

## Lesson 25

It was late at night in the monsoon season. The sky was dark and cloudy. There was an atmosphere of gloom. A lone sannyasin was slowly walking along the road looking for a quiet place to sleep. Though his possessions consisted only of a small bag, a blanket and a lantern, he was blissful and carefree.

Suddenly he heard a motor cycle behind him. The cyclist was travelling very fast along the dark road, but he had no light. The sannyasin knew that he would have an accident, so he immediately decided to give his lantern to the motor cyclist. He rotated the lantern in a circle to signal the cyclist to stop. However, the motor cyclist did not stop ... he went straight past and nearly killed the sannyasin. The sannyasin called out: "Stop! I want to give you this lantern, otherwise you will injure yourself." The driver shouted back: "What's the point, I haven't got any brakes either!"

This story is an analogy of the life of modern man. The dark road is the path of life, generally lived without joy and wisdom. The motor cycle represents the human body-mind. Most people live a life that is like the reckless and thoughtless motor cyclist driving along the road; all aspiration and effort is directed towards attaining fame, wealth, luxury and other things that satisfy the ego, with little thought of the consequences and harmful

effects. People tread the path of life without knowing where they are going.

The light of the lantern represents wisdom; the brake represents self-discipline. The motor cyclist had neither a brake (self-discipline) nor light (wisdom). He was certain to meet with a serious accident. It is the same with any person who walks the path of life without wisdom and self-discipline - he will pay the penalty in the form of frustration, illness and despair.

The sannyasin on the road tried to give a light to the motor cyclist, but it was not accepted because the cyclist was unable to apply his brakes. It is the dharma (duty) of a sannyasin to guide other people along the path of life, so that they avoid accidents in the form of disease, fulfil themselves and gradually tread the correct path to self-knowledge. If you can apply a brake in your life, then you will be ready to accept a guiding light.

The light that a sannyasin can give to others is yoga. There are many different types of light, just as there are many different paths of yoga. One of the brightest lights is the ancient and powerful system of kriya yoga. In this book we are making an offering - a light to those people who are now living in darkness, but who are willing to accept a lantern and willing to apply the brake of self-discipline. We offer you the lantern of kriya yoga.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



## Outline of Book III

Over the following twelve lessons of Book III we will progressively introduce the kriyas of kriya yoga. In each lesson we will describe one or two kriyas which you, the reader, should begin to practise. This means that, in this lesson you will practise the first two kriyas every day; in Lesson 26 we will introduce another kriya, so that you will begin to practise three kriyas every day. Gradually you will increase the duration of your kriya practice program as you learn more of the practices, always maintaining the correct sequence.

During the beginning stages of kriya yoga you can continue to practise other yogic techniques apart from kriya yoga, since the first few kriyas take only a short period of time to complete. Gradually you should discard the other yoga techniques and integrate kriyas into your practice timetable as we introduce them. We will continue to give a list of suggested practice programs to help you choose a suitable mode of practice.

The third book will be divided into two parts to allow the student to gain not only knowledge of the kriyas, but also many other yogic techniques that have not been described so far:

1. Kriya yoga section that deals with only details of kriyas and directly related topics.
2. General section where we will discuss other yogic techniques and topics.

In accordance with our fundamental policy, we will be concerned only with practical methods of heightening the quality of your life, health and awareness. We are not so interested in philosophical speculations, for these do little to change and improve your life. In fact, they tend to complicate the mind and hinder any progress in yogic sadhana. We are concerned only with practical methods of unfolding and awakening the potential already existent in every person's being and transforming life into an expression of joy. We are not interested in talking about changes; we

are interested in bringing about changes. This falls directly in line with the nature of kriya yoga itself, which is one hundred percent practice orientated. You, the practitioner, must play your part. We cannot bring about changes in your life without your cooperation. You must practise and have aspiration. We can give thousands of yogic practices, there is almost no limit, but if you don't practise, then we will be wasting our time and you will gain absolutely nothing, only a mind full of technical details. You must not remain only a reader; you must transform yourself into a practitioner. In fact, with regard to yoga you should do one percent reading and ninety nine percent practising. Only then can you tap the source of your being and gain the knowledge that cannot be contained in any book.

## Topic 1

# Kriya Yoga (Part 1)

Kriya yoga is a system that has always been taught directly by guru to disciple. We are actually breaking this tradition by publishing the techniques of kriya yoga in written form. However, we feel that this break with tradition is justified and even necessary in the present world, where so many people are trying to understand themselves, the world and their place in the scheme of life, yet lack positive guidance. Many people are ready for an advanced system of yoga, yet lack a guru to teach them. For this reason and for these people, we are printing comprehensive details of the techniques of kriya yoga.

Little needs to be said about kriya yoga; the practices speak for themselves. Throughout the third book we will purposely write as little as possible. We will intentionally try to confine our explanations to the mechanics of each kriya (technique). The less we write, the happier we will be. This will allow you, the practitioner, to do your practices with an uncluttered mind, reasonably free of preconceptions and misconceptions.

The following text is an introduction to kriya yoga. Read it carefully. This text will act as your teacher. Many questions will arise throughout your practices. In the past, these problems were solved by the guru while giving personal instructions to his disciples. Any faults were corrected on the spot. In the following lessons you will not be guided personally, therefore you must take care to follow the instructions that we give exactly. We suggest that you re-read this text from time to time so that you can correct any faults in your practice that were not previously very obvious.

Right attitude is an essential part of kriya yoga; it leads to full blossoming of the potential contained within the kriya yoga practices. A wrong attitude stunts and prevents this blossoming. If you plant a seed in rich soil it will quickly grow and give forth a beautiful flower and fragrance. If the seed is planted in the

wrong soil or in the wrong place, it will fail to sprout. The potential within the seed is the same in both cases; it is the environment that encourages or prevents growth and expression of inner potential. It is similar with kriya yoga; a positive environment of right attitude allows the practices to give forth their fruit; an incorrect attitude prevents this. The potential of the kriyas is ever the same, therefore you should try to adopt the basic attitudes of non-expectation, effortlessness, etc. that we have described in the following pages.

Problems and doubts will arise both in your practices and as a consequence of the practices. If necessary you can write to the ashram for advice. Each person will have their own specific questions, uncertainties and difficulties.

### Definition

The Sanskrit word *kriya* means 'action' or 'movement'. *Kriya yoga* is so called because it is a system where one intentionally rotates one's attention along fixed pathways. This movement of awareness is done, however, with control. Also, kriya yoga is so called because one moves the body into specified mudras, bandhas and asanas according to a fixed scheme of practice.

The word *kriya* is often translated as meaning 'practical'. This is indeed a good definition, for kriya yoga is indeed practical. It is concerned solely with practice, without the slightest philosophical speculation. The system is designed to bring results, not merely to talk about them.

Sometimes the word *kriya* is translated as 'preliminary'. This too is a good definition, for kriya yoga is a preliminary practice that leads first to dharana and then eventually to the transcendental state of dhyana (meditation) and yoga (union). It is a technique which has been designed to lead to that state of being which is beyond all techniques. Finally, the word *kriya* is used to describe each individual

practice. Thus the process of kriya yoga consists of a number of kriyas each being done one after the other in a fixed sequence.

### History and scriptural references

There is no history of kriya yoga to tell. Its beginnings and development lie lost in the ancient past. It is a system that has remained so secret that there is not even a myth to explain its origin. Actually we are happy that there is no history of kriya yoga to relate. This prevents the system becoming corrupted and twisted by irrelevant details. By remaining stripped bare of all superficialities, kriya yoga preserves its purity and its power to bring results. Most other systems of yoga are associated with a definite history and/or myth; stories and legends tell of different people who formulated the system or modified it, which can become a distraction. People become excessively concerned with who invented the system, when he lived, who influenced his thoughts, his beliefs, religion and so forth. People become so concerned with history that they forget practice is the purpose and essence of all yogic paths. Therefore, the lack of history of kriya yoga is, for us, one of the wonderful things about it. It allows the techniques of kriya yoga to be, applicable to all ages and all types of people, without being tied down to the beliefs and traditions of a specific era. It allows kriya yoga to remain a timeless system.

Of history, all we will say is that kriya yoga was passed on by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. It was transmitted in a matter of fifteen to twenty minutes and was retained. If anyone cares to trace the succession of gurus previous to Swami Sivananda they may find a clue to the history of kriya yoga, but this is certainly an impossible task, for sannyasins of the past had a habit of fading into their environment and escaping the pens of historians. Of course, there are various other groups of people in India who have practised and taught kriya yoga. For example, Swami Yogananda, Yuktishwar Giri, Lahiri Mahasaya, Mahatma Gandhi and so forth practised kriya yoga. In fact, a thriving organization still propagates it throughout the world. They also do not know the origin of kriya yoga, but they say that it was reintroduced by the great yogi Babaji as the ideal practice for sincere seekers of wisdom in the present Kali Yuga (Dark Age).

