

## Lesson 20

Most readers know that the meaning of the word yoga is union, but actually the path, the system of yoga, consists of a process of *viyoga* - separation. This seems to be a total contradiction, but is not. It means that through yoga practices, one must separate awareness from the mind and body. There must be a personal experience of the difference between the mind-body aspect and the awareness aspect of one's being. Only when this separation and difference is personally experienced can one know the truth behind it. And when this separation occurs between the seer and the seen, then one will understand oneself and life from a new and higher platform. There will be an explosion of new understanding. This *viyoga* is the first step towards the culmination of yoga; this separation is the first step towards unity.

Therefore, in your practices forget all concepts of union - all logical interpretations and understanding are wrong. Only worry about separation: separation of your awareness from mind-body identification. This is the aim of all paths of yoga: find the *viyoga* (separation) that will lead to yoga (union). Separate the purusha from prakriti, so that they can be united at a higher level.

The essence of yoga practices is really separation, not union. Separation is the method, union is the result. So be aware; be aware of everything that you do. Be a witness to all thoughts and actions. Separate your awareness from all other phenomena. This is not easy, but try.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



## Self-Acceptance

Accept your nature as it is now, whatever its obvious faults. Try not to continually feel that you are somehow inferior to others or that you are riddled with shortcomings and defects. It is only in this way that the grosser aspects and neuroses of the mind will drop away.

If elephants spent their time wishing they were goldfish, or peacocks spent their time wishing they were cows, then they would live totally useless and disharmonized lives. But animals live in accordance with the way that they have been designed. They have a unique role (dharma) to perform in the kaleidoscope of life and they do it. Because of this, they live harmoniously.

Man should also live a harmonized, tuned in life, but unfortunately this is rarely the case. Man can never accept himself and his faults, and in away this is a good thing for it motivates him to overcome his apparent limitations and elevate himself to the higher realms of understanding and bliss. But generally the lack of self-acceptance is too overwhelming; it totally grinds a person into an overburdened state of worry and dissatisfaction, which leads to a life that is lived at a very low level compared to the possible potential. There should be more self-acceptance combined with the need to improve oneself. There should be aspiration for self-improvement, but not neurosis because of the faults that a man sees in himself. Try to accept your present personality, no matter what its obvious weaknesses and faults, but still have the aspiration to overcome them.

### **Non self-acceptance as a cause of disease**

The inability to accept oneself is a fundamental cause of disease. Lack of self-acceptance results not only in mental disturbances, but also physical ailments. Mental dissatisfaction leads to a reflection and manifestation in the physical body.

Anger is widely regarded as a fault, but anger is actually a safety valve for all pent-up

feelings. But many moralistic systems and codes say: 'do not be angry' or 'anger is a sin'. Because of this, many people suppress their anger but the driving force behind the anger has to express itself somehow. It is rechanneled. If the suppression of anger is great enough and for prolonged periods of time it results in high blood pressure, or heart attack and so many other prevalent diseases. So we urge you to express your anger, if it is possible (sometimes circumstances make it difficult). Don't feel any pangs of guilt about your anger. Be angry, for it is better to express it openly than to transform it into disease at a later date. But when you feel angry be aware and in time the anger will disappear.

Consider another example. Every person has some desires. These are natural, they are part of man's innate nature. Without desire there would be no motivating force in life, children would not be produced and so forth. Yet many moralistic codes say that desire is bad. How can this be so? How can such natural feelings as desire be bad? Because of these unnatural codes, many people feel deep unhappiness and guilt about their desires. A person feels sexual desires, but because society says it is wrong and sinful, that person becomes very unhappy and suppresses his desires. This mental suppression eventually expresses itself in disruption of the physical body, especially in the form of malfunctioning of the sexual organs. So accept your desires; they are perfectly natural. Don't listen to narrow-minded moralistic codes. Whether you express your desires or not is, however, your business. When you have strong desires, let the thoughts come. Feel them. Be aware of them. In time they can be transcended.

The same applies with food. Many people feel that their eating habits are wrong. Well this is probably true, for gone are the days when primitive man only took food when he was hungry; now we have food, generally too

much and too rich, at fixed times during the day, whether there is hunger or not. But if you feel the need for a lot of food, it is better to indulge than to suppress. Suppression or guilt regarding one's eating habits will never solve anything. Many aspirants feel such guilt about their eating that they develop a neurosis and suppress their desire for food. The result is that the physical organs begin to malfunction in turn according to the abnormal needs of the mind. Of course, overindulgence in food can also lead to malfunctioning of the digestive organs, but it is likely to be much less destructive and serious. Accept your eating habits, but be aware. This is the way to whittle away unnatural food habits.

We could go on giving so many other examples, but by now you should clearly see the pattern: lack of self-acceptance leads to disease. Don't try to over discipline the mind, saying that it should be this or that it should act in accordance with a certain code, for this will only lead to suppression. Let the mind be free to do its own thing. But be aware. Don't suppress your thoughts for this will eventually lead to disease and unhappiness. Accept your thoughts, but with awareness. In time all disharmonious tendencies will slowly wither away through greater understanding.

Every person is fit to tread the yogic path. An important step in yoga is to accept your nature as much as you are able. If you can accept your nature, then we can also. Your purpose for wanting to do yoga is not important; your religion or non-religion is not important; and your lifestyle is also not important. The main thing is that you have started to practise yoga with a degree of sincerity. Your nature is unimportant; all faults are unimportant. Your present personality is the starting point. Yoga and daily life experiences will be the means to refine your being and eventually bring equilibrium. Everyone has the ability to contact elevated states of awareness. The potential lies within. It is not made or created, but at present this potential does not express itself because of imbalance and conditioning of the mind. These blocks are only superficial superimpositions on your nature. Each of us has the same potential. There is not one person in the world who is unfit to tread the path of yoga. If you make

the effort then you will start to tune in with yourself. But first of all accept your faults as being merely superficial aspects of your being.

Accept your nature, whether it is 'bad' or 'good'. Don't feel guilt. Accept your character for what it is: a product of circumstances. Acceptance will lead to acceptance of others. Don't suppress thoughts, whatever their nature. Accept that there are unruly traits and desires within you and eventually these disturbing traits will drop away. Let the hidden aspects of your subconscious mind rise to the surface. Don't fight them and don't be ashamed of them. Let them arise and face them. If you suppress them they will still influence your whole life, but from the murky depths of the subconscious mind. So you might as well let them bubble to the surface where you can become familiar with them. Eventually you will lose interest in them. They will fade away and no longer disturb your life, in the same way that water evaporates from a damp cloth placed in the hot sun. The evaporation occurs without the slightest effort.

The aim of man should be to find his natural role in life and stick to it. This is the basis of the spiritual path. Most people are on the path of adharma (in opposition to their natural inclinations). But you can never find and tread the path of dharma if you are in conflict with yourself. Non-acceptance only leads to neurosis and suppression. Accept your faults, but with awareness. This is the way to find your dharma. This is the way to harmonize your life and eventually transcend all faults and personality problems.

