

## Lesson 30

It makes no difference whether you worship God, Jehovah, Allah, Mohammed, Buddha, Christ or Krishna - it is still and always one and the same Cod. The difference is only in name, such as God, Gott, Dieu or Dios.

The omnipotent, the almighty, is and always will be the same, whether one is Hindu, Brahmin, Christian or whatever.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



## Kriya Yoga: Practice

### KRIYA 7: MAHA BHEDA MUDRA (GREAT PIERCING PSYCHIC ATTITUDE)

The Sanskrit word *maha* means 'great'; *bheda* means 'piercing' and *mudra* means 'psychic attitude'. This kriya is therefore called 'the great piercing psychic attitude'. It supplements and directly follows maha mudra<sup>1</sup>. Together they supercharge the whole mind-body.

There are two alternative methods. Choose and practise either one according to your capacity and preference.

#### Subsidiary practices

To do maha bheda mudra you should know the following basic techniques:

1. Ujjayi pranayama<sup>2</sup>
2. Knechari mudra<sup>2</sup>
3. Unmani mudra<sup>3</sup>
4. Moola bandha<sup>4</sup>
5. Nasikagra drishti<sup>5</sup>
6. Jalandhara bandha<sup>6</sup>

You should already know the first three techniques since they are an integral part of the previous kriyas numbers 3 to 9. Nasikagra drishti, uddiyana bandha, jalandhara bandha and the full form of moola bandha should be mastered.

### MAHA BHEDA MUDRA - ALTERNATIVE 1

#### Sitting position

Men should sit in siddhasana<sup>8</sup> and women in siddha yoni asana. If you cannot do these asanas then you should do alternative 2.

#### Technique

Sit with the back held upright.

Ensure that one heel firmly presses against the mooladhara chakra trigger point.

Open the eyes.

Do khechari mudra; maintain it for the entire practice.

Exhale deeply.

Hold the breath.

Gently rest the chin against the chest.

The first round begins here.

Be aware of the mooladhara chakra and mentally repeat: 'mooladhara - mooladhara - mooladhara'.

Inhale with ujjayi pranayama while moving awareness upwards through the kshetram in the frontal (arohan) passage (see figure 1): swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, bindu.

There should be no mental repetition; only awareness.

Your head should be slowly raised as awareness moves from vishuddhi to bindu.

At bindu there should be breath retention and the head should lean slightly backwards.

While fixing awareness at bindu mentally repeat: 'bindu - bindu - bindu'.

Then with ujjayi exhalation let your awareness slowly descend through the spinal (awarohan) passage (see figure 2).

Uddiyana

bandha<sup>7</sup>

Be aware of the chakras in turn: ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.

Do unmani mudra with descent of awareness. Hold your breath when your awareness reaches mooladhara.

Fix your awareness on mooladhara and mentally repeat 3 times 'mooladhara', i.e.: 'mooladhara - mooladhara - mooladhara'.

Do jalandhara bandha while continuing to retain the breath.

Do moola bandha.

Do uddiyana bandha.

Do nasikagra drishti.

Say mentally: 'nasikagra, uddiyana, mool'.

Simultaneously your awareness should move to the centres of these practices (see figure 3).

When you say 'nasikagra', awareness should be fixed at the nose tip.

When you say 'uddiyana', your awareness should be fixed at the navel.

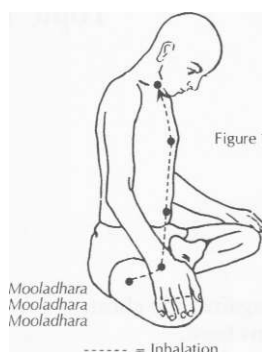


Figure 1

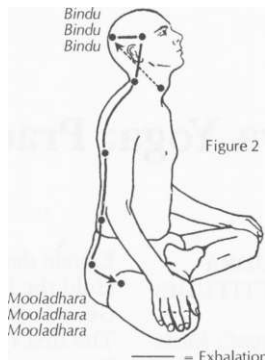


Figure 2

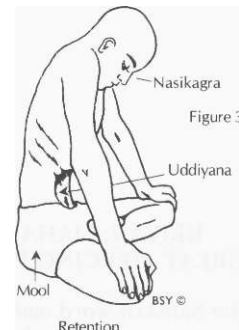


Figure 3

When you say 'mool', your awareness should be fixed at the mooladhara chakra.

This rotation 'nasikagra - uddiyana - mool' should be done 3 times by beginners and slowly increased to 12 times over a period of weeks or months.

Release nasikagra drishti.

Release moola bandha.

Release uddiyana bandha.

Release jalandhara bandha, but do not raise your head.

Become aware of the mooladhara chakra again.

This is the end of the first round.

The whole process is summarized in the accompanying pictures.

Now start the second round.

Hold the breath with awareness at mooladhara.

Mentally repeat: 'mooladhara - mooladhara - mooladhara'.

Then let your awareness ascend the frontal passage with ujjayi pranayama.

Repeat 12 rounds. Do not strain.

### Breathing

Ujjayi pranayama should be done throughout the practice. Retain the breath while repeating 'mooladhara' three times. Inhale while ascending the frontal passage. Retain the breath while repeating 'bindu' three times. Exhale while descending the spinal passage.

### Application of bandhas and nasikagra drishti

Make sure that all the bandhas are done correctly and in the right sequence. At first you will have to pay close attention to this, but with regular practice the bandhas will lock and tighten automatically without effort and at the right stage of the kriya.