Kriya yoga seems to be the only widely known yogic path that is not directly mentioned in traditional scriptures. Many texts use the word kriya or even kriya yoga, but in a different context. For example, in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali it says: "Kriya yoga comprises tapas (austerity), swadhyaya (self study) and ishwara pranidhana (resignation to the cosmic will)." (2:1) This has nothing to do with the kriya yoga that we will teach in this book. The form mentioned by Patanjali is intended as a preliminary means to harmonize a person's life in preparation for raja yoga.

Kriya yoga is also mentioned in the *Uddhava Gita* of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Krishna describes what he called kriya yoga in response to a request by his disciple Uddhava. It involves ritualistic worship of one's deity with flowers, food, etc. together with specific mantras, consecration of the deity and so forth. It has no connection with the kriya yoga that we will teach.

Various texts mention parts of kriya yoga, but never in much detail. Texts such as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gherand Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita* and so forth give specific details regarding asanas, mudras and bandhas, many of which are part of kriya yoga, but they are not integrated together as they are in kriya yoga. The *Kularnava Tantra* is a very practical text which explains ajapajapa in some detail; this is a part of kriya yoga, but nowhere is kriya yoga mentioned specifically. The same applies to a number of other texts; they hint, but never give details.

Kriya yoga seems to have been known in China, for a system which is vaguely similar is mentioned in a scripture called the *Tai Chin Hua Tzang Chih* (The Secret of the Golden Flower). This text has been translated into English by Richard Wilhelm with an introduction by Carl Jung. It describes the practice of rotating one's awareness through the back and front psychic passages of the body, though the rotation is in the opposite direction to that of kriya yoga practised in India. We are not saying that the Chinese system and the Indian are the same, only that they have similarities.

It is interesting to note that China developed its own unique, dynamic meditative system called Tai Chi Chuan. Though kriya yoga and Tai Chi Chuan seem to have little in common from outside appearance, their fundamental

aim is the same. Both are methods which induce meditation by bringing about perfect balance and harmony of the physical, bioplasmic and mental body. Both utilize flows of prana combined with heightened awareness.

All we can say is that kriya yoga is a secret technique that has been whispered down the ages by word of mouth from guru to disciple.

#### **Purpose of kriya yoga**

The purpose of kriya yoga is to transform your whole life into a continuous expression of joy, bliss and wisdom. It is designed to transform *tamas* into *sattwa*. It is intended to refine your whole being. We can say that kriya yoga brings about the following changes:

1. Slowly whittles away fears, phobias, conflicts, depressions, false ideas, conditioning, etc. hidden in the depths of the subconscious mind. Kriya yoga harmonizes the whole mind from the surface layers to the depths.
2. Induces twenty-four hours a day relaxation; not a lazy relaxation, but dynamic relaxation where one can spontaneously do much more work than at present and with much more power and effectiveness.
3. Allows one to explore and know the mind and go beyond.
4. Induces *dhyana* and intensifies spontaneous awareness.

These changes, brought about progressively, will transmute one's body-mind into a perfect instrument of action and wisdom.

#### **The channelling of energy**

Kriya yoga is a method, a very sophisticated method, of harmonizing and synchronizing the natural forces and energies of one's being. The prominent aspects of one's personality are channelled so that they flow in positive directions without suppression. Whether you are predominantly emotional, intellectual, peaceful, aggressive or whatever, the energies can be channelled into positive directions.

The physical, psychic and mental forces are brought into line with each other so that they flow together in a constant, powerful stream making one very sensitive to the deeper aspects of one's inner nature. One starts to vibrate, to resonate with underlying forces, which leads to a subtle perception, unknown before.

Take an analogy. Floods arise naturally in certain seasons of the year. The flood water

tends to flow along the easiest channel and direction available. The innate energy of the water eventually takes it to the sea. If ducts, dams, canals and so forth are built, together with turbo-electrical machinery, then the same energy can be utilized for constructive purposes. Electrical energy can be generated; fields can be irrigated. There is no change in the amount of energy available - it is merely transformed by a suitable method into a new, more refined form.

Kriya yoga brings about the same change within the human framework. Kriya yoga merely utilizes, refines and channels the already existing energy for the awakening of one's being. Nothing new is produced, rather that which is already there is allowed to blossom and unfold.

Kriya yoga is a method of transmutation. It is a method of alchemy. It is the philosopher's stone, or at least one of them. It transmutes base metal into gold - the gross, unrefined state of individual being is transmuted into its pure, radiant and natural state.

While doing kriya yoga, the aspirant becomes a *mandala* (psychic magnet) ... a focus for more subtle energies. His whole being becomes a magnifying glass. And this mandala leads to the central core of his inner world.

#### **Subtlety of perception**

All the systems of yoga are intended to develop subtle and direct perception. *Jnana* yoga does this through concentrated effort to answer an overwhelming enquiry. *Bhakti* yoga does it by making the emotional forces one-pointed. *Mantra* yoga does it by constant awareness of a mantra. Kriya yoga brings about subtle perception by harmonizing the forces of the entire body and mind, which leads directly to refinement of perception.

Through the practice of kriya yoga one starts to perceive the deeper aspects of one's nature - the *prana shakti* emanating from the underlying substratum of consciousness. One dives deep to see where the endless phenomena of the mind originate. One watches the thought bubbles arising from the primordial depths. The mind is normally like a murky pond, where the source of ascending bubbles cannot be seen. The source can only be seen by diving into the water and closely surveying the bottom. It is the same with the mind, one must

develop subtle perception, dive deep into the mind and closely survey the source of thought bubbles. The modern Indian mystic, Sri Dattabal said: "When you develop true sensitivity, the whole world will be an open book to you, revealing on each page new secrets and wonderful knowledge."

Thus subtle perception of one's being will bring about a total change in one's attitude and understanding of the outside world. Therefore, those who seek wisdom should begin to practise kriya yoga, preferably combined with other forms of yoga.

### The master plan

The practices of kriya yoga follow a specific plan and can be divided into three distinct groups. These groups combined together systematically induce:

- 2 Dharana (concentration)
- 3 Dhyana (meditation)

The first techniques are designed to induce *pratyahara*, the second group induce *dharana*; this leads to *dhyana*, which is actually beyond all techniques. This whole process is progressive and natural, without any strain and frustration. It is essential to induce a spontaneous outflow of *dhyana*. For this reason we will describe the process in more detail.

*Pratyahara*: From the day we are born we are conditioned to remain concerned only with the outside world and to believe that it is the only reality. Our whole motivation is directed to external experience. As a result it becomes difficult to internalize one's awareness. This is the first block in advanced yoga and it is a difficult block to overcome. Habits are easy to pick up but difficult to eradicate.

The mind is conditioned to continually receive and react to data coming from the outer world. The mind is tuned to external stimuli and, since these external stimuli are continuously impinging on our senses, the mind is always busy. It is ever in a state of turmoil. The process of *pratyahara* is intended to stop this process by disconnecting one's awareness from the sense organs. This brings about an internalization of awareness.

The mind is like a naughty child: it does the opposite of what you want. Therefore, it has been found by the experience of many people that excessive effort to forget the outside

surroundings leads to the opposite result. That is, applied effort to forget the outside world leads to an increase in external perception. This often leads to frustration and many people give up their attempt to introspect.

Kriya yoga is designed to overcome this problem in a unique yet obvious manner: it enters the house of the mind by the back door. In the first group of kriyas no attempt is made to curb or cut off external sense stimuli. In fact the eyes, which receive the largest amount of external stimuli, are purposely kept open for some time in the earlier kriyas. This seems to contradict logic, but it brings results. It induces internalization of awareness. One does each kriya, allows internal stimulation to arise - and lo and behold, the unexpected happens: after some time one's awareness becomes introverted spontaneously. Kriya yoga achieves a *state of pratyahara* by cunning means.

Cutting off external sense stimuli, however, brings its own problems; it easily leads to the opposite extreme - total absorption in inner thought processes and psychic realms. People are conditioned in such a way that their awareness must always be absorbed or entangled in something. Therefore, disconnection of one's awareness from the outside world leads to absorption and identification with the inner processes of the mind. One starts to brood over personal problems, fear, conflicts, or becomes attached to beautiful psychic scenery. This is like a bee that pulls itself free from sticky honey on the inside of a jar only to fly into the honey on the opposite surface of the jar. Freedom from one extreme leads to entanglement in the opposite extreme. Each is as bad as the other. Thus disentanglement from external stimulation of the mind can easily lead to internal involvement. Both have to be avoided if one wants success in yoga practice.

Many people try to meditate. They close their eyes, manage to forget the outside world, but immediately become overwhelmed by subconscious thoughts and psychic visions. This is not a bad thing in the early stages of yoga practice. In fact it is necessary since it helps to exhaust negative disturbing *samskaras* from the subconscious mind. But eventually one must prevent awareness becoming abducted by both the events of the outside world and the processes of the inner psychic and mental realms. That is, one must

tread the razor's edge between ida and pingala - the path of sushumna<sup>1</sup>. In order to induce pratyahara one must be firmly fixed on the sushumna path, lost neither in the ida nor pingala dimension of being. This leads to real pratyahara and eventually to dharana. Without mastery of pratyahara it is impossible to induce dharana.