## The Chakras (Part 2)

Don't make the mistake of thinking that the chakras are only awakened by a few specific forms of yoga. All paths of yoga are concerned with flowering the potential of the chakras; some more directly than others. The more direct approach is the method of kundalini, kriya and laya yoga. With karma, bhakti, jnana yoga, etc. the approach is indirect; no specific mention is made of the chakras in these systems. This does not mean that the chakras don't open, but that the chakras open as a consequence of higher levels of awareness. The chakras are opened so smoothly that they are not really felt as such. With the direct approach, the chakras are opened in order to induce a corresponding state of awareness. In the indirect approach, the chakras open as a consequence, a by-product of higher awareness. One method goes through the front door and the other goes through the back door in order to reach the same inner chamber of being.

Every religion, every mind awakening system, every spiritual system is concerned with unfolding the hidden potential of the chakras. they are all concerned with releasing the latent faculties and knowledge of the mind, and awakening of the mind implies the same thing as awakening of the chakras. The opening of the chakras means that layer upon layer of the mind is opened up ... the closed book starts to reveal its inherent knowledge.

### The granthis

The Sanskrit word *granthis* means 'knot'. In the context of the chakras, the word *granthis* is translated as 'psychic knot'. They are three in number, called the brahma, vishnu and rudra granthis. They represent levels of awareness (chakra domains) where the power of maya (illusion), ignorance and attachment to material things is especially strong.

we have given a very brief and simplified explanation of their implications.

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

2. *Vishnu granthi*. This psychic knot operates at the region of the anahata chakra. It is associated with attachment to things and people in an emotional sense. It is associated with attachment to inner psychic visions and so forth. It is connected with rajas, the tendency to passion and intense activities.

3. *Rudra granthi* functions in the region of the ajna chakra. It is associated with attachment to psychic powers such as telepathy, clair-audience and other mind phenomena. This psychic knot implies attachment to individuality. One must leave the sense of individual ego behind for further ascent, in the same way that a butterfly leaves the chrysalis behind in order to fly away to freedom. One must give up duality at the region of the rudra granthi.

All these psychic knots are obstacles or blocks on the route to sahasrara. They have to be progressively pierced or transcended in order for the kundalini power to rise through the chakras.

### The kundalini defined

The progressive awakening of the chakras is called the raising of the *kundalini* (sometimes called the *kundali*) and is symbolized by a snake or serpent. The word kundalini is derived from the two Sanskrit words:

1. *Kundala*, which means 'coiled', indicating that the kundalini power is symbolized as a coiled snake residing in mooladhara chakra.
2. *Kunda*, which means 'a pit', 'depression' or 'deeper place', indicating that kundalini resides in a deeper place, the mooladhara

they have many meanings. In the following

In English, the kundalini can be called 'the primal power' or 'the serpent power'.

In most people, kundalini sleeps or lies dormant in mooladhara chakra. At this level of awareness, the individual is awake to the world and asleep to himself. There is little realization of the potential of the mind. When the kundalini starts to awaken and rise up through the chakras, then man becomes more and more aware. Eventually, when the kundalini is fully aroused, then man is wide awake and in a state of superconsciousness. He is, in a sense, asleep to the world and in a state of yoga nidra.

Thus the kundalini symbolizes the awakening of the potential contained in the mind, the realization of the potential of each and every human being.

### **Sushumna defined**

The sushumna is a symbolic passage (nadi) which connects all the main chakras. That is, sushumna is regarded as connecting all the different levels of consciousness. It is a symbolic passage through which the kundalini rises on its ascent from mooladhara to sahasrara.

The etymology of the word sushumna is not certain. A voluminous Sanskrit dictionary that we have in our library defines it as 'something very gracious and kind, and one of the seven principal rays of the sun, supposed to supply light and heat to the moon'. This is open to many interpretations, but it is significant that number seven once again occurs (the six chakras plus sahasrara). The sun may possibly represent the sahasrara which provides light (consciousness) to man (the moon). Also sushumna is indeed gracious for it facilitates the ascent of kundalini and the resulting bliss and knowledge.

In the *Shandiliya Upanishad* the sushumna is called the royal road (*rajapath*). The meaning of the word taro in the tarot (taro) cards is believed to be derived from the two Egyptian words: *tar* meaning 'road' and *ro* meaning 'royal'. Therefore, it seems that the meaning of the *tarot* is 'the royal path' and that the purpose of the cards is to tread the royal path. This path is the sushumna - the road to knowledge and bliss.

The sushumna is far more subtle than the physical body. However, for the purpose of yogic practices, it is regarded as being located in the centre of the spine, from top to bottom. The tantric scriptures make this very clear. In the *Sammohana Tantra* it says: "The sushumna

extends from mooladhara chakra to the abode of Brahman (sahasrara). It is located inside the spine and is the very means to all knowledge." (6:5-6)

The sushumna is the central pathway between the ida and pingala nadis<sup>1</sup>. The ida and pingala have vast implications. They represent the internal and external aspects of existence. Sushumna implies the balance between them. That is, the kundalini arises when there is perfect harmony between the outside and inside worlds.

The sushumna is regarded as a hollow tube in which there are three more concentric tubes. Each is progressively more subtle than the previous tube (nadi) and contains the previous tubes within it. These represent the three aspects (gunas) of nature: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*; and consciousness.

The tubes or nadis are as follows:

1. *Sushumna* - signifying *tamas*
2. *Vajrini* - signifying *rajas*
3. *Chitrini* - signifying *sattwa*
4. *Brahma* - signifying consciousness

In short, *tamas* indicates ignorance, laziness and negativity; *rajas* indicates passion and activity; and *sattwa* represents purity, harmony and knowledge. The three aspects interplay throughout nature, in plant life, mineral life, animal life and the life of man. In an individual, any one of these aspects tends to predominate at a particular time. To raise levels of awareness *tamas* must be transmuted into raising of the kundalini through the central and most subtle passage, the *brahma nadi*.

The sushumna is regarded as being closed at its base near the mooladhara chakra. This is called the *Brahma dwara* - the gate of Brahman. This is the first gate that must be opened in order to ascend through the chakras. Yoga practices open this door and allow the kundalini to rise upwards through sushumna.

### **Kundalini in mythology**

Mythology in all parts of the world is abundant with stories involving snakes. Many of these refer directly to the kundalini. Here we will merely give a few examples, for we don't want to become lost in an exposition on mythology.

The ancient Egyptians symbolized the kundalini as a snake rising up through the spine (sushumna). Egyptian mystics also wore a head-dress on which was fixed a snake (*uraeus*)

at the eyebrow centre. This centre is called the *shrwnadhya* in yoga and is connected directly to the ajna chakra at the top of the spine. The uraeus therefore symbolizes the ascent of the kundalini. A similar head-dress is worn by various other groups of people throughout the world, including the American Indians.

Many of the prophets of the Old Testament in the *Bible*, such as Moses, are associated with a snake-shaped staff, representing the sushumna and kundalini.

Most people have heard of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and how Eve was tempted by a snake. The snake is kundalini - it represents consciousness. According to Genesis (3.1) the snake was more subtle than any beast in the field, that is, consciousness. Originally Adam and Eve lived in higher transcendental states, heaven on earth, the Garden of Eden. But through worldliness they ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Because of this, they descended to the level of the mooladhara chakra. It was worldliness that brought about their fall. Incidentally, the tree of life in the Garden of Eden symbolizes the sushumna.

