

Lesson 6

Khechari mudra is performed by inserting the tongue in the upper cavity of the palate and gazing at the eyebrow centre. By its practice the yogi attains immortality and overcomes death. He has no fear of losing himself in unconsciousness, and the influences of sleep (absence of awareness), hunger and thirst (urges of the senses) will no longer affect him.

Neither unconsciousness (laya), nor diseases, nor karmas will be able to influence the practitioner of khechari mudra. His chitta dwells in chidakasha and he will be beyond the influence of time and space. Therefore the siddhas (perfected ones) give salutation to this mudra.

He who is able to close the upper palate by khechari mudra will become the master of vajroli (locking of the nadi through which the sexual energy flows), because by this mudra the bindu (semen) becomes steady forever. Even at the climax of a passionate embrace, when the bindu remains steady in the body, then where is the fear of death?

DhyanaBindu Upanishad (79-84)

The Structure of Yoga

There are many different paths of yoga. In fact, in the ashram library there is one Hindi book listing well over a hundred different types. However, most of these separate paths are only slight variations of a few basic forms of yoga practices. These numerous variations arise from modifications designed to suit the temperaments and beliefs of everyone, and in a sense we can say that there is a different path of yoga for each individual, for each person has a unique personality. However, our personalities are more notable for their similarities than differences, as we are all composed of a few basic characteristics such as emotion, tendency to activity, etc. Because of these common aspects, yoga can be separated into a few paths which cater for each of these facets of personality. It is these fundamental paths that we want to briefly discuss in this topic.

The different paths

The various paths of yoga lead to the same point or source. They are often compared to different rivers which flow into the sea. At first they are completely separate and are known by different names. However, as the rivers progress, they begin to merge with each other until eventually they are totally absorbed in the ocean. The rivers completely lose their individuality. It is the same with the various yogic paths. At first they have specific characteristics and sometimes even appear to contradict each other, but as one progresses along any one or number of these paths, their separateness disappears. All the paths of yoga incorporate the same aim: physical health, mental peace and higher awareness.

The following is a list of the main branches of yoga: mantra yoga, kundalini yoga, laya yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, Patanjali yoga, bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, swara yoga, karma yoga, kriya yoga, japa yoga, jnana yoga. There are many more, and we will try to briefly define these different paths in the following pages.

The many variations of yoga can be broadly classified into five basic groups. These cater for the most prominent aspects of our personality:

- *Karma yoga*: the path of activity.
- *Bhakti yoga*: the path of devotion.
- *Jnana yoga*: the path of enquiry.
- *Raja yoga*: the path of introspection.
- *Hatha yoga*: the path of balancing the mental, physical and subtle (pranic or bio-plasmic) forces of the body.

Any other forms of yoga can be placed under these five headings.

All of us have a tendency to be introspective and to enquire about the nature of life and other topics that vitally influence us. Simultaneously, everyone has emotional tendencies by nature and are continually performing actions in one form or another. Lastly, everyone has a mind and physical body as well as a bioplasmic body, though few of us realize the latter aspect of our being. It is the way that these aspects of our consciousness relate to each other that determines our personality. In other words, some of us are more emotional or devotional than others. For these people the path of bhakti yoga is recommended. Other people can never keep still; they must always be acting and expressing themselves in the outside world. Karma yoga is the main path for these people. Others are much quieter and more introspective in nature; they tend to watch their mental reactions to life's situations. Here the way of raja yoga is recommended. Still other persons have a strong tendency to enquire about the nature of life; in a sense they are stubborn for they refuse to accept any answer unless it is based on personal experience. They should practise jnana yoga. Then there are those who, perhaps being a bit more down to earth, can relate to tuning up the forces of their mind and body (physical and subtle) to the best possible condition. In other words, to attain health and calmness of

mind. These people should practise hatha yoga.

Actually, it is best to practise all the five main paths of yoga to a certain extent, with an emphasis on the path that is in keeping with the predominant aspect of your personality. It is this path that should be followed with the most zeal, for it will be in accordance with your nature. Swami Sivananda was a firm believer in what he called 'integral yoga', in which all aspects of the personality are channelled through performing a combination of these different paths. He said that one should: "Serve - Love - Meditate - Realize". This encompasses the five different aspects of being: action, devotion, introspection, enquiry and body (the latter being included with meditation). Let us discuss these five categories of yoga in turn.