The incredible sophistication of kriya yoga is that it brings a balance between total external awareness (outer distraction) and total inner haziness, where one lapses into a dreamy reverie or psychic picture show. It automatically leads to sushumna awareness. In the early practices, as already explained, the eyes are kept open for sometime and then closed for some time. This allows one's awareness to tread the middle path; the closed eyes tend to induce introspection and the open eyes tend to induce extroversion. Eventually this can lead to a balance point and intense dharana arises automatically. This becomes the gateway to dhyana.

In most yoga practices, one tends to close the eyes during meditative practice. This easily leads to a dreamlike state, especially with beginners. Some systems, such as Zen Buddhism, try to overcome this introversion tendency by doing meditative practices with the eyes open. This too presents problems to beginners, for one is continually distracted by the outside world. Kriya yoga strikes a balance between the two extremes: the eyes are kept closed for a short time then opened for a short time. For this reason it brings fantastic results. It systematically and quickly induces pratyahara and leads directly to dharana.

*Dharana:* After performing and completing the initial group of kriyas, there is a likelihood that you may be in a state of pratyahara. The induction of pratyahara depends on regularity and intensity of practice, as well as the state of turmoil or calmness in your mind. Pratyahara can be easily and automatically induced in a calm mind, whereas a disturbed mind will require more regular practice over a period of months. Also induction of pratyahara depends on auspiciousness. That is, one day it may arise, on another it may not. This is one reason why you should be regular in your practices; on one auspicious day, because of favourable circumstances, you might be launched into a state of dharana and dhyana. It can occur at a

most unexpected time. It can never be predicted.

When pratyahara practices are finished then the eyes are kept closed. Ideally, at this stage most internal and external disturbances should have faded away. The second group of kriyas is then practised to induce dharana. This is done gradually by first of all rotating awareness throughout the inner psychic circuits. This slowly induces more perception. As the kriya practice progresses, one's awareness is confined more and more so that it becomes increasingly one-pointed. Dharana arises spontaneously.

The distinctive feature of kriya yoga is that concentration is not forced; it spontaneously arises as a consequence of performing the mechanics of the kriyas. Often concentration is forced during meditative practices which leads the individual nowhere, only to a headache and frustration. Many people grit their teeth, tense their facial muscles and light their mind in an effort to bring about concentration. They do this because they know that concentration is an essential part of higher yoga practices, and that if they can attain high states of concentration then they will induce dhyana, but dhyana must be spontaneous. Forced concentration is not really concentration; it creates tension in the mind, which leads away from the path to dhyana. Practise kriya yoga and concentration will arise. Dharana leads to dhyana.

*Dhyana:* We have nothing to say about dhyana, for it is the realm of the unspeakable. When it is known, no words are needed. Before it is experienced words will only cause confusion, misconception and over-intellectualization. It is better to say nothing. There are no techniques for dhyana; all the techniques of kriya yoga are intended to bring about the state of dhyana.

It is a continuous flow from pratyahara to dharana to dhyana. There is no rigid division as we have given; this classification has been given for ease of explanation. Don't take the classification too seriously. If you master kriya yoga to a reasonable degree then you will automatically flow from one state to the next. You will not need to think: "Ah yes, I must start dharana" and so forth. Everything will happen spontaneously. All you have to do is practise the kriyas in the correct manner.



### The tools of kriya yoga

Each individual kriya is comprised of a number of subsidiary techniques. These are the basic tools of kriya yoga. Many of these subsidiary techniques are widely known and practised individually. They can be classified into the following groups:

1. *Asana* (physical pose)
2. *Mudra* (external expression of an inner attitude)
3. *Bandha* (physio-psychic locks)
4. *Mantra* (special sound pattern which can produce subtle impact and change)
5. *Pranayama* (manipulation of breath to control prana)
6. *Psychic passage awareness*

These six groups of techniques are the building blocks of the kriyas. They are combined together in a scientific and specific manner in order to bring about changes in one's being. These changes induce the process of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana that we have just discussed. Individual practice of these subsidiary techniques can have powerful influences on the physical-psychic-mental body. It was discovered by ancient yogis that integration, synchronization and the blending of specific techniques can lead to a vast increase of the power of the techniques when done individually. These yogi geniuses discovered this fact through personal experience and were the founders of kriya yoga. It is these unique combinations that make kriya yoga such a powerful system.

Let us briefly describe these subsidiary techniques:

*Asanas:* These are specific positions of the physical body. In kriya yoga they are mostly sitting poses. Without a steady comfortable position it is impossible to induce pratyahara. It is necessary to master the relevant asanas so that they are comfortable to assume and maintain and are not a continual source of discomfort and distraction.

*Mudras:* These are special physical positions of the body which induce specific physiological, psychic and mental changes in one's being. Mudras often involve the use of bandhas and pranayama, and the internal rotation of awareness through certain specific psychic passages.

*Bandhas:* These are physical locks which tighten and contract specific parts of the body.

They are associated with breath retention and concentration on specific regions of the body. Beside the physical influences, they also induce profound psychic and mental changes in the human framework. They are especially powerful in inducing control of the pranic forces of the body<sup>2</sup>.

*Mantras:* there are a vast number of mantras, each with a specific power. Two mantras are utilized in two early kriyas.

*Pranayama:* in the first group of kriyas concerned with pratyahara, pranayama is widely utilized as a means to harmonize pranic forces in the body. The flow of breath is integrated with the psychic passage awareness. In later kriyas, the more subtle form of pranayama, namely ujjayi, is widely used. This is a great help in inducing pratyahara and dharana.

*Psychic passage awareness:* this is a vital aspect of kriya yoga practice. It is due to the subtle perception of ancient yogis that the significance of psychic passages became known. The science of prana was especially developed in India and China. In China it resulted in such a subtle science as acupuncture. In India it led to the development of pranayama and prana vidya (the science of prana flow).

In kriya yoga, awareness is rotated along specific pathways of the body. This in turn induces changes in the pranic and psychic flow patterns of the body. This harmonized flow pattern influences the more subtle aspects of one's being and greatly helps to induce pratyahara and dharana.

These six types of techniques are the basic tools of kriya yoga. Individually they are very powerful physio-psychic-psychological instruments. When they are combined they become irresistible yogic bulldozers. They all act in very subtle ways in the pranic and mental body. They transmute one's being into a sensitive yet powerful instrument of perception.

### Sequence and duration

Each kriya has an intimate relationship with the preceding and subsequent kriyas. Each kriya influences the other kriyas in a specific manner, therefore the order in which they are practised is most important. If they are done in the wrong order, then kriya yoga will either fail to produce results or, even worse, it may lead to negative results. The correct order of

practice allows the mind-body to be systematically balanced; incorrect order of practice may lead to imbalance. Therefore, we urge you to practise the kriyas in the given order.

Each kriya also has a fixed duration or number of rounds. These durations may seem arbitrary but in fact they have been found to be the ideal durations for optimum results. Remember: kriya yoga is the result of hundreds, even thousands of years of experimentation by countless yogis. Nothing in the system is arbitrary. Therefore, try to practise each kriya for the prescribed duration: no less, no more and in the correct sequence.

#### **Attitude and effortlessness**

While doing the kriya yoga practices one should have the attitude of trying, but without trying, doing without doing. This is not easy, but this attitude will bring the greatest results. One must not be too attached to the method, yet one must take care that the kriyas are done correctly.

Kriya yoga should be done for the joy of doing the kriyas; if it becomes too much of a burden and a chore, then it is difficult to practise and obtain the best results. Try to integrate the kriya practices into your daily life like other daily activities. They should become a habit. A person takes breakfast without effort or strain. Few people eat their breakfast grudgingly or unwillingly; they eat with hunger and enthusiasm. Practice of kriya yoga should be the same. You should look forward to the daily practice program. At times this will be difficult, especially when there are many problems in the mind, but this is the ideal attitude - enthusiasm and joy in your practice.

If you can adopt the attitude of purposelessness through purpose and effortlessness through effort, then you are on the right track. Try not to have the strong feeling of being the doer. Let the kriyas 'happen' through your mandala being.

#### **Non-expectation**

Non-expectation leads on directly from the previous heading where we tried to convey the idea of purpose without purpose. You should try to practise kriya yoga without the feeling of expectation. Again this is not easy, but you should try. There should be regularity of practice with minimum expectation of results

or experiences. If you are devotionally inclined, then you can do the kriyas as a form of worship; if you are not devotionally inclined, then you can do the kriyas for their own sake. In the *Uddhava Gita* of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it says: "Worship done without expectation of reward is sattwic; that done with expectation is rajasic; and that done with the intention of harming others is tamasic." (ch. 25) Try to do your kriya yoga practices with the sattwic attitude of non-expectation. The sadhana can be done as a form of worship or not, it does not matter, but try not to expect.

Dhyana is not created ... it happens. It occurs spontaneously when the mind is free of grasping and egotistical motivation. Expectation creates tension in the mind, which prevents dhyana.

Try not to intellectualize the practices. This will hamper the transforming power of kriya yoga acting on you. Just practise and the answers will come in their own time, and do not worry too much whether you are making progress or not, just do all the practices regularly. The less you expect, the quicker you will reach. Just let things happen in the way that they will. The moment you stop waiting and feel perfectly relaxed and receptive is the moment that dhyana will arise spontaneously. When you are empty, you will be filled to the brim.