The symbolism of the kundalini stretches back into the depths of time. It is believed by some people that the oldest book in the world is the *Bopal Vuh*, written many thousands of years ago by the Mayans of Central America. In the book, there is an image of the deity Quetzalcoatl, in which a multi-rayed sun is portrayed on the crown of the head. Also included is the symbolic form of the snake. It seems almost certain that this represents the sahasrara (symbolized by one thousand petals in India) and the kundalini.

The snake was venerated by almost all the ancient mystical societies, including the Druids, Orphic mysteries and so forth. The ancients regarded the snake as the symbol of wisdom and salvation. Even Christ urged his disciples to be as wise as serpents. All these attributes are directly connected with the kundalini, not only because the snake lives for many years, but also because it symbolizes kundalini.

The snake has also been associated with energy and power. A snake itself does not suggest these qualities, but that which it symbolizes, the kundalini, does.

The snake has also been associated with evil. This seems contrary to its identification

with wisdom, but this is easily explainable. The descent of the kundalini to mooladhara implies lower levels of awareness, general disharmony and limitations, that is, evil. The reascent of the kundalini means knowledge. Thus the attributes assigned to the kundalini (snake) depend on the viewpoint, whether you are looking from mooladhara upwards or from ajna chakra downwards. It is the descent that is associated with evil.

There are also myths which tell of snakes descending to the earth during the creation of the world, which symbolizes the manifestation of all things of name and form, including man, through the descent of the kundalini down the different chakra levels. In man kundalini eventually resides in mooladhara chakra; in other beings and objects, the descent is to even lower levels.

### **The implications of kundalini**

It is very easy to become caught up in superlatives and vague descriptions of kundalini. It is ineffable, so we will confine ourselves to a very simple and basic description.

In tantra and yoga, kundalini is regarded as feminine and is also called Shakti. She is the link to higher awareness and bliss. She is the revealer of all mantras and the means by which bliss trickles down from the eternal source, sahasrara, to individual beings.

The kundalini is the creator, sustainer and dissolver of all centres of being, including man. She creates by descending through the different chakra levels (*shristi krama*: process of creation); sustains by abiding in mooladhara chakra; and dissolves by ascending through the chakra levels (*laya krama*: process of absorption).

When kundalini descends to the lower chakras then she is the cause of delusion, limitation and lack of knowledge: maya. She is known as *jagan-mohini*, the world bewilderer, causing man to become caught up, ensnared and deluded by the outside world of name and form. As she descends, kundalini becomes progressively more gross and loses her power and subtlety.

In animals, insects, plants and all so-called inert objects, kundalini resides and sustains from levels below mooladhara chakra. In fact, the tantric scriptures list seven more chakra levels which exist below mooladhara: atala,

vitala, sutala, talatala, rasatala, mahatala and patala.

At these levels there is lack of any form of self-awareness that distinguishes man; this faculty does not arise until the level of the mooladhara chakra. We will not discuss these lower chakra levels for they are not important with regard to human aspiration and yogic practices.

In man, the kundalini resides in the mooladhara chakra. It sustains from the level of the mooladhara chakra. The kundalini is said to dream at this level; it is the dream of everyday wakeful life. While she sleeps, man retains a strong sense of individuality and self-centredness; he is awake only to the world of name and form, and unaware of the untapped potential that is his heritage. At this level, man is really asleep; it is the tamasic state of being. The situation can be summarized as follows: when the kundalini sleeps in mooladhara, then man is awake to normal levels of being; this is really deep sleep. When kundalini wakes up, then man as an individual begins to arouse from his twenty-four hours a day waking slumber.

The reascent of kundalini through the chakras implies the reversal of creation. She becomes the cause of awakening, bliss and realization. Shakti returns to its source at sahasrara. As the kundalini progressively rises through the chakras, so the veils of maya are removed. It is this maya that clouds consciousness. Maya is thicker in the lower chakras and nil in sahasrara. As she awakens, the barriers of individuality begin to break down and evaporate like a mirage. One's self-identification gradually expands to include more and more.

Eventually kundalini merges with *maha kundalini* (great kundalini) - sahasrara. She merges with Shiva (consciousness) with whom she is identical. In her formless form she is consciousness; in her formed form she is Shakti, the power of manifestation.

The last few paragraphs can be summarized as: descent of the kundalini implies increasing separation, disidentification and lack of knowledge. Ascent implies increasing integration, identification, bliss and a more harmonized, wider view of one's being in relation to life and others. The kundalini, as a centre of consciousness and power, abides in mooladhara chakra in individual man. It abides in sahasrara when

individuality and mind are transcended. It occupies intermediate chakra levels according to the awareness and identification of the ego. It is the same kundalini power, but viewed from different levels of awareness, understanding and identification.

The kundalini both binds and liberates. It is both the cause of the fall and illumination. In the tantric scriptures, *Hevajra Tantra*, it says "The kundalini is the cause of the fall and the cause of the rise." That is, kundalini only shows herself to those people who seek her. To these she gives liberation; to others she is the cause of bondage.

In order to break down too much attachment to logical understanding of the kundalini, we will now tell you something that seems to contradict what we have already said, but which actually does not. The kundalini, in a higher sense, does not really abide in the mooladhara chakra or anywhere else. It ever abides in sahasrara. It does not really rise through the chakras. Each of the chakras is connected to sahasrara, and each in turn can turn on the power of kundalini in sahasrara. The chakras are really switches that make the kundalini seem to ascend; it actually remains in sahasrara, the reservoir. The kundalini that is said to abide in the mooladhara of each human being is really a reflection of that which always abides in sahasrara. Contemplate on this apparent paradox. Tread the path of jnana yoga. If you discover the answer, then you will find that there is no contradiction - kundalini is both in mooladhara and in sahasrara. But please don't take our word for it; find out for yourself.

The kundalini is often associated with sexual energy. In fact, in tantra, under specified conditions, sexual energy is utilized as a method of raising the kundalini and expanding levels of awareness. This can be done in two ways: either by actual sexual intercourse in a prescribed manner, or by abstaining from sexual relationships. In both cases, the sexual energy is transmuted. This process is called *urdhvaretas*, which means the power and energy behind sex is directed upwards to induce higher states of consciousness.

Many people tried to identify sexual energy directly with kundalini but this misses the real meaning, for it means much more than sexual energy. Sexual energy is merely a small part and aspect of the full power of kundalini.



The awakening of kundalini indicates greater and greater levels of mind. As she rises through the chakras, so one becomes more and more concentrated. The fluctuations of the mind begin to settle. The mind becomes more and more like a placid, calm sea, instead of a tumultuous, stormy ocean. One's awareness begins to flow as smoothly as the flow of

oil from a vessel. One has become aware of something that continually rivets the attention. The whole mind starts to flow in one direction and becomes a vehicle of bliss instead of unhappiness. Such is the boon of opening the chakras and awakening the kundalini.

