

**Kriya Yoga:
Synthesis of a Personal Experience**

Ennio Nimis

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Illustrations by Lorenzo Pentassuglia

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PART I: MY SEARCH OF ORIGINAL KRIYA

CHAPTER 1

DECISION TO START THE PRACTICE OF PRANAYAMA

My spiritual search began at age 15 after I bought an introductory book on classical *Yoga*. I don't remember the title of that first book, but books of B.K.S. Iyengar followed and then finally the autobiography of an Indian saint, where I found the term *Kriya Yoga*. But first things first...

In primary school, unlike my peers I borrowed esoteric books from my parents' friends and I loved those books. I remember that the first one I read from end to end was on occultism. Knowing the book was considered unsuitable for my age, I was proud to be able to read and understand it. I turned a deaf ear to any persuasive advice to dedicate myself to more formative readings. I wasted a lot of time on worthless books and stacks of specialized esoteric magazines with tantalizing titles and idle fancies designed essentially to impress, and which were impossible to distinguish in advance between fact and fiction.

I also came into contact with the main themes of occidental esotericism with short digressions into phenomena like hypnosis and spiritualism. I continued these readings until I was about 11 years old. In the end, I felt I had traveled through an indistinct chaos and thought that perhaps the most precious secrets were hidden in other books which I had not been fortunate enough to find.

I saw the word "*Yoga*" for the first time in a postal catalog of esoteric books among my father's correspondence. I was entranced and inexplicably spellbound by the person pictured on the cover sitting in the "lotus position." However, I couldn't persuade my father to buy the book for me.

When I was 15 and in high school, the esoteric flame was rekindled for a while in a particular way: a friend told me he had a detailed textbook containing different *Pranayama* techniques, and added: "These exercises are used to obtain inner transformation..." I was deeply intrigued by his words: what internal transformation was he talking about? Surely my friend didn't mean the attainment of a particular state of relaxation or

concentration, or how to integrate the oriental vision of existence with our lifestyle. He must be referring to some intense experience that left a lasting psychological mark. *Pranayama* was something I had to learn as soon as possible. But my friend would not lend me the book.

A few days later at the train station newsstand, I spotted a simple *Hatha Yoga* manual and bought it forthwith and read it in its entirety. Although I thought I was searching for physical and mental control, my spiritual search had in fact begun.

This book had a long philosophical introduction that did not stir up anything spiritual. It was neither impressive nor thought provoking (Jiva, Prakriti, Purusha...). The author's goal seemed to be solely to give the reader the impression of serious authority. Even concepts like Reincarnation, *Karma*, *Dharma*, and *Maya*, the understanding of which in the future would become so important in my life, remained unfathomable, hidden in a tangle of Sanskrit terms. *Pranayama* was only hinted at by explaining how to do a complete breath – dilating the abdomen, diaphragm, and upper chest during inhalation and contracting the same in reverse order for a calm exhalation. That was clearly an introduction, nothing else.

I was sure that the ancient art of *Pranayama* was not intended simply to train the chest muscles, strengthen the diaphragm or create peculiar conditions of blood oxygenation, but was also meant to act on the energy present in the psycho-physical system. It was common knowledge that the inharmonious state of that energy could be related to conflicts and disharmonies within.

I was frustrated about the lack of in-depth information about *Pranayama*. The author concluded by saying that *Pranayama* should be learned from an experienced teacher but instead of adding a precise indication (the title of a book, the name of a school...), he remained vague about exactly how to find him, maintaining that we find the Teacher when we are ready to learn.

As for *Asanas*, the book explained the name of each posture (*Asana*), gave a brief note on the best mental attitude for practicing it, and explained how each exercise stimulated certain physiological functions (important endocrine glands, etc.). It was taken for granted that these positions were not to be seen as simple "stretching work-outs"; but were a means of providing a global stimulus to all the physical organs to increase their vitality. The satisfaction I felt at the end of a session spoke to their effectiveness.

I began doing yoga postures (*Asanas*) in a corner of our school gymnasium during physical education classes. I wasn't very good in sports anyway despite being well-conditioned by long walks. Moreover, being able to do something significant without the inherent risks of popular and common sports attracted me. After the preliminary group warm-up exercises, when the teacher gave me permission to work out on my own, I devoted myself to mastering *Yoga* positions or moving the abdominal muscles with the *Nauli* technique. To my amazement one day the teacher (whom I had assumed had an opinion of me close to zero) came over and inquired as to the secret of succeeding in moving the abdominal muscles in such curious way. I tried to explain how simple it was, provided that you had the constancy to work daily at it for a couple of weeks.

IMPORTANT TECHNIQUE TO STOP THE THINKING MIND

In that unassuming but appreciable book, there was an entire chapter devoted to the "Corpse Pose" (*Savasana*), the last one to be practiced in the daily *Asana* routine. The instruction was very clearly given and the author did not lose his focus in useless philosophical embellishments. He explained that the purpose of the exercise was to quiet the mental faculties in order to recharge the whole psycho physical system with fresh energy. I was attracted by the grandiose promise that by stopping all mental functions – without falling into a state of sleep – and remaining for some time in a state of pure awareness, one could obtain within one hour the equivalent of five hours sleep. I regret not having the book anymore, but I will describe the exercise based upon what I remember:

► Lie in the supine position with arms extended alongside the body and with eyes closed, covered with a cloth to keep the light out as much as possible. After staying still for two or three minutes, mentally repeat – "I am relaxed, I am calm, I am not thinking of anything." Then, to enter the state of *mental void* visualize your thoughts including those with abstract qualities and push them away one by one as if an internal hand were moving them gently from the center of a mental screen toward its outer edge. All thoughts, without exception, must be put aside; even the thought itself of practicing a technique. You should never become annoyed by continuous new thoughts. Picture them as objects and shift them aside. In this way, new chains of thought are prevented from coming out. After pushing a thought away, return your awareness to the small spot between the eyebrows (*Kutastha*) which resembles a pond of peace, and relax therein. The ability to continuously push away thoughts that knock at the door of your attention will become almost automatic.

When, on some occasions – such as practicing immediately after a strong emotional incident – the mechanism does not seem to work, convert your

concentration into a small *needle* which constantly touches the area between the eyebrows – just touching, without worrying about shifting thoughts aside. You will notice that at a certain point there is no more effort, and any remaining restless emotion subsides. The seeds of new thoughts starting to take shape as indefinite images quivering at the edge of awareness cannot disturb your mental rest. Whichever of the two methods you choose, the exercise works perfectly and after 40 minutes you get up well-rested and recharged with new fresh energy.

In my experience, in spite of the 40 minutes promised by the book, the final state of relaxation lasted no more than 20 minutes and the exercise itself never more than 25-30 minutes altogether. The technique inevitably ends in a peculiar way; the state of deep calmness is interrupted by the thought that the exercise had not yet begun. The body always reacts with a wince and a faster heartbeat. After a few seconds, confidence that the exercise had been perfectly executed appears.

Thanks to this technique, which became a daily habit, I realized once and for all the difference between "mind" and "awareness". When the mental process is eased off into perfect silence, pure awareness without content arises. Like a luminous point duplicating itself an unlimited amount of times, it remains unchanged for some minutes. You know you exist and that your existence is indestructible – this happens without thinking. You have the indisputable experience that thoughts are in essence ephemeral, and instead of revealing the final truth they cloud it. I think that the Cartesian deduction: "I think, therefore I am" is indefensible. It would be more correct to affirm: "Only in the silence of no thought lies the proof and the intimate certainty of existing."

CONTEMPLATION OF BEAUTY AS A NATURAL RELIGION

Besides the dimension of esoteric oriental meditative practices, I also had a passion for poetry and literature as well as a habit of daily seeking the contemplation of Beauty in Nature.

When I was 9 years old, I borrowed a book of poetry from the school library and copied different short poems with naturalistic themes into a notebook. By reading them frequently, I soon knew them all by heart. By recalling them while contemplating the hilly surroundings beyond the outskirts of my village, I could intensify my emotions. Such event was sought every day and lived with the sacredness of a religious experience.

Instead, the discovery of the pain of which life is pervaded (including not only the animal kingdom but also the vegetable one) produced a rebellion to the concept of God as "Endless Goodness." I was never afraid to express my protest. Noticing how many illusions are propagated by religions and

cults, I felt sorry for all those who, in the abyss of their tragedy, were not able to voice their sharp loud cry to God facing Him in protest but kept on imploring God (visualized as a omnipotent, supernatural being) not with a spirit of devotion and surrender, but with such a beseeching attitude as if they feared even worse calamities.

As my high school years were drawing to a close, I developed a passion for classical music and Beethoven became my idol. Despite the tragedy of his deafness at his creative peak, he reacted in a most honorable manner and carried on creating works he had already composed in his heart. The Heiligenstadt Testament, where he reveals his critical condition and states his decision with calm and total resolution, made him almost a hero and a saint in my eyes.

He wrote to a friend: "I have not a single friend; I must live alone. But well I know that God is nearer to me than to other artists; I associate with Him without fear; I have always recognized and understood him and have no fear for my music – it can meet no evil fate. Those who understand it must be freed by it from all the miseries which the others drag about with themselves."

How could I remain indifferent? He was drawing incomparable music out of the depths of his being, and offering it to humanity. The triumph of this frail human creature over a nonsensical fate had a tremendous impact on me. The daily rite of retiring to my room to listen to that music consolidated my consecration to the Ideal.

Each day for the first three months after high school graduation, when I experienced a strong romantic crush whose fulfillment seemed impossible, I listened to Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. The more my emotionalism prompted me to act rashly, which proved to be destructive to my love affair, the more my desperate heart found refuge in that masterpiece.

During a walk in the country, sitting on a hill contemplating a far landscape bathed in the warmth of the summer evening, his music rang out again in my memory. What my heart craved was before me, perfect and untarnished neither by fears nor by a sense of guilt. That was my first spiritual experience.

ACADEMIC STUDIES

I chose to study Math at university. While attending the first classes, I understood that a happy chapter of my life was concluded and there would be no time for distractions like enjoying classic literature. All my attention was focused on finding an effective method of study and a way to avoid wasting my energies. This meant focusing in a disciplined way both during study time and during my idle moments. For this purpose, I decided to utilize the dynamic of the previously described exercise to rest the mind.

A bad habit I had to conquer was a tendency to daydream and jump from one memory to another to extract moments of pleasure. I had formed the unshakeable conviction that when thought becomes an uncontrollable vice – for many it is an utter addiction – it constitutes not only a waste of energy but is the main cause of almost all failures in our life. The frenzied whirl of the thought process, accompanied by alternating moods and strong emotions, creates at times unreasonable fears that hinder the decisive action that life requires. On other occasions it fosters an optimistic imagination that unfortunately pushes the person toward inappropriate actions. I was convinced that disciplined thought was the most valuable trait I could develop, and would open the doors to fruitful achievements. My decision filled me with euphoric enthusiasm.

However, after breathing the limpid, sparkling, celestial state of thought restraint for a few hours I encountered a significant mental resistance. In the mirror of my introspection, I saw how other habits were wasting my mental energy. One of these, wrapped and unexpectedly dignified by the concept of socialization, was that of falling daily into nerve-racking discussions with friends. It was time to renounce it. I abruptly avoided their company. Certainly mine was not an impossible sacrifice – theirs was not my world.

One day during a short afternoon walk, I saw them from afar sitting lazily and chatting in the usual bar. My heart gave a lurch. They were my friends and I loved each of them, yet seeing them together, they appeared to me like chickens cooped up in a narrow space. Mercilessly I assumed they were completely governed by the instincts of eating, partying, sex, and generally overindulging. Whatever tragedy happened to their friend didn't concern them, they would have kept on sipping the daily pleasure of dawdling until misfortune hit them personally. I found it very sad and distressing.

At that moment I again resolved to concentrate on my studies, and passing my exams became my sole focus. I perceived that period of my life as a descent into an unfathomable night but I knew that in order to shape my future the way I desired, tough sacrifices were necessary. To see the dawn of a "day of pure joy", I would have to endure momentarily a dark emptiness: I would savor it without lament and without being tempted to turn on a light for momentary solace.

INSPIRATION FROM BEETHOVEN AND MAHLER

The incident put me in a gloomy mood, but a sentence from Beethoven's Heiligenstadt testament came spontaneously to mind and evoked the bliss I had enjoyed during my high school years:

O Providence - grant me at least but *one day of pure joy* - it has been so long since real joy echoed in my heart - O when - O when, O Divine One - shall I find it again in the temple of nature and of men? - Never? No - O that would be too hard.

An event illuminated my life: a friend introduced me to Gustav Mahler's Symphony No.2 "*Resurrection*" and invited me to a live concert of this work. I read the information leaflet. Each part of the symphony had a precise meaning which Mahler himself had explained in a letter to the conductor, Bruno Walter. It was Mahler's intention to treat death as the inevitable end to all human enterprise. The music itself conveyed a sense of desolation which was sweet, as if death meant drifting off into a peaceful sleep. In a sorrowful voice of endless dignity, the words of the contralto communicated a childlike innocent vision:

O Röschen roth!

Der Mensch liegt in größter Noth!

Der Mensch liegt in größter Pein!

Je lieber möcht ich im Himmel sein.

O red rose!

Man lies in direst need!

Man lies in deepest pain!

Oh, how I would rather be in heaven.

While listening, I fancied I was in the countryside during a light rain. But it was spring and a ray of sun pierced the clouds. Amid the vegetation there was a beautiful red rose. That simple vision brought solace to my heart's inner ache and warmed me to a high pitch of enthusiasm with the thought that Beauty would be with me forever, in all the places of my solitary wanderings. Then the choir sang some verses from Klopstock's hymn:

*Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n
Wirst du, Mein Staub,
Nach kurzer Ruh'!
Unsterblich Leben! Unsterblich Leben
wird der dich rief dir geben!*

Resurrect, yes resurrect,
Will you, my dust,
After a brief rest!
Immortal life! Immortal life
Will He who called you, give you.

Next Mahler's own verses were chanted. These ended with:

*Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen,
In heißem Liebesstreben,
Werd'ich entschweben
Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'gedrungen!
Sterben werd'ich, um zu leben!
Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n
wirst du, mein Herz, in einem Nu!
Was du geschlagen
zu Gott wird es dich tragen!*

With wings I have gained,
in love's fierce striving,
I shall soar aloft
To the light that has not pierced eye!
I will die, so I can live!
Resurrect, yes resurrect,
Will you, my heart, in an instant!
What you have coveted and fought for,
Shall lead you to God!

In the following days, I tried to penetrate the meaning by reading everything I could on the symphony and listening to it entranced in the quietude of my own room. After many integral and enthusiastic listening sessions, the words: "Sterben werde ich, um zu leben!" ("I will die so I can live!") resounded all day long in my mind like a thread around which my thoughts crystallized.

Would I ever, now or before infertile old age, be able *to die to myself* – namely to die to my small self or my ego? Was it possible to cross the foggy curtain of thoughts, superficial emotions, sensations and instinct, and emerge into that pure Dimension for which I had yearned many years and which I felt was my Highest Good?

There was no doubt I was willing to perfect my self-imposed discipline to the extreme, but by no means did I want to spend the rest of my life staring at the wall of my silenced mind and waiting for something to happen. "I will seize Fate by the *throat*", said Beethoven: so I too was prepared to act in a strong and decisive way.

MY FIRST PRANAYAMA ROUTINE

I purchased B.K.S. Iyengar's *The Illustrated Light on Yoga*. His description of *Pranayama* awakened in me an unshakeable desire to practice it intensively. In the last part of the book there was a prudent warning:

"Pneumatic tools can cut through the hardest rock. In *Pranayama*, the *yogi* uses his lungs as pneumatic tools. If they are not used properly, they destroy both the tool and the person using it. Faulty practice puts undue stress on the lungs and diaphragm. The respiratory system suffers and the nervous system is adversely affected. The very foundation of a healthy body and a sound mind is shaken by a faulty practice of *Pranayama*."

This sentence ignited my immoderate will to experience all its power, to the point of "dying" in it, figuratively speaking. What would have frightened others emboldened me. If this discipline would bring about an authentic psychological earthquake, well, I was on the right track. Of course, some prudence was necessary; an intensive practice had to be reached gradually and each session had to be carried out with extreme care.

From now on, I practiced daily the two breathing exercises called *Nadi Sodhana* and *Ujjayi* with *Bandhas* (muscle contraction) and *Kumbhaka* (breath retention.) I sat on the edge of a pillow, in the half-lotus position, with my back straight. I focused with zeal on applying the instructions flawlessly but with a creative spirit.

I concentrated keenly on the alternate feelings of coolness and warmth produced by the air on the fingers and on the palm of the right hand used to open and close the nostrils. The pressure, the smooth flowing of the breath... every detail was pleasant. Becoming aware of each peculiarity of the exercise helped me maintain vigilant attention without becoming stressed.

GOOD EFFECTS

On different occasions I noticed a change in my mind's global functioning – memory, concentration... I could especially observe this during my exams. Before the test began, a little bit of *Pranayama* would endow me with a sudden calm and self-possession, no matter what the examiner's attitude was. I would not feel a bit nervous. I was able to maintain the necessary self-control to master my speech, often succeeding in expressing clearly not only what I knew, but also something more, which just then seemed to become evident for the first time.

Day after day, I could perceive *Pranayama's* potential acting on my psyche. I was certain my old school friend had told the truth – "...these exercises can change a person inside". It had to be true!

Learning *Pranayama* was like learning to play a musical instrument – the instrument was always with me. *Pranayama* appeared to me the most perfect of all arts, with no intrinsic limits. I couldn't understand how I had waited so much before taking on this commitment seriously. Now, at least, the moment had come.

During the day, I found my perception of things had changed. My eyes searched for the most intense colors, fascinated by them as if they were close to revealing an unknown reality lying beyond the material. Sometimes in the first sunny days after winter, when the skies were crystalline and as blue as they had ever been, I would sit in the open air and contemplate my surroundings. In a bushy ditch covered with ivy the sun shed its light upon flowers that a few weeks before were blooming during the cold and now, heedless of the mildest days, still lingered in their spell-binding glory. I was deeply inspired. I would close my eyes and rely on an inner radiance accompanied by a sensation of pressure on my heart.

At that time, my internal life was still split between two interests which I perceived as two dimensions having nothing in common. On one side were esoteric matters which had guided my search toward *Yoga* discipline, which I conceived to be an *efficacious tool* for purifying and *controlling the mind*.

On the other side was the aspiration toward the ideal world of Beauty which I tried to evoke through the study of literary works, and listening to classical music. I never imagined that the first interest could lead me to a most intense way to enjoy the second!

It was reasonable to hope that *Pranayama* could give me a permanent base of mental clarity, helping me to not spoil the fragile miracle of an encounter with Beauty with a jumble of thoughts, but I could never have imagined that *Pranayama* had the power of multiplying the experience of the Sublime or even make it spring up from nothing! I often repeated inside myself and sometimes quoted to my friends this verse from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

(The *yogi*) knows the eternal joy beyond the pale of the senses which the reason cannot grasp. Dwelling in this reality, he moves not thence. He has found the treasure above all others. There is nothing higher than this. Having achieved it,

he shall not be moved by the greatest sorrow. This is the real meaning of *Yoga* – a deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow.

While repeating it, I was actually savoring that Joy. On a quiet afternoon walk among trees just before sunset, I quickly glanced now and then at text from one of the *Upanishads* [ancient Sanskrit sacred texts] that I had with me. One particular sentence awakened an instantaneous realization: "Thou art That"!

I closed the book and repeated this short sentence as if in a trance. My rational mind was able to grasp but not fully accept the incommensurable implication of the statement. It meant that it was I that was the unbelievably delicate green light filtering through the leaves, bearing witness to the spring that brought new life.

Back home, I did not even try to put down on paper the numerous "moments of grace" I experienced from this realization, nor could I have. My only wish was to delve further and further into this new inner source of understanding and enlightenment.

Panning my sight around, a landscape would appear amongst the leaves and a group of distant houses surrounding a bell-tower. Only that sort of "light" could instill a superhuman poise into my being and give me the intuition that the traces of the ineffable "primeval cause" of all things was not to be sought in books, in reasoning but only in the realm of Beauty.

A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The first glimpse of the Spiritual Reality may manifest as a series of bliss waves rising through the spine and entering the brain. This experience usually lasts from few instants to a couple of minutes. Sometimes it is like having a volcano erupting inside, a "rocket" shooting up through the spine! Other times, it may appear like an intense bliss in the chest region – suddenly you are inside an immense joy and wake up with tears in your eyes. You are filled with the euphoria obtained by this short but unforgettable plunge into Eternity.

Frequently this experience is called "*Kundalini awakening*". The concept of *Samadhi* (or religious ecstasy) is very akin to "*Kundalini awakening*". *Kundalini* is Sanskrit for "coiled". It is conceived as a particular energy coiled like a serpent in the root *Chakra*. The representation of being coiled like a spring conveys the idea of untapped potential energy having its seat at the base of the spine. The concept of *Kundalini* is very useful since it can be utilized to express what generally happens along the spiritual path.

Some authors foster the idea that this great concentration of energy has its seat in our entire body, not only at the base of the spine. It sleeps in our body, underneath the layers of our consciousness, waiting to be aroused by spiritual discipline.

Yoga teaches to harness this tremendous power through specific techniques and guide its rising from the *Muladhara* up through *Sushumna*, activating each *Chakra*. It has been explained that when *Kundalini* arrives at the *Sahasrara Chakra*, it bestows mystical illumination.

Sometimes the experience comes before any *Yoga* practice is done. It may spring from the vibratory shock produced by reading a religious text or the biography of a Saint, when the idea of the vastness of the Spiritual Reality creates a sort of dizziness. You feel that this idea is capable of sweeping away all your certitudes.

Some were so elated by their experience that they wrote about it with perhaps too much grandeur, placing too much emphasis on it, discerning implications it has not. I remember an article in a specialized magazine in which the woman who had this experience attributed the event to an imaginary individual who, purportedly, granted her every intimate detail. You understand that it is the lady herself to write since it is highly improbable that another person had communicated her such profusion of details of the event. Her alleged act of humility was annihilated by the title she gave to her article: "Forerunners of a new race." She gave the impression of not having understood the teaching contained in the experience. In her description, *Kundalini* awakening happened in her body as a privilege obtained by divine intervention. We know it is no privilege at all. It is a natural event.

After having bought the works of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Gopi Krishna and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, I finally decided to buy the autobiography of an Indian saint, whom I will indicate by PY.¹ It was a

¹ The reader will understand why I am not mentioning the full name of PY – it is not difficult however to figure out his identity. There are many schools of *Yoga* spreading his teachings according to a 'specific legitimacy'. One of these, through its representatives, made me realize that not only won't they tolerate the smallest of the Copyright violations, but they won't even appreciate their beloved Teacher's name being mixed into discussions about *Kriya* on the Internet. The reason is that in the past some people used His name to mislead a high number of practitioners who were trying to receive His original teachings. Moreover, my desire is to inform the reader that in the following pages I will only summarily linger upon my understanding of His legacy, without any pretension of giving an objective account of it. An interested

book I had seen some years before but had not bought because it didn't contain practical instructions. My hope now was that I would be able to find useful information such as the addresses of some good Yoga schools.

This autobiography enthralled me and created a strong aspiration toward the mystical path. In certain moments I found myself almost burning from an internal fever. This provided fertile ground for the coming of an event which was radically different from any I had experienced before. It was a kind of "intimate" experience. Nonetheless, since I have listened to similar descriptions from *Yoga* practitioners, I have decided to share it.

One night while pausing after reading this book, I felt a shiver similar to an electric current spreading itself throughout my whole body. A "shiver" was insignificant in itself, but it frightened me. My reaction was rather strange since I had always believed I was immune from fear of all things related to transcendence.

The thought flashed through my mind that a deeper event was going to happen soon and that it was going to be strong, very strong and I would not be able to stop it in any way. It was as if my memory had some inexplicable familiarity with it and my instinct knew its inescapable power. I made up my mind to let things happen unimpeded and go ahead with the reading. Minutes passed and I was not able to continue reading; my restlessness turned into anxiety. Then it again became fear, an intense fear of something unknown which was threatening my existence. Certainly, I had never experienced a similar state. In past moments of danger, I used to remain paralyzed, unable to think. Now my thoughts were stirring frantically, picturing the worst results: loss of psychological balance, encounter with an evil entity, perhaps even death.

I felt the urgency to do something, even though I did not know what. I set myself in the position for meditation and waited. The anguish increased. A part of me, maybe the totality of that entity I call "myself", seemed at the point of melting away. The worst thoughts hung over me without a clear reason.

I was well aware of what happened to Gopi Krishna, the author of *Kundalini: Path to Higher Consciousness*. He described the awakening experience he had through a daily intense concentration on the seventh *Chakra*. Later on – because his body was probably unprepared – he met serious physical and, as a reflex, psychic problems as well. According to his description, a very strong energy began to flow inside his spine from

reader should not renounce the privilege of turning to the original texts!

the coccyx region toward the brain.

So strong was the energy that he was bedridden and could not accomplish normal bodily functions. He literally felt as if he was being burned by an inner fire which he could not put out. Weeks later, he intuitively discovered the way to control the phenomenon: the upward flow of energy through the spine became a persistent experience of internal realization.

I was afraid I too had come to the threshold of that same experience but, since I did not live in India, perhaps people around me might not understand. The consequences would have been terrible! I could not be reassured that my experience would be channeled toward a positive conclusion.

In those terrible instants, the spiritual world appeared to me to be a sorrowful and horrible nightmare, able to annihilate and destroy whoever would imprudently approach it. Ordinary life, on the contrary, seemed the dearest and healthiest reality. I was afraid I might not be able to get back to that condition again. I was convinced that through my intense practice of two simple breathing exercises I had opened a door I was not supposed to open, therefore I tried to stop the experience.

I stood up and left the room, out to the open air. It was night and there was nobody to whom I could communicate my panic! At the center of the yard I was burdened, choked, almost crushed by a feeling of desperation, envying all those people who had never practiced *Yoga*.

I suddenly felt guilty and ashamed of the harsh words I had used against a friend who had been involved in part of my search. Like so many others, he had shunned any practice and decided instead to "enjoy life." Equipped with a juvenile boldness, I had addressed him with a tone far from affectionate, which now started to thunder inside my head. I was sorry I had thrown unjustified cruelty at him without really knowing what was in his mind and soul. I would have liked to tell him how sorry I was to have brutally violated his right to live the way he thought was best. Perhaps he had preferred to protect his mental health rather than become unstable or insane through practices he was unsure of.

After returning to my room, I hoped that, because of my great passion for classical music, listening to it might yield the positive effect of protecting me from anguish and help me get back my usual mood. It was Beethoven's *Concert for Violin and Orchestra*, which I listened to in my room with headphones, that soothed my soul and after half an hour eased my sleep.

The following morning I awoke with the same fear. Strange as it may seem, the idea that every day in my present life stirs a joyful emotion in my heart, conveyed at that moment a feeling of horror! I mean the belief that man can practice a definite discipline in order to attune to the Divine Intelligence which is the First Cause of everything existing.

Sunlight poured into the room through the gaps in the shutters. I had a whole day before me. I went out to try and amuse myself by being with other people. I met some friends and spent the afternoon cracking jokes and behaving like the people I had always considered lazy and dull. In this way, I succeeded in hiding my anguish. The first day went by; my mind was totally worn out. After two days, the fear had diminished and I finally felt safe. Something felt changed anyway.

One week later I began, calmly and objectively, to ponder the meaning of what had happened. I understood the nature of my reaction to that episode: I had cowardly run away from the experience I had pursued for such a long time! In the depth of my soul my dignity urged me to continue with my search exactly from the point where I had quit. I was ready to accept all that was to happen and let things follow their course, even if this process implied the loss of my wholesomeness. I resumed the practice of *Pranayama* again, as intensely as before. A few days went by without detecting any form of fear. Then I experienced something very beautiful.

It was night. I was lying in a relaxed "corpse pose", when I had a pleasant sensation, as if an electric wind was perceived over the surface of my skin, propagating itself quickly and with a wavy motion from my feet up to my head. My body was so tired I could not move – even if my mind had ordered it to. My composure was serene. I had no fear. Then the electric wind was replaced by another feeling, comparable to an enormous power pouring into the backbone and quickly climbing up to the brain. The experience was accompanied by an indescribable, and so far unknown, sense of bliss. The perception of an intense brightness accompanied everything. My memory of that moment is condensed into a single expression, "a clear and euphoric certainty of existing, like an unlimited ocean of awareness and bliss". The strangest thing was that in the very instant I had it, I found it familiar.

In *God Exists: I Have Met Him*, A. Frossard tries to give an idea of his spiritual experience. To that end, he creates the concept of an "inverse avalanche". An avalanche collapses, runs downhill, first slowly then faster and violently at the same time. Frossard suggests we should imagine an "upside-down avalanche" which begins strengthening at the foot of the mountain and climbs up pushed by an increasing power; then suddenly it leaps up toward the sky. I do not know how long this experience lasted. It definitely peaked out at only a few seconds. When it ended, I turned on my side and fell into a calm, uninterrupted sleep.

The following day when I awoke I had forgotten it. It only came up some hours later, during a walk. Leaning against the trunk of a tree, I remained immobile for a couple minutes, enthralled by the reverberation of the memory. I was flooded with great joy. An elated condition stretching out far past the limits of my awareness – a sort of memory hiding in the recesses of my subconscious – began to be revealed, as if a new area of my brain had been stirred to a full awakening. I found myself contemplating a dreamlike reality, still objectively indisputable; it had arisen in me with the naturalness of a primordial instinct although it had nothing to do with the world surrounding me in which I lived.

The meaning of the experience I was going through was sufficiently clear to me. I had no doubts that the Reality I had contacted was my inner "Self." The practice of *Pranayama* had provoked it by cleansing the subconscious part of my psyche. I had no fear since I had trained my consciousness to live by the contemplation of Beauty. Another thing became adamantly clear: I would have to choose a profession that would not occupy all my energy. I had to live a simple life, never betraying the inner Self that was revealed to me!

CHAPTER 2
FROM UJJAYI TO KRIYA PRANAYAMA

[I]

The enthusiasm for the art of *Pranayama* was constantly growing. Undertaking this practice was like planting the seed of a mighty tree in the feverish season of my youth and contemplating its safe growth at other times of my life. *Pranayama* became my safe refuge when the trials of life conspired to wear away the basic joy which was my inherent nature. To abide by it was the Decision of my life. I practiced morning and evening in an "absolute" way, with ferocious concentration, as if there were no tomorrow.

The "*Kundalini* experience" happened again, several times but never became a constant. It took place especially when I devoted myself to study late at night and then lied supine on my bed. Whenever it appeared my heart bubbled with infinite gratefulness to something higher, beyond my capabilities of understanding.

In my beginner's zeal, I could not refrain from trying to convince other people of its benefits. I was convinced that it could help anyone to live in a better way. I declared that *Pranayama* would harness their energies towards a more balanced psyche. My friends were polite while listening, but did not share my enthusiasm. Rather they reacted affirming that mine was not at all a state of emotional equilibrium: closing myself in a room to practice *Yoga*, abstaining from many aspects of social life, was a road toward alienation.

I made a blunder by insisting on emphasizing some aspects of their behavior which I decided needed improvement. In short, I was telling them that their social life was a farce. This generated a violent reaction. They replied that my words were deprived of a genuine sense of respect and love and that I was unable to show sympathy toward others. The essence of what I had found in *Pranayama*, which I went on extolling unflinchingly, appeared to them as the pinnacle of egoism and even a real mental cruelty.

Guilt-ridden, I saw I had provoked only bitterness. I also realized that, for purposes of my disquisition, I had taken advantage of their past

confidential admissions. Only one friend, a "Hippie", understood perfectly what I was saying and showed me some empathy; to him, the only real problem was my excessive enthusiasm about the automatic benefits of *Pranayama*. He had no doubts that my success in this practice depended wholly on me. In his opinion, *Pranayama* was not an art bringing its own reward, but an "amplifier" of what I had inside, enhancing what I had already achieved. *Pranayama*, he said, could not create anything new.

In my opinion *Pranayama* was an action of "climbing" toward a lofty state of consciousness whereby you achieved something radically new. I felt disoriented in listening that it was only an "amplifier." I wasn't able to see that the two visions could coexist – I was young and I categorized everything as black or white.

GREAT INTEREST FOR A NEVER HEARD KIND OF PRANAYAMA: KRIYA YOGA

I felt no immediate attraction for *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I did not find in those many pages one single clear practical instruction. Later I was struck by a fact: the author hinted at a particular form of *Pranayama* (*Kriya Pranayama*) that was taught by a famous yogi, Lahiri Mahasaya, who was depicted as the embodiment of *Yoga*. When I read that this technique had to be mastered through four stages, I thought that surely there must have been something unique in his "way". I loved my technique of *Ujjayi Pranayama*, and the idea of improving a *Pranayama* technique through different steps sounded wonderful. Considering that the simple breathing exercises I had already practiced had given me such incomparable results, it was obvious that the four-level system of *Kriya Yoga* will produce greater result!

That technique was secret, it had to be learned by direct initiation from a Master. Where could I learn that? I was not in the condition to leave for India. I guessed that *Kriya Pranayama* had to be a sort of *Ujjayi*, but more complicated. Could I guess the technique from books? I went on reading whatever I could find about *Pranayama*. My imagination ran wild and my fervor grew.

I had good reasons to think that *Kriya Pranayama* consisted of slow and deep breathing with the awareness focused on the spine. During the *Kriya* process, the internal energy had to be "rotated" around the *Chakras*.

Since PY wrote that the *Kriya* technique was quoted in the *Bhagavad Gita*, I quickly tried to decipher the precise quote.

"Offering inhaling breath into the outgoing breath, and offering the outgoing breath into the inhaling breath, the yogi neutralizes both these breaths; he thus releases the life force from the heart and brings it under his control." [*Bhagavad Gita* IV 29]

The *Bhagavad Gita* explains then that through the repetition of this action a *yogi* reaches a marked dying down of the breath. By perfecting this action, a *yogi* enters the state of meditation: with a pure heart he remains longer and longer established in a state of sublime peace.

Steadfast a lamp burns sheltered from the wind;
Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind
Shut from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven...
[*Bhagavad Gita* VI 19]

I must admit that when I read line [IV 29], I was not able to understand its meaning. How can one offer "inhaling breath into the outgoing breath" and offer the "outgoing breath into the inhaling breath?"

Just for the curiosity of the reader I try here to convey the meaning of this sentence, which was later clarified to me.

► During *Kriya Pranayama* two opposite forms of energy interpenetrate continuously. Precisely: during **Inhalation** you experience a form of energy entering the body with the air through the nose, coming down into pharynx, larynx, trachea, lungs At the same time another form of energy is coming up from the base of the spine, moving inside the spine, reaching the higher *Chakras*.

The energy going down with the fresh air is called *Prana*. The energy coming up from the base of the spine is called *Apana*. The two movements of energy happens simultaneously. *Prana* comes down inside the body, *Apana* comes up inside the spine.

During **Exhalation** the two forces change the role: *Apana* is in the consumed air leaving the body, *Prana* is in the current that from *Medulla* enters the body and comes down along the spine.

Apana moves again upwards, *Prana* moves again downwards. But all is different – *Apana* guides the consumed air outside the body. *Prana* draws the divine current from *Medulla* guides it down, piercing each *Chakra*, reaching the first *Chakra*.

So, what happens in *Kriya*? The sensations experienced during *Ujjayi* are "internalized" [in other words they are experienced as internal phenomenon, taking place in the spine] and become the secret of *Kriya Pranayama*. Without this clarification, one remains blind and thinks that *Ujjayi* is so rough to be a spiritual tool.

In order to internalize your awareness, you can mentally chant *Om* in each *Chakra* going up (inhalation) and down (exhalation) along the spine. This mentally chanting of *Om* is simply an educational tool – an help to make the described procedure more easy. I mean you simply teach your awareness to be more disciplined, to patiently obey you by going up and down. What is written in the Bhagavad Gita happens both without chanting of *Om* and with chanting. What is important is that you be aware of what is happening in your spine.

If you practice *Ujjayi* and internalize it, you are practicing *Kriya*. It is so simple. If you mentally put *Om* in each *Chakra* you have the same procedure because chanting *Om* in the *Chakras* does not transform *Ujjayi* in another tool.

N.B. The technique of *Kriya Pranayama* is patiently described in chapter 6. A good way to discipline your self in practicing it deeply is described in chapter 12.

After this clarification let me return to the concepts that became clear to me at that time.

PY's emphasized the evolutionary value of *Kriya Pranayama*. He explained that if we compare the human spinal column to a ferromagnetic substance constituted of elementary magnets that turn towards the same direction when they are overlapped by a magnetic field, as taught by physics, then the action of *Pranayama* is akin to the process of magnetization. By uniformly redirecting all the "subtle" parts of our spinal cord's physical and astral essence, the *Kriya Pranayama* burns off the so-called "bad seeds" of *Karma*.²

² We allude to *Karma* whenever we stick to the common belief that a person inherits a baggage of latent tendencies from his previous lives and that, sooner or later, these

This is a key idea in the teachings of PY. Is it true? I cannot answer, I have not the means of answer. What matters to me is go deep in the practice of *Kriya* and see that the breath becomes more subtle and disappears.

This happened to me after years of *Kriya*. But I never saw the elementary magnets. The only effect this words, this concepts had is this: because of that exciting description I felt imperative to believe that the technique should be extremely complicated.

SEARCH IN ESOTERIC BOOKS

I discovered in his Autobiography that PY had created an organization that published a whole set of lessons on *Kriya*. Those lessons could be received by correspondence. With great joy, I quickly applied for the course.

When, after four months from my application, I received the first lesson of this course, I came to know that I would have had to wait for at least one year before applying for the *Kriya Yoga* lessons. I felt so desperate.

The written material traveled by ship and the delay times were enormous. I could not wait so long. ³ I decided to discover the technique of *Kriya Pranayama* through another source. My idea was to seek something similar in the best treatises of *Yoga* or tracing it through esoteric traditions.

I looked for a technique of *Pranayama* in which the energy had to be visualized "rotating" somehow around the *Chakras*. If this was – as stated by PY – a universal process, I thought having a good chance of finding it.

I vaguely remembered having seen some drawings in a book about occultism which sketched out different circuits of energy throughout the human body. The idea came to explore those esoteric books who had illustrations like those.

tendencies will come out in actual life. Of course *Kriya* is a practice which one can experimentally use without necessarily having to accept any creeds. However, since the concept of *Karma* lies at the basis of Indian thought, it is worthwhile to understand and speak freely of it. According to this belief, *Pranayama* burns out the effects of the "bad seeds" just before they manifest in our lives. It is further explained that those people who are instinctively attracted by methods of spiritual development such as *Kriya*, have already practiced something similar in a "precedent incarnation". This is because such an action is never in vain and in actual life they get back to it exactly where, in a remote past, they had quit it.

³ I can still consider myself as fortunate. I lived in North East Italy not far from the border with the former Yugoslavia. Those people and all those who lived beyond the Iron Curtain could not receive such material.

I started going to a used books store which was very well stocked, probably because it had once been the Theosophical Society's reference bookstore. I turned down those texts which dealt only with philosophical topics, while, in ecstasy and not concerned by time, I kept on skimming through those which illustrated practical exercises with clarity. Before purchasing a book

I made sure it hinted at the possibility of channeling the energy along certain internal passages, thus creating the prerequisite for awakening the *Kundalini*. While reading the index of a text which was in three volumes, introducing the esoteric thought of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, I was attracted by the entry, "*Breathing exercise for the awakening of Kundalini*." It was a variation of *Nadi Sodhana*.

This was definitely not PY's *Kriya* because, according to several clues, *Kriya* was not to be done with alternate-nostril breathing. [This way of breathing is wonderful but only as a preparation. You cannot go ahead for a long time moving your hands. You must have the opportunity to remain in a state of perfect immobility.]

So I went on haunting the bookstore. The owner was very nice and I almost felt obliged, considering the cheap price and the perfect conditions of those second-hand books, to buy at least one book per each visit. Often a lot of space was dedicated to theories alien to concrete life, which tried to describe what cannot be seen or be experienced – such as the astral worlds and the subtle coverings of energy wrapping our body.

One day, after browsing, without much enthusiasm, through a tiresome selection of books, I went to the storekeeper to pay a new purchase. While deciding the price, he thought of something that might interest me. He led me to the back of the store and invited me to rummage through a cardboard box filled with a messy heap of papers. Among a quantity of miscellaneous material (complete series of the theosophical magazine issues, scattered notes from old course on hypnosis etc.), I came upon a book written in German by a certain K. Spiesberger which contained various esoteric techniques, among them *Kundalini-breathing*.

I had not much familiarity with the German language, but I immediately realized the extraordinary importance of that technique. I thought that I would doubtlessly be able to decipher all of it at home with the help of a dictionary. ⁴ The description of this technique still amazes me. During a

⁴ I cannot help smiling when some half-hearted people insist that they are fond of *Kriya*, yet they will not study some crucial texts in English because they are afraid to misinterpret them. I am convinced that their interests are superficial and rather

deep breath, the air is to be imagined flowing inside the spinal column. While inhaling, the air is rising; when exhaling, the air is flowing down.

There was also the description of two particular sounds created by air originating in the throat.

In another book written in English there was an exhaustive description of a breathing exercise called "*Magic breath*," It consisted in visualizing the energy flowing *around* the backbone, not *inside* it. Through the inhalation, the energy had to go up behind the spinal column, to the center of the head; exhaling, it had to go down along a particular channel in the front part of the body. I completely forgot about the other material. The smirk of satisfaction I wore before the storekeeper holding the two books, as if I had found a treasure of unfathomable value, definitely caused an increase in their price.

Walking home, I could not help skimming through the pages. I was curious about some rough drawings illustrating techniques which were based on the movement of energy. I read that the *Magic breath* was one of the most valuable secrets of all times, and if practiced constantly, accompanied by the strength of the visualization, it would "open" the spiritual eye. I convinced myself that this technique had to be Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* and I add it to my daily routine.

[III]

A letter from the organization informed me about other people living not far from my area, who were also practicing *Kriya Yoga*. They had formed a group in order to practice that discipline together. I was enthusiastic and quivered with cheerful anticipation to meet them. That night I could hardly fall asleep.

"Too bright were our heavens, too far away, too frail their ethereal stuff", wrote *Sri Aurobindo*. I would never have thought that those words could be applied to my meeting those people! With a sort of sour irony, I would dare say that that phase of my life characterized by an extreme enthusiasm for *Pranayama* had been too happy for it to last much longer. I now experienced firsthand the problems, limitations and distortions caused by

emotive. Such was my enthusiasm that I would have studied Sanskrit or Chinese or any other language, if that had given me the chance to understand an essential text on *Pranayama*!

the human mind when it has lost the habit of rational thinking. Many times in the future I would have to experience how life is made of short moments of inspiration and serenity, alternating with times when all seems lost and the distortions of the ego reign supreme. While approaching the man in charge of that group with total sincerity, I could not have imagined what kind of a hard shock I was about to receive.

He welcomed me with visible enthusiasm, sincerely eager to meet a person with whom he could share the fire of his passion. Since the very first moment of our meeting, standing on his doorstep, I told him how fascinated I was by the practice of *Kriya*. He asked me right away when I had been initiated in this practice, taking for granted that I had received the teaching from the same organization he was a member of.

When he figured out that I had picked out a breathing technique in a book and convinced myself it was *Kriya Pranayama*, he was horrified and showed a bitter smile of disappointment. He thought I considered *Kriya Yoga* a child's play and had no idea how serious it was. Visibly confused I babbled something about currents and sound of the breath, but he didn't want to hear any more and ushered me to his study.

He emphasized that *Kriya* cannot be learned through books. He began the tale – which, later on, I had the opportunity to hear plenty of times – of the Tibetan *yogi* Milarepa who, getting no positive results from the painstaking practice of his fraudulently learned techniques, received the very same instructions kneeling at the feet of and with the benediction of his *Guru* – so that this time the results came out easily.

We all know how the human mind is more conditioned by an anecdote than by a logical reference! An anecdote, even if it is totally fanciful with fictional purpose, is endowed with a sort of internal "brightness" that conditions a person's common sense. Stimulating emotions and feelings, it is able to cloud people's judgment in order for them to easily accept conclusions that are absurd. This story left me speechless; I just did not know what to reply.

There was only one way, according to him, to learn *Kriya*: be initiated by a "Minister" authorized by PY's organization! He told me that *no other person* was allowed to teach the technique. He, and all the other devotees of his group, had received the technique, swearing a strict and solemn promise of secrecy.

"*Secrecy!*" How odd this word sounded, what a strange appeal, what a

mysterious fascination it exerted upon my being! Until then, I had always believed it did not matter at all how a certain teaching was received, or what book had been read or studied in order to learn it. I thought that the only important thing was to practice it correctly, accompanied by the desire to go deeper and deeper into it. The idea began to enter my mind that it was in fact okay to protect precious lore from indiscreet eyes. In that occasion I had nothing to say against the vow of secrecy. Later, over a span of many years, I changed my opinion because I witnessed an innumerable series of absurdities originating from this behest; dramatically, I had the evidence that it brought miserable repercussions into the lives of thousands of people.

Staring into my eyes, with an enormous emotional impact, he went on to say that a practice learned from any other source was "worth nothing, it will not be effective in matters of spiritual purpose", and a possible effect, only apparently encouraging, might be "a dangerous illusion in which the ego remains trapped for a long time".

Inflamed by an absolute faith, he launched himself into a wide discourse on the value of the "*Guru*" (spiritual Teacher), a puzzling concept to me because it was attributed to a person that he had not known directly. Having been initiated into *Kriya* through the legitimated channels of PY's organization, PY was, to him, real and present in his life, and "his" *Guru*. The same thing was true for the other people belonging to that group. Their *Guru* was a special aid sent by God Himself, therefore such an event was "the greatest luck a human being can ever have." The logical consequence – underlined with overflowing emphasis – was that, abandoning such form of aid or looking for a different spiritual path amounted to "a hateful rejection of the Divine hand, stretched out in benediction."

He asked me to demonstrate for him my book-learned *Kriya* technique. He expected, I suppose, to verify a well-rooted prejudice that the technique, received through illegitimate channels, could not – because of a particular spiritual law – be anything but corrupted. He smiled when he saw me breathing through the nose. Then he asked me to explain if there was something upon which I was focusing my attention during my breathing. According to the books I had read, the energy could be visualized both flowing inside the spine and around the spine. Since PY wrote that a *kriyaban* "mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers", I chose the second of the two possibilities and this was the version I explained. Having also read in another book that during *Kriya Pranayama* the practitioner was supposed to chant "*Om*" mentally into each *Chakra*, I added this detail as well. I did

not realize that PY had decided to simplify the instructions taught in the west, using the other variation with no mental chanting of *Om*.

While telling him these details, I saw an inner satisfaction spreading over his face. Clearly he didn't identify my practice with the technique of *Kriya Pranayama* he had learned. The "secret" he was bound to had not been broken by the author of my esoteric book! Pretending to feel sorry for my consequent disappointment, he informed me in an official tone that my technique had "nothing to do with *Kriya Pranayama*"!

A really bizarre situation was taking place: I was describing for him a technique very similar to *Kriya Pranayama* taught by Lahiri Mahasaya while this gentleman was one hundred per cent sure that I was talking nonsense! However, since my position was totally incompatible with his basic tenets, he recommended that I send a written account to the headquarters of PY's organization, describing the details of my vicissitudes, hoping that they would accept me as a disciple and, in due time, grant me the sacred Initiation to *Kriya Yoga*.

I was somewhat stunned by the tone in which our dialog was progressing. In order to re-establish the initial agreeability of our meeting, I tried to reassure him about the positive effects I had gained from my practice. My statement actually had the effect of worsening the whole matter, giving him the chance to scold me a second time, which was not totally unfair but undoubtedly out of place. He made it clear I should never look for any tangible effects in the practice of *Kriya* much less should I display them, because in this way I would "lose them." That clever guy had talked himself straight into an obvious contradiction without even realizing it; he was saying that the results were too important to risk losing them by telling others, while a few seconds before he had stressed that they were of no value whatsoever.

Realizing he had given too much of his time to me, a strange metamorphosis took place in his demeanor. It was as if all of a sudden he had been invested with a sacred role: he promised he would pray for me! On that day, I had lost the "fight." I told him I would follow his advice. As a matter of fact, from that moment I abandoned *Pranayama* entirely and restricted my practice to simply centering my attention between the eyebrows (*Kutastha*) – just as he had suggested to me.

GROUP MEDITATION

The group practicing *Kriya* met twice a week to practice the techniques

together. The room devoted to meditation was bare but pleasant. Each member paid part of the rental, so that continuance would not depend on the owner's whims and could be dedicated to an exclusively spiritual use. I began attending these meetings and I remember it nostalgically – listening to Indian songs translated and harmonized for westerners and, above all, meditating together was a true joy! Everything seemed heavenly to me, even though little time was given to the practice of meditation – no more than 20 minutes, often barely 15 minutes. A particularly inspiring session of collective practice took place on Christmas Eve, enriched by devotional songs and lasting many hours.

At the end of each meditation we were required to depart in silence, thus I began to know my new friends more closely only during the monthly "social" lunch. It was a beautiful chance to spend some hours talking and enjoying each other's company.

Since many of us did not have their family's approval, much less support, in the practice of *Yoga*, the only occasion we had to spend time among people with the same ideas and interests was an experience of serenity and relaxation. Unfortunately, the pleasantries of our meetings was partly spoiled because the directors of PY's organization had requested us not to talk about other spiritual paths or deal with specific details of *Kriya Yoga* techniques. Only authorized people could cover such a role; no one in our group could. During our gatherings, since our conversations were strictly kept on well-defined tracks, we were not able to find a topic which would be interesting and at the same time respected the given rules. It was not the right place for gossip, unsuitable for a spiritual group discussion. So only one topic was left: the beauty of our spiritual path and our great fortune in having discovered it!

No wonder that, after some meetings of mutual "exaltation", an almost frightening boredom started to reign. As a last resort, some risked telling some jokes. They were not mean or insulting jokes, but a light and innocent use of humor. Unfortunately this also had to live up to the devotional attitude kept by many of the members and eventually succumbed to their cold attitude. When you tried to be agreeable you got a look and a hint of a smile that left you frozen for the rest of the day. They seemed to be unable to show a single inch of true joviality. Thinking over, perhaps they were naturally inclined toward depression. Actually, their enthusiasm towards *Kriya* was very moderate, and they gave the impression they were practicing the few techniques they knew as if they were accomplishing a sacrifice to atone for their "sin" of existing.

What struck me in an extremely unfavorable way in the behavior of some of them was the belief they were protected by their *Guru* and therefore don't mind putting themselves in dangerous situations, abdicating every prudence. Before the prospect of doing a very dangerous action in which there are fears for their safety, their mind was filled with a sort of hysterical joyous anticipation. I don't know if there could exist a worse way to belittle the spiritual teachings. In my opinion this attitude should be avoided like the plague, being actually a stupid superstition.

As a matter of course, the group underwent a great recycling process; many members who had joined with enthusiasm quit after a few months and then, oddly and without deep reasons, scraped the whole experience off their memory.

My open temperament allowed me to become close to one person and establish a bond which later became true friendship. It was not so easy to find what could be called a free spiritual seeker. Many made a display of emotionally-charged devotion, others, perhaps envisaging the prospect of expanding our group, seemed to have the sole aim of raising enough funds to provide our rented room with impressive signs of its sacred consecration; others seemed only social misfits.

With a barely concealed impatience, I tried on different occasions to receive some elucidation on the technique of *Kriya* by discussing what had been my book-learned practice of it. I hoped that someone, making some oblique remark about it, would help me discover the exact *Kriya Pranayama* technique. No "courting" could extract even a crumb of information from them. Each one repeated that he was "not authorized to give out any explanations", and this rule was strictly respected.

While I was continuously receiving unasked-for lessons of devotion, humility, and loyalty, my interest for *Kriya* became a real craving, a burning fever. A *kriyaban*, making fun of me with unconcealed cruelty, told me: "They won't give you the *Kriya* at all; a devotee should not desire a technique with such intensity. God is to be mostly found through devotion and surrender."

I tried to behave like a pious disciple but deep down I awaited my initiation with unimagined eagerness. Even while doing my best to convince myself that I was among individuals with the same passions, I had to acknowledge that the reality of it was altogether different!

AN IMPORTANT VISIT IN OUR GROUP

I don't want to complicate my narration by talking about the preliminary meditation techniques to prepare one for initiation into *Kriya Pranayama*. However it is necessary to write a few lines about this theme because it will give me the opportunity to add some remarks about how to organize a *Kriya* routine.

Well, according to PY's will, the technique of *Kriya Pranayama* should be coupled with two other techniques: *Hong Sau* and *Om*. The first one slows down the breath and the mind; the second one concerns itself with listening to internal (astral) sounds melting into the *Om* sound. I didn't receive these instructions at the same time but with an interval of two months between. This gave me the splendid opportunity to concentrate on the first technique for many weeks; only then I could enjoy the combination of the two techniques. Thus, I could experiment with the meaning and beauty of each.

Our group received the visit of an elderly lady who had personally corresponded with PY. Thanks to her earnestness, sincerity, and long-time loyal discipleship she had been authorized to help us with meditation. Her temperament was very sweet and more inclined to understanding rather than to censorship. She demonstrated the so-called "*Recharging Exercises*" These exercises were similar to isometric stretches and were practiced while standing; peculiar to them, however, was that the *Prana* was directed to all the parts of the body through concentration.

Then she reviewed the *Hong-Sau* technique. She went on to clarify that the *Hong-Sau* technique was not easy at all, in spite of its apparent simplicity; but encouraging us with a smile, she concluded: "The technique contains all you need to come into contact with the Divine Essence".

Then she dwelt on the technique for listening to internal sounds (often called *Om* technique.)⁵ She explained that PY had tried to explain the teaching of the Trinity in a new way. Om is the "Amen" of the Bible – the "**Holy Ghost**", the "witness", a sound; a proof of the vibration of energy sustaining the universe. The Om technique, discovered by the mystics long ago, makes it possible to detect this vibration. Thanks to this technique it is also possible to be guided toward the experience of the "**Son**" – the Divine

⁵ This technique does not belong to those included in the original *Kriya Yoga*, wherein the internal sound perception happens without closing the ears. It is not an invention by PY, it had been plainly described in the books of classical *Yoga*, called *Nada Yoga* – "the *Yoga* of the sound." It is a good preparation for *Kriya* since instead of putting the accent on "doing", it teaches the attitude of "perceiving."

awareness that is present inside the above-mentioned energetic vibration. At the end of one's spiritual journey, one can reach the highest reality, the "Father" – the Divine awareness beyond every existing thing in the universe.

The lady's explanation was characterized by such a sacred flavor that it stayed with me for several months, helping me to overcome the beginning phase of the practice, when it seems unlikely that the sounds will manifest. Instead, the results obtained were very concrete. Now, while I am trying to recall my first contact with the sound of *Om*, I rediscover the memory of that ardent love for the Divine, that seemed so solid during those days and that subsequently disappeared for various years when I decided to do a research on the "*Original Kriya*." But this will be described later.

In those days I led a cloistered existence. I practiced my meditation in a slightly illuminated room. The rainy days and early-onset evenings of Winter helped my seclusion and strengthened my determination to turn on, through meditation, an internal sun. Some weeks of zealous practice passed without any result, but one day I became aware of a clear inner sound. It manifested after ten minutes of calm effort, just upon returning to my state of full awareness, after having been lost in some sweet reverie.⁶

The sound was like the humming of a mosquito. By listening intently to it, it became the feeble sound of a musical instrument playing far away. Then it seemed like the tolling of a bell echoing at dusk from the deep green of woody hills. It reached me faintly from unfathomable distance. Light, soft as falling petals, it knocked gently on the doors of my heart, giving total contentment and ease, as if the spiritual path had come to its fulfillment. Recollections of my infancy were vibrating at the periphery of my awareness without disturbing my introverted mood.

In times of misfortune, there was always a feeling of protection like a vast, comforting smile surrounding me. The sound I was listening to, enchanted and thrilled, brought me now the same sweet feeling of relief. It had in itself all the Beauty ever experienced. It was the gilded thread around which the experiences of love, the most involving, the most exalted ones grew like splendid crystals. The healing of old wounds was attained by real understanding. An azure, limitless immobility sweetly clasped my heart with fingers of bliss. What I thought impossible to accomplish, whose absence was so cruel to accept, materialized real and true before me.

⁶ To be lost in a "reverie" state and to return suddenly to the awareness that I was losing time, happened often.

In the following days I became totally absorbed in this new practice. A never experienced before devotion rose spontaneous, crossed the wall of the psychological sphere and made life and spiritual experience indistinguishable. Reality appeared me as transfigured – like in winter, when a soft mantle made of snow makes any asperity disappear.

Unfortunately, I learned *the hard way* that you should never detach yourself voluntarily from that state of grace. Some months later, during a moment in my life when I wanted to relax and enjoy life, I decided to interrupt this contact, as if it were a drawback to being fully sociable. I didn't realize that this seemingly innocuous and instinctive "betrayal" would make me unable to tune with the *Om* sound for a very long time. Incredibly, in a few days I felt hopelessly cut off from that sweet reality. Among people, I felt like one who had landed in another continent and had to live in surroundings that mean nothing to him. I struggled to retrieve the lost deep emotions originating from listening to internal sounds. This went on for months until my soul was again reminded of the motivations that had led me to the spiritual path: change my life forever. Now I saw clearly that my stupid decision of detaching from the contact with the *Om* vibration, had been a *monumental mistake*.

INITIATION INTO KRIYA YOGA

Eventually, the moment came to file the application form to receive the *Kriya* instructions by mail. About four months passed as every day I hoped to receive the coveted material. Finally, an envelope arrived. I opened it with heightened expectation, but was deeply disappointed because it contained nothing but more introductory material. From reading the index page I understood that the actual technique would be sent after four weeks. So for another month I would have to study just the usual nursery rhymes I already knew by heart. In the meantime, two ministers of PY's organization visited our country and I took part in the initiation ceremony. After waiting for months, it was high time "to make an eternal pact with the *Guru* and to be taught the *Kriya* techniques in the only legitimate way, and receive his benediction."

There were about 100 of us who were to be initiated. A beautiful room had been rented for the ceremony at a very high price and embellished for the occasion with lots of flowers, such as I have never seen even at the most extravagant weddings! The introduction to the ceremony was magnificent. About 30 people wearing somber uniforms entered the room, and lined up with a solemn attitude and joined their hands in prayer. It was explained to

me that these people belonged to the local group whose leader was a fashion designer and had choreographed that triumphant entrance. The two Ministers who had just arrived from abroad walked meekly and bewildered behind them. Then the ceremony began.

I accepted without objections their demand that I swear everlasting devotion not only to the *Guru* PY but also to a six-master chain of whom Lahiri Mahasaya was an intermediary link. PY was the so-called *Guru-preceptor*, namely the one who would partially bear the burden of our *Karma*.

It would have been strange if no one had had doubts about this. I remember a lady wondering if PY – definitely unable to give any confirmation, now being a long-time resident in the astral world – had really accepted her as a "disciple" and, consequently, to be laden with her *Karma*. In order to avoid that with such thoughts she weakened the enjoyment of the enticing ceremony, I reassured her that she was accepted without fail.

They explained us that Christ was also part of this chain because He had appeared to Babaji (Lahiri Mahasaya's *Guru*) asking Him to send emissaries to the West to spread *Kriya*. This story caused me no perplexity at all. Perhaps I had no desire to think about it. To consider the whole mission of *Kriya* diffusion as originating from Christ Himself was a pleasant idea. On the other hand, I was too anxious to hear the explanation of the technique which was soon to take place to listen to anything else.

The introductory talk went ahead in a suggestive way. The *Kriya* technique embodied God's most effective blessing toward His privileged creatures, humans, which exclusively possessed an inner body with seven *Chakras*. The mystic seven-step ladder of the *Chakras* was the real highway to salvation, the fastest and safest. My mind was in great expectation for something I had so strongly desired and for which I had seriously been preparing for months. It was not what might be called a "sacrament" that I was submitting to in order to safeguard a family tradition; it was the crowning of a definitive choice! My heart was immensely happy at the thought of the inner joy that I would gain through the practice of *Kriya*.

Finally, after being taught the *Kriya Pranayama*, I realized I already knew it! It was the same *Kundalini-breathing* technique which I had found a long time ago in my esoteric readings and which prescribes that the energetic current flows all the way inside the spinal column. [I have explained that I had not taken that procedure into serious consideration, owing to the fact that in PY's book it was written that the energy had to be rotated "around

the *Chakras*, along an elliptical circuit."]

The explanation of the techniques *Maha Mudra* and *Jyoti Mudra* (they never used the more common term *Yoni*) concluded the technical instructions. Each technique's detail was explained in such a way that it would not allow for the smallest variation and, in addition, a specific routine was warmly recommended. If the least amount of doubt on the correctness of a certain detail had arisen during the practice, nobody was encouraged – even vaguely – to conduct an experiment and come to a conclusion by himself. The only "correct" action was to contact the headquarters of our *Kriya* organization, tell them the problem, and receive further guidelines. This, in effect, was what I always did. I learned to interact only with them. I would instinctively look for their advice as if it were given by perfect beings that could never be wrong. I believed they were "channels" through which the blessings of the *Guru* flowed. Besides, I was quite confident that – even if they would not admit it out of humility – they had already reached the highest level of spiritual realization.

OFFICIAL KRIYA ROUTINE

After *Kriya* initiation, I followed the counsel of my organization to practice the two techniques *Hong So* and *Om* before *Kriya Pranayama*.

With the first technique the breathing was supposed to become more relaxed and create a good state of concentration. Then, I was supposed to listen to the internal sounds. Then there would follow the *Maha Mudra*. Eventually, setting back in a still and stiff position to restore the feeling of sacredness, I was supposed to practice *Kriya Pranayama* with rigorous respect to all the instructions. To absorb the results of the whole endeavor, after *Jyoti Mudra*, the *Kriya* routine would be concluded with a full ten-minute concentration upon *Kutastha*,

In my experience the two preliminary techniques did not receive the attention they deserved, and the time devoted to the final concentration was too short. During the *Hong So* technique, the thought that I should interrupt it to start the *Om* technique brought about a disturbing feeling, hampering my whole surrender to its beauty. The same happened with the procedure of the *Om* technique, interrupting it in order to practice *Maha Mudra*.

The technique of listening to *Om* was a complete "universe" in itself and led to the mystic experience, which is why its interruption was something worse than a simple disturbance. It was illogical, as if, recognizing a friend with joyous surprise among a crowd one begins talking with him, then suddenly goes away hoping to meet, quite by chance, that same friend again and get back to where the conversation had previously ended.

The sound of *Om* was the mystic experience itself, the Goal I sought. Why should I interrupt that sublime attunement to regain it through another technique? Perhaps because *Kriya Pranayama* was a higher procedure? *Higher*? What on earth does that mean?

I forced myself into such absurdity for many months. At that time, the idea of using my brain and radically changing the routine seemed to me an act of stupid arrogance. Such was the power of that insanity which in our group was called "loyalty"! I must acknowledge that unfortunately I had become like one of those animals that, fed by man, tend to forget how to be self-sufficient.

When I tried to discuss this problem with other *kriyabans*, I noticed an enormous and unreasonable resistance. There were those who were not satisfied with their practice but planned to try it again in the future, while others were not able to even understand what I was saying.

Talking with a lady who was a longtime friend of our family, she pretended to listen attentively, but in the end bluntly declared she already had a *Guru* and did not need another. Her remark cut me deeply since my intention was only to have a rational talk which could be inspiring for us both. Apart from this, what sort of friendship can exist between two people when one is so curt?

To encounter such episodes confirmed my idea that, not being encouraged to trust the validity of self-observation, many friends went on mechanically performing what had often become an empty ritual simply to appease their conscience. With the exception of one person (who harbored really strange ideas about the spiritual path which made me entertain the thought that he might be mentally unstable), these new *kriyaban* friends seemed to censor my questioning of techniques, claiming that devotion was much more important. Often they referred to concepts I could hardly link to the practice of *Yoga*, i.e. the paramount importance was loyalty toward P.Y. and his organization.

Well, one day I decided to use my brain and changed my routine. My *Kriya* routine became inspired by *Patanjali's* theory. I decided that the two techniques *Hong So* and *Om* had to be practiced either at the end of my *Kriya* routine or never.

Having sensitized the spine, I could practice *Hong So* in the spine. [This means "watching" the breath as if it moved not in and out the lungs but up and down in the spine. [I will return upon this point in chapter 11.]

Remark about Patanjali's Yoga sutras

Patanjali was a pioneer in the art of rationally handling the mystical path, aiming at individualizing a universal, physiological direction of inner events that explained why a certain phenomenon inherent to the spiritual path should be preceded and necessarily followed by other ones. His extreme synthesis may be criticized or, because of its temporal distance, may be hard to understand; however, his work is of extraordinary importance. There are different ways of translating the Sanskrit terms summarizing Patanjali's eight steps of *Yoga*: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*.

Boring and useless from the practical point of view is the definition of *Yama* and *Niyama*. *Yama*: self-control (non-violence, avoid lies, avoid stealing, avoid being lustful and seek non-attachment); *Niyama*: religious observances (cleanliness, contentment, discipline, study of the Self and surrender to the Supreme God).

Why useless? A beginner cannot understand what "Study of the Self" means. In my opinion the moral rules are not to be put as premises to be respected in order to start the path of *Yoga*, but are the consequences of a serious spiritual effort brought ahead for years, nay, for tens of years.

As for *Asana* (position of the body), Patanjali explains it must be stable and comfortable. There is no hint of particular exercises of concentration and meditation after *Asana* and before *Pranayama*.

The two interesting and enlightening concepts for those who practice *Kriya* are *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara*. They refer respectively to the regulation of the *Prana* by repetition of particular breathing patterns and to the internalization process of the awareness which becomes disconnected from the external reality.

The three further phases, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*, respectively mean: concentration upon a physical or abstract object, contemplation of the essential nature of such object, lengthening of such contemplation in a constant flow of awareness up the point of being lost in it.

A *kriyaban* understands "concentration upon an object" as the concentration on the breath, the spine, the *Chakras*; the "contemplation of the essential nature of such object" means to become absorbed in the sweetness originating from this basic concentration; "being lost in it" means the unending happiness while achieving the final ecstatic state. This is in my opinion the essence of Patanjali's thought.