You can tread the path of belief or non-belief; it does not matter, but there should be no expectation of spiritual experience, for expectation means ego and the ego does not allow dhyana to arise. Where there is ego there can never be meditation, just as there can never be night where there is day. They mutually prevent each other. So do your kriya yoga sadhana with regularity and intensity but without any expectation. Expect nothing and you will gain everything, and more<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For further details on sushumna refer to Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 1

<sup>2</sup> Book II, Lesson 14, Topic 3

<sup>3</sup> Book III, Lesson 26, Topic 2

## Kriya Yoga: Preparation and Rules

Because kriya yoga has always been a secret technique, it has always been practised under the close guidance of an expert. In this book there is no personal guide. All the guidance is given in these pages, therefore it is essential that you carefully follow the rules and preparations as closely as possible.

### GENERAL PREPARATIONS AND RULES

#### **Diet**

Try to eat vegetarian food that is fresh, clean and easily digestible, also try to eat in moderation. Kriya yoga is a system of purifying the whole mind-body. If there is excessive impurity in your body then there will be a drastic purging process. Too much food will make it difficult to do the practices properly, especially breathing practices, and kriyas which involve uddiyana bandha etc. You must use your own discrimination in choosing the food you eat. Remember: all full-time kriya yoga courses in this ashram are accompanied by compulsory food restrictions, so try to adopt sensible eating habits.

Dhyana is a sattvic state; it cannot take place in a tamasic state of mind and body. It is therefore essential to adjust one's dietary habits so that the food is pure, easily digestible and less. When the body is more gross it can easily tolerate mistreatment without immediate adverse reaction, but as sensitivity increases, as it certainly will through regular kriya yoga practice, so mistreatment in gross ways will quickly bring adverse repercussions. The ancient yogis classified the different levels of man into five types: earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five elements represent the progressive levels of sensitivity. Those at the earth level can eat enormous amounts of heavy food without consequence, but if the same food is taken by a person at the air or ether level, then digestive problems or illness can easily result. Take an analogy: if you put dirty

oil into a new car engine it will quickly lose efficiency. Clean oil must be used. Dirty oil used in an old battered car will also take its toll, but the negative results will be much less obvious. It is the same with food and the body. One must use clean food of a suitable quality and in reasonable amounts. So if your food habits need to be changed then you must begin to gradually modify them, if you want to practise kriya yoga. This applies more and more as you progressively practise a greater number of kriyas.

#### **Illness**

If you suffer from any serious physical illness, then we strongly suggest that you do not begin kriya yoga at this stage. First of all take steps to cure your illness by adopting any suitable healing systems, possibly hatha yoga. Don't attempt kriya yoga, for it may easily worsen the condition. If necessary seek expert guidance on the best method of curing your ailment.

If you are currently suffering from any serious mental upset do not start to practise kriya yoga. Certainly you should practise other forms of yoga, since they will gradually bring harmony into your mind. Kriya yoga is a supercharged system; it is very strong medicine and may worsen or heighten mental disturbances at this stage<sup>1</sup>. The fundamental requirement for the practice of kriya yoga is sound health.

#### **Preparation of mind and body**

If you have not practised other types of yoga, then we strongly suggest that you do not begin kriya yoga at this stage. First of all you must harmonize mind and body by practising some of the techniques previously described in Books I and II. You should start to practise yoga regularly following the suggested practice program in each lesson.

### **Mastery of preparatory techniques**

Before beginning kriya yoga you should have developed a reasonable degree of sensitivity to those parts of the body utilized in kriya yoga techniques. In particular, you should be able to mentally and physically feel and locate the chakra and kshetram trigger points associated with mooladhara, swadhisthana, etc. During the last six lessons we have described specific techniques for developing sensitivity to these centres<sup>2</sup>. You should be able to locate these centres at will, without excessive effort. Before attempting to practise kriya yoga, you should be familiar with the meditative technique of ajapa japa<sup>3</sup>. We do not advise you to begin kriya yoga until you have practised all these techniques for a reasonable period of time, preferably six months should have been given over to these preparatory practices.

Without mastery of these basic techniques, you will find many of the kriya yoga techniques very difficult. You will be unable to do them properly. Those people who have been following the course closely, with regular practice, as prescribed over the previous two books, will be adequately prepared to start kriya yoga sadhana. Without adequate preparation, you may possibly harm yourself.

### **SPECIFIC RULES OF PRACTICE**

The following rules and recommendations apply directly to the actual practice of kriya yoga.

#### **Cold wash**

It is very easy to lapse into a state of drowsiness during your practice; in fact, if your mind is not accustomed to early rising, then you may easily fall asleep during the practice. You may have pleasant dreams but it will not lead you anywhere on the yogic path. One good method of reducing the likelihood of falling asleep is to take a cold shower before beginning your practice. If it is too cold, then you should at least wash your face with cold water. If you feel sleepy during your practice, we strongly suggest that you again wash your face with cold water, or take another shower.

#### **Place of practice**

Try to practise in the same place every day. In this way you will gradually build up an

atmosphere of positivity. Your place of practice should be clean and peaceful. It should be well ventilated but not swept by gale force winds. It should be dry and not too hot or cold. Do not practise on the bare floor; place a blanket beneath you. All the kriyas after the first one are done in a sitting pose; therefore, if the atmosphere is cold you can wrap a warm blanket around you. If it is excessively warm we do not advise you to practise under a fan as this is the quickest way to catch a cold. In hot climates such as India, you should ensure that you practise early in the morning when the atmosphere is reasonably cool.

If you live in a country where there are many insects, such as mosquitoes, you should make sure that you are protected by a sheet or blanket. Again it is only the first kriya that precludes the use of a blanket. If you have a sufficiently large mosquito net, we see no reason why you should not practise all the kriyas after the first one under the net, but there should not be the slightest contact between the body and net. This is important.

#### **Clothing**

Let your clothing be as light and as loose as the prevailing climate will allow. Do not wear tight clothes for this will interfere with free breathing.

#### **Light**

The kriyas should not be done in darkness. There should be some form of light, otherwise it is not possible to do the kriyas properly. Remember: many of the initial kriyas are done partly with the eyes open. If it is pitch black, what is the advantage and purpose of opening the eyes? Some of the kriyas require you to gaze at the nose tip or gaze upwards at the eyebrow centre; it is not possible to do this properly in darkness.

#### **Nasal cleansing**

It is very difficult to practise kriyas if the nose is blocked. If you have time available, and if it is necessary, we suggest you clean your nose by doing jala neti before the kriyas<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Loosening up and preparation**

If you have the time, practise surya namaskara and a few asanas immediately before starting the kriya yoga practices<sup>5</sup>. This will flush the

whole body with a good blood flow, loosen up stiff joints and induce optimum relaxation.

### **Sitting position**

For most kriyas, the ideal asanas are padmasana and siddhasana (siddha yoni asana for females)<sup>6</sup>. If you cannot sit in either of these asanas, you can adopt alternative sitting asanas which we will describe as we introduce each individual kriya in turn.

You should try to adopt the habit of keeping the back as straight as possible, but without strain. In this erect position it is far easier to locate the chakra and kshetram trigger points and to maintain awareness of rotation through these centres via the psychic pathways. If one sits with the back slumped forward one will easily fall asleep.

### **Awareness**

At first your attention may wander everywhere; everywhere, that is, except on the practice. Do not worry; let the attention wander and let the thoughts arise. Do not suppress them, but watch them carefully while maintaining awareness of the practice. Eventually the bubbling thoughts will subside and your mind will become one-pointed. You must only persevere with your practice.

You must develop the habit of regularly checking that you are maintaining awareness of the practice and that you are not totally lost in a haze of thoughts. This checking procedure will arise automatically when you change over from one kriya to the next.

### **Interruption of practice**

If you have to go to the toilet midway through your practice, try not to get distracted by any outer events, and avoid talking. Fix your awareness on the movement of the body, breathing, or a mantra until you return.

If you feel stiff during your practice, it is better to interrupt the practice and loosen up the body.

### **Regularity**

Try to practise every day without fail. Even if your mind is in a state of turmoil, even if your attention jumps here and there like a wild monkey, still try to carry on your daily practice program. Only stop your practice if you become ill.

You should make a strong resolve that you will practise kriya yoga every day, through thick and thin, without fail. Before you sleep at night make a strong resolve that you will get up in the morning and do the practices.

It is only by regular daily practice that you will reap the fruits of kriya yoga. You should make the resolve penetrate the deeper layers of the subconscious mind by repeating it with intensity, feeling and sincerity. If the resolve is planted in the subconscious, then it will manifest itself by making the body follow the dictates of the resolve. That is, your body and mind will wake up at a fixed time every morning and you will persevere with the practice.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> We suggest that you refer to the previous discussion entitled Removal of Mental Problems: Part 1 - Book I, Lesson 9, Topic 2; Part 2 - Book I, Lesson 10, Topic 2; Part 3 - Book I, Lesson 11, Topic 1

<sup>2</sup> Mooladhara chakra - Book II, Lesson 19, Topic 2; Swadhisthana chakra - Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 3; Manipura chakra - Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 3; Anahata chakra - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 2; Vishuddhi chakra - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 3; Ajna chakra - Book II, Lesson 24, Topic 2

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 5;

<sup>4</sup> Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 2

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

<sup>6</sup> Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

## Topic 1

# Kriya Yoga: Practice

### KRIYA 1: VIPAREETA KARANI MUDRA (INVERTED PSYCHIC ATTITUDE)

The Sanskrit word *vipareeta* means 'inverted'; *karani* means 'to get done'; and *mudra* means 'psychic attitude'; therefore, the English translation of this kriya is the 'inverted psychic attitude'. In the scriptures, this practice is sometimes called 'vipareeta kari mudra' with the same meaning.