The purpose of yoga is to retread the path back to the source. In other words, the aim is to raise the kundalini (Shakti) so that she unites with her husband (Shiva) in sahasrara. Poetically, it is said that through the practice of yoga, kundalini develops an overwhelming desire to unite with her husband and for this reason awakens from her slumber in mooladhara. The awakening transforms everyday life into bliss. The world remains the same but one's changed attitude, feelings and awareness transform everything into a fulfilling, joyful experience.

### Sound of the kundalini

Various ancient mystical societies conceived that the highest heaven (sahasrara) has the same musical tone as the earth (mooladhara chakra) and that it differs only in the musical pitch. Since there are seven basic notes in the musical scale, then these relate directly to the different chakra levels.

According to tantra, everything is a manifestation of *shabda*, subtle sound vibration. This is really another way of defining the kundalini. Sound in the form of mantras can also be used to raise the kundalini. It should therefore not be surprising to know that the cosmic sound Aum symbolizes and is kundalini. Aum arises in the realm of the sahasrara and then descends through the various chakra levels, until it manifests gross matter, organic life, including man. In the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* it says: "Aum resides in all created things (i.e. it is the kundalini). Generally, it remains downwards enjoying the material world." (v. 73) In man, Aum or kundalini resides in mooladhara.

The letters of Aum represent many things, but they notably indicate tamas, rajas and

sattwa. That is: A - sattwa, U - rajas and M - tamas. As we have already explained earlier, tamas predominates in the lower chakras, rajas in the middle chakras and sattwa in the higher chakras. Therefore, Aum symbolizes the progressive ascent of kundalini through the chakras. The symbol Aum as a whole symbolizes the sahasrara. But Aum is not only a symbol, it can be used as a mantra to raise the kundalini when utilized under the right circumstances.

It is also significant that the well-known yogic scripture, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, praises nada yoga as being a powerful method of raising the kundalini. The following are selections: "Salutations to the sushumna, kundalini and the nectar secreted from the moon (bindu); O Manonmani (Brahman or the absolute), salutations to you, the source of supreme power and consciousness." (4:64) "Sri Gorakhnatha (a great yogi) described numerous types of laya yoga (methods of raising the kundalini). Amongst these nadanusandhana (discovering the source of nada) is the best." (4:66) "By this the brahma granthi is pierced and a wonderful bliss arises from the void. A tinkling sound can be heard emanating from the anahata chakra." (4:70)

"In the second stage prana enters the sushumna; the posture of the yogi becomes steady and he becomes wise like a divine being." (4:72) "Then the vishnu granthi is pierced and overwhelming bliss is experienced. In the shoonya (void) the sound of a bheri (type of musical instrument) is heard." (4:73) "In the final stage, when the prana enters the ajna chakra, the rudra granthi is pierced. The sound of a veena (musical instrument) takes place like the sound of a flute." (4:76) This describes the process of raising the kundalini. The practice of nada yoga is an excellent technique and if you are inclined, we suggest you practise it earnestly<sup>2</sup>.

Incidentally, music is a powerful medium for producing changes in one's state of mind. Under the right conditions, it has a direct influence on the chakras. It depends on sensitivity. In fact, many great musicians attained elevated states of awareness through sound because of their heightened sensitivity. Music becomes a particularly powerful method of raising the kundalini when it is combined with bhakti yoga.

### The chakras, physical organs and trigger points

In recent years, great efforts have been made to relate chakras directly to physical organs in the body. Also, people have tried to identify the kundalini with specific nerve pathways. We feel that this is not very valid. The chakras function on a pranic level. They definitely have an influence on the physical body, but the chakras should not be associated and identified with specific physical organs as such.

If you dissect the human body you will find no sign of the chakras. This does not mean that they don't exist, but that they are more subtle. It is only possible to see them through methods of modern science, such as Kirlian photography, or to experience them in states of supersensitivity.

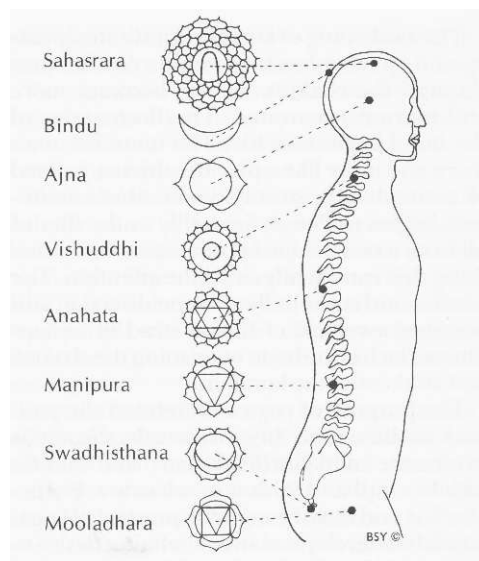
However, the focal point of the chakras can be assigned a definite location within the framework of the body. The chakras can be regarded as functioning at these definite points, though their influence and implications extend much deeper than the physical realms. Don't make the mistake of identifying the chakras with the physical organs in the body.

Think of the chakras as mountains in the sea. Only the peaks are visible and these are comparable to the physical aspects or influence of the chakras. Most of the island, and certainly the base, lies hidden below the waves. It is the same with the chakras: they mainly lie below the surface of normal perception. Their root lies behind the scenes, just as the base of the chakras comes from the mind. Yet at the same time, stimulation of the physical aspects of the chakras will give some feedback to the psychic realms. There will be stimulation of the deeper realms of the mind. This is the purpose of chakra stimulation. This stimulation can be physical, as in the case of acupuncture, or both physical and mental as in the case of yogic practices, such as kriya yoga.

You should regard the physical location of the chakras as trigger points for deeper realms of the mind. Try not to become involved in relating the chakras to specific physical organs of the body.

### Chakra locations

The accompanying diagram indicates the physical locations of the trigger points of the chakras.



Don't take these positions too literally, but rather take them as physical switches for the more subtle chakras. You should note that most of the chakras lie within the spine; mooladhara is outside the bottom of the spine and ajna is at the top of the spine; bindu, which is not strictly a chakra, is at the back of the head. We have shown sahasrara in the centre of the crown of the head. This is entirely symbolic. You should carefully note the exact locations and relate them to your own body. This is essential for the forthcoming practice of kriya yoga. Part 3 of this discussion can be found in the next lesson<sup>3</sup>.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 1

<sup>2</sup> Nada yoga: Book II, Lesson 17, Topic 4; Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 5

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 2

## Swadhisthana Chakra

The accompanying picture is a symbolic representation of the swadhisthana chakra, the second of the main chakras, coming immediately above mooladhara chakra<sup>1</sup>, both in the physical location of the trigger point and the plane of awareness.

### Definition

The Sanskrit word *swa* means 'one's own' and *adhisthana* means 'dwelling place', 'residence'. Therefore, *swa+adhisthana* = *swadhisthana*, which means 'one's own abode'. This chakra is regarded as being the substratum, the basis of individual human existence. This is explainable when one knows that this chakra is generally associated with the unconscious mind with its storehouse of mental impressions - *samskaras*. Individual being takes root in the unconscious mind. The many instinctive drives that are felt at the level of swadhisthana chakra bubble up from the depths of the unconscious mind. Swadhisthana is indeed the basis, the abode from which most people express themselves in the world. It is their basis for living life.