Fixed in this conviction, I decided that in my routine the two techniques *Hong So* and *Om* had to be practiced after *Kriya Pranayama*.

I am unable to express the emotion and feeling of sacredness which characterized henceforth my practice of *Kriya*. At the end of my practice, I often repeated to myself the sentence (quoted in AOY) by Lalla Yogiswari:

"What acid of sorrow have I not drunk? Countless my rounds of birth and death. Lo! naught but nectar in my cup quaffed by the art of breath."

This beautiful sentence intensified my enthusiasm, strengthening my determination to unceasingly perfect my *Kriya* path.

[III]

A couple of years passed by. I was preparing my self towards receiving the *Higher Kriyas* through the correspondence course. At the end, finally they entered my life. As the reader can guess, the process of learning them brought some trouble in my life.

Among the *kriyabans* in the meditation group I didn't saw a great interest in the *Higher Kriyas*. A woman who was my friend, had received *Kriya* initiation many years before. She had once lived near our school's general offices. I asked if she had received the *Second Kriya*. She didn't seem to understand the question. So I reminded her that Lahiri Mahasaya's disciple, Swami Pranabananda, had accompanied the moment of his death with the practice of the *Second Kriya*. She became visibly nervous, saying that the quotation clearly referred to the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*: one breath, then a second one. This had to be, in her opinion, the "*Second Kriya*!" I looked at her with a meek but piercing look; I felt my legs give way. I had the impression that the idea of a further technique to be added to the too many already received and practiced daily, upset her. It was as if she felt she had made so great an effort to form the habit of daily practice of the *First Kriya* that she could not muster up even more dedication. I believe that, up to this day, she has remained fixed in her conviction.

The lessons with the *Higher Kriyas* were given after completing the basic correspondence course. Unfortunately, those lessons contained some ambiguous parts. Just to give an example, PY wrote that in order to awaken *Kundalini* it was important to regularly practice *Kechari Mudra*, but the instruction on how to perform it were nowhere to be found.

I contacted the elderly lady who was officially invested as a "Meditation

Counselor" the same sweet lady who taught me the *Om* meditation technique. She could not help me to clarify my doubts. Just like everyone else, she had learned them only in written form because, unfortunately, after PY's *Mahasamadhi* no direct initiations were ever given. Acknowledging her uncertainties about their correct execution, she admitted that she regretted not having had her *Higher Kriyas* checked by Ministers who were direct disciples of PY, despite having had plenty of opportunities to do so.

After some time, I had still not recovered from this shock when an aristocratic-looking lady disclosed to me she had received initiation in the so-called *Higher Kriyas* years before. Full of enthusiasm, my eyes opened wide. She said she had felt so unworthy that she had put them aside and, after some time, she had forgotten them entirely.

"*Forgotten!*" I couldn't believe my ears. This last abomination was inconceivable to me. Her self-satisfied ignorance, passed off as humility and who knows what kind of overabundant devotion, crossed the bounds of decency. When I expressed my objection that her behavior seemed an exhibition of indifference toward the higher teachings taught by her *Guru*, she looked at me in bewilderment as if my impertinence had violated an implicit law: do not impudently enter the intimate arena of her *Sadhana*. She replied that what she had was enough, and then briskly cut off any further discussion.

I wrote to the management of my *Kriya* school in order to schedule an appointment with one of its representative Ministers who would soon come to our country to impart initiation to *Kriya Yoga*. I asked for this interview because I really needed it. It is not in my temperament to disturb anyone on trivialities. I am sure that, in order to answer my questions, it would have taken the Minister just a couple of minutes. I looked forward to that date with great anticipation.

A SAD EPISODE

When the Minister arrived, my Meditation Counselor introduced me to him. He said he would clarify my doubts as soon as possible. In the following days I became dismayed when I realized that the Minister kept postponing our meeting without valid reasons. Since I had decided not to give up, at last we met.

Unfortunately I found this meeting to be truly disturbing. I was convinced that hypocrisy, bureaucracy, formality, and deception were totally alien to one who devoted his life to practicing and teaching *Kriya*, yet the sensation

I had meeting him was akin to meeting a business man who had more important affairs in mind and who was very irritable. He was emphatic that we not talk about *Kechari Mudra*, and with regard to the *Third* and *Fourth Kriya* techniques, he advised me brusquely to restrict my practice to the *First Kriya*. He declared I was overexcited and that this was not a good sign for a *kriyaban*. I replied I would surely take his advice into consideration; nevertheless, I wanted to see how to move my head correctly in order to practice those techniques in the future.

Annoyed – taking my remark as insolence – he recommended that I send my questions to the school's head and stood up to leave as he said this. In vain I replied that the movements of the head (required for *Third* and *Fourth Kriya* techniques) could not be shown in a letter. I was speaking to a "wall" and the refusal was absolute.

I had always trusted and respected PY's organization and had studied the reference literature as if preparing for a university exam. I have asked to this organization only one thing: that this so much craved jewel of *Kriya* was taught in its completeness. Why this reaction from the Minister?

After some time, the feeling of having witnessed the senseless whims of a man in power yielded to a different consideration. Very probably that Minister had given me the same discipline he received during his postulant years. A lady who had known him at that time depicted him as a very curious *kriyaban* who usually put many technical questions to elder Ministers. Knowing the rules of monastic discipline, I was sure that his queries weren't always answered promptly.

After my interview with that ill-disposed figure, I was in an atrocious mental and emotional state. I wondered what role a school played that was not doing its very best to clarify each given teaching. For what purpose were our ministers traveling around the world, if not to directly show students how to practice what they have learned through the correspondence course?

Why should I feel guilty and unsuitable for the *Kriya* path, only because I had dared to ask (firmly but politely) for a practical demonstration? I was not able to drop the whole matter and was quite agitated. Those who saw me immediately after the meeting said I was unrecognizable. Among them, a lady with a honeyed voice suggested that I had gotten an important lesson from our *Guru* – in her opinion, I had a too self-assured attitude and should learn to accept unquestioningly the word of a Minister. Strange as it might seem, a part of me was relishing the whole situation. I knew for certain that

this destructive experience would somehow be turned into something positive, crucial for my path. I was too much in love with the *Kriya* path to be daunted by any difficulty.

This made me more calm and cheerful. However, there are often childish thoughts that emerge when we are in an uncertain situation. I was afraid that this man, communicating back to the headquarters of PY's organization, might speak unfavorably of me, saying something that might have reduced the probability of my obtaining that coveted information in the future. I feared that my idyllic relationship with my *Kriya* organization – a bond that for so many years had represented my horizon – could be deteriorated.

The lady Meditation Counselor, who was not present on that occasion but had met the Minister in another town, blamed me for having disturbed the Minister's peace of mind. I wrote her a bitter letter, insulting her indirectly. She replied very firmly, implying that my letter ended our friendship. Later she toned down her attitude and invited me to her house to talk about the event.

First of all I expressed to her my unyielding determination to explore all possible sources in order to clarify my questions. I mentioned my idea of leaving for India, and she mumbled something about India not necessarily being any guarantee of authenticity. She told me that recently some *kriyabans* had found (in a well-known *Ashram* strictly tied to PY's life story) a *Swami* who gave them "pseudo *Kriya*" techniques that were, in her opinion, some meaningless, others dangerous. She said that there were many unauthorized teachers introducing themselves as loyal disciples of PY. With a vivid imagination, she compared them to spiders using the honey of the *Guru's* love to attract devotees who then became their prey.

She spoke about one disciple of PY who had formerly been one of the directors of the organization but then had branched out on his own, opening another *Kriya* school. This man was a "traitor" in her opinion.

This woman had enough material to go on with her stories indefinitely, but it was then that a very forceful sentence slipped out of my mouth which surprised me and froze her: "Should I receive *Kriya* teaching from the worst criminal in the world, I would still be able to turn it into gold. If it were polluted, I would have the intuition to reconstruct it to its original integrity!"

She replied with a sigh that I was moving dangerously close to losing the

grace of my *Guru*-disciple relationship. In order to make me understand the value of receiving the instructions from a true *Guru*, she told me what happened when one *kriyaban* decided to leave the *Ashram* of his *Guru*, PY, and seek another teacher. The *Guru*, aware of this, got in the disciple's way to stop him when he heard an inner voice – "the voice of God", she specified – ordering him not to interfere with the disciple's freedom. PY obeyed and in a flash of intuition foresaw all the disciple's future incarnations, those in which he would be lost, in which he would keep on seeking – amid innumerable sufferings, jumping from one error to another – the path he was then relinquishing. Then, in the end, the disciple would return to the same path. The lady said that PY had been quite specific as to the number of incarnations that whole discouraging trip would take – about thirty!

The moral of this story was clear, something from which one could not escape: I had to avoid looking elsewhere or I would lose myself in a labyrinth of enormous sufferings and who knows when I would be able to get back on the correct path. I shifted my attention to her photograph of PY, taken on the day of his death. It was nicely framed, and some flowers and packets of incense were before it. In those moments of silence I had the sensation that tears were going to form in his blissful eyes (it was not a bizarre feeling; other people told me they had had the same experience.) I related my impression to her, in response to which she became very serious and, with her eyes pointed far off toward an indefinite spot, soberly uttered: "You have to consider it a warning: the *Guru* is not content with you"! There was not the least doubt that she was not joking at all.

In that moment, I realized how much PY was a "presence" in her life, although she had never met him! I let my gaze rest on the bouquet of May lilies which we had purchased at the train station immediately after my arrival in town graciously arranged in a small vase before the photo of PY. She had then explained that she never skimmed on fresh flowers for her "Guru." I realized how full of sweet comfort must be her life! I knew that if I wanted to feel devotion with such intensity I had a lot of work to do, namely develop stable internal tranquility, bow to my favorite form of the Divine, and repeat this action of surrender with total sincerity every day of my life.

Although she admired the earnestness with which I was making progress – unlike so many other tepid and halfhearted people who would go to her only to be reignited with the motivation they could not find in themselves – she was dismayed that her devotion toward the *Guru* was totally alien to me. She could not relieve my immense thirst for knowledge of the art of

Kriya. Looking into her beautiful eyes, I had the clear impression that she was permanently expecting me to act in a somewhat "disloyal" way either toward the *Guru* or toward the organization.

The Minister of my organization was at least right about one point: I was not calm at all. My search for technical explanations had made me as tense as a coiled spring. Although remaining faithful to my *Kriya* organization, I didn't accept vetoes and therefore I didn't take her advice. I was determined to know *Kriya* inside out and no one could stop me with any argument.

FIRST REACTION: READ EVERYTHING I COULD FIND

The will to have a deeper understanding of PY's written words about *Kriya Yoga* took a particular route. I knew three names of direct disciples of PY who had had a clash with the school's board of directors and set out on their own. I hoped to find clues in their writings which could help me clear my doubts. I purchased all their published material, taped lectures and all. I was expecting that in order to prove their high level of Self realization, they had elaborated PY's thought through direct experience of the different phases of *Kriya* and were willing to prepare a more accurate didactic material for those devotees who would turn to them, neglecting the main source.

Well then, the first disciple seemed to be an expert in remembering even the most insignificant episodes of the life of his *Guru* while in the educational material he spread there was no hint of the *Higher Kriyas*; the second one was undoubtedly more professional, pedagogically gifted, but out of the material he gave, almost nothing new emerged. In the literature of the third disciple – surprising and valuable since, having suffered the tragedy of mental illness which he recounted exhaustively – I found only an illumining sentence upon the role of *Kechari Mudra*: all the rest was a devastating banality. The secrets, if these three disciples had any, were well guarded!

Months later, the lady (many *kriyabans* addressed to her as "Meditation Counselor") who helped me with the *Hong so* and *Om* techniques found out that I had read the "forbidden books." Not only that, I had made a present of one of those books to a couple of friends! A friend of mine showed me a letter in which the Counselor referred to me as "a man who stabs his *Guru's* back, handing out daggers to other people as well, so they can do the same"! She concluded by writing that "intelligence is a double-edged weapon: it can be used to eliminate the swelling of ignorance and also to abruptly cut off the lifeblood that sustains the spiritual path!"

Her reaction was so exaggerated that I wasn't hurt at all. Her actions were

obviously driven by waves of unabashed emotion. Decades of steadfast conditioning had irretrievably affected her common sense. I felt a sort of tenderness toward her and I smiled, picturing the moment in which she had written that letter. Seeing her own expectations regarding my behavior coming true, I am sure that her countenance was first serious and then, at last, tranquil and serene as if tasting a delicious, intimate satisfaction. She could well say she had predicted my ... "betrayal."

Overcoming certain reluctance, I began reading some books written by Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples rather than those of PY. These few books disappointed me.⁷ They were nothing but bland meaningless words endlessly repeated, together with continuous changes in topic, which I considered unbearable. The practical notes, presented as essential, were only scattered bits copied from classical books on *Yoga*. The lack of care in their presentation made me suppose that the author had not bothered checking the original texts he had quoted but had most likely taken those quotations from other books which were also quoting from other reference books, continuing a chain wherein each author would add a little something just to mark his personal contribution.

STUDY THE LESSONS AGAIN

I decided to study again all the material furnished by my organization and try to delve deeper into it. I would meet some *kriyaban* friends on Sundays, and together read crucial passages from the correspondence course and discuss them during a walk. Our main interest was to find inspiration there that could help us to perfect our practice of *Kriya*. Our attempt was vain – like trying to draw blood from a stone.

The correspondence course contained esoteric teachings that could not be considered an integral part of *Kriya Yoga* but could help students to develop their intuition of the subtle laws governing human lives.

At that time I was especially interested in mastering two skills in particular: how to recognize friends from previous lives and how to project energy for pranic healing. The teachings were clearly given with all the necessary cautionary remarks, but my approach was devoid of caution and discrimination. I acted as if I were supported from "above", imagining that the benedictions and the strength of the *Guru* were with me. I paid attention to only some aspects of the teachings, choosing those particular patterns of behavior that appealed to my emotions.

Then my illusory dream began to disintegrate, slowly but inexorably. Failure came, and I felt desolate. At first I could not accept it. I refused to

⁷ The very interesting book *Puran Purush* by Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee was not yet published.

believe I had acted wrongly. I believed that mine was only an apparent failure, but as time went by, all evidence suggested that I had neither cured nor helped any person in any way. This was the greatest blow to me because I had made a fool of myself and, furthermore I had disturbed the peace and privacy of other people.

As for "previous lives", I acknowledge that in this unprovable territory everything is possible; however at that time it seemed so self-evident and sensible to me that instead of using my meditation-born intuition (which the received instruction aimed at developing) I simply took figments of my imagination to create various mind films, convincing myself I had lived them in a far distant past. In fact these day-dreams were actually wish fulfillment and easy-to-read indicators of my likings and preferences.

Slipping into a state wherein I doubted even the metaphysical basis upon which the edifice of *Kriya Yoga* is built, for months I was unable to think a single coherent thought.

CHAPTER 3 BREATHLESSNESS

[I]

THE IDEA OF JAPA ENTERS MY LIFE

With a desperate need of peace and tranquility, I chose to stick to the simplest routine of *Kriya* and to live in a more introverted way. I stubbornly grabbed the well-known instruction to maintain resolutely, during the day, a smooth attitude toward both pleasant and unpleasant events, while sincerely feeling like a detached "witness". Sustained by the enthusiasm for this new "trick", described in such an alluring way in almost all the books dealing with oriental meditative practices, I succeeded in attaining an almost ideal state but, after some days, I felt under stress as if all was a pretense, an illusion.

It was at this time that I came across a book about the life and experiences of *Swami Ramdas* (1884-1963), the Indian saint who moved far and wide all over India unceasingly repeating the *Mantra Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om*. Discovering the simplicity of his life and the greatness of his experience was very inspiring; his photo and the childlike simplicity of his smile kindled my devotion and inspired me.

He was born in 1884 in Hosdrug, Kerala, India, and named Vittal Rao. He lived a normal life and experienced the typical difficulties of a householder's life. Often his thoughts dwelt on the meaning of life and felt the desire to pursue the spiritual path. His father initiated him into the *Ram Mantra*, assuring him that by repeating it unceasingly he would, in due time, achieve the perfect peace he desired. It was then that Ramdas renounced the householder life and went forth in quest of God as a mendicant *Sadhu*. The *Mantra "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram"* was ever on his lips. Besides the practice of *Japa*, he adopted the discipline of looking upon all other people as forms of *Ram* (God), and of accepting every happening as coming from the will of God. In a short time the *Mantra* disappeared from his lips and entered his heart. He perceived clearly the "Spiritual eye" in the middle point between his eyebrows. A stage was soon reached when this dwelling in the Light of the Spirit became a permanent experience. Swami Ramdas attained *Mahasamadhi* in 1963.

His teaching was extremely simple:

"Repeat the one name 'Ram' at all times of the day and at nights when you are awake. You may be sure that you will not feel lonely or miserable as long as you are uttering that glorious name. Where this name is sounded, or meditated upon, there resides no sorrow, no anxiety – nay, not even death."

"Utter Rama's name any time, amid all of life's distractions, whenever there is a momentary return of your consciousness to Self-awareness. When this happens, feel the ensuing joy and concentrate on it as long as possible. Perfect your surrender to God, when facing every event. At Night, when free from worldly duties, devote yourself to intense practice of *Japa*.

Almost at the same time I read the masterpiece of the spiritual movement *Hesychasm*. This is a Christian orthodox movement considering inner peace a basic necessity for pursuing the spiritual path.

In the Gospel of Matthew it is said: "Go into your closet to pray." *Hesychasts* take very seriously this injunction and make daily a very strong effort to still their body, mind and heart in order to be fully open to the presence of the Divine. Their way of praying helps them to reject any useless thought.

Again the reflection about the art of *Japa* (*Devotional Prayer*) caught my attention. Mount Athos is the place where some *Hesychasts* developed the art of continuous Prayer for achieving inner peace. They utilized the "*Jesus Prayer*": (*Kyrie Iesou Christe, Yie tou Theou, Eleison me ton amartalon* – "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner". They repeat it unceasingly during the day, guiding it into the space of the heart and recite it in synchrony with the heart beats.⁸

Why could I not utilize the same methods, crossing the same well-defined, universal stages of internalization?

⁸ Strange as it may seem, for many the first exposure to the *Prayer of the Heart* came from *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger: "... if you keep saying that prayer over and over again, you only have to just do it with your lips at first - then eventually what happens, the prayer becomes self-active. Something happens after a while. I don't know what but something happens, the words get synchronized with the person's heart-beats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing."

Some *Hesychasts* use only "Kyrie Eleison". *Eleison* can be translated as: "be your embrace upon me, turn yourself to me." We can appreciate how the sound *Eleison* seems to melt with the sound of the *Om*. What is important to understand is that the chosen Prayer should be able to stimulate your devotion, to unify all your being around the practice.

In that book *The Way of a Pilgrim* I found this sentence: "Like a person enjoying the beauty of a chilly winter near the fireside, contemplating either the sad or the joyous spectacle of life, such is a devotee having found the infinity of the skies residing in their heart! The *Continuous Prayer* is truly a marvelous gem whose glitter warms up life. Its magic spreads into each facet of life, like walking out of a dark room into fresh air and sunlight." This phrase stirred my enthusiasm. It painted clearly the state I wanted to achieve.

I tried to imitate Swami Ramdas' behavior adding the counsels given in the book: "*The Way of a Pilgrim*." I spent three beautiful days. I remember moments of ecstasy that filled me with delight, tears came down while I was sitting on a bench in a public park whispering my Prayer. Yet I stopped because the effort was really too great. Having aimed too high (continue steadfastly in Prayer) I ran the risk of developing an aversion to this practice, losing it for a long time. It was necessary to use some wisdom and recharge myself with inspiration. The writings of Mère (The Mother) and Satprem came in my life at the proper time.

[III]

INSPIRATION FROM THE WORKS OF THE MOTHER AND SATPREM

The Mother was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and, after his death in 1951 continued his research. From 1958 until her death in 1973, the Mother recounted her extraordinary exploration to her disciple Satprem. Their talks are written out in *Mother's Agenda* (6000 pages in 13 volumes). I studied not only her *Agenda* but also *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*; *Mother or the Divine Materialism* both written by Satprem. It was a revelation!

Let me share my experience with the Mother. I want to communicate how it happened that the Mother aroused my enthusiasm helping me to make *Japa* a constant fact in my life. I will also try to communicate how reading Mother and Satprem exercised an action in my life like the one that in India is called "Initiation" or "finding one's the *Guru*."

Her thought had nothing to do with philosophy: it was new, something

never heard before. It was, I would say, "debunking." The Mother reasoned like a westerner and treated the themes of India's spirituality with a western language which was both lyrical and rational, and at the highest degree of excellence. The Mother gave voice to my own innermost convictions in an euphorically vivid way. Sometimes I had the impression to discover in her writings a sort of revolution, a reversal of values.

The most appealing concepts that created a real positive shock in me were two. They saved me from a stalemate.

[First] What impressed me at first glance was her comment to Sri Aurobindo's aphorism No. 70: "Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more charitable and pitying to others."

Annotating it, she wrote:

The need to be virtuous is the great obstacle to true self-giving. This is the origin of Falsehood and even more the very source of hypocrisy -- the refusal to accept to take upon oneself one's own share of the burden of difficulties.

Do not try to appear virtuous. See how much you are united, one with everything, that is anti-divine. Take your share of the burden, accept yourselves to be impure and false and in that way you will be able to take up the Shadow and offer it. And in so far as you are capable of taking it and offering it, then things will change. Do not try to be among the pure. Accept to be with those who are in darkness and give it all with total love.

Naturally, by daring to say that: "Morality is the great obstacle on the spiritual path", she simply stressed the value of not trying at any cost to appear pure in other people's eyes, but instead behaving according to the truth of one's being. She believed that each person should acknowledge their dark side, accept the fact that in the depths of their being there stirs the same substance that in some had developed into a way of living shunned by society.

[Second] I was very impressed with how she dealt with the theme of *Japa*. To start the repetition of a *Mantra* was for her the most simple and natural spiritual action: first of all let us remark that there was no solemn initiation into it. She recounted how during the screening of a film in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram she heard a devotional chant: *Om Namō Bhagavateh Narayanaya*. She was attracted only by the first part: *Om Namō Bhagavateh* and she wondered what would happen if she repeated that *Mantra* during her daily meditation. She did and the result was

extraordinary. She reported that: "It (the *Mantra*) coagulates something: all the cellular life becomes one solid, compact mass, in a tremendous concentration – with a single vibration. At the place of all the usual vibrations of the body, there is now only one single vibration. It becomes as hard as a diamond, a single massive concentration, as if all the cells of the body had ... I became stiff from it. I was so stiff that I was one single mass." [This quotation is drawn from *Mother's Agenda*.]

During the day the *Mantra* became a sweet presence:

"On the days when I have no special preoccupations or difficulties (days I could call normal, when I am normal), everything I do, all the movements of this body, all, all the words I utter, all the gestures I make, are accompanied and upheld by or lined, as it were, with this *Mantra*: *Om Namō Bhagavateh... Om Namō Bhagavateh...* , all the time, all the time, all the time."

In many passages of *Mother's Agenda*, Satprem and Mère discuss how the *Mantra* calms the persons in surrounding areas by creating an atmosphere of such an intensity that disharmonies cease to exist. Furthermore:

"*Mantra* has a great action: it can prevent an accident. It simply springs forth in a flash, all of a sudden: "It has to spring up without thinking, without calling: it should issue forth from the being spontaneously, like a reflex, exactly like a reflex."

The Mother was able to notice the difference between those who have a *Mantra* and those who don't. "With those who have no *Mantra*, even if they have a strong habit of meditation or concentration, something around them remains hazy and vague, whereas *Japa* imparts to those who practice it with a kind of precision, a kind of solidity: an armature. They become galvanized, as it were".

[III]

Swami Ramdas' photo - the almost childish simplicity of his smile - kindled my intuition and led me to experiment and enjoy the same practice. From this decision something came that still remains in my heart as a peak experience.

Almost at the same time, I received as a gift a very simple Catholic Rosary from a colleague who had just returned from a pilgrimage to Medjugorje. I took it with me during a walk in the countryside and decided to utilize it; obviously the *Mantra* I choose to repeat was Ramdas': *Sri Ram Jai Ram*

Jai Jai Ram Om.

I practiced it aloud for about 108 repetitions, utilizing the Rosary twice [A Catholic Rosary is made of 60 grains; later I acquired a *Mala* with 108 grains.]

The sound of the *Mantra*, which I had already listened to in a spiritual song recording, was very pleasant. Since the choice of my *Mantra* was born from an indubitable predilection, I loved to caress its vibration, prolong it on my lips, make it vibrate in my chest and invest it with my heart's aspiration. My attitude was not that of a supplicating and sobbing devotee, but that of a man one step away from his goal. Even if sometimes I felt a bit dazed, I maintained the determination to complete my 108 repetitions in a low voice.

Nothing in particular was done during the rest of the day: no spiritual readings, no *Bhajans*... At evening I retired in my room to practice my *Kriya* session. I felt a great calmness in me and around me but nothing adumbrated the eventuality that in a short time I would experience something capable of changing my life.

Almost at the end of my routine, after *Kriya Pranayama*, while mentally moving up and down along the spine, I distinctly perceived that the life of my cells were sustained by fresh energy which didn't originate from the inhaled air. The sensation was calmly enjoyable and I went ahead undisturbed in my practice. My awareness paused on each *Chakra* like a bee drawn to the nectar in flowers, hovering upon each in great delight. The more I relaxed, the more I became simultaneously aware both of the *Chakras* and of the body as a whole. A clear perception of an inner lightness and utter mental transparency was the mark that a new state of awareness was settling.

The breath, which in the meantime had become very very short, eventually came to immobility, like a pendulum gently reaching the equilibrium point. My mind settled down completely. I entered a perfect immobility and, at a certain moment, I discovered I was completely without breath. This condition lasted various minutes, without any feeling of uneasiness: there was neither the least quiver of surprise, or the thought: "Finally I have it!".

A calm euphoria accompanied me: the certainty of finally having found something stable and immutable within the evanescent flux of existence - which sometimes seems to have the consistency of an infinite sequence of reflexes upon the water. Flashes of the ultimate stage of freedom touched

my mind...

Trying in vain to remember the words that Sri Aurobindo wrote about the moment he stepped on the Indian soil after his period of studies in England, that night I jotted down a note in my diary:

"A perfect immobility settled in my being.
The wind of the breath ceased
and a vast calmness surrounded me."

I was astonished that one of the simplest techniques in the world, such as *Japa*, had produced such a valuable result! Where my best intentions had failed, *Japa* had produced the miracle!

In the following days the same event happened again – always during *mental Pranayama*, after my daily number of *Kriya* breaths (I never exceeded 36 repetitions.) I verified the perfect association between the practice of *Japa* and the attainment of this state.

This event happened every day, but only when I respected three conditions:
[1] the *Japa* should be practiced aloud not mentally for at least one Mala (108 times)
[2] it should be practiced not immediately before the *Kriya* session, a couple of hours before was the idea timing.
[3] from the moment the 108 repetitions aloud are done, *Japa* should go ahead mentally, effortlessly, without caring if the mind is concentrated or not.

Every day I could verify this. Compared to the results obtained through *Japa*, my past experiences of calming the mind seemed elusive, vanishing, superficial, illusory.

During the following Summer, *Japa* was practiced in the morning and *Kriya* at noon in the open countryside. When I reached the breathless state, I used to open my eyes, keeping the gaze steady. With an incomparable sense of inner freedom the breathless state became instantaneously deeper. The resistance of my Ego disappeared and I was seized by the real experience of the Divine.

I think that with eyes open the realization that my body was living by inner energy was more sharp. Very probably it was the contemplation of Beauty in nature the decisive factor. The essence of this Beauty was the Divine itself.

The Mother said that the contemplation of Beauty in nature and in some forms of art was not to be considered a fleeting emotion but had to be lived with an indomitable striving toward a divinization of life.

Spellbound, I contemplated the shimmering splendor of a full manifestation of the Divine in the atoms of inert matter. There was a purity in this never-before-elaborated idea. It excited and moved me. There were moments in which my head felt hot as if I were feverish.

My reaction was intense love for the Mother. The Beauty in nature was the Divine and the Divine was The Mother. The more I felt love for Her, the more the Divine was in front of me. Now she was no more in this physical dimension, I could not meet her but I started, each night, dreaming Her.

Often I went around with eyes full of tears. These tears accompanied my love for Her. This love brought a great blessing in my life.

Ishta Devata means one's favorite form of conceiving the Divine essence. Now, I think that my *Ishta Devata* is the Beauty in Nature and, at the same time is The Mother. When, practicing *Kriya* in the open countryside, I opened my eyes, I had the impression of being implacably crushed by the vibration of The Mother.

Winter came; in my warm room, during meditation, I used to retrieve the memory of that landscape – an image fixed in a transparent purity – and my breath disappeared in less than a second. Winter was the proper time to understand what happened in my life.

[IV]

INITIATION

All say that the spiritual path of *Kriya* starts with *Initiation*. I believed that. Now I think that initiation is not a ceremony in which you learn a technique and your teacher touches the point between the eyebrows. I think that initiation is a happy coincidence. You have a burning desire to walk the spiritual path while, at the same time, a divine soul becomes a real presence near you. Somehow this soul accepts to help you and your transformation starts to take place immediately. Your heart radiates love. The affection that you give changes you forever. Through your love, something that is beyond

the human live flows into you.

You don't choose your *Guru*, maybe he is from a previous life: perhaps he has already left the body. Now you have only one duty: to practice, even from a book. You will realize who is your *Guru* when you will reach the breathless state. Non only that: when you will be full with a burning love for a particular saint who will reveal himself of herself to you in a mysterious way for example through a dream or (rarely) in a vision. So go ahead with your practice and forget everything else!

I was not expecting that Mother was my *Guru*, it was impossible for me to think that. But the reality was that Mother acted toward me as a *Guru*.

In Her life she did not behave like a traditional *Guru*, she was able to extract from all persons going to her all the hidden potentialities. She said that one becomes a true individual only when, in constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony and knowledge, become perfectly and compactly integrated with their divine center.

Yes, this happened in my life. What can I say? When you search the Divine only, then, in mysterious ways, the Divine replies.

Sri Ramana Maharshi wrote:

"Hearken! It stands as an insentient hill. Its action is mysterious, past human understanding. From the age of innocence it had shone in my mind that Arunachala was something of surpassing grandeur, but even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai I did not realize its meaning. When it drew me up to it, stilling the mind, and I came close I saw it stand unmoving."

This happened in my life. Yes ... I saw Her stand unmoving.

By finding PY's organization, I started my preparation. There is no doubt that it was useful for me. Finding the Mother, I found another teaching, other levels of subtlety, and I woke up.

It happened that I gradually began to examine with limpid eyes my way of practicing *Kriya Yoga* and realized the complexity of my self-deception.

My approach and attitude towards the spiritual path was improper. Unfortunately, entering a *Kriya* founded organization had not meant finding new means to perfect my preexisting practice of *Pranayama*.

Inside the organization, by trying to behave like a "good" disciple, I had unconsciously betrayed the values my culture instilled in me. I deviated from the common way of reasoning and feeling, embracing as final truth a set of speculative ideas wholly unsupported by facts. My judgment was impaired and practically non-existent. Obviously, responsibility was mine alone. As a matter of fact, I have known so many people in the organization that, differently from me, had nourished in such dimension the best tracts of their personality, having grown in rationality and sensibility.

Instead of focusing upon the joy of perfecting the art of *Pranayama*, I relaxed my effort lulled into the false sense that finding *Kriya* had been a stroke of luck. This idea, coupled with the childish idea that each *Kriya* breath produced "the equivalent of a solar year of spiritual evolution" and that through a million of these breaths I would infallibly reach the Cosmic Consciousness, made my *Kriya* routine become an habit lived with a lazy mind. Actually, I tried to perform the greatest possible number of *Pranayama* and I felt no shame nor remorse for the way I was practicing.

My first efforts in exploring my book-learned *Pranayama* were accompanied by constant striving for perfection. My intuition was alive, constantly stimulated; while practicing, I anticipated its inevitable progression and was quietly excited during each moment of it. I constantly felt myself as one who is pursuing his ideal of perfection, nay his ideal of Beauty. Afterward, having received *Kriya*, the idea of practicing "the fastest technique in the field of spiritual evolution" made the intensity of my effort lose its edge.

I was not able to perceive that my iron-willed discipline was softened by the hypnotic promise of the "*Guru's Blessings*". "Aren't you glad to have found a true *Guru*?" For years I heard this refrain from my *Kriya* organization, "Aren't you enthusiastic that He has been chosen for you by God Himself?" "Oh yes we are happy" we replied with tears of joy, with an exhibition of excessive enthusiasm. This idea, more than any other factor, had lethal effects on me; it was the cradle in which my ego was fed and strengthened.

My basic mistake was that I had let that **Kriya** (reinforced by egotistic motivations and to be fulfilled impatiently at any means) happened in a mind too much active. The teaching of The Mother was that I should first

create the state of **Mental Silence** wiping out all the ego-born ideas, plans and distractions. Through Mental Silence the Divine would descend into my life, cross all the layers that protect the Ego: thoughts, emotions, sensations.... Only then could my intuition guide me.

[V]

RATIONAL WAY OF EXPLAINING WHY JAPA WORKS IN SUCH A DRASTIC WAY

In my opinion the peculiarity of *Japa* is to annihilate the "background noise" of the mind. This "noise" becomes perceptible only when you sit for meditation. There are some thoughts which you can visualize, identify and, in case, block, but a diffuse, persistent hard-to-rid-of background noise nullifies all your effort at concentration.

Being no hermits, when we take refuge in our room to practice *Kriya*, we cannot reach the ideal conditions of relaxation in barely twenty, thirty minutes. More time is needed to calm completely one's mind. Therefore, even if the *Kriya* process is carried through with the maximum care, the force of the background noise becomes an insurmountable obstacle. The only possible way to annul it is not through technical tricks, but through the *Japa*. This tool is unique, it can produce "miracles!"

When we practice *Japa* during the day (not immediately before starting our meditation routine) then, in the last part of our *Kriya* routine, we discover that the background noise of the mind has given place to immobility and transparency: the experience is fantastic, unexpected. We enjoy a state of calmness where almost all the activities of the mind have subsided.

Many books introducing the practice of *Japa* do not explain this precious concept but insist only upon a heap of banalities. Many books about *Japa* are useless essays deprived of any intelligence or passion. For example when I read that the *mala* should be made of this or of that material, or that it should not be seen by others, or that the *Sumeru* bead (where the *mala* begins and ends) should never be passed [they say that if you want to practice the *mala* twice, you must turn it and make the last bead become the first bead of the second round] I know that these are first-class idiocies. [Likewise when I read in a western spiritual book that the power of the *Prayer* lies not in your effort but in a "Grace" that comes only when you use a particular formula canonized by a traditional pattern of worship, I know that this is another falsehood.]

CHAPTER 4 IN SEARCH OF ORIGINAL KRIYA

The thirst for *Original Kriya* was ignited again by a book found in Wien. It was written by the Indian *Yogi Swami Hariharananda*, claiming he was teaching the *Original Kriya* and PY's was mentioned as a slightly modified version of it.

Devoured by the suspicion that PY had taught a simplified form of *Kriya* in order to meet the constraints of his westerner disciples, I studied that book hoping to unearth the *Original Kriya Pranayama*.

In the meantime my daily application of *Japa* decreased. Less time was devoted to deepen the breathless state, while more time was devoted to experimenting with variations of *Pranayama*.

Months before I had formulated the thought, "I must never lose the enjoyment of the breathless state, even for a single minute. It is the most real thing I have ever experienced!" But my frenzied search for the *Original Kriya* made me go crazy. I had opened a door that couldn't be closed easily. The most intense feelings of joy and satisfaction came from reading and rereading *Swami Hariharananda's* book, finely underlining some sentences.

This book, like innumerable others I later read, was only bait to create interest in the *Kriya* school founded by the author, therefore it did not include practical explanations.

I was excited about reading that *Pranayama* should be considered inaccurate and wrong if, during its practice, the practitioner had not heard the internal sound of Om without closing the ears. That sentence wouldn't let me sleep. It left *dangerous* doubts that an unimaginably deep and rich technique of spiritual realization had been taken away from me and all westerners only because PY had found it difficult to teach to his first American disciples.

MEETING SWAMI HARIHARANANDA

Before undergoing surgery in the United States, *Swamiji* was stopping over in Europe. I worked very hard to meet him and receive his Initiation on that

occasion.

To me, his introductory conference was of great emotional impact. He had a majestic and noble bearing. He was "handsomely" wrapped in his ocher clothes; his old age, and long hair and beard marked the features of the typical sage. I caught glimpses of him while he spoke, hidden by the front rows; I felt he was talking from direct experience.

The theoretical concepts he introduced were absolutely new to me and created a beautiful consistent framework for a *Kriya* practice based on a unique progressive process of tuning with the *Omkar* Reality.

Like a thread passing through all the pearls of a necklace, *Omkar* was coursing through all the different phases of *Kriya*. Furthermore, the *Omkar* Reality had to be perceived not only in the aspects of sound and light but also as a "swinging sensation" or "internal pressure."

His stupendous, appealing words were for me a revelation, but at certain moments my focus on technical detail made me unable to give due attention to what he was saying. My obsession was: "What kind of throat sound is to be produced in this Original *Kriya*; up to which center does the energy rise in the spine?" Instead, almost nothing was said about breath. Breath should be always subtle, short and on the verge to disappear.

To make more clear to the public the proper swinging aspect of *Omkar*, he touched some of the students (their head and chest) making his hand vibrate, trying to transmit this quivering to their body. He was leading the auditorium into a wondrous dimension, giving himself completely to us so that we could picture and feel in our body the core essence of the *Omkar* experience.

Putting aside the problem of the simplifications of the *Kriya Yoga* by PY, my mind was full of cheerful anticipation about the improvements that I would bring to each technique that I was daily practicing.

Since I missed the *Kriya* that I had practiced for a few years, which gave me the breathless state, I merged the teaching that I was receiving with what I knew well. I practiced his wonderful "*Forward bendings*" and his particular *Maha Mudra* (both are explained in detail in chapter 10) and then my classic *Kriya Pranayama*, through the nose, adding a continuous willingness to listen to the inner sounds.

The sounds produced in the throat (similar to those of *Ujjayi Pranayama*)

disappeared or were very feeble. I tried to make them subtler and subtler. The exhalation arising in the nasal pharynx produced a fine sound like a faint whistle. Subtracting force to the breath was positive and led to a great mental relaxation. This sound seemed to originate from the upper part of the nasal pharynx.

The basic idea presiding over his form of *Kriya Pranayama* was that of visualizing the spine as a well. You moved down and up the well, utilizing a ladder whose "steps" were the *Chakras*. The first breath helped your awareness to reach *Ajna* starting from *Fontanelle*, the second breath helped you to reach the fifth *Chakra* ...and so on... reaching all the remaining *Chakras* ... (see chapter 10.) The concentration on listening to the internal sounds was continuous. After a few complete rounds you were almost lost in a bliss state.

I was present in different meetings with *Swamiji* and the opportunity happened to talk with some kind *kriyabans* who practiced since many years. They explained me that, many years ago, this school has taught two alternative ways of practicing *Kriya Pranayama*. One way was surely similar to *Lahiri Mahasaya's Original Kriya*. The other way was the one I identify with the number 1728.

Kriya Pranayama 1728 consisted in a stupendous meditative experience requiring about three hours of time. [For this reason it was usually practiced once in a week or even each day during the vacation time.] The purpose of this *Pranayama* is to find stability in the still breath state. This state is called *Sahaja Kumbhaka* (natural way of internalizing the breath.) In my opinion this was the most direct way to enter the breathless state and to achieve a deep syntony with the *Omkar* vibration.

To become aware of each breath it was to have a good faculty of visualization. You enjoyed one short breath in the first *Chakra*, one in the second..... up to *Ajna* ... The will to listen to the internal sounds was obviously continuous.

EFFECTS

Recalling the period when I had practiced the "*Om* technique" (received from my school) I knew perfectly that any effort toward listening to the internal sounds was very well rewarded. The increase of devotion toward the Divine, the blissful rapture in a spiritual passion arising from my heart, experienced in that period had not been surpassed by any other event. The idea of living it again through the practice of a richer form of *Kriya Pranayama* charmed me.

After returning home, the ancient well known sweetness again entered my life and I gratefully welcomed it with open heart. I can't remember how many *Kriya* breaths I practiced each day, surely never more than 48-60. The daily contact with the *Om* vibration was my Heaven on earth for many weeks. I can't imagine anything being able to make a person feel so blissful.

I had a clear perception that a state of inconceivable sweetness was mine, that I could taste it every day, during the practice and in every moment when I rested, free from work. To preserve such experience became the sole focus of my *Kriya* practices.

In winter of that year, I lived an unforgettable experience. I had a three week vacation. I spent every morning wrapped in the warmth of my home, practicing the new form of *Kriya Pranayama*. It was so sweet. I also spent some days in a beautiful location equipped for winter sport, where I could wander aimlessly around the snow-white countryside. While I was lazily roaming about, the sun set early, painting the landscape with breathtaking colors; the small village, sunk in the snow, started to radiate in a few seconds of glory all the colors of the spectrum of light. My memory will always hold it as the splendid symbol of this wonderful period in my life.

After one year, I received Swami Hariharananda's particular form of *Second Kriya*. I was entranced by assisting to the initiation into the *Second Kriya*: the explanations were given live and not through written material as happened in the past with my first organization. I was so happy!

The purpose of the *Second Kriya* is to have deep experience of the six *Chakras* and then transcend their reality. *Prana* is intensified and distributed equally among all the *Chakras*. After many repetitions of the whole procedure (contemplating also particular movements of the head) you feel that your awareness is separated from the physical body – like a cloud floating in a sky of peace. They say that the *Second Kriya* ends in "cracking the coconut." The coconut is a symbol of the human head, whose upper part is becomes full of calm *Prana*.

After receiving initiation, while I was walking in the city that hosted *Swamiji*, all seemed more beautiful than ever. It was a sunny day and the bells were ringing out in the splendor of noon. I lived in heaven. I experienced a total contentment and ease, as if my *Kriya* path had come to its fulfillment.

After returning home, I practiced intensively. One day while still at work, I was in a room from which I could see the distant mountains through a window pane, contemplating the pure celestial sky above them. That distant sky was the mirror of my future years, wholly dedicated to *Kriya Yoga*. For the first time the prospect of retiring and living on a minimal income, maintaining this state for the rest of my days, started to take real shape.

MY MIND CANNOT FIND DEFINITIVE SATISFACTION

After all these beautiful happening, a question came. Swami Hariharananda's *First Kriya* is wonderful and not greatly different from Lahiri's. There is practically nothing to speculate about it. On the contrary, Swami Hariharananda's *Second Kriya* is indubitable different from Lahiri's. Now, is it possible that Swami Hariharananda with his *Second Kriya* started a great deviation from Lahiri Mahasaya's method?

Is it possible that Swami Hariharananda's *Second Kriya* is different from Lahiri Mahasaya's because its origin is the Radhasoami movement? This is what I heard. I am sure that PY and Sri Yukteswar were part of this movement. Lahiri Mahasaya's method envisages a great action upon the heart *Chakra* through the method of *Thokar*.

Later, a representative of Hariharananda's school expressed to me his opinion in clear words:

"*Thokar* is not necessary and may be even disturbing. The repetition of a *Mantra* upon a *Chakra* is enough to awaken it. You can contract and relax the muscles near the location of a *Chakra*: this also is good. Then stop with physical movements. Generally speaking, a physical movement like *Thokar* disturbs very much, instead the repetition of a *Mantra* helps the mind to come to complete rest. Repeating internally a *Mantra* in the spine and enjoy the pure *Omkar* helps one to raise the consciousness of the *Self* to higher regions. One sits still, eyes closed, mentally repeating the *Mantra*, gazing into the middle of the darkness lying in front of him in order to perceive the inner light. Breathing is natural and free flowing. A long *Kumbhaka* is stressful."

Before taking leave from me he emphasized again that there are no other means of spiritual liberation, except through the *Omkar* experience.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Unfortunately the following year I received a great disappointment. I asked to Swamiji a private interview. A few days later I was in his room. My purpose was to get information about that part of the Second Kriya I knew existed but of which nothing there had been said during my initiation. In that part all the syllables of the Sanskrit alphabet were used.⁹ He said that nothing of this was to be practiced by me. Instead he took the strong initiative to guide me in the practice of the "Forward bendings." This was a true benediction! He gave everything of himself to repeat all the main concepts of his teaching as if he wanted to engrave them even more in my mind.

While talking about *Kriya*, he said that its original spirit had been lost in this epoch. He told me that he wanted me to perceive and live in that spirit. To have that it was essential that I utilized only what I had received and no more. He asked me to place a bulky folder of his on the bed next to us. He opened it and let me see some drawings related to different phases of *Kriya*. He smiled as he skimmed through them. I got the feeling that he wanted to show me that he knew everything about *Kriya* and that he guaranteed that what I had learned was enough for my life, now and in the future. My quest of knowing other techniques implied my lack of engagement in the essential techniques. With that our meeting came to an end. The same evening I meditated with other devotees at his feet.

I was inspired to be there but the decision of the *Swamiji* instead of confirming me in the practice of the *First* and the *Second Kriya* brought me out of my peace and well-being: how and where could I learn the *Higher Kriyas* from this school?

He told this to every person coming to his feet. His disciples knew this. Only the few chosen disciples following him around the world could receive higher teachings. The awareness of this situation fizzled out the enthusiasm of many and contributed to his isolation.

He did not take into consideration the insatiable curiosity of the majority of *kriyabans* who accepted no interference in their quest. His unfortunate decision triggered an automatic reflex which pushed away the people most indispensable to him. Consumed by a thirst for the complete teachings, they began to search for other teachers. Disappointed by their defection, he stubbornly focused even more pointedly on his decision. Those who tried to get this absurdity across to him and thereby prevent it found themselves

⁹ I got this information some years later. You can read every detail in chapter 11.

facing a stone wall.

The soil he plowed and was cultivating started to become sterile. He had all the tools necessary to attract the western world. The book he had written had been a smart strategic move which made him popular in the West, saving for himself a place of crucial importance in the domain of *Kriya*. Moreover, his Indian-sage figure impressed people. Hundreds of scholars were ready to back his mission and treat him as a "divinity", and were willing to show the same respect to possible collaborators and successors.

It is true that a lot of people were content with his *Kriya*, but they would never organize a seminar for their teacher. Frankly speaking, the faithfulness of the many was not enough to avoid the worst. His commendable effort, all the marvelous subtleties by which he had enriched our *Kriya* and made this practice far more beautiful, was not enough to prevent a shipwreck of his mission – at least here in Europe. ¹⁰

Using the same fliers and changing only the Master's name and photo, many of the people who formerly organized his seminars invited another teacher from India because they knew he was well-disposed to explain *Kriya* in its complete form. Those who had already met him in India knew his own spiritual realization was almost non-existent. This invitation was perhaps made more out of desperation than of conviction. Because of visa problems, it took two years before he finally landed in Europe, and when he arrived practically all the before-described teacher's disciples were ready to welcome this new guru as their God-sent messenger. This new teacher did in fact give us the very craved key to achieve *Kechari Mudra*, the *Navi Kriya* and others.

¹⁰ Something remains indeed, but very scanty compared to what he could have realized if only he had been more conciliatory!

CHAPTER 5 MY LAST TEACHER

You remember the episode when I sought a clarification about the *Higher Kriyas* received through the correspondence course – the Minister refused to give me any clarification. Instead he recommended that I send my questions to the school's head quarters. Nine years had elapsed.

I felt quite distant from my *Kriya* organization, but I still respected it and when two female Ministers of the same organization visited our country, I took part in a review class of *Kriya*. During an interval between two review classes, something wonderful (and sweet for my heart) happened. What I had hoped for so ardently in the past and yet was negated in such a brutal way, materialized easily. I had a private talk with one of the two Ministers wherein all my doubts were clarified.

That Minister was kind and talked from direct experience. Regarding *Kechari Mudra*, she said that it comes with time, especially by persisting in touching the uvula with the tip of the tongue. I also inquired about one of PY's remarks: "The *Chakras* can be awakened by psycho-physical blows given at their different locations." She clarified its meaning by explaining it referred to the use of a *Mantra* coupled with strong concentration and a short pause of the breath. No other hypothetical technique other than what is fully described in the written material was being hinted at. She explained that if a syllable is mentally chanted in a *Chakra's* location with real intensity, it creates a "psycho-physical blow".

This clarification inspired my practice. Returning home, I had the impression of living again the best time of my life. I discovered a way of perfecting the final part of my *Kriya* routine. While projecting in each *Chakra* the mental chant of the *Mantra*, I realized I had the power to touch the core of each one with an almost physical intensity. A great sweetness sprang from this procedure; my body seemed to become stiff like a statue and the breathless state made my mind transparent as crystal.

I was willing to put an end to my search of the *Original Kriya* and take my present *Kriya* routine as definitive. My routine was a wonderful blend of what my organization and what *Swami Hariharananda* had taught, but the eagerness to get new information about *Kriya* had already caused devastation and poured a mortal poison in my soul.

MY LAST TEACHER

When the moment came to meet him, I was not in the best of moods. Certain clues had warned me I would have to reckon with a radically new approach. I was afraid this could upset the simple and adequately profitable routine into which I had settled. The magical realm of *Omkar* dimension, into which my first teacher *Swami Hariharananda* had immersed me in a passionate way, could be neither left aside nor forgotten. I approached my new teacher with the idea of rejecting him if, somehow, he appeared to dissuade me from such a reality. I accepted the idea to meet him for one single reason, to have what *Swami Hariharananda* decided not to give me.

I met this teacher in a *Yoga* center. The essence of his introductory speech was that *Kriya* was not intended to inflate the mind and the ego but was a journey beyond the mind. I realized that the core of *Krishnamurti's* teaching was the source from which this teacher drew his ideas.

I indulgently observed some inadequacies in his behavior which shocked other students. He was hot-tempered. When it came to teaching simple and banal things that even kindergarten children could understand, he flaunted a great profusion of words, and concepts were repeated ad nauseam. When anyone in public politely but determinedly asked for a precise explanation of some difficult practical detail, he came out of his hypnotic state and, visibly vexed, tried to humiliate and silence the unfortunate listener. Sometimes he exploded with rage whenever he sensed that underneath legitimate questions there was a veiled opposition or an intention to challenge his authority.

I focused all my attention on learning his form of *Kriya*, ignoring his obvious faults. He clearly communicated to us that the reason for his tour to the West was to reestablish the original teachings, and this was enough to overcome my initial wariness.

In the following initiation seminar the technical explanation was reasonably clear, even if in some parts were unusually synthetic. For instance, his instructions on *Kriya Pranayama* – formally correct – could be understood only by those who had already been practicing *Kriya Yoga*

for a long time. However I realized that my exhaustive search for the original *Kriya* was going in a valid direction. I followed this teacher for six years. Hereafter I summarize the reasons of my enthusiasm and why I later broke off with him.

KECHARI MUDRA

Returning home after the Initiation seminar, I achieved *Kechari Mudra*. Only three months of a simple exercise were necessary.¹¹ For a couple of weeks the effects of *Kechari* were a feeling of "dizziness." My mental faculties seemed to be fogged up, but when all that ceased, I learned to live in a state of constant happiness.

Some days I was so happy that when I went out for a walk, if I met someone and stopped to listen to him, no matter what he said, a sudden joy would expand in my chest to the point that I could barely hold back my tears. Looking at the distant mountains or at other details of the landscape, I would try to direct my feeling toward them in order to turn my paralyzing joy into aesthetic rapture; only this could keep back the joy clutching my being, only this could hide it. Inspired by this new condition, comparing it to that of the mystics, I realized how difficult was to live without being paralyzed by such bliss!

In order to explain the definitive crack in our relationship, it is necessary to refer again to the haste and shallowness with which my third Master explained the *Kriya* techniques. The introductory lecture to *Kriya* (which was usually held the evening before initiation) and a big part of the seminar of initiation was devoted to pure philosophical talk which didn't touch the basis of *Kriya Yoga* but was a summing up of Krishnamurti's strong points, mainly the theme of no-mind, which he improperly called *Swadhyaya*. There was no part of it that could be criticized, all he said was correct, but many students, being uncomfortable sitting on the floor, with aching back and knees, waited only for the explanation of the techniques, enduring this long talk as a giant bummer.

The traditional offerings (he also required a coconut, which was very difficult to find, forcing the students to desperately look in store after store) lay in disarray before a scruffy altar. Since he usually arrived very late, those who came from other cities pictured all their plans for the return journey falling through and were very anxious. Despite it being late, people being tired, and some already leaving to catch their train, he loved to linger

¹¹ I believe it is legitimate to ask why do *Kriya* organizations not teach such a simple technique as *Talabya Kriya* that helps us to reach *Kechari Mudra*.

on Patanjali's *Yama* and *Niyama*, taking all the necessary time to ask the audience to take a solemn vow that, from now on, the male students would look at women (except their wife) as mothers and, correspondingly, women would look at men (except their husband) as fathers.

The public listened to his vain words with a sigh of ill-concealed nuisance. Everyone gave an assent with a nod, just to stop his ravings.¹² Only then did he switch to a hurried explanation of the basic techniques. One day I decided to time him; the explanation of the fundamental technique of *Pranayama* was offered in no more than two minutes! He demonstrated *Kriya Pranayama* by means of an excessively loud vibratory sound. He knew this sound was not correct, but he continued using it so that the last rows of students could hear it, sparing himself the annoyance of getting up and walking among them as *Kriya* teachers usually do. In any case, he did not bother to say the sound had to be smooth rather than vibrating. I know that many of the students believed this was the "secret" he had brought from India and tried to reproduce the same noise. He carried on that way for years, in spite of his close collaborators' polite complaints.

By this time I accepted everything and I would never have dreamed of complaining. Nevertheless one day I had a visit from the couple who organized the master's tours in Germany. I had become acquainted with those kind friends during the seminars of my first teacher *Swami Hariharananda*. While talking together, they emphasized the necessity of making a particular proposal to our teacher: to organize, at the end of his *Kriya* initiation seminars, a guided group practice which served as a review both for the new initiates and for those who were already practicing. I occupied myself with having this proposal reach the teacher through a friend who went to India. I gave him a letter to deliver to the teacher with my regards and a warm embrace.

I forgot the whole matter. Master's reaction was inexplicable. He

¹² I respect of course *Yama-Niyama* (the what-is-correct and the what-is-not-correct) but, in my opinion, requiring people who are anxious for learning *Kriya Yoga* techniques to take an oath to obey them is only a farce and a waste of time. My teacher's request in particular was impossible, an oath that no one would ever respect. Why not put confidence in the transforming power of *Kriya*? Why think that without oaths, a *kriyaban's* life would be licentious? The necessity of adopting specific ways of behavior is something that appears spontaneously after having tasted the honey of the spiritual experience. Perhaps in the beginning the best thing is not to cry shame because of a problematic student's behavior. To put it simply, it has been seen that people living a morally questionable life who were successful in *Kriya* spontaneously came to the so-called virtuous life, while a lot of conformists failed.

interpreted my letter as an oblique criticism. As a response, he crossed me off his list of those who organized his European tours. His decision was transmitted to the Italian coordinator, who did not even inform me. Some months went by.

My experience with that teacher probably would have ended that way, had I not gone to welcome him back to Europe. We exchanged hugs as if nothing had happened. He apparently interpreted my presence as a move of repentance. Some hours later when he was resting, his collaborator, with a slight indecipherable hint of embarrassment, explained to me what had happened behind the scenes. I was appalled and disoriented. My first impulse was to abandon everything and sever any connection with him.

In order not to disturb the peace of all the persons who were my friends and who had followed me in this adventure, I decided to pretend nothing had happened, keep on collaborating with him and drop the theme of my letter. If I had gone I would have disturbed next day's initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*. That was a beautiful moment in which Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* revealed (to those who had the sensibility to perceive it) all its hidden beauty. My role was to serve as translator. I knew well how to perform such a function, reporting every last detail, while the man who would have replaced me was filled with old knowledge and out of habit would have neglected to translate 80% of the talk.

During that initiation, Master demonstrated *Thokar* in a way visibly different from the previous year. When one of the listeners asked him about the reason for the changes, he replied he had not changed anything and argued that in the past seminars a problem of translation might have occurred. His lie was obvious. The questioning *kriyaban* remembered well the head movements he had previously been shown.

Confronted with other minor changes from one year to the next, I had the impression I was cooperating with an archaeologist who was deliberately altering certain findings to justify them to the public within the theoretical framework to which he was accustomed.

Months later during another tour, when we were alone and he was searching for something in a room, I found the courage to drop a hint about a technical issue which had set one *Kriya* school against another. He suddenly turned toward me with hate in his eyes, shouting that my practice was not his business. This, according to what I'm able to remember, was the sole technical "discourse" I had with him in the entire course of my six years with him.

From that moment onward all was changed. I deliberately began to control myself and made the resolution to always agree with him. I acted so well that one day he asked me to teach *Kriya* to those who were interested and who couldn't meet him on his tours. I rejoiced at the opportunity because I dreamed I could finally explain *Kriya* in a complete and comprehensive way. I wanted none of my students to ever feel the pain of seeing a legitimate question go unconsidered.

A year passed by, and I sensed I was doing virtually useless work. I gave *Kriya* initiation following a mandatory fixed protocol. When I took leave of the students I knew that most would practice for few days and then leave *Kriya* to pursue other esoteric interests. Usually one or two among the most tenacious students made up questions and called me just to carry on the pretense of continuing, from a distance, our relationship.

When Master came to our country I invited all the new initiates to the seminar where he was present. Unfortunately, many didn't "survive" such a meeting. Accustomed by me to put forth any question, receiving always precise answer, they tried to do the same with the teacher. Good heavens! He censured most of the questions, implying that they were the sign of a insane way of thinking. Often exploded with rage. Many entered a deep crisis after observing his almost total lack of human understanding while simultaneously being kicked around by him.

Too many things were not going in the right direction. I felt that this man, whose every small whim I tried to satisfy as if carrying out a sacred deed, did not love *Kriya*. Instead, he used it only to create a more beautiful life for himself in the West compared to the wretched one in India he had often described to me.

Another year went by. On a request from friends abroad, I went to teach *Kriya Yoga* to their group. There I met a very serious student who was already familiar with my teacher's behavior and was taking part in the initiation seminar only as a refresher. He asked me a lot of pertinent questions and I gave him accurate answers. At that point he asked: "From whom have you learned all these details?" He well knew that my teacher was a total disaster from a didactic point of view. He perceived that I had learned many details from other sources. How could I give *Kriya* initiation using knowledge that did not originate from my teacher? He understood my predicament and was surprised that since I was authorized to teach *Kriya*, I had never had the chance to talk freely with my teacher about *Kriya* details! It was logical and fitting for me to settle the matter as soon

as possible.

Knowing the irascible disposition of my teacher, I hesitated a long time but there was no way out. Through a friend, I sent him a fax mentioning the matter at hand and prayed him to adjust his schedule so we could discuss it after his arrival during his next tour. He was in Australia, but within one week at the latest I would have received an answer. My subconscious was ready for a disaster, anticipating an event I intuitively knew would come. The most probable situation was that he would become very angry and fly into a rage. If the whole situation slipped out of my hands and, as a result of our break, he stopped coming to our group, those who loved him would suffer. Few people, in fact, would be able to comprehend the reason for my action. I would be the one who had disturbed a comfortable, though imperfect, situation. My friends liked him; his annual visit was a powerful stimulus to their effort and motivated them to practice *Kriya* intensely.

A harsh reply came a few days later. In a disdainful way, he did not address it directly to me but pretended to answer the 'persona' that had materially sent my letter via fax. He wrote that my excessive attachment to the techniques would never let me out of the fences of my mind – I was like St. Thomas, too desirous to touch with my hand and verify the goodness of his teachings. He added that if he satisfied my request, it would only be to gratify my ego.

Reading the term "gratification," I knew he had understood nothing. We should have talked to each other long before it came to this! I wondered why he had never allowed me to express my concerns. I didn't want to contest him, I didn't want to destroy him; the necessity that brought me to write him was to establish once and for all what I was supposed to communicate and what not to communicate to the *kriyabans* during initiation. Why had he always evaded me?

I decided to behave candidly, as if I had not perceived his tone. I wanted to see what he was capable of. I neither apologized nor answered in a resentful tone. I wrote that I taught *Kriya* on his behalf and therefore a mutual discussion about certain *Kriya* details was necessary. I added that at such an event the other three people in Europe authorized by him to impart *Kriya* initiation could also be present. I thus made him understand that he would not have wasted his time and breath for me only. I never received an answer, neither then nor ever. A few weeks later I saw on his Internet site that the name of my town had been taken off the list for his visit to Italy. My second letter had brought about a definitive split. The nightmare was over!

I took a one-day vacation and went for a long walk; I roamed a lot, tensely, imagining a hypothetical discussion with him. All of a sudden, I found myself crying with joy. It was too beautiful – I was free. I had been with him too many years, and now all that had really ended!

The question that I would ask myself in the years to come was why I had followed him for so long. Surely I had not sacrificed my dignity for the sake of receiving *Kriya* information! Actually, all of his techniques had been revealed to me by a friend who was disciple of one of his father's disciples. The reason for my behavior was concern for the diffusion of *Kriya* here in Europe. I appreciated the fact that he traveled extensively throughout USA and Europe to spread his *Kriya* without charging a penny for his Initiations (save for a free donation and a fair share of the expense for renting the seminar room). I covered all the necessary expenses to permanently fit out a room in my house where *Kriya* Initiations seminars could be held during my teacher's visits. My willingness to cooperate with him was always constant in order that he could carry out his task.

When I saw that he continued to teach in his rushed, superficial manner, taking advantage of us as if we were complete idiots, my subconscious began to rebel. I vividly remember a dream in which I was swimming in manure. I must admit that behind my mask of fake delight hid a dry agony. There had been moments in which, thinking of my meek beginning in the practice of *Yoga*, my heart felt an indefinite nostalgia for the peace of that initial period, a peace which was waiting for nothing more than consistency and honesty on my part to rise again and blossom unimpeded. On more than one occasion I had the impulse to abandon everything and sever any connection with him, but I didn't want to disturb the peace of all the people who were my friends and who had followed me in this adventure. Only when I received his rude and improper answer to my legitimate request for clarification and realized that my internal truth was at stake, I said to myself – Now or never!

At that time I could not tolerate the least deformation of truth. I zeroed my diplomatic mask and provoked the breaking-off with my third teacher. This bewildered my *kriyaban* friends who were naturally affectionate toward him. In time they understood the deep-seated reasons for my decision and showed their solidarity.

Like a domino effect, other coordinators in Europe who barely tolerated his bad manners took advantage of that episode to break contact with him. They were fed up with the dullness of his philosophical discourses

followed by scanty technical explanations which didn't quench their desire for a good understanding of *Kriya*.

WHAT FOLLOWED AFTER OUR PARTING

The following months were lived in a peaceful and relaxed mood, nothing to compare with the restlessness of my previously described years. Having dismissed that mean individual from my life, an enervating situation ended. I no longer had to go here and there to organize *Kriya* seminars for him; I had been relieved of the constraint of wearing a mask of hypocrisy while responding to those who called me to get information about him.

I had not even a faint idea of the destiny of the recently formed *Kriya* groups, up until then regularly visited by him. There were reasons to celebrate but the sense of all the time wasted, of all the silly things which had been carried out thoughtlessly, was weighing me down.

Puran Purush

A couple of months marked by calmness and introspection followed: the only noteworthy event was the issue of the book *Puran Purush* – surely the most beautiful biography of Lahiri Mahasaya. It was written by the renowned *Kriya* master Dr. Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee who consulted Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries and benefited from the personal assistance of Sri Satya Charan Lahiri (jan 1905 - jan 1987), one of Lahiri Mahasaya's grandsons, who had access to those diaries. The book came out in Bengali (then in French and English.) It contains a selection of the most important entries in Lahiri Mahasaya diaries.

Although this text does not seem to respect a logical order in the topics and contains an endless number of repetitions and rhetorical sentences, it helps us to understand Lahiri Mahasaya's personality – thus, the core of *Kriya* may be reached as fast as an arrow. During summer I had this book with me in the countryside; many times, after reading a part of it, I would raise my eyes to the distant mountain tops and repeat internally "At long last...!". I looked at the photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya on the front cover; who knows what a state of bliss he was in while being photographed! I saw some horizontal lines on his forehead, his eyebrows raised like in the *Shambhavi Mudra*, where awareness is set upon the head; a slight tension of his chin seemed to reveal he was practicing *Kechari Mudra*. During those days, his figure, with that blissful smile, was a radiant sun in my heart; he was the symbol of the perfection I yearned after.

It strikes his skill in communicating complicated abstract concepts when he affirms that the whole course of *Kriya* is a great adventure beginning with a

dynamic Prana and ending with a *static Prana*. One feels a thrill of delight by reading sentences which have light in themselves: "*Kutastha* is God, he is the supreme *Brahma*". Remarkable is the great importance given to *Pranayama*, *Thokar* and *Yoni Mudra*.

Lahiri Mahasaya refused to be worshiped as a God. This is a point that some of his followers seem to have forgotten. Actually he said: "I am not the *Guru*, I don't maintain a barrier between the true *Guru* (the Divine) and the disciple". He added he wanted to be considered as "a mirror." In other words, each *kriyaban* should see him not as an unreachable ideal but as the personification of all the wisdom and spiritual realization which, in due time, the *Kriya* practice will produce. When *kriyabans* realize that their *Guru* is the personification of what resides potentially inside themselves, of what one day they will become, then that mirror must be "thrown away."

Whether one likes it or not, that is exactly what He wrote: *thrown away*. People who have been raised with the usual dogmas about the *Guru*-disciple relationship are prevented from fully understanding the impact of these words, otherwise they would face a strong conflict within themselves. To face the truth, it takes courage and an intelligent, discriminating approach to abandon one's own illusions, especially those that are nice and gratifying. Besides courage, it takes also a good brain capable of overcoming the tendency to be easily swayed.

Few noteworthy things happened.

- A friend remained for some days at an *Ashram* in India in the hope he might receive initiation into *Kriya Yoga*. The leader of the *Ashram* was away, and my friend received the initiation from one of his disciples. At the conclusion he acquired a large volume summarizing the techniques, and at the end of his trip, visibly content, he showed me the book. The techniques did not differ much from those I already knew, but there were many more details.