Hatha yoga

We will deal with this path first because it generally precedes the other forms. In other words, to tread any path of yoga, physical, psychic and mental health is essential and these are the basic aims of hatha yoga. In fact, it is often regarded as the first part of raja yoga, for without the preliminary practice of hatha yoga, raja yoga becomes very difficult, if not impossible.

The Hindi word *hatha* means 'obstinate'. But the meaning of hatha yoga is not 'obstinate yoga', though some people might regard it as being so. The word hatha is composed of two syllables, namely *ha* and *tha*. *Ha* means the 'sun' and *tha* means the 'moon'. Yoga means communion. Thus hatha yoga means the harmony between the sun and moon aspects of our being. The right nostril is connected with the sun aspect; the left is associated with the moon aspect. The moon rules over the mental functions, while the sun controls the vital and physical functions. This applies to everyone and is a basic tenet of yoga. The two nostrils have a deeper association with the flow of prana within our being. It is this flow of prana that ultimately influences the mental and physical functions. If the moon flow is predominant, then one tends to think too much. If the sun flow is predominant there is a tendency towards extroversion and physical activity. Throughout the day we tend to operate either more mentally or more

physically. This is a natural process. However, for perfect mental and physical balance the sun flow should predominate for a total of about twelve hours and the moon flow for the other twelve hours in each day. This ensures a balanced personality - neither too much introversion nor too much extroversion. The balance of these two is essential and is the basic aim of hatha yoga. Not only this, but balance leads to perfect physical and mental health. Further, it is the period when the flow in both nadis is exactly the same (manifested by equal flow in both nostrils) that spontaneous states of meditation can arise.

In the ancient classical text, the *Gherand Samhita*, hatha yoga is referred to as 'ghatastha yoga'. *Ghata* means a 'pot' or a 'vessel', representing the physical body. The word *stha* means 'contents'. Therefore, ghatastha is an analogy for the contents of the physical body, meaning the yoga of that which is contained within the physical body. The text continues: "The physical body is like an unbaked pitcher which dissolves itself if filled with water. When the pitcher is fired, then it becomes strong enough to contain water. In the same way the body becomes strong when it is fired or hardened by the fire of yoga (hatha or ghatastha)." (1:8) This is a perfect description of the basic aim and philosophy of hatha yoga.

We have already introduced you to some of the basic practices of hatha yoga, which can be roughly divided into different groups, as follows:

Shatkarmas are in the main concerned with cleansing the body. Many diseases are caused by the build-up of toxins within the body. These practices are the first step in eliminating these waste products, and thereby regaining perfect health¹.

Asanas are the physical postures of yoga. We have already introduced you to many of them, their rules and a few practices, so we will not go into any detail here². We will mention, however, that there is much controversy between the different schools of yoga as to whether asanas are actually a part of hatha yoga, raja yoga, tantra yoga or of all three.

Pranayama has also been fully discussed and a few practices have already been given³.

Mudras and bandhas are often classified with hatha yoga. Mudras are special physical positions of the body or parts of the body

which induce deeper physiological, psychic and mental changes in one's being. Bandhas are physical locks which perform the same function.

These are very basic definitions. The practices will be fully discussed later in the book⁴.

Health is the fundamental aim of hatha yoga. What is health? It is difficult to define. Some people think that good health is epitomized by rippling muscles, but this is not necessarily true, for many fitness fanatics suffer from chronic physical problems, are easily susceptible to infection and disease and are also weighed down with many mental problems. Often skinny looking people are far healthier than the Tarzan types. In a general sense, health can be defined as a combination of the following: resistance to infection, absence of disease, both mental and physical endurance, flexibility of mind and body, mental peace, perfect coordination and condition of all organs, muscles and nerves in the body and their control by the brain and spinal nerve centres, together with a perfectly functioning pranic body. Hatha yoga aims to bring about this state of health.