It is also said that swadhisthana chakra was once the seat of the kundalini, but that there was a fall, a further fall, and kundalini descended to the mooladhara chakra. Therefore, it is said that swadhisthana is the real root centre of man and not the mooladhara chakra. As such, it is called 'one's own abode'.

### Chakra symbolism

Refer to the colour illustration. There are six petals on the lotus which is coloured vermillion. On many traditional pictures the Sanskrit letters *bam*, *bham*, *mam*, *yam*, *ram* and *lam* are written on the petals. The central portion of the picture contains a white crescent moon. The bija (seed) mantra is *vam*.

### Attributes

The swadhisthana chakra represents the level of being where one is primarily concerned

with seeking pleasurable sensations. One is motivated to obtain pleasure through the sense organs in the form of food, sex, wine, etc. It is very similar to the mooladhara chakra, except here there is more appreciation of the enjoyment of the pleasures in themselves. At the mooladhara chakra, pleasurable sensations are sought in order to satisfy the need for security. Swadhisthana is the level where people motivate their whole life to attaining pleasure in the way that suits them. The world, all things and other people are viewed according to the amount of pleasure that they can bring.

As we have already pointed out, swadhisthana is the level where *samskaras* (subconscious and unconscious mental impressions) begin to show themselves. They become manifest very clearly in overwhelming cravings for food, sex, etc. This is the level of man that Freud was very much concerned with. He did not realize that man's nature extends well beyond this level.

In *The Serpent Power* by John Woodroffe, the attributes of swadhisthana are given as credulity, suspicion, disdain, false knowledge and pitilessness. These are from original tantric texts.

This is as much as we want to say about the characteristics of the swadhisthana chakra, for mere knowledge of these attributes is not very useful. Furthermore, they are arbitrary in that they are subjective. They are only manifestations of that level of awareness and don't in any way indicate the experience of that awareness level.

It is said that most people in the world today predominantly function at this chakra level.

### Chakra kshetram

In kriya yoga practices the trigger points of all the main chakras are utilized. These trigger points ascend from mooladhara to ajna chakra, following the contours of the spine between

the swadhisthana and ajna chakras. The swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi chakras are also regarded as having physical counterparts on the front surface of the body. They lie directly in front of the corresponding chakras and on the same horizontal plane. Each of these frontal trigger points is called *chakra kshetram*. They can be regarded as reflections of the original chakra trigger points. The reflection of the swadhisthana chakra is called the *swadhisthana kshetram*. The same applies to the other three chakras - manipura, anahata and vishuddhi.

These frontal centres or kshetrams are essential in kriya yoga techniques. It is necessary to be able to locate them. Therefore, in this topic and in the next three lessons we will outline practices that increase sensitivity to both the chakra trigger points and the corresponding kshetrams<sup>2</sup>.

#### Location

The physical trigger point of the swadhisthana chakra is at the base of the spine, at the coccyx (the tailbone). If you place your hand on the bottom of the spine, you will feel a small bulb at the lowest point just above the anus. This is the coccyx bone and the region of the physical trigger point of the swadhisthana chakra.

The physical location of the swadhisthana kshetram is at the level of the pubic bone in front of the body. It is just above the sexual organ directly in front of the coccyx bone.

It can be regarded as being on the skin surface.

#### Differentiation between mooladhara and swadhisthana

It is important to be able to discern the difference between the physical location of the mooladhara chakra and both the swadhisthana chakra and kshetram. You should know the difference in position both 'anatomically and you should also be able to feel the difference with the eyes closed. As such, we suggest that you first of all spend some time locating the mooladhara chakra', then attempt the simple practice that we will shortly describe to locate the swadhisthana chakra and kshetram. This will enable you to more clearly discern and distinguish the different locations.

Remember, the mooladhara chakra is located in the perineum between the legs. It is

roughly midway between the swadhisthana chakra and the swadhisthana kshetram, but a little lower. At first it may be difficult to feel and differentiate between these positions, but with practice it will gradually become easy.

#### SWADHISTHANA CHAKRA LOCATION

##### Technique

Take a comfortable sitting pose.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

##### Stage 1: location of mooladhara chakra

Direct all your attention to the mooladhara chakra region<sup>1</sup>.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

##### Stage 2: location of swadhisthana chakra

Try to feel the position of the swadhisthana chakra at the coccyx.

The best way is to practise ashwini mudra with rapid contractions<sup>3</sup>.

Try to feel pressure waves spreading out from the place of physical contraction.

Imagine that the base of the spine (coccyx) is the wooden support of a pier above the sea; the waves of contraction are the strong sea waves striking it.

Focus your whole attention on the base of the spine and feel the pressure waves.

Continue this for a few minutes.

Then do the next stage.

##### Stage 3: swadhisthana kshetram location

Focus your attention on the front surface of the body directly in front of the coccyx.

Practise ashwini mudra.

Feel the pressure waves emanating outwards and striking the pubic bone.

Fix your whole attention on the centre of the swadhisthana kshetram.

Do this for a few minutes.

##### Stage 4: mental location

For a few minutes be aware mentally of the blood pulse at the mooladhara chakra.

Then try to feel the blood pulse at the swadhisthana chakra.

Practise this for a few minutes.

Then feel the pulse beat at the swadhisthana kshetram.

Continue in this way for a few minutes.

The important thing is that with practice you

should clearly feel the difference between these three trigger points.

This is the end of the practice.

You can extend the practice by doing any of the stages that you find most difficult.

**Duration of practice**

try to practise for at least fifteen minutes every day until it is mastered. In this way you will be fully prepared for the next stage<sup>2</sup>.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Book II, Lesson 19, Topic 2

<sup>2</sup> Manipura chakra - Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 3;

Anahata chakra - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 2;

Yishuddhi chakra - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 3

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

## Topic 4

# Asanas: Practice

Matsyasana and supta vajrasana are two excellent backward bending asanas. They are perfectly suited as counterposes for forward bending asanas such as paschimottanasana<sup>1</sup>, ardha padma paschimottanasana, janu sirshasana<sup>2</sup>, etc., as well as inverted asanas such as sarvangasana<sup>3</sup>. They also give characteristic benefits in their own right.

We are introducing them together because they give similar benefits. Generally, there is no need to practise both in an asana program. Choose the one that you like best.

### MATSYASANA (FISH POSE)

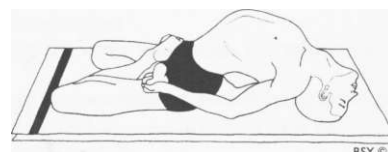
In Sanskrit the word *matsya* means 'fish'. Therefore, this asana can be translated as 'the fish pose'. At first this may seem a strange name for an asana that seems to bear no resemblance whatsoever to any kind of fish. However, if you use a little imagination you can see that the folded legs in padmasana resemble the tail of a fish; the rest of the body represents the body of the fish, and the head corresponds to the head of the fish. This is not difficult to imagine. But there is a better reason why this asana is called the fish pose: it is an excellent position for floating in water for prolonged periods of time.

The folded legs change the position of the centre of gravity (the centre of weight in the body); it moves nearer the head. This means that the head can be held higher above the water, allowing ease in respiration. Furthermore, since the legs are locked in a firm position, the body becomes more compact and rigid and therefore able to float in water with much less effort.