Also note that the nose tip gazing is subtly yet directly related to the application of the bandhas. Nasikagra drishti helps to tighten the lock of the bandhas. Make sure that nasikagra drishti and the bandhas are done simultaneously and that you do not forget to do them while rotating awareness through the centres nasikagra, uddiyana and mool.

Beginners will find it difficult to practise nasikagra drishti for more than a minute or so without feeling pain and discomfort in the eyes. Do not strain. If necessary stop doing nasikagra drishti when you feel discomfort but continue the bandhas and rotation of awareness. Slowly increase the duration of nasikagra as the eye muscles adapt themselves to the new practice.

### Rotation through nasikagra, uddiyana and mool

This rotation of awareness is done while holding the breath. Beginners are advised to practise only 3 rotations at first, slowly increasing by one round at a time as they develop the ability to easily hold the breath for a longer duration. Eventually you should do the complete 12 rotations.

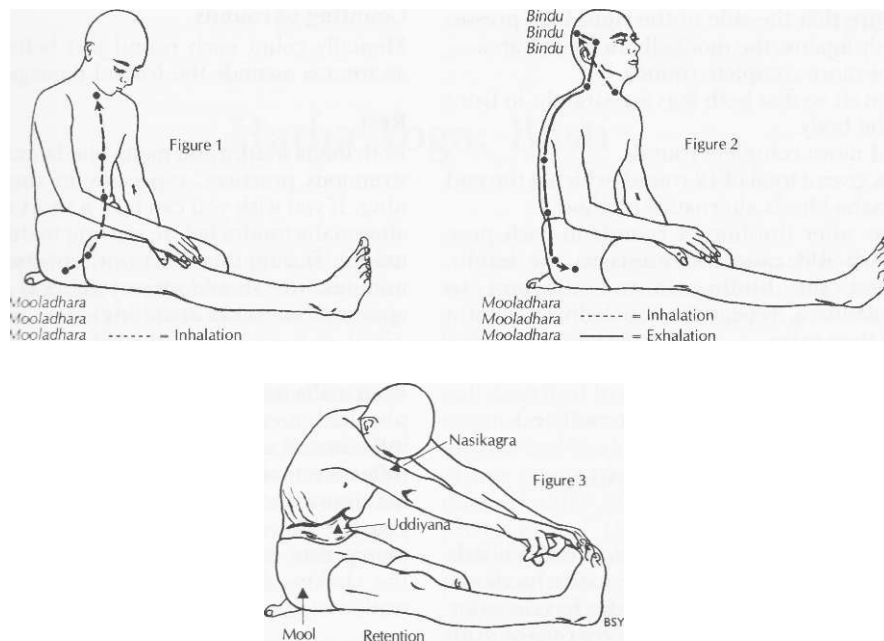
### MAHA BHEDA MUDRA - ALTERNATIVE 2

#### Sitting position

You should sit in *utthanpadasana* (stretched leg pose) as described in alternative method 2 of maha mudra<sup>1</sup>.

#### Technique

Sit in *utthanpadasana* with the left leg folded and the right leg straight.



Place your hands on the right knee.  
Open your eyes.  
Hold the back straight but relaxed.  
Exhale deeply.  
Bend the head forwards.  
Fix the awareness at mooladhara chakra.  
Repeat mentally: 'mooladhara - mooladhara - mooladhara'.  
The first round starts here (see figure 1).  
With ujjayi inhalation let your awareness ascend the frontal pranic passage in the way already described for alternative method 1.  
Raise your head as you pass from vishuddhi to bindu.  
Repeat 'bindu' 3 times mentally.  
Then with ujjayi exhalation descend the spinal avarohan passage, with awareness of the chakras enroute (see figure 2).  
Do unmani mudra with descent.  
Exhalation should be completed by the time your awareness reaches mooladhara.  
Hold your breath.  
Fix awareness at mooladhara chakra.  
Repeat mentally: 'mooladhara - mooladhara - mooladhara'.  
Then bend the head forwards and do alandhara bandha.  
Bend forwards and grasp the toes of the

Ensure that the side of the right heel presses firmly against the mooladhara chakra area.  
 Do 4 more complete rounds.  
 Then sit so that both legs are straight in front of the body.  
 Do 4 more complete rounds.  
 This gives a total of 12 rounds which is the end of maha bheda alternative method 2.  
 Note: after finishing 4 rounds in each pose you should raise awareness to the bindu, repeat the bindu mantra, descend to mooladhara, repeat the mooladhara mantra and then relax.

### **Breathing**

All details are as given for alternative 1.

## **GENERAL DETAILS**

### **Choice of method**

Both maha mudra (kriya 6) and maha bheda mudra (kriya 7) have two alternative methods. Each alternative of maha mudra has the same sitting position as the corresponding alternative in maha bheda mudra. Therefore, in order to bring continuity and flow into your practice we suggest that you either do both alternatives 1 or both alternatives 2.

### **Awareness**

During the practice of this kriya you should be aware of the following:

1. The flow of prana through arohan and awarehan passages and the chakras and kshetrams in turn.
2. Mental repetition of mooladhara, bindu, nasikagra, uddiyana and mool mantras.
3. Movement of head and eyes.
4. Number of rounds completed.

### **Duration**

For the complete practice you have to do 12 rounds. Beginners who do only 3 rotations of nasikagra, uddiyana and mool will take about 8 minutes; those who do 12 complete rotations for 12 rounds will require about 10 minutes.

### **Sequence**

Maha bheda mudra is to be done immediately after maha mudra<sup>1</sup> and before manduki mudra<sup>9</sup>.

### **Counting of rounds**

Mentally count each round just before your awareness ascends the frontal passage.