#### Scriptural references

Vipareeta karani mudra is one of the few kriyas mentioned in various traditional tantra-yoga texts. The most comprehensive description is given in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* as follows: "The secretion of the moon (bindu), the nectar of immortality (amrit), is normally consumed by the fire of the sun (manipura chakra). It flows downwards and results in ageing of the body. There is a wonderful technique which can reverse this process; it should be learned from a guru and can never be understood by reading even a thousand scriptures. The practice is called vipareeta karani mudra and the positions of the bindu and sun (manipura) are reversed (i.e. the body is inverted). The sun is held upwards and the moon downwards." (v. 77-79)

The bindu is the focal point through which consciousness manifests and expresses itself in all created objects'. This also applies to man; it is the direct channel, the lifeline of man. It is through the bindu that man is sustained with both energy and bliss. With most people this energy is poorly directed into disharmonious living in the outside world, into selfish and worldly pursuits expressed through the medium of the manipura chakra. This leads to spiritual death. Man loses contact with his source; he lives blindly. Vipareeta karani mudra and indeed all yoga practices reverse this process, so that human awareness is directed once more through the bindu to

the fountainhead of life. That is, awareness increases. This leads to revitalization of one's whole being. It leads to bliss. It leads to wisdom. This is called the nivritti marga (the return to the source); the positions of the sun and the moon are reversed. The normal flow of nectar downwards from the moon to the sun represents the pravritti marga (the path of worldly activity). This symbolizes the life of most people. In spiritual life this process has to be reversed so that the path of pravritti is transformed into nivritti. Vipareeta karani mudra symbolizes this process.

Vipareeta karani mudra is not only symbolic. It is a method of transmuting energy from grosser to more subtle forms. For this reason it is included in the kriya yoga sequence.

#### Rationale

Vipareeta karani mudra is the first of the kriyas in the sequence of kriya yoga for various reasons. One of the most obvious reasons is that it physically induces balance of the ida and pingala breath flows in the nostrils<sup>2</sup>. This balance is vital in spiritual life and should occur on all levels from the physical to the more subtle levels of the mind. In Lesson 23 we described physical methods of inducing balance of the ida and pingala breath flows<sup>3</sup>. In technique 1, called padadhirasana we explained that pressure under the armpits quickly and effectively induces the required ida-pingala balance. Vipareeta karani mudra brings about the same result in the final pose, since the arms are compressed in order to support the weight of the inverted body. This balance of the breath flow through the two nostrils is essential in meditative practices for it helps one to tread the narrow razor's edge between excessive introversion and absorption in the psychic world (ida) and the opposite extreme, distraction in the outside world (pingala). If you practise vipareeta karani mudra you will find out for yourself that the

breath flows are indeed rapidly balanced. When this balance is achieved, then the subsequent kriyas become much more powerful.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* continues: "Regular practice of vipareeta karani mudra increases the digestive fire; therefore, the sadhaka (practitioner) must have extra food available. If the diet is insufficient then the increased digestive fire will reduce the body." (v. 80, 81) This is a warning that applies to all kriya yoga practices. One must be careful with diet<sup>4</sup>. In the above quotation, a warning is given that the metabolic rate may increase; therefore, it may be necessary to increase your food quantity to prevent loss of weight. The reader should use his discrimination and regulate his food input according to prevailing needs.

"In the beginning, the body should be inverted for only a short duration. The duration can be slowly increased day by day. After six months of daily practice wrinkles and white hair will disappear." (v. 82) This advice is more relevant for long periods of practice such as half an hour, one hour, etc. In kriya yoga there is a fixed time, which should not be exceeded.

The vipareeta karani mudra in the scriptures is not specifically intended to be a part of kriya yoga. It is given only as a technique.

Another reason for practising vipareeta karani mudra first is that it increases wakefulness. That is, the inversion of the body directs an extra blood supply to the brain and increases alertness. One is then able to do the following kriyas more correctly, with greater awareness and without falling asleep. Vipareeta karani mudra acts on the brain in a similar manner to sirshasana, though the effect is less extreme<sup>5</sup>.

### Body position

The body should be inverted as shown in the accompanying picture.

Place a blanket on the floor.

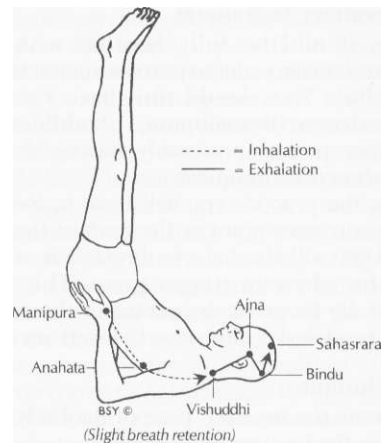
Lie flat on your back with legs straight and together.

Place the arms straight beside the body, palms up.

Relax the whole body.

Breathe in deeply and then raise both legs, keeping them straight and together.

Let the legs move over the top of the head.



Then, pressing the arms against the floor, raise the buttocks off the ground and push the legs further over the head.

Bend the arms and place the hands at the hips. Let the trunk be supported by the arms.

Raise the legs so that they are vertical.

Keep the eyes closed and relax the whole body as much as possible.

This is the body pose for the practice of vipareeta karani mudra.

*Note:* Unlike sarvangasana the chin should not press against the chest in the final pose<sup>6</sup>.

### Position of hands

At first you may find it difficult to maintain the final body pose for the full duration of the kriya practice. Your hands will probably start to ache. With practice this problem will not arise; until this point, however, you should adjust yourself and your hands whenever it is necessary.

The usual method of supporting the body in the inverted pose is to rest the hips between the thumb and fingers of each hand. After a short while the hands begin to ache. A better method of supporting the body is to let the top of the hips rest on the palms of the hands. That is, the hands act as a cup for the hips, with the hips resting on the base of the palms, near the wrist. This position is clearly shown in the accompanying picture. This hand position will help you to stay in the final pose for the full period of the kriya without experiencing excessive pain and discomfort.

### Subsidiary techniques

You should be fully familiar with ujjayi pranayama in order to practise vipareeta karani mudra<sup>7</sup>. You should also have developed sensitivity to the manipura, vishuddhi and ajna trigger points, preferably having done the associated techniques<sup>8</sup>.

In the practice you will have to locate the bindu trigger point at the back of the head<sup>9</sup>, and you will also have to direct your attention to the sahasrara trigger point. This is symbolically found at the centre of the crown of the head and is quite easy to locate mentally<sup>10</sup>.

### Technique

Assume the inverted pose of the body.

Make the legs perfectly vertical.

Close the eyes.

Relax the body as much as possible.

Practise ujjayi pranayama.

Fix your awareness at the manipura chakra trigger point in the spine; this is the starting point of the first round.

While inhaling try to feel the flow of prana moving from the manipura chakra to the vishuddhi chakra. You should imagine this prana moving through the spinal passage as a hot smooth stream of amrit (nectar).

Let the nectar collect at vishuddhi chakra.

Hold the breath for a few seconds and feel the nectar becoming cool at vishuddhi.

Then exhale and feel the prana moving from vishuddhi through ajna and bindu in turn so that it eventually reaches sahasrara.

You should feel that the prana is being injected through these trigger points by the force of the exhaled breath.

When the prana and awareness reach sahasrara, it is the end of 1 round.

Immediately transfer your awareness back to manipura and repeat a second round.

Do a total of 21 complete rounds.

Then proceed to kriya number 2.

### Breathing and psychic passages

You should practise ujjayi pranayama throughout the practice. Inhalation is done in the psychic passage connecting the manipura to the vishuddhi chakra trigger point via the centre of the spine. Retain the breath for a few seconds at vishuddhi. Exhalation is done in the psychic passage passing from vishuddhi via the spine to ajna, then directly back to

bindu and then to sahasrara at the crown of the head. The breath should be synchronized with the flow of prana or amrit through the psychic passages. Breathing should be as slow and as comfortably as possible.

### Awareness

Awareness should be fixed on the prana as it passes through the psychic passages and on the trigger points as the prana passes through them. Each round should be mentally counted as your awareness reaches the sahasrara.

### Duration

You should practise 21 rounds. The duration will depend on the speed of respiration. An average duration of the practice is about 10 minutes. In the beginning don't practise the full 21 rounds. On the first day of practice do 5 rounds only. Then increase by 1 round every day.

### Over-intellectualization

**TIT** not to involve yourself with the intellectual speculations of the practice. Merely do the practice itself and all answers will come in due time.