#### Technique - classical pose

In order to do the classical pose one must be able to sit in padmasana<sup>4</sup>. If you cannot sit in padmasana, then you can do either of the variations that we will shortly describe. The

aim of course should be to eventually master the classical pose, but until this stage you can at least reap the benefits by practising the simpler variation.



#### Stage 1: starting position

Sit in padmasana<sup>4</sup>.

If you cannot sit in padmasana please don't try to force your legs.

Relax the whole body.

#### Stage 2: leaning backwards

Lean slightly backwards.

Place the hands on the floor slightly behind and to the side of the buttocks.

Support the weight of the body on the straight arms.

Bend one of the arms, allowing the forearm and elbow to rest on the ground; to do this you will have to twist your body to one side.

Then slowly bend the other arm so that both elbows rest on the ground.

At this stage the trunk and head should be supported above the ground behind the buttocks.

Then take the final pose.

#### Stage 3: final position - alternative A

Bend your head backwards so that you can see the floor behind your head.

Stretch the front of the neck as much as is comfortable.

Slowly slide your arms forwards away from your head and lower the top of the head towards the ground.

Gently allow the top of the head to support the body weight.

Adjust the position of the head so that the

maximum arch of the back is attained.

Then relax the arms, allowing the head (and the buttocks and legs) to support the weight of the body.

If possible try to grasp the big toes with the hands; if this is too difficult place the hands on the thighs or on the floor.

This is the final pose.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Close your eyes. Be aware of breathing.

Stay in the final pose for as long as is comfortable.

Then return to the starting position by executing stages 2 and 3 in reverse; that is, using the arms to raise the body back to the upright position.

### Stage 3: final position - alternative B

This stage can be done after stage 2 as an alternative.

Slowly slide the arms forwards from the end of stage 2 allowing the back of the head and the spine to rest on the floor.

Your face should be directed towards the ceiling.

Place the hands under the head with the palms open and facing upwards, the fingers interlocked.

The back of the head should rest in the open palms.

Without straining try to push your bent elbows towards the ground; with practice you should be able to rest the elbows on the ground.

Relax the whole body.

This is the final pose.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Then release the position of the arms and hands.

Return to the starting position using the arms in turn to raise the body in the reverse order to that described in stage 2.

**Note:** it is important that the body is lowered into the final pose and also raised from the final pose to the starting position by using the arms as described in stage 2. Don't throw your body backwards for it is very easy to injure the spine. The movement should be done with control and care.

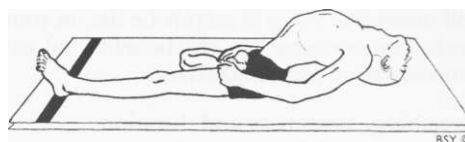
### Final position

You can choose any of the alternative final poses or if you wish you can do both. Each has a distinctive influence on the body. Alternative

A gives the best flexion of the spine and neck. Alternative B has a notable influence on the abdomen and chest, giving them a powerful stretch that massages the internal organs and nerves.

### Variations for beginners

The following two variations are simplified forms for beginners. They can be done by those people who cannot sit in padmasana. They give nearly equivalent benefits as the classical form, though at a lower level.



#### Variation 1: in ardha padmasana

Sit on the floor with the two legs in front of the body.

Fold one of the legs into ardha padmasana (half lotus pose) keeping the other leg straight<sup>4</sup>. Do stage 2 described for the classical form of matsyasana.

Then do alternative A (don't do alternative B for there will be little or no benefits).

In the final pose hold the toes and ankle of the folded leg with both hands.

Make sure that the back is arched as much as the flexibility of your back will allow.

This is the final pose.

Relax the body.

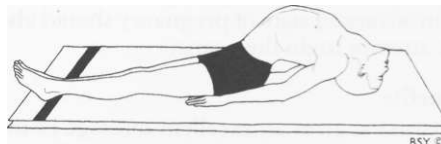
Close the eyes.

Be aware of breathing.

Stay in the final pose for some time.

Then return to the starting position.

Repeat the same practice with the other leg folded.



#### Variation 2: with both legs straight

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

Do stage 2 as described for the classical asana. Bend your head backwards and look at the floor behind the head.

Gently lower the head to the ground by sliding the arms away from the head towards the feet. Accentuate the upwards arch of the spine and then let the head support the weight of the body. Then place the arms either on the thighs or let them rest on the floor.

Close the eyes.

This is the final pose.

Breathe slowly and deeply with awareness.

Stay in the final pose for a comfortable duration and then return to the starting position.

*Note:* the final stage is the equivalent of alternative A; don't do alternative B for this will mean that you will merely lie flat on your back. This of course can give benefits, but has no connection with matsyasana.

#### **Breathing, awareness and duration**

In stages 1 and 2 the breathing is not important. In the final stage the breathing should be deep and slow.

While moving into the final pose be attentive to the slow physical movements. In the final pose be aware of deep and slow breathing.

The asana can be done for up to five minutes. A reasonable duration to reap benefits is three minutes.

#### **Counterpose**

Matsyasana is an excellent counterpose for all forward bending asanas and for sarvangasana. Therefore, it can be done after any of these types of asanas. It is the ideal counterpose for sarvangasana since it stretches the neck in the opposite direction, releasing any muscular tension<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Limitations**

People who suffer from peptic ulcers, hernia or any serious spinal ailment should not do matsyasana without expert guidance. Ladies in an advanced state of pregnancy should also not attempt to do this asana.

#### **Benefits**

Matsyasana gives an excellent massage of the abdominal organs, thereby helping to alleviate various types of digestive disorders.

The ribcage and lungs are given an accentuated stretch which helps to improve the breathing process by allowing the chest to expand to full capacity during respiration. It is therefore a good asana for those people who

suffer from asthma, bronchitis or any other lung ailments.

Matsyasana loosens up the whole spine and removes any tendency towards round shoulders. The associated nerve connections and blood supply are rendered more efficient. The nerves in the neck, and the thyroid gland are particularly influenced.

The pelvic region is also given a good stretch; this asana is therefore useful for ladies in preventing or removing various forms of sexual malfunctions. The pressure of the legs on the thighs greatly reduces the blood circulation in the legs; the femoral arteries are compressed. The blood flow is diverted to the pelvic organs including the sexual glands (testes and prostate in males and ovaries in females), which helps to revitalize these organs and eliminate various types of associated ailments. Youthfulness and vitality are also closely related to the testes and ovaries - matsyasana therefore helps to bring about these desirable attributes.

It is also a useful asana for loosening up the legs in preparation for sitting in still postures for meditational practice.

#### **SUPTA VAJRASANA (SLEEPING THUNDERBOLT POSE)**

The Sanskrit word *supta* means 'sleeping' and *vajra* is the name of a pranic channel (nadi) connected with sexual energy. Vajra also means 'thunderbolt' the so-called weapon of Indra, the king of the gods in Hindu mythology. In this context, it is also associated with sexual energy. This asana is so called because it helps to transmute sexual energy into more subtle forms of energy.

There is no equivalent English word for vajra, therefore any translation is bound to be inaccurate. Supta vajrasana is called various names, the most common of which are 'the sleeping pelvic pose', 'the supine pelvic pose' and 'the sleeping thunderbolt pose'. The Sanskrit name most aptly describes the asana.