Hatha yoga is particularly popular with many people, for they can see tangible benefits from its practice. It is very easy to see improvement in physical health and to feel emotionally and mentally more calm than usual, and hatha yoga leads to these benefits in a reasonably short period of regular practice. However, at the same time it is important to understand or at least appreciate that health of the body and mind is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is a method to master the mind and attain higher states of consciousness. To this end hatha yoga and other paths of yoga can be utilized. The basic aim of hatha yoga is to build a firm, strong, healthy body, because without this asset, one's activities and aspirations are severely curtailed.

Hatha yoga also ensures that there is free flow of prana within the psychic channels of the body. This is of prime importance for perfect physical and mental health as well as experiencing higher states of awareness⁵. Remember that although prana is not visible it does not mean that it is non-existent or a mere concept. For the sake of comprehension, equate prana with electricity. Electricity cannot be seen and scientists have never explained its nature, yet at the same time it is agreed that

some form of energy exists which we label electricity, and can be seen when we flick a switch and electrical gadgets work. Without the electrical supply there is no reaction. Similarly without prana our body would cease to function.

Hatha yoga aims at harmonizing prana in the body so that in turn the physical body will automatically become healthy and receptive to higher vibrations. The mind and prana are intimately linked together and so if the pranic body is tuned up, then the mind is automatically relaxed and harmonized; at least to a degree, for it is the mind that controls prana, not prana the mind. However, prana and mind are part and parcel of the same thing; the division between them is only arbitrary. Certainly we can say that a balanced pranic body implies vitality of both body and mind, for all these aspects are directly related to each other.

Hatha yoga treats the body as an instrument to be kept in the best possible condition. This is one of the reasons most other spiritual and religious systems fall down. They seem to ignore this important aspect of our being. If a musician wants to play a beautiful musical composition, it is essential that his instrument is in perfect condition. He would not dream of playing his masterpiece on a broken, battered violin. It is the same with the path to higher awareness. The essential prerequisite is a well-tuned body and mind.

At the same time, as we have already mentioned, one should not assume that hatha yoga is only to bring about mental and physical health. Hatha yoga involves awareness in many of its practices and as such is a means to meditation in itself. This does not imply that people who are sceptical of the concept of higher awareness should not practise hatha yoga for health reasons - far from it. But at the same time they should bear in mind the higher ideals of hatha yoga, which are clearly stated in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the classical textbook on this subject: "Those people who practise only physical exercises (in hatha yoga) without mental and spiritual aspiration will fail to achieve the best results."

In a sense yoga has a different aim to other methods or systems that concern themselves mainly with the body. These other physical systems aim to develop the body in one way or another so that it can be exhibited, or can

perform certain sports with a greater degree of perfection etc. They make the practitioner more concerned with his or her body. Hatha yoga, on the other hand, is exactly the opposite. It attempts to harmonize the body so that it can be forgotten or transcended. In this way one is less hampered by the body and associated ailments, and more able to dedicate oneself to mental and spiritual pursuits.

Karma yoga

This is the yoga of action, the system of attaining awareness through activity. It is performance of our daily work with constant awareness and at the same time without any expectation of reward. It is this living in the present which enables far more effective, efficient and powerful actions. By totally absorbing the self in the work at hand we tend to reduce the power of the ego. This is the essence of karma yoga, and results in less emotional and mental upsets in life. It helps to make the mind more calm and peaceful under any circumstances and more receptive to the practices of yoga. This in itself can lead to meditation. Karma yoga will be more fully discussed in later lessons⁶.

Bhakti yoga

This is the yoga of devotion. It is the channelling of emotions into devotion, directed towards a guru, deity or suitable object. In this way the emotions are given an outlet, instead of suppressing them or dissipating them in different directions. The bhakta absorbs himself completely in his object of devotion, losing his individuality or ego. Emotional and mental problems disappear, concentration increases and the path to higher awareness and self-realization is opened. A full discussion of bhakti yoga and its benefits will be given in Book II⁷.

Jnana yoga

This is the path of enquiry. It is not, as so many people say, the path of the intellect. It attempts to transcend the limitations of the intellect or logical faculties of each individual, so how can it possibly be the path of the intellect? Higher awareness can never arise through rational thinking. Jnana yoga is the path towards illuminative knowledge, and this is allogical - neither logical nor illogical. It transcends them both.