### KRIYA 2: CHAKRA ANUSANDHANA (SEARCH FOR THE CHAKRAS)

This kriya should be done immediately after vipareeta karani mudra. The Sanskrit word *chakra* means 'psychic centre' and *anusandhana* means 'search' or 'discovery'. Therefore, in English this kriya can also be translated as: 'the search for the chakras' or, perhaps better, 'the location of the chakras'.

### Body position

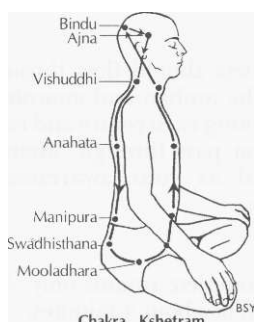
Assume a comfortable sitting asana. The best asanas are padmasana and siddhasana (siddha yoni asana for women)<sup>11</sup>. If you find these asanas too difficult or uncomfortable you can sit in ardha padmasana, swastikasana, or in sukhasana<sup>12</sup>.

In order not to be distracted by body discomfort, we suggest that you loosen up your leg joints before starting kriya yoga practices, that is, before doing vipareeta karani mudra. A simple yet effective exercise is ardha titili asana (half butterfly)<sup>13</sup>.

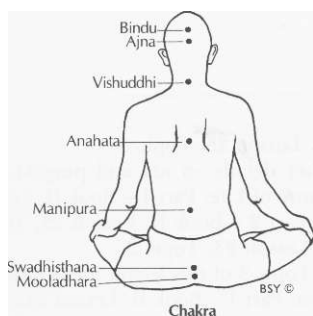


### Arohan and awarohan psychic passages

In this kriya and a number of subsequent kriyas you will be required to move your awareness through two psychic passages called the *arohan* and the *awarohan*. The path of these passages is as follows:



*Arohan* is the ascending psychic passage which starts from the mooladhara chakra, travels forwards to the swadhisthana kshetram in the pubic area, then follows the curve of the belly to the manipura kshetram, upwards to the anahata kshetram and vishuddhi kshetram in the front of the throat, then in a straight line to bindu at the back of the head.



*Awarohan* is the descending passage which starts at bindu, travels forwards to the ajna chakra, then down through the sushumna in the spine, passing through all the chakra trigger points in turn, to terminate at mooladhara.

Arohan and awarohan join each other at bindu and mooladhara. Together they form an irregular shaped psychic circuit in the body, something like a squashed egg. The entire circuit is shown in the top picture.

These two psychic passages are widely known throughout the world, especially in mystical circles. They are used in various types of healing methods. In acupuncture there are two types of pranic passages (meridians) - normal meridians (called sei-ke) and abnormal meridians (called ki-ke). The normal meridians, twelve in number, are used in diagnosis and treatment. The abnormal meridians, eight in number, have no yin-yang interrelationships. The two principal abnormal meridians are called the meridian of conception, running up the front part of the body directly in front of the spine, and the governor meridian, running inside the spine (refer to *Religion and Parapsychology* by Motoyama of Japan). These two meridians correspond exactly with the arohan and awarohan psychic passages of kriya yoga. The front passage is yang, whereas the spinal passage is yin. These principles of yin and yang have deep implications and roughly correspond with the yogic principle of ida and pingala.

In acupuncture, these two meridians are regarded as reservoirs of prana. In the case of disease, the necessary vital energy flows from the corresponding abnormal meridian and brings relief. The vital energy then flows back to the meridian.

These paths are not imaginary, but are actual subtle passages in which prana flows. At first in kriya yoga one may have to imagine the flow, but with practice and the development of more subtle perception, one will actually feel the flow of prana in these passages.

You should fully familiarize yourself with the exact route and location of the arohan and awarohan passages and try to develop sensitivity to them. They are an integral part of chakra anusandhana and a number of subsequent kriyas. One of the aims of kriya yoga is to balance the prana that flows through them.

### Technique

Take a comfortable sitting position.

Close the eyes.

Relax the whole body, but keep the spine upright. Breathe normally.

Fix your awareness at the mooladhara chakra trigger point.

This is the starting point for the first round.

Let your awareness ascend the arohan psychic passage (frontal passage).

You should let your awareness pass in turn through the swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi kshetrams until it reaches bindu.

As you pass through each centre, mentally say the name of the centre: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, bindu. After reaching bindu you should immediately let your awareness descend through the arohan passage to mooladhara.

As your awareness passes through each centre mentally say: ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.

This completes 1 round or circuit of awareness. Immediately begin a second round by moving your awareness upwards through the arohan passage, again mentally saying the name of each centre as you pass through them.

Do not make tense efforts to locate the chakra and kshetram trigger points; just let your awareness flow through the centres without effort.

Try to imagine that each centre is a railway station, and that your awareness is like a train that passes through them without stopping. The centres should be regarded as if they are part of the psychic scenery.

If you wish you can try to imagine your awareness as a thin silver serpent travelling in an elliptical path within the body.

Do 9 rounds.

Then proceed to kriya number 3<sup>15</sup>.

#### **Alternative route of the arohan psychic passage**

There is also another pathway for the arohan psychic passage that has been taught by tradition throughout the ages. On the ascent, the awareness is taken from vishuddhi kshetram to the lalana chakra in the palate, then to the nose tip, then to bhrumadhya<sup>14</sup>, then follows the curvature of the skull through sahasrara at the crown to bindu at the back of the head. This method is perfectly valid and also follows a natural flow or circuit of subtle prana. If you already practise kriya yoga and use this psychic passage in your kriyas then you should continue to do so. If you are now learning kriya yoga through this book then you can experiment with both passages and find the one you like the best. However, in this course we will generally refer to the arohan passage as connecting the vishuddhi kshetram

directly to bindu in the way explained under the previous heading.

#### **Breathing**

Breathing should be normal and not synchronized with the flow of awareness through the psychic passages.

#### **Awareness**

The awareness should flow through all the centres in the arohan and arohan psychic passages, noting each centre and repeating its name as you pass through. Mentally count each round as your awareness reaches mooladhara.

#### **Duration**

Practise 9 complete rounds only. An average duration will be about 4 minutes.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Book III, Lesson 25, Topic 5

<sup>2</sup> For further details on ida and pingala refer to The Balance of Life: Part 1 - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 1; Part 2 - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 1

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 2

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Topic 3 of this lesson for details on diet

<sup>5</sup> Sirshasana: Part 1 - Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 4; Part 2 - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 3

<sup>6</sup> Book II, Lesson 16, Topic 2

<sup>7</sup> Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 5

<sup>8</sup> Manipura - Book II, Lesson 21, Topic 3; Vishuddhi - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 3; Ajna - Book II, Lesson 24, Topic 2

<sup>9</sup> Refer to Topic 5 of this lesson

<sup>10</sup> Book III, Lesson 26, Topic 1

<sup>11</sup> Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

<sup>12</sup> Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 5

<sup>13</sup> Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 3

<sup>14</sup> Book II, Lesson 24, Topic 2

<sup>15</sup> Book III, Lesson 26, Topic 3

# Bindu

The most subtle of the chakras is the ajna.

Beyond ajna and even more subtle is *bindu*. It is not a chakra. The chakras are associated with the human psychic framework; bindu, on the other hand, is the subtle centre from which the human framework itself arises. Bindu is therefore the primary manifesting source of the chakras themselves. The chakras are within the realms and fetters of the mind; bindu is beyond the mind.

The subject of bindu may seem very technical, abstract and incomprehensible, but it implies an elevated and profound part of tantra-yoga and other mystical systems. Though it may appear to have little significance in terms of practical yoga, it is the purpose of all yoga practices to induce awareness of the bindu. Actually it is completely inexplicable in terms of logic, for it unites the finite with the infinite. Like the six main chakras, it is completely impossible to understand bindu by discussion, reading or speculation.

## Definition

The word *bindu* comes from the Sanskrit root *bind* - 'to split', 'to divide'. This means that the bindu is the origin of individuality; it is the point where the oneness first divides itself to produce duality, the world of multiple forms. This division implies limitation in knowledge, action and so forth.

Bindu implies a point without dimension - a dimensionless centre. In Sanskrit texts it is often called *clidghana*, that which has its roots in the limitless consciousness. The word bindu also means zero or voidness - the *shoonya*. More correctly, bindu is the gateway to the *shoonya*. This zero or voidness is not, however, a total nothingness. It is a voidness, an emptiness that contains the fullest potential. In fact, the word *shoonya* should be translated not as nothingness, but as no-thingness. There is a vast difference between these two words. The state of no-thingness is pure consciousness.

Bindu is therefore a mysterious, ineffable focal point where the two opposites - infinity and zero, fullness and no-thingness - coexist. Bindu is widely called the *bindu visarga* - 'the falling drop'. This means that bindu is one of many drops of nectar that continually trickle down from sahasrara, the primal fountainhead. This nectar irrigates life. This nectar is the real 'water of life'.

In summary we can say that bindu literally means seed, small particle, semen or sperm, a point, dot and so forth. It represents the focal point of individuality, whether animate or inanimate. It is the cosmic seed from which all things manifest and grow. It is an infinitesimally small point of infinite potential.