This asana gives the same benefits as matsyasana, therefore it can replace matsyasana in your program.

#### **Technique - classical form**

To do the classical form of the asana you should have a reasonably supple back and



flexible legs. If you find this classical form too difficult you can practise the simplified form instead.

### Stage 1: starting position

Sit in vajrasana<sup>5</sup>.

The knees can be together or separated.

### Stage 2: leaning backwards

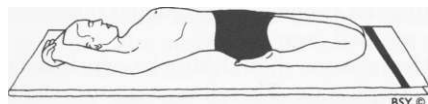
Do stage 2 as described for the classical pose of matsyasana.



### Stage 3: final pose - alternative A

Do stage 3: final position - alternative A as described for the technique of matsyasana.

The final pose is illustrated above.



### Stage 3: final pose - alternative B

This is quite difficult if your legs are stiff. Be sure not to strain. If this alternative is too difficult, do the simpler alternative A instead. The movement is performed in the same way as described for matsyasana stage 3: final position - alternative B. The arms can be folded behind the head in the final pose as shown.

### Precaution

Special care should be taken not to strain the muscles and ligaments of the thighs and knees. In this context it is important not to unfold the legs from the final pose. You should raise the body to the starting position and then straighten your legs. If you try to straighten your legs from the final position you will easily injure them. Many people have found this out from bitter experience.

### Further details

All other details: breathing, awareness, duration, counterpose, limitations and benefits are as given for matsyasana.

### Simplified variation for beginners

Those people who have stiff legs should not attempt the classical form of supta vajrasana. Instead, they should do the simplified form where the legs are kept straight in front of the body. That is, the legs are not folded under the buttocks in vajrasana. This variation is exactly the same as 'Method 2: with both legs straight' described under the heading 'Techniques for Beginners' in our description of matsyasana.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Book II, Lesson 13, Topic 2

<sup>2</sup> Book II, Lesson 19, Topic 3

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 16, Topic 2

<sup>4</sup> Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

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

## Meditation: Ajapajapa (Stage 1)

Over the next few lessons we will gradually introduce and progress through the meditation techniques of ajapajapa. It can consist of various numbers of stages depending on the method adopted; we will give five stages'.

Ajapa is an integral part of kriya yoga. Furthermore, it is a great help in developing breath and mantra awareness in preparation for kriya yoga. In fact, with good reason, it is said that kriya yoga practices must be preceded by extensive practice of ajapa japa. We therefore urge you to practise ajapa regularly; and by regularly we don't mean once a week, but every day.

All of life throbs with pulsations of expansion and contraction, of intake and expulsion, of prana and apana. Every molecule, every aspect of existence vibrates with this pulse. Everything is in a continuous and spontaneous state of cyclical change. Everything is endlessly repeating a subtle mantra.

Man throbs with this pulse of life in many ways. The most obvious are the heartbeat and respiration. The ancient yogis developed a wonderful yet simple method of using this constant beat of life as a means to calming the mind and raising levels of awareness and understanding. They realized that the breath is constant rhythm that continuously repeats a mantra. This mantra is normally known as *Soham* or *Saham*. The practice is called *ajapa*.

### Definition

Japa can be defined as the continuous repetition of a mantra<sup>2</sup>. The suffix 'a' in front of japa implies that the process of japa becomes spontaneous. That is, japa is transformed into ajapa when the mantra repeats itself without effort; the mantra has been planted so deeply through japa that one's whole being pulsates with that mantra. Japa requires conscious effort, whereas ajapa requires no effort. It is said that japa comes from the mouth whereas ajapa comes from the heart. Japa is the

preliminary practice and ajapa is the perfection of japa.

### Rationale

The aim is to create a situation where the chosen mantra repeats itself continuously and spontaneously twenty-four hours a day. The mantra should overwhelm your whole attention; it should be a permanent background to all thoughts and actions. No matter what you are doing, work or play, there should be constant awareness of the mantra. This brings about incredible one-pointedness of mind and in time all problems and mental fluctuations are soothed away.

The mantra should also be synchronized with respiration. Therefore, a person who has perfected ajapa will repeat the mantra about 21,600 times every day (i.e. 15 respirations per minute or 900 per hour). Actually, however, the number of mantra repetitions will be much less, for continuous practice of ajapa leads to such mental and physical relaxation that the breathing rate will drastically reduce. At an advanced stage the breathing rate at times may be two or three times per minute.

The whole body and mind should unceasingly vibrate with the mantra. This is not easy, for at first great mental effort is required to prevent the mind wandering here and there. Effort is required to train the mind to repeat the mantra as japa. As soon as the mind wanders then the mantra will be forgotten. But when the process becomes spontaneous as ajapa, then no effort is required. You will be forced to be attentive to the mantra; you will be attracted to the mantra like iron to a magnet. To attain this stage, however, will require much time and effort. But if the stage of continuous ajapa is reached, then one's whole life will be transformed. The mind will become a perfect reflector of experience and consciousness.

Very few people will be able to repeat the mantra throughout the day. Therefore, it is

sufficient to repeat the mantra, synchronized with the breath only for the duration of the set meditative practice of ajapa that will be described shortly. This will bring many benefits if it is done diligently, though not as many as continuous ajapa day and night.

### Integration of mantra

Any mantra can be integrated with the flow of breath, but the mantra *Soham* is generally used since it arises naturally and corresponds with the actual sound of inhalation and exhalation. Listen carefully to your breath; you will hear the sound So with inhalation and Ham with exhalation. This is especially true if you do ujjayi pranayama<sup>3</sup>. Depending on the length of the breath, the sound of So will be a prolonged S-o-o-o-o; the sound of Ham will be a prolonged H-a-a-m-m-m-m. Little or no imagination is necessary. This is why the mantra *Soham* is such a powerful mantra - it arises almost naturally from the sound of the breath.

Sometimes the mantra *Soham* or *Hamsa* is used. This is also acceptable. In fact, if you can hear any other mantra sound emerging from the breath, then use it; there is absolutely no harm. In fact, there will be great gain. You can use the mantra Aum, Ram, Hreem or any other mantra if you wish. You can use your guru mantra or you can use the gayatri mantra: *Aum hhuṛ bhuva swaha tatsaviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dheemahee dīyō yo nah prachodayat*.

In the case of the gayatri mantra, one half should be repeated with inhalation and the other half with exhalation. Any mantra can be chosen, it does not matter, for it is only a technique. The mantra should be one that comes naturally to you, and once chosen, the mantra should not be changed.

However, we advise you to adopt the *Soham* mantra, for this has been tested by yogis throughout the ages in conjunction with ajapa. It is this mantra that is most conducive to continuous awareness in union with the breath. In the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, *Saham* (or *Soham*) is called the *Sri Prasadapara* mantra because it gives sublime grace (*prasada*) and is regarded as the greatest (*para*) of all mantras.

### Meaning of Soham

The meaning of the mantra *Soham* is not essential for the practice of ajapa. However, it is worthwhile explaining it:

*So* - Shiva or He

*Ham* - A ham or 'I am'

That is, *Soham* means 'I am He' or 'I am Shiva' or 'I am consciousness'. The mantra *Saham* can be split up in the same way (i.e. Sah+Aham) to give the same meaning.