There was nothing in that book, however, that could remove all my questions; not a single hint about how to obtain *Kechari Mudra*, nothing on *Thokar* either. On the contrary, I can remember a very complicated technique based on the visualization of the *Chakras* as they are described in Tantric texts. Each technique was preceded by a theoretic introduction with quotations from ancient books and an illustration which eliminated any possible doubt. In the last part of the book a precise gradual routine was given. Of course, there was a note guaranteeing that all the mentioned techniques constituted *Kriya Yoga* as taught by *Babaji*, Lahiri Mahasaya's

mythical *Guru*.

The material was very interesting, and I would have liked to yield to the illusion that my quest had finally ended since those notes contained what I was searching for. I simply had to convince myself that *Babaji* had made a synthesis of the innumerable spiritual practices of Tantrism to create His *Kriya Yoga*. It was impudent to think that *Thokar* could be considered no more than a variation of the *Jalandhara Bandha*! If the instructions for *Kechari Mudra* were not there, never mind, it probably just meant that ... *Kechari* was not really so important! With a bit of good will and application, I could have closed the circle.

Chance made me listen to the recording of a conference with the author Swami S.S. He discussed how he had found those techniques in some tantric texts which he had translated; he then made an accurate selection from them to form a coherent system of *Kriya*. How was it possible, then, to have a note saying that those teachings came directly from *Babaji*?

Simple – as is the case with the majority of Indian masters, he had his disciples write the book; they had the brilliant idea of making it more interesting by hinting that the techniques were derived from the mythical *Babaji*. The teacher, exhibiting another classic Indian habit, never checked the material and was taken aback later on when he became aware of those "supplementary notes". He then tried to defend his disciples' work stating that after all ... "*Babaji's Kriya* had Tantric origins."

- Some friends returning from India expressed their excitement over such an extraordinary land. But at the end of their tales, disappointment in all the things they had not been able to learn emerged. Often they would meet a boaster who assured them he knew original *Kriya Yoga* and could initiate them all as long as they kept it a total secret without establishing any contact with other teachers. In this way the boaster could ensure the disciples would not recognize that it was not *Kriya Yoga* they were being taught. I realized this only when, overcoming their hesitation, I convinced them to confidentially give me a rough description of that technique.

It was nothing more than the mere repetition of a *Mantra*! What made me feel sad was not so much the great advantage gained by those braggers (the *Gurudakshina* [donation] they received meant a real fortune at my friends' expense) but that my friends missed the opportunity of learning *Kriya* from other sources in other places.

- Something different happened to a friend who met Sri Banamali Lahiri,

one of the master's great-grandsons, a man with a great academic background and with a direct experience of *Kriya*. Various testimonies described him as a saint that wore the suit of the humility.

My friend was not able to learn anything from him, returned rather to me very confused. I tell only shortly such experience to show that when we are very desirous to find techniques we are not able of to listen to a saint that could see in us what doesn't go in the right direction and correct it. We could receive therefore the greatest possible help.

I was taken aback when he told me that in Benares, and probably throughout rest of India, *Kriya Yoga* was not practiced any longer. I kept enough control not to interrupt or challenge him, but then by posing apparently incidental questions, I tried to understand what had happened. My friend had, as he usually did, began the discussion with trivialities like asking some information on Indian habits and about an *Ashram's* address where he planned to go. Then almost at the end of the interview – he must have suddenly remembered he was in Lahiri Mahasaya's house – he asked if any of the disciples of Lahiri were still practicing *Kriya*, and received a sarcastically sour, negative response of, more or less, "Definitely not; it is not practiced any longer. I dare say it is not practiced throughout the whole Indian peninsula. Rather, you surely must be the only one still practicing it!"

At the end of his narration, my friend was looking at me questioningly. I am still not sure whether he was hoping to convince me or whether he was just absorbed in bitter frustration. I did not pry. In my opinion, he did not realize how foolish his discussion had been with that noble person. A certain blow came for him one month later. He heard that a man from his same town had recently been initiated into *Kriya Yoga* from the very personage he had met in Benares! He was so irritated, he planned to go back to India to raise a protest to that noble man. Unfortunately, he did not have that chance – a serious disease killed him. In spite of our huge character differences, I will always be grateful for all the things he shared with me concerning the path of *Yoga*.

THE DECISION TO WRITE THE BOOK

It was winter. One day I went skiing in the nearby mountains with a couple of friends. All went magnificently. During a break in the afternoon, I managed to find time alone. I found myself looking at the mountains that marked the boundaries of the distant horizon in all directions. In less than half an hour the sun would paint them pink – with an intense hue on their

eastern side and tinged with blue on the western side. I imagined India to be right behind them, the Himalayas being their continuation. My thought went to all the *Kriya* enthusiasts who found, as I did, insurmountable obstacles to the understanding of that beloved discipline. All those obstacles seemed to me an absurdity that wore the clothes of a nightmare – I felt an infinite rebellion.

I visualized a book on *Kriya* explaining every technique in great detail. How often had I wondered what would have happened if Lahiri Mahasaya or one of his disciples had written it! I didn't dare think that Lahiri Mahasaya had made a mistake by not writing his techniques, yet I felt that this decision had brought so much suffering and endless losses of time and energies.

As for my dream of an ideal book about *Kriya*, my imagination led me to fantasize about its cover, to skim its few pages – sober, yet rich in content. If this book existed, we would have a reliable manual of *Kriya* that restrained the many small or large variations made up by various teachers. Perhaps some annotator would try to force its meaning into his own theories. Nay, I was positive that some pseudo-*guru* would say that the techniques described in it were for beginners only, while there were much more complicated techniques that could only be passed on by an authorized teacher to chosen disciples. Some would swallow the bait, contact the author, and pay good money to be introduced to rubbish that he had assembled either through fancy or borrowed from some esoteric book... This happens; it's part of our human nature. However, sincere researchers would surely be able to recognize the strength and self-sufficient intrinsic evidence of the original text. ¹³

It is a misfortune that no one had written that book! For the first time I dared to let my thoughts stray toward what could happen if I wrote it. The purpose of the book was to summarize the totality of my knowledge of *Kriya* welding together techniques and theories through a clean, rational vision. I would not describe the set of the modified *Kriya* techniques received by my first *Kriya* school.

¹³ Such a book will be useful to review what was explained during Initiation. There is in fact 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.

I had a model in my mind: T. Bernard's *Hatha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience* ¹⁴ The intention was definitely not to lay the foundations for yet another new school of *Kriya*. There would be no rhetorical claims of legitimacy and riddle-like sentences to seduce the reader and arouse curiosity in their mind! ¹⁵

Such a book as I imagined would not be a threat to any honest *Kriya Acharya's* activity. Good teachers will always be needed in any field where a skill is to be transmitted. But how could one highlight this to them, without being at odds with the deeply-rooted conditioning of their "cerebral chemistry"? Of course, some teachers of *Kriya* – those who live from donations for rituals of initiation and who exert power over people thanks to the pledge of secrecy – would consider my book a real threat. Maybe what was virtually eternal for them (living like a lord, surrounded by people who have to meet all their needs with the hope of getting the crumbs of their "secrets") might change, and they would be fearful of that.

They would try to destroy its credibility by means of pitiless censorship. I anticipated their scornful comments, uttered while skimming its pages, "It contains only stories that have nothing to do with Babaji's and Lahiri Mahasaya's teachings. It spreads a false teaching!" Other people might not like the book, either because they are taken aback by the barrenness of descriptions of techniques deprived of frills, which doesn't match their expectations, or because they do not manage to get "good vibrations" from it.

It was necessary to write in a way that readers could feel my story as their own story, therefore I tried so many times to rethink my approach. I would write for people like myself: disillusioned by organizations and traveling Gurus. They would feel an enormous relief in finding that book in an esoteric library. I was already sensing their happiness. Thanks to them, the book would continue to circulate, and who knows how many times it would echo back to the teacher who had decreed its unforgivable flaws. He

¹⁴ This extraordinary handbook, better than all the others, clarifies the teachings contained in the three fundamental texts of Tantrism: *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Shiva Samhita*. Despite having been published many years ago and several texts of *Hatha Yoga* appearing recently, that book is still one of the best. Old, 'dusty' techniques once again became relevant, feasible, comprehensible in front of the eyes of our intuition.

¹⁵ Some authors give only a hint to some procedures (either part of authentic *Kriya* or often concocted through imagination) and let the reader unsatisfied, compelled to go to the author in order to receive the secret let only glimpse.

would have to pretend not to notice that a student was browsing through its pages during his seminars, thus missing a part of the conference...

By staring into the blue of the sky above the gilded mountain brims, I saw that bizarre situation as poignantly real. Each part of my dream had developed in the space of a few seconds, and invaded my consciousness as a swollen torrent, as if every part of it had already been rehearsed and cherished innumerable times.

A STRONG CONDITIONING HAS TO BE OVERCOME

The experience that I had in the following months, revealed a great conditioning present in my subconscious and received from my first *Kriya* school. Violating the dogma of the secretiveness was unthinkable. Perhaps the reader cannot understand the reasons for my strong resistance: today you can find online many sources where you can read various technical *Kriya* details. At that time this did not exist and the secrecy was respected rigorously.

It was evident that the organization's justifications for the request of secrecy could not stand any rational analysis. They claimed that secrecy helps "to maintain the purity of the teachings." Since they gave some alterations in the practice of *Kriya* as originally taught by Lahiri Mahasaya, it would be better to affirm, "to maintain the purity of the modifications."

However, my heart was torn apart. How could I coarsely challenge the sacredness of the *Guru-disciple* relationship as the only way to be instructed in *Kriya*?

I tried to summon up my courage thinking that such dogma had some tracts of cruelty. I recalled what happened when some friends of mine who didn't understand English asked to receive initiation into the *Higher Kriyas* (such instruction was given only in written form to those who had completed the study of the complete set of lessons which existed only in English, German and Spanish); the answer was always an inflexible NO. I had always perceived this as a cruel form of discrimination.

I remembered some cases in which the rigid injunction had been broken by common sense. People who were otherwise faithful to the organization had, under exceptional conditions, broken that rule. For example, a Catholic priest sincerely desired to learn *Kriya* but could not receive it from the right channels because of an issue of conscience regarding the act of signing the application form of the lessons; he found a *kriyaban* who

explained the technique to him and shared with him his lessons (an action he was strictly forbidden to do).¹⁶

My thoughts about secrecy arrived just to that point and there they stopped – for months. It was very difficult to put all the crucial points into a logical order. I tried to think sequentially but either mental and physical fatigue was impairing my reasoning ability or conditioning carved into my brain acted as an entity which had a life of its own. Each time I tried to organize my vision into a well-integrated and coherent whole, for one reason or another it appeared to me as a monstrosity.

I resumed the practice of the so called "Incremental Routines."¹⁷ I stopped particularly on those techniques that deal with to loosen the knot of the heart. Such knot is also called Vishnu Granthi. The Divinity Vishnu is the Lord of the maintenance: the knot of the heart sustains the desire to put to put our own trust in the traditions and in religious authorities, especially when their teachings and dogmas are introduced in the suggestive frame of a solemn ceremony. An incremental routine that strongly acts on the knot of the heart makes you discover your internal dignity and nobody deceives you any more. It acts as a gigantic injection of courage, it recovers you from an evil that it stops us fragile human beings when we decide to risk us in the paths of the Spirit. Your thinking process becomes compact, of a solidity that the other people's suggestions were not capable to undermine and to contaminate. It was the effect of these routines that helped me to put more clarity in my thoughts.

One evening, after thinking it over about the Guru-disciple relationship, I remembered the episode of Swami Vivekananda's "investiture" by his *Guru* Ramakrishna. I read that one day toward the end of his life Ramakrishna entered *Samadhi* while his disciple Vivekananda was near him. Vivekananda started to feel a strong current before fainting. Having returned to consciousness, his *Guru* cried and whispered: "O my Naren (Vivekananda), everything I had I gave to you, today. I have become a poor fakir, I do not have anything; with these powers you will do the world an immense good." Later, Ramakrishna explained that the powers he passed onto him could not be used for his own spiritual fulfillment – one had to

¹⁶ I am not advocating breaking a vow made to an organization that is sustained by the proceeds of the sales of didactic material. To those persons who can become students, let them pay the little money required and receive their set of lessons.

¹⁷ Incremental routine means to utilize one Kriya technique at a time, increasing gradually the number of its repetitions up to reach a great amount of them – I will clarify this concept in Chapter 8.

get to that by himself; on the contrary, they would help him in his mission as a spiritual teacher.

With this image my subconscious mind revealed itself to admonish me not to surrender to the temptation of throwing away something valid and precious. The concept of *Guru*-disciple relationship was not to be challenged.

I read again the memorable impressive discourse by Dostoevsky about the role of elders in Russian monasteries in his *The Brothers Karamazov*:

What was such an elder? An elder was one who took your soul, your will, into his soul and his will. When you choose an elder, you renounce your own will and yield it to him in complete submission, complete self-abnegation. This novitiate, this terrible school of abnegation, is undertaken voluntarily, in the hope of self-conquest, of self-mastery, in order, after a life of obedience, to attain perfect freedom, that is, from self; to escape the lot of those who have lived their whole life without finding their true selves in themselves." (Translated by Constance Garnett)

Great, very great! However this did not happen in my life. My first *Kriya* organization had made me believe I had a *Guru* – whereas in fact, I was light years away from having one. While the great examples of *Guru*-disciple relationship were based on a real physical meeting between two souls, my relationship was purely ideal. I was surrounded by persons who said they humbly followed their *Guru*, yet they had never met him physically. They imagined to have a *Guru*. To me they were as children of kindergarten that loved to ideally believe in something comforting.

They were required to swear their everlasting devotion not only to this person called *Guru*-preceptor but also to a chain of Masters, no one directly accessible to them. They receive this affirmation: "It is the *Guru*-preceptor that introduces you to God. There is no other way to achieve salvation." Once the students are initiated into *Kriya* by the Ministers or the organization, the departed *Guru* becomes a real presence in their life. They are taught that their *Guru*-preceptor is a special aid chosen by God Himself even before they began to seek the spiritual path: he will somehow burn a part of their *Karma* and protect them evermore. This was a wonderful vision, obviously. But it was a fairly tale!

To many persons of my organization God and Guru are one and the same reality. A representative of my organization instructed me: "Have you not realized that Guruji is the Divine Mother Herself?" From the belief that *Guru* and God are one and the same reality comes the idea that the organization founded by the *Guru* be not just an institution devoted to spreading his teachings but be the sole intermediary between God and those who want to progress spiritually through *Kriya Yoga*. Since *Kriya* learned outside the organization has no value, the dogma of secrecy ensues obviously. The myth of secrecy allows the myth of the irreplaceable role of the organization to be kept alive.

My organization could, in certain situations, be similar to a church. The teaching of PY was religious par excellence. In any religion there is discretion not secretiveness. The discretion comes spontaneous to the intelligent and sensitive people. Secretiveness is irrational, unnatural, and therefore it asks for a solemn vote. The threat of possible calamities that would happen to whoever infringes the dogma of secrecy clashes with everything we read in the biographies of the saints. It fits perfectly with the magic dimension of certain esoteric confraternities – secrecy is indispensable to their existence. The oath of secrecy has nothing to do with the spiritual dimension. I might be wrong, but I feel that the unique benefit of secrecy to an individual is to feel the pleasure of possessing something exclusive.

One evening, while I was practicing *Kriya Pranayama*, with the tongue in *Kechari Mudra*, I had the inner vision of three beautiful mountains. The central mountain, the highest, was black; its form reminded me of the point of an arrow made of obsidian. My heart exulted, I was madly enamored of that image; I found myself crying for joy. I remained as calm as possible while I felt a particular pressure (like a grip of beatitude) that was intensifying in the chest region. The image was strong, tremendously vivid before me. There could be nothing more beautiful; it made me mad with love. I had the impression of having cast a glance at the source from which my current trend of life originated. It was as if an internal thread tied all of my actions passed to that image receiving sense and meaning from it. That mountain was to me the symbol of the universal spiritual path. It talked to my intuition: "A *Teacher* who gives initiation might be very important to your spiritual development, but your personal effort when you remain alone is far more important. In any *Guru*-disciple relationship there comes a moment when you remain alone. You awaken to the realization that your path is a solitary flight between you and your indwelling Self. The *Guru*-

disciple relationship is an illusion – useful and comfortable – appearing real until you are overcome by what surpasses your mind.

NET

I visualized a net: each individual was a junction from which a lot of threads fanned out, like the network of our brain's neurons. When a soul toils to go beyond the common way of living, the state of their consciousness reverberates along the surrounding threads of the net. That soul will be helped by others' positive response and, of course, will be slowed down by others' indolence and apathy. In my opinion those who follow the spiritual path carry other people's evolution ahead with them. This net connecting every one of us is the *Collective Unconscious*.¹⁸

For example, Beethoven's life and works gave a direction to my quest of a meaning in life. Yes, I was alone, but not totally alone. What Beethoven did, his life, his music, influenced my existence and dragged it ahead, toward the endless one.

One evening after a long walk, subdued by a sudden tiredness I dragged myself back home. Worn out by thoughts, the problem of the *Guru*-disciple relationship emerged, obscurely, more as a wound than as a theory unfolding its myths. In my room I set the record player on "repeat", playing Beethoven's second movement of the *Emperor Concerto*... Did anyone, after having haunted all the possible ceremonies of Initiation given by the "legitimate" channels, and being stuffed with all the possible *Guru*'s blessings, ever practice *Kriya* with the same dignity and courage with which Beethoven challenged his fate?

I turned down the lights and watched the sun set behind the trees on the top of a hill. The shape of a cypress covered a part of that great, blood-red circle. That was the eternal beauty! That was the model by which I would be inspired. I closed my eyes to have a dispassionate, unemotional assessment of the situation.

¹⁸ To Freud the Unconscious was similar to a depot full of old "removed" things that we cannot recall to consciousness - refused by a nearly automatic act of the will. Jung discovered a deeper level of it: the Collective Unconscious which links all human beings by the deepest layers of their psyche. The Collective Unconscious is "inherited with our cerebral structure" and consists of "the human systems of reacting" to the most intense events that can happen in one's lifetime: the birth of a child, marriage, death of a loved one, serious illness, family crisis, true love, natural disasters, war...

THE LAST PUSH TOWARDS WRITING A BOOK

Two facts gave me the last push

- a) The arrogance of certain persons
- b) Their cruelty
- c) The practical impossibility of realizing certain requests.

a) The arrogance of certain persons

Between-times I consulted a few Forums for devotees of *Kriya Yoga*. My desire was to see if other *kriyabans* had similar problems. Many were seeking information about *Kechari Mudra* and, more in general, about unmodified *Kriya*. If I had had their email addresses, I would have immediately sent them the instructions.

I was struck by the pedantic and conceited tone of some Forum users that abused genuine and honest curiosity. With facetious tenderness betraying their low form of concern, they labeled the seekers' desire to deepen their *Kriya* practice as a "dangerous mania." They had the audacity to hush the humble student by counseling him to stay with what they had and not to seek more. They spoke in the same tone used by my old "Ministers".

Although I felt myself aeons distant from that world, objectively speaking the period of my life when I would have never addressed to any other person to ask a counsel, was not so far. Actually it was my yesterday's world. I wondered how those Forum users dared to enter (uninvited) a person's life and personal space, about whom they knew nothing, treating them as incompetent and superficial beginners! Was it so difficult to simply answer truthfully: "I don't have that information"?

b) Their cruelty

I stumbled upon an extremely unpleasant discussion (in the same Forum), the thought of it turns my stomach. One personage claimed he had access to the *Original Kriya*. He was very secretive and exclusive. He said there were a number of true *Kriya* teachers around but was unwilling to share any names or addresses. I found this stupid. I imagined that the petty idea of possessing this secret knowledge and not conveying it to others was the only thing keeping the pieces of his scattered childish mind together, avoiding him the sadness of realizing the nothingness he was. Why should the key of *Original Kriya* belong only to him?

c) The practical impossibility of realizing certain requests.

At last, an event that caused an uproar in my soul happened. I came to know that there was the possibility of inviting a new *Kriya* teacher to Europe. Since he was well qualified in his role, I was on the verge of cooperating in this project and bearing part of its cost. A dear friend went to India to meet him for a private interview. After about one month he returned home and called me. Some hours later, we were sitting together. He had had a private interview with him and had good news. I was all ears. He was enthusiastic. They had talked about the deplorable situation of the diffusion of *Kriya* in the West; the teacher was sorry for that and manifested his willingness to help us. At the end of that meeting, my friend had his *Kriya Pranayama* checked by that expert.

Much to my surprise this friend asked me to practice *Kriya Pranayama* in front of him, and then remarked that there was a fault in my practice. I asked him what it was and his reply literally froze me: he could not tell me, since he had promised the teacher he would not reveal anything.¹⁹ He clarified that in relation to our group, he had indeed asked for his teacher's permission to correct eventual mistakes in our practice but the answer had been negative and the teacher swore him to secrecy. Was this teacher – who had manifested the intention to help us – concerned that we would not find any need to invite him to Europe, or visit him, after our mistake had been corrected? Was he really so petty and unkind? I did not put pressure on my friend to disclose other details about his talk with the teacher. I could not and would not enter the privacy of his experience, but how could he just let me and our group go on with an incorrect practice?

The shattering part was to see a friend with whom I had shared everything along my spiritual path, accompanying me in my ventures with all my previous teachers and suffering the same woes, satisfied only with having noticed my mistake. It was as if this justified his trip to India, the cost, and the time he spent on this venture. I didn't start quarreling, but I reacted very badly. I got up and left, leaving the friend alone.

Some days later, contacted by the teacher's secretary, I was further disgusted by how she handled the financial side of the tour. I declined the offer. Actually I was not in the mood to undertake the enormous work of

¹⁹ Considering the episode later, I realized what this incorrect detail was: I had not made an abdominal breath in a particularly visible way. I am sure of this fact because it was the only thing my friend was able to see – we did not talk about inner details of the practice.

organizing. As for the idea of visiting him, nothing could be farther from my mind. I was certain that he would have required of me the customary oath of secrecy. Once returned to my friends, what would I have had to tell them? "Dear friends, I can tell nothing, you too must go to India." We had reached an absurd situation: if the friends in my group wanted one more crumb of information regarding the *Kriya* practice, they would have to be put on a plane and packed off to India. Otherwise, they would have to live without this information.

If the events would take place in this way, each year an innumerable series of charter flights would transport all those interested in *Kriya* – no matter if old or ill – to a remote Indian village, like a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Fatima! The farce was not even worthy of being considered. Here I sensed the grip of desperation.

"As you understand, this request was unrealistic. The only teacher that years later would manifest intelligence and good will was Sri Rangin Mukherjee. He is an active teacher now."

In the following days I cleaned up the compilation of my notes about different *Kriya* techniques jotted down during different seminars, and passed them on to friends who had already received initiation but not to all levels of *Kriya*. I purchased a computer and, like a voluntary prisoner, I reduced my social life to an absolute minimum in order to give my all to writing the book. It was not easy to extract the essential core of *Kriya Yoga* from the huge piles of notes collected during seminars with different teachers. There was the feeling of working on a difficult puzzle, without a preview of what was to be obtained in the end.

In the first part of the book I summarized the story of my spiritual search while I devoted the second part to share what I knew about the theory and practice of *Kriya Yoga*. The third part is devoted to consider a good plan of teaching *Kriya*. The fourth part is devoted to consider how a *kriyaban* should coordinate and harness their efforts in withstanding the corrosion of time. We know that many *kriyabans* fail in keeping their enthusiasm alive standing the test of time. My answer deals with the *Devotional Prayer* – or *Japa*.

The time employed in this activity had been much longer than expected. Friends said I would never finish it. I had not felt any urgency, I enjoyed that quiet moment of my life, experiencing the calmness and contentedness that comes to those who devote all their efforts to a single purpose. At long last, the book was ready and was posted on the Web. After a couple of

months there was a reaction from my former third teacher. During a seminar he explained my actions as those of one who wants to make a business of *Kriya*. He defined me an "intellectual prostitute." My reaction was strange: that night I could not sleep – I was intimately satisfied. Finally there was a *Kriya* book readily accessible to everyone.

Was entstanden ist, das muß vergehen!

Was vergangen, auferstehen!

Hör auf zu beben!

Bereite dich zu leben!

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

What was created, must perish!

What perished, revive!

Cease from trembling!

Prepare yourself to live!

PART II: METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA

Disclaimer

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.

In my opinion, certain delicate techniques e.g. Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama, Thokar, and Yoni Mudra 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. ¹

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

CHAPTER 6
LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S KRIYA YOGA – FIRST PART

INTRODUCTION

The techniques of *Kriya Yoga* are explained in Part two and Part three of this book. Here you have an overall vision of the seven chapters involved. The first thing that stands out is the distinction between Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* and Swami Hariharananda's *Kriya*.

Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9: Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya Yoga

This is the *Kriya* that I have always sought. It's a *Kriya* that in my opinion originates from *Tantric Hatha Yoga* and from particular discoveries made by Lahiri Mahasaya himself. Sufi mystics with their *Dhikr* make a huge contribution. This *Kriya* is a set of very effective methods. If you want a practical guide to metabolize them, utilize chapter 12.

In chapter 6 the basic technique of *Kriya Pranayama* is introduced. In chapter 7 you find the description of all the techniques which are traditionally part of *First Kriya*. In chapter 8 we introduce the *Second*, *Third* and *Fourth Kriyas*. This is altogether the art of *Thokar*. In chapter 9 we introduce the *Fifth* and the *Sixth Kriyas*. This is altogether the art of *Tribhagamurari* movement.

Chapter 10: Swami Hariharananda's Kriya Yoga

This *Kriya* is influenced by the *Radhasoami* movement. Entering the *Omkar* dimension plays a predominant role. The information contained in this chapter can prove to be very useful.

Chapter 11: Discussions with students of PY Correspondence Course

Kriyabans who live in the love and loyalty to PY can find here, material to understand the reason why PY decided to make some modifications toward Lahiri Mahasaya's vision. PY's *Kriya* path has an unprecedented simplifying power. If the mind of the reader is open, a very important understanding will happen.

Chapter 12: A Good way of experiencing the beauty of Kriya Yoga

This chapter contains what I presently recommend for approaching *Kriya Yoga*. I utilize my personal experience to envisage a good plan of practice. The chapter starts with a very simple and effective way of introducing the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*. Simpler than what we describe in chapter 6 or in chapter 10. The teacher who gave this long-awaited inspiration is Sri Mukherjee. But we don't stop to that first step, we are delighted to visualize

a complete *Kriya* path which can be practiced with similar simplicity and effectiveness.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO MAIN CONCEPTIONS OF KRIYA

A) LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S KRIYA VISION

First Level

The first level of this *Kriya* is grounded on the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*. Normally each session opens with a short preparation and ends with a phase that many call "Meditation" but it would be more correct to call "*Pratyahara*" that means "withdrawal of the senses." After this transition phase, a *kriyaban* is open to a dimension that is beyond the mind.

In the first level we achieve the melting together of the energies *Prana* and *Apana*. A particular state happens in our consciousness. Lahiri Mahasaya calls it *Equilibrium*; it is situated half road between the awareness of the external reality and the awareness of the internal state of peace.

Before starting the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*, the *Nadis Ida* and *Pingala* are partially blocked and the *Prana* has difficulty to flow. Through this condition of *Equilibrium* the state of *Prana* in the body changes. It becomes possible guiding our *Prana* in the subtle channel of *Sushumna*.

A good signal that the breath has become "subtle" is given by a particular realization: during the exhalation we feel that our breath doesn't go out of the body through the nostrils but travels within, filling with fresh energy the cells of the body.

In the first level, the obtainment of *Kechari Mudra* is undoubtedly of great value since it creates perfection in *Kriya Pranayama* and calms enormously the functions of the mind. Other events can happen during the months or the years when you one is busy with the first level. Other procedures come in handy, even if they are not, because of inexperience, used in every aspect of their power.

Second Level

In this level we consider a very subtle work upon the *Chakras* and a strong work upon the heart *Chakra*. The *Chakras* are not an obstacle, we do not want to entertain here any negative concept of them. But we know that our

duty is not only to awake them but go beyond them. This is the real meaning of the *Second Level*. We shall utilize the power of *Thokar* which is directed toward the heart *Chakra* – this will happen also in the *Third level of Kriya*, in greater dimensions.

In the *Second Level*, the mental pressure of *Prana* upon each *Chakra* becomes stronger. A positive transformation is noticed in the practice of *Kriya Pranayama (First Kriya)* which becomes more solid.

Third Level

The *Third level of Kriya* is devoted to the practice of *Thokar* using a long *Kumbhaka* (holding of the breath.) Here a *kriyaban* exerts a very great action on the *Chakra* of the heart. Knowing that the heart is the place in the body where the traditions says that the immortal Self resides, some schools of *Kriya* consider this as the last level of *Kriya*. They don't know other levels of *Kriya*.

There is no doubt that through a great, long, work with this *Third Level of Kriya* no other technique is necessary. There is a strong connection between the heart *Chakra* and *Kutastha*. The bright point (*Bindu*) that appears in the heart *Chakra* during the practice of the *Third level of the Kriya* is the same reality that appears as a white star in the center of *Kutastha*. Entering the star of *Kutastha* crossing the so-called "tunnel of eternity " or entering a deep state of ecstasy that is expressed as the "contemplation of the uncreated light in the heart" (typical expressions of the *Hesychasts*) embody the same event.

Fourth Level

Do you want to improve at the maximum the practice of the *Kriya Pranayama*, while the attainments regarding the *Chakra* of the heart remain unaltered? Then you must practice the *Fourth Level of Kriya* where *Thokar* is applied on all the *Chakras*.

It has been said that if you create a great impact on the *Muladhara Chakra*, *Kundalini* comes up and crosses the center of the heart bringing its potentialities to the maximum expansion. In that state our breath is totally internalized, therefore *Kriya Pranayama* is practiced in a state very similar to the breathless state. This must be kept present when we face the mysterious reality of the *Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Fifth level.)*

Fifth Level

At this level, those who accept the teaching of Satya Charan Lahiri (one of the grandsons of Lahiri Mahasaya) focus their attention on a descending energetic flow moving towards *Muladhara*, but remaining outside the spine. What happens by perceiving such current is difficult to express because we have no words to describe a reality which is beyond mind. This

level is a prosecution of the previous level but seems to belong to another word.

Sixth Level

The door of the spine is opened. Now we can meet the subtle transcendent *Omkar* reality in the aspect of micro movement sensation. I do not venture to indulge in rhetoric quotations of ancient holy writings. I can only say that through this procedure we become able to leave the dimension of time and space and reach the highest *Asamprajnata Samadhi* which leads to *Kaivalya* state.

B) SWAMI HARIHARANANDA'S KRIYA VISION

First Level

Practically speaking, this is the stage in which, mainly through simple procedures (among which a great place is given to *Forward Bendings* and *Maha Mudra*), a *kriyaban* succeeds in perceiving the astral sounds, light and a moving sensation inside each *Chakra*, while the perceptions of the external world diminish in power. Through the daily repetition of this form of meditation, *kriyabans* enters the channel of *Sushumna* deepening their contact with the *Omkar* reality.

Second Level

This level is more mysterious, because in it we dissolve the obstacles represented by the *Tattwas* (five elements.) By referring to the well known theory of the five elements, we understand that our duty is to dissolve the deceptive reality that is at their basis. We must reach the realization that every aspect of the physical reality is made of one only substance: the Spiritual Light. The five *Tattwas* (earth, water, fire, air, ether) are an illusion.

Working with this ideal in mind, a *kriyaban* drives the *Prana* from the body toward the spine and inside the spine. Through the help of concentration, utilizing also a particular tool like the repetition of the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet on the "petals" of the *Chakras* and on different parts of the body, the *Prana* gets sucked in the upper part of the head. A *kriyaban* enjoys an ecstatic state and is ready for the last work that happens in a new dimension having its seat in the upper part of the brain and over it.

Third Level

In this level a work is started to pacify the *Prana* in the crown of the head. Some movement of the head are still necessary.

Fourth Level

In this level, immobility in the whole body, head included, is established. A deep concentration, that gradually becomes effortless, happens in the five parts of our head: frontal, left, back, right and under Fontanelle. ² Then the mind is lost and the estatic state ensues.

Fifth Level

A simple instruction is given to reach the perfect breathless state. The awareness of a *kriyaban* is not only on the calm *Prana* in the body but also over the body. A new center over *Sahasrara* is revealed. The mind is lost in the divine Light, over *Sahasrara* and gradually comes down in *Cerebellum*.

Sixth Level

There are two ways of describing this level. One is to say that we reach the *Brahma Randra* which is the subtlest aspect of *Bindu* – a place beyond time and space. Another way is to say that we reach the abode of the spiritual Light of God which is in the *pineal gland*.

Conclusion

In Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* we work to bring the Light of the Spirit in all the parts of our being. Each *Chakra* is awakened, each *Chakra* is considered spiritual.

In Swami Hariharananda's *Kriya* we find a tendency to escape from what in Lahiri's *Kriya* is considered a duty: to face our human nature and live more in the heart and less in the brain. In Swami Hariharananda's *Kriya* we don't find that huge work upon the region of the heart. There is the tendency to move the center of our awareness in the higher regions of the astral dimension.

In both paths we have wonderful procedures to reach the region situated in the highest part of the brain where we can experience the dimension of great, deep peace. Our heart is full of inexpressible joy. But this joy becomes alienation if is not supported by a work upon the heart and, finally, upon the basic Chakra *Muladhara*.

It is inspiring to read the words that Lahiri Mahasaya has left in his diaries.

² To locate such point, raise the chin, focus your attention where the divine Light seems to originate.

"The breath is normally externally oriented. If, through the practice of *Pranayama* it is made internally oriented, then it is possible, through the technique of *Thokar*, to open the door of the internal temple. With a forceful impact upon the *Anahata Chakra* the door opens. A deep engrossment occurs and this state becomes stable for a prolonged period. By achieving this state the mind becomes saddened by seeing the suffering in others." (*Lahiri Mahasaya*)

This sentence is the summary of Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* with its different phases. After obtaining the perfection in *Pranayama* it is possible to obtain the fruit of *Thokar*. The door finally opens and... "the mind becomes saddened by seeing the suffering in others." The promise of Lahiri Mahasaya is to become one with humanity [you cannot become one if you do not feel the suffering in other human beings.]

Identifying the *Sahasrara Chakra* with our supreme goal means to follow a refined illusion. Reaching the *Brahma Randra*, or the pineal gland... does not mean having achieved our final goal but only an intermediary phase. The true destination is the "Uncreated Light" (so said the Hesychasts) in the region of the heart. The obsession about always holding the mind in the *Sahasrara* region has produced people full of Ego that have lost contact with the reality of the life and have become fix in behaviors and theories that are the caricature of the spiritual path.

In my life I made the choice of refusing living in *Sahasrara*. I said a total yes to Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*.

SPIRITUAL ANATOMY

● *Location of the Chakras*

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 Yoga* it is not as much important to visualize a *Chakra* with petals, with a *Bija Mantra* in its center, with a *Yantra*... and with all you can find in New Age books, as to perceive approximately its location. The practice of *Kriya Yoga* refines this perception.

When certain particular conditions are established – mental silence, relaxation, an intense aspiration of the soul – the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* takes, so to say, the "inward route" and the Spiritual Reality manifests. You will then perceive, in the astral dimension, the reality of the *Chakras*. You will be able to listen to their astral vibration as well as hues of light pouring forth from their locations. The practice of *Kechari Mudra* (explained in chapter 7) fosters this experience, especially when the "wind" of the breath subsides.

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 the Infinity above) into the body, 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 coccyx (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*, (more simply called heart *Chakra*) 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.

The sixth *Chakra* is called *Ajna*. *Medulla oblongata* and *Bhrumadhya* (the point between the eyebrows) are strictly related to *Ajna* and can not be considered as separated entities. *Medulla* is considered the physical counter part of *Ajna Chakra*. What matters is that by finding stability of concentration in any of the three points, the spiritual eye (*Kutastha*), a luminous point in the middle of an infinite spherical radiance, appears at the interior vision. This experience is the royal entrance to the spiritual dimension. Sometimes the term *Kutastha* is utilized at the place of *Bhrumadhya*.

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

Moving from the seat of *Medulla* toward the point between the eyebrows, it is not difficult to locate the seat of *Ajna*: swing slowly your head sideways (a few centimeters left and right) having the sensation of something connecting the two temples. The seat of *Ajna Chakra* is the intersecting point of two lines: the line connecting the seat of *Medulla* with the point between the eyebrows and the line connecting the two temples.

The energy flowing through the tip 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 worthwhile clarifying this because a famous *Kriya* school counsels to focus on this gland in order to obtain the experience of the spiritual eye.

The same school emphasizes the role of the **pineal gland**. 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 after long concentration upon the pineal gland it is considered the last action that you do to perfect you meditation before being lost in *Samadhi*.

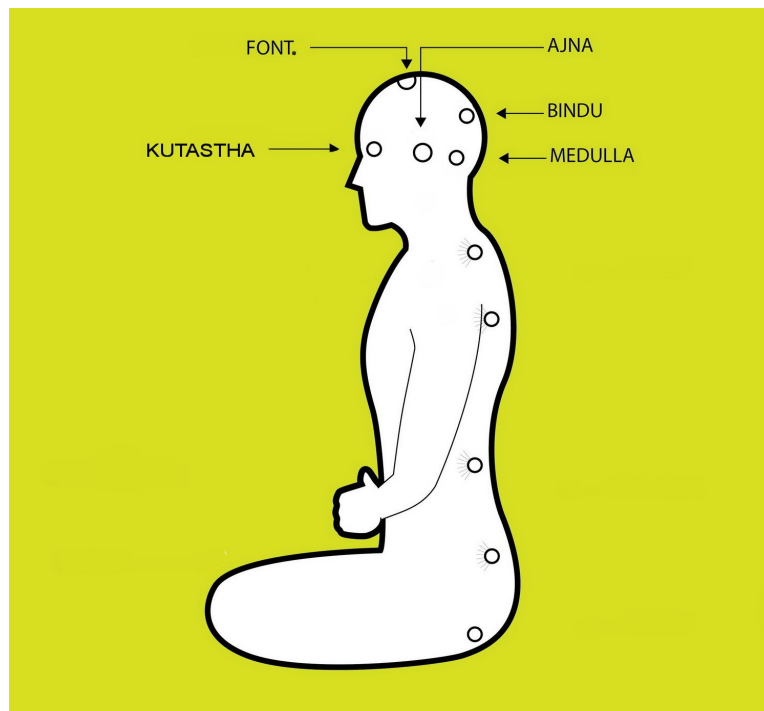


Fig.1 Location of the Chakras

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* that happen in the upper part of the brain.

Bindu is located in the occipital region and is not considered a *Chakra* in itself. However it is a very important spiritual center because it works as a door leading the awareness to **Sahasrara** – the seventh *Chakra* located at the top of the head. *Bindu* is located where the hairline twists in a kind of vortex (This is the *Sikha* point where the *Hindus* leave a lock of hair after having shaved their head.)

In order to become aware of *Sahasrara* some schools counsel to focus on **Fontanelle** [the anterior fontanelle more properly called "Bregma".]

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*.

KRIYA PRANAYAMA

[I] *Deep breathing with throat sound*

Start the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*. Assume your favorite meditation position. Sit facing East. From now onwards 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. Mouth and eyes are closed. Feel that the center of your awareness is located at *Medulla* while the inner gaze converge effortlessly on *Kutastha*.

Inhale deeply through the nose producing an unvoiced sound in the throat (like in *Ujjayi Pranayama*).³ 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.

Kriya Pranayama is to be practiced with a deep abdominal breathing. This means that, during inhalation the upper part of the thorax remains almost immobile while the abdomen expands. Shoulders are not raised. During exhalation, the abdomen comes inside. Count the number of breaths utilizing a *Mala* [rosary beads] or the fingers. To start, you will practice 24 breaths. In time you will increase by 12.

[II] *Mentally chant Om in each Chakra. Enjoy the breathing process.*

During inhalation, *Om* is mentally chanted (or, more simply, "mentally placed") in each one of the six *Chakras* from *Muladhara* to *Medulla*. During exhalation, *Om* is mentally chanted in the *Medulla* and in all the other *Chakras* coming down to *Muladhara*.

Don't lose the focus of your inner gaze on *Kutastha*. It is clear that going up and down the spine producing the throat sound and at the same time placing *Om* in each *Chakra* is difficult. However, Lahiri Mahasaya wrote

³ The sound of inhalation is similar to the amplified background noise of a loudspeaker – a quiet *schhhh...* /s/. There is only a slight hiss during exhalation. The perfection of the sound will be reached through *Kechari Mudra* proper. The sound of inhalation will be very subtle, while the exhaling sound will be flute-like: *Sheee Sheee* [ʃi:].

that going ahead without chanting *Om* in each *Chakra*, your *Kriya* becomes "tamasic" [of negative nature] and many kinds of useless thoughts arise. Therefore try to calm yourself and get this result.

Have a deep breath, then another: don't worry about the length of inhalation and of exhalation. (After some breaths you discover that your breath lengthens naturally.) Enjoy the beautiful feeling of fresh air that seems to come up through the spine and pierce each *Chakra*, enjoy the warm exhaled air permeating each zone of the body from top to bottom. You actually perceive this. This is not a figment of your imagination! Merge your awareness with the beauty of this deep breathing. ⁴

A short pause between inhalation and exhalation and between exhalation and inhalation comes naturally. The pause do no last more than 2-3 seconds. Each pause is a moment of comfortable peace.

[III] *Perceive the energy moving through the spine*

After some days or weeks of regular practice, during inhalation, you will perceive a cold current coming up through the spine – or simply a diffused fresh sensation. During exhalation you will perceive a lukewarm sensation in the spine. Exhalation could be longer than inhalation. During the last part of the exhalation, there is a clear perception of the navel moving in toward the spine. By refining this experience – being more aware of the navel moving inward and of the action of the diaphragm muscles – you will feel an ecstatic sensation.

[IV] *Listening to the sound like a "flute" of the breath*

Make the sound of the breath subtler and subtler. The exhalation arising in the nasal pharynx has a fine sound like a faint whistle. Symbolically speaking they say it is the "flute of Krishna". Lahiri Mahasaya described it "similar to blowing air through a keyhole". He explained that this sound has the power to cut out any external distracting factor including thoughts, Therefore he says it is: "a razor which cuts off everything related to the mind".

In order to have an idea of it, take a whistle, blow, diminish, diminish until it is barely audible. Consider an empty perfume sample, without cap. Close one nostril. Put the opening of the sample under the open nostril and have a long but subtle exhalation. Move up and down the sample

⁴ Reference literature says that perfect *Kriya Pranayama* is 80 breaths per hour – about 45 seconds per breath. A beginner is far away from reaching such rhythm. For a beginner if each breath lasts 20 seconds, this means that the practice is very good.

experiencing all the variations of the produced whistle sound. At a certain point you will obtain a fantastic whistle and say: "This is it"

This sound is produced in the upper part of the nasal pharynx. If you feel it you have only one duty more, letting that this sound absorbs your mind completely.

[V] *When you cross the number of 48 repetitions of Kriya Pranayama, move the focus of your awareness from Kutastha to Fontanelle*

If you decide to face this situation, you can, from now onwards, after about 4x12 repetitions of *Kriya Pranayama*, move the center of your awareness into the upper part of your head. *Kriya Pranayama* is to be practiced by adopting a specific *Mudra* which is an evolution of the classical *Shambhavi Mudra*. Let us learn it.

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. Now, 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.

The practice 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.

Remark

This practice is a real jewel, it embodies the quintessence of Beauty. Time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest. However we must remember that to practice of *Kriya Pranayama* with a strong concentration on the upper part of your head is not appropriate for a beginning or medium level students. Developing a strong magnet in *Sahasrara* is the most powerful way of stimulating the *Kundalini* awakening. This implies acting on our

Subconscious Mind bringing to the sphere of consciousness some contents that we are not able to assimilate. The person who experience this, especially if she/he is far from emotional maturity, might experience an entire range of negative moods.

CHAPTER 7
LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S KRIYA YOGA – SECOND PART
(Completion of the explanation of First Kriya routine)

The practice described in the preceding chapter is unique, you won't find another similar with regard to beauty and sweetness. Now, to add something (*Maha Mudra*, *Navi Kriya* and *Yoni Mudra*) has in itself a slight probability to damage this idyll. You know, traditional teaching of the *First Kriya* includes these three practices. Usually *Maha Mudra* and *Navi Kriya* are a good preparation to the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* and *Yoni Mudra* is practiced at the end of your routine. Other arrangements are not only possible [everything is possible: life is yours] but are rational, logic and surely useful.

Not only that, you can decide to practice other techniques – for example the traditional *Pranayamas* like *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*, *Kapalabhati*, *Bhastrika*.... and you can tell me that they are fare more useful than what is given by the tradition of *Kriya Yoga*.

There are many things to consider when experimenting. In chapter 12 we shall discuss this theme. Now let us learn these three pillars of *Kriya Yoga* initiation.

MAHA MUDRA

Use a carpet placed on the pavement to practice the following procedure.

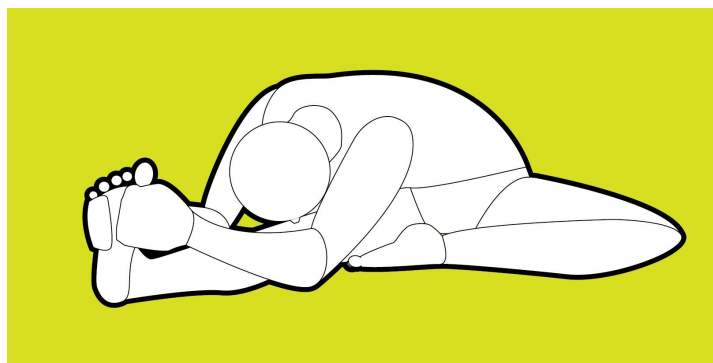


Fig.2 Maha Mudra

Bend the left leg under the body so the left heel is as near as possible to the perineum; the right leg is fully extended in front. Inhale deeply, feel the energy coming up in the head. Hold the breath, stretch forward (in a relaxed way) so that you can grasp the toes of your right foot with both

hands and gently pull them backwards. 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.

You can contract the anal and the abdominal muscles and draw the abdominal muscles in slightly so the navel moves inward toward the lumbar center. 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 and finally repeat the procedure with both legs outstretched. This is one *Maha Mudra*; it requires about 60-80 seconds. *Maha Mudra* is to be practiced three times.

Note 1

This *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, you can keep the outstretched leg bent at the knee until the position feels comfortable!

Note 2

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*.

Effects

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. 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.

Insignificant details

I have noticed that some schools insist on unimportant details. For example they insist that when you extend the right leg in front, you must bend the left leg under the body so the left heel is as near as possible to the perineum. Then the left heel exerts pressure on the perineum. This pressure is of course a means of stimulating one's awareness of the *Muladhara Chakra* in the coccyx region at the root of the spine. [Of course when you extend the left leg, it is the right heel to create pressure.]

Another example is when 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. They recommend that the interlocked fingers are placed around the knee to exert pressure on it. They say that this helps to keep the back straight and make the inner sound of the *Anahata Chakra* audible.

Another detail is this. As we have seen, in the outstretched position, the big toe is grasped with firmness. Some schools insist on this detail: the toenail of the right (left) big toe is squeezed with the thumb of the right (left) hand; the index and middle fingers are behind it. The left (right) hand cups the sole of the foot. When the procedure is repeated with both legs outstretched, both toes are grasped with the interlocked hands.

NAVI KRIYA (*three variations*)

For a lot of people this technique is boring and they jump it. In effects it is not strictly necessary. It will be when a particular teaching will be faced in the so-called *Higher Kriyas*, precisely: the *Advanced Form of Thokar*. I have found three variations of *Navi Kriya* and I deem it useful to introduce them so that the reader has a possibility of choice.

Navi Kriya. First variation – the most common

Forget the breath, let it be natural.

Rest the chin on the throat cavity. *Om* is chanted 100 – aloud or mentally – times in the navel region. The chin is then raised as much as possible and *Om* is chanted approximately 25 times in the third *Chakra Manipura*. This

is one *Navi Kriya*. Practice four *Navi Kriyas*.

In this exercise, if you like, the hands can be involved. With the fingers interlocked, palms face downward, pads of both thumbs touching, the thumbs lightly press the navel for each *Om*. When the chin is then raised the hands are kept behind the back and joined by interlocking the fingers with the palms facing upward. For every *Om*, the thumbs apply a light pressure to the lumbar vertebrae. This technique is repeated four times.

Navi Kriya. Second variation – the most beautiful and useful

This variation envisages a remarkable work upon *Dantian*. 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. Focusing the awareness inside the *Dantian* is something fantastic. This variation of *Navi Kriya* rivets the attention in a way that no other variation is able to produce. Its smooth shifting of energy along the circumference of the head has an effect without parallel.

How to practice. The chin is brought down toward the throat cavity. You have a short inhalation (two seconds maximum, without concentrating on the *Chakras*) followed by a very long exhalation during which the energy is 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.

A short inhalation draws the energy into the head again. Now each detail is repeated but the descent of the energy happens through a different path. 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*.

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.

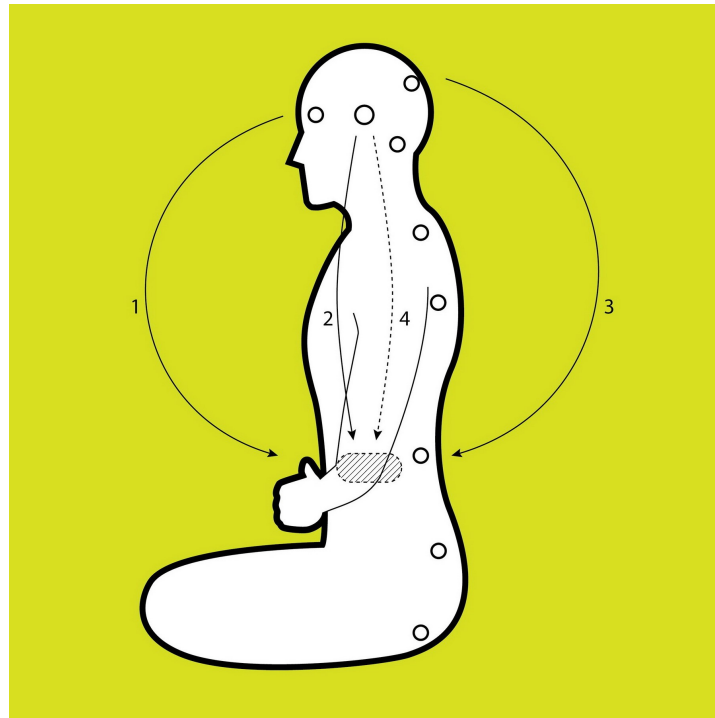


Fig.3 The energy enters the *Dantian* along four directions

The 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 the *Dantian*. This mini cycle is repeated 9 times. In conclusion we have had $4 \times 9 = 36$ descents of energy. What we have described lasts 8-10 minutes and is equivalent to 4 repetitions of the basic form of *Navi Kriya*.

Navi Kriya. Third variation – nice

Visualize a tiny cord that comes out from the point between the eyebrows bends slightly and goes down to the navel.

The procedure consists in mentally chanting the *Om Mantra* in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel. Precisely, when it comes natural to have an inhalation, inhale, 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.

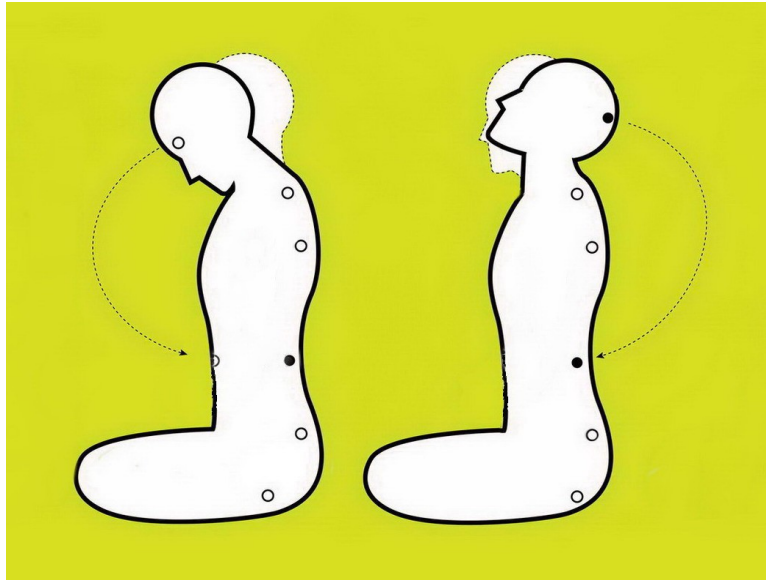


Fig.4 Simple form of Navi Kriya

When *Om* is chanted about 100 times, bend your head backwards and repeat a similar procedure by chanting *Om* in alternation between the *Bindu* and the third *Chakra*. Visualize another 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. This is one *Navi Kriya*. The optimum is to have 4 cycles of *Navi Kriya*.

YONI MUDRA

After a deep *Kriya* inhalation, having drawn the energy up to the central part of the head, close 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. Hold your breath while mentally repeating *Om* several times and observe any light in the point between the eyebrows. Hold the breath as long as is comfortable. 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. When you feel that you need to breathe, exhale and bring the awareness down along the spine. *Yoni*

Mudra is usually performed only once.

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. 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.



Fig.5 Yoni Mudra

The fundamental instruction is to increase the number of repetitions of *Om* repetitions (while holding the breath) by one per day up to a maximum of 200. It is recommended to avoid forcing. But how it is possible to achieve these results without forcing? In my opinion this ability can be achieved only in time, especially after a confrontation with the *Thokar* procedure. For the present moment I share a simple remedy that can reduce the discomfort of a long *Kumbhaka*.

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.

Remark

You have read that this technique is to be practiced only at night, at the end of your routine. You can actually practice it anytime! 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. *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.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO CONCEIVE A KRIYA ROUTINE

Now, having all these techniques, how can you conceive a good *Kriya* routine? There are different possibilities. I bring here only three examples.

Example 1:	Example 2:	Example 3:
Maha Mudra	Maha Mudra	K. Pranayama (only 12)
K. Pranayama	Navi Kriya	Maha Mudra
Navi Kriya	K. Pranayama	Navi Kriya
Mental Pranayama	Mental Pranayama	K. Pranayama again
		Mental Pranayama

I counsel to practice *Yoni Mudra* a part: this technique is so delicate that if not practiced in a perfect way, risks to ruin all the meditative experience.

MENTAL PRANAYAMA

This is the most pleasing part of the routine. *Chakras* are like knots that can be untied if "touched" by one's concentration. One feels vast and free as the sky and knows the formless joy. A *Kriya* routine that does not end with the enjoyment of such sweetness is like an orchestra going on stage, unpacking the instruments, tuning them and then leaving at once!

After three deep breaths, let your breath be natural and forget it. Move your awareness up and down the spine pausing in each spinal center for about 10-20 seconds. Start with the first, pause there, move to the second, pause....and so on. After ascending to the *Medulla*, start the descent, pausing in the fifth *Chakra*, fourth *Chakra*, and so on. One complete round lasts about 2-4 minutes.

Try to catch the sweetness emanating from each *Chakra*. It does not suffice

to keep on exerting a mental and even physical pressure on each *Chakra*, unable to relax. Do not complicate the teaching with various details (which could be useful in other techniques but not in the present one – contracting the muscles near each *Chakra*, utilize intense visualizations and *bija mantras*.... You risk all the sweetness is dispelled. Even ... mentally chanted Om in each *Chakra* may be disturbing.

The secret lies in maintaining the awareness in each of them until a sensation of sweetness is felt, as if the *Chakra* were "melting". It is important you assume a passive attitude and patient as well, with total reliance on what will be revealed by the practice itself.

So remember: *mental Pranayama* must be brought ahead with great seriousness until a deep silence settles in the consciousness. While going ahead with the *Kriya path*, you will discover that the *mental Pranayama* will turn first into the *Second Kriya* and finally will become the supreme form of *Kriya Pranayama*, the one that Lahiri Mahasaya called *Uttam Pranayama (Excellent Pranayama.)*

You will learn to utilize your meditation born intuition for effective handling any issue that arises from life. Inside the perfect transparency of an inner order, all problems are solved. I think that one is "born" to *Kriya* (understand the greatness of what they are doing) while perceiving the effects of such sweet practice: 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) "

DIGRESSION ABOUT KECHARI MUDRA (What is, how to obtain it)

Kechari Mudra means inserting the tongue in the hollow of the nasal pharynx. *Kriya Pranayama* should be practiced with the tongue in that position. I say "should" because very few people are able to practice in that way. [In the next Chapter we shall introduce a method (*Talabya Kriya*) to achieve *Kechari Mudra*.]

The ancient *yogis* discovered the importance of connecting the tip of our tongue with the seat of the calm *Prana* in the brain. Usually our tongue is normally unable to touch the uvula and, consequently, enter the nasal pharynx. Because of this, we are limited in our connection with the great reservoir of energy existing in the *Sahasrara* region.

The practice of *Kriya Pranayama* with *Kechari Mudra* represents an enchanting experience, one of the best moments in the life of a *kriyaban*. However many must be contented by keeping their tongue in the "baby *Kechari*" position. What does this mean? It means that with the tip of your tongue you touch the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft. This easy-to-achieve position of the tongue is enough to make the mind very still.

To get *Kechari Mudra* we practice *Talabya Kriya* which is described below:

- ***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. **DON'T TURN YOUR TONGUE BACKWARDS!**

When you have created the suction-cup effect, 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 will do 50 repetitions in about 2 minutes (110-120 seconds.)



Fig.6 Key part of Talabya Kriya

Some do not understand immediately 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. Many practice *Talabya Kriya* incorrectly by instinctively turning their tongue backwards. 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 should be relaxed.

Note

The technique of the *Talabya Kriya* can be enriched by massaging both the muscles of the tongue and the frenulum with one's own fingers. Lahiri Mahasaya was absolutely against cutting the frenulum to obtain faster and easier results. 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.

I hope that it is clear that *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!

Talabya Kriya is a technique that besides its utility to achieve *Kechari Mudra*, creates a perceivable relaxing effect on the thinking process. Therefore *Talabya Kriya* 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, in the best of the ways, into the meditation state. 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.

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.

- ***Check if you are near to Kechari Mudra***

After several months of regular practice of *Talabya Kriya*, it is counseled to check how much you are near to *Kechari Mudra*. The test is whether the tip of the tongue can touch the uvula, utilizing the fingers to push the base of the tongue inward. If the tip of the tongue touches the uvula, then for some minutes a day, try to push with more force the basis of the tongue inward until the tip goes beyond the uvula and touches the pharynx behind it.

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 is the turning point. The soft palate (the part from which the uvula hangs) acts like an elastic band and creates a hook. This prevents the tongue from slipping out. 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 and occasional swallowing – the practice of *Kechari Mudra* becomes easy and comfortable. 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.



Fig.7 Position of the tongue when you enter the nasal-pharynx

Kriya literature affirms that 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.

- ***First effects of Kechari Mudra***

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.

Kechari Mudra has a remarkable effect upon upon the state of our mind. When you become stable in this *Mudra*, you will notice a quieting of all useless, unwanted thoughts. 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.

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.

About the necessity of Kechari Mudra to practice the higher Kriyas
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!

We cannot conceive that the achievement of *Kechari* creates 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... the whole idea is absurd.

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.

CHAPTER 8
LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S KRIYA YOGA – THIRD PART
(Higher Kriyas (II, III, IV) – The art of Thokar)

Thokar is the art of forcing (pushing) energy from the body (precisely from the head or lungs) somewhere in the spine to unlock a knot, an inner obstacle.

Thokar in its variants represents the perfection of Kriya Pranayama. The ancient texts of Hatha Yoga say that Pranayama without the three Bandhas (Jalandhara, Mula and Uddiyana) is useless, they say also that the Bandhas are useless without Maha Veda, well all the Bandhas are contained in Thokar and the Maha Veda is in that form of Thokar that we call Fourth Kriya.

The practice of *Thokar* is always preceded by the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* and, if possible, by the practice of *Navi Kriya*.

Second Kriya [Elementary form of Thokar]	You focus your concentration on the two upper parts of the lungs (first the right, then the left), guiding the energy from the left lung into the heart <i>Chakra</i> . This happens in a sharp way. This way is called <i>Thokar</i> .
Third Kriya [Advanced form of Thokar]	You do the same action as in Second Kriya but you repeat it many, many times while holding your breath.
Fourth Kriya [Complete form of Thokar]	After inhalation, guide the energy down from the head to the lungs, then from the lungs to the heart Chakra. The energy does not stop there. Actually the energy is guided in a strong way to hit (awakening them) the third, the second and the first Chakra.
Fourth Kriya with Maha Veda	After the inhalation, guide the energy down from the head to the lungs, then from the lungs directly to the <i>Muladhara Chakra</i> location. There you apply the procedure of <i>Maha Veda</i> [which is the well know <i>Tadan</i>]

► **SECOND KRIYA [ELEMENTARY FORM OF THOKAR]**

Initial inhalation

All these techniques begin with a Kriya inhalation: moderately contract the muscles at the base of the spine. Inhale and at the same time rise the awareness along the spinal column. Interlaced hands are placed over the

navel to create a mental pressure over the first three *Chakras*. This pressure is perfected by adding the practice of *Uddiyana Bandha*. During the inhalation, lift the chin following the inner movement of the *Prana*; mentally chant *Om* in each *Chakra*. Or you can mentally chant the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya.*) *Om* is chanted in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second, *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu*. Hold your breath.

Specific part of this Second Kriya

Move your head a few millimeters to the left, then return to the center with your chin slightly up. Without stopping turn your face to the right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. There should be no stress in this movement.

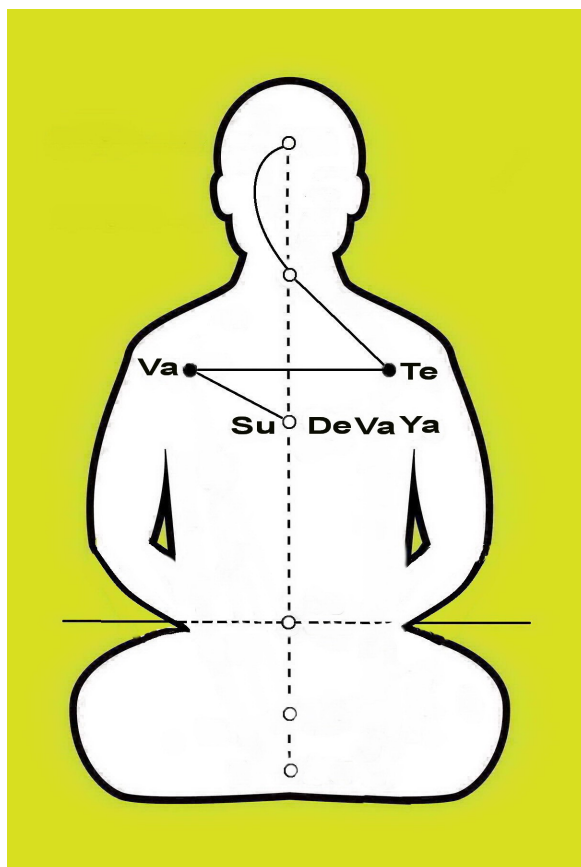


Fig.8 Second Kriya

Mentally chant "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung. The syllable Su is vibrated in the center of the heart Chakra.

The singing of the syllable "Su" involves a precise stimulus in the heart Chakra; this is the simple *Thokar* that appears in the *Second Kriya*. While you hit this Chakra, intensify the practice of the *Mula Bandha*.

While exhaling go ahead intensifying the energy of the heart. Repeat very slowly De, Va, Ya in the heart Chakra.

Repeat the procedure at least 12 times. Then breathe naturally

Close your practice with *Mental Pranayama*

► THIRD KRIYA [ADVANCED FORM OF THOKAR]

Initial inhalation which is the same of the previous technique....

Specific part of this Third Kriya

Move your head a few millimeters to the left, then return to the center with your chin slightly up. Without stopping turn your face to the right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. There should be no stress in this movement.

Mentally chant "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung. The syllable Su is vibrated in the center of the heart Chakra while directing the chin near the center of your chest with a rapid movement. This produces a hit (Thokar) in the center of the heart Chakra.

Do not exhale, repeat the "*Te Va Su*" procedure. "Repeat" means: raise your chin and focus for an instant your awareness to *Bindu* where you vibrated the sixth syllable *Ba*, move your head a few millimeters to the left, then return to the center with your chin slightly up. Without stopping turn your face to the right... vibrate *Tee* at the top of the right lung. Then move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing *Va* at the top of the left lung, then practice again Thokar on the heart by vibrating *Su* in it.

...repeat and repeat... : "*Te Va Su*" "*Te Va Su*" "*Te Va Su*"...

Feel the irradiation of Light increasing, maintaining the state of Kumbhaka... keep it until you feel that it is correct to stop and exhale.

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 80 seconds.

This technique is to be practiced once a day.

A first counsel to increase comfortably the number of rotations

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. It is imperative not to feel uneasiness! "Do not force" is the pressing recommendation!

Now, how is it possible to achieve the goal of 200 rotations, without interrupting the *Kumbhaka* state, comfortably? Satisfying this request appears very difficult – almost impossible. Almost all *kriyabans* are jammed after 30-40 repetitions, while gasping for breath.

Does the solution lie in going ahead rotating your head much more quickly? No, this would be silly. Please consider what I am explaining now.

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 this phenomenon happen of its own accord. The sensation will always be of not breathing at all.

In other words, if you want to go ahead comfortably with this practice, you must give up the idea of keeping a perfect *Kumbhaka* while trying to reach the 200 rotations goal.

The counsel to renounce a perfect *Kumbhaka* is strange, 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 and without hurry. You will experience 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.

The advice that I have given can seem a desecration, however... it works.

A second counsel (to increase comfortably the number of rotations) to be applied before starting your *Third Kriya*.

Before starting the *Third Kriya* procedure, inhale slowly and steadily through your nose and at the same time pull-in the stomach and lift up the the perineum. While inhaling, mentally repeat *Om, Na, Mo...*and raise the *Prana* to the upper part of the lungs. Then partially relax the muscles of the thoracic cage as if you were going to begin a new inhalation.