### **Rest**

Both maha mudra and maha bheda mudra are strenuous practices, especially in the beginning. If you wish you can take a short rest just after maha mudra before starting maha bheda mudra. During this short rest, say one or two minutes, you should close your eyes and fix your awareness on breathing.

### **Specific influence**

Both maha mudra and maha bheda mudra are physical methods that have a profound influence at a pranic level. They specifically influence three centres: mooladhara chakra, manipura chakra and ajna chakra. Whether you are aware of it or not, these two kriyas manipulate and harness the energies within the chakras for the inducement of concentration of mind and meditation.

### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Book III, Lesson 29, Topic 1
- <sup>2</sup> Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 5
- <sup>3</sup> Book III, Lesson 26, Topic 3
- <sup>4</sup> Book II, Lesson 19, Topic 4
- <sup>5</sup> Book I, Lesson 8, Topic 5
- <sup>6</sup> Book II, Lesson 14, Topic 3
- <sup>7</sup> Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 3
- <sup>8</sup> Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2
- <sup>9</sup> Book III, Lesson 31, Topic 3

## Hatha Yoga: Basti

Basti is a hatha yoga method of cleaning the colon by sucking in air or water through the anus. It is one of the shatkarmas (six cleaning processes) that have been practised in India since time immemorial<sup>1</sup>.

It > a direct and obvious method of washing and purifying the bowels, yet strangely it is rarely taught by yoga teachers or mentioned in modern books on yoga. This is a great pity because basti is reasonably easy to do and can bring many results. The purpose of this topic is to explain the basic technique and try to encourage you to practise it yourself.

### Definition

The Sanskrit word *basti* (also widely written as *vasti* or *wasti*) is a general word that relates to anything pertaining to the lower abdomen, belly, pelvis and bladder. The technique of basti is widely called *basti karma*. The word *Karma* in this context means 'process or technique'. Therefore, *basti* or *basti karma* is a process concerned with cleaning the lower part of the abdomen, specifically the colon.

There are two types of basti: *sthala* and *jala*. These have derivations and meanings as follows:

1. *Sthala basti*: The word *sthala* means 'ground'. Sthala basti is a practice where one stands on dry ground; in other words, it is a practice where one sucks air into the anus (instead of water). The technique is also called sushka basti, the word *sushka* meaning 'dry'. Therefore, *sushka basti* means 'dry basti' or more exactly 'air basti'. Another name for air basti is vata basti, where the word *vata* means 'air'. It is the practice which cleans the colon with air.

therefore jala basti is the practice where one sucks water into the anus. It is also called vari basti, *vari* meaning 'water'. Therefore, vari basti is the process of cleaning the colon with water.

These two practices, air and water basti, are very similar, so we will describe them together.

### Scriptural references

Unlike some other yogic practices, basti is quite well described in some of the traditional yogic scriptures. The following are quotations from the *Gherand Samhita*: "Basti karma is said to be of two types - jala and sushka. Jala basti is done in water while sushka is done on land (that is in air)." (1:46) This verse is a repeat of what we have already explained under the previous heading.

The text continues: "Stand in utkatasana in water to the height of the navel. Contract and expand the anus. This is called jala basti." (1:47) Utkatasana is a standing pose in which one bends the legs slightly, leans forwards and presses the hands on the thighs just above the knees. It is the same position in which one does nauli<sup>2</sup>. The method described in this verse is a very simple method in which one merely contracts and relaxes the anal sphincters. This is called ashwini mudra<sup>3</sup>. It helps to cool and relax the abdominal organs.

The text continues: "Urinary, digestive and wind problems are cured by jala basti. The body becomes pure and looks like Kama Deva (Cupid)." (1:48) We do not make any promises that you will become like Cupid, but certainly jala basti will help you to remain or become healthy.

The scripture then proceeds to describe sthala basti: "Sit in paschimottanasana and do basti. Contract and expand the anus (ashwini mudra)." "This practice prevents abdominal problems. It stimulates the digestive fire and eliminates wind problems." (1:49-50)

2. *Jala Basti*: The word *jala* means 'water'. Jala basti is the simple form of air and water basti. No mention is made of the sucking of air or water into the anus. It seems that instructions for this method of yogic enema was left to the guru to explain to his disciple.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* briefly mentions the more advanced method of basti as follows: "Stand navel deep in water. Do utkatasana. Insert a tube into the anus. This cleaning process is called basti karma." (2:26)

The insertion of the tube into the anus is one method of basti that we will shortly describe. Without any more practical details, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* then proceeds to expound the benefits: "Basti karma removes all ailments associated with vata, pitta and kapha (the three progressively more subtle principles of man's being utilized in ayurveda)." (2:27) "The practice of jala basti makes the bones, muscles, semen, senses (or perception and action) and the antah karana (literally the inner instrument, the mind) healthy. The body glows with vitality. Physical faults are removed." (2:28) The scriptures regard basti as a very useful and beneficial practice.

#### **The use of a tube**

One traditional method of doing basti is to insert a thin bamboo tube into the anus. This allows air or water to be sucked easily into the colon via the anus. The boon of modern technology means that a thin plastic tube can also be used. In fact plastic is preferable to bamboo since it is smoother and more flexible. Bamboo could be a little harsh on the sphincter muscles of the anus.

If you are sitting or standing in water then the tube can be ten to twenty centimetres long. It should be inserted into the anus by gently opening up the anal sphincters with your fingers. Don't strain. As you insert your fingers and the tube you will find that muscles automatically expand. This makes insertion of the tube easy and prevents injury to the anus.

When the tube is in place you should practise basti. After the water or air has been drawn into the colon, then the protruding end of the tube should be blocked with one finger; this will retain the water or air inside the colon.