## Evolutionary implications

Here, by evolution, we do not mean scientific or Darwinian evolution, which can be regarded as horizontal evolution in a historical sense. We mean evolution in a vertical, transcendental sense, where life, objects, etc. arise from the underlying substratum. Scientific evolution is in the realm of time; the evolution we are referring to is in the realm of the timeless.

There is an individuating principle that generates the myriads of objects in the universe. In Sanskrit it is called *kala*. This causes the potential inherent in the underlying consciousness to accumulate at a point called the bindu. It is from this point or seed that an object, animal, human being or whatever, can evolve, manifest or grow. Each and every object, big or small, has a bindu as its base. This bindu is *hiranyagarbha* - the golden egg or womb of creation. It is through the bindu that the immanent and the transcendental merge together.

Bindu contains a blueprint of all the characteristics of the object to be evolved. That which previously had no shape assumes shape through the bindu. The nature of the evolved object is fixed by the blueprint of the bindu.

The bindu is both the means of expression of consciousness and also the means of limitations. Some of the objects will be conscious centres, as in the case of man; most centres will be unconscious, such as elements, stones, etc. The faculty to be conscious or unconscious depends only on the nature of the apparatus of the individual object; this is determined by bindu. Man has the apparatus that allows him to be a conscious centre.

Every object, conscious or unconscious, is intimately linked to the very essence of consciousness through the intermediary of the bindu. Every object evolves into material existence through the medium of the bindu; conversely, every object is withdrawn to the source via the bindu. Bindu is a trapdoor that acts in both directions. It is also the means through which certain conscious centres, such as man, can realize the totality of sahasrara the whole (poorna). There are basically two types of humans: those who are on the Pravritti path and those who are on the Nivritti path. The pravritti path means that man is looking away from bindu towards the outside world. He is almost entirely motivated by external events. This is the path that most people in the world are now treading. It is the path that leads to bondage and away from self-knowledge. The other path, the nivritti path, is the spiritual path, the path to wisdom. It implies that the individual is starting to face the bindu, that he is starting to tune in with the source of his being. It is this path that leads to freedom.

The path of evolution is the pravritti path of manifestation and extroversion. The path of involution leads back along the path that produced one's individual being; it leads back through bindu to sahasrara. The whole purpose of yoga practice is to direct one's awareness along the path of involution.

#### **The power within the infinitesimal point**

Every particle, even the tiniest such as the atom, is the centre of a much greater power than is indicated by its external appearance. Science, especially in recent years, is finding this out to the astonishment of vast numbers of scientists. Those who are familiar with modern research into atomic particles - positrons, neutrons, electrons, protons, neutrinos, psi-particles, mu-mesons, leptons, muons, 'u' particles and a multitude of other

particles - will appreciate how much power is concentrated in these tiny point-sized particles in the space-time continuum. Atomic physics seems to be moving into the realms of the inexplicable.

The degree of intelligence in such organic bodies as DNA molecules, RNA molecules and so on is also an illustration of how much can be condensed into the confines of a small point. The deeper science delves into nature, the more power and complexity it finds. Instead of becoming simpler with decrease in size, tiny particles of the type already mentioned indicate that there is vast potential within each one of them.

The power of the point (bindu) has been known by mystics through the ages. In tantra, each bindu, each particle of manifested existence, is regarded as a centre of power - shakti. Shakti is an expression of the underlying substratum of static consciousness. The aim of tantra is to merge shakti (the individual) with shiva (consciousness). The means to do this is the bindu.

Kabbalists were also very much concerned with bindu. It corresponded to the state of being where one could say: 'I am'. It was called *kether* (the crown) because it occupies the most prominent place in the creation of all things. It was regarded as the link between the manifested and the unmanifested. It was known as the primordial dot, for all things emanated from, or rather, through it.

According to the philosophy of the *Kabbala*, nine sephiroth evolved from the kether (bindu). Together they formed ten sephiroth on the mythical and symbolic tree of life. The nine sephiroth below the kether are chakras (levels of human consciousness). In yoga, only six main chakras are utilized and discussed, but there are others. Therefore, though there are different numbers of chakras in the two systems, yoga and the Kabbala, the light of consciousness and manifestation shines firstly through the kether, then progressively filters down to the other sephiroth (chakras) in turn. This is exactly the same as tantra-yoga, where consciousness shines firstly through bindu then down through the chakras.

In some mystical systems sahasrara, source of all things, is symbolized by a circle. Powers inherent in this circle of infinite potential focus at an infinitesimal point at the centre. Pascal,

the famous mathematician, said: "The supreme is a circle, of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere."

This centre is the bindu. The centre of bindu is the core of all things, from the sun to an atom. From bindu, objects become manifested into objective reality by expanding outwards to express inherent potential. This potential may be physical, pranic and mental. In the *Zohar*, one of the Kabbalistic scriptures, it says: When the concealed of the concealed wished to reveal himself, he first of all made a single point: the infinite was entirely unknown, and spread no light until the luminous point violently broke into manifested reality."

macrocosm being reflected and reproduced within the microcosm. This is achieved through the intermediary of the bindu. In spiritual life, the microcosm is man and the macrocosm is consciousness.

Perhaps the best way to conclude this part is to give a vivid description of one person's experience of the power inherent within bindu. The following are two quotations from a book called *Kundalini: the Evolutionary Energy in Man* written by Gopi Krishna: "My body, the chair I was sitting on, the table in front of me, the room enclosed by the walls, the lawn outside and the space beyond, including the earth and appeared to be mere phantoms in this real, interpenetrating and all pervasive ocean of existence which, to explain the most incredible part of it as best I can, seemed to be simultaneously unbounded, stretching out immeasurably in all directions, and yet no bigger than an infinitely small point. From this marvellous point, the entire existence, of which my body and its surroundings were a part poured out like radiations as if a reflection as vast as my conception of the cosmos were thrown out upon infinity by a projector no bigger than a pinpoint, the entire intensely active, gigantic world picture dependent on the beams issuing from it."

This point is bindu and is described further: "...my lustrous conscious self is floating, with but an extremely dim idea of the corporeal name in a vivid bright conscious plane, every fragment of which represents a boundless world of knowledge, embracing the present, past: and future, commanding all the sciences, philosophies and arts ever known or that will

be known in the ages to come, all concentrated and contained in a point existing here and everywhere, now and always, a formless, measureless ocean of wisdom from which, drop by drop, knowledge has filtered and will continue to filter into the human brain."

Both of these descriptions give a clear indication of the power inherent within bindu. The bindu must be a focal point of power because it connects all things to their common, underlying source. As we have already pointed out, science is beginning to find out this fact, something that mystics have known since time immemorial.

#### Bindu and sex

Many mystics and seers also speak of the bindu. The bindu is often closely related to male sperm. The reason is not difficult to understand: from one drop of sperm, the tiniest bindu combined with the ova of the female grows life in the form of a baby. The bindu point of sperm is the starting point for creation. This is symbolic of the more subtle bindu which makes manifest all objects from the underlying substratum. In fact, it is almost a perfect symbol which makes understanding of the bindu a little easier. Because the bindu is widely associated with male sperm, many tantric charts of the human centres show the bindu in man, but omit it in women. That is, the bindu trigger point is clearly depicted at the back of the male head. This symbolism only applies when bindu is intended to indicate sperm. In actual fact, both men and women have a bindu, a subtle bindu that is, for without bindu they could not exist. In kriya yoga sadhana, both men and women should concentrate on the bindu trigger point at the back of the head.

In other symbolic systems the bindu is comprised of two other bindus, one red and one white. In the *Chudamani Upanishad* it is written: "The bindu is of two types, white and red. The white is *shukla* (sperm) and the red is *maharaja* (menses)." (v. 60)

This white bindu symbolizes Shiva, purusha or consciousness. The red bindu symbolizes Shakti, prakriti, the power of manifestation of all objects. The trigger point for bindu is at the back of the head; this is the centre that is used in kriya yoga. The seat of the red bindu is the mooladbara chakra. The purpose of yoga, tantra and all other spiritual systems is to unite these principles, so that Shiva (male) and Shakti

(female) become one. The text continues: "The red bindu is established in the sun; the white bindu in the moon. Their union is very difficult." (v. 61)

Though difficult, their union is the whole purpose of yoga. Here the sun represents pingala and the moon represents ida<sup>1</sup>. These two bindus also symbolize the merging of opposites in terms of male and female. The dynamic prana (female) merges with the static consciousness (male). The result of this union is the seed of the bindu from which manifestation begins, including life. In all spiritual practices, this union results in the ascent of the kundalini: "When the red bindu (Shakti) moves upwards (the ascent of the kundalini) by control of prana, it mixes with the white bindu (Shiva) and one becomes divine." (v. 63)

All systems of yoga control prana in one way or another; sometimes it is direct control as in the case of pranayama, in other cases it is indirect. The meeting and merging of these two polarities, Shakti and Shiva, individual and consciousness, leads to superconsciousness: "He who realizes the essential oneness of the two bindus when the red bindu merges with the white bindu alone knows yoga." (v. 64)

Only he who unites these two polarities can know the real meaning of yoga (union) through experience. In these verses we have only discussed the symbolic meaning of the bindu, but there are many more implications behind the previous verses in the practical use of sexual intercourse as a means to higher consciousness. The verses imply that retention of orgasm, by both male and female, during sexual intercourse - retention of the physical bindu - can lead to absorption in the exquisitely subtle bindu, the trapdoor to the sahasrara. The harmony, concentration and unleashing of psychic forces under controlled conditions of sexual intercourse can lead to transcendental experience. This can arise only, however, when there is a high degree of mental harmony in the practitioners. Those people who do not have the necessary level of mental purity will not reap the benefits of spiritual experience. This method is called *maithuna* in tantra and is prescribed for those aspirants called *virya* (literally: heroic) - those with a reasonable level of attainment in yoga. The average person is called *pashu* (instinctive) which means that they have so much dis-

harmony in the mind that they will not reap the fruit of maithuna. Sexual intercourse is for anyone who is inclined; maithuna, however, in the real sense is not. There has to be prior purification of the mind.