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. Be sure to feel *Prana* pervade the rib cage and become calm and stable there. ⁵

Well, taking this as a basis, utilize the best attitude you have to reach a real, tangible freedom from the breath. Remain stable in this state, without ever letting the abdomen and the rib cage relax and the *Prana* slide down. In this mental and physical state, apply the first counsel given before and practice your *Third Kriya*. 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.

► FOURTH KRIYA [COMPLETE FORM OF THOKAR]

Initial inhalation which, as we have said, is always the same ...

(see previous description)

Specific part of this Fourth Kriya

Move your head to the left of few millimeters, then return to the center with chin slightly up. Without stopping, turn your face toward right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. Vibrate "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung.

⁵ The counsel to mentally chanting *Om, Om, Om...* really draws energy in the spine from all the parts of your body and guides it toward the spine. If your body condition is perfect (if you are moderate with eating and you are on an empty stomach) you will notice that your breath is dissolved in some inexplicable way in the body.

From this position there is a movement of the chin to hit the *Anahata Chakra*. You mentally chant "Su" feeling a hitting sensation in the heart *Chakra*.

Holding your breath and starting from the upper part of the right lung where you again chant *Te*, repeat the movement of your head and place *Va* at the top of the left lung, then there is a movement of the chin to hit the third *Chakra* with the syllable *Su*. [Yes the same syllable you have utilized to hit the fourth Chakra.]

In a similar way you hit the second *Chakra* and then the first *Chakra Muladhara* where, after *Su*, you also chant the final syllables *De Va Ya*.

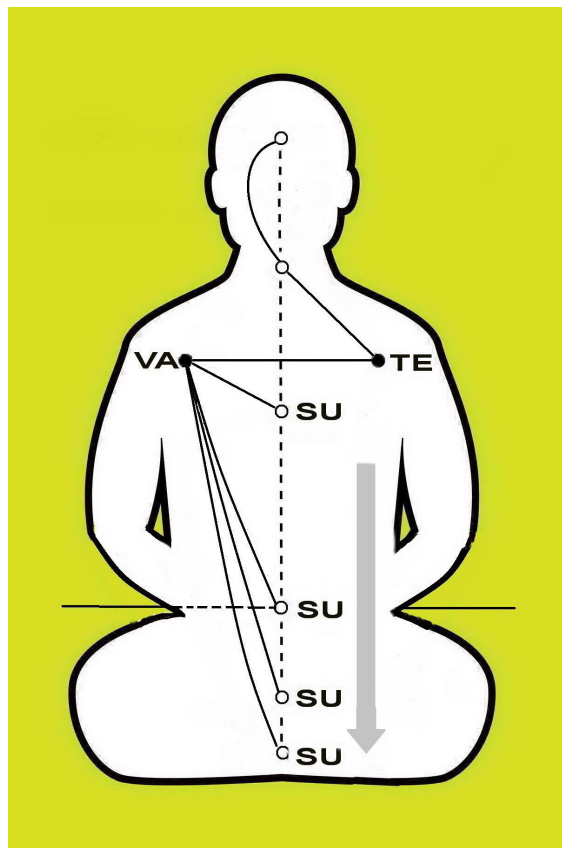


Fig.9 Fourth Kriya

During these four movements of your head (each movement is of course one *Thokar*) you have always held your breath. This procedure is lived in the *Kumbhaka* state.

Exhale feeling an ecstatic state. Repeat the whole procedure at least 12 times. Then breathe naturally.

Now consider if you want to go ahead intensifying the practice of hitting the *Muladhara Chakra*.

► FOURTH KRIYA WITH MAHA VEDA

Initial inhalation which, as we have said, is always the same ...

(see previous description)

Specific part of this Fourth Kriya with Maha Veda

Move your head to the left of few millimeters, then return to the center with chin slightly up. Without stopping, turn your face toward right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. Vibrate "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung. From this position there is a movement of the chin to hit the *Muladhara Chakra* with the syllable *Su*

When you come down with *Thokar* (you are holding your breath) lift your body, with the help of the hands, of few millimeters and then let the buttocks touch the seat with a mild jolt. *Thokar* in *Muladhara* happens in this moment. Have three jolts – be sure that you are holding your breath during them! Then exhale, slowly and deeply. Relax any tension, perceive an ecstatic feeling. This detail is very important: it is a signal that the *Prana* has entered the spine and *Kundalini* starts its travel upwards. The mental energy (not just the physical action) that you put in this exercise is a decisive factor. Repeat this *Kriya* for 6 to 12 times. Wait months before increasing.

Pranayama with Internal Breath

Consider the experience that Lahiri Mahasaya reports in his diaries when, a couple of years after his initiation at the Himalaya, he wrote: "After an excellent *Pranayama*, today the breath is completely directed inside. After so much time, today the purpose of my descent (on the earth) has reached!"

This is a great sentence! The breath has become *mental substance, something immaterial*. PY describes the same event by referring to an elevated form of *Kriya Pranayama* where energy moves without utilizing the breath.

Method to discover the Internal Breath

Let us suppose you have just completed your *Fourth Kriya*.

After exhaling your breath, don't pause but inhale very, very slowly, feeling

that you are really entering the spine. Come up as far as possible, crossing each *Chakra* while trying to reach your head. Proceed with great delicacy and sensitivity.

You will discover that you can, very easily, guide the movement of the energy up the spine. Perhaps only for a small stretch. Do not force – it is not necessary to complete that breath. Instead let your task unaccomplished and start another round of *Fourth Kriya*.

After that round, try again your experience with the *Internal Breath*. Whatever happens, whatever you perceive (a very delicate current moving up the spine) is precious.

At a certain moment you will experience with renewed joy that you are really inside the spine and your *Pranayama* has become more subtle than you ever thought possible. You will feel the beauty and the strength of this process: for some days you will not desire to do any other thing. This work will seem you the most important thing to do.

We have written that at the end of *Thokar* it is wise to practice any technique that guides *Kundalini* energy to come up to *Kutastha*. We have up to now counseled the procedure: "*Mental Pranayama*" Now we describe a higher technique which requires more time but is fantastic.

► GAYATRI KRIYA

This technique is very ancient and existed before Lahiri Mahasaya begun his mission of spreading *Kriya*. Its structure is well known in India and is considered the subtlest way of using the *Gayatri Mantra*. It contains the same principles of the technique *Japa 432*. Therefore there is no reason to practice both.

The *Gayatri 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*.

Practical instruction

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*.⁶ 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*;

⁶ "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.

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*.

Advanced practice

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*...

Digression about the effects of an intensive practice of Thokar

The most precious effect is the manifestation of a particular joy in the heart as if you moved around with an ardent 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 perform your daily duties in His presence.

Let us deal with emotions because it is upon them that the practice of *Thokar* acts in an admirable way. I have tried to retrace the theme "emotions" in some oriental books and have found so much rhetoric, too many words without practical meaning. They distinguish between positive (affection, happiness, contentment...) and negative (envy, aggressiveness,

illusion ...) emotions, but at the end of boring discussions you still have not grasped the essential fact: untamed emotions can create disaster in one's life. We are governed by superficial emotions and instincts that include our religious conditioning, our weak points, our fears, our doubts and our pessimism. It is important to have the ability to keep emotions at bay, going our way even when all the world and even our closest friends are trying to convince us to follow theirs.

We all know how frantic and hysterical emotions often rise unexpectedly from one's inner self, then disappear after a while. They actually express a reality devoid of authentic depth but their propulsive action inevitably results in hurried acts accompanied by a sort of cerebral fever, nourished by a narrow, visceral pleasure. When passion inflames one's whole being, it is not possible to be guided by common sense; the consequence is that our deeper and most earnest choices sometimes withdraw to an irrevocable halt.

Just as during the summer hail stones are molded, condensed and enlarged in the air before falling down to the earth and cause disasters, fatal decisions take shape in advance in one's imagination. During daily, frequent daydreams, the perspective of renouncing something positive which requires a great commitment throws a false light upon our immediate future, so that what in the past would appear as an act of cowardice, now seems to glitter at the horizon of our life, like a dull, flat, somber sky that suddenly lights up, serene, in luminous azure blue. When we listen to such alluring emotions, we pave the way for our doom. A wrong decision may become our crucifixion, our covenant with unhappiness, with a state of inner misery that will last a lifetime.

And lo, some put aside *Kriya Yoga* forever, while others interrupt a course of studies and throw away a profession they had been dreaming for years for which they had fought and suffered. They do the same with a beloved, with friends, with their family itself. Nothing can stop them: the wise words of people near them have no power anymore. An indomitable internal strength wants to produce sheer calamity in their life. Sometimes we have the idea that a person wants only one thing: to affirm with stubbornness his "*right to pain and suffering*" – the last is an expression of *the Mother*, main disciple and companion of *Sri Aurobindo*.

The destructive effects of yielding to this force remind those of an asteroid falling through the atmosphere on its way to fire and destruction. So, there is a reasonable hope that the completion of the Incremental Routines save

one from being a victim of this havoc, having built an almost automatic reflex of not being influenced or guided by frantic emotions.

Many *kriyabans* break some important human relationships because they assume that their religious choices are criticized. Sometimes a breakup of a relationship is unavoidable, other times it is a great loss especially if it is the product of the orgasm of pride. Many times people are annoyed by sincere and constructive criticism as if it was a useless display of cruelty.

They believe the other counterpart provokes sadistically enervating discussions with inappropriate topics.

Sometimes *kriyabans* are too prideful to accept other "uninitiated" people's commonsense. On the contrary, it is necessary to listen to other people's opinion, especially if it comes from our family or from all people who love us. Those who have become prey of destructive cults, have not listened anyone's opinion. The more the criticism has sound basis, the more one feels as if they were swallowing a black, sharp-edged rock.

A *kriyaban* who believes they are following their heart but who is actually just venting their most violent frustrations, can, on this occasion, reject any discussion and break off a relationship lasting a lifetime with an action of such "radiant" free will as to overwhelm all bystanders. Several days go by and their heart feels heavy; the subtle deception of the mind creates the firm belief that any saint, any true mystic would have acted in the same way. They want to believe that beneath their action there was an almost sacred motive, linked with destiny and karma.

If the risk of retracing one's steps appears, pride will prevail, driving the presently exciting pleasure of freedom to the top. This emotion -- which is perhaps a sadistic satisfaction in disguise -- makes existence to be as beautiful as ever, just like being reborn after a long and painful malady. Wisdom has no chance of prevailing. A strange frenzy fills the mind of our *kriyaban*, making even the most trivial activity enjoyed with uninterrupted voluptuousness, surrounded by flashes of blue. Yet a pain in their heart remains, despite the rosier projects. A good crumb of their spiritual aspiration is trapped in a past that can no longer be reached due to their unwillingness to endure the full impact of a truthful and honest reminiscence. Wounded pride is an emotion that suffocates.

CHAPTER 9
LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S KRIYA YOGA – FOURTH PART
(Higher Kriyas (V, VI) – The Tribhangamurari experience)

In this school the *Fifth Kriya* happens in three steps called: *Amantrak*, *Samantrak* and *Thokar* (this *Thokar* is different from what was described in the preceding chapter.) A new concept – the *Macro movement Tribhangamurari* – is introduced.

The *Sixth Kriya* will then be introduced by discovering that the *Movement Tribhangamurari* exists also inside each *Chakra*. It will be called *Micro movement Tribhangamurari*.

The *Macro movement Tribhangamurari* is perceived first by simply moving one's breath and awareness along a prescribed path, then this perception happens in the state of tranquil breath and is accompanied by the *Vasudeva Mantra*. At the end this perception is reinforced through the help of the movements of the head. By repeating this procedure, going up from *Muladhara* to the head and coming down following the three-curved path *Tribhangamurari* (*Tri-banga-murari* = form with three curves) each *Chakra* is stimulated and partially pierced.

FIFTH KRIYA

Fifth Kriya first part: Amantrak

Start a deep, very long inhalation. Your tongue is stable in *Kechari Mudra* or at least in *baby Kechari*. Very slowly raise *Prana* and awareness through the spinal channel, from *Muladhara* to the *Sikha* point (*Bindu*) – half a minute is required. Do not pause in any *Chakra*. Then start a deep exhalation. Let *Prana* and awareness come slowly downwards along the *Tribhangamurari* path and reach *Muladhara*. Another half minute is required.

The *Tribhangamurari* path starts from *Bindu*, goes up to the left of a very short length, then descends 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 3 procedures *Amantrak*, *Samantrak* and *Tribhangamurari Thokar* are not intended to be tested simultaneously. If, to spare time, you will do that, the only effect could be the imprinting on your mind a wrong way of conceiving the practice.

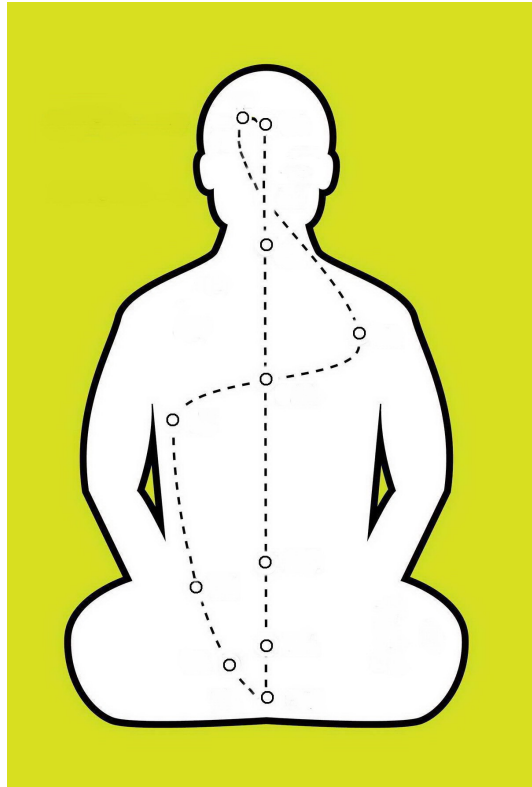


Fig.10 Tribhangamurari path as seen from the back

We call this technique *Amantrak*, which means "without the use of a *Mantra*." This teaching is addressed to expert *kriyabans* who can make their breath subtle and long, very long. It is possible to make a round of *Amantrak* last one minute. If you experience it in a shorter time, let us say 40 seconds, it does not mean that your practice is wrong. However, resolve to do your best to lengthen your breath.

Let us clarify the most important aspect of this procedure. Its essence it consists in the constant intensification of the mental pressure along the whole circuit. Consider the action of squeezing an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last bit out. This gives you an idea of the quantity of mental pressure you have to apply during this procedure. If you utilize a great strength of concentration and will, there is no limit to the increase of the internal energetic flow along the *Tribhangamurari* path.

As for the routine, some teachers gave this counsel: "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 *Samantrak* instruction."

We must clarify that those teachers did not give the initiations in *Second, Third, Fourth Kriya*. They gave initiation only into *First Kriya*, then required a particular preparation for this *Amantrak*: to practice *Kriya Pranayama* 200 a day for two – three months.

For those who have practiced conscientiously all the previous steps, a good prescription is this: "For a couple of months repeat this technique 36 times, once a day, then start to practice the following technique *Samantrak*."

Fifth Kriya second part: Samantrak

Samantrak means: "with the use of a *Mantra*." Now the breath is free, forget it wholly.

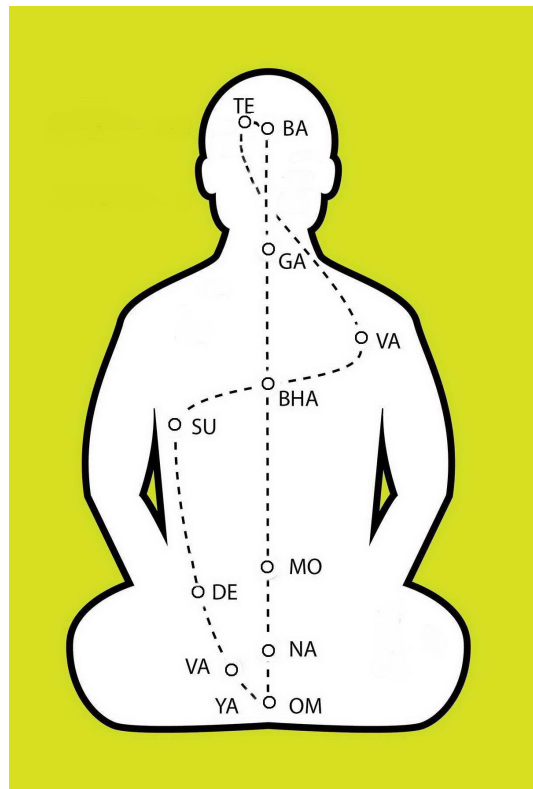


Fig.11 Tribhangamurari path, enriched with the syllables of the Mantra

The syllables *Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga*, are vibrated into the first five *Chakras, Ba* in *Bindu. Teee* (with prolonged eee ...) is chanted in the center in left part of the brain. The syllables *Va, Su, De, Va* are put in the four new centers outside the spine; *Ya* is vibrated in *Muladhara*.

These five new centers are five "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, make a resolution to reach the exact timing.

Remember what we have recommended while introducing *Amantrak*. Now, the essence of this particular procedure consists in utilizing the vibration of the 12 syllables to encourage a more keen intensification of the mental pressure along the whole circuit.

The prescription for starting the following practice are the same we have described for *Amantrak*. However, read carefully the following:

Don't be in a hurry!

Amantrak and *Samantrak* create in your body the perception of a particular internal movement. The *Thokar Tribhangamurari procedure* should be applied only when this energetic flow is well printed in your consciousness.

This technique, correctly applied, has the power to create a permanent transformation in your attitude towards *Kriya*. You will become acquainted with a mostly unknown ecstatic state while fully living the experience of life.

The *Mantra's* syllables, which are put with care like seeds in each center will change your mood. It is like turning on various lights along the three-curved path. It is like as if the rays of a sun in a clear sky finally entered your practice.

Some students try to relish right away the power of *Thokar Tribhangamurari* by a desultory, system-less experimentation of *Amantrak* and *Samantrak*, far from abiding by the given rules. What could be the real impact of the *Thokar-Tribhangamurari* technique remains unknown and not even vaguely foreshadowed.

Fifth Kriya final part: Thokar Tribhangamurari

Forget the breath or start with a very subtle 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, crossing the heart *Chakra*. 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 in the most 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. ⁷

Without turning the face, bend your head sideways a couple of centimeters to the left. Return to the middle raising the chin. Remain only an instant in this position, with the chin raised and slowly turn the face to the right and as far as possible. Only the face moves, not the torso. During this SLOW movement the inner flow of energy moves from *Bindu* to the point in the back of the right side of the body. Realize how this simple movement accompanies perfectly the descent of energy.

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

⁷ What is essential is: do not be influenced by the dynamics of the technique of classic *Thokar* learned in Chapter 9!

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*.

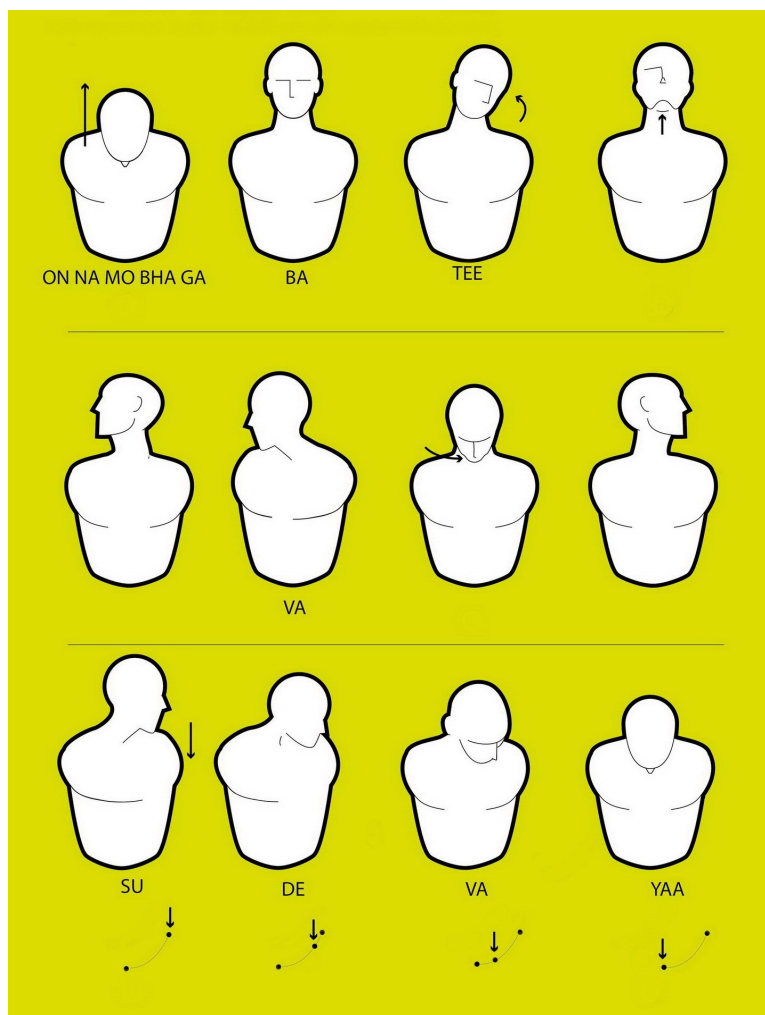


Fig.12 Thokar Tribhangamurari as seen from the front

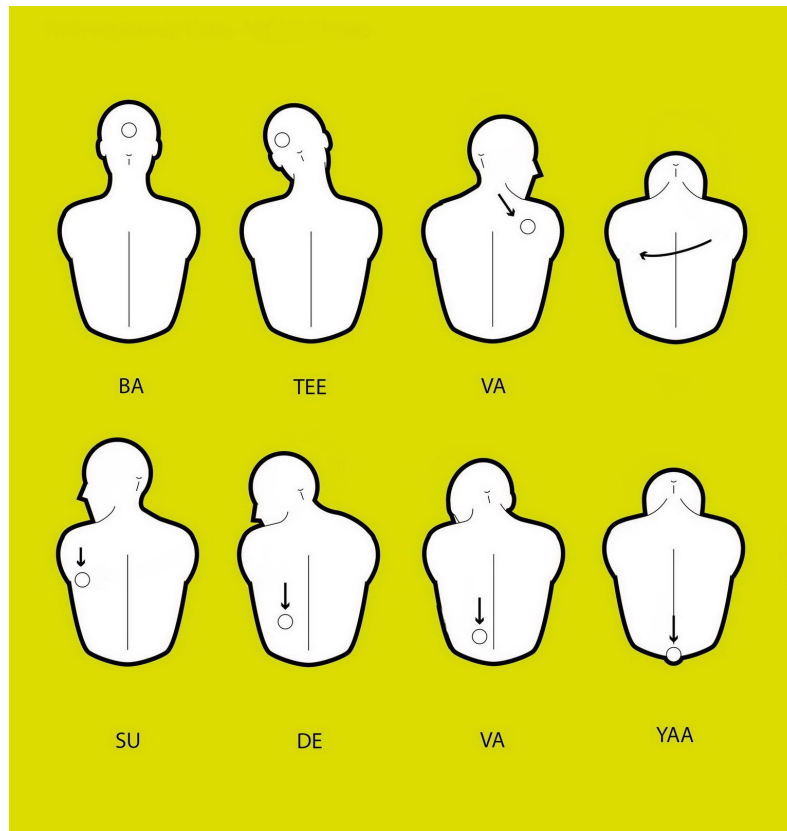


Fig.13 The same movements (only the descent) as seen from the back

I hope it is clear that the essence of this particular procedure consists in utilizing the movements of the head (with the five strokes) to encourage a further intensification of the mental pressure along the whole circuit.

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.

Remark

Through this procedure, the *Tribhangamurari* flow is intensified by specific movements of the head. The problem is that many *kriyabans* focus all the attention on giving the strokes and don't understand the value of creating mental pressure along each millimeter of the path.

We have started with perceiving the movement sensation coming up along the spine and coming down along a three curved path. Then with *Samantrak* procedure we have reinforced the perception of the 12 centers. Now it is necessary to feel that the movements of the head accompany perfectly, millimeter after millimeter, the flow of the internal current. Now we can try to intensify the perception of the internal flow by creating a mental pressure along each part of it. We utilize the movements of our head to "touch with pressure" each millimeter of the path, up and down. The chin is to be moved slowly as we are striving to win a strong resistance. We have suggested the idea: "like squeezing with a pencil an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last little bit out. "

Incremental Routine of the macro movement Tribhangamurari

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. I recommend this routine as a very important feat. A minimum of 8-10 months is required to complete it.

While *Amantrak* and *Samantrak* are practiced every day, the *Incremental* sessions of *Thokar-Tribhangamurari* are practiced once a week (the other days one can, however, practice up to 36 repetitions.) A *kriyaban* must have had all the time necessary to metabolize the subconscious material that the strong action exerted upon *Muladhara* brings to the surface.

One begins with 36 rounds; a week later one practices 36x2, then 36x3 ... and finally 36x36 repetitions. This means 1296 rounds! Can you imagine the powerful effects of this action? 1296 means that you begin in the morning and end in the night, doing again and again the same action. There is no doubt that you'll succeed in opening the door of *Sushumna*! Of course you have prepared this experience by practicing 36x35, and before that 36x34.... And don't forget that you have practiced *Amantrak* and *Samantrak* for months!

SIXTH KRIYA: MICRO MOVEMENT TRIBHANGAMURARI

This procedure reminds the teaching of Swami Hariharananda. He taught us to contact the *Omkar* reality in its manifestations of sound, light and movement or swinging sensation. The swinging sensation of the *Omkar* reality had a central place in his teaching.⁸ The books of *Yoga* explain the importance of feeling the energy moving throughout the body, for example rising from the *Muladhara* along the spine or, as Sri Aurobindo explained, coming down from the high and infused in the body. Swami Hariharananda on the contrary hinted at a feeling of movement or better of oscillation within each *Chakra*.

Perceiving an oscillation inside each *Chakra* is not exactly like perceiving the *Tribhangamurari* form in small dimensions, however the effects are, more or less, the same. The state of "absorption" created by having this particular perception in each *Chakra* has no comparison. Only few *Kriya* schools have disclosed the nature of this micro-movement and revealed its importance. Unfortunately, many people seek frantically impossible surrogates for it!

Practical instruction

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.

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.

⁸ I remember that during his meeting with devotees he touched the head and the chest of some of them, vibrating his hand, trying to transmit a feeling as of a "oscillation."

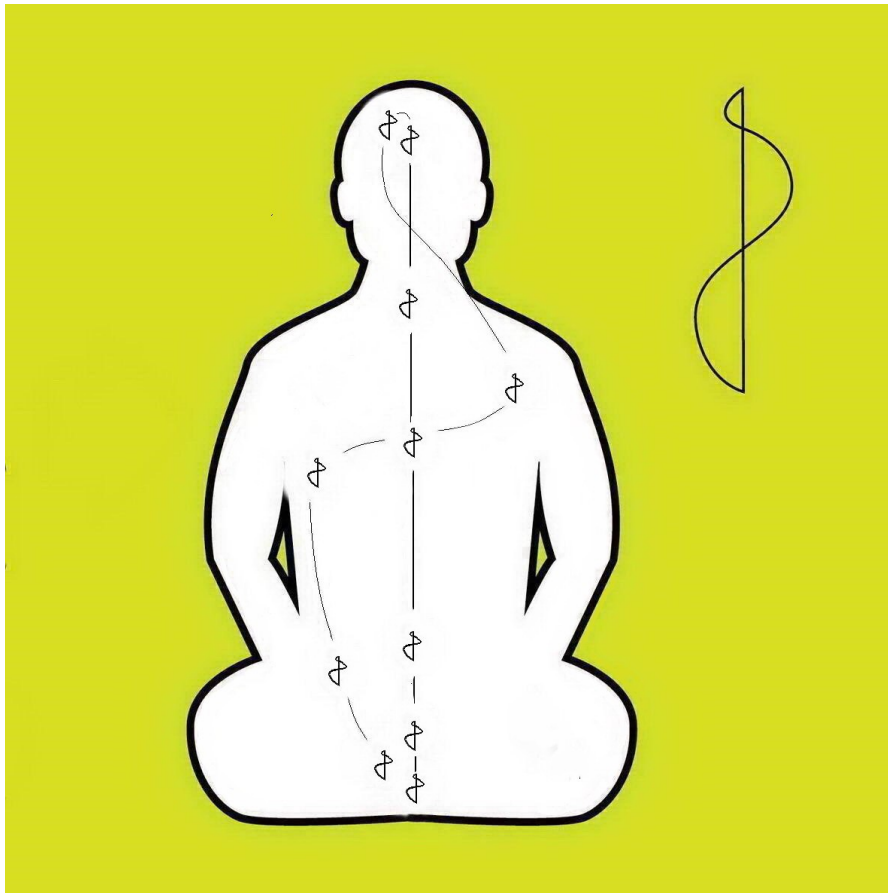


Fig.14 Tribhangamurari micro movement in each of the 12 centers

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

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

Micro movement Tribhangamurari utilizing the Mantra

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

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 the five 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. If you have proceeded without hurry you will get a state that can be defined "beyond time."

If, after the completion of the practice, you find the time to lie down supine (*Savasana*) you will get a particular state of physical and mental immobility where the *Kundalini* energy can climb up to the *Chakra* of the heart while the *Kutastha* will reveal itself.

Incremental Routine of the micro movement Tribhangamurari, to be completed in the last part of life

When I received this instruction I was told that, analogously to the *Yoni Mudra* which is practiced every night at the moment a *kriyaban* prepares to withdraw his awareness from the body and from the physical world and gets ready for sleep – which is a "small death" – the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari Incremental Routine* is like a peaceful return to the origin – a preparation to "die forever" – meaning to become forever free in Spirit. It was explained to me that this last *Incremental Routine*, besides being the best preparation for the conscious exit out of the body at death (*Mahasamadhi*), burned forever the necessity of reincarnating.⁹

In *Micro-movement Incremental Routine* we have 36 sessions of practice. What's new is that the major part of this session requires more than one day.

On the first day you perceive 36 Micro-movements in each of the 12 centers. The second session requires that you perceive 36x2 Micro movements in each center. [You experience one single long round: 72 Micro movements in the first *Chakra* without interruption, then 72 in the second *Chakra*, and so on....] After some days, you face the third session with 36x3 Micro movements in each center. Then other days pass by. Then you have your 36x4 session which will fill up your whole day.

The next steps: 36x5, 36x6, 36x7, 36x8, will not only fill up a whole day but also part of the next day. Therefore you must divide your effort into two parts. What was heretofore never allowed now happens: you can sleep a whole night between the two parts which are considered one session. What is important is that you start more or less immediately on the morning of the next day. Therefore, you are not allowed to go to work and it is also recommended that you keep silent, avoiding any opportunity for conversation. (However, the use of common sense should always prevail; if

⁹ As for what happens during the process of *Mahasamadhi*, we have heard many stories about possible "*Kriya* ways" of leaving the physical shell; obviously we cannot vouch for their authenticity. Some assert that the typical practice is *Thokar*, others hint at procedures happening entirely in *Kutastha*. We can reasonably assume that it is not always possible to perform the physical movement of *Thokar*. To focus one's awareness in the spine or at the point between the eyebrows may be the only thing possible. The most interesting thing I've heard is that some *kriyabans*, during the last weeks or months before leaving the body, practice only one technique: perceiving the *Micro-movement Tribhangamurari* nel *Kutastha*. At the moment of death, they merge with the Infinite through the same procedure.

addressed, a polite reply is always imperative.)

You can now understand that the following sessions require more days; the last session requires about 12 days! Let me describe what happens during the last session: you perceive 36x36 micro movements in each center! This means: 1296 micro movements in *Muladhara*, 1296 in *Swadhistan*.... and so on, ending after some days in *Muladhara* with 1296 movements.

Let me emphasize that one should never skip over a stage. Don't think, "On my next Summer holidays I'm going to find a dozen days to practice 36x36." No! It does not work in this way. Before perceiving the Micro movement 36x36 times in each center you must have perceived it 36x35 times. And before this, you should have perceived it 36x34 times, and so on....

Completing this *Incremental Routine* is really a giant achievement. Many splendid experiences will happen and the last internal obstacles will be cleared one after another. When you have completed your practice, you discover that you cannot describe it because the bliss experienced has totally effaced from your memory the modalities of your experience.

A *kriyaban* should make every effort to create the opportunity to grant himself the joy and the privilege of completing the recommended number of repetitions without every yielding to the temptation of hurried practices.

CHAPTER 10
KRIYA YOGA IN THE VISION OF SWAMI HARIHARANANDA

This particular form of *Kriya* has a structure similar to Lahiri's but it gives not so much weight to the action on the heart *Chakra*. At a certain point it seems to transcend the spine with its Chakras and take refuge at the top, at the upper part of the head. I find it not powerful but, with some intelligent choice – coupling it, as much as possible, with Lahiri's *Kriya* – it can guide you in a dimension of unspeakable beauty.

Swami Hariharananda explained us that the *Omkar* reality reveals to us as "Sound", "Light" and "Movement sensation." This was to me a great revelation. I am thankful for what I have learned at the feet of this Teacher.

In the following techniques the tongue is in the position of "*baby Kechari Mudra*."

FIRST KRIYA

First Kriya routine

Maha Mudra in two parts (Forward bendings and Maha Mudra proper)

Kriya Pranayama

Jyoti Mudra

Paravastha

Maha Mudra in two parts (Forward bendings and Maha Mudra proper)

In this school *Maha Mudra* is given with unsurpassed care, making *Omkar* realization almost tangible even to a beginner. This *Maha Mudra* is divided into two parts: the *Forward Bendings* and *Maha Mudra proper*.

Forward bendings

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 too long) 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.

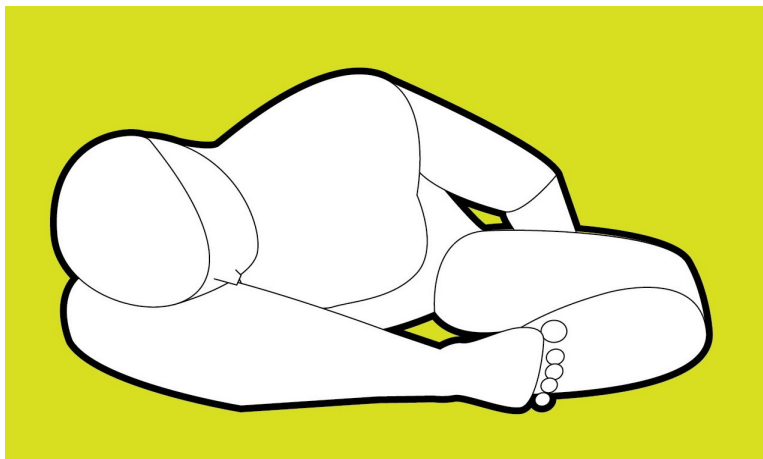


Fig.15 Forward bending. First position
[Sitting on heels is also OK!]

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*. 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 just as we have done for *Muladhara*. At the end through a long exhalation you guide the energy from *Ajna* to *Swadhisthana*. 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

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.

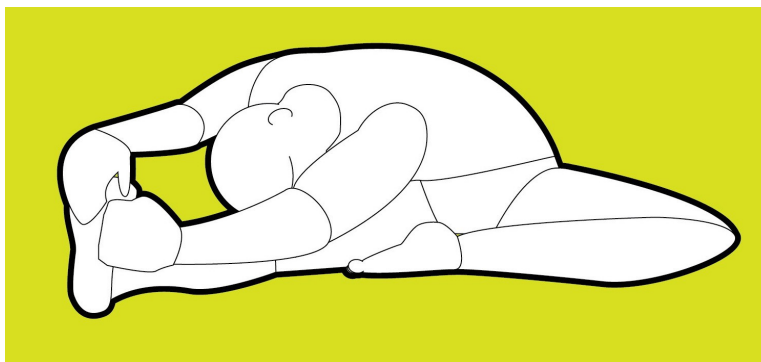


Fig.16 Here the face is turned to the left

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.

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, sit up and hold. Massage briefly toes, fold legs back to chest and exhale. As usual, this exercise is repeated three times.

Kriya Pranayama

With eyes closed, deeply inhale into *Fontanelle*. Then exhale into *Ajna*. Hold breath for few seconds (3-4) then inhale up to *Fontanelle*. Hold your breath for few seconds. Then exhale to *Vishuddha*, hold for a few seconds then inhale to *Fontanelle*. Hold your breath for few seconds. Then exhale to *Anahata* ... and so on. At a certain point you have reached the *Muladhara*. Hold your breath for few seconds. Then inhale to *Fontanelle*.

Now repeat in reverse order. Exhale down from *Fontanelle* to *Muladhara*. Hold your breath for few seconds. Then inhale to *Fontanelle*, hold your breath. Then exhale down to *Swadhisthana Chakra* ...pause... inhale... and so on until you exhale down from *Fontanelle* to *Ajna*. This is one cycle (12 breaths). You can repeat the whole cycle for a couple of times.

During the pause between inhalation and exhalation (the awareness is in *Fontanelle*) the breath should be held 2 to 3 seconds, but after several weeks of *Pranayama*, the time of each pause can be gradually increased up to 30 seconds. This detail is very important to create a deeper calmness.

Now then, this flute sound is one thing and the astral sounds is another thing. However, a long concentration upon the flute-like sound is the best action to listen to the internal astral sounds. These sounds come from the

activity of the *Chakras*. A great experience is hearing a distant sound of a long-sustaining bell (the sound of *Anahata*.) The experience of the "bell" changes into the sound of "many waters." This is the real sound of *Om* that guides the soul to travel through the spine, contacting the Divine Light in the upper part of the head. 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.

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.

A very important fact to understand is that the event of perceiving these 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). What is essential is to bring ahead a continuous will to listen internally. 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. Your listening skills will improve.

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 in the entire occipital region.

Jyoti Mudra

Close your ears with your thumbs while with the index fingers press lightly at the corners of the eyes or covering your eyes with a small pressure. Focus on *Kutastha*. Allow that part of your attention goes down in the *Muladhara*. Then ideally 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*. Exhale and ideally place *Muladhara Chakra* back down to its original position. Part of the attention moves now on the

second Chakra. Then do exactly what you have done with the *Muladhara Chakra*. Then 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*. Always try to see the light at the point between the eyebrows. Feel that you are offering each center to the light of the spiritual eye. 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.

Paravastha

Paravastha is the state ensuing a good practice of *Kriya*. Remain longer in meditation listening to divine Sound, feeling the vibration and enjoying the divine Light. Perceive the focus of your concentration slowly rising from *Kutastha* to *Fontanelle* and above *Fontanelle* outside of the body. Remain without thoughts perceiving this inner sky which starts from the upper part of your head. When you come to the end of your meditation routine, open your eyes. Stare at what is before you but do not observe anything in particular. Watch without watching. Keep 99% of 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.

SECOND KRIYA

Second Kriya formal part

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. 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.

Hold the breath and practice *Kechari Mudra* as best as you can. The head bends forward towards the throat cavity: the divine Light flows down from

above into the occipital region of the brain (therefore in the part of your head that is turned towards the ceiling.) After feeling this for a second or more, resume the normal position and immediately bend the head slightly toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. The previous experience of the divine Light infusion happens again in the right part of the head.

Resume the normal position and bend the head slightly backwards: the experience of divine Light happens in the frontal part of the head. Then bend your head toward the right shoulder... the experience of divine Light happens in the left part of the head. Close the round by repeating the first movement.

After concluding one rotation of the head, exhalation starts. The exhaling breath 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*. If this is comfortable make a short pause after exhalation. During it, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn around the *Muladhara Chakra*.

What I have described is called by me *Omkar Pranayama* – in order to avoid saying: "*Second Kriya formal part.*"

The timing of one *Omkar Pranayama* depends on the individual: usually it is approximately 45-50 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.

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. It may also happen that the "thread" of energy envelops each "pearl". The counter clockwise rotation of awareness around the crown (induced by the experience of Light coming down from above) can be also perceived in small dimensions 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 becomes 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.

Second Kriya informal part

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...* about 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.

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 ...)*.

Now practice the five bents of the head but in a slower way.

The chin 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. After feeling this for about 10-20 seconds, resume the normal position and bend the head slightly toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. The previous experience of the divine Light infusion happens. Divine Light flows down from above the head into the right part of the brain. 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. Remain in this position for about 10-20 seconds, then resume the normal position.

Now the head bends slightly toward the right shoulder, without turning the face. The same experience happens and divine Light flows down into the left part of the brain, then the spine and the body....

To close the round, the chin bends forward, towards the throat cavity: the same experience happens The head then resumes its normal position.

You have perceived Light and divine blessings in each of the four parts of your brain. In this way, the spiritual Light will gradually pervade each atom of the upper part of your head.

Then focus on *Medulla* repeating many times *Te, Te, Te, Te, Te ...* The absorption state is really strong. 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 repeating the same procedure is one round: the time required is approximately 4-6 minutes. Repeat 3-4 times and then be lost in the meditative state.

Key points

[1] Moving from one *Chakra* to the next, a *kriyaban* begins to notice the change of the light vibration in the region between the eyebrows. Later, you will have the experience that a specific sound comes from each center. Being absorbed in listening to astral sound creates inner bliss, putting aside – at least momentarily – our Ego consciousness. This is the moment when the *Omkar* reality is revealed.

[2] After completing this procedure, the upper part of the brain will remain ideally in the space, separated from the physical body. Swami Hariharananda said that this procedure ends in "cracking the coconut." The coconut is the head, whose upper part will be detached from the lower part. You must actively cooperate to reach this result. You must "invite" the divine energy to pervade the frontal, lateral and back part of your head.

During the day remain in this state as much as you can. Whenever you can withdraw for a short meditation, tune yourself with the Sound, Light, formless power of the Divine rotating inside the cranium.

Employment of the 50 letter-sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet

Swami Hariharananda took the decision of teaching a practice typical of the *Tantric Hatha Yoga*. It was taught for a certain number of years, later he put it aside. In my opinion it is interesting to give just a hint to it. This procedure is meant to help the seeker to perceive the Divine Energy in the *Chakras* and in the different parts of the body

In each Chakra

The 50 letter-sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet will be chanted visualizing the petals of each *Chakra*. There is no breath control.

Start with Hang Kshang in *Ajna Chakra*: Hang in the left hemisphere of the brain and Kshang in the right. Then place the 16 vowels in the *cervical Chakra* (Ang Aang Ing Iing Ung Uung Ring Rring Lring Lring Eng Aing Ong Oung Aung Ah) – you chant each letter only once, the same for all the following *Chakras*. In this practice you visualize each *Chakra* as a vertical disk radiating Divine Light through its petals. Visualize the number of

petals assigned by *yogic* tradition in clockwise direction. Then place the first 12 consonants in *heart Chakra* (Kong Khong Gong Ghong Wong Chong Chhong Jong Jhong Neong Tong Thong), chant the following 10 in *Manipura* (Dong Dhong Nong Tong Thong Dong Dhong Noing Pong Phong), then the following 6 in *Swadhistan* (Bong Bhong Mong Jong Rong Long) and finally the last 4 in *Muladhara* (Vong Shhong Shong Song). In each *Chakra*, you start from upper left go down left and come up from the right part. Three cycles are recommended. Close repeating the two letters Hang Kshang in *Ajna*.

In the crown of the head

The 50 letter-sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet are spiraled around the cranium, activating the *Omkar* sound which is perceived in the center of the brain – in the so called "Cave of *Brahma*", the seat of the pituitary and of the pineal gland. You start from the back of the crown, begin with the vowels, then the consonants. Make all the tour counterclockwise, then repeat clockwise. Twelve couple of rotations (6+6) are recommended. The good effects of this procedure are easily to be perceived and therefore this procedure is perceived as "heaven sent."

In different parts of the body

The 50 letter-sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet are placed in the 50 parts in which the human body [according to the tantric tradition] can be divided. No breath control. Put your hand on the different parts of your body that we shall describe, uttering distinctly at the same time the appropriate letter for that part.

1 ANG Forehead 2 AANG Mouth 3 ING Left eye 4 IING Right eye
5 UNG Left ear 6 UUNG Right ear 7 RING Left nostril 8 RRING Right nostril
9 LRING Left cheek 10 LLRING Right cheek 11 ENG Inner mouth (without touching)
12 AING Chin 13 ONG Upper lip and set of teeth
14 OUNG Lower lip and set of teeth 15 AUNG Forehead & top of head
16 AH Whole face (touching with both hands) 17 KONG Left shoulder
18 KHONG Left elbow 19 GONG Left wrist 20 GHONG Left knuckle
21 WONG Left finger joints 22 CHONG Right shoulder 23 CHHONG Right elbow
24 JONG Right wrist 25 JHONG Right knuckle
26 NEONG Right finger joints 27 TONG Left thigh joint
28 THONG Left knee 29 DONG Left ankle 30 DHONG Ball of the left foot
31 NONG Left toes 32 TONG Right thigh joint 33 THONG Right knee
34 DONG Right ankle 35 DHONG Ball of the

right foot 36 NOING Right toes 37 PONG Left ribs 38 PHONG
Right ribs 39 BONG Whole back (touch up and down) 40 BHONG
Lower abdomen 41 MONG Upper abdomen 42 JONG Heart center
43 RONG Left shoulder 44 LONG Back of neck 45 VONG Right
shoulder 46 SHHONG From left shoulder to right hand 47 SHONG
From right shoulder to left hand 48 SONG From left shoulder to right
foot 49 HAM From right shoulder to left foot 50 AKSHAM Moving
down the front of the body

Jyoti Mudra Second Kriya

During this practice you contract (and then relax) the muscles near the physical location of each *Chakra*. The position of the hands and fingers for this *Jyoti Mudra* is the same as in *First Kriya*: you stick your thumbs in your ears with the index fingers covering your eyes.

Become aware of the *Muladhara Chakra*. Contract the muscles near *Muladhara*: the back part of the perineum. Then lift this *Chakra* through an inhalation to *Kutastha*. 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 tension and exhale .

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, place the focus of your awareness 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 lift this *Chakra* through an inhalation to the point between the eyebrows. Hold etc.

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. To astrally locate *Vishuddha Chakra* we need a different

procedure. Inhale from the cervical center without particular muscle concentration to *Kutastha*. Now, holding your breath, practice the five inclinations of the head:

- a) turn the head to the left (the hands follow; the slight pressure upon ears and eyes does not change) the right elbow comes near the right breast,
 - b) turn the head to the right, the left elbow comes near the left breast,
 - c) return to the central position and bow the head forward;
 - d) bow the head back
 - e) then again in the front. Return to the normal position
- Exhale from *Kutastha* to the *Vishuddha Chakra*.

For *Medulla* we have the following procedure. Inhale very slowly from the base of the spine. During this inhalation, contract the muscles at the base of the spine, then the muscles near the sex organ, then the muscles near the navel and near the *Manipura Chakra*, then contract the muscles near the dorsal center, near the region of the throat and, finally, clench your teeth and put wrinkles in the forehead. see the light at the point between the eyebrows. Feel that you are offering your sixth center to God. Exhale and release the contraction.

For *Sahasrara Chakra* we have the following procedure. Inhale, contract all centers like we have done for *Ajna Chakra* then with teeth clenched, push the portion of your head which is above the eyebrows (cranium) up into the high heavens, offer it to God. Exhale, and release the contraction.

To end the procedure, put the palms of your hands over the eyelids and remain there seeing a milky white Light for 2-3 min. When the Light disappears, lower your hands and bow in the front and pray to the form of God you prefer. Open your eyes but remain concentrated inside, in the pituitary gland and see the divine Light in all things. Then enjoy *Paravastha* as in the *First Kriya*.

THIRD KRIYA

Here starts the meditation without action that happens in the upper part of the brain where the dimension of *static Prana* reigns. Obviously, there is always a minimum of action: only in the final state of *Samadhi* (the last of these six phases) there is properly no action.

Brain orbit forgetting breath. With physical movement

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 under *Fontanelle*. Mentally vibrate *Su* there. This completes the first round. Repeat this practice 12 times.

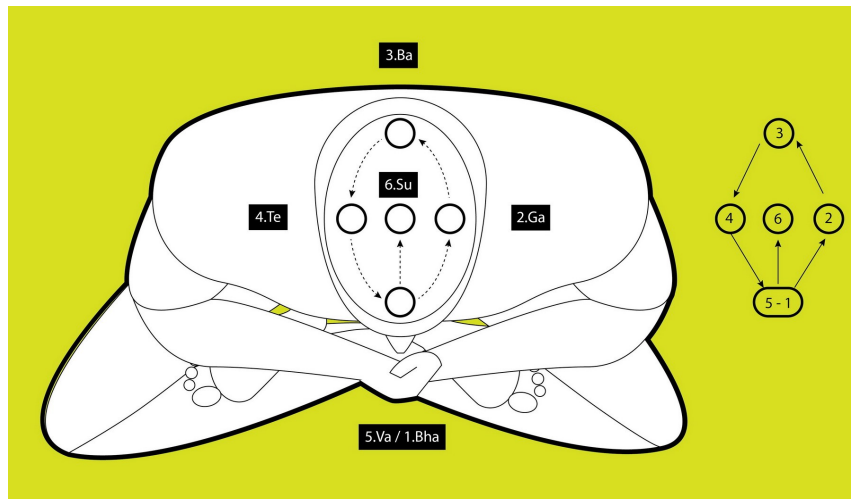


Fig.17 Circulation of calm Prana in the upper part of the brain

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, creates the Divine Light manifestation.

FOURTH KRIYA

Brain orbit – immobility

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.

Breath naturally. 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 under *Fontanelle*. Practice about 36 rounds during each *Kriya* routine.

Note

These two last practices 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.

If you feel unfocused or spacey – as if you were under the influence of drugs, experiencing a state of too much *detachment* from the world and from *worldly things* – then it is wise to complete the practice with some repetitions of *Second Kriya*, both the formal part of it (6 repetitions) and the informal part (3 repetitions.)

Brain orbit – comprehensive practice

This practice is the happy crowning of the effort done with the two previous techniques. It makes the cosmic sound of *Om* to naturally rise and be perceived by your enchanted awareness. You will listen only to this. Therefore the mental chanting of *Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su* is of no utility. The same will happen with the following three last procedures. You will focus only upon *Omkar* sound and won't need any *Mantra* chanting.

Focus on *Muladhara*. Inhale deeply and ideally lift this *Chakra* in the central part of the brain, under *Fontanelle*, over *Ajna Chakra*. Visualize that *Chakra* as a disk, large as the circulation of energy that you have previously created.

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.]

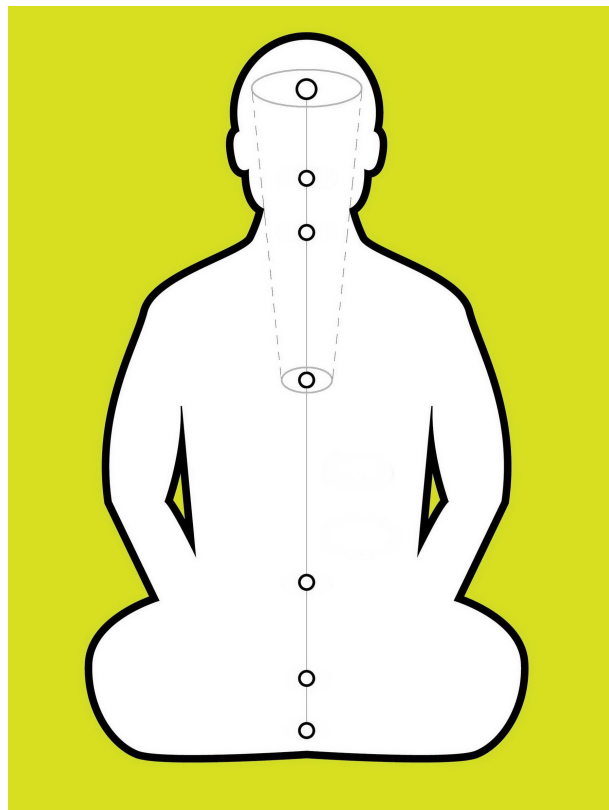


Fig.18 Here we are acting upon the heart Chakra

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.

Fig.18 This is 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

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.

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. 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.

Note

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.

FIFTH KRIYA

Dissolve the breath in Brahmaloaka

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!

Inhale, slowly drawing *Prana* from *Muladhara* to the *8th Chakra*. 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*.) 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.

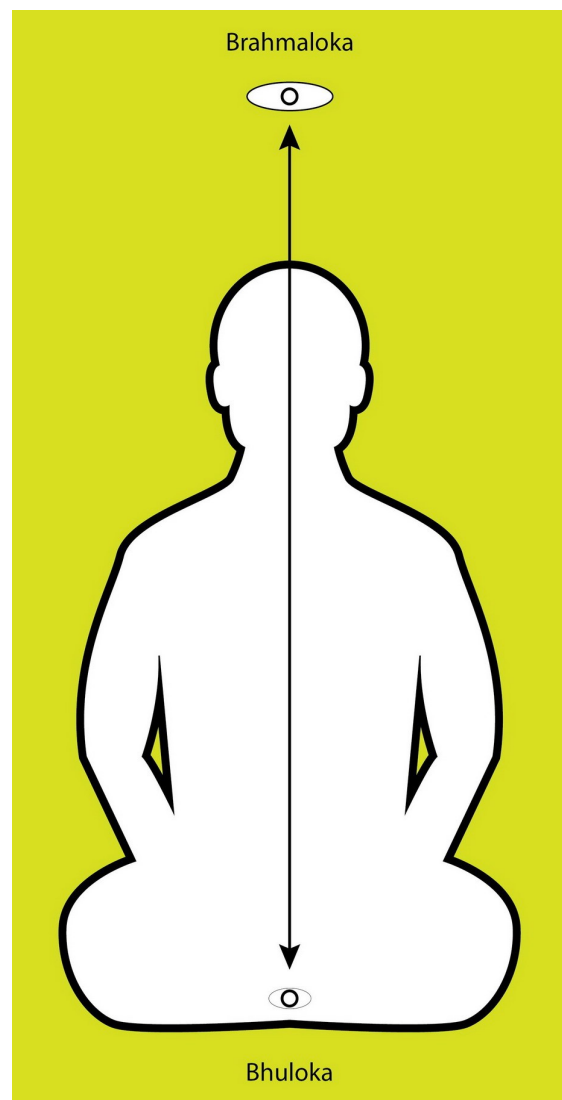


Fig.19 The breath moves between Bhuloka and Brahmaloaka and then dissolves

Now inhale sweetly from *Muladhara* to the *8th Chakra*, raising breath and *Prana*. 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. Pause there. 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.

SIXTH KRIYA

Meditation upon the light in Cerebellum

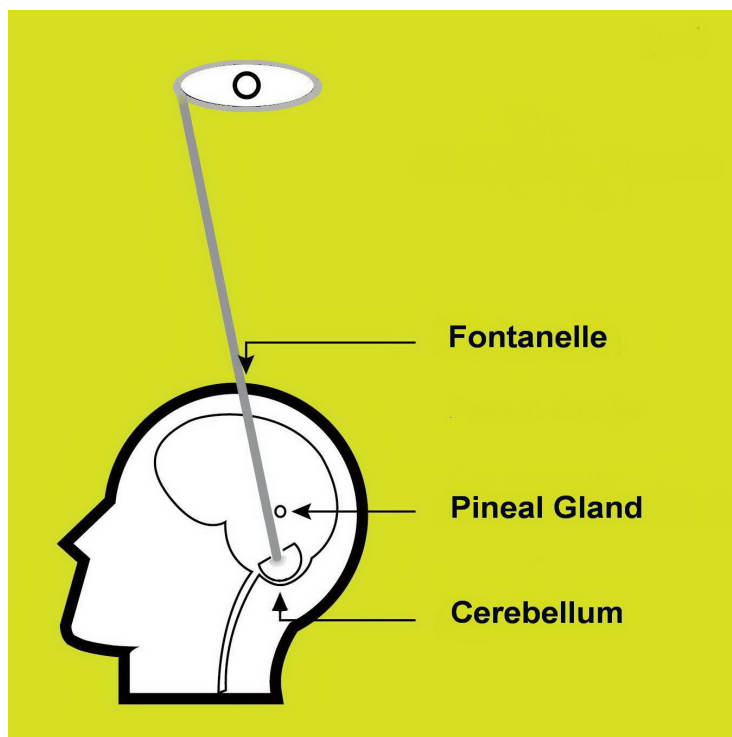


Fig.20 The Light moves from the 8th Chakra to Cerebellum

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*. 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*. 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. The Divine Light becomes stable at the *Cerebellum*.

Meditation upon the light shining in 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.

In order to achieve this goal, intuitively condense all the Light in *Cerebellum* and direct it toward your *Pineal Gland*. This gland is located very near the *Cerebellum*, but slightly forward and above it, along a line forming a 60° angle (with the pavement.) A substantial help comes by doing a movement like the one utilized to obtain the coming down of Light and focusing it in the *Cerebellum*, but more slow and almost imperceptible. The movement should be only hinted, with no muscular tension at all. The last immersion in the Light happens after this slight movement, when you are almost immobile: there is a sort of internal tension that guides you intuitively toward the *Pineal Gland*.

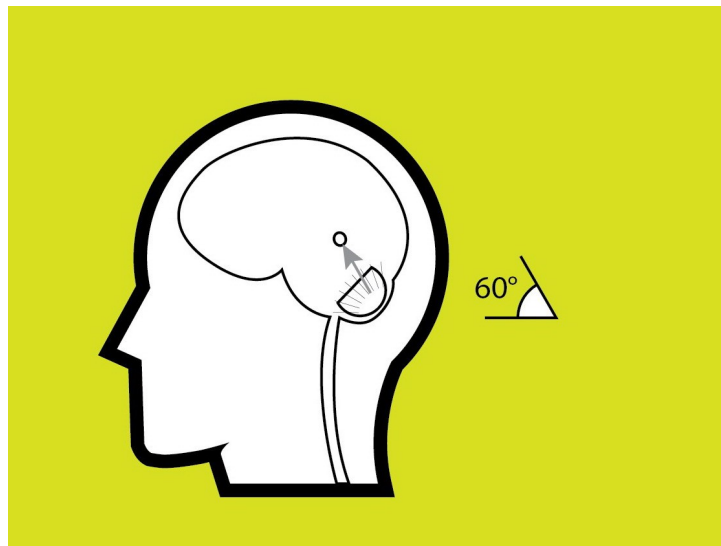


Fig.21 The Light moves from the Cerebellum to the Pineal gland

Repeat and repeat your attempt until you succeed in entering the *Pineal Gland*. Here the union with the Divine takes place. The state of TAT TVAM ASI manifests. During this time of divine oneness, one is devoid of body consciousness and unaware of one's surroundings.

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*) ¹⁰

¹⁰ 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

CHAPTER 11

DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS OF PY'S CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

This appendix is devoted to those students who are serious about going ahead on the *Kriya* path utilizing only the techniques that can be obtained by the organizations that spread PY's teachings.¹¹ Apart from the technique of *Kechari Mudra*, often quoted in PY's writings and surely practiced by him, they don't feel the necessity of mixing PY's techniques with other spiritual procedures. They feel they are PY's disciples and believe that by adopting other teachings is equivalent to betray him.

When I followed PY's teachings, our "Meditation counselor" explained that the worst evil was disloyalty toward *Guru* and his organization. With the term "disloyalty" she meant even just reading what other persons who left the organization had written about *Kriya Yoga*.

After posting my book online, I had an intense email exchange with various researchers faithful to PY. After having clarified that they did not approve my decision to write in such explicit way Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* techniques, they asked me how I can be sure that PY had simplified or modified some details of the *Kriya* procedures. Trying to perceive what was stirring in their heart and mind, I felt that their worry consisted in the possibility they had missed something important, for example techniques not contained in the correspondence course, that PY could have shared only with some intimate disciples.

Those *kriyabans* were very serious, honest, deeply motivated. No nonsense would ever slip out of their mouths. I learned to listen to them respectfully and silently whenever they corrected some of my fancy interpretations of *Kriya Yoga*. Many, without being exhibitionist, were able to quote by heart many passages from the works of PY.

book *Purana Purusha* by Dr. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee

¹¹ The *Kriya* techniques as taught by PY [Some people do not consider them exactly equal to those of Lahiri Mahasaya. They are not here described in detail, but freely commented according to my personal experience – for what its worth.] I give it for granted that the reader knows PY's techniques in detail. In order to avoid confusion, I will denote them in the following way: PY's First *Kriya*, PY's Second *Kriya*.....

They had studied all the *Kriya* material written or dictated by PY and often remembered verbatim key quotations from that material. They had read and re-read through those texts several times trying to decode them.

They always struck me with their extraordinary commitment to a regular practice of *Kriya*. Although unsatisfied with their understanding of the subtle mechanism underlying the *Kriya* procedures and tormented by many doubts, they never dismissed the practice. It was clear that they were following the *Kriya* path not for esoteric curiosities, not to find an alternative cure to anxiety, depression . . . but for one reason only: to follow and realize the spiritual path so fascinatingly delineated in PY's autobiography.

The greatest part of our discussions concerned the *Higher Kriyas*. This is perfectly explainable. To many *kriyabans* the crisis with their *Kriya* organization began when their request of having a seminar on the *Higher Kriyas* received an incomprehensible, anachronistic "NO".

The purpose of that seminar had to be not only to demonstrate the technical details but also to give a theoretical scheme, providing devotees with resources to conceive – and subsequently improve – their routine. Every student wanted at least to see how such techniques were performed. Each technique included some physical movements: if you study them only from a written text, you are never sure about your correct performance.

The meetings organized to review the basic teachings (*Kriya proper* plus *Hong So* and *Om techniques*) were always a source of inspiration. The disappointment of not getting this opportunity also in the field of the *Higher Kriyas* was unbearably bitter.¹²

We had inspiring conversations. The purpose of this appendix is to refer in synthesis the main points of those conversations. I am confident they contain interesting information.

¹² We know that recently a couple of the organizations based upon PY's legacy proved they had understood that it doesn't pay to behave in such a way and are giving regular initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*.

The synthesis is divided into four parts:

[I] A rational approach to Yogoda and First Kriya techniques.

[II] A rational plan to work with the Higher Kriyas starting from PY's Third Kriya.

[III] The control of the mind during the day is a necessary prerequisite to master Pranayama (control of energy.)

[IV] Work with PY's Second Kriya till the last days of your life

[II] A RATIONAL APPROACH TO YOGODA AND FIRST KRIYA TECHNIQUES

There are different ways of planning a *Kriya* routine. We discuss here a *Kriya* routine where the well known techniques of *Hong So* and *Om* are practiced at the end.

[1] Maha Mudra

[2] Kriya Proper

[3] Repeating Maha Mudra. Jyoti Mudra

[4] Meditation. Choose one of the following:

[Med.1] Focus in Kutastha

[Med.2] Focus in Kutastha with Hong So Mantra

[Med.3] Focus in the spine with Hong So Mantra

[Med.4] Om meditation technique (closing the ears)

Let us comment each point

[1] Maha Mudra

Some *kriyabans* prepare *Maha Mudra* with the "Forward Bendings" by Swami Hariharananda. [The teachings of Swami Hariharananda are discussed in Chapter 10.] Other complete the balancing action of *Maha Mudra* with the classic breathing exercise *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*. If you test these two optional additions, you will never forget them.

[2] Kriya Proper. Kriya with open or closed mouth. Value of both. Kechari Mudra. Mental of chanting of Om in each Chakra.

Both methods (*Kriya* with open, semi closed or closed mouth) are good. The logic order is: first mouth open then closed. The hypothesis that only open mouth *Pranayama* causes the energy to flow through the *Sushumna* channel – implying that the lateral currents of *Ida* and *Pingala* have no role – is baseless. Breath and energy move in *Sushumna* only when the

breath is subtle, internalized and this happens after a great effort of concentration and relaxation.

Many *Kriya* students know that a few direct disciples of PY practiced with mouth closed. As for *Kechari Mudra* I was glad to see that a good number of *kriyabans* had achieved it – some having applied the classic exercise of *Talabya Kriya* from my book, others by following the tips found in a *Yoga* web site.¹³

One of my *kriyaban* friends had a strange opinion: he stated that *Pranayama* with *Kechari* was too "weak", being deprived of the strong sensations in the spine that you feel with mouth *Pranayama*. It was clear that this friend had tormented himself for a long time before taking his decision to give up *Kechari Mudra*.

Now reviewing that episode, I think that the problem was the purity, the beauty of the sounds of the breath obtained with the open or semi closed mouth. He experimented that with the mouth perfectly closed and found that the sound of the breath was not so pure and strong. At that time he had not the information that with the mouth closed and the tongue in *Kechari Mudra* (even baby *Kechari*) the sound was destined to become clean like that of a flute. I was not able to explain that this "flute" sound was experienced only after years of committed practice. This information was found later. We had not clear in mind that the flute-like sound appears only when the spine is "clean" like an empty tube.

During the first *Kriya* breaths (unless you have mastered the *Samadhi* state), even if your concentration is perfect, it is clear that the mind, the breath and the *Prana* have not totally entered *Sushumna*! *Ida* and *Pingala* do have a role. When they are balanced, *Sushumna* current start to manifest. You feel this when your awareness start to detach from the external, physical world and is attracted by the spine and the joy of internal breathing.

Mouth *Pranayama* has the remarkable power of granting a clear cold and warm sensations in the spine, therefore it is reasonable to start *Kriya Pranayama* in this way.

¹³ PY in his writings and in his talks gave the definition of *Kechari Mudra* without introducing any practical exercises to be performed over a certain period of time in order to achieve it. [I discuss *Kechari* in *Chapter 7* of my book.]

Curiosity 1: elliptic path

In AOY we read that: "The *Kriya Yogi* mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, **around** the six spinal centers.... One-half minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord ..." This does not match with the technique we had received. How is it possible? Not everyone knew that there were two versions of the *Kriya proper*, one taught in 1930 and the, more recent, definitive one.

In my opinion a serious *kriyaban* should know and have experience of both versions. The first one matched perfectly that description. Having found that version online, many practice in that way. I suppose that who reads this appendix knows well both.

Curiosity 2: a definitive help to prepare the spine for the practice of Kriya proper procedure.

Some *kriyabans* reminded me [actually I found this information in the correspondence course but then forgotten] that PY explains how a *kriyaban* can gently sway the spine of few centimeters to the left and to the right: in this way he/she succeeds in perceiving the astral spine as separated from the physical one. He also taught to move the consciousness along the spine while mentally chanting *Om* in the location of each *Chakra*. These two teachings are very simple but the result can leave you astonished! You wonder how came that they are not imparted during the *Kriya proper* initiation class.