If you wish you can use a tube; it is one method of doing basti. However, the tube must be smooth; if not then it is very easy to harm the delicate lining of the anus. Also one must be gentle when inserting the tube. The use of a tube is a good method, if you take care. However, the method that we generally recommend is to merely open the anal sphincters with the fingers. This is much safer and

much easier. It is this method that we have described.

The use of a tube has one big advantage in connection with jala basti: water can be sucked up into the colon from a small container. That is, one can practise basti without standing in a river or a deep bath.

#### **Gravity feed method**

The most common method of using an enema is gravity feed. Water or whatever is being used as enema is kept in a container above the level of the anus. A thin tube feeds the water from the container directly into the anus. The water flows directly into the colon under the force of gravity; no effort is necessary. Special tubes and containers can be obtained from a chemist shop.

The gravity feed method is very similar to basti and is certainly much easier. Basti requires some degree of muscular control. If a person has severe constipation and cannot do basti, we recommend that they adopt the gravity feed method. However, we suggest that he or she tries to master basti since it has the following advantages:

- Develops strength and control of the abdominal muscles. This is necessary in order to suck the air or water into the bowels. This alone helps to improve the efficiency and health of the abdominal organs.
- Simultaneously massages the inner organs and tones up the nerves.
- Requires little or no equipment. If you can do basti (with or without a tube) then do it in preference to a gravity feed enema. If you cannot do basti then use gravity feed, but you should gradually aim to develop more control over the abdominal muscles in order to practise basti in the future. We recommend that you practise yogic techniques such as bhastrika pranayama<sup>4</sup>, uddiyana bandha<sup>5</sup> and asanas in general.

#### **Preparatory practices**

Before attempting basti you should master madhyama nauli<sup>2</sup>. This is necessary in order to suck water or air into the colon.

#### **Water and bath**

For air basti no water or bath is required. For water basti you will have to sit or stand in a bath of water. The water level should be such that it



is just above the level of the anus. The depth of water required will depend on the sitting position. That is, if you sit in paschimottanasana then five to ten centimetres is sufficient. On the other hand, if you stand in utkatasana the water will need to be much deeper.

The water should be neither excessively cold or hot. If you have sufficient time then you can dry of all use warm water (about body temperature - 98° Fahrenheit is ideal). This warm water will loosen hard encrusted stool from the walls of the colon. Then you can use cooler water (not freezing); this will tone up the nerves of the colon and anus and will stimulate the blood circulation. This will be very useful if you suffer from piles or constipation.

### Other enemas

There are many other types of herbal enemas that can be used instead of water and air. They can be used for specific needs. Generally, however, water or air are more than sufficient.

### Body position

You should utilize any one of the following asanas while doing basti:

*Utkatasana* (unyielding pose). This is the asana in which one practises nauli<sup>2</sup>. This is the traditional method recommended by the *Gherand Samhita* and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. The legs should be separated by about half a metre. They should be bent at the knees and one should lean forwards and place the hands on the thighs just above the knees.

This asana can be utilized for jala (water) and sthala (air) basti, but if you practise jala basti in this pose then the water will have to be deep. If you have the facilities available to obtain this depth of water then you can use this pose.

*Kagasana* (crow pose). This is the squatting pose<sup>6</sup>. It is very easy for orientals but difficult for occidentals. It is an ideal position for sucking in both air and water. Less than thirty centimetres of water is required.

*Paschimottanasana* (back stretching pose)<sup>7</sup>. A simplified version of the full form of this asana can be utilized for basti. One should sit on the ground for air basti or in water for jala basti. The legs should be stretched out in front of the body. Exhale as deeply as possible by leaning forwards into the final pose of paschimottanasana; that is one must breathe

out and try to touch the head to the knees. Do not worry if you cannot touch your head to your knees. The important thing is that you attain the deepest possible exhalation. This is mainly achieved by contracting the abdominal muscles. The purpose of leaning forwards in paschimottanasana is only to achieve even greater expulsion of air from the lungs. This sitting position has two main advantages:

- It can be practised in shallow water (even less than eight centimetres)
- It can be easily and comfortably practised by almost everyone.

Choose whichever asana suits your body and available facilities.

### Suction and vacuum

The method of sucking water (or air) into the anus is difficult to describe. In order to understand it you must try it for yourself. The method is as follows:

Exhale deeply. Hold your breath.

Gently open the anal sphincters with your fingers.

Do madhyama nauli<sup>2</sup>.

Then, while retaining your breath and madhyama nauli, try to expand and pull up the abdomen.

This process creates a vacuum and sucks in water. As you draw in water, gently manipulate the anal muscles so that there is free flow through the anus. Some people can do this technique the first time; others require a lot of practice. It is very easy when you know how. If you have trouble sucking in water, then you are probably doing something incorrectly. You should contact a local yoga teacher who will be able to quickly point out your mistakes. If necessary, see a personal demonstration; this will be far more useful than one hundred pages of descriptions.

### BASTI (YOGIC ENEMA)

The method is exactly the same for both jala (water) and sthala (air) basti. The only difference is that jala basti is practised in water and sthala basti in air. The full practice is divided into four stages as follows:

#### Stage 1: initial suction and evacuation

Sit or stand in one of the suggested asanas. Place your hands near the anus.