Maithuna is not part of kriya yoga as such, but the purpose of both methods is the same: expansion of awareness and fusion with the shoonya via bindu. In maithuna, the bindu of sexual intercourse is utilized to heighten sensitivity to the transcendental bindu; in kriya yoga, the trigger point of the bindu at the back of the head is utilized to bring about the same result.

### **Bindu, vishuddhi chakra and amrit**

When we described vishuddhi chakra we pointed out that nectar or amrit trickles down from bindu to vishuddhi<sup>2</sup>. This amrit is bliss and the bindu is the abode of uninterrupted bliss. This is symbolized in Indian mythology by the river Ganges (nectar) coming from the crescent moon (bindu).

This amrit or divine nectar flows down through the sushumna passage from bindu'. In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* it says: "The nectar secreted from the bindu is indeed the consort (Shakti) of Shiva (consciousness). It fills the sushumna passage." (v. 4:46)

In kriya yoga, the aim is to awaken the chakras and balance ida and pingala so that bindu will flood the sushumna passage.

### **Bindu and concentration of mind**

Bindu implies dissolution or nullification of mental fluctuations. The mind becomes lucid, receptive and perfectly one-pointed. It becomes crystalline ... a perfect reflector of pure consciousness.

In the famous *Yoga Sutras* by Patanjali it says: "To block the patterns of consciousness is yoga." (1:2)

This is a raja yoga text and concentration of mind is brought about by raja yoga techniques. The bindu is not mentioned in the entire scripture, yet they are really talking about the same thing. Perfect concentration of mind implies that there is awareness of bindu. Piercing of the bindu, as in kriya yoga, implies that there is perfect concentration of mind. The bindu also implies total cessation of all mental fluctuations; at this stage the path of yoga is transformed into the experience of yoga.

Some yogic methods bring concentration of mind through manipulation of prana, as in pranayama. The sense behind this approach is explained as follows: "When the breath is irregular, then the mind is also unsteady, but when the breath is controlled then the mind too will be controlled, calm and one-pointed." (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika* 2:2) Conversely: "Steadiness of mind leads to steadiness of the prana; with this the bindu also becomes steady." (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika* 4:28)

Therefore, control of breath, concentration of mind and bindu are closely related. When the mind is concentrated on the bindu point, then one passes from the limited to the unlimited. One passes beyond the realms of the mind. This is the reason why concentration of mind is the essence of all yoga practices and spiritual life in general. It is by piercing the bindu that one passes into the realm of pure consciousness, into the realms of zero time - the timeless.

#### **Bindu and nada yoga sadhana**

According to ancient Indian philosophy, consciousness expresses itself through nada (subtle vibration). Three concepts are worth mentioning: kala, bindu and nada. Kala is the individuating principle mentioned under the heading 'Evolutionary Implications'. Bindu is the point through which consciousness expresses itself in the created universe. Nada is the flow of consciousness from the infinite through the bindu to the object of creation. This process can be compared to a funnel: bindu and kala bring the consciousness into a concentrated flow and nada is the medium through which consciousness flows along the restricted orifice. When the nada moves upwards, then creation takes place. This is denoted by the pravritti marga and is called manifestation or material evolution. Nada is regarded as the link between pure consciousness and all created objects. This nada can also be utilized to proceed in the opposite direction - the nivritti marga. That is, nada can be used by aspirants as a means of merging their awareness with the source, the sahasrara, pure consciousness. To bring this about, the nada must first of all pass through bindu on the upward path.

Therefore, nada yoga is a means of retracing the path of nada which was the original means

for individual growth and being. With extensive practice, one's perception becomes more and more refined and sensitive. Eventually, one's perception of subtle nada becomes so sensitive that one becomes aware of the bindu. This is the gateway to pure consciousness. This is the essence of nada yoga sadhana<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Symbolism**

The bindu is symbolized by both a full moon and a crescent moon. The full moon really represents the infinitesimally small point we have tried to describe in the preceding pages. The crescent moon indicates that the bindu is widely associated with the kalas (phases) of the moon. In the same way that the moon is progressively revealed during the period from new moon to full moon, so the immensity of the sahasrara behind the bindu can be gradually unveiled through all types of yoga practices, if they are done regularly and sincerely, and if one has burning aspiration day and night to understand life and oneself. This crescent moon implies that the spiritual aspirant has some glimpses of sahasrara, behind the bindu, but by no means a total experience. The totality can never be known while there is individuality.

The bindu is drawn on the background of the night sky, indicating that the basis of bindu, the sahasrara, is infinite. Most people who practise yoga are familiar with the symbol of Aum: In the top right hand corner of the symbol there is a small point and a crescent moon. The point is called *visarga* (drop) and represents bindu; the crescent moon also represents bindu, as already explained. The chakras exist in the realm of the main figure, together with the qualities of tamas, rajas and sattwa. These exist in the realm of nature - prakriti. The bindu is shown separate from the main body of Aum indicating that bindu is transcendental and beyond the fetters of nature.

#### **Bindu trigger point in kriya yoga**

For the purpose of kriya yoga practice, the trigger point for the bindu is regarded as being at the back of the head. The two diagrams for kriyas number 1 and 2 (vipareeta karani mudra and chakra anusandhana) in this lesson show the exact location<sup>5</sup>.

**Practice for location of trigger point**

No special practices are required to locate this centre. One should merely begin to practise the first two kriya yoga techniques<sup>1</sup>. This in itself will lead to sensitivity of the bindu.

**Understanding the bindu**

The bindu can only be understood through regular practice of yoga, or any other spiritual system. This discussion has tended to be a little technical. If you are the type of person who is reflective in nature and able to unceasingly enquire into the real nature of things, then we suggest that you enquire into the real nature of bindu. If this is done with sufficient intensity, then this alone can bring about an understanding of bindu.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For full details refer to Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 1; Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 1

<sup>2</sup> Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 3

<sup>3</sup> Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 2

<sup>4</sup> Book II, Lesson 17, Topic 4 and Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 5

<sup>5</sup> Topic 4 of this lesson



## Daily Practice Program

Now it is time to integrate the kriyas of kriya yoga into your daily program. In this lesson we have given the first two kriyas of the sequence, namely vipareeta karani mudra and chakra anusandhana. As these two kriyas do not take much time to do, you should also practise other yogic techniques. Because this lesson has been mainly concerned with introducing kriya yoga, we have not given many practices as such, but you should read the discussions carefully as this will help you to practise kriya yoga correctly.

The following are suggested practice programs of which you should choose one according to time available.

Note that we have omitted the 30 minute program since at least half an hour will soon be needed to practise the first few kriyas. If you only have half an hour to spare every day, then we suggest that you do not start to practise kriya yoga. For general health benefits you should adopt any of the programs outlined in the first 24 lessons.

Practice	Minutes
<b>Program 1:</b> duration 2 hours	
Surya Namaskara	10
Shavasana	3
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Bhujangasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	4
Sarvangasana	4
Halasana	4
Matsyasana	3
Sirshasana	5
Tadasana	1
Shavasana	3
Nadi Shodhana with Maha Bandha	15
Chakra Shuddhi	20
Kriya Yoga:	
Kriya 1: Vipareeta Karani Mudra	10
Kriya 2: Chakra Anusandhana	4
Ajapajapa - Stage 5	20
Chidakasha Dharana	6
	120

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

Surya Namaskara	7
Shavasana	3
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	4
Sarvangasana	4
Halasana	4
Bhujangasana	4
Sirshasana	5
Tadasana	1
Shavasana	3
Nadi Shodhana with Maha Bandha	12
Chakra Shuddhi	15
Kriya Yoga:	
Kriya 1: Vipareeta Karani Mudra	10
Kriya 2: Chakra Anusandhana	4
Ajapajapa - Stage 5	10
	<hr/>
	90

**Program 3:** duration 1 hour

Surya Namaskara	5
Shavasana	3
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	3
Halasana	4
Bhujangasana	3
Sirshasana	3
Tadasana	1
Shavasana	2
Nadi Shodhana with Maha Bandha	10
Kriya Yoga:	
Kriya 1: Vipareeta Karani Mudra	10
Kriya 2: Chakra Anusandhana	4
Ajapajapa - Stage 5	8
	<hr/>
	60