In this path one enquires about the essence of existence and one's true nature. Effort, concentration and total absorption in the enquiry are prerequisites for success in this path. Without these attributes, illumination will not take place. By illumination we do not mean stereotyped answers, but intuitive answers which cannot be spoken about. If one can talk about an illumination it usually has not occurred. This is the reason why so many great yogis have refused to talk about their highest experiences. They know it is impossible.

The path of jnana yoga is open for everyone, but at the same time few people are really ready for it. They have too many mental tensions and problems and are unable to relax. They dissipate their mental energies in a large number of different pursuits, and therefore lack the intensity of purpose to pursue their enquiries until they gain the answers in the form of revelations. As such, most people should follow alternate forms of yoga to clean out their minds and develop their power of concentration. When they progress in yoga they can turn to the path of jnana yoga. The subject of jnana yoga will be further outlined in Book IIP.

Raja yoga

This is the path of introspection. It encompasses many other separate paths of yoga which we will briefly mention. It is the path in which one attempts to explore the different realms of the mind: conscious, subconscious, unconscious and beyond, the purpose is to become increasingly aware of these different aspects of being. Raja yoga progressively attempts to transcend the outer environment of the physical body, and direct the awareness to the inner environment. Each person has consciousness; either it can be directed outwards or it can be directed inwards. Either we can be conscious of the external surroundings or we can be conscious of the inner world. Usually our attention is on outer objects. If perception of the external is cut off, as is attempted in raja yoga, then the consciousness must be directed inwards. It has to go somewhere. When it goes inwards it starts to light up our inner existence and we begin to explore ourselves. We normally see only the surface of the ocean of the mind; we don't see what is below. If we dive into the depths towards the

seabed we would see the deeper aspects of the mind that are normally hidden from us. This is the aim of raja yoga in its many forms. We will briefly mention some of the main types:

Patanjali yoga

Patanjali yoga is often identified with raja yoga directly, for they are regarded as synonymous. However, for the sake of argument we will consider raja yoga as being the group name of all the different paths that are introspective in nature. The system of Patanjali yoga consists of eight steps or limbs which the aspirant must progressively master on the path to self-realization⁹.

1. *Yamas* (self-restraints)
2. *Niyamas* (self-observances)
3. *Asanas* (postures)
4. *Pranayama* (regulation of prana through breath control)
5. *Pratyahara* (disassociation of consciousness with the outside environment)
6. *Dharana* (concentration)
7. *Dhyana* (meditation)
8. *Sa'nadhi* (identification with pure consciousness).

Kundalini yoga

This is a system of yoga concerned with the awakening of the pranic or psychic centres known as chakras, which exist within all of us. These chakras are centres of bioplasmic energy and are directly related to different levels of awareness⁵. In the body there are numerous chakras, but kundalini yoga concerns itself with six main ones which are located throughout the length of the spine. Kundalini yoga aims to awaken these chakras and thereby induce higher states of consciousness. In a sense it puts the 'cart before the horse'; in other words as one attains higher states of awareness, perhaps by practising other forms of yoga, then the associated chakra will automatically open. Kundalini yoga tackles this from the opposite direction. It tries to first open the chakras to induce the associated levels of awareness.

This force or power one attains in the form of higher awareness is symbolized by the kundalini, a serpent that is said to reside in the lower regions of the trunk. This form of yoga is also known as laya yoga.

Mantra yoga

Mantra yoga is the yoga of sound. Most people are very sadly ignorant of the power of sound, yet the ancient sages through personal experience realized that sound has incredible power to influence the mind and body as well as produce changes in the material world. The ancient yogis experimented with different combinations of sound and found that they could induce extraordinary changes within the mind - different sounds producing different effects. They called these special sounds mantras and they were handed down from generation to generation.

Mantra yoga utilizes the power of sound as a method of inducing introspection and subtle mental changes, and to evoke mental and psychic manifestations. A particular mantra is usually repeated over and over again either verbally or mentally, producing mental tranquillity, concentration and awareness of the inner processes of the mind. It is a powerful method of allowing meditational states to flower.

Mantra yoga is also known as japa yoga, though generally japa yoga is a more confined term¹⁰.

