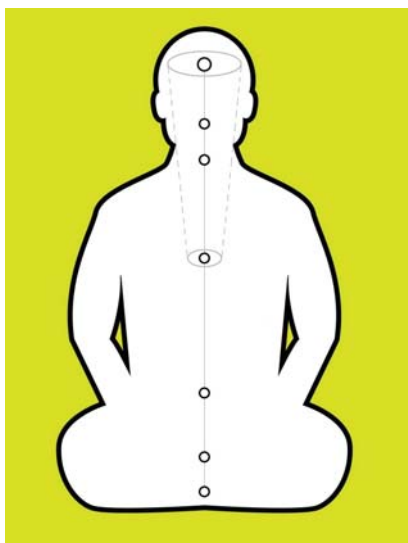


Figure 14. Procedure to open the Muladhara knot. The figure shows the moment in which the Fourth Chakra is lifted. You see the circulation of energy in the upper part of the head and, at the same time, around the heart Chakra

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!

[1] *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.

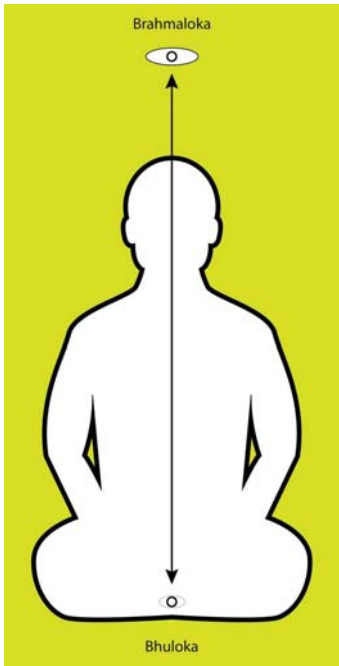


Figure 15. The breath moves between Bhuloka and BrahmaloKa and then dissolves

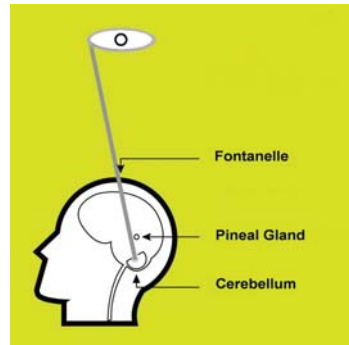


Figure 16. The Light moves from the 8th Chakra to Cerebellum

[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.)

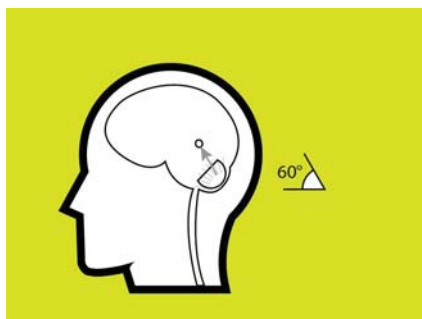


Figure 17. The Light moves from the Cerebellum to the Pineal gland

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, counterclockwise 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"
(*García 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.

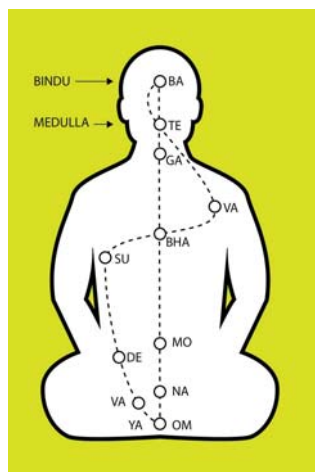


Figure 18. Tribhangamurari path as seen from the back

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

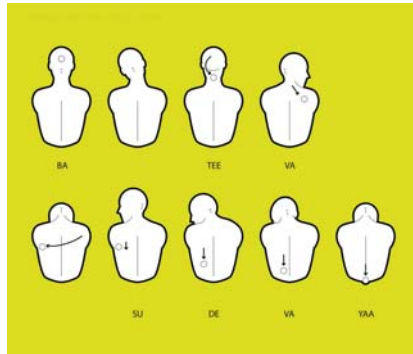


Figure 20. The same movements (only the descent) as seen from the back

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.

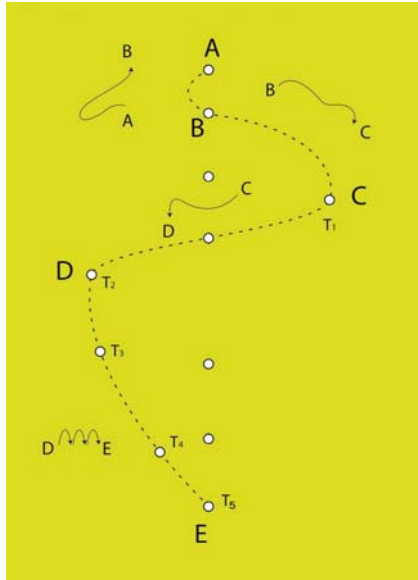


Figure 21. Descent phase of Thokar Tribhangamurari. Dotted line is the movement of Prana and awareness. Continuous line gives an idea of the movement of the chin. Note that all is seen from the back!

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.

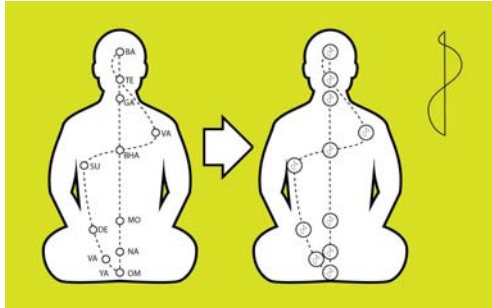


Figure 22. Tribhangamurari micro movement in each of the 12 centers

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.

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