Exhale deeply by contracting the abdominal muscles and doing uddiyana bandha.  
 Hold your breath.  
 Gently pull the anal sphincters apart.  
 Do madhyama nauli.  
 Create a vacuum inside the colon as described under the previous heading.  
 Suck in water (or air) through the anus.  
 As you suck in you should carefully manipulate the anal sphincter so that there is free flow.  
 Suck in as much water (or air) as possible.  
 Then release the suction and relax; the anal sphincters should be slightly contracted in order to retain the water (or air) inside the bowels.  
 Breathe out, but maintain the water inside the colon.  
 Hold the water inside for a short duration while breathing normally.  
 Then expel the water (or air) and stool into a nearby toilet.  
 Suck in more water and again evacuate the stool-water mixture.  
 Repeat the process until most of the stool has been evacuated.  
 Then proceed to stage 2.

#### **Stage 2: progressive suction**

In this stage a greater amount of water (or air) is drawn into the colon in order to bring about the best possible wash. The method is the same as stage 1 except that water (or air) is progressively drawn in with successive practice of madhyama nauli. The method is as follows:  
 Take the same body pose as stage 1.  
 Suck in water (or air) in the same manner as described for stage 1.  
 When you have drawn in the maximum amount of water release madhyama nauli and breathe out. Hold the water inside by slightly tightening the anal sphincters.  
 Let your breathing and heart rate return to normal.  
 Then breathe out deeply again.  
 Do madhyama nauli and suck in more water (or air).  
 Draw in as much water as you can.  
 Then relax madhyama nauli and breathe out. Retain the water inside.  
 Breathe normally for a short duration.  
 Then again repeat madhyama nauli and draw in more water.  
 Relax and breathe out. Retain the water inside.

Repeat the process until the colon is as full as possible.  
 Then proceed directly to stage 3.

#### **Stage 3: rotational nauli**

The technique of rotational nauli (stage 2 of nauli) should be integrated with basti<sup>2</sup>.

If you cannot do rotational nauli then you can practise either agnisar kriya<sup>8</sup>, uddiyana bandha<sup>5</sup>, bhastrika pranayama<sup>4</sup> or madhyama nauli<sup>2</sup>. In these alternative practices the abdominal muscles should be rhythmically contracted and relaxed.

Rotational nauli is the preferred practice. The method of stage 3 is as follows:

Stand up and hold the water (or air) inside the colon.

Do 1 or 2 rounds of rotational nauli both clockwise and anticlockwise.

This practice will loosen up stool encrustations on the intestinal walls.

Proceed to stage 4.

#### **Stage 4: evacuation**

Evacuate the water (or air) and stool mixture into a toilet.

Then do mayurasana or hamsasana<sup>9</sup>.

These two asanas exert pressure on the colon and ensure full evacuation.

They also stimulate intestinal peristalsis.

Again go to the toilet and empty the bowels.

If the water is dirty then the whole process, stages 1 to 4, can be repeated.

This is the complete practice of basti -jala and sthala.

#### **Retention of water**

If you have the time then the water can be retained inside the colon for a period of time. This should be done after completing stage 2 before starting stage 3. Hold the water inside for as long as you can, perhaps 5 or 10 minutes. This will help to further remove stool that has encrusted on the intestinal walls.

#### **Number of rounds**

If you have time repeat stages 1 to 4 until the evacuated water is perfectly clean.

#### **Water and air basti compared**

Water basti is a better practice than air basti since it thoroughly scrubs the intestinal walls. Air basti does not clean the walls of the bowels;

rather it helps to stimulate intestinal peristalsis in order to remove accumulated stool. Both are very useful for constipation.

Air basti has the advantage that it can be practiced anywhere without preparation (apart from ensuring a nearby toilet). If you have constipation, we advise you to practise it every day while in the latrine. If you have more time available, then do water basti as it is a better alternative.

### Time of practice

Both water and air basti can be practised at any time, but not after food (because of *nauli*). The best time is early in the morning before breakfast.

If you intend to go on a fast then we suggest that you practise basti beforehand. This will clean out the bowels and allow the fasting to bring about maximum purification of the body.

### Frequency

*Sthala* (air) basti can be practised as often as you wish. There is no limitation. *Jala* (water) basti: on the other hand should only be practised when necessary. For general cleanliness of the bowels once a week is sufficient. If you have constipation, however, it can be utilized every few days. Water basti should not become a daily habit. It is natural for the colon to contain a certain amount of stool. It is in this stool that bacteria grows, which is necessary for maintaining general health of the body. Excessive use of basti will interfere with this process of bacterial growth, also it will tend to irritate the large intestinal lining (mucosal).

Actually the daily use of basti or any other form of enema is absolutely not necessary. Many people think that their colon has to be perfectly clean. They develop a neurosis if they do not go to the toilet every morning. For this reason they resort to the daily use of an enema or laxative. Try to avoid this drastic measure and do not worry if you cannot go to the latrine every day.

### Limitations

Basti should not be practised by anyone with:

- high blood pressure
- hernia
- any serious digestive ailment

Basti is useful in treating ailments such as colitis and dysentery; however, in some cases

it may be too drastic. If you suffer from these type of disorders you should seek expert guidance.

### Benefits

Basti is the best method of cleansing the bowels. Many people feel that a large number of ailments originate in the colon, especially from impurities and malfunction. Actually we do not fully accept this idea, for we feel that most ailments arise in the mind, but certainly a congested colon or excessive toxins in the bowels can help to initiate ailments. Of this there is little doubt. Therefore, basti is a great help in reducing the occurrence of various types of disease as well as improving general health.

Basti is a direct method of tackling constipation. If the constipation is very bad then basti should be preceded by *moola shodhana*<sup>10</sup>. This practice will remove hard stool. Water basti can then be used to thoroughly clean the bowels.

If you have piles then you should also try water basti, but with a little care. Use cold water as this will stimulate the blood flow. You will gain instantaneous relief.