Dhyana yoga

Dhyana yoga is most often classified as a separate path of yoga. However, the word dhyana means meditation. So in a sense this type of yoga can refer to the aims and higher stages of all forms of yoga.

Kriya yoga

This is the yogic path of movement and awareness. It is a powerful system and is the subject matter of the third part of this book. The aim is to bring about awareness of the processes of the inner environment of man.

Summary

There are many other forms of yoga - shiva yoga, siddha yoga, samkhya yoga, buddhi yoga, sannyasa yoga, maha yoga and many more which we have not mentioned. They are excellent systems in themselves but they lie within the five main groups that we have outlined. There is, however, one path of yoga that seems to lie outside the main branches of yoga. It is called swara yoga. It doesn't really fit into any of the five main groups. It is

concerned with relating the flow of prana in the body with internal and external events. It is concerned with the flow of air through the two nostrils, like pranayama, but is also related to the position of the sun and the phases of the moon, the time of sunrise and so on. From basic rules laid down by swara yoga, it is possible to predict auspicious times to undertake certain types of work, marriage, meet friends, business associates, etc. It is a system for allowing one to know how to act in given circumstances to achieve the best out of life. In a sense it is in the same class of systems as palmistry, astrology, etc. which aim to guide people through their lives in a way to suit their personality and circumstances¹¹.

We emphasize again that one path should not in general be practised to the exclusion of the others. Choose a main path but supplement it to some degree by the practice of other paths. In fact an integration of all the paths would be ideal. This is summed up in the following verse by Swami Sivananda:

*Eat a little, drink a little,
Talk a little, sleep a little,
Mix a little, move a little,
Serve a little, rest a little,
Work a little, relax a little,
Study a little, worship a little,
Do asanas a little, pranayama a little,
Reflect a little, meditate a little,
Dojapa a little, chant a little,
Write mantra a little, have satsang a little.*

This poem clearly indicates that the best approach to life is integration of all activities.

This also includes yoga.

We have only briefly mentioned the main forms of yoga, for we are more interested in showing the interrelation between them and introducing their basic aims, than to delve into them deeply at this stage. These five paths cover every aspect of our being and as such are applicable to everyone. There is no one who cannot relate in some way or another to yoga.

Notes

¹ For further details on shatkarmas refer to Book 1, Lesson 1, Topic 2

² Asanas: Introduction - Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 2
Asanas: Rules and Preparations - Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 3

³ Pranayama: Book I, Lesson 4, Topic 3.

⁴ For further details on bandhas refer to Book II Lesson 14, Topic 3

⁵ Prana: An Introduction - Book I, Lesson 5, Topic 3

Pranayama: Book I, Lesson 4, Topic 3

⁶ Karma yoga: Part 1 - Book I, Lesson 12, Topic 1

Part 2 - Book II, Lesson 13, Topic 1

⁷ Bhakti yoga: Part 1 - Book II, Lesson 15, Topic 1

Part 2 - Book II, Lesson 16, Topic 1

Part 3 - Book II, Lesson 17, Topic 1

Part 4 - Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 1

⁸ Jnana yoga - Book III, Lesson 28, Topic 1

⁹ Book III, Lesson 25, Topic 2

¹⁰ For
Lesson 14, Topic 5

¹¹ For more details on swara yoga refer to Book II Lesson 22, Topic 1

Hatha Yoga: Agnisar Kriya

Abdominal malfunctions are common ailments among many people. The causes are often due to lack of exercise and inadequate massage of the internal organs. Many of us spend long periods of time sitting motionless doing office work, studying, watching television and other activities that require little or no physical effort. This leads to laziness and sluggishness of the entire body, including the abdominal organs. For this reason, the organs become inefficient and unable to perform their basic functions properly, leading to general bad health, whether conspicuous or inconspicuous.

In the case of the abdominal organs, sluggishness leads to indigestion, constipation, kidney and liver problems and various other common ailments of the abdomen. Of course there may be other factors involved, but certainly inefficiency of the organs is a major one. Agnisar kriya is a powerful method of counteracting this condition, for it vigorously contracts and expands the abdomen, giving the internal organs the massage and exercise that they require in order to carry out their functions in the best way.