The meaning can be remembered continuously with the practice of ajapa as a method of affirmation. It is an excellent method for those people who have had a deep transcendental experience to help in maintaining that state of awareness. It is a method of intensifying identification. But other people need not associate any meaning with the *Soham* mantra. It is not necessary in order to bring results. It is the continuous remembrance and attentiveness that is important.

### Position

Ajapa can be practised in any position, any place and at any time. However, for the purpose of the fixed meditative practice that we will shortly describe, a comfortable sitting asana is best. Padmasana, siddhasana, siddha yoni asana, vajrasana, swastikasana, ardha padmasana and sukhasana can be used<sup>4</sup>. Shavasana can also be used, but this position easily leads to sleep<sup>5</sup>.

### Integration of Ujjayi and Khechari Mudra

Both ujjayi pranayama and khechari mudra are very simple but very powerful practices and should be integrated with ajapa to gain maximum benefits<sup>3</sup>.

## AJAPAJAPA - STAGE 1

The following technique is stage 1 and should be practised every day until mastered, before proceeding to the next stage.

### Technique

Sit in a comfortable position.

Close your eyes and relax the whole body.

Hold the spine upright, but without excessive strain.

Tell yourself that for the duration of the practice all problems and worries will be discarded; all attention will be on the practice of ajapajapa.

When you are ready start the practice.

Firstly do ujjayi pranayama and khechari mudra.

Become aware of your breathing process. As you breathe in, know that you are breathing in. As you are breathing out, know that you are breathing out.

Be totally attentive to every incoming and outgoing breath; feel the rhythm of the flow. Carry on in this manner for a few minutes.

Then imagine that the breath is flowing between the navel and the front of the throat. On inhalation, the breath rises from the navel to the throat.

On exhalation, the breath descends from the throat to the navel.

At first, you may find this process difficult to imagine, don't worry, only try; the important thing is to be completely aware of the breath. Let the breathing become rhythmical, deep and long, but without force; the more you relax, the more the breath will automatically become slow and deep.

Continue in this manner for at least 5 minutes. Maintain awareness.

If the mind wanders, which it surely will, don't fight it, but simultaneously try to maintain the breath awareness; this is not easy but you must try.

Then you must merge and synchronize the mantra *Soham* with the up and down movement of breath in the throat and navel passage.

You must be simultaneously aware of both the rising and descending breath and the sound *Soham* produced at the throat.

The mantra and the breath must be synchronized so that:

*So* sounds with the upward moving inhalation, from the navel to the throat.

*Ham* sounds with the downward moving exhalation, from the throat to the navel.

There should be unceasing awareness of *Soham* as you breathe in and out from the navel to the throat.

If your mind wanders let it, but know that it is wandering and try to maintain mantra and breath awareness.

Continue in this manner to the end of the time that you have assigned for the practice.

#### **Awareness**

The essence of Ajapa, like all other meditative techniques, is continual attentiveness to the practice being performed. There is no need to suppress the fluctuations and distractions of the mind, but you should try to simultaneously

maintain awareness of the breath and mantra. Let the mind roam; all you have to do is to remain aware.

#### **Benefits**

Ajapa gives the benefits of all other meditative practices. The benefits that you actually reap will depend entirely on your effort, regularity of practice and the degree to which your mind is now harmonized.

It is an excellent and essential preparation for kriya yoga, brings mental peace and one-pointedness of mind and leads directly to meditation.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Ajapa: stage 2 - Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 5; stage 3 - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 5; stage 4 - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 4; stage 5 - Book II, Lesson 24, Topic 5

<sup>2</sup> Book II, Lesson 14, Topic 5; Book II, Lesson 15, Topic 6

<sup>3</sup> Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 5

<sup>4</sup> Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 5; Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

<sup>5</sup> Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 5; Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 8

## Daily Practice Program

Two of the practices that we have given in this lesson, swadhisthana chakra location and ajapa, stage 1, are directly related to the practices of kriya yoga. Therefore, we urge you to practise them regularly every day. If you don't have the time, try to make time. They must be mastered in order to gain maximum benefits from kriya yoga.

In kriya yoga, it is important to be able to sit in siddhasana (or siddha yoni asana for ladies) and/or padmasana. If you can already sit comfortably in these positions then there is no problem, but if you cannot, we suggest that you start to practise regularly the leg loosening exercises as previously described<sup>1</sup>. Don't strain for you may injure your legs. But slowly loosen them up over a period of months.

The asanas that we have described in this lesson, matsyasana and supta vajrasana, as well as the two forward bending asanas from

Lesson 19 (janu sirshasana and ardha padma paschimottanasana) are a great help in loosening up the legs for mastery of the meditative positions. This is one of the reasons why we have introduced them at this stage. Try to incorporate them into your daily practice program.

You should continue the pranayama practice, i.e. nadi shodhana pranayama combined with uddiyana bandha<sup>2</sup>. It is an advanced technique and requires some months of practice before being perfected. If you find it easy with the ratio 1:8:6:2:1:8:6:2, then you can increase the duration of the actual times of each ratio, but keeping the actual ratio the same. Conversely, if you find the practice too difficult, you should reduce the duration of inhalation, exhalation, etc. If necessary you should stop the practice of uddiyana bandha, doing nadi shodhana pranayama alone.

Practice	Minutes
<b>Program 1: duration 2 hours</b>	
Surya Namaskara	10
Shavasana	4
Shalabhasana	4
Shashankasana	4
Janu Sirshasana or Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Bhujangasana	4
Yoga Mudrasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	4
Sarvangasana	4
Matsyasana or Supta Vajrasana	4
Shavasana	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	15
Mooladhara chakra location	15
Swadhisthana chakra location	20
Ajapa - Stage 1	21
	120
<b>Program 2: duration 1 1/2 hours</b>	
Surya Namaskara	10
Shavasana	3
Shalabhasana	4
Shashankasana	4
Janu Sirshasana or Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Bhujangasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	4
Sarvangasana	4
Matsyasana or Supta Vajrasana	4
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	10
Mooladhara chakra location	10
Swadhisthana chakra location	15
Ajapa - Stage 1	14
	90

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Program 3: duration 1 hour	
Surya Namaskara	5
Shavasana	3
Shashankasana	3
Janu Sirshasana or	
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Bhujangasana	3
Ardha Matsyendrasana	3
Sarvangasana	4
Matsyasana or Supta Vajrasana	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	10
Swadhisthana chakra location	10
Ajapa - Stage 1	12
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	60

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<b>Program 4:</b> duration 1/2 hour	
Surya Namaskara	5
Shavasana	3
Janu Sirshasana or	
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	3
Ardha Matsyendrasana	3
Sarvangasana	3
Matsyasana or Supta Vajrasana	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	10
	<hr/>
	30

Try to find the time to practise Ajapa - stage 1 and swadhisthana chakra location.

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#### Notes

- Topic 4      <sup>1</sup> Book I. Lesson 1, Topic 3; Book I, Lesson 6,  
                   <sup>2</sup> Book II. Lesson 18, Topic 4