[3] Repeating Maha Mudra. Jyoti Mudra.

The repetition of *Maha Mudra* at this point of the routine, helps to raise the *Kundalini* energy along the spinal tunnel. Coupled with *Jyoti Mudra* it helps to win a strong obstacle in the spine. I mean the knot of *Muladhara – Kutastha* called *Rudra Granti*. In other words, by repeating *Maha Mudra* and by practicing *Jyoti Mudra* you prepare yourself in the best of the ways for the meditation phase of your *Kriya* routine.

[Med.1] Focus on Kutastha

Let a certain number of natural breaths happen. "Natural" means without any effort to produce the sound in the throat and without any visualization concerning the movement of energy in the spine. Put your whole being in *Kutastha* in a way that nothing exist outside that "cave" of peace. [These breaths are not counted – forget also the time.] Maybe you have also cold and warm sensations in the spine, if his happens, enjoy them intensely. The more you do, the more your *Prana* is approaching to the *Sushumna*.

You are flying along the spinal tunnel towards a state of paradisiac tranquility. Your pacified mind will no more be an obstacle to perceive the Divine presence beyond your thoughts and individuality.

Unfortunately some prefer to remain immovable only, waiting for the time to go by. This reminds me a person who is waiting that the shot of medicine given into a muscle by an injection spreads peacefully and be possible to stand up and walk without compromising the action of such treatment. I respect of course this choice [I respect any choice] but I feel my duty to speak sincerely. In my opinion a *kriyaban* often misses a wonderful tool, like, for example, *Hong So*.

[Med.2] Focus on Kutastha with Hong So Mantra

We know that PY taught two systems of spiritual practice. The first was the *Yogoda* system [*Recharging exercises, Hong So, Om meditation technique.*]

The second is the *Kriya Yoga* system [*Kriya proper, Maha Mudra, Jyoti Mudra plus Higher Kriyas.*] The *Yogoda* system derives from the religious movement *Radhasoami*, the second from Lahiri Mahasaya. The *Yogoda* system is not a simple preparation to *Kriya Yoga* but is a spiritual path complete in itself, effective and worthy of our total respect.

To practice them both, in the same routine, putting *Kriya Yoga* (which consists in the art of *Pranayama*) at the end or the routine is deeply wrong. This creates a big impoverishment of the practice.

The result is excellent if such fusion happens according to Patanjali's teachings. First the *Pranayama* stage, then the meditation practices. Only in this way these two systems can be merged into a unique, coherent system of practices.

A note about the Hong So technique

Often this technique is introduced as a procedure to develop concentration, actually this does not happen. The first consideration is that the *Hong So* technique does not give you as by magic the ability of concentration if you do not already possess it! The *Hong So Mantra* is not a "magical formula" that, when repeated many times, calms invariably the breathing process. [This technique is also taught with *So* during inhalation and *Hong* during exhalation. You discover that the effect is the same.]

In order to see the power of this technique you must be endowed with the ability to maintain a high level of concentration during all the practice: only then the breath calms down. Usually, at this point of your routine, it is

not too difficult to enter that high-level-of-concentration state.

But be very careful: while you are watching your breath, never establish a rhythm in the mental chanting of *Hong So*! If by mentally chanting this *Mantra* you follow a rhythm, this rhythm will never settle down. If you relax your keen awareness of the breath and remain there as if hypnotized by the pleasing sound of the two syllables *Hong* and *So*, you shall be disappointed. Your mind will not be prone to being internalized and will not guide you to the state of calm breath. Don't permit that the implacable rhythm of the litany: "*Hong So, Hong So, Hong So, Hong So...*" marches onward like the clackerty clack of the wheels of a train.

If your body can physiologically stay off-breath for some instants or for long moments, the rhythm should not cause the breathing process continue implacably. If you don't let the pauses exist, then you will never realize you are in the condition of living the emancipating experience of the breathless state.

Be always very attentive to each pause. Respect it, have care of it, merge with it. Enjoy the beauty of this pause, no matter if it lasts just an instant!

Another point is important: the pause after inhalation is different from the pause after exhalation. In normal, not controlled, breathing there is the tendency to exhale immediately after inhalation. Inhaling, the rib cage expands and gets into an elastic tension. If there is no control, this elastic force, even if it is minimal, is released immediately after inhalation. If you want to practice the *Hong So* technique in the best of the ways, you should control the natural reflex to exhale as soon as the inhalation is completed. This is possible only in one way: after inhalation wait calmly and without any forcing the stimulus to exhale. Accept that the rib cage remains expanded and therefore in slight tension for some instants. When, after this pause, the stimulus to exhale appears, exhale. This slight tension, in this particular phase of the practice, is to be respected. Students who abide by the before said rules will soon verify, in a very impressive way, how the breath eases off.

[Med.3] Focus on the spine with Hong So Mantra

Visualize your breath going up and down the spine with *Hoooong* and *Soooo*. No control – your breath is free. You can go ahead in this way for some minutes, then, when the breath is so short that the procedure is on the verge of evaporating into nothing, try to feel this short breath happening in each *Chakra*. One short, almost invisible, but complete breath happens in *Muladhara* and is blended with the soothing chant of *Hong* and *So*. This

breath is like a peaceful vibration in a silent mind. Then place your concentration on the second *Chakra*: another breath happens there, then another breath happens in the third *Chakra* ... and so on... up and down along the spine... until there is no more breath, only *Hong So* like a micro movement, in each *Chakra*.

If you practice in this way, a "virtuous circle" between this growing calmness and the reduced necessity of oxygen will start. This leads to an extraordinarily result even for those who deem they are only clumsy beginners.

In time, this will lead you to enjoy a perfect breathless state. Then you will realize the truth contained in the words of a great disciple of PY. He said: "I have learned to live by inner joy." [The disciple was J.J.Lynn, called Rajarsi Janakananda.]

[Med.4] Om meditation technique (closing the ears)

Contrarily to what some students think, this technique works. But it works only if you practice as it is taught: in the recommended position, with arm rest, closing one's ears with your hands (no ear plugs) while mental chanting *Om* innumerable times, with total commitment to internal listening without ever discouraging. Often your hands seem paralyzed. You won't sense them anymore: this is the moment to keep on, undeterred.

Usually you do not notice the exact instant when you start listening to the internal sounds: at a certain point you notice you are already listening to them since some time. The internal sounds don't appear when the mind is active thinking, but only when it is perfectly void, even void of the I consciousness, void of the thought you are doing a certain practice. When you reach a total void (to some this state seems having entered the sleep state), when the repetition of the *Mantra* has created a transformation of you state of consciousness, you will be surprised by a certain indefinite internal sound. You will sweetly become aware of them.

Great experiences ensue from this meditation technique. But it is necessary to devote to this technique the necessary time it requires. Its good effects disappear entirely when you operate the unhappy choice of practicing a greater number of *Kriya breaths* and devote to it no more than ten minutes.

Sometimes a wrong choice of a *Higher Kriya* procedure, instead of cooperating with the process of calming the *Prana*, produces the contrary effect and the whole magic of the meditation state is lost.

One must understand that after the *Om technique* no other procedure should follow. There is a striking contradiction in the action of interrupting the listening of the internal sounds in order to practice any other procedure.

[III] A RATIONAL PLAN TO WORK WITH THE HIGHER KRIYAS STARTING FROM PY'S THIRD KRIYA

Facing the *Higher Kriyas* was not an easy task. I received from the organization an outwardly simple meditation technique called "*Second Kriya*". It was not based on some form of *Pranayama* but on the listening to the internal sounds. My first impression was that this procedure was the evolution of the *Om meditation technique*, part of PY's *Yogoda* system. I think that it is correct to call it: "*Technique to locate, physically and astrally, the seat of each Chakra*." However I didn't succeed neither in distinguishing the astral sounds of the *Chakras*, nor in perceiving the color of each one of them on the screen of *Kutastha*.

Surely the the reason of my failure was that this procedure happens in the best of the ways when the breath is subtle, when the meditative phase is already begun, rather very deep. As I have explained, it was then that I asked to my organization a live seminar on this practice and the response was negative. My state of disappointment and confusion came near to desperation.

In the course of the years, I do not think I have ever found a *kriyaban* that told me he was practicing regularly this technique. Some friends gave up completely the *Higher Kriyas*, other practiced occasionally only the *Third Kriya*.

The fact that this technique is noticeably different from the *Second Kriya* as handed down by the tradition created bewilderment in the heart and mind of some students. The hypothesis that PY had received this technique by Swami Kebalananda (his Sanskrit teacher) seems plausible. Be that as it may, there were students who, only for this reason, felt deceived and dropped it without fully testing its potentialities. The idea that their *Guru* had deceived them by not giving the "true" *Second Kriya* originated a terrible conflict (I would say a true catastrophe from the emotive point of view) in their soul. Now I know that this conflict could have been mitigated by explaining that the traditional *Second Kriya* is PY's Third Kriya technique. The truth is that PY's *Second Kriya* is valuable – this point will be discussed in the last part of this Appendix

Driven by this situation (but not only because of it) some friends of mine visited a couple PY's *Ashrams* in India and contacted also some *Kriya Acharya* outside the organization. What happened is very difficult to summarize.

Many returned with their mind full of contradictory information. They told what seemed a visible exaggeration: the *Higher Kriyas* as they are practiced in PY's Ashram are completely different from what we practice through the correspondence course.

I put my trust in a friend, who lived every year for about one month in an Indian Ashram who was officially linked with PY's main *Kriya* organization. Over the course of many years, he talked with me about his experience.

He had received a great privilege: to meet and talk different times with an old disciple of Swami Satyananda Giri, disciple of Sri Yukteswar. The old man, who often payed a visit to the Ashram, did not give formal initiation to him, but encouraged him to follow faithfully PY's teachings.

One day, talking about the *Higher Kriyas*, this disciple hinted at the procedure of *Thokar*. My friend asked more details about this technique. The term "Thokar" was found also in the literature about Lahiri Mahasaya's original *Kriya*. The disciple said one thing that often comes back to me.

"Practicing *Thokar* is like grasping a tiger for queue – he replied – you will receive immediately a great power, but one day "the entire tiger" will come to you ... and perhaps you will not be able to hold all that power.

He continued explaining that *Thokar* was a procedure during which you give a strong stimulus to the *Muladhara Chakra*. This technique should not be practiced outside of an Ashram or without the direct guidance of an experienced *kriyaban*.

He also said that PY had shared this procedure only with six direct disciples.

My friend had a great respect for this person. When the old disciple left the body, my friend preferred to talk the bare minimum with the other persons

in the Ashram. So it was not easy to convince him to formally ask a revision of his *Kriya*. But accepted.

When he was back from India, I received him warmly. He said that the minister appointed for revision was surprised that he was requesting a check of his *Higher Kriyas*. This was quite uncommon. While listening from my friend a description of his *Second Kriya*, the minister was in trouble, being not able to pick out which technique my friend was describing. There was a moment of clear embarrassment. Then he recollected himself and gave a generic instruction about the movement of energy in the spine and on meditation in general.

My friend had however the impression that the monk was talking about PY's *Third Kriya*. In that perspective the words of the minister were perfect.

Next day the minister wanted to talk again with my friend. He apologized for having created some confusion. He said that when PY abandoned his body it was a shock for the entire organization. So many things were not decided. The correspondence course was not entirely completed. Some parts would be reconsidered in the future. The key problem was that PY knew that it was not correct, not possible to share some delicate instruction through the correspondence course. He (the minister) said that perhaps he received something slightly different from what my friend received.

He said that when people, who feel they are disciples of PY, are informed of those editorial difficulties, this should not be a problem. Either they have trust in their Guru, or everything is going to collapse.

At that time, I draw the following scheme:

Correspondence course	Kriya as some PY 's direct disciples (or Sri Y.'s direct disciples) received
"SECOND KRIYA" as conceived by PY	--- There is no trace of this ---
"THIRD KRIYA" as conceived by PY	--- is considered the real SECOND KRIYA, the most precious Kriya technique after Kriya Pranayama ---
"FOURTH KRIYA" as conceived by PY	--- it is a variation of the previous. It is called THIRD KRIYA ---
There is no other teaching, approved by PY, that can be learned from the correspondence course.	--- there is a variation of the previous two techniques envisaging a strong stimulus of Chakra Muladhara. It is said that Sri Y. had given this to a pair of disciples, while PY gave it to six persons ---

Now those who feel they are disciples of PY accept and practice what is written in the correspondence course. If PY chose to delete the teaching mentioned in the last line of the table, this means he (PY) had good reasons for doing so.

I think that PY hinted at this teaching, writing that the Chakras can be awakened by imparting in their location some "psycho physical blows."

The strategy that was discussed with my friends is now described:

[1] Master PY's Third Kriya by means of a natural, serious daily practice and, for those who have a great strength of will, by means of a special routine that we came to know later. A year of intense work is necessary. We can then experience with prudence the Fourth Kriya without ever abandoning the Third.

[2] Master PY's Second Kriya by mastering first the state of "Pranayama." We know that Pranayama is a state of consciousness and not a breathing

exercise. Achieving this state of consciousness is possible by a full control of the mind.

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE FOR PY'S THIRD KRIYA

There are two Incremental Routines concerning PY's *Third Kriya*. The first is a preparation for the second. As a rule these incremental routines are practiced once in life. This strategy comes from Satya Charan Lahiri, nephew of Lahiri Mahasaya.

First incremental routine

Being a preparatory routine, we will not apply the procedure of *Thokar* [Strong stimulation of some *Chakras* utilizing particular movements of the head coupled with holding the breath.] We shall work only upon one aspect of this *Third Kriya*: we shall master first the procedure of moving along the spinal tunnel. The ability one has achieved after years of *Kriya proper* is stoutly utilized in bringing *Prana* in the first *Chakra*, then guiding it slowly and intensely into the second *Chakra*... and so on *Chakra* after *Chakra*, up to the point between the eyebrows. Then we return back moving contrariwise. This must happen in a state of absolute immobility, mentally repeating the 12 syllables of the *Mantra* typical of Lahiri Mahasaya's *Higher Kriyas* of. [No movements of the head, no holding the breath. All the rest remains as per the received instructions. What we are doing is a *Kriya proper* deepened by the utilization of the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*.]

A key point is the gradual increase of the number of the repetitions: with this modality, what a *kriyaban* will experience will remain like a firm point for the whole life.

The plan of gradual increase starts with the practice of 25 repetitions of the technique every day, once a day, for two weeks. Then 50 repetitions a day for two other weeks. Then 75 repetitions a day for two other weeks... then 100... and so on, increasing of 25 in 25 until you practice 200 repetitions a day for two weeks. And then? Then you can rest for some days to get ready for the following incremental routine.

Second incremental routine

Now you can put in this exercise the ability obtained with the previous incremental process. You are ready to draw the best from the complete technique – the one you have received originally, with the movements of the head¹⁴

Start again with 25 repetitions of the complete procedure – "Complete" means: as per written lessons. Now a *kriyaban* knows how to raise the energy inside the spine and the quality of breathing has become more and more subtle, without decreasing of intensity, rather, increasing it. The *Kutastha* has become a magnetic, bright reality. The same *Kriya proper* has changed in refinement. The current in the spine seems to move spontaneously.

The incremental plan is the same: 25 repetitions of the technique every day, once a day, for two weeks. Then 50 repetitions a day for two other weeks.... 75 100... 125.....150 ...175200 for two weeks! The power that this plan can put into motion is indescribable.

Unfortunately if one has not the courage to overcome the 12 prescribed repetitions of the *Third Kriya*, will never realize the power contained in this technique! Increase therefore the number of repetitions, increase without fear and end your routine by trying any means to calm the breath and reach the breathless state.

However, be very cautious. Do the movements of the head in a very delicate way avoiding to stress the cervical vertebrae!

TWO WORDS ABOUT PY'S FOURTH KRIYA

Unfortunately, many in our group after receiving PY's *Third* and *Fourth Kriya*, were not able to resist the temptation of trying *Fourth Kriya* on the spot – "if it leads to *Samadhi*, why not try it now"? After about 15 - 20 rotations, *Kumbhaka* became stressful. Instead of giving up, we repeated a couple of times the same attempt, while discomfort increased while a feeling of nausea or dizziness goes on launching its alarm signals. Eventually we stopped, defeated. The gain was zero, less than zero! Not only we had not obtained the slightest trace of *Samadhi*, but we had lost the initial tranquil state.

¹⁴ We discussed also the fact that the movements of the head are not a "rotation of the head" they are a "triangular" movement.

[III] THE NECESSITY OF CONTROLLING THE MIND DURING THE DAY AS A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO MASTER PRANAYAMA (CONTROL OF ENERGY)

I did two great advertising campaigns in my life, one about the value of *Pranayama* (or *Kriya*) to fill our existence with happiness and beauty and one about the value of *Japa* to make the breath calm, hence to perfect the state of *Pranayama*.

Breath control and *Devotional Prayer* have always been for me the two instruments with which spiritual aspiration becomes reality in the life of any person. "Any" means both people who have always been attracted by the spiritual path and those people who do not even know what the spiritual path is.

Thinking about *Pranayama*, about the blessings that it has brought in my life, I remember the song (Bhajan) preferred by Sri Yukteswar:

*Desire, my great enemy,
With his soldiers surrounded me...*

.....

*What will be my fate?
Oh Lord, tell me.*

*Pranayam be thy religion,
Pranayam will give thee salvation,
Pranayam is Beloved God,*

....

*Control the little Pranayam,
Become all-pervading Pranayam,
You won't have to fear anything anymore.*

Now what needs a *kriyaban* to obtain perfection in the practice of *Pranayama*? Something must happen during the day, and must happen to their mind. If the mind is always active in useless thoughts, without ever pausing in a state of contemplation, then all the wealth created by the breathing exercises of *Pranayama* is dissolved

In order to live in a state of grace, you have to feel your mind as a solid and limpid substance like crystal. This is the state of real *Pranayama*. This happens through *Japa*. Can you make your mind acute only through

the strength of will? No, you can do it for half an hour and then all comes back as before. If you want a lasting, stable result, then you have to use *Japa*.

Sometimes *Kriya Pranayama* seems not to work at all. It can make life arid, it can make your words acid; you can radiate not love but bother and annoyance. Start with Devotional Prayer until it becomes automatic.

Unfortunately, many people buy spiritual books or New Age and cannot understand just one thing: how important it is to remain in the crystalline peace of murmuring your Mantra, your Prayer.

In this book I have dedicated three chapters to *Japa*. Yet many readers have not understood the importance of it. Some write me asking specific exercises to develop this or that virtue, while everything could be developed automatically by *Japa*.

The mind made transparent by *Japa* can obtain everything.

Saint Teresa of Avila (see chapter 13) said: "You can do nothing without Prayer and you can do everything with it." According to her: Prayer represents everything in the mystical path. There was no other practice on which she insisted so much in all her writings and to which she gave so much importance; according to her, the soul that does not create the habit of praying cannot reach the mystical goal; without this habit, one does not keep the mind at bay.

Continuous Prayer guides you to the state of breathlessness. How vast and supreme this experience is! In that state your whole body is sustained by calm Prana, the mind is a still substance. This is the state of Pranayama. If you open your eyes, everything you see is like a transparent and solid substance, it is your vast body, it is *Prana*.

Without *Japa*, the *Pranayama* is just an exercise and nothing else – with *Japa*, your *Pranayama* has a solidity without limits.

"Pranayam be thy religion" is exactly this.

In my opinion, only in this condition we can seriously start the practice of PY's *Second Kriya*.

[IV] WORK WITH PY'S SECOND KRIYA TILL THE LAST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

Now we aim at perfection in what we have worked upon so far. We have become familiar with PY's First, Third, and Fourth Kriya. Our effort has focused on the Pranayama procedure: now we renounce the use of the breathing process and work only with pure awareness. Our breath is very calm, we have learned to make it almost evanescent. Keeping the mind calm during the day had been the decisive factor.

The work we are going to do happens apparently in the spine, actually it happens in *Kutastha*. *Kutastha* has different layers, like an onion. We start by becoming aware of its outer layer which is ... the *Chakra Muladhara*!

This is not easy to understand. We will certainly continue to do what we have done for a long time, namely moving within the spinal tunnel. Yet now our intuition will fall into line with a new way of conceiving the reality of the spine.

We shall focus on the Muladhara and discover that we are in Kutastha, then focus on Swadhisthana and realize we are in Kutastha but in a subtler dimension, the same will happen with Manipura ... at some point we shall be in front of the white star in Kutastha..

While shifting the focus of concentration from *Chakra* to *Chakra*, we will refine our attunement to subtler vibrations.

Through the instruments of the *Third* and the *Fourth Kriya* we have cleaned the spinal tunnel and loosened most part of the subtle obstacle of the heart *Chakra (Hridaya Granti Ved.)*

One does not enter *Kutastha* with breath. For this reason a needed condition is that *Kriya*, in its various levels, has annihilated the breath.

PY's *Second Kriya* is the conclusion of the long phase of our path that happens when pure *Pranayama* is enriched with the *Bandhas* and with the great stimulation that happens through the procedure of *Thokar*.

The Tattwas

In PY's *Second Kriya* we force our concentration upon each *Chakra* until the essence of each of them is revealed. To say that we will meet the essence of the *Chakras* means that we shall also meet the essence of the *Tattwas* (that is, the 5 elements.) Indeed the first five *Chakras* preside over the 5 elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether. One may think that this is part of Indian philosophy. Well, what will happen in our experience is touching, feeling, realizing these five elements.

In *Kriya*, subtle experiences take place, and what will happen is described very well by PY in his correspondence course. He explains very clearly the physical changes that occur in our bodies depending on the predominance in our consciousness of one *Tattwa*. He describes particular patterns of the flow of breath through the nostrils, different flavors that we perceive in our mouth....

Here, we are talking of the external role of the *Chakras* – the aspect of the *Chakras* which is not directed in a higher way towards the Spirit but is directed towards the physical world and therefore towards our material body.

Of course, it is difficult to perceive the essence of the five elements; it is a procedure that even in the esoteric literature is rarely and cautiously mentioned. I am obviously talking about the best esoteric schools, those whose aim is to gain pure knowledge and not to explore the powers, the potentialities of the mind.

In serious esoteric paths, a practice similar to our *Second Kriya* is introduced among the final techniques that aim at freeing the students from the identification with the 5 elements or rather with the physical world. As many readers know, in such schools we find the revelation of symbols, images on which to focus ... PY explains that these symbols (square, moon in the nascent phase, triangle...) are revealed spontaneously through meditation upon the *Chakras*.

All this must be said because a *kriyaban* loves (and has all the rights) to understand with the mind, with his reason. But what we do then is just perform (with a breath that almost doesn't exist) the few instructions we received in the correspondence course.

Chronicle

I learned various characteristics of the procedure of *Second Kriya* from Swami Hariharananda's school who had for several years his residence in Karar Ashram (belonging to Sri Yukteswar.) It's not up to me to say anything about his behavior, I can only bow to what he kindly accepted to share with me.

The first concept that he put in my mind is the concept that the right form of *Kriya Pranayama* is that in which you can listen to the inner sounds while you are performing it, without closing your ears. Normally, according to the correspondence course, we are used to perceiving them by applying the *Om meditation technique*.

All this was usually explained by him (Swamiji left his body in 2002) while imparting initiation to *First Kriya*.

As for his *Second Kriya*, it was based on stimulating the *Chakras* either using *Pranayama* or using a method very similar to that of PY's. His *Third Kriya* instead took place in the upper part of the brain.

He said he had learned *Second Kriya* from PY. I think this is possible and I believe that Sri Yukteswar also practiced similar procedures (having learned them from the *Radhasoami* movement) and taught it to his disciples.¹⁵

What I find interesting is that in this method one starts from a fragmented breath (a breath in which there is a micro pause in each *Chakra*); when one holds the breath at the end of inhalation, the head bends in the four directions allowing the Divine force to flow down from above in the 4 regions where one can divide their head.

He explained that this way the head was perceived as separated from the body and a region was created in the upper part of the brain where the remaining *Higher Kriyas* could take place. I know that this fact is powerful and gives you real experiences where your consciousness seems to travel freely in the astral worlds.

In my opinion, a serious lack in his *Kriyas* was the work on the knot of the

¹⁵ He applied the essence of them at the time of his death. He moved through the spinal tunnel a last time, mentally placing the syllable Om in each Chakra, climbing up to Kutastha and then entering the Kutastha.

heart, which instead takes place magnificently in PY's *Third* and *Fourth Kriyas*.

It is correct to point out that the practice of the *Second Kriya* provides for various degrees of deepening of the process of meditation on the *Chakras*. Everything is deepened also including the use of all the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet; Swami Hariharananda took the decision to teach a typical practice of *Tantric Hatha Yoga* to complete the practice of his *Second Kriya*.

The letters are utilized on the petals of the *Chakras* and on the various parts in which the human body can be divided; in this process the heart *Chakra* is involved as well: and it is by recalling this fact that he explained the reason why he believed that the practice of *Thokar* could be considered unnecessary.

What can we reasonably expect from this practice

It turns out to be a fantastic plan to practice PY's *Second Kriya* every day, once a day, at least for one year. To those who take this practice seriously, a universe of subtle experiences is revealed.

Some "strong" experiences happen in the spine, especially if one stretches out immediately after the practice. Each "experience" gives such an intensity of devotion that one is surprised to discover it in his own life.

The *First* and the *Second Kriya* tend to merge together, or rather, the revelations that normally take place with *Second Kriya*, now tend to take place during *Kriya Pranayama*. The *Om* sound can be heard during proper *Kriya proper* without closing the ears! This is a blissful experience. You won't wonder if your *Kriya* is correct or not. You know that it's perfect.

Being in tune with the *Om* vibration, a sense of vastness pervades our consciousness. The *Om* vibration will take on a slightly different tone in each *Chakra*. *Kriya Pranayama* then gives the feeling of flying through different regions of an inner sky.

Repeating in this way 108 *Kriya* breaths leads to *Samadhi*. The habit of *Japa (Devotional Prayer)* makes love one's heart pure: it's not emotional hysteria, it is a pure love that finds stability in the soul because it is not almost instantaneously interrupted by the agitation of the mind. *Samadhi* state needs the realization of this condition to happen.

PART III: ESSENTIAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER 12

A GOOD WAY OF EXPERIENCING THE BEAUTY OF KRIYA YOGA

In the second part of my book I have tried to give the reader the opportunity to familiarize with various procedures of *Kriya Yoga*. I have tried to describe in detail different techniques, perhaps too many techniques.

Probably the reader has made some experiments with different procedures and has noticed that some of them are more effective than others. Surely with few techniques the whole spiritual path of *Kriya Yoga* can be mastered.

Now, if I had the intention of teaching *Kriya* to a beginner, which techniques would I choose to teach? My desire is obviously to see good and solid results.

I want that a person, through the practice of <i>Kriya</i> that I have recommended to him, be born to the <i>spiritual life</i> .

Besides the physical birth (... to feed, to work, to create a family...) and the mental birth (... to find pleasure in thinking with your own head...) there is the spiritual birth (... to find perfect joy coming in your life without a plausible reason.)

Those who are born to mental life only, cannot understand what the birth to the spiritual life is. This birth rarely happens and when it happens it doesn't consist in the decision to live in a different way, adopting certain rituals and professing a certain faith. The spiritual life doesn't start through a mental effort.

A human being must first have a contact with the joy that is in the center of her/his heart. That joy is somehow related with the spine, with the spiritual centers that are found along it and is experienced with the intuitive vision that happens through the "third eye." Sometimes the contact with the internal beatitude is accompanied by the experience of a strong current of energy in the spine. The experience is sometimes preceded by inexplicable fear, sometimes by real anguish. I think that the reader has familiarity with these events.

Now, what is necessary to teach in order that the person has a strong contact with that joy?

The first thing I will teach is *Kriya Pranayama* as taught by Sri Mukherjee

FIRST LESSON: Technique of Kriya Pranayama as it was explained by Sri Mukherjee

The *Kriya Pranayama* as taught by Sri Mukherjee has been the best discovery in the field of *Kriya* since my initiation into *Kriya* in 1975. Sri Mukherjee is a nice person, a very likeable and open-hearted *yogi*. He is well-intentioned. He told me a thing that nobody had ever told: "I don't want to leave this body allowing that this original *Kriya* dies with me." He really wants to do something practical in this direction.

Preliminary remark

The technique of *Kriya Pranayama* is practiced to enter *Sushumna*. In order to enter it, you need to make the breath extremely subtle. Actually, you can enter *Sushumna* only by behaving with extreme delicacy. This happens when, during *Kriya Pranayama*, your inner gaze and all your attention are fixed in the central point of the spiritual eye between your eyebrows and not in any other place! This point is *Kutastha*. Therefore, put your whole attention there. Be mindful of avoiding any strain on the eyes. Everything should stay natural.

Many try to raise the energy in *Sushumna* with force, in a coarse way. In this situation, *Kundalini* does not move upwards but is dispersed and burned in the body; this may create diseases because initially the *Nadis* are partially blocked. Your *Kriya Pranayama* will produce only stress. Many endeavor to produce the sound in the throat since the beginning and create a strong visualization of the energy that comes up and down: this is not correct. Therefore, I repeat, we must start in an extremely simple way and proceed without expecting striking results. But then, at a certain point, something profound and meaningful will happen. As for *Kechari Mudra*, the *baby Kechari* is enough for now – *baby Kechari* is to hold the tip of the tongue up, touching the soft part of the palate.

Main instruction

By keeping both the shoulders in a natural position, by expanding the chest a little bit, by bringing the back in a straight position, by lowering gently the chin, by mentally gazing between the two eyebrows, the position becomes steady effortlessly. Do not cross the eyes, simply set yourself in

the point between the eyebrows as if this were a cave where you take shelter.

Have a deep, natural breath. ¹ Chant mentally *Om* six times in *Kutastha* during inhalation and six times during exhalation.

Unlike other forms of *Kriya*, during this initial part you don't put *Om* in the physical seat of each *Chakra*. Rather you don't feel the body at all. Your breath doesn't require effort – therefore you don't make any sound in the throat. Perhaps this will seem to you not a correct way of practicing *Kriya*, but please practice this way, this is what Lahiri Mahasaya and Swami Pranabananda Giri instructed.

If your breath is very short, accept this situation without trying, with uneasiness, to lengthen your breath. A longer breath will appear spontaneously in time. What matters is to stay focused at *Kutastha* with the mental chant of *Om*. So, while you are inhaling or exhaling you "knock" at the door of *Kutastha* by chanting 6 + 6 *Oms*.

The recommended number of breaths is 108 and therefore (if you don't fall asleep, if are not disturbed by external events) at the end you shall have mentally chanted the syllable *Om* 12x108=1296 times.

Knocking with *Om* at *Kutastha* will give you the power to mentally touch the central point of each *Chakra* – this event happens spontaneously, so don't try to anticipate it through complicated visualizations. This event happens because the the sixth *Chakra Ajna* governs everything: it gives you an alignment with all the *Chakras*.

When, while inhaling and exhaling, you mentally chant *Om* the prescribed number or times in the central point of *Kutastha* and this subtle action happens also in each *Chakra*, automatically – even if you are not aware of this fact.

There is only a sphere of Light in *Kutastha* and all happens there. You, your body, your spine, everything is there. By going ahead, the exercise becomes more and more pleasant.

In time [if it doesn't happen today, it will happen tomorrow: it needs to have patience and to encourage the right attitude] you will feel that the

¹ In this situation "deep breath" means: "Deep as much as you can easily mentally chant six + six *Oms*."

spine exists, that it is possible to perceive it in all its length. There is nothing in particular you do. Don't try to obtain this by moving your awareness down in the body. Everything happens automatically.

Meanwhile you notice that the breath is slower and also the mental chant of the various *Oms* is more calm and pleasant. At a certain point you will feel that the six *Chakras* exist. What will appear through internal vision is not necessarily the traditional form of the spinal column with the six *Chakras*. The *Chakras* can be perceived in many different ways.

At a certain point you will realize that the mental chants of *Oms* in *Kutastha* are happening in the center of each *Chakra* too. But remember that your attention is always at the central point of the spiritual eye. If your focus is diverted from *Kutastha*, all the magic of this process is lost.

At a certain moment you will notice that the breath is accompanied by a delicate sound in the throat. It is the sound of the friction of the air in the throat. In this way the breath becomes slow and subtle. In time the sound of the exhalation reminds the sound produced by a small flute through which a small amount of air passes. Now don't worry how this sound should be.

If everything goes as expected, if you still maintain calmness, your breath crosses the *Chakras* from the first to the sixth and from the sixth to the first and in each *Chakra* the syllable *Om* is vibrated. This is a delicious situation. Usually this happens toward the end of the 108 breaths. All your being is settled in a bright sphere located between *Kutastha* and the center of your head. What you see doesn't matter, what matters is that you are perfectly comfortable, absorbed in the beauty of the procedure. While you are approaching the end of the 108 *Kriya* breaths, you might have the experience of the light in *Kutastha*. This will be intensified by *Yoni Mudra*. After *Yoni Mudra* and *Maha Mudra* you will sit again placing yourself in *Kutastha* without doing nothing. In other words without chanting *Om*, and without paying attention to the breath.

Questions and answers

Some *kriyabans* find it difficult to learn how to practice this form of *Kriya Pranayama* because they do not accept the fact that this method is completely different from what they had been practiced before. For example they feel it strange that in the instruction there is no mention of the spinal path. There are many unexpected questions.

Are the breaths uncontrolled like in the Hong So technique?

During the *Hong So* technique we observe the spontaneous process of breathing without paying attention to whether the inhalations and exhalations are long or short.

By going ahead with this technique the breathing must be natural but we must pay attention so that it is gradually prolonged. How can the "*Hong So* breathing" sustain the procedure of *Kriya Yoga* that gradually leads to a slowing down of upward and downward movement of the current along the spine?

In Lahiri Mahasaya's teaching (and we are trying to abide by that tradition) it is stated that in the long run you become able to practice a very sublime form of Pranayama: inhalation and exhalation prolonged up to 22 + 22 seconds.

In other words: in Sri M.'s *Kriya Pranayama* we utilize a NATURAL breath. But this breathing must be slow so that you can chant *Om* mentally six times during inhalation and six times during exhalation. We must have a breath that can support this mental action. Our breath must go ahead effortlessly but must exist! If we would practice like in the *Hong So* technique, it will be impossible to have it. The breath must be natural but we must care that it gradually lengthens.

If you have a very short breath and therefore you are not able to mentally pronounce that many *Oms*, chant the *Oms* more quickly. Your breathing will be prolonged after a small number of repetitions.

I would like to know little more about the process of "knocking" with *Om* in *Kutastha*. If we mentally chant *Om*, then at that time we are not having *Kutastha* in mind.

The point is not: "having *Kutastha in mind*" but being there, inside *Kutastha*. The mind is still, the process of thought is not stressed with the idea "I must have *Kutastha* in mind otherwise my practice is wrong" No. Nothing of that. You are occupied with two activities, [1] breathing and [2] putting *Om* repeatedly in the central point of *Kutastha*. That's all. If you do this for some minutes, you enter a paradise. With patience you achieve your divine state of contemplation.

Some persons speculate about the duration of each *Om*, if after each *Om* there is a short pause. They want to know how many micro seconds it lasts... They are free to sophisticate and come to their failure. *Kriya* sometimes might seem a chemical receipt but its nature is that of an art based upon intuition, intelligence, commonsense.

What is the best routine?

108 *Kriya* breaths [Time required: from 40 to 50 minutes] After that, practice *Yoni Mudra* (only once in 24 hours), 3 *Maha Mudra* and then remain calm, focused on *Kutastha*. In this final part you simply enjoy the peace and the bliss originating from the practice of *Kriya*.

Sri Mukherjee explains clearly that even a beginner can start right away doing the full 108 repetitions. There is no lower number to begin with, there is no recommended progression. Of course if one is ill, he does not practice at all. And if one, due to circumstances beyond their control, can practice only an inferior number, well, this may happen but it should not become the rule. About other numbers found in the letters written by Lahiri to his disciples, we must understand that those letters represent very personal instructions. Here we are considering a general counsel given to serious *kriyabans* in a good condition of health.

As for *Maha Mudra* there is a variation recommended by Sri Mukherjee for those who find *Maha Mudra* too difficult. "Lie down on the back. Inhale. Raise the legs maintaining the pelvis on the floor. Join the hands under the knees. Keep your equilibrium on the inferior bones of the pelvis and keep the forehead near the knees. Exhale. Return to the initial position."

Alternative practice to conclude your practice of Kriya Pranayama.

When the breath is internalized inside *Sushumna*, keep attention at *Kutastha*. With natural breathing pull one inhalation into *Sushumna* with only one mental chant of *Om* and exhale with another *Om*. Practices like this until you forget yourself and reach the stage of *Samadhi*.

In the correspondence of Lahiri with his disciples, Medulla is often quoted. Has Medulla a role?

What I now describe is a "subtlety" that is discovered in time.

Practice as I describe: keep the chin some millimeters down and inside in a way that *Kutastha* and *Medulla* are at the same level. It is not difficult to realize that the center of your awareness is in the *Medulla* while the faculty of visualization is located in the point between the eyebrows. Now you will discover that every manifestation (not visualization), every luminous revelation of the *Chakras* happens about four centimeters inward from the point between the eyebrows: the seat of *Ajna*. What I say seems perhaps complicated to you but, believe me, while you are practicing, breath after breath everything becomes clearer.

How can I know when comes the right moment to produce the sounds in the throat?

It is typical of *Kriya schools* to teach you how to produce strong sounds in the throat since the beginning of the practice. They explain that strong sounds in the beginning are ok because they produce cold and warm sensations in the spine. Sri Mukherjee explains that these sensations happen but they are produced by the *Ida* and *Pingala* currents. These currents have nothing to do with being in *Sushumna*. If you, since the starting of your *Pranayama*, insist too much upon them, you may cause some problems and lose the magic of the procedure.

Let that throat sounds come later. They will be more enjoyable, will "mesmerize" your concentration and help the procedure. The sounds appear spontaneously when the breath is sufficiently long. Only meditation born intuition can help you to understand when it is good you try to increase the force of your breath and produce the sounds.

Why in the main document posted on the download page it is written: "after entering the Sushumna you have to use force on Pranayama."

This is a hint to the *Second Kriya* stage. It may happen that before ending 108 *Kriyas* breaths you are in *Sushumna*. It might happen that at a certain moment you will feel that the veil of darkness fades away and you witness the brilliance of the Divine Light in the center of which lies the entry point of *Sushumna*. In that wonderful situation you might perceive the color of each *Chakra*.

This is the realm of *Second Kriya* that we will examine later. In this situation it is not necessary to abide by the injunction "Don't overstep the prescribed number: 108." In this case you can go ahead until you enter an ecstatic state and are lost there. Lahiri Mahasaya has said that in this state there is no other instruction to be practiced.

If *Kriya Pranayama* as it is taught by Sri Mukherjee is so beautiful and works so well, what is the utility of *Kriya Pranayama* as described in Chapter 6?

Kriya Pranayama requires a continuous improvement. Those who have fresh in their mind chapters won't have any difficulty in perfecting now at incredible levels the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*. I recommend to everyone be inspired by the various aspects of *Kriya Pranayama* as delineated in chapter 6.

<p>Here ends the explanation of <i>Kriya Pranayama</i> as I have heard it from Sri Mukherjee. Now, in the remaining part of this <i>Chapter</i>, I will explain how to obtain the best from this technique.</p>

SECOND LESSON: Let us learn a very important preliminary phase

Let us learn four important techniques. For the time being let us consider them "Preparatory" to *Kriya Pranayama* – later we shall discover that there is more in them.

PREP. 1: Forward bendings

Before describing this procedure let me remind that one cannot start a *Kriya* routine by simply sitting in the correct position for meditation with erected spine after having sitting for hours to do mental work. It is important to practice some exercises that awaken the *Prana* in the body. At least stroll casually ... few minutes are sufficient.

Forward Bendings

Through a deep inhalation 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 touch the floor with your head. During the forward bendings you should utilize the legs and also the hands in the way which is more comfortable for you. If you usually practice *Kriya* in *Siddhasana* or *Half Lotus* do not insist in maintaining this position while bending!

Move your head 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 12 seconds.

Then repeat the same exercise with the other side of your body, reversing the perceptions. 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.

Then sit up straight, inhaling deeply. Through a long exhalation let the energy go down from *Ajna Chakra* to *Muladhara*. Practice six of these forward bendings.

- The "*Forward Bendings*" as taught by Swami Hariharananda are explained in Chapter 11. In this Chapter 12 when I recall an already explained procedure, I do it in a synthetic form.

The forward bendings are useful not only as a preparation to *Kriya* but also for ameliorating your standing position, correcting wrong positions. For many old persons the forward bendings can replace the *Maha Mudra*.

PREP. 2: Kriya Pranayama with Japa rotating in Kutastha (12)

We know how important is the practice of *Japa*, especially when practiced a couple of hours before starting the *Kriya* routine. It creates a condition very favorable to an entranced contemplation of the Spiritual Reality.

Now we summon all the power of *Japa* through "*Preparation 2.*" All the efforts of internalization will be more successful.

Now remember that if you want to practice the *Kriya Pranayama* you must know how to make your awareness stable in *Kutastha*. The recommended exercise is based upon perceiving something like a *micro movement* in *Kutastha*.

Inhale as in *Kriya Pranayama*, then create a pause after inhalation. During this pause mentally chant your favored *Mantra* (the one you utilize for *Japa*.) Perceive that this *Mantra* is something that rotates in the sphere of *Kutastha*.

What does "something that rotates" mean? You have surely seen those acrobats that ride a motorbike inside a sphere made of solid steel armor. They cross the inside part of the sphere along all the directions winning the strength of gravity. Well you make pretense that your *Kutastha* is a sphere in whose internal part you make your *Mantra* rotate. (More slowly of course.) Do this until you feel a sensation of strong presence in the center between you eyebrows. A very good choice is to do 12 of these breaths while keeping the pause after inhalation for the same length of the inhalation.

Bhastrika Pranayama as alternative

If you want that the experience be more intense, then utilize a mild form of *Bhastrika Pranayama*. Thus you will create an increase of energy that can be suitable, for example in the morning, for the practice of *Kriya*.

Make a few deep but fast breaths through your nose. Two seconds for breath is fine for beginners. With every inspiration feel that your abdominal muscles expand. The contrary happens with the exhalation.

After 6 breaths as described, inhale deeply focusing the whole awareness in *Kutastha*. Make another short inhalation expanding the breast and

internally relaxing. Hold your breath for around 30-second. Then exhale. Repeat 3 times.

PREP. 3: Nadi Sodhana with inverted breath & Tadan Kriya

These two techniques have a decisive power to foster the free movement of *Prana* through *Sushumna*. A *kriyaban* will find great benefit by practicing every day these two exercises with inflexible determination.

Nadi Sodhana (with inverted breath)

Focus on the *Muladhara Chakra*. Close the right nostril and inhale through the left nostril while mentally chanting *Om* 3 times. Visualize that you are attracting the energy contained in the inhaled air and bring this energy down around your *Muladhara*. Close both nostrils and mentally chant *Om* 6 times while holding your breath. At the same time apply *Maha Bandha*. (Or *Aswini Mudra* six times.) Then exhale through the right nostril mentally chanting *Om* 6 times.

Maha Bandha means to apply the three basic *Bandhas*. The three *Bandhas* are:

Mula Bandha: contract the muscles at the base of the spine

Uddiyana Bandha: draw inside the abdominal muscles by contracting them

Jalandhara Bandha: lower the chin on the chest

Repeat the procedure inhaling through the right nostril, pause with *Bandhas* and exhale from the left nostril. These two breaths count as one unity. Practice only three unities. In the future you can increase such number. During this procedure the concentration on the *Muladhara Chakra* is the most important detail. This exercise finds its natural completion with *Tadan Kriya*.

Tadan

Inhale deeply through both nostrils feeling the breath coming down to *Muladhara*. Hold your breath and practice the three *Bandhas*. Lift your body, with the help of the hands, of few millimeters and then let the buttocks touch the seat with a mild jolt. Have three jolts – be sure that you are holding your breath during them! Then exhale, slowly and deeply, releasing the three *Bandhas*, perceiving an ecstatic feeling. This detail is very important: it is a signal that the *Prana* has entered the spine and *Kundalini* starts its travel upwards. The mental energy (not just the physical action) that you put in this exercise is a decisive factor. The action of *Tadan Kriya* is called *Maha Veda Mudra* "Mudra of the great perforation." Repeat the practice of *Tadan* two more times for a total of 9 jolts.

PREP. 4: Guiding Kundalini

This preparation is very important. In this procedure, the breath is utilized to guide *Kundalini* along an internal path known, in *Internal Alchemy*, as "*Small Heavenly Orbit*". Complete the procedure three times. However even one practice produces a fantastic result.

While *Nadi Sodhana with inverse breath* and *Tadan* are always practiced together, this exercise can be practiced independently. You will surely love it and will practice it, in different moments of your *Kriya* routine, every time you will feel the need to center in the internal state of calmness. When you experience the effect of this procedure you won't ask why this techniques should be practiced but why you have not practiced it before.

Note. Do not complicate this exercise, the procedure should always remain natural and likeable.

From now onwards it is fine (unless the instruction is to keep the mouth open) you keep your tongue in *baby Kechari position*. Of course practice *Kechari* proper if you are able to assume this position of the tongue.

First part: coming up

Take a deep, strong inhalation, marked by the particular sound of *Ujjayi*. [Of course when I say *Ujjayi*, the mouth is closed.] The length is about 4 seconds. Attract, through it, the energy from your body into the first *Chakra*. Feel *Kundalini* in the first *Chakra* and exhale rapidly with mouth open "huh." ² The length of the exhalation is about half second. During this exhalation *Kundalini* remains in the first *Chakra*.

Now take a deep, strong *Ujjayi* inhalation – the length is about 3-4 seconds. Feel that the energy comes upward from the first *Chakra* to the second. After feeling *Kundalini* in the second *Chakra* exhale rapidly with mouth open "huh." The length of the exhalation is about half second. During this exhalation *Kundalini* remains in the second *Chakra*.

The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the base of the spine to the third *Chakra*. [It is not necessary to perceive *Kundalini* crossing distinctly the second *Chakra*.]

The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the base of the spine to

² The sound is the same you produce with your mouth when you want to fog up a glass.

the fourth *Chakra*. [It is not necessary to perceive *Kundalini* crossing distinctly the second and the third *Chakras*.]

The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the base of the spine to the fifth *Chakra*. [It is not necessary ...]

The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the base of the spine to *Ajna Chakra*. [It is not necessary ...]

Second part: going down.

As a general rule, the procedure of going down is symmetric to the procedure of going up.

Take a rapid inhalation through the nose. This is not *Ujjayi*. The length is about 1 second. Feel that *Kundalini* is present in the seventh *Chakra* – the "Thousand petal lotus." Now have a deep, strong *Ujjayi* exhalation – the length is about 4 seconds. [This exhalation happens through the nose.] Feel that the energy of *Kundalini* comes down from the seventh *Chakra* to the spiritual eye in the space between the eyebrows.

Take a rapid inhalation through the nose – as in the previous breath. The length is about 1 second. Feel that *Kundalini* is present in the seventh *Chakra*. Now with a deep *Ujjayi* exhalation (the length is about 4 seconds) feel that the *Kundalini* energy comes down from the seventh *Chakra* to the frontal part of the fifth *Chakra*: the Adam's apple.

The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the seventh *Chakra* to the frontal part of the fourth *Chakra* – the central part of the breast bone. The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the seventh *Chakra* to the frontal part of the third *Chakra* – the navel. The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the seventh *Chakra* to the frontal part of the second *Chakra*. The procedure is repeated guiding *Kundalini* from the seventh *Chakra* to the base of the spine – the seat of *Muladhara*.

Note: optional way of intensify the procedure "Guiding Kundalini."

While going up, during each inhalation you can contract the muscles near the location of the *Chakra* you are focusing upon.

The muscles to be contracted are the following:

Muladhara: the back part of the perineum.

Swadhisthana: the genital and the sacrum muscles. You can practice Vajroli Mudra (contract and relax both the urethral sphincter.)

Manipura: tighten the muscles of the abdomen at the level of the navel.

Anahata Chakra: expand the chest. Bring the shoulder blades together and contract the part in the middle near the heart.

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. Contract the muscles of the back of the neck near the cervical vertebrae.

Medulla: clench your teeth and pull back your head, raising your chin.

During the second part (going down) of "*Guiding Kundalini*" there is only a slight contraction in the muscles near the location of the *Chakras* where the energy comes down from *Sahasrara Chakra*. All what we have described (in the definition of the procedure of "*Guiding Kundalini*") remains the same, there is only emphasis on the descent of Light. The ideal result would be to become sensitive to the different nuances of color of the light of the different *Chakras*.

After such intense procedure, it is good to deeply relax with some form of *Mental Pranayama* like the form we have explained at the end of chapter 6. Let me summarize it here:

After three deep breaths, let that the breath is natural and do not think of it. Move your awareness up and down along the spine making a pause in every *Chakra* for about 10-20 seconds. Try to perceive the sweetness that emanates from each *Chakra* until you perceive a feeling of sweetness, as if the *Chakra* is "melting". It is important that you assume a passive and patient attitude, with total trust in what will be revealed to you through the practice itself.

THIRD LESSON: Let us now put together the preliminary phase with a calm practice of Kriya Pranayama

In Routine 1 and Routine 1bis you will find a good method to utilize the four preparatory techniques by coupling them with Sri Mukherjee's *Kriya Pranayama*. Be patient, be not in a hurry and the experience will be fantastic.

ROUTINE R1
[A way to master the First level of Kriya]

This routine starts with an excellent preparatory phase that aims at opening the spinal passage located in the *Muladhara*. When this passage is opened even only partially, the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* becomes a real delight. This routine is like a vacation that you grant to yourself; the sense of work doesn't exist. Obviously, if you live a chaotic life and the mind is continually overheated at the point of collapse by thousand thoughts and worries, the process of internalization will be slower.

ROUTINE 1

- Prep. 1, 2, 3
- 36 Basic Kriya Pranayama
- Prep. 4: "Guiding Kundalini"
- Kriya Pranayama perceiving the light of the Chakras (72)

Explanation

In this routine I show you how to make the best use of the preparatory techniques. I counsel to break the *Kriya Pranayama* into two parts (36+72). After **Prep. 1, 2, 3** practice **36 Kriya breaths**. Then practice **Prep. 4 "Guiding Kundalini."** You will be stunned how easy is to perceive the location of the *Chakras* and to calm the breath. Therefore the following 72 *Kriya* breaths will happen in the best conditions.

This interruption is also useful to avoid the particular problem that is called "Plateau Effect."

The Plateau Effect is this: an exercise up to a certain moment seems effective, from a moment onwards seems not to work anymore. Our concentration faculties don't succeed in answering to the procedure that we are following and you can falsely think that there is no possible improvement in store for you or that we ourselves are a total failure. This effect is potentially destructive.

Now, during these 72 breaths you will have a great surprise. *Kriya Pranayama* will happen in an extraordinary way. If don't have your mind destroyed by a chaotic life, you will experience a real heaven.

You will succeed in "seeing" the *Chakras*. You will perceive that all the parts of your being are ideally focused in a region situated between *Kutastha* and *Ajna*. In this sphere you will perceive the lights [these lights seem weak but they bring great internal realization] of the different *Chakras*. This will be a stupendous moment of the practice. To close simply remain focused on the Internal Light.

R1 FINAL COMMENT

Enjoy this routine at least for one month before facing the next Routine R1bis. If you find Routine R1 boring and unpleasant, decrease the number of breaths. For example, instead of practicing 36+72 you can practice 12+24. In the days that you feel strongly negative avoid doing violence to your being. Simply rest and enjoy a country walk !

ROUTINE R1bis

[Another way to master the First level of Kriya]

Kriya Pranayama in three parts

During the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* you can move the attention from *Kutastha* to *Fontanelle* and to the heart *Chakra Anahata*. This is very wise: your routine will fill you with joy during all the day.

ROUTINE 1bis

- Prep. 1, 2, 3, 4
- Kriya Pranayama in three parts

Explanation

After having practiced the 4 preparatory techniques, divide the breaths of *Kriya Pranayama* in three parts.

In the first part the concentration is on *Kutastha*.

In the second part the concentration is on *Fontanelle*. In Chapter 7 we have explained how to do this. You need only to guide your awareness and energy at the summit of your head and remain stable there. Therefore, the chant of *Om 6+6* happens only in the *Fontanelle*. Very useful it is to also add a continuous *Aswini Mudra*.

We know that the practice of *Aswini Mudra* is insuperable in its power to make you touch with the awareness the spinal cord. Therefore, when you feel yourself ready, try to introduce a continuous *Aswini Mudra* during *Kriya Pranayama*. "Continuous" means: during the inhalation and during the exhalation. Always, continuously.

There are different definitions of *Aswini Mudra*. The standard definition is to repeatedly contract the muscles at the base of the spine (anal sphincter) with the rhythm of around two contractions a second. While learning the technique, you contract the buttock muscles, perineum or even the entire pelvic region also; with time, the contraction involves only the sphincter muscles.

This *Mudra* is a direct way of obtaining a perceptive contact with the energy at the base of the spine. This energy is pushed up within the spine. Little by little, *Aswini Mudra* will become more and more subtle – namely it will become just a mental pressure along the whole spine. You start to clearly perceive the totality of *Sushumna* like something cool and bright as a silver thread.

The exercise is very gratifying. You will perceive a white light, diffused, in the upper part of your head. A beautiful sensation of fresh air that comes up crossing each *Chakras* will make you feel filled with energy. A sweet warm that goes down permeating every zone of the body from top to

bottom will infuse a great feeling of comfort. The practice seems to have a life of its own.

Sometimes you will have the impression you are crossing a mental state, that is similar to falling asleep and suddenly returning to full awareness, realizing that you are basking in the spiritual light. It's like a plane emerging from clouds into a clear transparent sky.

Final part

During the last 36 *Kriya* breaths, the *Oms* (6+6) are mentally chanted in the *Anahata Chakra*. That's all. Forget the *Aswini Mudra* or make it so subtle that it cannot disturb. The routine ends with the awareness become stable in the heart *Chakra*.

FINAL COMMENT ABOUT ROUTINE 1 AND ROUTINE 1bis

Many persons write me thanking for the previous two routines. They said that the results is extraordinary. Let me emphasize the secret of the success of these routines.

The secret lies in the utilization of strong tools during the preparatory phase. *Nadi Sodhana with inverted breath*, *Tadan Kriya* and *Shakti Chalana* ("*Guiding Kundalini*") are very strong tools.

Never recoil from giving the right stimulation to the *Muladhara Chakra* before facing the subtle work of *Kriya Pranayama*!

In other *Kriya* schools, we see an excessive prudence in teaching effective tools that point at awakening the *Muladhara Chakra*. All the other *Chakras* are seriously taken into account.

I believe that there are no serious reasons to cultivate such fear. Let us avoid thinking that *Muladhara* and *Kundalini* can be a source of troubles!! *Kundalini* is the vital energy present in the body. It is true that when it enters *Sushumna* it has an overwhelming effect that recalls the image of a snake that hisses and spits when disturbed, but there is no reason to fear the *Kundalini* energy that is the very essence of the spiritual experiences.

A very good strategy is to complete the stimulus on the *Muladhara Chakra* by guiding the awakened *Kundalini* energy up and down along the spine. Remember also that this possibility is always achieved after having created a condition of energetic balance between *Ida* and *Pingala*.

Focusing on this task will help a *kriyaban* to familiarize with a dimension that can falsely appear as austere, while in reality is made of true Beauty.

Now the strategy for the remaining routines is to diminish the number of *Kriya Pranayamas* and utilize the *Higher Kriyas*.

Other six Routines are here described. You will find both *Kriya* techniques already explained in the preceding chapters and other procedures which I describe here for the first time. I tested them in these last years. All I can say is that there is really something great in them.

Familiarize with each one of them, studying and testing them in the given order. In my opinion each routine should be utilized for at least two months. However other approaches are possible, especially for people who are practicing some form of "spinal breathing" since many years. The four preparatory techniques are utilized in almost every routine, it is for this reason that I explained them at the starting point.

When in the following routines you find "*Basic Kriya Pranayama*" this refers to the technique of *Kriya Pranayama* as taught by Sri Mukherjee.

The routines that I am going to introduce

R 2: This is to work intensively upon the *Chakras*. They receive a great stimulus. There are two important techniques described here: *First Omkar Kriya* and *Sushumna Pranayama*. You don't find here the traditional *Second Kriya* (You find the description of it in the opening page of chapter 8.) The reason is that this *Second Kriya* technique is contained in the *First Omkar Kriya* and in the *Third Kriya*.

R 3: Here you find a strong form of *Thokar*. It is the Third Kriya technique. The description is the same as in chapter 8, **BUT** here you will benefit of an unorthodox detail about how to reach 200 repetitions

R 3bis: Here you find a totally different way of conceiving the *Thokar*: pushing the energy toward whatever target through fragmented exhalation.

R 4: The art of *Thokar* is here completed. The effect is to obtain the best form of *Pranayama*: *Pranayama with internal breath*.

R 5: After obtaining the "*Internal Breath*" your breath moves along the *Tribhangamurari path*. The *Tribhangamurari* is the form of *Sri Krishna*.

R 6: This is a formidable way of reaching the breathless state and, at the same time, to knock at the door of *Kutastha*. Through this routine that door opens...

FOURTH LESSON: Let us familiarize with the Higher Kriyas

ROUTINE R2

[A way to take a tremendous forward step for a good practice of Kriya Pranayama]

Piercing the Chakras

With this routine you become intensely aware of the reality of the *Chakras*. The *Chakras* are to be awakened and pierced by the *Prana* guided by your awareness.

ROUTINE 2

- Prep. 1, 2, 3
- Mental chanting of Om in the Chakras
- Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya Pranayama
- First Omkar Kriya
- Prep. 4
- Sushumna Pranayama

Explanation

Start with Prep. 1, 2 and 3

Mental chanting of Om in the Chakras

After Prep. 3 you are in a particular state of awareness in which it is easy to perceive the location of each *Chakra*. Vibrate mentally *Om* (sounds like Oooonnng) in the *Muladhara Chakra*; then do the same with the second *Chakra* and the same up to the fifth *Chakra* (*Vishuddha*) and then also in the *Medulla*. During this action, try to intuitively touch the internal nucleus of each *Chakra*. Don't pay attention to the breath: breathe naturally

Then the descent starts. *Om* is chanted in the cervical *Chakra*, then in the heart *Chakra*, then in each *Chakra*, down to *Muladhara*. Repeat this two more times.

The correct vocal 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. You can also practice with mouth 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). Some schools teach to chant *Vam* or *Bam* or *Hrom* at the place of *Om*. In particular *Hrom* (*Hroooooooooom*) is very effective. It fills you with euphoria.

• **Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya Pranayama**

We have described this wonderful technique in chapter 6. You can practice it now with supreme sweetness for 12-24 times.

The *Kriya* of Sri Mukherjee is fantastic. However it is true that the "*Original Kriya*" requires indeed that you mentally chant *Om* in the location of each *Chakra*. After practicing for many months the *Kriya* of Sri Mukherjee (Routine 1 and 1bis) it is more easy to practice Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya Pranayama*. I have explained in detail Sri Mukherjee's way of practicing the *Kriya Pranayama*. I wrote sincerely that to me it was a great discovery. I adore how it PREPARES you to the practice of the original *Kriya Pranayama*.

In my opinion Sri Mukherjee's instructions represent a didactic strategy that aims at making you realizing a correct practice of the original *Kriya Pranayama*.

If you try to practice the "*Original Kriya*", without a long preparatory phase – breathing intensely, while mentally placing the *Om Mantra* exactly in the seat of each *Chakra* – very probably you will do some mistakes that, in time, will halt your progress. Unaware, you will do violence to the system of your *Nadis*. You believe you have entered *Sushumna*, but, probably, you will not be there. You have only exerted a mental effort to enter a path which is momentarily barred. The door of *Sushumna*, instead of opening, remains firmly closed. The strategy of Sri Mukherjee is to make you gradually enter the *Sushumna*, enter with sweetness. Following his method you will arrive slowly but safety. The awareness of the essence of *Chakras* [and therefore their real location in the astral spine] will appear at the proper time.

First Omkar Kriya

Moderately contract the muscles at the base of the spine. Inhale and at the same time rise the awareness along the spinal column. Interlaced hands are placed over the navel to create a mental pressure over the first three *Chakras*. This pressure is perfected by adding the practice of *Uddiyana Bandha*. During the inhalation, lift the chin following the inner movement of the *Prana*; mentally chant *Om* in each *Chakra*. Or you can mentally chant the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya*.) *Om* is chanted in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second, *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu*. Hold your breath.

After the just described inhalation, bend the head to the left (without turning your face to the left), guide your awareness within the right hemisphere of the head (it is the part which in this moment remains aloft.) Then, always holding your breath, bend your head to the right intensifying the concentration on the left part of the left hemisphere (it is the part which in this moment remains aloft.) Keep holding your head, lower the chin on the chest and practice *Maha Bandha*.

Maha Bandha means practicing the three *Bandha* together. The three *Bandhas* are: *Mula Bandha*: contract the muscles at the base of the spine; *Uddiyana Bandha*: draw internally the abdominal muscles by contracting them; *Jalandhara Bandha*: keep the chin on the chest.

Perceive an intensification of the *Prana* in the *Dantian* region. Raise your chin as much as possible and perceive light in the region from the *Kutastha* to the *Fontanelle*.

Now your chin is perfectly horizontal. Start a sweet, slow, tranquil exhalation. This exhalation injects the Light in *Sushumna* through *Medulla*. Let the Light come down millimeter after millimeter towards the base of the spine. This Light "pierces" each *Chakra*. The mental chant of *Te, Va, Su, De, Va, Ya*, helps you to feel more clearly this "piercing" procedure.

Enjoy this powerful, beautiful beyond comparison, *Kriya Pranayama*. Enjoy the movements of the head, the *Bandhas*, the mental pressure of the *Prana* upon each *Chakra*. Repeat 24-36 times.

Now you can close your routine with the beautiful Prep. 4. If you have time, you can try the very subtle *Sushumna Pranayama*.

Sushumna Pranayama

Sushumna Pranayama is the *Pranayama* that happens inside the *Sushumna* and therefore in the state of breathlessness. We shall reach this state by a succession of short breaths between *Muladhara* and each *Chakra*.

Start with three deep breaths. Then focus the attention on the *Muladhara*. When it comes natural to inhale, inhale without forcing the breath and pause an instant in the second *Chakra*. Try to have a good perception of this *Chakra*. Exhale when it comes natural to exhale and focus again on *Muladhara*. Make a short pause. When it comes natural to inhale, inhale without forcing the breath and pause an instant in the *Third Chakra*. Try to have a good perception of this *Chakra*. Exhale when it comes natural to exhale and focus again on the *Muladhara*.

Repeat the procedure between the *Muladhara* and the fourth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* and the fifth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* and *Medulla*; *Muladhara* and fifth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* - fourth *Chakra*; *Muladhara* - third *Chakra*; *Muladhara* – Second *Chakra*.

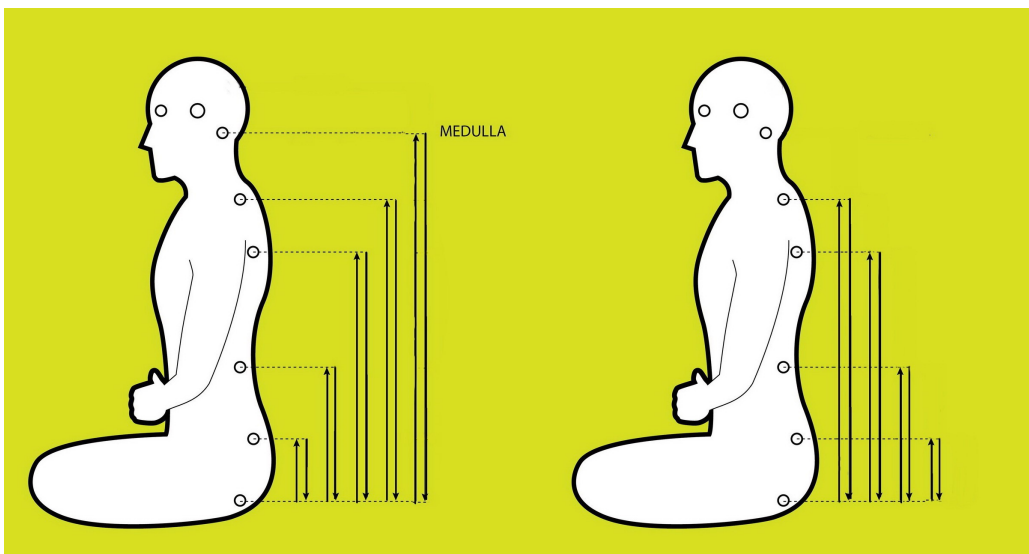


Fig.22 One cycle is made of 9 short breaths

These 9 calm breaths are one cycle. If at this point your breath has not drastically calmed down, you practice one or two cycles more.

After 4-6 cycles you will notice that the breath is almost disappeared, while the spine has become like a steel bar. I cannot guarantee that you will also succeed in listening to the internal sounds coming from the *Chakras*,

but you will certainly perceive a particular internal pressure in the head which is an aspect of the *Omkar* dimension.

Once completed 4-6 cycles, if you are not in the breathless state forget the *Chakras* and make the procedure more "subtle". Feel *Muladhara* and a small piece of the spine, then *Muladhara* and another piece of the spine, then another The mechanism is the same but instead of reaching the perception of the whole spine in 5 steps you reach it in a greater number of steps.

You intuitively discover the power of conquering the spine millimeter after millimeter. What does it mean "conquering"? It means to perceive, to be intensely conscious.... It means that you do not breathe anymore and you are inside the *Sushumna*.

One day your intuition will suggest to focus on the totality of your body and perceive there a fresh energy. 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" ³
(*Garcia Lorca*)

R2 FINAL COMMENT

First Kriya as taught by Sri Mukherjee // First Omkar Kriya // Prep. 4 (Guiding Kundalini) // Sushumna Pranayama are four wonderful procedures to come very near to the breathless state. They are a real blessing!

I emphasize this because if a *kriyaban* desires to experience *Thokar* in its elementary form and practice it at the place of the *First Omkar Kriya*, or after it, he can of course do that, but he must be very careful, prudent, delicate. Otherwise the breathless state instead of coming near may move away. Study the Elementary form of *Thokar* in the beginning of chapter 8.