If you suffer from pruritis (itchiness of the anus) then you may find basti gives some relief.

Basti will stimulate the nerves of the colon as well as the nerves connecting other parts and organs of the digestive system. It will also improve muscle tone and blood supply. Old stool and gas are removed. The blood is purified. We suggest that you practise basti and master it. Then you can use it occasionally for general health or to treat specific ailments such as constipation. Try it... you have nothing to lose and much to gain.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 2

<sup>2</sup> *Nauli*: Stage 1 - Book III, Lesson 28, Topic 3; Stage 2 - Book III, Lesson 29, Topic 2

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 16, Topic 3

<sup>4</sup> Book III, Lesson 27, Topic 4

<sup>5</sup> Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 3

<sup>6</sup> Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 3

<sup>7</sup> Book II, Lesson 13, Topic 2

<sup>8</sup> Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 2

<sup>9</sup> Book III, Lesson 28, Topic 4

<sup>10</sup> Book II, Lesson 14, Topic 1

## Topic 1

# Asanas: Practice

Most asanas can be easily categorized into specific groups such as backward bending, forward bending, spinal twist, balancing and so forth. However, some asanas don't fit into any obvious category.

1. Gomukhasana
2. Dhanurakarshanasana
3. Baka dhyanasana

These three asanas are well worth practising for they have distinctive benefits.

### GOMUKHASANA (COW'S FACE POSE)

In Sanskrit *gomukha* means 'cow's face'. This asana is so called because it resembles the face of a contented cow. At first this may not seem obvious, but in time you will find that the final pose does in fact seem to evoke some similarity with a cow's face. It seems to be more of a symbolic rather than an actual resemblance.

#### Scriptural references

In the *Gherand Samhita* it says: "Place your legs on the ground so that the two feet are on either side of the back. Keep the body straight and steady so that it looks like the head of a cow. This is called gomukhasana." (2:17)

This is a very incomplete description, and a person would not be able to practise gomukhasana without further details.

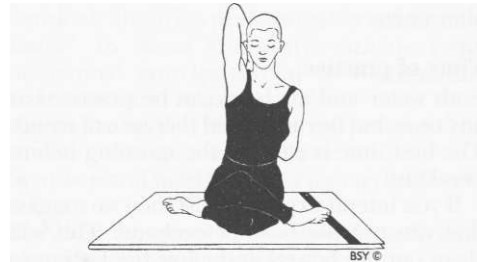
The same description, equally incomplete, is given in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

#### Sitting position

The sitting position for gomukhasana is veerasana (hero's pose). This is a meditative asana<sup>1</sup>. The right leg can be folded above the left or the left above the right; it does not matter.

#### Technique

Sit in veerasana with the right leg folded over the left leg. Make sure that the right knee is located directly above the left knee.



Hold the back straight.

Raise the right arm and place the hand over the shoulder.

Place the left arm and hand behind the back. Try to grasp the left hand with the right hand behind the back; at first you may find this difficult, but with practise it becomes very easy. The back of the left hand should lie in contact with the spine, while the palm of the right hand should point towards the spine.

Join the fingers of the two hands.

Hold the spine erect.

Raise the head so that it faces forwards.

Close the eyes.

This is the final pose and is shown in the above figure. Stay in the final pose for a minute or so. Then release the hands and straighten the legs.

Now the asana must be repeated in the opposite direction.

Fold the left leg on top of the right leg in veerasana.

Raise the left arm and place the hand over the left shoulder.

Place the right arm behind the back.

Try to join the two hands.

Straighten the back and hold the head upright.

Close the eyes and remain in the final pose for the same length of time as the other side.

#### Breathing

The breathing should be normal in the final pose. If you wish you can practise ujjayi pranayama<sup>2</sup>.

### Awareness

Be aware of the breathing in the final pose.

### Duration

You can practise gomukhasana for as long as you wish: there is no limit. At least a minute or two in each direction is recommended.

### Sequence

Gomukhasana can be practised at any place and at any time. It can be done at any stage in your asana practice program.

### Benefits

Gomukhasana is an excellent asana for inducing relaxation. If you feel tired, tense or worried then we strongly suggest that you practise gomukhasana for at least ten minutes. It helps to greatly ease away tension. For this reason, it has been found very useful for helping to relieve ailments such as diabetes, high blood pressure and sexual malfunctions.

Gomukhasana directly helps to remove stiffness in the spine, neck and shoulders. It also develops the chest and improves breathing.

### DHANURAKARSHANASANA (ARCHER'S POSE)

The word *dhanu* means 'bow' and *akarshana* means 'to draw' or 'to pull back'. Therefore, in English this asana can be translated as 'the pose of drawing the bow'. Dhanurakarshan-asana emulates an archer pulling back an arrow in a bow immediately before shooting towards the chosen target.

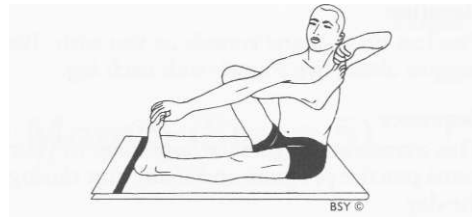
### Scriptural references

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* mentioned dhanurakarshanasana under another name: "Hold one of the toes with the opposite hand and pull it towards the ear like a bow. This is called dhanurasana." (1:25)

Generally dhanurasana is the name given to another asana'. The above verse is an incomplete description of dhanurakarshanasana.

### Technique

Sit with the two legs straight in front, straighten the arms and cross them with the right arm uppermost. Grasp the big toe of the right foot with the



fingers of the left hand.

Grasp the big toe of the left foot with the fingers of the right hand.