³ "Don't ask me that I explain it. I have the fire in the hands

ROUTINE R3

[A wonderful way of having the experience of Thokar]

The *Advanced Form of Thokar* is the *Thokar* repeated various times while holding the breath. In the past I have experimented it in different variations but the outcome was never good – save for the form that I am going to describe here.

ROUTINE 3

- Prep. 1, 2, 3,4
- First Omkar Kriya
- Cross shaped Pranayama
- Third Kriya (Advanced form of Thokar)
- Savasana

Explanation

After the sequence of all the preliminary techniques and after a small number of repetitions of First Omkar Kriya (12-24) let us consider the following procedure:

Cross shaped Pranayama

Practice some breaths in the following way. When you inhale, feel a movement of energy that goes from the left part of the body toward the right part. During exhalation feel a movement of energy from the right part of the body toward the left part. To this breath, a classic *Kriya* breath follows: the energy moves upwards during inhalation and downwards during exhalation. Go ahead alternating the two ways of breathing. You need only 6 couple of breaths to clearly feel the location of the *Anahata Chakra*. Practice 18 couples of breaths. The last couples of breaths must be very very subtle.

Now let us describe the following technique which is a real jewel:

Third Kriya (Advanced form of Thokar)

Moderately contract the muscles at the base of the spine. Inhale and at the same time rise the awareness along the spinal column. Interlaced hands are

placed over the navel to create a mental pressure over the first three *Chakras*. This pressure is perfected by adding the practice of *Uddiyana Bandha*. During the inhalation, lift the chin following the inner movement of the *Prana*; mentally chant *Om* in each *Chakra*. Or you can mentally chant the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* (*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya.*) *Om* is chanted in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second, *Mo* in the third, *Bha* in the fourth, *Ga* in the fifth and *Ba* in *Bindu*. Hold your breath.

After the just described inhalation, move your head a few millimeters to the left, then return to the center with your chin slightly up. Without stopping turn your face to the right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. There should be no stress in this movement.

Mentally chant "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung. The syllable *Su* is vibrated in the center of the heart *Chakra* while directing the chin near the center of your chest with a rapid movement. This produces a hit (*Thokar*) in the center of the heart *Chakra*.

Do not exhale, repeat the "*Te Va Su*" procedure. "Repeat" means: raise your chin and focus for an instant your awareness to *Bindu* where you vibrated the sixth syllable *Ba*, move your head a few millimeters to the left, then return to the center with your chin slightly up. Without stopping turn your face to the right... vibrate *Tee* at the top of the right lung. Then move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing *Va* at the top of the left lung, then practice again *Thokar* on the heart by vibrating *Su* in it.

...repeat and repeat... : "*Te Va Su*" "*Te Va Su*" "*Te Va Su*"...

Feel the irradiation of Light increasing, maintaining the state of *Kumbhaka*... keep it until you feel that it is correct to stop and exhale.

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 80 seconds.

This technique is to be practiced once a day.

A first counsel to increase comfortably the number of rotations

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. It is imperative not to feel uneasiness! "Do not force" is the pressing recommendation!

Now, how is it possible to achieve the goal of 200 rotations, without interrupting the *Kumbhaka* state, comfortably? Satisfying this request appears very difficult – almost impossible. Almost all *kriyabans* are jammed after 30-40 repetitions, while gasping for breath.

Does the solution lie in going ahead rotating your head much more quickly? No, this would be silly. Please consider what I am explaining now.

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 this phenomenon happen of its own accord. The sensation will always be of not breathing at all.

In other words, if you want to go ahead comfortably with this practice, you must give up the idea of keeping a perfect *Kumbhaka* while trying to reach the 200 rotations goal.

The counsel to renounce a perfect *Kumbhaka* is strange, 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 and without hurry. You will experience 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.

The advice that I have given can seem a desecration, however... it works.

All this was already explained in chapter 8 (and is given here for you convenience) please consider the following counsel to be applied before starting your *Third Kriya*.

Before starting the *Third Kriya* procedure, inhale slowly and steadily through your nose and at the same time pull-in the stomach and lift up the the perineum. While inhaling, mentally repeat *Om, Na, Mo...*and raise the *Prana* to the upper part of the lungs. Then partially relax the muscles of the thoracic cage as if you were going to begin a new inhalation.

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. Be sure to feel *Prana* pervade the rib cage and become calm and stable there.⁴

Well, taking this as a basis, utilize the best attitude you have to reach a real, tangible freedom from the breath. Remain stable in this state, without ever letting the abdomen and the rib cage relax and the *Prana* slide down. In this mental and physical state, apply the first counsel given before and practice your *Third Kriya*. 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.

Savasana

After practicing this method for at least a couple of weeks, something very strong could happen in you spine.

Let us suppose that, after a good practice of *Kriya*, you have the opportunity of being alone for about half an hour, locked in a room where no one can reach you.

Relax in the *Savasana* position and enter the state of deep sleep (*Turiya*.) Suddenly an extensive, yet intense Beauty is in front of you but somehow

⁴ The counsel to mentally chanting *Om, Om, Om...* really draws energy in the spine from all the parts of your body and guides it toward the spine. 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.

distant as within a kind of ideal horizon. You feel that Beauty, you recognize It and feel limitless joy. Your reaction is crying of nostalgic longing. The joy intensifies and you are not able to bear it anymore because it becomes like an aching pain. You are aware that your time to merge with that Beauty has not yet come. You return to reality with tears in your eyes, tears of joy and burning devotion.

"My worship is of a very strange kind. Holy water is not required. No special utensils are necessary. Even flowers are redundant. In this worship, all gods have disappeared, and emptiness has merged with euphoria." (*Lahiri Mahasaya*)

R3 FINAL COMMENT

In this routine we have faced the delicate process of experiencing a long *Kumbhaka*. I gave you a particular counsel how to proceed with delicacy.

Soon after my initial footsteps in Yoga, I studied shortly after the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali commented by T.K. Taimni. I was spellbound from his annotations. Among the other things he recommended to be prudent with the *Kumbhaka*. Those words made me understand that I had among the hands a powerful tool of spiritual evolution.

"*Kumbhaka* affects the flow of pranic currents in a very marked and fundamental manner and enables the *Yogi* to gain increasing control over these currents. [...] Not only is *Kumbhaka* the essential element of real *Pranayama* but it is also the source of danger in the practice of *Pranayama*. The moment one starts retaining the breath, especially after inhalation, in any abnormal manner the danger begins and one can never know what it will lead to. [...] *Kumbhaka* unlocks the doors of unexpected experiences and powers. If it is taken up without the necessary preparation and guidance it is sure to lead to disaster."

I have always followed his admonishment and I hope that the reader of these notes wants to follow it. We will never try to hold back the breath in abnormal way. Our "holding" will be always very prudent.


ROUTINE R3bis

[A very particular way to cooperate with the Third level of Kriya]

**A different form of Thokar**

In this routine the repeated stimulus of the *Anahata Chakra* happens through a particular form of fragmented exhalation. This powerful method is not part of the canonical Kriyas, therefore it is not described in chapter 8 or 9. You find it only here in chapter 12.

ROUTINE R3bis

- Prep. 1, 2, 3,4
- First Omkar Kriya
- Thokar with fragmented exhalation

Explanation

After the sequence of all the preliminary techniques and after a small number of repetitions of First Omkar Kriya (12-24) let us consider the following procedure:

Thokar with fragmented exhalation

After a short but deep inhalation (nothing to do with *Kriya* inhalation, you simply fill the lungs with air) a long exhalation happens through the half closed mouth. Precisely: the lips are united in the central part and the air goes out through the side part of the lips. During the exhalation, the sound of s-s-s-s-s-s-s... is produced... creating between the lips a warm sensation which is continually transferred mentally to the spine. When you actually feel the warm in the spine, the exercise is practiced correctly. When you don't feel it, usually the problem lies in the fact that you are practicing in a too quick way.

In the first part of the exercise you increase the perception of the warm energy in Chakra 1, then 2, 3, 4, 5, Medulla, right part of the brain, left part of the brain, Chakra 5, Chakra 4.

In the second part of the exercise through one (I mean only one) long exhalation you guide the energy millimeter after millimeter along the spinal path that goes from Medulla to Chakra 4.

First part

After a deep inhalation, utilize a long fragmented exhalation with s-s-s-s-s... sound to increase the perception of the warm energy in *Chakra 1*. Produce as much micro pushes s-s-s-s-s.. as it is possible [until you remain without breath.] After another deep inhalation, utilize a long fragmented exhalation with s-s-s-s-s... sound to increase the perception of the warm energy in *Chakra 2*. Then do the same with the focus of your concentration on *Chakra 3, 4, 5, Medulla, right part of the brain, left part of the brain, Chakra 5, Chakra 4*. At this point the first part of the exercise is completed.

Second part

After a deep inhalation, utilize the ensuing long fragmented exhalation with s-s-s-s-s... sound to guide a warm flow of energy from the right part of the brain to the left part of the brain and then to *Medulla*. This requires few seconds. Now, without interrupting the exhalation come down very slowly along the spinal path, cross the cervical center and come down very, very slowly (millimeter after millimeter) until you enter the heart *Chakra* and stop there.

The last part of the exhalation has a sound like "sssst" and is strong and sharp. In other words, when the exhalation is ending, inject energy in the heart *Chakra* with the movement of the chin. This is a form of *Thokar*. Stop an instant in the *Anahata Chakra* to perceive the particular energetic irradiation that is originated there and expands in the heart region.

Inhale deeply and repeat this procedure. The general plan of *Kriya* practice envisages 36 repetitions of this technique.

The secret is to intensify, through the power of concentration, the heat produced by the different fragmented exhalations. The heat is increased by increasing the number of small micro parts of the exhaling breath. This form of *Thokar* is really strong, there are no doubts!

Repeat the exercise at least 36 times. Then breathe freely, become stable in the meditation posture. Reach a state of pure flow of awareness WITHOUT A SINGLE THOUGHT. Remain like this 15-20 minutes.

R3bis FINAL COMMENT

One day you will bless the technique of the fragmented exhalation. You will realize that it succeeds in an instant in lifting your spirits. Every time you feel the necessity of it, utilize the procedure until you feel perfectly calm and serene.

ROUTINE R4

[Complete form of Thokar leading to Pranayama with Internal Breath]

The ancient texts of *Hatha Yoga* affirm that the *Pranayama* without the three *Bandhas* (*Jalandhara*, *Mula* and *Uddiyana*) is useless. They affirm also that the *Bandhas* are useless without *Maha Veda*. Well then, what is this *Maha Veda* to whom they give such supreme importance?

A simple form of *Maha Veda* is the *Tadan Kriya* that we apply inside **Prep.3**. *Maha Veda* in its full form is the *Fourth Kriya* that we are going to learn now.

ROUTINE 4

- Prep. 1
- First Omkar Kriya
- Fourth Kriya
- Pranayama with Internal Breath.

Explanation

After the first Preliminary technique (forward bendings) + 12 First Omkar Kriya practice the Fourth Kriya

Fourth Kriya

[See illustration in chapter 8. (Figure 9.)

First part

► Inhalation [The same kind of Inhalation that you have learned in First Omkar Kriya and in Third Kriya]

... During the inhalation, lift the chin following the inner movement of the

Prana. Mentally chant the syllables of the *Mantra*: *Om Na mo Bha Ga Ba*.

Hold your breath. Move your head to the left of few millimeters, then return to the center with chin slightly up. Without stopping, turn your face toward right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. Vibrate "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung.

From this position there is a movement of the chin to hit the *Anahata Chakra*. You mentally chant "Su" feeling a hitting sensation in the heart *Chakra*.

Holding your breath and starting from the upper part of the right lung where you again chant *Te*, repeat the movement of your head and place *Va* at the top of the left lung, then there is a movement of the chin to hit the third *Chakra* with the syllable *Su*. [Yes the same syllable you have utilized to hit the fourth *Chakra*.]

In a similar way you hit the second *Chakra* and then the first *Chakra Muladhara* where, after *Su*, you also chant the final syllables *De Va Ya*.

Second part

In the second part, Chakras 2, 3 and 4 are not stimulated: only *Muladhara* receives our stimulation with *Thokar*. The action of *Tadan Kriya* is called *Maha Veda Mudra* "Mudra of the great perforation."

What is the difference between *Maha Veda* and *Tadan*, the *Tadan* that we have practiced in Prep.3? The answer is very simple: there is no difference. There is only one fact to underline: now we are ready to receive all its power. Now it is important to handle that power, and this happens by experiencing **Pranayama with Internal Breath** after the practice of the *Fourth Kriya*.

► Inhale... During the inhalation, lift the chin following the inner movement of the *Prana*. Mentally chant the syllables of the *Mantra*: *Om Na mo Bha Ga Ba*. Hold your breath. Move your head to the left of few millimeters, then return to the center with chin slightly up. Without stopping, turn your face toward right. The chin goes down a bit to get closer to the front of the right shoulder. Vibrate "Tee" at the top of the right lung. Then slowly move your head to the symmetrical position by mentally placing "Va" at the top of the left lung.

From this position there is a movement of the chin to hit the *Muladhara Chakra* with the syllable *Su*.

When you come down with *Thokar* (you are holding your breath) lift your body, with the help of the hands, of few millimeters and then let the buttocks touch the seat with a mild jolt. *Thokar* in *Muladhara* happens in this moment. Have three jolts – be sure that you are holding your breath during them! Then exhale, slowly and deeply. Relax any tension, perceive an ecstatic feeling. This detail is very important: it is a signal that the *Prana* has entered the spine and *Kundalini* starts its travel upwards. The mental energy (not just the physical action) that you put in this exercise is a decisive factor. Repeat this *Kriya* for 6 to 12 times. Wait months before increasing.

Now, what is Pranayama with Internal Breath?

Consider the experience that Lahiri Mahasaya reports in his diaries when, a couple of years after his initiation at the Himalaya, he wrote: "After an excellent *Pranayama*, today the breath is completely directed inside. After so much time, today the purpose of my descent (on the earth) has reached!"

This is a great sentence! The breath has become *mental substance, something immaterial*. PY describes the same event by referring to an elevated form of *Kriya Pranayama* where energy moves without utilizing the breath.

Method 1

Consider the procedure Prep.4 "*Guiding Kundalini*." Start it soon after completing the practice of the *Fourth Kriya*.

Practice it very, very slowly. The six inhalations of the "ascending" phase must be long and intense. With the first inhalation the energetic movement is perceived as an energetic stream from the body to the first *Chakra*. A short exhalation follows.

The second inhalation is very important. The energetic movement is perceived from the first to the second *Chakra*. This movement must be very very slow. If you deem it necessary, repeat it. Don't mind about time. Come up millimeter after millimeter. Do the same with all the other parts of the spinal path up to *Sahasrara*.

The "descent" phase follows. Through the six exhalations you perceive the movement of the energy from the *Sahasrara* to the sixth *Chakra*, then to the fifth, then to the fourth etc... If you go ahead slowly, this phase is not difficult. The maximum of intensity is given to the "ascension" phase.

Method 2

This is more difficult because you must alternate it with your *Fourth Kriya*. After completing one round of *Fourth Kriya*, inhale very, very slowly, feeling that you are really entering the spine. Come up as far as possible, crossing each *Chakra* while trying to reach your head. Proceed with great delicacy and sensitivity.

You will discover that you can guide the movement of the energy up the spine. Perhaps only for a small stretch. Do not force – it is not necessary to complete that breath. Instead let your task unaccomplished and start another round with the *Fourth Kriya*.

After that round, try again your experience with the *Internal Breath*. Whatever happens, whatever you perceive (a very delicate current moving up the spine) is precious.

At a certain moment you will experience with renewed joy that you are really inside the spine and your *Pranayama* has become more subtle than you ever thought possible. You will feel the beauty and the strength of this process: for some days you will not desire any other thing to do. This work will seem you the most important you have ever done in *Kriya*.

R4 FINAL COMMENT

During the day observe yourself. You will notice an alternation in your mood. Sometimes your nights will be characterized by very vivid dreams that could upset you. Sometimes they will make you live in the most sublime state of ecstatic enjoyment. Why all this? Because the power started by striking the *Muladhara* is great. The effect of this technique is a shock. You will live in a new way: you will live allied with Truth, accepting all the consequences of being sincere with people.

ROUTINE R5

[A way to master the Fifth level of Kriya]

This *Fifth Kriya* is a higher octave of *Fourth Kriya*. Its action is very subtle.

ROUTINE 5

- Prep. 1
- First Omkar Kriya
- Preparation to Fifth Kriya
- Fifth Kriya
- Pranayama with Internal Breath along the Tribhangamurari path.

Explanation

After Prep.1 and *First Omkar Kriya* try to have a clear perception of the *Tribhangamurari* movement. The follow preparation is very useful, but you must know what is explained in chapter 9.

Preparation to Fifth Kriya

In chapter 9 we have divided the work into three parts: *Amantrak*, *Samantrak* and *Thokar*. Here we omit *Amantrak* and simply perceive the *Tribhangamurari* movement by reciting the syllables *Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su De Va Ya*. You can chant mentally those syllables or whisper them with your voice. Read the simple instruction given in Chapter 9. See figure 11. Intensify with mental pressure the energetic flow of energy along the whole *Tribhangamurari* circuit. Each syllable when vibrated in the right place is like a mental *Thokar*. Make the round 24-36 times.

Fifth Kriya

Practice this procedure only when the energetic flow along the *Tribhangamurari* path is well printed in your consciousness.

Inhale placing the first six syllables of the *Mantra* in the relative *Chakras*. Hold your breath. Go down along the *Tribhangamurari* path making the movements of the head and giving five blows in the way we have explained in Chapter 9.

Let us shortly recall the movements of the head.

Without turning the face, bend your head sideways a couple of centimeters to the left. Return to the middle raising the chin. Feel the seventh center in the left part of the brain. Remain only an instant in this position and chant *Tee* there. Then turn the face to the right as much as possible. Only the face moves, not the torso. The chin touches the right shoulder for an instant and the syllable *Va* is vibrated in that region.

Then the face turns to the left. The syllable *Su* is vibrated in that region and the chin for an instant touches the left shoulder. 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 syllables *De* and *Va* are vibrated. Finally, with the chin down in the central position the syllable *Yaaa* is vibrated in *Muladhara*.

You notice that the three final blows characterized by *De*, *Va* and *Yaaa* produce a sense of ecstasy. The last movement, the blow upon the *Muladhara Chakra* is especially enjoyable: the energy is pushed upwards from the base of the spine toward the heart *Chakra*. It is possible to perceive divine Light in the upper part of your head.

After chanting *Yaaa...*, the exhalation starts. During the exhalation you don't utilize again the *Tribhangamurari* path. You simply create a fine "eee..."⁵ sound in the throat and visualize a white light coming down along the back of the spine. Feel a warm current. The practice is so beautiful that often you will enter the ecstatic state during the practice itself. It is a drunkenness of joy.

At the end of the exhalation you can practice *Tadan* 3 times. Then relax.

Repeat the procedure 36 times.

Pranayama with Internal Breath along the Tribhangamurari path

Now practice Pranayama with Internal Breath along the Tribhangamurari path. You are doing Pranayama inside the Tribhangamurari path. But this is internal.

R5 FINAL COMMENT

The sixth level of *Kriya* we are going to describe in the next routine, represents the final improvement to enter *Kutastha* and complete your spiritual path. Most persons try to complete the spiritual path through *Yoni Mudra*. I prefer to complete it with the very subtle practice of R6.

⁵ SHEEE is perceived as: [ʃi:]

ROUTINE R6

[A way to master the Sixth level of Kriya]

In search of the Micro movement Tribhangamurari

Let's prepare for a definitive work in *Kutastha* and therefore in *Sushumna*. We shall utilize a formidable method that should be learned with great attention and patience.

ROUTINE 6

- Prep. 1, 2 and 3
- First Omkar Kriya
- Fifth Kriya
- Pranayama with Internal Breath along the Tribhangamurari path.
- Perception of the Micro Movement Tribhangamurari

Explanation

We have already experienced each entry up to "Pranayama with Internal Breath along the Tribhangamurari path."

Perception of the Micromovimento Tribhangamurari

Put the totality of your being in *Muladhara Chakra*. Inhale a subtle breath by mentally chanting *Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba* trying to feel something moving inside *Muladhara*. There is something that starts in the back part of the *Muladhara* and comes forward toward the frontal part of it. Then exhale a subtle breath by mentally chanting *Te Va Su De Va Ya* trying to perceive a movement sensation with three curves that returns back to the position of departure. This (the internal sensation that accompanies the recitation of the 12 syllables) is the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari*.

Perceive it three times. Then focus on the *second Chakra* and patiently to have there the same experience. Then in the *third Chakra*....

In conclusion you have the experience of the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari* three times inside each of the 12 centers. You see that your focus touches each of the first 5 Chakras, then Bindu, then the center in the left part of the brain, then the center in the upper part of the right chest, then the one on the left part of the chest, then two centers coming down towards *Muladhara* and finally *Muladhara* again to close the round.

See fig. 14 in chapter 9. During one round the *Micro movement* is perceived 3x12 times.

[In the *Muladhara Chakra* the *Micro movement* is perceived 3+3 times. This is correct because here *Muladhara* plays a particular role.]

Well, this long procedure is to be repeated three times for a total of $3 \times 12 \times 3 = 108$ times

During this long practice, the breath disappears while the spine becomes like a bar of steel. This exercise has a power, without parallel to let you enter *Sushumna* and pierce *Kutastha*.

If you practice in open country, with open eyes, then the practice becomes pure ecstasy. Going beyond the sense of drowsiness that is typical of this practice, you will enter another dimension. Somehow your perception of space and time are altered.

R6 FINAL COMMENT

During the day take back the practice of the *Japa Tribhangamurari Macro*. Go ahead slowly. Decide (through your strong will) that each syllable of the *Mantra* is translated into joy. Feel that each syllable promotes your alertness and your capacity for joy. You feel such an intense joy that your mind will blow up. ... and you know that *Samadhi* happens when actually your mind blows up.

*Seize me as I pass by
if you have the strength to do so,
and try to solve the enigma of happiness
that I offer you. (M. Proust)*

PART IV: HOW TO AVOID FAILURE ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

CHAPTER 13

THE VALUE OF JAPA AND THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

Devotional Prayer [Japa, Internal Oration] especially if it becomes *continuous* and is sustained by the practice of the "*Presence of the Divine*" is a complete-in-itself path. *Japa* is not a plea to God with the purpose of obtaining something necessary to the material existence or peace, happiness... A mystic utilizes *Japa* to declare their intention of worship and complete surrender to the Divine.

I don't enter in intellectual discourses to state dogmatically that *Kriya* is a quicker path. I am interested only in one thing: while following the path of *Kriya Yoga*, it is very wise to accept the help of *Japa*.

I have already introduced *Japa* in the first part of the book [chapter 3]. Here I am setting out to take back that theme in a systematic way. The first part of this chapter deals with the *Japa* that you can practice during the daily chores, the second part of it is devoted to a meditative practice called "*Prayer of the heart*." The third part is biographical and tells some personal experiences with *Japa*.

There are many reason for practicing *Japa*. Since the first moments of my practice of *Pranayama* I had one fixed idea: to practice my *Kriya* routine inside a particular mental state that could be reached through the practice of *Japa*. The idea to renounce to the pleasures of uncontrolled thought during the day was a sacrifice that would generate a new mind. If my idea was correct, *Japa* could help me looking at *Pranayama* not as a mere breathing exercise aiming at the modification of the state of some energetic currents in my body but as a continuous merging, a co-habitation with a continuous state of bliss.

Readings

In chapter 3 I tell about my finding the book by Swami Ramdas "In search of God." This book inspired my decision to practice *Japa* utilizing his *Mantra*. This is true, but it is also true that I had already read the works of

Teresa of Avila and also the book (whose author remains anonymous) "The way of a pilgrim."

Teresa of Avila

In the search of inspiring literature about *Omkar*, I found the writings of John of the Cross and of Teresa of Avila. The first gives a splendid description of his meeting with the "silent music", the "sounding solitude", the second drew my attention about the importance of "Internal Oratio" (Devotional Prayer.) I treasured the words of Teresa of Avila. ¹

"Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you, all things are passing, God is unchanging. Patience gains all; nothing is lacking to those who have God: God alone is sufficient."

According to her, *Prayer* is all in all in the mystical path. She wrote: "The body becomes insensitive and the will is totally captivated by irresistible devotion. The other faculties, such as memory, reason, and imagination, are progressively captivated and occupied with God. Both intellect and will are absorbed in God. Distractions are not possible and the external bodily senses are made prisoners."

"You can do nothing without *Prayer* and you can do miracles with it." There is no other exercise upon which she insists so much in all of her writings and to which she grants such importance. In her opinion, the soul that doesn't create the habit of *Prayer* won't reach the mystical goal. Strange as it may seem, I firmly believe in this statement.

Her words could sometimes appear obscure to people. We *kriyabans* can easily understand them:

"The soul is wounded with love for the Divine. Body and Spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence, unconsciousness, and a feeling of *suffocation*, sometimes intermixed with such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. There are moments in which you feel like an arrow has deeply penetrated your heart. One laments

¹ Saint Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, (March 28, 1515 – October 4, 1582) was a prominent Spanish mystic, Roman Catholic saint, Carmelite nun, and writer of the Counter Reformation, and theologian of contemplative life through Contemplative Prayer. She was a reformer of the Carmelite Order. The teaching of St. Teresa flows from her own experience and not from books. In the mist of the countless complications of the catholic faith she saw that with a simple *Prayer*, to be repeated without cease a soul can cross all the different levels of the spiritual path up to the union with God.

with such a vivid and intense pain, but at the same time the experience is so delicious you never want it to end."

She is explaining what happens when *Kundalini* comes up to the heart. I bow to this description because it is true, deeply true. When you experience *Kundalini* rising, no other reaction is possible except a giant wave of love towards the Divine. The strength of this Love intensifies around the fourth *Chakra*, as if a mighty hand is squeezing the region of your heart. When you return to normal state of consciousness, you cannot stop your tears of devotion.

Before adding other remarks about Japa. Let me remind an important point discussed in chapter 3.

I explained how, after practicing *Japa* during the day, I encountered the breathless state. I choose to repeat Swami Ramdass' Mantra and I practiced it aloud for about 108 repetitions in a low voice (not mentally!) At evening I retired in my room to practice my *Kriya* session and almost at the end of my routine, while mentally moving up and down along the spine, I distinctly perceived that the life of my cells were sustained by fresh energy which didn't originated from the inhaled air. Then I explain how I entered a perfect physical and mental immobility and, at a certain moment, I was completely without breath. The surprise that one of the simplest techniques in the world, such as *Japa*, had produced such a valuable result was very great!

In chapter 3 I state three important conditions to be followed in order to obtain the breathless state:

- [1] the *Japa* is to be practiced aloud (not mentally) for at least one Mala (108 times)
- [2] it should be practiced not immediately before the *Kriya* session but at least a couple of hours before it.
- [3] from the moment the 108 repetitions aloud are done, *Japa* should go ahead mentally, effortlessly, without caring if the mind is concentrated or not.

Then I give my idea about the working mechanism of *Japa*. The peculiarity of *Japa* is to annihilate the "background noise" of the mind. This "noise" becomes perceptible only when you sit for meditation. There are some thoughts which you can visualize, identify and, in case, block, but a diffuse, persistent hard-to-rid-of background noise nullifies all your effort at concentration. There is also a remark about how the breathless state

becomes almost instantaneous when you evoke mentally your *Ishta Devata* – your favorite form of conceiving the Divine essence.

This is what we have already explained. Now let us start the first part of this chapter

FIRST PART: OTHER REMARKS ABOUT JAPA

How to find your Mantra

Most books insist only upon a heap of banalities. When I read that the *mala* (rosary) for *Japa* should be made of this or of that material, or that it should not be seen by others, or that the *Sumeru* bead [an extra bead as the extension to the row, which is the point at which one round of counting around the *mala* begins and ends] should never be passed [if you do the *mala* twice, you should turn it and make the last bead become the first bead of the second round] ... I infer that the person who is writing has no familiarity with the virtue of common sense. The same I feel when I read that *Japa* works only when we use a particular formula utilized in the liturgical tradition.

Furthermore, experience and common sense contradict the belief that a *Mantra* works only if it is given by a *Guru*. Certainly if you want to lighten your portfolio then race to a teacher and buy your personal *Mantra*...

Naturally in certain occasions having a teacher is justified. When an experienced person helps you to choose a *Mantra* and uses everything in his power of persuasion to convince you to apply it continually, this persons does you the greatest of all the favors and is correct to compensate him; but that's all!

Choose a *Mantra* (Prayer) that appeals to you. Don't feel obliged to use Lahiri Mahasaya's favored *Vasudeva Mantra* ("Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya".) It is true that among different favorite prayers, you could prefer one that has (by adding, if necessary, *Om* or *Amen* at the beginning or at the end) twelve syllables. Twelve is a perfect number because you can utilize it during *Kriya Pranayama*, placing each of its syllables in a different *Chakra*. Various beautiful twelve-syllables *Mantras* can be taken out of *Bhajans* or poems. As an example, from the well-known Adi Shankara's chant you can select the beautiful 12-syllable verse: *Chi-dan-da-ru-pah-shi-vo-ham-shi-vo-ham* [*That Form which is pure consciousness and bliss, I am that supreme Being!*]

One thing should be stated objectively: YOUR *Mantra* should express or evoke exactly what YOU want to achieve and embody the attitude you want to express. For example, the attitude of surrender is expressed by *Mantras* beginning with *Om Namó* ... other *Mantras* might express the absolute non-dual realization, and so on. Sometimes, the meaning is not as important as having in one's heart the example of a dear saint who used it.

Generally speaking, a good choice is that of a *Mantra* having both a strong and a soft tone. Be sensitive to the vibration that your *Mantra* arouses in the body and heart.

In literature you will see how beautiful *Mantras* have been built. Here you have the *Krishna Mantra: Om Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijana Vallabhaya Swaha*. Here you have the *Durga* (Divine Mother) *Mantra: Om Hrim Dhum Durgaye Namaha....*

If you study the concept of *Bija Mantra*, you can forge for yourself a wonderful *Mantra*. To a pre existent *Mantra*, after the initial *Om*, your teacher can add some "*Bija*" (seed) *Mantras* like: Aim, Dúm, Gam, Glamu, Glom, Haum, Hoom, Hreem, Hrom, Kleem, Kreem, Shreem, Stream, Vang, ...

These sounds were chosen by ancient *yogis*, who felt their beauty and liked their vibration. They were not given by a divinity, they are a human discovery. These seed *Mantras* have no meaning but can enrich a *Mantra* who has a meaning. Don't choose a *Mantra* only because certain literature extolls the power of this or of that *Bija Mantra*. Read your mood, feel your emotions after an intense practice of a *Mantra*.

Some make an unfortunate choice, through which they seem to punish themselves. The sentence they have chosen to repeat could have negative tones and emphasize unequivocally their limits and unworthiness. When this happens it is clear that after a short time, their practice of *Japa* falls apart – they find themselves repeating that *Mantra* once or twice during the day, like a sigh of dejection.

How to practice your Mantra

Even though the oriental traditions recommend to do *Japa* mentally, I am confident that it should be done aloud – at least for an initial set of a hundred repetitions. Resolve to complete daily at least one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) of it aloud. Pronounce its syllables with serene attitude. Learn to resonate it in your mouth, chest and head areas. When you have completed the 108 repetitions, close your mouth and let *Japa* go ahead mentally, effortlessly, in the background of your awareness. When it is

possible, take back the vocal practice of *Japa* in the next hours.²

While you practice, feel the protective shell of tangible peace surrounding you. I am not recommending to do an exercise of visualization but only to become aware of a subtle substance in which you are immersed. The same substance is also perceived by those who come in contact with you.

Observe, while doing *Japa*, an irresistible impulse to put everything in order. The *Mantra* works in a similar way to clean your mental stuff and to put your "psychological furniture" in order. The practice is like a pneumatic hammer tearing asunder the concrete of the mind's conditionings, allowing you to cross, unharmed, its swamps and reach the dimension of pure awareness.

A very strong way of practicing

I tried to pass on this experience to other persons. I am reminded of a friend who practiced *Kriya* without getting any result. I talked to him and suggested *Japa* but I was not able to explain myself clearly. One day he showed me how he had interpreted my explications and I was witness to a lifeless practice, a tired plea for God's mercy. I had the impression that he took *Japa* as an emotive outpouring. His chosen *Mantra* was nothing more than a sigh of self-pity. It was not surprising when, after some time, he entirely abandoned the practice.

All changed later when he took part in a group pilgrimage. Someone began to recite the so-called rosary (a set number of repetitions of the same prayer), and all the pilgrims joined in. Even if tired and almost gasping for breath, my friend did not withdraw himself from this pious activity. While walking and praying softly, murmuring under his breath, he began to taste a state of unknown calmness. He looked with different eyes at the show of continuously changing landscape and had the impression of living in a heavenly situation. He went on repeating the *Prayer* unremittingly for the entire walk (which surpassed the 20 miles), completely forgetting he was tired and sleepy. When the group paused to rest, he luckily was left alone undisturbed. He slipped into an introspective state and was pervaded by something vibrating in his heart which he definitely identified with the Spiritual dimension. His ecstatic state became solid as a rock, becoming almost unbearable, overwhelming him.

It is interesting to tell how my friend summarized the correct way of practicing *Japa*. He said that the secret was to not only reach the state of

² A teacher was adamant about the fact that a *Mantra* should be pronounced only mentally. I tried to follow his counsel and it didn't work. After various months I was fed up with my useless attempt: I dared to chant it vocally on my *Mala*. Before completing my 108 repetitions, a spring of happiness and mirth gushed from my heart.

"exhaustion" but also to go beyond it. After some days he chose to repeat the same *Mantra* I had chosen and, thanks to it, he reached the breathless state.

Well, perhaps it is not necessary to go beyond the frontier of exhaustion. Usually one has very good effects by completing daily one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) aloud then letting the repetition of one's *Mantra* go ahead mentally and automatically. However the "law of exhaustion" is a valuable resource for breaking some possible internal resistance and experience thus the breathless state for the first time.

Consider Lahiri Mahasaya's motto "*Banat, Banat, ban jay!*" (doing and doing, one day it is done!) At first this sentence will give you the idea of one who, without ever losing heart, goes all out to reach his/her goal. Your only care is to remove the obstacles created by the mind. Practice *Japa*, then the spiritual dimension would manifest naturally, almost without further effort on your part.

In books we seek God, in Prayer we find him. Prayer is the key which opens God's heart. (*Padre Pio of Pietrelcina*)

Dogmatic kriyabans and Japa

My conviction was challenged by some *kriyabans*. They say that the *Kriya* techniques are both necessary and sufficient to bring about the awakening of *Kundalini* and therefore we don't need any other practice. They add: "Neither *Guruji*, nor Lahiri Mahasaya taught it – *kriyabans* do not need it." They seem even annoyed by the thought that the practice of *Japa* could pollute the purity of their spiritual path

I had been the witness of the failure of different *kriyaban* friends who did not care of the state of their mind during the day, while I saw the eyes shining of joy and sincere surrender to the Divine, of those *kriyabans* who added – during their busy day, when they could remain alone even for few minutes – the practice of *Japa*.

I have good reasons to believe that those who went to Lahiri Mahasaya were not only familiar with the practice of *Japa*, but undertook the path of *Kriya Yoga* not to start something totally new but to deepen and intensify the practice of the *Continuous Prayer*, in which they had already poured their soul. Very probably to some of them, receiving the procedure of *Thokar* was the definitive practical instruction to crown their efforts to achieve the lofty state of the *Prayer of the heart*. There must be a reason why Continuous Prayer ("Inner Prayer", "Heart Prayer", *Dhikr*) was and is the basic technique used by a lot of mystics.

Encouragement to the reader

After the practice of *Kriya* techniques, make room for a long phase of internalization where the senses can become dead to the external reality and become totally open to the internal reality.

Perfect physical and mental immobility should never be lost. If you have decided to practice the *Higher Kriyas* (with physical movement) then start your routine with 24 *Kriya* breaths. Practice a short session of the *Higher Kriya* that you prefer and then take back the practice of the *Kriya* breathing until you enter a very peaceful state of mind. Only in the dimension of peace something good can come to make you again alive along your Spiritual Path. If you have the experience of the breathless state, do not forget this experience ever; do all you can to have the same experience every day of your life.

Decide to "touch" this celestial dimension every day by being faithful to your practice of *Japa*. The magic of your bright, dazzling *Mantra* will spread in each facet of your life. It is like walking out of a dark stuffy room into sunlight and fresh air. The breathless state is very near to the innocent and pure skies of your childhood.

If a delusion arouses from your subconscious – for example the fallacy that *Japa* might be a mind-numbing activity, that by repeating a *Mantra* mechanically all day long like a parrot, you are doing a mind-numbing activity.... if you think that your mind is getting lazy and that it is better to cooperate with the spiritual evolution using more powerful and effective methods... then turn your *Mantra* into a pneumatic hammer and tear asunder the concrete of the self created prison. Summon your moral strength and turn your doubts into a calm euphoria. Reinforce your will. Crumble the wall of impossibility that life has put in front of you. Whatever is the abyss of mental confusion and spiritual aridity in which you could be, Practice *Japa*, repeat your *Mantra* with superhuman calmness and determination!

SECOND PART: THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

[I] Japa in the spine

Repeat your *Mantra* aloud. Pronounce its syllables with serene attitude. Learn to resonate it in your mouth, chest and head areas.

Now repeat your *Mantra* mentally in the spine. Chant mentally half *Mantra* during the inhalation, and half during the exhalation. Or chant all your *Mantra* during the inhalation and all again during exhalation. Realize that you willingly affirming with each breath your surrender to the Divine. Feel the meaning of the chosen *Mantra*. Make a special effort to go ahead with intensity.

After 12 breaths, follow the syllables of the *Mantra* slowly moving your chin up and down. Increase your aspiration. The movement of the *Prayer* in the spine warms your passion. When you exhale and the *Prayer* reaches the *Chakra* of the heart, your chin touches your breast. Remain immobile there with eyes closed for some instants perceiving the emptying of the content of your mind. It is impossible to think a single thought: the state of *Mental Silence*, appears very strong. A subtle bliss pervades your soul.

[II] "Cross-Shaped Prayer"

Practice some breaths in the following way. When you inhale, feel a movement of energy that goes from the left part of the body toward the right part. During exhalation feel a movement of energy from the right part of the body toward the left part. To this breath, another breath follows creating a cross. It is not long from *Muladhara* to sixth *Chakra* like in *Kriya Pranayama*. The energy, perceived in the dorsal region, moves upwards during inhalation and downwards during exhalation.

Go ahead alternating the two ways of breathing. Feel how naturally the concentration on the heart *Chakra* intensifies. You need only 6 couples of breaths to make this breathing automatic and effortless.

Since this practice is very important let me give you an example. Let us utilize the Mantra: *Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya*.

Perceive a horizontal movement of energy that from a point at the left (about 6 centimeters) of the heart *Chakra* moves toward a symmetrical point on the right. You touch the heart *Chakra* from the back. During this movement, mentally chant *Om* in the first point, *Na* in *Anahata*, *Mo* in the point at the right; then *Bha* again in the point at the right, *Ga* in *Anahata*, *Ba* in the point at the left.

A very light inhalation accompanies the canting of *Om Na Mo*. A very light exhalation accompanies the mental chanting of *Bha Ga Ba*.

Then perceive a vertical movement of energy that from a point under *Anahata* (about 4 centimeters) comes up to a symmetrical point over *Anahata*, touching *Anahata* from the back. During this movement, mentally chant *Tee* in the point under *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Su* in the point over *Anahata*.

A very light inhalation accompanies the canting of *Te Va Su*. A very light exhalation accompanies the mental chanting of *De Va Ya*. [*Yaaa.. long*]
These four energetic movements that draw a cross, cutting in two different directions the heart *Chakra*, make one cycle. It comes natural to make inhalation and exhalation last about 3 seconds each. You will be struck by the efficacy of this procedure. 108 cycles without hurry do not require more than 30 minutes. At the end you won't desire to do more. Actually stop here for different times.

It embodies the most direct way to "straighten up" our personality and consequently our spiritual path, that is to channel toward the right direction whatever effort we are doing in the spiritual field. Its effectiveness resides in the fact that it touches, trying to dissolve them, the dualities that prevent your tuning with the cardiac plexus. The dualities which I refer to are: *Ida* and *Pingala* (they flow sideways the backbone); *Prana* and *Apana* (they have their seat above and under *Anahata*.)

I think that this way of praying could be a decisive, heaven-sent aid for a person who experiences a split between the sphere of the mind and that of the heart.

In the book *The Way of a Pilgrim* there is the description of how one day the pilgrim finds eventually the *Prayer* at his lips and in his mind every waking hour, as spontaneous and effortless as breath itself. In this wonderful condition he comes to experience the effulgence of the divine light, the innermost "secret of the heart".

Like a person enjoying the beauty of a chilly winter near the fireside, contemplating either the sad or the joyous spectacle of life, such is a devotee having found the infinity of the skies residing in their heart! The *Continuous Prayer* is truly a marvelous gem whose glitter warms up life. Its magic spreads into each facet of life, like walking out of a dark room into fresh air and sunlight. (*The Way of a Pilgrim*)

[IV] Prayer of the heart proper

After many days of practicing the "Cross-Shaped Prayer" you are ready to practice the *Prayer of the Heart proper*. You need at least 20 minutes free.

You are in the meditation position, your chin is slightly down, the gaze is turned toward the location of your heart. With great calmness perceive the pulse of your heart. It is not easy but if you persist you will succeed. Then make each pulsation coincide with a word or with a syllable of the *Prayer*. With this new criterion, constantly applied, you reach the stadium in which the breath first and the pulsing of the heart then, tend to slow down and disappear. When you come near to this state, you will understand what it means "*praying with the heart and not with the mind.*"

Wait before increasing the length of your practice.

When the *Prayer of the heart* is practiced seriously, the *Prayer* becomes continuous. In every possible moment of silence you are aware of the *Prayer* that sweetly and comfortably goes ahead as a music in the background of your consciousness. Sometimes silence is not possible but you can preserve silence in your heart. You will feel an ardent brazier located in the region of the breast. Or simply a warm sensation originating from the heart region. This sensation, first mild, may turn into a sensation of solidification of the heart which is felt like a point surrounded by an endless pressure.³ In this way you live, always having God in your remembrance. This harmony is not lost during sleep.

I sleep, but my heart waketh
(*Song of Solomon 5:2*)

The soul is conscious of a deep satisfaction. Something that has the taste of eternal life invades your being. The soul feels to be in contact with an *Endless Goodness*. The intensity of this state grows and grows. You realize that you are not in the condition of resisting this all-consuming emotion: you realize that behind it there is the Divine. From the corners of the eyes tears of inexpressible delight slowly go down. An unlimited, all consuming internal desire to cry exerts a pressure upon your heart. When you enjoy

³ St Theresa also explains the same concept: "From this pressure comes a strange experience of pain. We perceive the Divine, the endless Light and we burn of love. We realize the moment has not yet come to become one with that endless Light and Bliss: hence tears of intense longing."

this, you have the drastic realization that "what you have lived till now had been NOTHING."

Unheard of Light is born from this ineffably,
And thence, beyond all telling, the heart's illumination.
Last comes – a step that has no limit
Though compassed in a single line –
Perfection that is endless...

(Monk Theophanis, the Hesychast ascetic of the 8th century)

THIRD PART: SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH PRAYER

It's a pity that the *Kriya* schools do not give officially the teaching of *Devotional Prayer (Japa)*. Perhaps the pride and arrogance of some *kriyabans* had contributed to spread the idea that *Japa* is a too simple practice fit for simpletons – those that understand nothing about *Prana*, spine, *Chakras*. [I have appreciated that the organization founded by PY leak out the information that great disciples of PY practiced *Japa*.]

Actually, you will never be able to find anything like *Japa* to ameliorate your *Kriya*. *Japa* acts on the subconscious mind. You cannot practice *Kriya* by the sheer strength of your will alone, you have to relax. Here you will find a few examples of what "relax" means.

[I] Only Japa

One day I went in the open country not to practice my *Kriya* routine but just to focus on pure *Japa*. It was a near perfect day where I could enjoy the blue sky in which a small cluster of clouds floated in the golden light. The session was longer than I had planned. I was sustained by a calm euphoria. I decided to mentally repeat the *Prayer* in the spine. I mentally chanted half *Prayer* during the inhalation, and half during the exhalation. I decided to meditate on the meaning of the chosen *Prayer* – willingly affirming with each breath my surrender to the Divine. I felt an urge to make a special effort to go ahead slowly, with intensity.

I followed, while slowly moving my chin up and down, the movement of the *Prayer* in the spine and remarked this: the passion that was warming my heart was intensified when I came down with the *Prayer* and reached the *Chakra* of the heart.

Non only that: very important became the process of spontaneous tendency to prolonging the exhalation. I remained with the chin almost touching the chest. I remained there immobile with eyes closed for some instants

perceiving the annihilation of my mind. It was impossible to think a single thought: the state of *Mental Silence*, appeared stronger than ever. My eyes were full of tears. Bliss, pure bliss!

I returned many times in that place and tried to live the experience again. I increased the length of my practice. Summer came and I remember long sunsets, with evenings that seemed to have no end. That moment of my life was really a magic one. I have an endless nostalgia for it. Living those long sessions sitting in the open countryside, in total freedom and in a state of mystical "intoxication" was an unforgettable event. The devotion that I experienced at that time was not the classical feeling that we define *Bhakti*. It was the sense of being crushed, destroyed by something that in my diaries I called "Unbearable Beauty". At that time, lost in my innocent exaltation, I compared this state with the meditative experience that St Teresa of Avila called "Infused Recollection"

A glorious delirium, a celestial folly, a state of unspeakable delights. It is an inebriation of love in which the soul doesn't know what to do, whether to speak or to keep silent, whether to cry or to laugh. The soul is conscious of a deep satisfaction. The soul feels invaded by something that has the taste of eternal life and feels as if coming into contact with an *Endless Goodness*. Hence comes the feeling that there is nothing on the earth worthy of your desire or attention. (*S. Therese*)

One evening, a sound of tolling bells came from a distant village – it was like a cascade of light! It was so unexpected! A part of me went on repeating: "There has never been granted so much joy to a human being!"

[III] Incremental routine Micro *Tribhangamurari* (see chapter 9) utilizing the *Prayer* given by *Lahiri Mahasaya: Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*,

Often an invincible drowsiness overpowered all my best efforts. On the inner screen of my awareness a lot of images were displayed like dreamlike visions. No help came from changing the position of the legs, practicing *Maha Mudra* several times, or interrupting the practice for a short pause. After some rest, I found out, however, that it did not solve my problem – sleepiness came back as soon as I resumed the practice. There was no way (coffee, a lot of rest...) to find some relief from it; there was nothing to do but to accept the situation and become accustomed to practice while never coming out of a drowsy state.

The situation improved by practicing at the seaside, amid people that did not disturb me but that I felt walking in the nearby. When I perceive they were looking at me, I pretended I was reading a book that I always had

opened upon my knees. The beatitude was awful.

One day I was on a cliff not far from the beach. I had taken shelter from the sun, under a tree. At dusk I leaned my back against a rock and practiced keeping my eyes open. The sky was an indestructible crystal of infinite transparency and the waves were continually changing their color. Behind the black lenses of my sunglasses my eyes were full of tears. I cannot describe what I felt except in poetic form.

There is an Indian song (in the final part of the movie *Mahabharata*) whose lyrics are taken from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* - "I have met this Great Spirit, as radiant as the sun, transcending any material conception of obscurity. Only the one who knows Him can transcend the limits of birth and death. There is no other way to reach liberation but meeting this Great Spirit." When I listen to the beautiful voice of the Indian singer repeating "There is no other way", my heart knows that nothing has the power to keep me away from this state and this terrifically beautiful practice, which I will enjoy for the rest of my life.

Many times I practiced in that way. The memory of the period in which I was absorbed in this practice comes back to mind surrounded by a dreamy aura. Sometimes, only in jest, I ask myself if this period actually existed. For more than two years I deviated from the common way of living. This was the deepest experience of my life. I practiced all day long, every day, if possible, out in the open.

[III] Twelve repetitions of Lahiri's Mantra in each center of the Small Heavenly Orbit

Sometimes a simple experiment can reveal a fantastic opportunity for introspection. When I was learning the utilization of the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari*, I decided to repeat that *Mantra* not three but twelve times in each *Chakra*. I decided also to test the theory given in some books of Internal Alchemy according to which there exist 4 more Chakras in the frontal line on the surface of the body.

To make it simple, I practiced 12 micro in these centers: *Kutastha* – Adam's apple – central part of the breast bone – navel – pubic region – perineum – Chakra 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in the spine, then *Medulla*.

The experience went ahead in a particularly deep way. I felt I had the power to "touch" internally the essence of each center. I had only to visualize the syllables of my *Mantra* moving sweetly like the flow of a liquid substance inside each center.

While nearing *Medulla*, the muscles of my lower jaw gradually relaxed to the point that my mouth opened and I remained there with the mouth open, the chin slightly up, sweetly locked in that position for a very long time. An approximate calculation from my part, revealed that I remained in that position for about half an hour. I know that the experience was surely pleasant but I do not remember anything. Something very subtle, indefinite, happened inside Medulla. What happen in the Medulla while going up, what happened in me... I don' know.

[IV] Japa while walking

Encouraged by the definitively established principle that *Prayer* is the central part of the spiritual path, (this of course came from the teaching of S.Teresa of Avila) I decided to take part in a pilgrimage, praying "unceasingly." The program was to walk a full night in order to reach a beautiful sanctuary the following morning. While I walked, I had the sweet intuition that my mates' lives were wrapped up in love. I moved around as if my heart bore a brazier within. The center of what I call "me" was not in the brain, but in my heart. And in my heart I perceived a sort of tension of tenderness. The vision increased in power. My mates could not by instinct avoid loving or taking care of somebody – their own children for example. Each one of them had the power for great and incredible actions. As a consequence, no one had the certitude of being protected by painful experiences. Their life, being merged in love, was also merged in pain and tragedy. This duality is involved in earthly existence, interwoven with our being. The sentiment of this inescapable reality was experienced as a painful grip tearing my chest apart.

While I was merged in these thoughts, the sun rose over our path and the sanctuary appeared over a hill, something thawed in my depths and there came such an intensity of love that the same experience turned into a "blissful" pain.

CHAPTER 14
THE KRIYA OF THE CELLS

Let us consider 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: it has become a mental substance.

PY describes the same event foretelling what a skillful *kriyaban* will experience "...the current will then automatically move by itself and the joy experienced will be indescribable." He is referring to a higher form of *Pranayama* where the energy moves by itself, without our action of guiding it through our *Kriya* breathing.

Let us try to conceive what is this *Kriya Pranayama with Internal Breath*, or this *Kriya of the cells* as I call it.

I think that the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* (see Chapter 15) could come in our aid. We have considered the three main energies in the human body: Jing (sexual energy), Qi (love energy) e Shen (spiritual energy.) We have seen how, through the Microcosmic orbit, sexual energy is transformed in pure love and this in spiritual aspiration. This Alchemy happens gradually in the three *Dantian* – in the abdomen, in the heart region and in the upper *Dantian* (*Kutastha*: the region between the eyebrows.) Then a spontaneous phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body happens. As we have seen this circulation is called Macrocosmic orbit. This envisages a great infusion of energy coming down as a golden liquid outside and inside the body, in all its cells. Years of *Kriya Pranayama* prepare this great event. If you have experienced the state of calm *Prana* in your body after *Kriya* practice, you are in the right mental and physical state to try this new way of perfecting *Kriya Pranayama*. What you have sown is ready to flower.

[I] How to direct our efforts toward this supreme achievement

1 Lengthen the exhalation and let a new kind of energy appear in the abdominal region

What you have learned about the role of the navel during *Kriya Pranayama* should be intensified more than usual. During inhalation expand the abdomen by pushing out the navel; during exhalation

concentrate intensely on the navel as it moves toward the spine. Focus your attention on the increase of energy in the abdominal region. This detail is intensified at maximum. Perceive a peculiar ecstatic sensation originating from the abdominal region.

Now make exhalation last a lot more than inhalation. Go ahead breathing, increasing the length of the exhalation: you will have the impression that it can be *lengthened indefinitely*. At a certain point you will find yourself becoming crazy with joy – sometimes with the chin slightly lowered, directed toward the navel as if it were a magnet. The pleasurable sensation will become orgasmic. The body will remind you the necessity of inhaling, interrupting the progressive increase of this joy. At this point, few breaths separates you from the, coveted state where all effort ceases. Very useful, but not indispensable, to cross this veil, is to make use of a fragmented exhalation.

Optional

Consider dividing your exhalation into about 20-30 fragments or even more. This is in itself pleasurable, especially when each fragment tends to become microscopic. When you succeed, make this process more and more subtle. The exhalation becomes endless while a particular radiation of joy raises from the abdomen to the chest and to the head! The diaphragm with micro upward pushes helps to raise this energy. Go ahead until the fragments of breath seem to have practically dissolved! When you feel the need, inhale feeling energy rising from *Muladhara* in the spine. Repeat the process again and again, you will never exhaust the beauty of this procedure.

2 Fill with a higher form of Prana the cells of your body

During inhalation visualize a powerful vibration departing from the sexual zone, absorbing the energy there and guiding it into the head. Increase the intensity of the sound in the throat. Before starting the exhalation strengthen the intention of finding (or opening) an internal way to reach the cells of your body. During exhalation create a strong pressure of the awareness on the whole body. No one iota of vitality in the air should leave your nose; all the vitality should be directed into the body. Perceive that the descending flow of energy permeates all the parts of the body, muscles, internal organs, skin, cells as if countless hypodermic needle injected energy and light in the cells of your body. The *Sheee* sound of exhalation helps to infuse energy in the cells of your body. Be inspired by thinking that the *Sheee* sound be like "the cry that breaks the hardest rock" – thus Sri Aurobindo was referring to the power of *Bija Mantra*, the "sacred sound of the *Rishi*" – revealing:

...the treasure of heaven
hidden in the secret cavern
like the young of a bird,
within the infinite rock
(*Rig-Veda, I.130.3*)

If you are not able of producing perfectly the *Sheee* sound described by Lahiri Mahasaya, try all your best to create it in your mind, in other words try to mentally "produce" it.

3 Pass through the barrier of breath

Forget the breath and try to make the whole process go ahead through your will power. Visualize that the *Prana* comes up with *Haaa...* and goes down with *Sheee...* The mental repetition of these two syllables helps the circulation of the *Prana* even without breath. With the breath practically nonexistent energy streams out of the *Muladhara* rapidly going to the head and then slowly spreading through the body. The ascent is a very short act. So short that is almost not noticeable. You have the impression that only exhalation exists.

This sublime experience is like breathing in all atoms. The great barrier has been crossed: the breath as a physical fact does not exist, there is no air coming out your nose. There is an inner source of fresh energy making you lighter and filling you with strength. The sensation is reminiscent of a brisk walk in the wind. This can not merely be called a joyous state: it is a feeling of infinite safety surrounded by a crystalline state of immobility.

Open your eyes and consider not only your body but every thing before and around you as your body. You will perceive a continuous sound of *Om*. This state is very different from what we call a cyclic phenomenon. This process seem to involve a different energy from the one we move in *Kriya Pranayama*. It does not flow from one point to another. It is timeless, it transcends time. It is a *static Prana*. It has no current flow direction. It's an energy field without a flow; it just is there.

Remarks

A great source of inspiration is meditating outdoors with eyes open and with the adamant will of becoming one with a mountain, a lake, or a tree in front of us. Open your eyes and consider everything surrounding you as your body. During *Sheee*, visualize the light that enters not only the cells of your body but, at the same time, the atoms of everything. You will perceive a continuous sound of *Om*. This is the confirmation that you are heading in the right direction. You can avoid the practice of *Kechari Mudra*: sometimes it might give the paradoxical impression of hindering your efforts. *Kechari* isolates you from the surrounding

environment, while here we should feel one with it.

[III] First effects immediately after the practice

This practice has an immediate effect upon our mood. To say it shortly, even a rainy day of November will seem to evoke the mood of the clearest days of Spring. The simple fact of adding awareness to the exhalation phase of your *Kriya* breath, visualizing it going toward each cell of the body has surprising effects. The beauty of living, like wine from a full cup, seems to overflow from every atom and fills the heart. You perceive it as if you had vainly hoped for years that the Divine would be part of your daily life, without ever seeing any result.... then suddenly you discover that the Divine has always been there.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
and the undying suns here burn.
(*Sri Aurobindo, "A God's labor"*)

The sense of beauty and satisfaction is great, as if an impressionist painter had finally succeeded in actualizing their visionary conception conveying the idea that the painted inert substance of matter is composed of multicolored particles of light, like innumerable suns radiating in a brilliant transparency.

This *Pranayama* is a basically healthy process. It seems to destroy any mental prison created by you. Your psychological problems, especially those connected with intricate and thwarted plans for the future, appear as an illusion out of which you have emerged definitively. The life which up until that point had been full of asperities, now seems to stretch out evenly toward the future where you do not perceive insuperable obstacles.

[III] What happens after the initial euphoria

In the following days unexpected consequences could be observed. The image of an anthill that's been disturbed comes to mind: countless ants move at a frenetic pace. In a similar way, our environment appears more agitated, at times aggressive toward us. We feel as if "not having a skin anymore." For instance, after a long absence some acquaintances return with demanding challenges that require radical changes of attitude on our part. We are in trouble facing intricate, unsolved issues that in the past we cleverly succeeded in avoiding.

If we go ahead undeterred with our practice of *Kriya*, we shall be stunned by a very peculiar event. We are under the impression that we are perceiving – not only through our awareness but, in a strange way, also

through our body – what is passing in another person's consciousness. We are not talking about telepathy. We experience a mood which is not our own, which has no reason to exist and we vainly search for reasons in order to justify it. When, after a couple of days, it vanishes, only then we realize that all was a kind of subtle deception: the strange mood came from another person's consciousness; indeed we made new acquaintances and talked with them being sincerely touched by their narration.

If this is true, we must deduce that our practice of *Pranayama with internal breath* has an effect on the surrounding world! It seems impossible, a dream. Even after many similar episodes, you cannot know whether this is simply an impression or a real fact. Why by guiding breath and awareness into the cells of our body, do we obtain such important results having so tangible effects upon the material, emotive and psychological planes?

Can we accept the fact that our spiritual practices have an influence on the surrounding reality by making things happen that would not otherwise happen (or that would have happened anyway, but in a different way.) Such event has all the appearance of a figment of our imagination. The principle of causality implies that the world ignores what happens inside our consciousness. It is well known how good our mind is when it comes to clutching at straws; but when a similar episode is observed with due detachment and, as the days and the months go by, it repeats with mathematical precision, then the evidence of this phenomenon cannot be denied. I know that what I am writing evokes the most bold of *New Age* manias. It is only after listening to similar effects by other researchers and on account of my commitment to total sincerity, that I have made up my mind to write about this particular experience.

[IV] Ascending and Descending phase of each spiritual path

In my opinion, each authentic spiritual path has an "ascending" and a "descending" phase. The "ascending" phase is what is commonly intended with "mystic path." The "descending" phase usually happens automatically and it is the phase where the mystic acts for the good of other persons. Usually we never take time to describe and understand the descent phase.

It is not easy to realize factually that a single person's spiritual realization has an effect not only upon those who are in tune with that person, but also upon those who are simply physically in the nearby? The spiritual efforts of an individual influence those who are around. Moving toward Spirit means acting in inconceivable ways to reason. We have the intention of living peacefully, always attuned to divine joy. Often we affirm to love mankind as

"our greatest Self" and we have learned to send "good vibrations" and "pious intentions" to humanity. But these are just words.

By studying the biographies of mystics, we often find examples of how they accepted to take upon themselves the suffering of other persons. They did not refuse to receive, to make it disappear through *Prayer*, part of the obscurity in which humanity lives. I remember how St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) had many times all the pains of death by being metaphysically united to some wounded soldiers who were dying on the field of battle, far away from home.

Lahiri Mahasaya himself suffered. Think of the famous episode when he "drowned" in the body of people who were shipwrecked in a far away sea. He had not endeavored to attract that experience to him. But he fully accepted it and we don't know, but we can guess, what supreme solace he was able to bring to those poor souls.

[V] Has our destiny in store for us a similar suffering?

Lahiri Mahasaya and other saints are a mirror for all *kriyabans*. What happened in their body may one day happen in our body. Surely we are far away from Lahiri Mahasaya sublime state of consciousness: we have not the spiritual realization, devotion and surrender of the saints, but we can patiently turn our heart toward this new dimension of the spiritual path. If we constantly and inexorably exclude any difficult achievement from our dreams and goals, our spiritual venture risks falling apart.

What we can do now is to perfect endlessly our *Kriya Pranayama* knowing that it will lead us on a higher plan of spiritual realization. In particular, each effort to come near to the practice of *Pranayama with Internal Breath* will guide our awareness to touch the *Collective Unconscious*. Through this practice we do not move toward a spiritual dimension wholly cut off from the physical plane but toward the deeper and most real dimension of the Divine inside the matter, inside the consciousness of all mankind. The cells of the body are like doors that lead exactly to that dimension. All this will become part of our lives not as an object of theoretical speculation but as a practical discovery.

Lahiri Mahasaya said: "The whole universe is in the body; the whole universe is the final Self." It is now time to realize what he meant by such statement!

[VI] The alternative

Sri Aurobindo wrote:

Seeking heaven's rest or the spirit's wordless peace,
Or in bodies motionless like statues, fixed
In tranced cessations of their sleepless thought
Sat sleeping souls, and this too was a dream.

(*Sri Aurobindo, Savitri; Book X - Canto IV*)

What does it mean: "... and this too was a dream" ? We cannot live with a mind always focused upon enjoying elated emotions or spiritual pleasures, with a heart fictitiously open to universal love but in reality hard and resistant like a stone. In this situation our meditative state instead of a reality of enlightenment risks to resemble a chronic state of drowsiness. Those who want to live only in an heavenly dimension without any disturbance, want to live in illusion – a golden illusion, but in any case *illusion*.

By virtue of a universal law, the very last phase of our spiritual path may contemplate a hard experience: that we share part of other's suffering. This event might imply a momentary loss of our spiritual realization. Indeed this is a difficult test, that only true love can justify; such test must be overcome. But let us don't be desperate.

There is a sentence attributed to the mythical *Babaji* (quoting Bhagavad Gita): "*Even a little bit of the practice of this (inward) religion will save you from dire fears and colossal sufferings.*" In my opinion "dire fears and colossal sufferings" originates from the contact with the quagmires of *Collective Unconscious*. Well, the achievement of *Pranayama with internal breath* will surely mitigate that suffering.

Shall we be able to cross with untamed serenity the various layers of obscurity that are in us and in the mind of our brothers? The alternative is to wait that life itself exert upon us a sharp tug downward and force us to focus the attention on the body.

Some spiritually minded people have forgotten the world and are lost in their dream. How can you explain their negative moods and depression? Some times they know the blackest desperation. St. John of the Cross named that state: "The dark night of the soul." He explained that those souls feel as if God had suddenly abandoned them; they doubt the validity

of their own spiritual path. Although their conscience is totally turned to God, they keep on believing they are sinners, without any possibility of salvation. In a lengthy and profound absence of light and hope, even if they have the drive to go ahead with outward expressions of faith, they reach the stage where they doubt the existence of God. Therefore they feel irremediably impure, lost for eternity.

It is also true (but less frequent) that there were souls who had not forgotten the world, rather they had no other goal than to diminish the suffering of their fellow creatures, and yet they have known the "Dark night of the soul."

Well, I believe that such sufferings could be mitigated or even skipped by learning to guide their awareness into the cells of their body. Our body is our greatest protection. When it seems impossible to go back to that deep inspiration which time ago guided our steps toward the spiritual path, when the innocence seems lost and we see only a dark wall blocking definitively any effort of ours to consecrate our life to the Divine, that is the moment to go down with the method we feel more congenial, towards the cells of our body to meet the dimension, known to few, that the Mother evoked describing the: "abysses of truth and the oceans of smile that are behind the august picks of truth." ⁴

By perfecting our *Pranayama with internal breath* we come near a incomparable experience of perfect Beauty: the Divine immanent in matter. I believe that Sri Aurobindo was relating to this possibility when he wrote:

Now the wasteland, now the silence;
A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.
(*Sri Aurobindo, from: "Journey's End"*)

Final note: the concept of Collective Unconscious

The *Collective Unconscious* represents a part of our *Unconscious* common to mankind as a whole. Jung ⁵ introduced terminology which permits us to probe

⁴ You can also utilize *Japa*, thinking its syllables in the body.

⁵ I believe that Jung's discoveries are precious for the understanding of the mystical path – perhaps more than many other concepts formulated during the 20th century. Even though his statements never lacked the necessary prudence, the scientific community never forgave him for dealing with matters that were not considered a part of Psychiatry – such as Alchemy (deemed an absurdity), the realm of myths (considered the result of a senseless imagination) and, more than any other thing, the great value he attributed to the religious dimension; which he considered something universal and fundamentally sane, instead of a pathology. Presently the enthusiasm

an aspect of the mystical path which would otherwise risk being totally extraneous, not only to our capability of expression but also to our comprehension. Jung discovered that the human psyche is made up of layers or strata, parts of it *shared* by all humanity and called the *Collective Unconscious*.

To Freud the *Unconscious* was similar to a depot full of old "removed" things that we cannot recall to consciousness - refused by a nearly automatic act of the will. Jung discovered a deeper level of it: the *Collective Unconscious* which links all human beings by the deepest layers of their psyche. The contents of the *Collective Unconscious* have never been part of our immediate conscious perception, and when an infinitesimal part of it bursts forth into our psyche, we are momentarily dismayed.

However the influence that the *Collective Unconscious* has upon our life, is, in some occasions, vital! When we feel helpless as we deal with difficult problems, this deeper layer of our unconscious mind put us in touch with the totality of human experience, a vast store of objective wisdom and perfect solutions. This can save us!

A typical outcome of contacting the *Collective Unconscious* is to witness a countless series of "*Meaningful Coincidences*." They happen in so many ways that we cannot even adumbrate. Jung put a basis for the rational study of this subject in his book *Synchronicity: An a-causal Connecting Principle*.