Pull the right foot under the right arm.

Place the right foot on the left thigh.

Keep the left leg and right arm straight.

Hold the spine and head upright.

Breathe in deeply.

Hold the breath and pull the right big toe towards the left ear; this action resembles the drawing of the bow and arrow.

This is the final pose and is illustrated above.

Hold the right big toe as near as possible to the left ear while retaining the breath.

Try not to bend the head and spine forwards.

Then replace the right leg on the left thigh.

Breathe out.

This is the end of 1 round.

Do a few more rounds.

Then straighten the legs and release the hands.

Now the asana has to be repeated in the opposite direction.

Cross the arms with the left arm uppermost.

Grasp each big toe with the fingers of the opposite hand.

Pull the left leg under the left arm and place the left foot on the right thigh.

Breathe in and while holding the breath pull the left big toe towards the right ear.

Remain in this final pose while retaining the breath.

Then replace the left foot on the right thigh.

Breathe out then repeat a few more rounds.

### Breathing

Inhale before pulling the big toe towards the ear, with the foot resting on the thigh. Retain the breath while drawing the foot backwards, remaining in the final pose and while returning the foot to the thigh. Exhale at the end of each round.

### Awareness

Fix your awareness on breathing and on applying maximum pull on the foot.

**Duration**

You can do as many rounds as you wish. We suggest about five rounds with each leg.

**Sequence**

This asana can be done at any stage in your asana practice program and at any time during the day.

**Method of grasping the big toe**

The foot has to be firmly pulled backwards in the final pose. Therefore, the fingers must tightly grasp the big toe. The best method is to wrap the second (index) finger around the big toe to form a loop. The loop should be closed with the thumb.

**Benefits**

This is an excellent asana for loosening up the legjoints and strengthening the arms. It also helps to remove back and neck ache. It has been found useful in treating hydrocele.

**BAKA DHYANASANA  
(PATIENT CRANE POSE)**

The word *baka* means 'crane' and *dhyana* means 'meditation'. The crane is a long-legged bird that can be seen standing in the shallow water of rivers. The crane seems to be asleep, but as soon as an unsuspecting fish comes within its range, it pounces. The crane is calm and yet very alert and epitomizes the state of meditation.

Baka dhyanasana is named after the reflective nature of the crane. Also the final position of the asana vaguely resembles a bird, the two arms being the bird's legs, the two feet the bird's tail and the head imitating the crane looking downwards into the water for fish. In English, the asana can be called 'the pose of the meditative crane'.

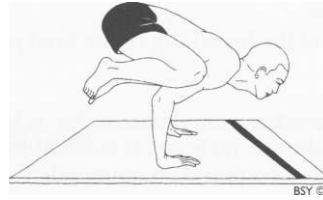
**Technique**

Squat on the floor with the feet apart.

Balance on tiptoes.

Place the palms of the hands flat on the floor directly in front of the feet with the fingers pointing forwards; the elbows should be bent outwards.

Adjust the position of the knees so that they rest against the outside top surface of the upper arms as close as possible to the armpit.



Slowly lean forwards.

Lift the feet off the floor so that the whole body is supported on the hands and arms. Keep the knees firmly in contact with the upper arms.

Bring the two feet together.

Raise the head upwards as far as is comfortable.

This is the final pose.

Stay in the final pose for a comfortable length of time.

Then slowly lower the feet to the ground.

If you have time repeat the practice.

**Breathing**

In the final pose one can either hold the breath or breathe slowly and deeply.

**Awareness**

Be aware of maintaining balance.

**Duration**

The asana can be done for as long as you have time available. We suggest two or three minutes, whether remaining in the final pose or intermittently raising and lowering the feet.

**Benefits**

Baka dhyanasana develops the sense of balance and induces mental steadiness. It strengthens the arm muscles.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

<sup>2</sup> Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 5

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 15, Topic 4

## Meditation: Antar Mouna (Stage 5)

*Amuni* is described in the yogic scriptures as a person who has attained the state of inner silence. He is a wise man who has explored the depths of his being. He has made his mind perfectly silent so that it becomes an untarnished reflector of consciousness. His mind has been harmonized and harnessed so that it becomes the key to higher consciousness. This is the boon of a silent mind.

In order to induce inner silence, sadhakas practise mouna - a vow of silence. they reduce interaction with external events. It can be practised in the form of anusthana (for a fixed period of time) for a day, a week, a year or even a lifetime. During mouna, perception and interrelation with the outside world are reduced to the bare minimum or even cut off completely. Generally it is practised in the form of no speaking while carrying on normal life. Sometimes a sadhaka will retire to a cave or room for a few years and totally cut off contact with society and other people. This induces perception of the mind processes.

We do not suggest that you go to a cave, since this will probably cause more harm than good. Nor do we suggest that you practise mouna as a permanent part of your lifestyle; it is too difficult to work and carry out one's responsibilities without speaking. But we do strongly advise you to practise mouna occasionally - perhaps for a day or so. This will help you to calm the mind and become more aware of the inner realms. Also it will make you aware of how much energy each of us wastes in talking too much. Tell your family and friends beforehand so that they know your intentions; if you do not then they may think you have lost your voice or have gone a little crazy through too many yoga practices! The best time to practise is at weekends.

Many people who practise antar mouna find that in the beginning a lot of strong negative emotions and thoughts (samskaras) arise. Because they occur so intensely and rapidly

they can make you very unhappy for a period of time. This is a necessary part of the process of purging the mind, but it should be done more slowly, therefore we suggest that you practise for no more than a day or so at first. The duration of mouna can be increased as your mind becomes more harmonized.