To explain with simple terms what this is all about, we say that in addition to causality – that which acts in a linear direction of progression of time and puts in connection two phenomena that happen in the same space at different times – we hypothesize the existence of a principle (a causal) that puts in connection two phenomena that happen at the same time but in different spaces. The key point to emphasize is that they have a meaning that ties them together and it is this fact that arouses deep emotion in the observer.

Now, if two events happen simultaneously but in different spaces, it is clear that causality (cause-effect chain: one has caused the other or vice versa) is impossible. There would be nothing strange in these events of themselves, save one fact: the observer considers them as a *meaningful coincidence* – like a miracle, something that the universe wants to communicate to him. The observer is intimately touched by what is perceived as a manifestation of the mysterious dimension of life.

An example will help us to better understand this concept. A youth moves a plant in a vase, which falls, breaks into peaces and the young man looks at the wounded plant. He thinks with intensity about the moment when his girlfriend gave the vase to him as a present. There is emotion and pain in him, the event is

for his writings remains, especially among those who study topics of a spiritual and esoteric nature.

feared as an omen. At the same time his girlfriend (this will obviously come to be known subsequently) is writing him a letter to leave him and therefore to break their relationship.

Here the characteristics of the *Jungian Synchronicity* are observed. The two events happen simultaneously and are connected, concerning the meaning (a vase breaks and a relationship is broken), but one is not the cause of the other. When, later, our youth discovers the contemporaneity of the two events, he is stunned. This is not telepathy or clairvoyance; in telepathy a cause could be hypothesized, for example the existence of cerebral waves transmitted from one person to another. In this case, no cause exists whatsoever. Jung explains that we are not able to realize what happens: we are too limited, we cannot see that in this situation there is only one event in a multi-dimensional reality.

The two events are actually only one event, merely seen from two different points of view.⁶

When this happens, it is as if the world would talk to you. If it happens, and you notice it has happened, I only hope that you don't lose your wits and come to believe you are endowed with extraordinary powers. It doesn't deal with telepathy, clairvoyance.... it is something very deep. You are opening your eyes on the wonders of the subtle laws of this universe.

⁶ In the esoteric literature we find the concept of *Siddhis* (powers). We are very perplexed about it. Those who write books on *Yoga* are not able to resist the temptation of copying some lines from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It's typical to find the ridiculous warning of the danger coming from the abuse of the *Siddhis*. Quoting Patanjali (IV:1), they recount that *Siddhis* are the spiritual powers (psychic abilities) that may occur through rigorous austerities; they explain that they vary from relatively simple forms of clairvoyance, telepathy, to being able to levitate, to be present at various places at once, to become as small as an atom, to materialize objects and more. They recommend to their readers not to ever indulge in these powers since "they are a great hindrance to spiritual progress". *Indulge* - what a beautiful word! If you did see someone practicing *Pranayama* and 'indulging' in a little bilocation for fun, could you tell?! Perhaps they don't think enough about what they are writing because they let themselves be seduced by the dreams of possessing those powers. Perhaps they already visualize all the fuss which will come with it: interviews, taking part in talk shows etc. However, here, I repeat with emphasis, we are discussing quite another phenomenon!

FINAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX N.1

DEFINITION OF INCREMENTAL ROUTINE

An unvarying schedule which consists of a daily practice of the same set of *Kriya* techniques, changing neither their order of practice nor the number of their repetitions, seems the best way of starting on the *Kriya* path. For the first three months, there is no valid substitute for that. But, if after a couple of years of patient application of the same routine, you would discover that your efforts had been totally ineffective and the initial enthusiasm got lost, you have the opportunity to be reborn to the spiritual path by utilizing your time in a different way.

I know full well that if you address to a dogmatic *kriyaban* you would receive the standard reprimand: "You depend too much on results. Even if you deem that *Kriya* does not work, be loyal to it and go ahead undeterred as you have done up to now." Perhaps he will tell you the story of that loyal *kriyaban* who had his first spiritual experience a day before dying!

I never had doubts that one should continue the practice of *Kriya* through seemingly unproductive phases. Yet a lot of *kriyabans* drop everything because they reach a standstill where further progress appears impossible. The idea of practicing *Kriya* daily during their entire life because of a promise made at the moment of initiation can become a nightmare, a cage from which one wants to escape.

Definition

An *Incremental Routine* consists in utilizing mainly one single technique, whose number of repetitions is gradually increased up to reach a large number of repetitions whose amount has been handed down from *Kriya* tradition. Each step of this demanding practice is lived only once in a week.

Let us consider what happens in athletics. I know that *Kriya* is not a sport, but in the beginning stages of *Kriya*, while applying its different psycho-physical techniques, it has many points in common with the essence of athletics. Both shun the employment of brute force, and both require goals and the diligent channeling of one's strength to achieve them. Both also require analyzing and evaluating one's performance to learn from the experience.

Now, what happens in athletics gives us a good example of how to progress. Athletes who wish to achieve excellent performance must somehow increase the intensity and the quality of their practice. Only through intensive training sessions where athletes push their physical and mental endurance beyond their normal levels, will they succeed in accomplishing otherwise unachievable levels of performance. This is a "law" no one escapes. It is clear that each session should be followed by some days of rest in order to have a full recovery.

Let us consider two examples

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE OF NAVI KRIYA

On Saturdays – or on any free day – after a short practice of *Maha Mudra* and of *Kriya Pranayama*, practice the double number of your usual practice of *Navi Kriya*. It is wise to choose the most beautiful variation of *Navi Kriya*, the one whose process begins with 36 descents to the *Dantian*. This variation (you find the description of it in chapter 7) will be utilized for our first example of *Incremental Routine*.

You start practicing $36 \times 2 = 72$ descents. The next steps will be: 36×3 , 36×4, 36×19 , 36×20 . There is no need to go beyond 36×20 repetitions. You will do these fundamental steps once per week. What would you do during the other days of each week? The answer will astonish you: "Do nothing or have a very short practice of *Kriya*."

The increase of this delicate technique should be gradual. If you try to outsmart the process and perform too many repetitions all at once, nothing will come of it because the inner channels close up. Our inner obstacles cannot be removed in one day; our inner force is not strong enough to dissolve them. This internal power is initially weak and must be enhanced week after week. Furthermore, this process should be incorporated within a regular active life.

If you always practice in your room, arrange to have a tranquil walk in the evening. Everything will proceed harmoniously and the benediction of blissful silence will unfailingly visit you. The following day, grant yourself a day of rest from all *Kriya* practices and grant yourself the balm of a long tranquil *Japa*.

It is up to you to make your practice days as pleasant as possible. It is advisable to break these long sessions into two parts – to be completed before going to bed. You can conclude each part by lying on your back (*Savasana*: the corpse pose) on a mat for a couple of minutes. You may complete the first part unhurriedly in the morning, carefully respecting every detail. In the afternoon, after a light meal and a little nap, it is fine to go out, find a pleasant place to sit, and then reserve some time to

contemplate nature. Then you can complete the remaining prearranged number of repetitions, absorbed in your practice and perfectly at ease. You will see how the effects increase as daylight approaches twilight.

Effects of this practice

A good effect of this practice is a striking increase in mental clarity, probably due to the strong action on the third *Chakra* which governs the thinking process. A more calibrated, precise and clear logical process rises from a more efficient synergy between thoughts and emotions. Intuition flows unimpeded when important decisions are to be made.

Unfortunately, traits of hardness might appear sometimes in your temperament. You will find yourself uttering statements that others find offensive and cutting but that for you, in that moment, are the expression of sincerity. Although sustained by a luminous internal intuition, you might hurt friends through your words and only hours later, being alone and detached, notice how those words were inappropriate.

To understand the reason for this problem, let us look into the meaning of "crossing" the knot of the navel. (*Navi Kriya* is done primarily for this reason and secondarily to unite *Prana* and *Apana* and attract them into the spine.) It is explained that the cutting of the umbilical cord at birth splits a unique reality into two parts: the spiritual and the material. The spiritual, which manifests as joy and calmness, establishes itself in the higher *Chakras* and in the head; the material establishes itself in the lower *Chakras*. This split between "matter" and "spirit" inside each human being is a permanent source of excruciating conflicts. The healing of this fracture happens through this *Incremental Routine*. Although the healing is harmonious, visible manifestations can be interpreted negatively by others.

The personality of a *kriyaban* is destined to be ideally collected around a central point and all inner conflicts healed. The effects are observed clearly in one's practical life. One feels an inward order settling; each action seems as if it were surrounded by a halo of calmness and headed straight for the goal. It reminds me of Ahab in "Moby Dick" by Herman Melville:

Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, ... The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. ... Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (*Herman Melville*)

When you practice more than 36x4 *Navi Kriyas*, the movements of the head become less marked. The head movements tend to be hardly noticeable. In other words, the forward, backward, and sideways movement of the chin is reduced to a couple of millimeters! This happens spontaneous because the practice is internalized.

At the same time what happens to your breath is remarkable! This practice will transform the quality of it. 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 discussed in chapter 14.

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE OF KRIYA PRANAYAMA

Let us first reply to an obvious question: "Why should one practice the Incremental Routine of *Navi Kriya* before that of *Kriya Pranayama*?" The reason is that *Navi Kriya* creates that solidity that permits to face such a challenging procedure such as the *Incremental Routine of Kriya Pranayama*.

36x1, 36 x 2, 36 x 3, up to 36 x 20 *Kriya Pranayama* breaths is the best plan. 24x1, 24 x 2, 24 x 3,.....24 x 24 is a lighter plan, however very good also.

In Chapter 6 we have shown different aspects of *Kriya Pranayama*, let them all be present. Start with the simplest details and after some time, introduce the others. When the practice is broken into two or three parts – for example between morning and afternoon – you always restart reconsidering the simplest aspects.

Move forward prudently. Respect the rhythm of the breath suited to your constitution. If you feel that your breath is too short, don't worry about it! However, during each stage of the process it is important to keep a slender thread of breath up to the completion of the prescribed number. In other words, the process should never become purely mental. If you like it, make use of the 12 letter *Mantra* "*Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya*" (*Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba* coming up and *Te Va Su De Va Ya* coming down.) This helps you to keep the breath not too much short.

Note 1

During this very delicate period, you can practice *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* both during your week and especially the same day of the Incremental Routine. You can take advantage of this useful technique although it is not part of *Kriya Yoga*. As I have already pointed out, *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* is far more

important than expert *kriyabans* are willing to admit. Its practice should always be coupled with the basic techniques of *Kriya Yoga*. Thanks to it, a beginner receives a dramatic transformation – many important patterns of energy imbalance disappear. Without this balancing action it is not easy to achieve a *watchful but peaceful alertness*, which is the basis itself of the *Kriya* meditative state. It is a common experience that after a long practice of *Nadi Sodhana* without adding any other technique you enter a natural meditative state.

Note 2

Don't be upset if on some occasions this routine becomes an extraordinary journey in your memory. It happens indeed that by focusing your attention on the *Chakras* you obtain a particular effect: the inner screen of your awareness begins to display a lot of images. This is a physiological fact and we have reasons to suspect that those who affirm they are exempt from such phenomenon, it is because they do not have enough lucidity to notice it. The *Chakras* are like jewel boxes containing the memory of our whole life and they give rise to the full splendor of lost reminiscences. The essence of past events (the beauty contained in them and never fully appreciated) is lived again in the quiet pleasure of contemplation while, sometimes, your heart is pervaded by a restrained cry. It is a revelation: the light of the Spirit seems to twinkle in what seemed to be trite moments of your life.

OTHER INCREMENTAL ROUTINES

We can conceive different *Incremental Routines*. Each technique practiced in intensive way, will arouse specific effects – perceived in particular the day following the practice. Some effects can rouse concern. [A *kriyaban* should have familiarity with the laws of the human psyche.]

If you want to practice an *Incremental routine* of whatever technique and you have not an expert by you to help you in planning the number of repetitions, remember this criterion:

the first step should take 15-20 minutes, then, week by week, go ahead increasing the number of repetitions until you practice for about six hours.

APPENDIX N.2

CAN THE PRACTICE OF KRIYA PRODUCE NEGATIVE MOODS?

While browsing through the Web pages you will find some warning against the dangers of *Yoga*, especially the danger of a "premature awakening of *Kundalini*". The list of the problems that it would cause is limitless. There are also a few web sites that warn against any form of meditation, hinting at the possibility of a break with reality with unusual or extreme strengthening of emotions, in particular agitation and anxiety, long-term disorientation where one has become unable to focus long enough to work.

We read also that: "... an aspirant can develop occult, psychic powers. These powers can be used for constructive or destructive purposes, but quite often they are misused. For example the ability to read someone else's mind can create problems and is likely to be ... resented by those who it is used on." This is comic! When we find such amenities we wonder who on earth has written such nonsense and with what purpose. Unfortunately there is a tendency in the Web to duplicate pages from site to site without changing a comma. Make an impossible story up, for example that one *yogi* died of spontaneous combustion during the practice of *Pranayama*, post it on a spiritually orientated web site and verify that, after a couple of months, this story appears on many web sites.

We read that *Yogis*, sooner or later, are inclined to ... fall into sorcery and black magic because they evoke, unaware, negative entities. An author claimed that: "When you repeat that Mantra *Om, Om...* you are actually invoking a demon spirit to come and possess your mind." He added his testimony: "During a meditation session, I began to levitate. Ever since that second I haven't slept as a human, I lost my sleep! Whenever I closed my eyes, I saw the flames of Hell, I didn't dare to close my eyes, I couldn't! I became a psychiatric case, and 26 times I've been hospitalized." Of course there is no need to comment on.

My personal experience, limited to *Kriya Yoga*, of listening to similar complaints, had not been without conflict. I had a hard time meeting people who claimed that *Kriya* was responsible of all their psychological (perhaps they meant psychiatric) problems and of some physical troubles too. Hence, I would have to believe that by breathing fresh air, focusing the mind on the spine and on particular centers in the head, they had developed all kinds of mental and physical ailments. From a benediction as it seemed at the very beginning, *Kriya* turned out to be a curse, a misfortune. The

same practices that I had experimented so many times, with so much love, drawing the purest delight, had been for them a doom. My reaction was: "How, with what attitude, with what expectation, had you approached *Kriya*? You say that *Kriya* made you crazy ... well, if the germs of madness are inside me, they will come into bloom both if I practice *Kriya* and if I do not practice it. Yet, considering the glorious moments experienced, I will walk the *Kriya* path without an ounce of fear, had I to burn in it."

What can we reply when such charges come from persons who say nothing about the different drugs they have taken for years! A person impressed me by telling that after practicing some simple meditation techniques (something very mild like awareness of the breath or concentration on the *Chakras*) he had lost his mental equilibrium and had experienced the most intense attacks of anguish and terror. This person made a big fuss about it, posting on *Yoga* forums. I could not abstain from a strong suspicion. For what reason did he go to India each year, for a long series of years, without ever showing interest for *Yoga* or for the Indian spirituality? Perhaps he went there to get different types of drugs at a low price? Later through common friends I came to know that he took not only opiates but also acids, any kind of amphetamines and (emulous of Carlos Castaneda) didn't disdain the use of psychotropic plants. It was obvious that by complaining before me, he tried to exorcize the rather frightening thought that he had seriously damaged his brain and, perhaps, of being in a condition of permanent, fatal psychic disorder. He removed the very idea that his past unwary choices could be put in causal relation with his present mental situation.

Often I think how shocking would be having a magic mirror in which people could see their past actions and realize how inconsiderate and cruel they had been toward their body! I understand that in some cases a preexisting mental disturbance can push a person to be after drugs as a remedy. Well, in such case I don't believe that the use of the techniques of *Yoga* can aggravate the condition of their alienation.

Many have heard about the story of Gopi Krishna

Worthwhile reading is *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* by Gopi Krishna – currently available under the title *Living With Kundalini*.

A routine which is totally based on a strong concentration on the *Sahasrara* is not appropriate for those students who have not crossed the spiritual eye. To obtain this, years are necessary not months. Building a strong magnet in *Sahasrara* is the most powerful way to stimulate the rising of *Kundalini*. You might experience moments of panic or in which

you feel unrelated with the reality. If you are a beginner, forget the techniques in which you concentrate on *Fontanelle* or over it. We are deeply thankful to the site AYP which explains clearly the reasons of this.

Through intense concentration on *Sahasrara* only, Gopi Krishna got into trouble. His life was both blessed by ecstatic bliss and tormented by physical and mental discomfort. In 1967 he wrote his excellent testimony. His book gives a clear and concise autobiographic account of the phenomenon of the awakening of *Kundalini*.

He experienced this "awakening" in 1937 although he had not a spiritual teacher and was not initiated into any spiritual lineage. He practiced concentration for a number of years. His main technique consisted in visualizing "an imaginary Lotus in full bloom, radiating light" at the crown of the head. As he sat meditating – exactly as he had for the three hours before dawn each day for seventeen years – he became aware of a powerful, pleasurable sensation at the base of his spine. He continued to meditate; the sensation began to spread and extend upwards. It continued to expand until he heard, quite without warning, a roar like that of a waterfall and felt a stream of liquid light enter his brain.

Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord. Entirely unprepared for such a development, I was completely taken by surprise; but regaining self-control instantaneously, I remained sitting in the same posture, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light. (Gopi Krishna *Living With Kundalini*).

This experience changed radically the scheme of his life. He experienced a continuous "luminous glow" around his head and began having a variety of psychological and physiological problems. At times he thought he was going mad. He adopted a very strict diet and for years refused to do any other concentration exercise.

The keen desire to sit and meditate, which had always been present during the preceding days, disappeared suddenly and was replaced by a feeling of horror of the supernatural. I wanted to fly from even the thought of it. At the same time I felt a sudden distaste for work and conversation, with the inevitable result that being left with nothing to keep myself engaged, time hung heavily on me, adding to the already distraught condition of my mind. [...] Each morning heralded for me a new kind of terror, a fresh complication in the already disordered system, a deeper fit of melancholy

or more irritable condition of the mind which I had to restrain, to prevent it from completely overwhelming me, by keeping myself alert, usually after a completely sleepless night; and after withstanding patiently the tortures of the day, I had to prepare myself for even worse torment of the night.

Let us consider now how he emerged from this negative experience into a wonderful state of awakening that blessed him to the end of his life. He discovered that the esoteric teachings contained a number of practices that might help him to bring the energy back into balance. His main cure reminds a lot the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*.

.... a fearful idea struck me. Could it be that I had aroused *Kundalini* through *pingala* or the solar nerve which regulates the flow of heat in the body and is located on the right side of *Sushumna*? If so, I was doomed, I thought desperately and as if by divine dispensation the idea flashed across my brain to make a last-minute attempt to rouse *Ida*, or the lunar nerve on the left side, to activity, thus neutralizing the dreadful burning effect of the devouring fire within. With my mind reeling and senses deadened with pain, but with all the will-power left at my command, I brought my attention to bear on the left side of the seat of *Kundalini*, and tried to force an imaginary cold current upward through the middle of the spinal cord. In that extraordinarily extended, agonized, and exhausted state of consciousness, I distinctly felt the location of the nerve and strained hard mentally to divert its flow into the central channel. Then, as if waiting for the destined moment, a miracle happened. There was a sound like a nerve thread snapping and instantaneously a silvery streak passed zigzag through the spinal cord, exactly like the sinuous movement of a white serpent in rapid flight, pouring an effulgent, cascading shower of brilliant vital energy into my brain, filling my head with a blissful lustre in place of the flame that had been tormenting me for the last three hours. Completely taken by surprise at this sudden transformation of the fiery current, darting across the entire network of my nerves only a moment before, and overjoyed at the cessation of pain, I remained absolutely quiet and motionless for some time, tasting the bliss of relief with a mind flooded with emotion, unable to believe I was really free of the horror. Tortured and exhausted almost to the point of collapse by the agony I had suffered during the terrible interval. I immediately fell asleep, bathed in light and for the first time after weeks of anguish felt the sweet embrace of restful sleep.

Very interesting is the modality through which Gopi Krishna started a process of recovery. Convinced he had aroused *Kundalini* through *Pingala*, he made a last desperate attempt to bring in activity *Ida*, thus neutralizing the internal fire that was devouring him. There is an action he did, which,

patiently repeated, helped him out of his predicament. He mentally created a cold current coming up within the central channel of the spine. This was enough to save him!

From then onwards, Gopi Krishna believed that this experience originated a healing process. He wrote about the mystical experience and the evolution of consciousness from a scientific point of view. He theorized that there existed a biological mechanism in the human body, known from ancient times in India as *Kundalini*, which was responsible for creativity, genius, psychic ability, religious and mystical experience. In his opinion, *Kundalini* was the true cause of evolution. He understood that only a balanced method could put in motion a healthy process of *Kundalini* awakening.

Another interesting testimony about *Kundalini awakening* is that of B. S. Goel's (1935- 1998) described in his: *Psycho-Analysis and Meditation*. He was a very rare individual. His experience of *Kundalini* awakening happened when he was 28 and was quite dramatic. *Kundalini* got awakened on its own. During this long process, his friends thought he was "losing his mind". He went up and down India looking for someone who could explain what was happening to him. He found many people that had theories. However they did not know. His uniqueness lies in his experience of classical psychoanalysis along with meditation, which he advocated. When he was 35, his *Guru* appeared in his dream, and told him that Psycho-analysis and Marxism, both of which he had embraced, were false ways to happiness. He told him the only path to inner peace and joy was through God. In 1982, he opened an ashram in the Himalayas to help and guide other aspirants who had *Kundalini* experiences.

What is interesting for us is that Dr. Goel talks about the different degrees of suffering he went through as his ego was destroyed and rebuild. He was the first, apart late Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who studied the role of *Bindu* point, in the occipital region. He explained that "when the consciousness marches toward *Bindu* (which he calls *Brahma-randhra*) the ego-formations will get exposed before the consciousness in free-associations, in free writings, in dreams, and above all, in meditation itself.

In the last part of his book, while discussing "signals toward the final goal", among a lot of signals he had the courage to quote one in particular whom is not usually treated in book but in those book who want of mimic all the gurudom matter. He quotes "the great desire for being pierced and penetrated." About "pierced", he exemplifies it with the "desire of putting a nail at the mid-point between the two eyebrows. About "penetrated", he

clarifies that the desire of penetration at *Bindu* may, out of ego-ignorance "turn into the desire of passive anal-penetration." He clarifies that an ordinary sexual act cannot satisfy the person who need really penetrated at the *Bindu* to get final spiritual bliss. He adds that: "as long as he does not reach that stage, he may often indulge in compulsive homo-sexuality. It is very probable that many saints of all ages might have remained great homosexuals if they had stopped their spiritual effort in their pre-sainthood period."

Let us try to conceive a wise and safe behavior to be promptly adopted when, after our practice of Kriya, we face disagreeable or negative or worrying moods

Kriya is a spiritual path, nothing else, but its procedures can touch the subconscious sphere. Even if one practices in the best of the ways, he/she could experience negative moods like depression, unmotivated fear, anxiety etc. Close to glorious experiences, a *kriyaban* could feel overwhelmed by an unknown power and experience a panic attack. What is then the best behavior in order to retrieve the lost tranquility?

1. Avoid long concentration on the *Sahasrara*

Apart from *Anahata* and *Kutastha*, don't utilize techniques that work on a single *Chakra*. If you want to unlock an energetic, psychic knot, remember that a knot (*Granti*) is not as we usually visualize it, namely like an ordinary rope-knot. It has a kind of mutual dependence with all the other knots, they are subtly inter-twined, one inside the other. If you concentrate for long time upon one single knot, you risk to lose your mental peace. Don't be like a surgeon who wants to remove a gallstone embedded in a organ, without taking all the care not to destroy the organ and kill the patient. After an understandable momentarily drop of your practice of *Kriya* during depressive moods, when you resume your *Kriya*, give the same concentration to all the *Chakras* and always end by concentrating either on the heart *Chakra* or on the point between the eyebrows. If the result of your practice is a state of greyish mind, if you have the impression that your soul is scratched, this is a sign that your practice is not well balanced.

2. Nadi Sodhana followed by Sitali

You surely know the basic technique of *Nadi Sodhana*.⁷ Practice it every day, even different times a day. This technique is always all right but, for the problems we are dealing with, add *Sitali Pranayama*. (Creating a

⁷ It is explained in the first chapter of this book.

cooling sensation coming up through the spine was exactly what Gopi Krishna did to get out of his awful situation.)

To practice *Sitali*, sit with erected spine and concentrate all your mental strength in the point between the eyebrows. Use all your imagination to raise a fresh current up the spine. This can be done by inhaling through the mouth while keeping the tongue in a particular position. Curl comfortably your tongue and protrude it slightly past the lips to form a tube. Inhale deeply and smoothly through the tongue and mouth – a cooling sensation is felt over the tongue and into the throat. Exhale through the nose, ideally directing the breath to all the parts of your body. Repeat at least 12 times.

3. Practice intensely Mula Bandha for 108 repetitions

Forget the breath, try to attune to calmness in the point between the eyebrows. Practice slowly, but intensely, 108 *Mula Bandha*. Contract the muscles at the base of the spine, maintain the contraction for a couple of seconds and relax. Repeat... Don't be in a hurry: each hold and relax should last at least four seconds. You can have more than one session in order to complete 108 repetitions. The benefit of this practice is almost immediate.

APPENDIX N.3

SPIRITUAL PATHS WORTH STUDYING

[Radhasoami – Hesychasm - Sufi - Internal Alchemy (Nei Dan)]

Usually, when we start the *Kriya* path, we are naïve. We would like to find a book that explains *Kriya* techniques in detail, with beautiful pictures and clear diagrams helpful and supportive of our efforts. We purchase what we find on the market. Often, skimming through those books, we are likely to be disappointed. We won't find what we look for: there are no practical information. The first reaction is to throw the book in the wastebasket.

Unfortunately most books on *Kriya* contain tedious rhetoric and innumerable repetitions, all drenched in useless references to abstruse philosophical theories such that, apart from one or two interesting lines, all the rest is be discarded.

I don't dissuade anyone from reading a book: students must gain first-hand experience. For example, like thousand of persons, I also read avidly the commentaries, attributed to Lahiri Mahasaya, of some sacred writings. Lahiri Mahasaya's great disciple P. Bhattacharya, printed these interpretations. These books were little known for a long time, as they were written in Bengali. Recently they were translated into English. I studied these books with enthusiasm, hoping to find some key useful to my understanding of *Kriya*. I was disappointed. Their value, from an exegetic point of view, is almost null. It seems almost impossible to me that they really come from Lahiri Mahasaya: I am not able to find the same practical wisdom and tremendous realization expressed in his diaries and letters. I find rather a mind with an almost maniacal tendency to interpret each thing in the light of *Kriya*, as if centuries ago, the authors of those spiritual works knew exactly one by one all the *Kriya* techniques.

I think that Lahiri Mahasaya explained orally the meaning of some Indian sacred books. Perhaps, reading the verses of those texts, Lahiri Mahasaya was transported from the force of his insight, forgot completely the starting point and, entranced, talked extensively and freely about the subtleties of *Kriya Yoga*. Very probably what he said on that occasion could have been taken as a specific comment to that text. Furthermore, it is possible that, in order to publish those hard-to-understand notes, the editor had them completed with parts of his own comprehension.

What I would suggest is to study *Kriya* in the light of other mystical traditions. I will bring here precise examples. They can inspire us, fostering an unexpected deepening of our understanding of our spiritual discipline.

We do not know what did Lahiri Mahasaya exactly teach, what

suggestions he gave to his disciples. It is not correct to live in the fixation that it is possible to reconstruct them. Let us be inspired by what is found in the nucleus of the great mystical paths.

[I] RADHASOAMI

Why should *kriyabans* give their time to study the *Radhasoami* cult? Because it has so many similarities with the *Kriya* path. It teaches procedures that are very similar to the techniques *Hong Sau*, *Om*, *Kriya Pranayama* and the technique that PY calls *Second Kriya*. Sri Yukteswar and P. Y. were part of this movement.

A *kriyaban* who feels a strong tie with PY's teachings will surely read with shivers of surprise what comes out from *Radhasoami* literature. It is reasonable to infer that some disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya belonged to a *Radhasoami* group and perhaps, without even being fully aware of this, added to *Kriya* some elements of theory and practice which belonged to this movement.

Radhasoami is a monotheistic religion that has the *Omkar* Reality as "Single God." Well, the *Kriya* path is a process of refinement, in progressive stadiums, of the tuning with the *Omkar* vibration. *Omkar* is the final destination of *Kriya*, the unique essence that permeates every of its phases. This is what you will find in this path.... that's saying a lot.

Practical teachings

The following procedures in their entirety are called *Surat Shabda Yoga* (*Surat* means "soul," *Shabda* means "word". The "word" is the "Sound Current", the "Audible Life Stream" or the "Essence of the Absolute Supreme Being").

Meditation happens in the quiet of the early morning (before breakfast), and before sleep. Meditation begins with first relaxing the body and making it still. The position is comfortable either sitting in a chair or in a cross-legged position with spine erect, keeping spine, head and neck aligned naturally. It is important to gradually develop the ability of sitting relaxed and without any bodily tension.

The teacher gives the disciple a *Mantra*: its repetition helps the mind to come to complete rest. Repeating internally the *Mantra* in *Kutastha* helps one to raise the consciousness of the Self to higher regions. This is the key that helps transcending thought (time and space) and opens the door of the inner being. Disciples are invited to use the "5 Names of God": 1. *Jot Nirinjan* 2. *Ongkar* 3. *Rarankar* 4. *Sohang* 5. *Sat Nam*

One sits still, eyes closed, mentally repeating the *Mantra*, gazing into

the middle of the darkness lying in front of him. If one perceives the inner light, the concentration is on it. Breathing is natural and free flowing. This process automatically draws the spirit-currents, normally dissipated all over the body, toward the spiritual center.

They explain that the seat of the Spirit is at the point between the two eyebrows. It is on this point that the devotee having closed his eyes must focus his attention. The instruction is to repeat there your *Mantra*.

I have not found in *Radhasoami* the exercise of *Talabya Kriya* but only the following instruction. "Curl your tongue up to the roof of your mouth. Get the tip to touch the uvula make contact with *Amrita* (the divine nectar) that is constantly flowing through your body. Go further and enter the nasal passage. Usually you will experience the nectar only after much practice." It is claimed that this nectar is the "living water", the "bread of life" of which Jesus spoke.

Listen to internal sounds

Radhasoami teaches a spiritual path that is intentionally easier than those described in the ancient scriptures as it requires nothing more than sitting quietly and looking and listening within." They teach that there are no other means of spiritual liberation, except through the *Omkar* experience. Without actual, conscious, participation in the internally audible Life Stream, no one can ever escape the net of *Karma* and reincarnation, or ever become free and happy. They explain that no other system leads so easily to the highest regions of mystical experience.

In order to begin the upward journey, a devotee must learn to "go within." The procedure involves concentrating on the primordial vibration that activates the Universe, the so-called "Music of the Spheres." In order to hear the "divine sound", novices are asked to block their ears with the thumbs so they cannot hear any external sounds. This technique is practiced using an arm prop.

One can hear the inner sounds – the same described in *Kriya* literature. One listens to the internal sounds coming at first from the right side and ultimately from the top of the head. To some devotees this sounds like a bell. At a certain moment, it begins to fairly enchant you and to pull you up with increasing attraction and power. You will find yourself listening to it with rapt attention and deep delight, completely absorbed in it. You will never wish to leave it. This experience is deepened by perceiving the light in *Kutastha*.

Utilizing the breath to increase the Omkar experience.

There are plenty of variations of that procedure adopted by the different *Radhasoami* groups. Here I hint to one variation which represent, in my opinion, the most effective and efficient way to merge into the *Omkar* dimension.

Inhale slowly, deeply, through your nose, and then slowly exhale, but before all the air is out you start breathing in again, and you just keep going, never quite letting all the air out. Perceive two currents in the right and in the left lobe of the brain, respectively. The inhaling current moves upward, the exhaling current moves downward. You can actually hear the sound of the in and out breath as "*so-hung*" (*soham*): "*so*" on the in-breath, "*hung*" on the out-breath. The Divine Word is the sound your breath makes. This technique, in the classic *Yoga* literature, is referred to as *Kewali Kumbhak* because if you are constantly aware of the breath and of *Soham* you achieve the breathless state. This perception, if it is repeated for a long time, will help you to perceive the astral sounds in the internal part of each ear. You will hear internal sound inside the right ear, then inside the left ear also.

Through a long practice of this breathing exercise, you will hear a ringing about an inch above the right ear. You will hear a ringing about an inch above the left ear. It may take you about five minutes to hear both tones at the same time. Each breath should give momentum to this circular movement. Perceive inside the central part of the brain a counterclockwise movement (when looked from behind.) When the energy in the two is balanced, a circular force field is formed. Follow both tonal vibrations from the ears into the center of the cranium, where they will meet and blend into a slightly different sound. At the apex of this procedure you will have the revelation of the spiritual eye. When the breath disappears, the movement goes ahead through the sheer power of concentration. The white spiritual light appears in the central part of your head. Go ahead, relentlessly absorbed in it. A deep Bell sound will lead you in the *Samadhi* state. This is the culmination of this particular practice.

The *Radhasoami* movement believes that besides the 6 *Chakras* in the physical body, there are 6 *Chakras* in the gray matter of the brain, and 6 in the white matter. The 6 spinal *Chakras* are materialistic in nature, therefore they are not to be stimulated (you don't use specific *bija Mantras* to

activate them as you do in *Kundalini Yoga*) but they are simply astrally located. Strange as it may sound, long meditation upon the *Chakras* is not the right action to be done in order to achieve "*Mukti*" (liberation.) But by astrally locating them we acquire the ability to leave the human body at will – a practice sometimes referred to as "dying while living". The technique consists in assuming *Kechari Mudra*, focusing the internal gaze in *Kutastha*, while part of the attention locates the seat of a *Chakra* until its particular luminous vibration begins to appear. When this happens you don't dwell upon that *Chakra*; you focus on the physical location of the next each *Chakra* and so on. In other words, the pause upon a *Chakra* lasts only for the necessary time to have that subtle perception of it.

The location of the other 12 *Chakras* in the brain is gradually revealed by moving the *Prana* in a circular way inside the brain. A very slight breath can be used just at the very beginning of this procedure, then breath is forgotten and you use only the pure strength of your will.

After completing a great number of rounds, the soul has sufficient force to penetrate the 18th portal. *Radhasoami* teaches that is the most elevated *Chakra*; its seat is in the white part of the brain. This portal opens on the true, indestructible ocean of the Spirit. This is the ultimate goal to be achieved via meditation practices.

Kabir and Guru Nanak inspired the Radhasoami movement

Kabir

The writings of Kabir (1398 Benares - 1448/1494 Maghar), have deep similarities with the *Radhasoami* teaching. Kabir's concept of *Shabda*, which can be translated as "Word" (the word of the Master), can be related to the *Omkar* teaching. According to Kabir this *Shabda-Om* dispels all doubts and difficulties: is vital to keep it constantly in our consciousness as a living presence.

The literature about Kabir and Guru Nanak (1469 Nankana Sahib - 1539 Kartarpur) is very inspiring. Their teachings overlapped perfectly. Kabir, an illiterate Muslim weaver, was a great mystic, open to the vedantic and *yogic* influence, and an extraordinary singer of the Divine, conceived beyond name and form. The poems and sentences ascribed to him are expressed in a particularly effective language that remains permanently emblazoned in the reader's memory.

In the last century, Rabindranath Tagore, the great mystic poet of Calcutta, rediscovered the reliability of his teachings and the power of his poetry,

and made beautiful translations of his songs into English. Kabir conceived Islam and Hinduism to be two roads converging toward a unique goal. He was convinced of the possibility of overcoming the barriers that separate these two great religions. He did not seem to base his teaching upon the authority of the holy writings; he shunned the religious rituals. Kabir taught not to renounce to life and become a hermit, not to cultivate any extreme approach to the spiritual discipline, because it weakens the body and increases pride. God has to be recognized inside of one's own soul - like a fire fed by continuous care, burning all the resistances, dogmas and ignorance. This is beautifully stated in Kabir's: "One day my mind flew as a bird in the sky, and entered the heavens. When I arrived, I saw that there was no God, since He resided in the Saints!"

Hinduism gave Kabir the concept of reincarnation and the law of *Karma*; Islam gave him the absolute monotheism - the strength of fighting all the forms of idolatry and the caste system. I found the full meaning of the *yogic* practice in him. He says that there is a garden full of flowers in our body, the *Chakras*, and an endless beauty can be contemplated if the awareness is established in the "thousand-petal Lotus".

Who is there playing upon a flute in the middle of the sky? The flute is being played in *trikuti* (eyebrows center), the confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna. The sound emanates from the north! Cowherd girl, hear the sound of the flute and lo, they are all hypnotized by the *nada*." "It is a music without strings which plays in the body. It penetrates the inner and the outer and leads you away from illusion." (Kabir).

Guru Nanak

Beloved Guru Nanak gave the same teaching. He disapproved of ascetic practices and taught instead to remain inwardly detached whilst living as a householder. "Asceticism doesn't consist in ascetic robes, or in having a walking staff, nor in visiting burial places. Asceticism is not mere words; asceticism is to remain pure amidst impurities!" Traditionally, release from the bondage of the world was sought as the goal, therefore the householder's life was considered an impediment and an entanglement. In contrast, in Guru Nanak's teaching, the whole world became the arena of spiritual endeavor. He was bewitched by the beauty of creation and considered the panorama of nature as the loveliest place for worship of the Divine. He expressed his teachings in Punjabi, the spoken language of northern India. His disregard for Sanskrit suggested that his message was without reference to the existent Holy Scriptures. He made a deliberate attempt to completely cut off his disciples from all the ritualistic practices, orthodox modes of worship, and from the priestly class.

His teaching demanded an entirely new approach. While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, he described God as not wholly unknowable. God must be seen through "the inward eye", sought in the "heart". He emphasized that the revelation of this is to be achieved through meditation. In his teachings there are hints as to the possibility of listening to an ineffable internal melody (*Omkar*) and to taste the nectar (*Amrit*).

"The Sound is inside us. It is invisible. Wherever I look I find it."
(Guru Nanak).

In conclusion, *the Radhasoami* path deserves our respect: there are teachings in it that complement wonderfully Lahiri's legacy. Let us say in general that the literary material produced by this movement is very inspiring for all those who are seeking to be in tune with the *Omkar* Realty.

[III] HESYCHASM

As we have said, an easy way to come closer to the *Hesychast* teaching is to read *The way of the Pilgrim*. This is a novel written by "Anonymous" in the mid-nineteenth century and translated into English in 1930.

As for the story contained in that book, no one knows for certain if it is a true story about a particular pilgrim or a spiritual fiction created to propagate the mystical aspect of the Orthodox Christian faith. Some, on the basis of other witnesses, identify the author as the Russian Orthodox monk Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov. Whatever the historical truth, this pilgrim is the ideal representative of a vast category of people who spent their life visiting sanctuaries, churches, monasteries, the Athos Mountain, the Holy Land seeking God through the *Continuous Prayer*.

The story is about a pilgrim returning from the Holy Sepulcher who stopped at Mount Athos. One is immediately struck by the opening words: "By the grace of God, I am a Christian, by my actions, a great sinner, and by calling, a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth roaming from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack with some dried bread in it, and in my breast pocket a Bible. And that is all". Then we learn how the pilgrim at the start of his path was resolute about covering an infinite distance across the steppes, if he had to, in order to find a spiritual guide that would reveal to him the secret of *Continuous Prayer*. The novel is therefore a tale of the pilgrim's lifelong search for the teaching on how "to pray continually" – the way Saint Paul had recommended.

One day, the pilgrim's ardor was awarded when a spiritual teacher accepted him as a disciple, clarifying every detail of the practice. It is interesting to read how the Pilgrim was instructed to repeat the Jesus Prayer 3,000 times a day, then 6,000, then 12,000. By following this counsel, one day the pilgrim discovered that the *Prayer* had reached the mysterious secret zone in the heart. It happened spontaneously that the syllables of the *Prayer* were pronounced in synchronous with the pulse. From then on, whatever happened, it could not separate the pilgrim from God.

The spiritual practice starts by murmuring the Prayer just audibly enough that you can hear yourself. Then you skip to mental repetition. Then you can make a few prostrations (bows from the waist, while the rest is immobile.) Twelve prostrations will suffice in the beginning. *Hesychasts* explain that the prostrations warm up the body and strengthen fervor in *Prayer*.

You sit comfortably and try to lengthen the rhythm of your breath. You breathe through the nostrils in a way that the breath produces a noise in the throat. ⁸ When the breath reaches a stable and regular rhythm, combine the *Prayer* with the ingoing and outgoing breath. Go ahead with this for a minimum of 15 minutes; after a couple of weeks practice for 30 minutes. Very useful is to count the number of repetitions on rosary beads. Then move on to pure mental repetition.

Very interesting is the instruction of this unknown author that many call Pseudo-Symeon:

Then sit down in a quiet cell, in corner by yourself, and do what I tell you. Close the door, and withdraw your intellect from everything worthless and transient. Rest your beard on your chest, and focus your physical gaze, together with the whole of your intellect, upon the center of your belly or your navel. Restrain the drawing-in of breath through your nostrils, so as not to breathe easily, and search inside yourself with your intellect so as to find the place of the heart, where all the powers of the soul reside. To start with you will find there darkness and an impenetrable density. Later, when you persist and practice this task day and night, you will find, as though miraculously, an unceasing joy. For as soon as the intellect attains the place of the heart, at once it sees things of which it previously knew nothing. It sees the open space within the heart and it beholds itself entirely luminous and full of discrimination.

⁸ This is what *Hesychasm* teaches and everyone acknowledges this is pure *Yoga*.

Hesychasts explain that the region between the eyebrows is not fit for all the phases of meditation. If the energy of your thought comes down to the level of the throat – as it normally happens while reciting the *Prayer* – it acquires an evocative power recharged with emotional values. As a consequence there is the tendency to become lost in mental associations. If you move the center of your awareness towards the heart center, the attention reaches complete cohesion. It is sustained by a higher intensity and nothing extraneous can disturb it.

Interesting is to see how the *Hesychasm* introduce a procedure very similar to our *Navi Kriya*. The instruction is to sit (comfortably and without strain) with your head bowed and your eyes directed toward the abdomen. You pray with concentrated focus on the *navel*. You try to enter it, as if the navel were only a "door". Esicasmo explain that you will find a joyless and dull obscurity but with persistence, a limitless happiness will be reached. You will see the open space within the heart and contemplate the "*Uncreated Light*". Your heart will be filled with the most loving bliss! After achieving this state you will have a drastic realization that "what you have lived till now had been *nothing*."

All this is wisely and masterfully explained in the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. As you understand, the main reason for the work's attraction is the presentation of a pilgrim's life as the model pattern of life for those who truly wish to lead a spiritual life.

Surely, we *kriyabans* are "pilgrims", worn-out and exasperated, moving from a pseudo guru to another – each one woefully ignorant, slave of their own fixed idea: that we westerners are pushovers enjoying to be fooled.

Thanks to the inspiration coming from *The Way of a Pilgrim* we decide to test the practice of *Japa*, to murmur mentally our chosen *Prayer* for a couple of hours a day. Instead of just hanging around doing nothing of fantasizing about how to guess the original techniques of *Kriya Yoga*, we taste the divine honey of the *Contemplative Prayer*. This leads us to a sincere act of opening our heart to God. We shall gradually discover that the goal that the Russian Pilgrim had set for himself – achieving the state of *Continuous Prayer*, a real heaven on this heart, a state of unparalleled Beauty – is not a myth, it is feasible in our life.

[III] SUFI

Soul stirring ardent feelings and sincerity are to be found in *Sufi* literature: the celebration of the Creator of the universe shines with a strength and amplitude beyond comparison. *Sufis* tell us of their love for earthly Beauty, letting you guess how they are carried away by their ardent form of Prayer, from the contemplation of that Beauty to the direct experience of the Divine.

Consider how great is the inspiration that we receive from these lines by Rumi:

I died as a mineral and became a plant; I died as plant and rose to animal; I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blessed; but even from angelhood I must pass on: all except God doth perish. When I have sacrificed my angel-soul, I shall become what no mind e'er conceived. (Rumi, Translated by A.J. Arberry)

Many *Sufi* practice a private and silent *Adoration*. Their belief is that when you open your heart to *Allah* and utter words in His praise, *Allah* fills you with strength and inner peace:

When praying, the individual bows as a human person and gets up as God. (Al-Junayd)

The word *Dhikr* [which is the *Thokar* procedure we learn in *Kriya*] is commonly translated as "remembrance". Essentially, the practice of *Dhikr* is a form of *Prayer* in which the Muslim expresses their remembrance of God. Through *Dhikr* the seed of remembrance is planted in the heart and nourished daily, until the tree of *Dhikr* becomes deeply rooted and bears its fruit. *Dhikr* is something of tremendous importance. *Sufi* teach that the purpose of *Dhikr* is to purify hearts and souls in order to move toward the Light of the Divine without being deflected by anything.

Interesting is to study how they begin the practice of *Dhikr* by uttering the *Mantra* aloud (*Dhikr* of the tongue) until a state of great absorption makes it impossible to go on in this way (aloud.) At this point the mental practice commences. By persevering assiduously in this way, the syllables chanted mentally are gradually effaced from our awareness and only the meaning of the *Prayer* remains. The mind becomes so calm that it is unable to think, while the deepest sentiments are awakened – the touch of Divine Recollection drives the mind crazy and the most intoxicating of joys begins to expand within.

"Heavens and earth contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me."

(*Prophet Muhammad conveying the words of God, Hadith Kudsi.*)

If you want to follow the *Sufi* path and at the same time utilize the *Kriya* techniques, you will encounter no difficulties whatsoever. Of course, you should be endowed with a strong self-teaching spirit. At the first place put those procedures in which the chanting of the "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" is accompanied by the movements of the head. Lahiri Mahasaya gave the Islamic mantra "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" to his Muslim disciples.⁹

We don't have the exact details of that procedure but it seems reasonable that the head was lifted (with or without the help of the breath) from under the navel up to the brain; after reaching the brain, it moved from the brain to the one shoulder, then to the other shoulder and then it hit the heart.

Some *Sufi* order explains that he who wants to guide his Prayer into his heart, first of all must keep the tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, his lips and teeth firmly shut, and hold his breath. Then starting with the word "*Lâ*" , he makes it ascend from the navel to the brain.

After "*Lâ*" is placed in the head, he puts "*ilâha*" in the right shoulder (and upper part of the chest under the right shoulder) with head bending to the right; "*illâal*" is put in the left shoulder (and upper part of the chest under the left shoulder) with head bending to the left. Then "*lâh*" is driven forcefully into the heart with the head bending down. From this position, "*Lâ*" is again brought into the head, while raising the chin.

At the end of the chosen number of repetitions, the phrase "*Muhammad rasul Allah*" is made to incline from the left to the right side, and then one says, "*My God, Thou art my goal and satisfying Thee is my aim.*"

When the number of repetitions of the technique increases in intensity, a deep intoxication is felt in the heart. One may abide by the number of repetitions given in *Kriya* schools (related with the practice of the basic form of *Thokar*) or can go beyond them in a completely different dimension. I know that the *Sufis* reach a number of repetitions that is inconceivable to a *kriyaban*.

⁹ If you prefer to utilize a 12 syllable Mantra you can consider: Allahu la ilaha illa huwal hayyul qayyum (Allah—there is no god except He—is the Living One, the All-sustainer.) A good division into 12 parts is: 1- AL 2- LA 3-HU 4-LA 5-ILAHA 6- ILLA 7- HU 8-WAL 9-HAY 10-YUL 11-QAY 12-YUM

For a good practice of *Thokar* I recommend the correct attitude which is not to prepare to experience something tremendously powerful but that to lose oneself in the beauty of the prayer, of the *Mantra* -- as the Sufis do. The simplest way is the best.

"When a servant of *Allah* utters the words "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" (There is none worthy of worship except Allah) sincerely, the doors of heaven open up for these words until they reach the Throne of *Allah*."

[IV] INTERNAL ALCHEMY (NEI DAN)

The *Taoist Internal Alchemy* is a spiritual discipline, the esoteric core of Taoism, the mystical tradition of ancient China. My first reference book was *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality* by Charles Luk & Lu Kuan. My attention was considerably stirred up; I photocopied many pages, cut out the most important pieces, put them in order and glued them onto four sheets of paper, highlighting the four phases of *Taoist Internal Alchemy*.

When I read the description of the basic procedure (*Microcosmic Orbit*) of this ancient discipline, I saw it was very similar to *Kriya Pranayama* – but not exactly equal! However, studying deeply the former helps us to penetrate the mysteries of the hidden laws of the latter. Various metaphors used to explain its mechanism of the *Micro Orbit* (bagpipe turned upside-down, flute with no holes...) brought back to my mind, with surprising similarity, some weird explanation about *Kriya Pranayama* which I had once received from an eminent source.

The difference between *Microcosmic Orbit* and *Kriya Pranayama* is that in the first the energy goes down in the body touching not the *Chakras* but the points on the surface of the body which are connected with the *Chakras*: Adam's apple, the central region of the sternum, the navel, the pubic region and the *Perineum*. By going ahead with the practice, the difference between the two procedures fades away, as the result produced upon the body's energy is the same.

I was surprised: perhaps *Kriya Yoga* was the *Taoist Internal Alchemy*, taught within an Indian context, with clear use of both purely Indian techniques and procedures (like *Navi Kriya*) that were Indian only in appearance? Actually, *Kriya Yoga* is a discipline which could be described through the symbols of two different cultures. Surely *Kriya Yoga* is definitely deeper and richer than *Tantric Kundalini Yoga*.

I thought that it was not a weird idea that the mythical *Babaji* was/is one of the "immortals" of the *Taoist* tradition. My enthusiastic response derived from the intuition that the study of the *Internal Alchemy* would prove to be absolutely profitable.

[I] Small Heavenly Orbit (Lesser Celestial Circuit)

The first stage is the basis of the whole internal alchemical process, it consists in activating the *Small Heavenly Orbit*.

Let your breath free. Raise your eyebrows, become sensitive to the internal light. Try now to intuitively perceive this light in the "frontal component" of each *Chakra*. "Frontal" means that its location is on the anterior part of the body. After *Kutastha*, the awareness goes down, through the tongue, in the superior frontal part of the throat (this is the frontal component of the fifth *Chakra*.) The perception of the internal light in that point happens for few second. Then the awareness goes down in the central region of the sternum... you perceive internal light... then in the navel... then in the pubic region and finally in the perineum. Then the concentration moves upwards behind the vertebral column and the same perception of light happens in the second *Chakra*; then in the third one... and so up to the *Medulla*, the occipital region, the *Fontanelle*, ending again in the *Kutastha* where you stop for a longer time. Do this only mentally for weeks, then utilize the deep breathing (just as we do in *Kriya Pranayama*.)

Awareness and energy (Qi) are then raised during inhalation along the *Governor* channel at the back of the spine and let flow down along the *Functional* channel during exhalation. The purpose of this action is "to bring Three to Two, Two to One". What does it mean this last riddle?

"Three" are the three energies: **Jing**=sexual energy, **Qi**= love energy and **Shen**=spiritual energy .

The sexual energy is not only what this name implies but also the agent that makes us rejoice in the sensory perceptions, and that which gives us the strength and the determination to fight the battle of life and to achieve all the things we need (unfortunately, another reason we fight is to achieve superfluous things but this is another problem...).

Love Energy is a deep feeling toward another person, living creatures, life in general and also the joy felt beholding a work of art. It is the fuel of fair-minded actions born out of inner, noble instincts and ethical laws.

The Spiritual Energy vibrates during the highest peaks of aesthetic

contemplation, where the vast prophetic visions may manifest.

It has been explained that these three energies derive from one unique reality, their division originated at our birth and reinforced by education and social living. Now, the *Small Heavenly Orbit* [our *Kriya Pranayama* works exactly in the same way] redress this primeval harmony. Breath after breath, the sexual thoughts (which seem to be reinforced) will turn into love thoughts. The energy of love acquires strength, the determination not to succumb to any obstacle; it is then raised into the head where it mixes with the energy of the Spirit. In this way any split in our personality disappears: our many-sided life begins to flow naturally, unimpeded toward Spirit. We understand that the *Small Heavenly Orbit* [and therefore our *Kriya Pranayama* as well] bring about a *permanent healing action upon our personality*.

While through *Kundalini Yoga* one is just trying to climb up to the crown of their head to experience there divine ecstasy, in the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* one utilizes that state to reach the body, nurture and transform it. It is well-known that *Kriya Yoga* is substantially a path of "ascent". This means that it is incomplete and has to be balanced by a movement downward, until one settles in a still point of balance and harmony. Many religious paths teach to maintain, rather to cultivate as a virtue, the division between matter and spirit, and sexuality is repressed as unholy. This point is the main cause of nerve-wracking conflicts in spiritually minded people.

¹⁰

No tradition respects the whole mystery of human nature as deeply as the *Taoist Internal Alchemy*. One who wants to follow the spiritual path should listen to the practical wisdom that this path embodies. Thus could avoid a wide range of problems. Only commonsense, love for natural laws and

¹⁰ Some *kriyabans* develop sexual thoughts and become sexually aroused during the initial deep breaths of their *Kriya Pranayama*. We will never get tired of repeating: this is perfectly normal! Those who assume *Kechari Mudra*, either proper or a simplified form of it, and concentrate, during exhalation, on the flow of *Prana* in the body (it is very beneficial to visualize it passing through the tip of the tongue into the throat and into the body, each part of the body, as a beatific, healing rain restoring life in each cell) will immediately experience how sexual thoughts disappear and become pure love. This great energy of love will gradually turn into pure aspiration for the spiritual goal.

meditation-born intuition promotes the true self-inquiry which leads to Self Realization. One should consider the teaching received by the tradition, feel heavy conditioning, see all their limits and dangers and take the courage to rectify them.

[III] Guiding the energy to the lower Dantian

We know that the *Dantian* (here is indicated as the "*Lower Dantian*") has the dimensions of a ball whose diameter is about two-and-a-half inches long. In order to localize its position, one has to concentrate on the belly button, to come about one and a half inches behind and below to the same extent.

After a normal deep inhalation (which increases the energetic sensation in the brain) a long exhalation guides the energy in the *Dantian*. This action is repeated many many times – visualization helps to compress this energy to the size of a pearl in the center of *Dantian*. Internal heat increases.

This description of the second phase of the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* completes our understanding of the *First Kriya level* because it shows the necessity of practicing *Navi Kriya*. Here we understand that through the simple *Navi Kriya* [the same happens through the advanced technique of *Navi Kundalini*] the energy stored in the head (as a result of the *Kriya Pranayama*), should be conveyed into the *Dantian*.

We *kriyabans* say that after the mixing of *Prana* and *Apana* through *Kriya Pranayama*, the *Samana* current enters into play. *Internal Alchemy* has much more inspiring expressions like: "Coming back to the center"; "The union of heaven and earth"; "The birth of the golden flower"; "The creation of the dazzling gem"; "The creation of the elixir of immortality."

What we need to understand is that becoming stable in this unfathomable deep region of *Dantian* means to be born to the spiritual life. [This is the same event described in the teachings of *Hesychasm*.]

[III/FIRST PART] Pushing the energy up to Middle Dantian

The *Third Internal Alchemy* phase is conceived to reach the "*Middle Dantian*" which is the heart region.

It is difficult to understand which procedures are prescribed in this phase because in the relating literature, some hints about this topic are abnormally embellished with a lot of evocative terms, metaphors which make almost impossible to have a clear idea of what they mean in practice.

What I have understood is this: you simply focus on the vibration produced in the *Lower Dantian*. That vibration ascends spontaneously into the heart region and illuminates the "Space of the heart." [The space of the heart is the *Middle Dantian*.] The contemplation of the Light shining there brings the manifestation of the "true serenity." This reveals one's *fundamental nature*. The spiritual experience happens without mental pollution. The devotion knows no limits.

Some schools (near to the Tibetan teachings) add a small detail about the way to breathe. Precisely the inspiration that was normal at the beginning of the process becomes typical of the *Reversed Breath*. In practice you inhale deeply drawing inward the abdomen contracting and holding the anal region. The breath becomes more and more subtle. The energy that is found in the abdomen condenses more and more and is invited to come up in the region of the heart.

[III/SECOND PART] Pushing the energy up to Higher Dantian

The *thrusting channel* runs like a tube from the *Perineum* to the *Fontanelle* through the center of the body in front of the spine. We increase the *Prana* inside it. This is not a new phase of our work but the completion of the third phase. The purpose is to prepare the momentum necessary to set in motion the *Macrocosmic Orbit*.

In *Tibetan Yoga* we reach the same result through the practice of *Tummo*.

[IV] Greater Celestial Circuit

The *Fourth Stage* is a great event which happens when the time is ripe through the full mastery of the *Third Stage*.

When the energy increased in the *thrusting channel* reaches the *Upper Dantian* (*Kutastha*: the region between the eyebrows) a spontaneous phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body, (the *Macrocosmic Orbit*) which has vast implications, happens.

The three energies (sexual, love and spiritual) are mixed harmoniously, they have created the *elixir of immortality*. It trickles down into the body and feeds every cell. This happens in a state called "*prenatal breathing*" which is a movement of internal energy that gives perceptions similar to those obtained through the *Microcosmic Orbit* but is now experienced in the breathless state (*Kevala Kumbhaka*). This refined experience makes the spiritual path complete: the Divine is infused into our body. The spiritual path does not end with a flight out of the body toward the rarefied dimensions of the Spirit. The *Macrocosmic Orbit* discloses undreamed of

scenarios. It appears as an experience of perfect Beauty.

From a certain moment onwards, descending movement turns into an indefinite pressure on all the cells of the body. This event widens – in an unexpected way – the boundaries of the awareness. Experiencing this means to have entered at the full the last part of the spiritual path.

We have all the reasons to believe that this is the same experience called in *Kriya Yoga: Pranayama with Internal breathing*. This is a peculiar phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body. The breath is absent, the body is loaded with *static Prana*. The obstruction at the base of the spine is perfectly removed. One perceives the circulation of the energy as an "internal breath." A person enters spontaneously a state of well being and perceives a great infusion of energy coming down as a golden liquid outside and inside the body, in all its cells. We say that the breath is totally internalized.

Final remark to Appendix 3

There are many important spiritual figures that were not part of a religious movement. A study of their works (conferences, talks included) is a valuable activity. Let me add here two words about J. Krishnamurti.

It was my last *Kriya* teacher that counseled me to start studying Krishnamurti. The strange thing is that thanks to this study I found the crucial and conclusive boost that would assist me, after many years of controversial but loyal discipleship, to break my dependence on him.

Krishnamurti said what was then difficult to fully agree with: What is the need of a *Guru*? [...] You have to walk by yourself, you have to take the journey alone, and on that journey you have to be your own teacher and pupil. While I was reading these lines I felt undoubtedly that they expressed a deep truth, but my logic suggested peremptorily, "This is a sophism; even Krishnamurti acted as a *Guru* and acts upon me now just through his writings." I could not actualize his wise warning; fear and conditioning held me back. How many mistakes would I still have to make, how many slaps would I still have to take before I could affirm my freedom from *gurus*!

I studied many books of this author but nobody has the beauty of *The only revolution*. It is not easy to understand immediately its meaning. It is necessary to read only one chapter at a time and read it again in the following months.

Only repeated exposure to sunlight can lead to tanning; it is similarly necessary to expose our mind many times to this teaching before realizing its meaning. Bring with you this small book during your walks until you understand why this teaching is so important for our life!

The only revolution is a perfect synthesis of poetry and wisdom. "Life begins where thought ends," writes *Krishnamurti*. Do you want to realize this teaching? Take the whole necessary time. The practice of your *Kriya* will inexplicably turn out to be deepened.

APPENDIX N.4 FICTIONAL KRIYA

At that epoch of my life, I received a couple of initiations by other "minor" teachers that had once been the right-hand man of one or another illustrious *Guru* but then became independent because the *Guru* disowned them. We agreed our teachers were mostly mediocre, sometimes impolite and unethical. Some trifling episodes confirmed our first impressions of mental instability. They knew little about *Kriya Yoga* and they taught it in a superficial way, but we believed they taught the "*Original Kriya*" and this blinded us. Just for this reason we treated them with a deferential and tolerant attitude, forgiving them when they betrayed our trust.

We accepted the farce of the initiations as an inevitable drawback to success in acquiring the information we were searching for with so much passion. Generally speaking after attending many different rituals, the explanations were always quick and shallow; a destructive criticism was often raised against information coming from other sources.

I would finish every initiation thinking I had found the keys of *Original Kriya*. Often a vague sense of well-being perceived while practicing a certain technique for the first time was the proof of the excellence of the technique itself. I did not realize that, in this way, I had made my ego the compass needle of my spiritual journey. I could not realize that my past achievements – listening to the *Om* vibration, breathless state... – were no more with me, were forgotten. It was like I had been hypnotized.

I ignored any awareness that the new initiation had only added something insignificant to what I already knew and I was confining myself to a "cage" from which I would sooner or later break loose.

To many among us those initiations were a true vice. We stocked up on techniques like food for a famine. Just to give an example, at almost all initiation seminars a solemn pledge of secrecy was the password to be accepted. Every one took this pledge but as soon as the meeting was over, some shared the coveted news with other students by cell-phone who, in turn, would take part in other initiations and reciprocate the favor.

The mindset I developed in following these teachers led me to meet one particular school where *Kriya Yoga* was dramatically deprived from the classic *Higher Kriyas* and filled with fragments of "Classic Yoga." For

some of my friends who followed me in this trip, it turned to be the scene of bitter disappointments and marked the definitive abandonment of the spiritual pursuit.

Therefore let me describe the most disappointing meeting of my life. I came in contact with a *Kriya* school very far from Lahiri Mahasaya's teachings. I just want to drop a quick note on this school (I don't want to even mention its name) where I touched the lowest point of my spiritual path.

The *Kriya Yoga* they taught was based upon the teachings of an Indian personage who claimed he was a direct disciple of *Babaji*. The school offered three levels of *Kriya*, easy to obtain in about three years if you showed enough commitment. The idea of having found a source from which I could learn everything about *Kriya* excited me tremendously.

The introductory book to this school was very strange: its illustrations gave the impression of a fairytale. In this book there was no mention of techniques like *Talabya Kriya*, *Kechari Mudra*, *Navi Kriya*, *Omkar Pranayama*, *Thokar*... The main technique was called *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama*. It was coupled with many other teachings grouped under four main headings: *Hatha Yoga*, *Dhyana Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*.

The first instructions I received didn't disappoint me, but did leave me a bit perplexed. The teacher was obsessed with the precept of not holding one's breath, therefore the technique of *Yoni Mudra*, which is fundamental for Lahiri Mahasaya, was considered dangerous and thus banned. Their *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama* was indeed beautiful. The most annoying thing was that once you had completed the prescribed number of breaths, the process you had put into motion had to suddenly be relinquished and switched to *Dhyana Kriya*, a meditation which had nothing to do with spine, *Chakras* etc.

There is a principle that is always valid in any form of *Kriya Pranayama*: what you have done, or tried to do, utilizing your breath, you must bring it ahead by utilizing a subtler breath and finally only through mental effort. Another point is this: if during *Kriya Pranayama*, you create a particular throat sound, you must train yourself to make it become mental substance, pure astral vibration without physical component. Thus your effort will have a tremendous effect. This activity requires time, at least 10-20 minutes after the main exercise requiring the utilization of deep breath. It is clear then how stupid is to avoid this marvel and practice an exercise trying to realize quite another thing with our imagination.

Before receiving instruction from this school, I had mixed what I had learned from PY's organization with *Swami Hariharananda's* teaching and had created a very pleasant routine whose final part (concentration on the *Chakras*) was pure delight. Seriously practicing this new routine, there grew within me a marked longing for what I had relinquished. [I had the heavy sensation of gaining nothing substantial.]

The central core of the *Second Level* was initiation into Indian *Mantras*. This subject was more appealing to me. The day of initiation into a *Mantra* was preceded by a day of silence; entranced we listened a splendid lesson upon the utility of practicing *Japa*. There were other teachings that left me perplexed. Since I had placed much hope on the upcoming third level, I endured it all.

The third final level was an atrocious delusion. There were no proper *Higher Kriyas* but instead classic *Yoga* techniques, suitable for a preparatory course to *Kriya*. The six *Samadhi* techniques, given at the conclusion of that enervating and boring course, were: a variation of the *Hong Sau* technique, three fairly common techniques of visualization, the classic instruction of continuous awareness during the day and, at the end, a variation of the same *Om* meditation technique I had received from my first *Kriya* organization. The variations of the *Hong Sau* technique, as well as of the *Om* technique, seemed devised by a lazy mind whose only purpose in modifying them was to avoid the accusation of having copied from PY's organization, with no concern as to whether the resulting techniques were devoid of their power. For example, in the first technique, the "*Hong Sau*" *Mantra* was replaced by "*Om Babaji*" forgetting that *Hong Sau* is a universal *Mantra* whose syllables were specifically chosen for their power of calming the breath, with which they have a vibratory connection. The three techniques of visualization were of a genre one could find in any book on concentration and meditation. For many of us who had yearlong experience with the preliminary-to-*Kriya* techniques offered by PY's organization, being re-taught those techniques, disguised and passed off as *Samadhi* techniques, was actually like a cold shower.

Some of us dared to ask to the teacher his opinion about Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*. At first he was reticent and did not seem glad about our interest, then he shared his views. He believed that Lahiri Mahasaya had not practiced with total commitment the teachings he received from Babaji, therefore he ... died. Astounded, we realized that since Lahiri Mahasaya had not obtained immortality (as should happen to those who give their all to applying *Kriya* integrally), he was dismissive of him.

APPENDIX N.5

RIGHT AND WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SPIRITUAL PATH

The problem of considering the wrong attitudes towards the Spiritual path is more serious than what is commonly perceived. Do we really think that the *kriyabans* who stick faithfully to a schedule of regular practice are free from insane and totally irrational expectations that contradict the very basis of the mystical path? Human fragility while approaching the spiritual path is really substantial. Many enter the *Kriya* path with a wrong attitude. When I was part of PY's organization – and also afterwards – I saw different attitudes towards *Kriya*, some were blatantly improper.

The right attitude is not that of a student of occult science, inspired by sheer curiosity to test hasty some esoteric teachings. The devotee who surrenders to the divine Law, who understands that his birth on the earth plane was determined by the same law he is pursuing, has the right attitude and will not fail in his search.

A "*clean* mystical path" is a path directed one pointedly towards the total surrender to God and not a path polluted by the fantasies and deformations of the human mind. One's spiritual path of *Kriya* should be "clean" otherwise failure with colossal loss of time will happen.