During the practice of mouna, besides not speaking, you should try to become indifferent to all external activities. Try to be detached and feel as though you are alone - *ekaki* (by oneself). If you stop talking but still remain avidly concerned with the outer world then you will gain little from the practice. Your interaction with the world will merely flow out through the sense organs of eyes, ears, etc., instead of the mouth. You will remain as extroverted as ever. Therefore, try to remain detached from things around you. In this manner, mouna will help you to become more aware of what is happening in your mind. This is essential on the path of self-knowledge.

The practice of mouna that we have just described briefly is concerned with inducing prolonged inner silence. The practice of antar mouna that we have been describing is concerned with inducing the same state, but it is practised for shorter periods of time<sup>1</sup>.

### ANTAR MOUNA - STAGE 5 THOUGHTLESSNESS

The aim of this stage is to induce a state of thoughtlessness. In Sanskrit it is called *nirvichara awastha*. The mind must be emptied of all thoughts. Every thought that arises on the screen of consciousness should be immediately rejected. They should be eliminated. You have to refuse to think of anything. The mind has to become perfectly blank, but while you watch with alertness and without sleep.

This stage leads to the state of antar mouna - inner silence, where all thoughts stop. There is a mental vacuum.

### **Preparation**

This stage requires little effort; it should arise almost spontaneously as a result of perfecting the previous four stages. Therefore, we do not suggest that you start this stage until you have fully practised stages 1 to 4<sup>1</sup>.

### **Technique**

Sit comfortably with eyes closed.

For a few minutes practise stage 4.

Then become aware only of chidakasha - the inner space of consciousness in front of the closed eyes.

This is the screen of your psyche.

Watch carefully.

If any thought arises, immediately dispose of it. . . reject it.

Be alert.

Do not brood over any thought; as soon as a thought, any thought, arises get rid of it.

More than likely you will see thoughts in the form of visions; weird and wonderful shapes will arise in the chidakasha.

These visions must also be wiped out.

You should try to merge these forms and visions with the formless background of chidakasha; make them fade away.

Your whole aim should be directed towards attaining and maintaining a state of no thoughts and no visions.

No thought or vision should be allowed to manifest itself.

If you wish you can make a resolve:

'I will not think' . . . this can be your only thought.

Go on repeating this resolve until only the strong resolve 'I will not think' remains.

Then eventually this resolve must also disappear so that you are aware only of the chidakasha.

This is the state of thoughtlessness.

You may feel as though you are soaring through different levels of your mind.

Be alert and aware.

Do not sleep.

When you can attain a state of thoughtlessness then you are ready to begin dharana - concentration on a psychic symbol.

### **Suppression of thoughts**

In this stage, thoughts should be completely suppressed. This may seem to contradict what we have said in previous stages, such as stage

2, where we urged you not to suppress thoughts under any circumstances. However, in the earlier stages, thoughts were likely to be quite compelling, in which case suppression would cause more harm than good. They had to be exhausted by allowing them to arise without hindrance or suppression. On reaching stage 5, however, the thoughts in the mind should be greatly attenuated and almost insignificant. Therefore, they can be suppressed in order to extinguish minor thought agitation in the mind and to bring about the state of inner silence. Here suppression is justified. But of course, this assumes that you have perfected the previous four stages. Therefore, we again emphasize that you should not start this stage 5 until you have practised and mastered the previous stages<sup>1</sup>.

### **Readiness for stage 6**

When you can easily remain in a state of thoughtlessness, then you should proceed to stage 6. Do not continue with stage 5 for you will merely lapse into a state of laya (unconsciousness or sleep). You will have a nice deep sleep, but it will not take you anywhere on the yogic path. Therefore, proceed to stage 6 as soon as your mind is in a thought-free state<sup>2</sup>.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Antar mouna: Stage 1 - Book III, Lesson 26, Topic 5; Stage 2 - Book III, Lesson 27, Topic 5; Stage 3 - Book III, Lesson 28, Topic 5; Stage 4 - Book III, Lesson 29, Topic 5

<sup>2</sup> Antar mouna: Stage 6 - Book III, Lesson 31, Topic 6



## Daily Practice Program

In this lesson we have described maha bheda mudra. You should master it and add it to your daily kriya yoga practice.

try basti if you have perfect health and necessary facilities, and especially if you suffer from constipation.

You can proceed to antar mouna, stage 5 - thoughtlessness - if you have practised the previous stages for a reasonable duration.

You have described three asanas in this lesson: gomukhasana, dhanurakarshanasana, baka dhyanasana. Try to practise one or more of them in your spare time.

Practice	Minutes
<b>Program 1:</b> duration 2 hours	
Surya Namaskara	6
Shavasana	3
Kriya Yoga:	
Kriya 1: Vipareeta Karani Mudra	10
Kriya 2: Chakra Anusandhana	4
Kriya 3: Nada Sanchalana	7
Kriya 4: Pawan Sanchalana	25
Kriya 5: Shabda Sanchalana	30
Kriya 6: Maha Mudra	10
Kriya 7: Maha Bheda Mudra	10
Antar Mouna:	
Stage 4	5
Stage 5	10
	120

### **Program 2:** duration 1 1/2 hours

All the kriyas from Vipareeta Karani Mudra (1) to Maha Bheda Mudra (7).

Program 3: duration 1 hour for general health	
Surya Namaskara	5
Shavasana	3
Bhujangasana	3
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	4
Sirshasana	4
Tadasana	1
Gomukhasana	4
Antar Mouna:	
Stage 2	7
Stage 3	7
Stage 4	7
Stage 5	11
	<hr/>
	60