Technically speaking, a *kriyaban* is required to have a certain control over the mind and an adequate power of concentration. A minimum ability of visualization is also necessary. The breath is utilized to calm the *Prana*, to give a stimulus to each *Chakra*. Other "strange" paranormal powers are not required. Working with these tools, a *kriyaban* enters (after calming the breath) the ecstatic state where one is totally absorbed in the Divine essence. Intense joy is the first effect which produces love for the Divine. This love is deep, passionate, overwhelming, hitting the limit of the ability to endure its intensity. This is *Kriya*. No other quality, effort, knowledge is necessary.

Unfortunately, the mind, so acute in science and technology, often starts to play an incongruous role. When the mind wanders in the realm of esotericism or New Age dimension, this fact gives all deformations green light.

A cleaning process

I personally experienced this degeneration. I know how acute is the temptation to let our mind explore useless and deviating pseudo spiritual processes.

I began to free myself from all esoteric-magic conditioning when I was invited by a local cultural institution to give lessons on the present tendency of creating a self-made religion.

In order to prepare those lessons I had to go through the whole history of western esoteric movements. It was necessary to reflect where the boundary line between the genuine mystical quest and the cultivation of magic ambitions lay.

This was an unclouded period of my life: I was very gratified to have time and opportunity to read the best available essays and textbooks – I mean books written by academics who didn't belong (or were so smart as to hide their membership or affiliation) to any particular mystical school and manifested a detached attitude toward the whole matter. I appreciated those texts that were capable of presenting the essence of those mystic movements that flourished freely around the great religions.

Sometimes I didn't feel enjoyment but sorrow and a sense of discouragement in front of dazzling falsehoods and deceptive reasoning. The real field of study was the human psyche and its suggestibility and vulnerability when it deals with approaching the spiritual path.

Since the first lesson, I tried to communicate what is being expressed clearly with the word "mystic." I repeated that even if in some context the word mystic evokes a relationship with the mystery, with the concept of initiation (from the Greek μυστικός [mustikos], an initiate) into secret religious rituals (also this from the Greek μύω, to conceal), a *mystic* is one who tries sincerely (adopting any form of mental and or bodily discipline) to surrender themselves to *something* which is the quintessence of supreme comfort, something existing beyond the territories of the mind – unattainable by the acrobatics of a never satisfied mind.

The problem was that this "*something* beyond mind" was unintelligible and had no appeal for most part of my listeners.

I talked privately with some students and they revealed to cultivate the most striking illusions. I was aghast at discovering that most of them came to my lessons in order to receive support and fuel for those illusions. Despite all my explanations they had not understood what a mystical path really is, and above all, what amount of joy could come by working to clean their spiritual understanding.

One day, after talking with some of them, feeling lost and gasping in order to "find my Self again", I felt the need to walk in the open air. The feeling of alienation seemed to stretch out as far as the horizon and touch the rim of the sky. I had a thought, luminous and warm: even if the people I mix with, are not attracted by the teachings of the great saints of the past, and nurture instead the instinct of devastating any sacred and liberating teaching, I would stand fast anyway in my path, not because I have faith in obtaining one day the coveted good effects from it, but because *Kriya* has already given me something incomparable. I don't need a recharge of motivation: it is the radiance of my memory that saves me each time, every day.

EXAMPLES

[1] New Age Kriya

Coming across this group of people, was like meeting a family a little bit more vast and varied than my first *Kriya* group who strictly followed PY's teachings. I am reminded of those days whenever I listen to the tape recordings of devotional chants which I obtained at that time. Usually I fell in love with an Indian *Bhajan* and sang it within me all through the day. For me it had the same nature of food; I really had the impression of eating that music.

This group had a sincere heart's affection for their *Guru*. Looking back at those times, I wonder what their opinion was about my impatient attitude in contrast to their passiveness. Basking in my state of elation, sometimes I was not able to understand much about their actual day-to-day life. The only odd trait I noticed was a clumsy attempt to abide by the rules of an oriental lifestyle. They particularly loved a way of behaving characterized by innocent frenzies.

While their effort in practicing the *Kriya* techniques was not remarkable, they tried by external means (readings, devotional chanting, convocations...) to extract from the depths of their psyche any trace of religious attitude, any scrap of spiritual aspiration.

Among them, there were those who added to *Kriya* practice some "cathartic" [causing purification] processes. They wanted to produce a cleaning effect on their psyche by unearthing any kind of unconsciously

repressed material. They explained – and this idea is not absurd – that such processes favored the removal of the internal blocks. Hence, the evolutionary process of *Kriya* became more quick.

I was struck by their tendency of spending lots of money on training workshops focused on strange therapeutic methods like aromatherapy, crystal therapy, color therapy...

When I dared to call into question the validity of the whole thing, they, feeling annoyed, rebuked that there was no reason to be perplexed about their practices, without having tried them. They would comment: "It is our *Karma* that is giving us the best of all the opportunities to grow in all the planes". "We are expected to answer in a positive way. We don't have to stay jammed against this beneficial current otherwise we could have ... to die and be born again just to live those experiences!"

They would add that "Our *Kriya* technique will receive a great benefit because *Kriya* is practiced with the energy present in the body and it is recharged by the flow of the *Universal Energy*. *Kriya* is also practiced in the astral world; finding a guide in that dimension is important..."

In other words they gave me the idea that the benefit of all their search, of all their expensive activities was that their spiritual path became more and more easy, like a stroll.

Research on alternative medicines, group therapies directed by eccentric individuals devoid of academic formation, were expensive distractions to be added to *Kriya*. These harmless distractions aroused great enthusiasm, seemed to intensify their experience of *Kriya*. Apparently they seemed to be very effective for some time, afterwards they were forsaken.

Living a multidimensional cleaning process: there existed no other reality to be sought.

Once I attended a group therapy session. We were in a room, filled with multicolored posters and cushions, decorations, crystals and other objects. The persons felt perfectly satisfied by the beautiful atmosphere.

The session was guided by a cunning fellow who assumed the role of the psychotherapist. With a pendulum in his hand, he was able to diagnose everything, from the slightest indispositions to the most serious illnesses, as well as to suggest remedies. His methods to clean away their internal conflicts gave great importance to revealing one's childhood traumas in group discussions. Sitting on the ground in a circle, they formed work

groups and, overcoming inner resistances, shared, sometimes with acute suffering, experiences we had never told anyone before.

I learned to relate to each person the way an explorer deals with unknown animals, waiting for any eccentric revelation. Sometimes I could not abstain from reacting to their oddness sarcastically; it was something I just could not help, it came out so spontaneously.

During advanced seminars, they would be guided to find, through hypnotic regression, their past lives in order to revive, and therefore understand, their deeper traumas. From a legal point of view, this alternative psychotherapy had to be camouflaged as a cultural or religious activity.

After many years, some friends are still there, to obtain a deeper cleaning of their subconscious mind – so they assure. What I sense is that the effort with *Kriya* is totally forgotten and reduced to a nothing.

What I would like to say to them is that theirs is a colossal loss of time but I have not the guts to affirm that. Too much insistence on the cleaning process is like preparing one's house for a distinguished guest; endlessly polishing and decorating it, delighted by entranced awareness of the different comforts our house allows – meanwhile, after having repeatedly rung the bell, the guest is standing neglected on the doormat...

What I want to underline is that my relationship with those researchers was based on real affection and it never came to disagreement, bitterness or formality. They were always generous toward me and respectful of my personality. While passionately sharing everything they had learned, no matter if it cost them much money, they never tried to force something on me.

[2] Expansion of the previous experience

Kriya has nothing to do with paranormal studies or unfruitful attempts to develop the latent powers of the mind. *Kriya* is not a series of secrets (of growing effectiveness as soon as one moves towards the *Higher Kriyas*) to be exploited in the most cunning possible way.

I was stricken by the weakness of the human mind, by its discouraging slowness in dissolving glaring deceptions. Many esoteric movements, widely recognized as demanding and elitist, which would have once allured me, turned out to be an obscenity brought forth by a monster.

In the New Age group described before I had long discussions with a friend who had an entirely childish idea of *Kriya*. Mixing *Kriya* with esoterica was normal for him. Following the flickering of his moods, it became evident the reason of his failures.

He was always in the search of a technique of spiritual evolution that, in his opinion, had to be superior to *Kriya*. He was sure that this technique was once taught only to the most advanced people, people who are no longer present on this planet.

He had studied some of the so-called "masterpieces" of esoteric literature. I accepted to read the one he enthusiastically lent to me. I entered an almost hypnotic state and didn't immediately realize that each chain of ideas therein contained had no basis at all, but was only offspring of the unbridled imagination of the author. Through an intoxication profusion of words, the author dared to develop free from the relationship with reality and from the rules of logic. Actually, the whole thing was only a mental pastime. Reading a fantasy novel was surely more profitable.

One day he met a self-named expert in occult matters who purported to know the secrets of an almost extinct esoteric path and, in particular, a spiritual technique far more advanced than those known today, which was practiced centuries or millennia ago, by a few very evolved beings. This "expert" guided him sweetly but with the surety of a mature professional, towards a situation in which his economic base, essential to his living, was at risk of being swept away, completely reduced to shambles.

He easily bewitched him. "Now that humanity is different from before, such teachings are not revealed to just anyone" he started off, then after a pause and with a sigh, finally concluded: "Today's students would not know how to appreciate them and, in their hands, they could be dangerous."

The expert created the impression of being a dreamer, but was not so naïve as it seemed; he used an enchanting terminology similar to that of the Kabbalah and talked effortlessly about original Christianity also, whose texts (canonical and apocryphal) he was able to interpret in a non-conventional way.

My friend tried to captivate the teacher in order to present himself as a true adept. Confiding that he was willing to accept whatever toll and deprivation, consenting to whatever behest, provided that this extraordinary secret will be revealed to him, he actually fell into the trap. After having

expressed some reservations, our smart teacher at long last capitulated, murmuring: "Only for you, only because I feel I am *guided* to make an exception". My friend, a poor victim quivering with emotion, lived the best moment of his life, convinced that the meeting with the expert had been decided in the higher spheres. The requested donation to be given during Initiation – united to the promise of keeping absolute secrecy – was conspicuous, since in that way he would confirm the great value attributed to that event. The teacher said that the donation would be transferred to a monk who was helping an orphanage. (It is a real classic! ... there is always an orphanage in these stories.)

While my friend, completely satisfied, was preparing to receive such an incomparable *gift* (he received the explanation that it was a *gift* and that nothing could adequately compensate the benedictions that such an initiation would bring to his life) the scoundrel distractedly decided what kind of trash-stuff he was going to demonstrate with glaring solemnity. My friend received with indescribable emotion, the new technique and spent two days in sheer fervor.

Later, imprisoned in his chimera, he witnessed the rekindling of his passion and the comedy repeated. He heard about other incomparable valuable "revelations". This illusion is, in effect, indomitable. After having received his "drug", he continued his inexorable run toward the abyss. I cannot predict if, one day, he will realize that the techniques for which he paid a fortune had been taken from some books and altered, so he would not to guess their origin.

Some time ago, I came to know that he poses as the spiritual guide of a small group of persons. I can't imagine what he is teaching to them since he never talked with me about this activity. What I never understood of him was that now and then he assists to the liturgical practices of a Catholic church since, in his opinion, this may work as a ... bland form of exorcism!

[3] Mental disorder

Let us consider the case of a person who has a serious mental disorder, is aware of it and seeks in *Kriya* a remedy. His/her disorder may be insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks... [The case of Psychosis is not even taken into account here.] The person is honest and has a great will to work. The point is that often they pretend a nonexistent spiritual interest

Well, in my opinion, embarking on the *Kriya* path with the hope of getting free from depression or other common forms of neuroses leads nowhere. False publicity has guided many to believe that it is possible to work out

their psychological problems, and perhaps physical problems too, with a regular practice of *Kriya*. But on the spiritual path there cannot be guaranteed results, everything depends on the the sincere involvement that one puts in it.

If you have a sick mind and after having experimented with alternative remedies, you follow the counsel of a too much enthusiastic friend and try the *Kriya* path too, you won't obtain anything, except for a headache. Not only that: if, through this process something good in your psycho-physical system happens, you will not recognize it and get only anguish. In this situation there is no love for *Kriya*. There is fear in your heart that you will be disappointed and you will.

The faith in the "remedy" of *Kriya* often disappears for reasons of a chilling banality, like meeting a *kriyaban* who seems dependent on smoking. "How is such a thing possible! *Kriya* has no value!" ... and the person stop practicing.

Now, *Kriya* works when there is love for the Divine and great appreciation for the *Kriya* techniques. You cannot look at *Kriya* with suspicion: "Does it really work"? No human can ever touch the *supreme Good* of *Kriya* unless you place it, with unshakeable trust, above all the other achievements of the world. You cannot clumsily try to deny to yourself your doubts, your skepticism. *Kriya* can work even if you are not a "religious" person, but it should be the object of your enthusiasm and aspiration.

We must be wise and sincere with this person and explain that *Kriya* is a spiritual path and it is possible to follow it even if you are plenty of problems but one thing is required: you must be able to find during a 24-hour day to find at least 20 minutes in which the mind is calm and serene like the mind of a healthy human being.

If you have a mental disorder and there is no serenity in your life, accept to go ahead with your search of a scientist (doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist ...) who can help you. Then all will be possible for you.

[4] Situations without remedy: impossibility to have a rational talk.

[4a]: Salvation comes from Baraka

The belief that the power (*Baraka*) of the great Teachers of the past, is still present in their descendants, as a non-stop chain is common enough. A *kriyaban* whom I had only a phone contact was convinced that the spiritual progress cannot happen except through receiving this "power". In his life

he tried to receive multiple *Kriya* Initiations from those who claimed to have a valid lineage although their teachings didn't add nothing to what he already knew. He was spellbound by the idea of "transmission of power." He believed that the power received through initiation had in itself the power of redemption.

He gave not so much importance to the practice of the *Kriya* techniques – he said they were just to purify oneself before receiving the real "initiation" which for him meant "power."

While seeking the transmission of power, he gave small attention to the practice of *Kriya*. He believed that the power received through initiation had in itself the power of redemption. He said that "line of descent" was the most important thing to care while approaching a spiritual teacher. He went on receiving *Kriya* from those who claimed to have a valid lineage although their teachings didn't add nothing to what he already knew.

He talked very much about the importance of following the moral rules [Patanjali's *Yama* and *Niyama*.] The phases of *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara* which were for me my alpha and omega were for him nothing without *Yama* and *Niyama*. He behaved toward me in a very cordial way but, when he talked about the absolute place to be given to the ethic rules listed by Patanjali, he was able to make me feel a worm.

However, I saw that his way of following the moral rules were a farce, with no level of deepness and understanding of human nature.

He criticized my obsession to perfect the practice of *Kriya*. He explained that the very desire to master a meditation technique meant cultivating desire and this was against Buddhist principles.

At this point there is nothing to reply. When there is no brain, there is no remedy for this situation.

[4b] Illusion: we are already enlightened

If you want to do nothing, if you want to avoid discipline and live of illusions, the mind is very good in nurture these illusions. There is a vast group of people who once practiced *Kriya*, or some form of *Yoga*, constantly who, with a mechanism similar to self hypnosis, had convinced themselves that they are already free from *Maya*, in other words they are "enlightened" people, like Ramana Maharshi, just to give an example.

Consider a person lying on an air mattress floating over of pond of manure. The miasma of the fetid substance sustaining the mattress sends out a revolting smell. But the person look the sky and dreams to be immersed in a pure dimension of air and light. It suffice to hold one's nose to ignore the stink.

When they say: 'we are already free from *Maya*', they are neither naïve nor dishonest. They know that potentially we are Divine, but they also know that when they openly affirm that, in that precise moment they are lying. They know that illusion is prevalent.

In their philosophical perspective, we who practice *Pranayama* have been duped and lie in a state of illusion. We love work hard and struggle. They say: the human suffering is an illusion.

They say, but don't fully believe, that it is of no use to discipline oneself by control of breath and therefore control of mind, that it is sufficient to believe, be mental acrobatics, to be already free in order to be actually free.

Sometimes I felt myself inclined to discuss with them, to the point of exhaustion, completely forgetting the time. I saw how their mind was able to destroy, impoverish everything that I treasured. I was trying to tune with their reasoning but their wrong attitude and way of thinking succeeded in bringing me to a state of alienation. I remember one who tried to show me the state of *Samadhi*. Staring at me with eyes wide open he took the likeness of a mad.

[4c] Illusion: only in a monastery my practice of Kriya will become good.

These people desire to live a life of self-denial, usually retiring from active life for example entering a convent or living alone in a retired place quitting their job and living by a modest lifetime annuity.

They 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. Imposing upon yourself useless privations and attempt unnatural renunciations is not a good idea.

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 try living like a saint. Some rational and intelligent *kriyabans* believe impossible things. For example, they lament how difficult is to be free from sexuality. They state authentic nonsenses and live excruciating conflicts getting to the refusal of love. Don't try to amputate your individuality and desires; don't try to cut you from everything interesting and thrilling in life. Learn to use your intelligence and to think with your head!

Lahiri Mahasaya admitted in his diary that at times his sexual desire was really strong. One day a disciple put him a direct question: "How can one be definitively free from sexuality?" He replied in a way that let struck dumb the disciple: "I will be free from sexuality only when my body will lie on the funeral pyre." God bless his sincerity! (I knew a *kriyaban* who was so bound to his illusions that he took the aforementioned episode as a sign that ... Lahiri Mahasaya was not spiritually realized!)

RELAX – PRACTICE - ENJOY

There are persons who wait that everything is perfect before practicing *Kriya*. This will never happen. Start your *Pranayama* now. When you think: I must prepare myself before starting..., you are already fallen in the trap of the mind. You are already lost. You will never feel that you are ready. I am sorry for you.

There are persons who practice conscientiously the *Kriya* techniques but are convinced that they have to carry on a formidable work on the psychological plane in order to "grow" on the spiritual plane. They brood over one single worry: "What can I do in the domain of my mind, of my habits, in order to ameliorate myself?" They do not relax. They are involved in self analysis. I say: Enjoy *Kriya*. Accept what you are.

Don't think that the Divine resides outside our human state and that an individual can come closer to the Divine only by gaining some merit. Don't think that by working very hard through self discipline and hard renunciations it is possible to destroy in your consciousness the roots of iniquity and egoism.

The employment of the *Kriya Pranayama* technique does not need to be coupled with a toilsome effort of tormenting your psychological structure. Don't want to build brick by brick, fatiguing at the extreme, just as if it

were a complex construction, your. Redemption. Many are entangled with this illusion. I say: stop with this.

Relax and enjoy. Enjoy *Pranayama* without fear to die, to become mad. Often this fear comes. Many try to go ahead along the spiritual path without enjoying, without swimming in the sea of mirth. No, one last time I say: enjoy!

And finally, there are persons who live in the simplicity of Lahiri's promise "Banat, banat, ban jay!" [By doing and doing, one day done!]

The go ahead and see that the *Kriya* path is very simple. This means that they have found the right path. The right path is clean, unpolluted by thinking. Instead of thinking, they live in a state of continue joy.

Memory of a loving person and faithful friend

I became acquainted with an elderly *kriyaban*, worthy of maximum respect and admiration, who had begun the *Kriya* path many years before. We met each other in the last years of his life. He was totally alone and I felt very bad when I could not see him for months at a time; for various reasons this was inevitable. We always met for short and fleeting afternoons, walking and speaking quietly. I was witness to an inexorable process that brought him to the point of living solely for the memory of the warm rays of a glance and simple nod once received from the woman who was head of the *Kriya* organization and the spiritual successor of PY. His dream was to form a friendship with that divine being, whom he felt was the epitome of perfection. He firmly believed that his supreme Good depended on a loving benignity from that person he thought divine! I tried to convince him that to deify this inspiring figure could constitute the end of his spiritual adventure.

I write these lines, with a pang in my heart because I have never met a person kind and altruistic like him.

He was discouraged because he saw God in that person, but didn't have the courage to see God in himself. He was discouraged, and I went ahead telling him: you don't see the Divine in you because you don't want to see Him! My words were of no use at all.

The problem was that this fixed mindset had already corrupted the innocence of his spiritual disposition. He expressed something that years before he would not have even dared to think: the presumed spiritual evolution of the individual through *Kriya* was undeniable, but so slow as to be practically negligible. The *Kriya* technique was for him like a religious

ritual which had to be performed scrupulously just to give proof of loyalty. He had given his full approval to the idea that on this planet there were on the one end special people, Self realized, forever free from *Maya* whereas, on the other end, there were irreparably common ones who had to wait many incarnations in order to receive a spark of enlightenment. Unfortunately, this view was the framework upon which he had been interweaving his thought.

One day he vented all of his gloom. Looking at how superficially – so he said – he had practiced the techniques of meditation, he had no doubts that in this life he had certainly missed the "target". He was already dreaming of future incarnations in which he could practice inside an ashram near a Self Realized Master. To this situation he already had his heart set on.

I felt a giant wave of inexplicable nostalgia which was ready to overwhelm me, but it remained curbed, as if suspended around us. Now that he is no longer alive, I wonder if the idea of the transforming power of *Kriya* that eased and sustained the first years of his path, was gradually erased from his mind by the human tendency to emphasize (and sustain through a constant barrage of anecdotes) the greatness of certain persons who were "impudently" saintly, perfect, majestic. My friend had made the unfortunate mistake of believing that the eternal spiritual Source in the center of his being would wither when he was condemned to live far from a divine being, similar to the one toward whom he had directed the warm aspirations of his heart.

GLOSSARY

This glossary has been added for those who already know the meaning of the most common terms used in Kriya but do not wish to retain uncertainties about the way they are utilized in this book.

Alchemy [taoist internal -- Nei Dan] The Taoist Internal Alchemy is the mystical tradition of ancient China. It reminds us of the techniques of First Kriya with such precision that we have all the reasons to assume that it consists of the same process.

Apana Apana is one of the five forms of energy in the body. Associated with the lower abdominal region, it is responsible for all the bodily functions (elimination for example) that take place there. Kriya Pranayama, in its initial phase, is essentially the movement of Prana (the particular form of energy present in the upper part of the trunk – lungs and heart) into Apana and the movement of Apana into Prana. When we inhale, the energy from outside the body is brought within and meets Apana in the lower abdomen; during exhalation, the Apana moves from its seat up and mingles with Prana. The continuous repetition of this event generates an increase of heat in the navel region: this calms the breath and kindles the light of the Spiritual Eye.

Asana Physical postures fit for meditation. According to Patanjali, the yogi's posture must be steady and pleasant. The most part of the kriyabans are comfortable with the so-called *Half-lotus* [see]: this, indeed, avoids some physical problems. For the average kriyaban, *Siddhasana* [see] is considered superior to any other Asana. If we take finally into account those kriyabans who are expert of Hatha-Yoga, who have become very flexible, the perfect position is undoubtedly *Padmasana* [see].

Aswini (Ashwini) Mudra "Ashwa" means "horse"; "Aswini Mudra" means "Mudra of the female horse" because the anal contraction resembles the movement a horse makes with its sphincter immediately after evacuation of the bowels. There may be slightly different definitions of it and, sometimes, it is confused with Mula Bandha [see]. The basic definition is to repeatedly contract the muscles at the base of the spine (sphincter) with the rhythm of about two contractions per second. This Mudra is a direct way of getting in touch with the locked and stagnant energy at the base of the spine and to pump it up.

Bandha [See Jalandhara Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Mula Bandha] Bandhas are like valves, locks concerning the energetic system of the body. They prevent the Prana from being dissipated and redirect it inside the spine. No practice of Pranayama is considered complete and correct without the Bandhas.

In the very beginning of the Kriya path, a yogi has only an approximate understanding of the Bandhas, later one will come to a complete command and will be able to use them, with slight adaptations, in most of the Kriya techniques. The three Bandhas, applied simultaneously, create an almost ecstatic inner shiver, a feeling of energy current moving up the spine. Sushumna Awakening is thus favored.

Bindu A spiritual center located in the occipital region where the hairline twists into a kind of vortex. (This is the Sikha point where the Hindus leave a lock of hair after having shaved their head.) It is not considered a Chakra in itself. However it is an important spiritual center because it works as a door leading the awareness to Sahasrara – the seventh Chakra located at the top of the head. Until the energy, scattered in the body, reaches the Bindu, a sort of shroud prevents the yogi from contemplating the Spiritual Eye. Bringing all one's force there, in that tiny place, is not an easy task because the deeper roots of the Ego are to be found right there; they must be faced and eradicated.

Breathless state It is experienced after years of Kriya practice. It has nothing to do with holding the breath forcefully. It does not simply mean that the breath becomes more and more quiet. It is the state where the breath is entirely non-existent, with the subsequent dissolution of the mind. Many kriyabans are not able to conceive such a state. There is a halo of mystery that surrounds its description; people think it is impossible and that any affirmation about its occurrence is false. Nevertheless, it is possible, even if it is experienced only after years of Kriya practice. When it manifests, a kriyaban does not feel the need to take in any breath at all or one takes in a very short breath but doesn't feel the need to exhale for a very long time. (Longer than the time which medical science considers possible.) The breath becomes so calm that the practitioner has the factual perception that one is not breathing at all; one feels a fresh energy in the body, sustaining its life from inside, without the necessity of oxygen. According to the Kriya theory, this state is the result of having entered with the awareness (therefore with Prana) the Sushumna channel inside the spine. See also the entry: Kumbhaka

Bhrumadhya The space between the eyebrows, linked with Ajna Chakra and with the vision of the third eye (Kutastha).

Chakra The word Chakra comes from the Sanskrit cakra meaning "wheel" or "circle". The Chakras are the "wheels" of our spiritual life; they are described in the tantric texts as emanations from the Spirit, whose essence gradually has expanded in more and more gross levels of manifestation, reaching eventually the dimension of the base Chakra, the Muladhara, embodying the physical world. The descended energy-consciousness lies coiled and sleeping at the base of the spine and is called Kundalini – she who is coiled. We human beings consider only the physical world as real: it is only when our Kundalini awakens that we regain the full memory of the reality of the subtle dimension of the Universe.

No author has ever "proven" the existence of the Chakras – as no man has ever proven the existence of the soul. It is difficult to describe them: we cannot bring them onto a table in a laboratory. In any Yoga book we find descriptions which rest on a translation of two Indian texts, the Sat-Cakra-Nirupana, and the Padaka-Pancaka, by Sir John Woodroffe, alias Arthur Avalon, in a book entitled The Serpent Power. The matter depicted there seems to be unnaturally complicated, almost impossible to be utilized.

These concepts had been further polluted by theosophy and similar esoteric literature. The controversial C. W. Leadbeater book "The Chakras," is in large part the result of the mental elaboration of his own experiences.

Through the practice of Kriya, we can have an experience of the Chakras. Located over the anus at the very base of the spinal column, in the lower part of the coccyx, we encounter the root Chakra - named **Muladhara** in Sanskrit, a center which distributes energy to the legs, to the lowest part of the pelvis, irradiating especially the Gonads (testes in men, ovaries in women). Muladhara symbolizes the objective consciousness, the awareness of the physical universe. It is related to instinct, security, to our ability to ground ourselves in the physical world, to the desire for material goods and also the building of a good self-image. If this Chakra is in a harmonious state, we are centered and have a strong will to live.

The second, or sacral Chakra - **Swadhisthan** - is placed inside the spine between the last lumbar vertebrae and the beginning of the sacrum. It is said that its energetic projection is the area of the sexual organs - in part it intersects the region of Muladhara's influence. Since it is related to base emotion, sexuality vitality, creativity, and to the deepest part of the subconscious realms, a deep stimulus of it produces deep involving dreams; its action may be perceived as a feeling of living a fable, whose nature is sweet and alluring.

The **Manipura** - navel center or solar plexus - is placed in the spine at the level of the navel, near the end of the dorsal vertebrae and the beginning of the lumbar vertebrae. It is said to influence the pancreas and the adrenal glands on top of the kidneys. This connection gives fuel to the idea that this Chakra has the same role played by those glands: higher emotion and energy - just like the role played by adrenalin. It is said that it fosters a sense of personal power, secure feeling of "I Am.". Grounded and comfortable with our place in the universe, we are able to affirm with determination the purpose of our life.

The **Anahata** - heart center, located in the spine at the height of the middle part of the dorsal vertebrae - is said to influence the thymus, which is part of the immune system. There is a universal agreement that it is related to higher emotion, compassion, love and intuitiveness. When a person concentrates on it, feelings of profound tenderness and compassion will start to develop. A healthy and fully open heart Chakra means to be able to see the inner beauty in others – in spite of their apparent faults. One is able to love everyone, even the strangers we meet on the street. There is a progression from the instinctual "gut emotions" of the lower Chakras to the higher emotions and feelings of the heart Chakra. What is of great interest for us, is that opening this center means to see life in a more neutral manner and see what others cannot see. It ends the predisposition to

being influenced by other people, by churches and by organizations in general.

Vishuddha - throat center, exactly amid the last cervical vertebrae and the first dorsal vertebrae - is said to influence thyroid and parathyroid. Since it controls the activity of the vocal cords as well, it is said that it has something to do with the capacity to express our ideas in the world. It seems to be related with the capacity for communication and with taking personal responsibility for our actions. The person with a healthy throat Chakra no longer thinks to blame others for his or her problems and can carry on with life with full responsibility. Many authors state it awakens artistic inspiration, the ability to develop superior aesthetic perception.

Ajna - the third eye Chakra, located in the central part of the brain - influences the pituitary gland [hypophysis] and the small brain. The hypophysis has a vital role in organism, in the sense that together with the hypothalamus it acts as a command system of all other endocrine glands. In Sanskrit, "Ajna" translates to "command," which means it has the command or control of our lives: through controlled action, it brings to reality the fruit of our desires. Consequently, it is said that Ajna Chakra has a vital role in the spiritual awakening of a person. It is the seat of the intuition.

The supreme Chakra is the **Sahasrara** - crown Chakra - right above the top of the head. It is said that it influences, or is bound with, the pineal gland. It allows detachment from illusion and is related to one's overall expansion of awareness and degree of attunement with the Divine Reality. It is a superior reality and we can experience it only in the state of breathlessness. It is possible to "tune" into it by utilizing the **Bindu** as a doorway.

Teachings pertaining to the "**Frontal Chakras**" are to be found by some kriyabans coming from Sri Yuktswar's disciple lineage. The perineum is the first one, the genitals region is the second one, the navel is the third, the central part of the sternum region is the fourth, the Adam's apple is the fifth and the point between the eyebrows may be considered as the sixth. The core of the Kriya teaching regarding them, is that when these points are touched with concentration, the energy around the correspondent Chakra in the spine is revived.

Dharana According to Patanjali, Dharana is the concentration on a physical or abstract object. In Kriya, Dharana consist in directing the focus of our attention toward the revelation of Spirit: Omkar's inner sound, light, and movement sensation. This happens just after having calmed the breath.

Dhyana According to Patanjali, Dhyana ensues from contemplating the essential nature of the chosen object as a steady, uninterrupted flow of consciousness. In Kriya, the awareness, dwelling upon the Omkar reality, is soon lost in Samadhi.

Flute sound (during Kriya Pranayama) During the exhalation of Kriya Pranayama, a slight hiss is produced in the throat; when a kriyaban succeeds in assuming the position of Kechari Mudra, then the quality of that sound increases. It has been likened to the "flute of Krishna". Lahiri Mahasaya describes it: "as if someone blew through a keyhole". This highly enjoyable sound cuts to pieces any distraction, increases mental calmness and transparency and helps to prolong effortlessly the practice of Kriya Pranayama. One day the flute sound turns into the Om sound. In other words, it gives rise to the Om sound, whose vibration will be so strong as to overwhelm the flute sound. During this event, a strong movement of energy climbs up the spine.

Granthi [see knot]

Guru The importance of finding a Guru (teacher) who supervises the spiritual training of the disciple is one of the tenets of many spiritual paths. A Guru is a teacher, a guide and much more. The scriptures declare that the Guru is God and God is the Guru. We are accustomed to explaining the term "Guru" on a metaphorical interplay between darkness and light, in which the Guru is seen as the dispeller of darkness: "Gu" stands for darkness and "Ru" for one who removes it. Some scholars dismiss that etymology; according to them "Gu" stands for "beyond the qualities" and "Ru" for "devoid of form". In order to gain all the benefits from the contact with the Guru, a disciple has to be humble, sincere, pure in body and mind and ready to surrender to his Guru's will and instructions. Usually, during initiation (Diksha) Gurus bestow the esoteric knowledge upon their disciples, through which they will progress along the path to Self realization. The internal phenomenon of Shaktipat happens: the dormant spiritual realization within the disciple is awakened.

Kriya organizations don't insist upon the concept of Shaktipat but accept all the rest, rather they are founded upon the afore summarized tenets. On the contrary, Lahiri Mahasaya's ideas seem to go in a significantly different direction. Once he said: "I am not the Guru, I don't maintain a barrier between the true Guru (the Divine) and the disciple". He added that he wanted to be considered a "mirror". In other words, each kriyaban should look at him not as an unreachable ideal, but as the personification of all the wisdom and spiritual realization which, in due time, the Kriya practice will be able to produce.

Now the question is: do the Kriya techniques work outside the Guru-disciple relationship? There is of course no scientifically proven answer. In this matter we can use either faith or reason. Many kriyabans are confident they are able to transform the no-matter-how-received instruction into "gold". They think: "Beyond either reasonable or improbable expectations of finding a Kriya expert at my disposal, let me roll my sleeves up and move on!"

Half-lotus This asana has been used for meditation since time immemorial because it provides a comfortable, very easily obtained, sitting position. The left

leg is bent at the knee, brought toward the body and the sole of the left foot is made to rest against the inside of the right thigh. The heel of the left foot should be drawn in as far as possible. The right leg is bent at the knee and the right foot is placed over the fold of the left leg where the thigh meets to hip. The right knee is dropped as far as possible toward the floor. The hands rest on the knees. The secret is to maintain an erect spine: this can be obtained only by sitting on a cushion, thick enough, with the buttocks toward the front half of the cushion. In this way the buttocks are slightly raised, while the knees are resting on the floor. When the legs grow tired, the position is prolonged by reversing the legs. In certain delicate situations, it may be providential to do it on a chair, provided it has no arms and is large enough. In this way, one leg at a time can be lowered and the knee articulation relaxed! Some Yoga teachers explain that the pressure of a tennis ball (or of a folded towel) on the perineum can give the benefits of the Siddhasana position.

Hesychasm The word Hesychasm derives from the Greek word "hesychia" meaning inner quietness, tranquility and stillness. Outside this condition, meditation is not possible. It is a discipline integrating the continual repetition of the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"). It was already used by the early Church Fathers in the 4th and 5th centuries) with the practice of asceticism.

There were hermits dwelling in the desert, seeking inner peace and spiritual insight, while practicing contemplation and self-discipline: they had no doubts about the fact that knowledge of God could be obtained only by purity of soul and prayer and not by study or mental amusements in the field of philosophy. Later, their method of asceticism came to the fore as a concrete set of psycho physical techniques: this is properly the core of Hesychasm. It was Simeon, "the new theologian" (1025-1092), who developed the quietist theory which such detail that he may be called the father of this movement. The practice, which involved specific body postures and deliberate breathing patterns, was intended to perceive the Uncreated Light of God. The monks of Athos might have kept on contemplating peacefully this Uncreated Light (they considered it to be the highest goal of earthy life) had not their methods been denounced as superstitious and absurd. The objection was mainly based on a vigorous denial of the possibility that this Uncreated Light was God's essence. In approximately the year 1337, Hesychasm attracted the attention of a learned member of the Orthodox Church, Barlaam of Seminara, a Calabrian monk who held the office of abbot in a Monastery of Constantinople and who visited Mount Athos. There he encountered the Hesychasts and heard the descriptions of their practices. Barlaam, trained in Western Scholastic theology, was scandalized and began to combat it both orally and in his writings. He called the Hesychasts "omphalopsychoi" - people having their souls in their navels (owing to the long time they spent concentrating on the navel region). Barlaam propounded a more intellectual approach to the knowledge of God than the one taught by the Hesychasts: he asserted that the spiritual knowledge could be only a work of inquiry, brought ahead by one's mind and translated in discrimination between

truth and untruth. He held that no part of God, whatsoever, could be viewed by humans. The practice of the Hesychasts was defended by St. Gregory Palamas. He was well educated in Greek philosophy and defended Hesychasm in the 1340 at three different synods in Constantinople, and he also wrote a number of works in its defense. He used a distinction, already articulated in the 4th Century in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, between the energies or operations of God and the essence of God: while the essence of God can never be known by his creatures, His energies or operations can be known both in this life and in the next; they convey to the Hesychast the truest spiritual knowledge of God.

In Palamite theology, it is the uncreated energy of God which illuminates the Hesychast who has been vouchsafed an experience of the Uncreated Light. In 1341 the dispute was settled: Barlaam was condemned and returned to Calabria, afterwards becoming bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Later, Hesychast doctrine was established as the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. Up to this day, the Roman Catholic Church has never fully accepted Hesychasm: the essence of God can be known, but only in the next life; there can be no distinction between the energies and the essence of God.

Today Mount Athos is the well-known center of the practice of Hesychasm.

Ida [see Nadi]

Jalandhara Bandha In Jalandhara Bandha the neck and the throat are slightly contracted, while the chin is pressed against the breast.

Japa [See prayer]

Kechari Mudra This Mudra is carried in one of the two following ways:

1. By placing the tongue in contact with the uvula at the back of the soft palate.
2. By slipping the tongue into the nasal pharynx touching, if possible, the nasal septum.

According to Lahiri Mahasaya a kriyaban should achieve it not by cutting the tongue Frenulum but by means of Talabya Kriya [see]. Kechari is literally translated as "the state of those who fly in the sky", in the "inner space". Kechari is compared to an electrical bypass of the mind's energetic system. It changes the path of Prana flow causing the life force to be withdrawn from the thinking process. Instead of allowing the thoughts to jump like frogs here and there, it causes the mind to be quiet and allows focusing it on the goal of meditation. We do not realize the quantity of energy we squander away when we get lost in our thoughts, in our plans. Kechari turns this pernicious way of exhausting all of our vitality into its opposite. The mind begins to lose its despotic role: the "inner activity" happens no more by the thinking process but by the effortless development of the intuition. Coupled with Kriya it is a substantial aid in clarify one's complicated psychological structures. A more elusive claim is the experience of the elixir of life, "Amrita," the "Nectar." This is a fluid with sweet taste perceived by the kriyaban when the tip of his tongue touches either the

uvula or the bone protrusion in the roof of the palate under the hypophysis. The Yoga tradition explains that there is a Nadi going through the center of the tongue; energy radiates through its tip and when it touches that bone protrusion, this radiation reaches and stimulates the Ajna Chakra in the center of the brain.

Kevala Kumbhaka [see Breathless state]

Knot The traditional definition of the Granthis identifies three knots: the Brahma Granthi at the Muladhara Chakra; the Vishnu Granthi at the heart Chakra and the Shiva or Rudra Granthi at the point between the eyebrows. Those are the places where Ida, Pingala and Sushumna Nadi meet.

Brahma Granthi is related to our physical body: it preserves the ignorance of our infinite nature and is the first obstacle in the spiritual search, since it obstructs the Kundalini's path as she begins to move toward the higher centers. The world of names and forms creates restlessness and prevents the mind from becoming one pointed. Ambitions and desires trap the mind. Until one unties this knot, one cannot meditate effectively.

Vishnu Granthi is related to the astral body and to the world of emotions. Lord Vishnu is the lord of preservation. This knot creates the desire to preserve ancient knowledge, traditions, institutions... It produces "compassion", a keen desire to help suffering humanity. Discriminating knowledge combined with Yoga effort can unfasten the Knot of Vishnu and obtain deliverance from the traditional bonds, deeply rooted in our genetic code.

Rudra Granthi is related to the causal body and to the world of ideas, visions, and intuitions. After piercing the Rudra knot, the time bound consciousness dissolves – the yogi establishes himself in the supreme Atman whose seat is Sahasrara Chakra. Perfect emancipation is achieved.

Lahiri Mahasaya underlines the importance of overcoming two other obstacles: tongue and navel which are unfastened by Kechari Mudra and by Navi Kriya, respectively. The knot of the tongue, cuts us off from the reservoir of energy in the Sahasrara region. The knot of the navel originates from the trauma of cutting the umbilical cord.

Kriya Yoga If we want to understand the essence of Kriya Yoga it is necessary to put aside some definitions found on the web. "Kriya Yoga is the science of controlling life energy [Prana]." "Kriya Yoga is a technique that activates the astral cerebrospinal centers." "Kriya Yoga hastens the practitioner's spiritual development and helps to bring about a profound state of tranquility and God-communion." "Kriya Yoga brings about the stilling of sensory input."

I don't want to contest them, but I think that Kriya is broader than what is implied. There are definitions which say nothing: they make a misleading synthesis of its methods and list its effects in the same way one would describe Hatha Yoga or Raja Yoga practice. Patanjali refers once to Kriya Yoga: "Kriya consists of body discipline, mental control, and meditating on Iswara." [Yoga sutras II:1] This is definitely correct, but by following the further evolution of his thought, we are led astray. Although he states that by constantly remembering the

inner sound of Om we can achieve the removal of all the obstacles that block our spiritual evolution, he does not develop this method. He is far from describing the same spiritual discipline taught by Lahiri Mahasaya.

Kriya Yoga is a "mystic path" utilizing the best tools used by the mystics of all religions. It consists of control of breath [Pranayama], prayer [Japa] and pure effort of attuning with the Omkar Reality. The soothing process of calming the breath, followed by the Thokar procedure, guides the bodily energy into the heart Chakra, holding thus, as in a grip of calmness, the unceasing reflex originating the breath. When a perfect stillness is established, when all the inner and outer movements cease, the kriyaban perceives a radiation of fresh energy sustaining each cell from inside; then the breathless state settles in. When the physical breath is totally transcended and a circulation of energy happens in the body – the breath is said to have become "Internal" – a feeling of infinite safety, solidity and reliance originates. It is like having crossed a barrier and moved into a measureless space: Kriya yoga is a miracle of beauty.

Kumbhaka Kumbhaka means holding the breath. It is such an important phase in Pranayama that some Yoga teachers doubt whether a modified way of breathing which does not include any Kumbhaka can be called Pranayama at all. It is observed that when we are about to do something which requires our total attention, our breath is automatically held. We are not deliberately doing Pranayama, but our breath is suspended of its own accord; this demonstrates how natural this fact is. In Pranayama the inhalation is called Puraka, which literally means "the act of filling"; the exhalation is called Rechaka, meaning "the act of emptying". Retention of breath is called Kumbhaka, meaning "holding". Kumbha is a pot: just as a water pot holds water when it is filled with it, so in Kumbhaka the breath and the Prana is held in the body. In the classic Yoga literature there are described four types of Kumbhaka.

I. We breathe out deeply and hold the breath for a few seconds. This is known as "Bahir Kumbhaka" (External Kumbhaka).

II. The second, "Antar Kumbhaka" (Internal Kumbhaka), is holding the breath after a deep inhalation. Usually this kind of Kumbhaka is accompanied by the use of the Bandhas.

III. The third type is that practiced by alternate breathing – breathing in deeply through the left nostril, then holding the breath and then exhaling through the right... It is considered the easiest form of Kumbhaka.

IV. The fourth type is the most important of all, the peak of Pranayama. It is called Kevala Kumbhaka or automatic suspension of breath: it is the breathless state where there is no inhalation or exhalation, and not even the slightest desire to breathe.

In the Kriya praxis, the underlying principle of I. is present in all those procedures involving a series of very long and calm exhalations which seem to end in a sweet nothing.

Internal Kumbhaka II. happens in different Kriya techniques; particularly in Yoni Mudra, Maha Mudra and Thokar.

Maha Mudra, with its balancing action on the right and on the left side of the spine, contains also – in a broader sense - the principles of III.: alternating breathing.

A turning point in Kriya is the achievement of IV. Kevala Kumbhaka.

In Kriya we distinguish between "Bahir" (external) and "Antar" (internal) Kevala Kumbhaka. "Bahir (external) Kevala Kumbhaka" (the development and climax of I.) appears during mental Pranayama after having relaxed and thus emptied the rib cage.

"Antar (internal) Kevala Kumbhaka" (the development and climax of II.) appears during the highest refining of Yoni Mudra, Maha Mudra and the Advanced form of Thokar after having completed a long inhalation, with the rib cage moderately full of air-Prana.

Kundalini The concept of Kundalini and, particularly, of its awakening, provides a framework which is convenient for expressing what is happening along the spiritual path. Most of the spiritual traditions have some awareness of Kundalini; not all are equally open in exposing the practical details of the process. Kundalini is Sanskrit for "coiled": it is conceived as a particular energy coiled like a serpent in the root Chakra (Muladhara). The representation of being coiled like a spring conveys the idea of untapped potential energy. It sleeps in our body and underneath the layers of our consciousness, waiting to be aroused either by spiritual discipline or by other means - like particular experiences of life. It is depicted as rising from the Muladhara up through the Sushumna, activating each Chakra; when it arrives at the crown Chakra (Sahasrara), it bestows infinite bliss, mystical illumination etc. It is only through repeatedly raising of the Kundalini, that the yogi succeeds in obtaining Self realization. Its rising is not a mild sense of energy flowing inside the spine. Its movement is like having a "volcano erupting" inside, a "rocket missile" shot through the spine! Its nature is beneficial; there is an evident resistance in trusting the reports of Kundalini awakening accompanied by troubles such as patently disturbed breathing patterns, distortion of thought processes, unusual or extreme strengthening of emotions... We are rather inclined to think that a dormant malady, brought to open manifestation by thoughtless practice of violent exercises or drugs is the cause of those phenomena. Insomnia, hypersensitivity to environment may indeed follow the authentic experience. In a "true awakening," the force of Kundalini eclipses the ego altogether and the individual feels disoriented for some time. All is absorbed in a short time, without problems. Alas, the search for a repetition of the episode may lead to disorderly and careless practice of strange techniques, without ever establishing a minimal foundation of mental silence. Each book warns against the risk of a premature awakening of Kundalini and asserts that the body must be prepared for the event. Almost any yogi thinks he or she is capable of sustaining this premature awakening and the warning excites them more than ever: the problem is that many do not have (or have lost) a genuine spiritual approach and nourish a fairly

egotistical condition.

In the theoretical framework of Kriya Yoga we consider Kundalini to be the same energy that exists throughout the body and not specifically residing in the Muladhara Chakra. We seldom use the term "Kundalini awakening" and try to avoid what could give the impression that such an experience has an alien nature: Kundalini is our own energy; it is the purest layer of our consciousness.

Kutastha Kutastha, the "third eye" or "spiritual eye" is the organ of inner vision (the unified astral counterpart of the two physical eyes), the place in our body where the spiritual Light manifests. By concentrating between the eyebrows, a formless darkness is first perceived, then a small crepuscular light, then other lights; eventually there is the experience of a golden ring surrounding a dark stain with a blazing tiny white point inside.

There is a connection between Kutastha and Muladhara: what we are observing in the space between the eyebrows is nothing but the opening of the spinal door, which is located at the root Chakra. Some Kriya teachers affirm that the condition for entering the last and the highest Kriya stage is that the vision of the spiritual eye has become constant; others identify it with the condition in which the energy is perfectly calm at the base of the spine. Therefore both affirmations are one and the same.

Maha Mudra Maha Mudra is a particular stretching position of the body. The importance of this technique becomes clear as soon as we observe how it incorporates the three main Bandhas of Hatha Yoga. There are indeed a thousand and one reasons to practice Maha Mudra with firmness. There is a ratio between the number of its repetitions and the number of the breaths: it is recommended that for each 12 Kriya Pranayama, one should perform one Maha Mudra.

Mahasamadhi [see Second Kriya]

Mantra [See prayer]

Mental Pranayama In mental Pranayama a kriyaban controls the energy in his body by forgetting the breathing process and focusing only upon Prana in the Chakras and in the body. His awareness dwells on both the inner and the external component of each Chakra until he feels a radiation of fresh energy vitalizing each part of the body and sustaining it from inside. This action is marked by the end of all the physical movements, by a perfect physical and mental stillness. At times, the breath becomes so calm that the practitioner has the absolute perception they are not breathing at all.

Mula Bandha In Mula Bandha the perineal muscles – between the anus and the genital organs – are slightly contracted while a mental pressure is exerted on the lower part of the spine. (Differently from Aswini Mudra, one does not simply tighten the sphincter muscles; in Mula Bandha the perineum seems to fold

upward as the pelvic diaphragm is drawn upward through the motion of the pubic bone.) By contracting this muscle group, the current of Apana which normally gravitates downward is pulled upwards, gradually uniting with Prana at the navel. Mula Bandha has thus the effect of causing Prana to flow into Sushumna channel, rather than along Ida and Pingala.

Nada Yoga Nada Yoga is the path of union with the Divine through listening to inner sounds. Surat-Shabda-Yoga is another name for Nada Yoga. Nada Yoga is an experiential meditation. It has its basis in the fact that one who follows the mystical path infallibly meets this manifestation of Spirit – whatever may be their preparation and their convictions. It is a highly enjoyable form of meditation; anyone can be involved in this even without having fully understood it.

You may use a particular position of the body – a squatting position with the elbows resting on the knees, just to give an example – or plug both the ears. Remaining quietly seated, you simply focus all your attention on subtle sounds that come from within, rather than the audible sounds from outside. It is recommended to repeat mentally, unremittingly, your favorite Mantra. Awareness of inner sound must happen, sooner or later; your listening skills will improve and you will become more sensitive. There are different levels of development in the experience of inner sounds: you will hear a bumblebee, the drum, the lute, the flute, the harp, the clapping of thunder or a hum like an electrical transformer. Some of these sounds are actually just the sounds of your body, especially the blood pumping. Other sounds are actually the "sounds behind the audible sound". It is into this deeper realm that, while over time gently easing the mind into relaxed concentration, your awareness is drawn. After some weeks of dedicated practice you will tune in with a sound deeper than all the above-quoted astral sounds. This is the cosmic sound of Om. The sound is perceived in different variations; Lahiri Mahasaya describes it as "produced by a lot of people who keep on striking the disk of a bell". It is continuous "as the oil that flows out of a container".

Nadi Subtle channels through which life energy flows throughout the body. The most important are Ida, which flows vertically along the left side of the spinal column (it is said to be of female nature), and Pingala (of masculine nature) which flows parallel to Ida on the right side; Sushumna flows in the middle and represents the experience that is beyond duality.

Nadi Sodhana Alternate nostril breathing exercise, it is not a part of Kriya Yoga proper. Yet, because its effects of appeasing and cheering up the mind (especially if it is practiced in the morning) are unmatched, some kriyabans make it a regular part of their routine.

Navi Kriya The essence of this technique is to dissolve inhalation and exhalation at the state of equilibrium in the navel, the seat of the Samana current. It is coupled in various ways with the practice of Kriya Pranayama. Some

schools which do not specifically teach it provide some substitutes for it.

New Age The *New Age* sensibility is marked by the perception of something "planetary" at work. Since distinguished men of science have contributed to the *New Age* sensibility, there is no need to dwell on the affirmation, irrelevant for our understanding, according to which such a progress coincided with the entry of the solar system in the sign of Aquarius – from this belief it derived the term "Age of Aquarius" or "*New Age*". The essential thing is that people realized that the discoveries of Physics, of Alternative Medicine, the developments of the Depth Psychology, all converged toward one and the same understanding: the substantial interdependence among the universe, body, psyche and spiritual dimension of human beings. The esoteric-initiation societies, overcoming for a long time the differences of culture and religious vision, had already recognized this truth, which now, has become common heritage. During the twentieth century, human thought has made a strong step forward in a healthy direction.

There are many grounds to believe that, in the future, such an epoch will be studied with the same respect with which nowadays Humanism, Renaissance and Enlightenment ages are studied. The *New Age* thought deserves a deep respect for many reasons. If I hint at some "frenzies" I refer to the excessive use of alternative remedies for any type of real or imaginary troubles and to even more dangerous theories borrowed with a lot of superficiality from various esoteric currents, rather than to a depth progress in the understanding, in the expansion of the awareness out of the narrow fences of the small ego tied up obsessively to the maintenance of its petty conveniences.

Nirbikalpa Samadhi [see Paravastha]

Omkar Omkar is Om, the Divine Reality sustaining the universe, whose nature is vibration with specific aspects of sound, light and inner movement. The term "Omkar" or "Omkar Kriya" is also utilized to indicate any procedure fostering the Omkar experience.

Padmasana In this asana 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. The name means the "posture in which the lotuses (the Chakras) are seen." It is explained that, combined with Kechari and Shambhavi Mudra, this Asana creates an energetic condition in the body, suitable to producing the experience of the internal light coming from each Chakra.

There are yogis who had to have cartilage removed from their knees after years of forcing themselves into Padmasana. In Kriya Yoga, at least for those living in the west and not used to assuming it since infancy, it is much wiser, healthier and comfortable to practice either the Half lotus or the Siddhasana posture.

Paravastha This concept is linked with that of "Sthir Tattwa (Tranquility)". Named by Lahiri Mahasaya, Paravastha designates the state that comes by holding onto the after-effect of Kriya. It is not just joy and peace but something

deeper, vital for us as a healing. From our initial efforts directed at mastering the techniques, we perceive moments of deep peace and harmony with the rest of the world, which extend during the day. Paravastha comes after years of discipline, when the breathless state is familiar: the tranquility state lasts forever, it is no longer to be sought with care. Flashes of the ending state of freedom comfort the mind while coping with life's battles.

Pingala [see Nadi]

Prana The energy inside our psychophysical system. Prana is divided into Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vijana, which have their location respectively in the chest, in the low abdomen, in the region of the belt, in the head and in the remaining part of the body - arms and legs. That the term Prana is interpreted in two ways should not create confusion – provided that one considers the context in which the word is used. In the initial phases of Kriya Pranayama we are mainly interested in Prana, Apana and Samana. When we use Shambhavi Mudra and during mental Pranayama we contact Udana. Through many techniques (like Maha Mudra) and by the experience of Kriya Pranayama with Internal Breath we experience the fresh vitalizing nature of Vijana.

Pranayama The word Pranayama is comprised of two roots: Prana is the first; Ayama (expansion) or Yama (control) is the second. Thus, the word Pranayama can be understood either as the "Expansion of Prana" or as the "Control of Prana". I would prefer the first but I think that the correct one is the second. In other words, Pranayama is the control of the energy in the whole psycho-physical system by using the breathing process with the purpose to receive a beneficial effect or to prepare the experience of meditation. The common Pranayama exercises – although they may not involve the perception of any energetic current – can create a remarkable experience of energy rising in the spine. This is not negligible since this experience causes to the skeptical practitioner the discovery of the spiritual dimension and pushes him or her to seek something deeper.

In Kriya Pranayama the breathing process is coordinated with the attention of the mind up and down along the spinal column. While the breathing is deep and slow, with the tongue either flat or turned back, the awareness accompanies the movement of the energy around the six Chakras. By deepening the process, the current flows in the deepest channel in the spine: Sushumna. When by a long practice a subtle form of energy circulates (in a clearly perceivable way) inside the body while the physical breath is totally settled down, the kriyaban has an experience of unthinkable beauty.

Prayer [Japa] Prayer is an invocation that allows a person to make a reverent plead or to offer praise to the Divine. The sequence of words used in a prayer may either be a set formula or a spontaneous expression in the praying person's own words. Whatever be the appeal to God, this act presupposes a belief in the Divine Will to interfere in our life. "Ask, and ye shall receive" (Matt. 7:7, 8; 21:22). Prayer is a subject of wide range and scope; here I will restrict it to the

repetitive prayer. In India, the repetition of the Name of the Divine is known as Japa. This word Japa is derived from the root Jap - meaning: "to utter in a low voice, repeat internally". Japa is also the repetition of any Mantra, which is a broader term than prayer. Mantra can be a name of the Divine but also a pure sound without a meaning. A certain number of sounds were chosen by ancient yogis who sensed their power and used them extensively. (Some believe that the repetition of a Mantra has the mysterious power of bringing about the manifestation of the Divinity "just as the splitting of an atom manifests the tremendous forces latent in it"). The term Mantra derives from the words "Manas" (mind) and "Tra" (protection): we protect our mind by repeating unrelentingly the same healthy vibration.

Usually a Mantra is repeated verbally for some time, then in a whisper and then mentally for some time. In most forms of Japa, the repetitions are counted using a string of beads known as a (Japa) Mala. The number of beads is generally 108 or 100. The Mala is used so that the devotee is free to enjoy the practice without being preoccupied with counting the repetitions. It may be performed whilst sitting in a meditation posture or while performing other activities, such as walking.

Radhasoami The spiritual organization *Radhasoami (Radha Swami)* was formally founded in 19th century India is also referred to as *Sant Mat* (Path of the Saints). It is considered a derivation of *Sikhism*. Actually, the tradition is much more ancient and it relates to the teaching of Kabir and then Guru Nanak. There were also a group of teachers that assumed prominence in the northern part of the Indian sub-continent from about the 13th century. Their teachings are distinguished theologically by inward devotion to a divine principle, and socially by an egalitarianism opposed to the qualitative distinctions of the Hindu caste hierarchy and to the religious differences between Hindu and Muslim. In the modern times the first name to signal is that of Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh ji who created the Radha Soami movement in January 1861 (the same year in which Lahiri Mahasaya is reported to have received initiation into *Kriya Yoga*). The founder Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh ji died on 1878 in Agra, India. He did not appoint a successor, resulting in a succession crisis upon his death. Several disciples eventually came to be regarded as successors, which led to splits within the group. These splits led to the propagation of *Radhasoami* teachings to a wider audience although with slightly varied interpretations.

Sahasrara The seventh Chakra extends from the crown of the head up to the Fontanelle and over it. It cannot be considered of the same nature as the other Chakras, but a superior reality, which can be experienced only in the breathless state. It is not easy therefore to concentrate upon it as we do with the other Chakras. Only after a deep practice of Kriya Pranayama, when the breath is very calm, is the attunement with it possible.

Samadhi According to Patanjali's Ashtanga (eight steps) Yoga, Samadhi is the state of deep contemplation in which the object of meditation becomes

inseparable from the meditator himself: it results naturally from Dharana and Dhyana. In my opinion, Samadhi does not mean "union with God." We take so many things for granted. Our language is strongly hampered: magniloquent words risk meaning nothing. To become one and the same thing with God is different from to awaken to the realization that we are a part of That One! Words deceive our comprehension and kindle egoist expectations. One is thrilled by words such as: absolute, eternal, infinite, supreme, everlasting, celestial, divine....

I have half a mind to suggest a sober definition of Samadhi, which may stimulate a reflection upon the meaning of the spiritual path. Let me therefore define Samadhi as independent from any accident, beatific, near death experience (NDE). The descriptions of Samadhi and of NDE follow the same pattern: actually the nature of the phenomenon which takes place in the body is almost the same. This opinion may disappoint those who smell a restrictive and limiting shade of meaning in it; however I prefer to think in this way and discover much more during the actual Samadhi experience than to thrive in rhetoric. Even if Samadhi were no more than a NDE experience, however it would have a superlative value. In both the experiences, the awareness can provide a glimpse of the Eternity beyond mind; then (this happens to the trained yogi) that lofty awareness blends, integrates with the customary life, which is totally transformed for the better. To those who wonder if it is fair to diminish the worth of the Kriya ecstatic state by reducing it to a process of contacting for some time the after life dimension, we could reply that this genuine experience is unmatched in fostering in a clean way the Kriya Yoga ideals of a balanced spiritual life.

Second Kriya It has been reported that by using the Second Kriya technique, Swami Pranabananda, an eminent disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, left his body consciously (this feat is called Mahasamadhi – the conscious exit out of the body, at death). There was no violence to the body; the feat happened only at the most proper moment - according to a Karmic point of view when the moment was right. Now the debate is: what procedure did he make use of?

a... Many claim it was the technique of Thokar. It is possible that he arrested the movement of the heart and therefore left his body. He might have done one single Thokar and stopped his heart; this means he put so much mental strength in this act as to block the energy which kept his heart throbbing.

b... Some believe that this supreme calming of the heart was achieved only by a mental action of immersion in the point between the eyebrows, entering the light of Kutastha. The reports say that those who were around him did not notice any head movement. Similarly when other great ones left their body there was no movement.

c... In my opinion, Mahasamadhi is not a "shrewd esoteric trick" to master the mechanics of a painless suicide. Surely each great master relies upon his already built ability to enter Samadhi. By creating a total peace in his being, the soul's natural desire to regain union with the Infinite Source puts in action a natural

mechanism of appeasing the cardiac plexus.

Shambhavi Mudra A Mudra in which the ocular bulbs and the eyebrows are upturned as much as possible; often the inferior eyelids relax and a bystander can observe the white of the cornea under the iris. All the visual force of the ocular nerves is gathered on the top of the head. Lahiri Mahasaya in his well known portrait is showing this Mudra.

Siddhasana The Sanskrit name means "Perfect Pose". In this Asana, the sole of the left foot is placed against the right thigh so that the heel presses on the perineum. The right heel is placed against the pubic bone. This position of the legs, combined with Kechari Mudra, closes the pranic circuit and makes Kriya Pranayama easy and profitable.

Sikhism The *Sikh* religion is founded on the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine successive Gurus; it is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. It is interesting that the key distinctive feature of *Sikhism* is a non-anthropomorphic concept of God, to the extent that one can interpret God as the Universe itself.

Sushumna [see Nadi]

Talabya Kriya It is a stretching exercise of the muscles of the tongue, and particularly of the Frenulum. The purpose is to attain Kechari Mudra [see]. This practice creates a distinct calming effect on the thoughts and, for this reason, it is never put aside, even after Kechari Mudra is achieved.

Thokar A Kriya technique based on directing the Prana toward the location of one Chakra by a particular movement of the head. Studying the practices of the Sufis, we discover that Lahiri Mahasaya's Thokar is one among the many variations of the Sufi's Dhikr.

Tribhangamurari Some Kriya Acharya teaches the practice of Thokar in a very particular way. The central teaching is guiding your awareness along a three-curved path called Tribhangamurari (Tri-bhanga-murari = three-bend-form). These teachers explain that in the last part of His life, Lahiri Mahasaya drew with extreme precision the three-bends form which is perceived by deepening the after-Kriya-Pranayama meditation. This path starts from *Bindu*, goes up to the left of a very short length, then descends toward the right side of the body. Once a particular point in the back is reached, it curves and moves leftwards cutting the Vishnu knot whose seat is in the heart Chakra. After reaching a point in the left part of the back, it changes its direction again pointing toward the seat of the Brahma knot in the coccyx region.

Uddiyana Bandha Abdominal lock: it is usually practiced with breath out but in Kriya it is also utilized with breath in especially during the practice of the main Kriya Mudras: Maha Mudra, Navi Kriya and Yoni Mudra.

To practice it with breath out, utilize, at least partly, Jalandhara Bandha. Take a false inhalation (perform the same action of an inhalation without actually pulling any air into the body.) Draw the belly up as much as possible. Hold your breath out. To practice it with breath in, contract slightly the abdominal muscles until you intensify the perception of the energy in the spinal column in the region of Manipura Chakra.

Yama – Niyama Yama is Self-control: non-violence, avoiding lies, avoiding stealing, avoiding being lustful, and non-attachment. Niyama is religious observances: cleanliness, contentment, discipline, study of the Self and surrender to the Supreme God (Brahman). While in most Kriya schools these rules are put as premises to be respected in order to receive initiation, a discriminating researcher understands that they are to be considered really as the consequences of a correct Yoga practice. A beginner cannot to much depth understand what "Study of the Self" means. Some teacher repeats, parrot fashion, the necessity of observing those rules and, after having given absurd clarifications of some of the above points (in particular which mental trick to utilize in order to ... avoid being lustful), passes on to explain the techniques. Why utter empty words? Whom is he trying to fool? The mystic path, when followed honestly, cannot compromise itself with any rhetoric. When an affirmation is made, it is that. Yama and Niyama are a good topic to study, an ideal to bear in mind, but not a vow. Only through practice is it possible to understand their real meaning and, consequently, see them flourish in one's life.

Yoga Sutra (by Patanjali) The Yoga Sutras are an extremely influential text on Yoga philosophy and practice: over fifty different English translations are the testimony of its importance. Although we are not sure of the exact time when their author Patanjali lived, we can set it between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. The Yoga Sutras are made up by a collection of 195 aphorisms dealing with the philosophical aspects of mind and awareness, thus establishing a sound theoretical basis of Raja Yoga - the Yoga of self discipline and meditation. Yoga is described as an eight stage (Ashtanga) path which are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. The first five steps build the psycho-physical foundation for having a true spiritual experience; the last three are concerned with disciplining the mind up to its dissolution in the ecstatic experience. The Sutras define also some esoteric concepts, common to all the traditions of the Indian thought, such as Karma. Although, at times, Patanjali is called "the father of Yoga", his work is actually a compendium of pre-existing oral Yoga traditions, an inhomogeneous whole of practices betraying an indistinct and contradictory theoretical background. However, the importance of Patanjali's work is beyond discussion: he clarified what others had taught; what was abstract he made practical! He was a genial thinker, not just a compiler of rules. His equilibrium between theism and atheism is very appreciable. We do not find the least suggestion of worshiping idols, deities, gurus, or sacred books - at the same time we do not find any atheistic doctrine either. We know that "Yoga," besides being a rigorous system of meditation practice, implies devotion

to the Eternal Intelligence or Self. Patanjali affirms the importance of directing our heart's aspiration toward Om.

Yoni Mudra The potential of this technique includes, in all effects, the final realization of the Kriya path. Kutastha - between the eyebrows - is the place where the individual soul had its origin: the delusive Ego needs to be dissolved there. The core component of this Mudra is to bring all the energy into the point between the eyebrows and hinder its scattering by closing the head openings – the breath is quieted in the region from throat to the point between the eyebrows. If a deep relaxation state is established in the body, this practice succeeds in generating a very intense ecstatic state, which spreads throughout one's being. About its practical implementation, there are minor differences among the schools: some give a greater importance to the vision of the Light and less to the dissolution of breath and mind. Among the first, there are those who teach, while keeping more or less the same position of the fingers, to focus upon each Chakra and to perceive their different colors. One satisfactory remark, found in the traditional Yoga literature, is that this technique gets its name "Yoni", meaning "uterus", because like the baby in the uterus, the practitioner has no contact with the external world, and therefore, no externalization of consciousness.

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