In various yogic practices to be introduced in this book, one requires reasonable control over the abdominal muscles and the ability to manipulate the front wall of the abdomen. Most people lack this ability. Agnisar kriya is an excellent preliminary practice to gradually develop effective control of these muscles, and at the same time, of course, it gives many other related physical benefits.

Definition

The Sanskrit word *agni* means 'fire'; *sara* means 'essence' and *kriya* means 'action'. Of course there is no fire, as such, in the stomach, but the essence or nature of fire can be compared to the digestive process. If the abdominal organs are not working properly, then the digestive fire smoulders. Digestion is not as good as it should be; the fire needs to be fanned or

stoked. In other words, the process of digestion needs to be kindled and aroused to encourage the best possible digestive power. Agnisar kriya does just this. It makes the digestive fire blaze.

Agnisar kriya is also known as *vahnisara dhauti*. The word *vahni* also means 'fire', and the word *dhauti* means 'cleansing action'. The practice cleans out the digestive system and stimulates digestion. In fact this practice cleans out impurities not only from the digestive system, but other important abdominal organs as well.

Scriptural references

Agnisar kriya is well known and discussed in the ancient yogic texts. The *Gherand Samhita* says the following: "Contract the navel towards the spinal cord a hundred times. This agnisar kriya gives many benefits, removing diseases of the abdomen and stimulating the digestive fire. It is a technique unknown even to the devas (higher beings). The practice of agnisar kriya will result in a beautiful and healthy body." (1:19,20)

Very few details of the practice are given, for it is intended to be taught by a guru or teacher to his disciple with personal instructions. Of course, one should not assume that the text strictly means that you should contract your navel one hundred times. It means that you should practise as many times as possible without over-exerting yourself. Furthermore, don't take the text too literally when it says that the practice is unknown to higher beings. This merely implies that the practice is a good one but is rarely practised because few people know of it. The text also indicates that the ancient yogis were fully aware of the benefits of the practice.

Posture

One can assume various postures to perform this practice:

1. Standing position
2. Vajrasana¹
3. Padmasana²

Those who are able should practise while sitting in vajrasana (or padmasana if they are familiar with it). Otherwise adopt a standing position, which is equally good.

AGNISAR KRIYA



Technique 1: in vajrasana

Sit in vajrasana. Separate the knees as widely as possible keeping the toes in contact with each other. Place the hands on the knees.

Arch the spine backwards and straighten the arms.

Bend the head slightly forward.

Open the mouth and extend the tongue.

The eyes can be open or closed, as you prefer.

Then contract and expand the abdomen while simultaneously breathing in and out.

This breathing should be passive; that is, it should only occur because you are accentuating the movement of the abdomen. The breathing should resemble the panting of a dog and must be in harmony with the associated abdominal movements.

It is important that the internal organs receive a good massage.

Therefore contract and expand the abdomen as much as possible.

Don't strain.

The movement of the abdomen should be rapid, but at the same time ensure that the contractions and expansions are as full as possible.

Don't do the practice over-rapidly, so that the movement of the abdomen is reduced and becomes superficial. This will reduce the benefits of the practice.

Pull in and push out the abdomen for a short period of time, until you feel a little fatigue.

This is 1 round.

Rest for a short time, then repeat.

Technique 2: in standing position

Stand with the legs about half a meter apart. Lean forwards and place your palms just above the knees.

The arms should remain straight throughout the practice.

Bend the knees slightly.

Look towards your abdomen.

Open your mouth and extend your tongue.

Then contract and expand the abdomen while breathing in and out, in the same way as described in technique 1.

Continue as long as you are able to without straining.

Take a rest and then repeat the procedure.

Technique 3: advanced form

This technique gives the greatest massage of the abdominal organs.

It can be practised in vajrasana, padmasana or a standing position.

It is similar to techniques 1 and 2, but the breath is held while pulling in and pushing out the abdomen.

Breathe in deeply.

Then exhale, emptying your lungs as much as possible by fully drawing in the abdomen. Without breathing, try to push your abdomen outwards.

Then contract your abdomen again.

Repeat this process in quick succession as many times as you can while holding your breath. Be careful not to strain yourself by holding your breath too long.

Then breathe in. This is 1 round.

Rest until the breathing returns to normal.

When your breathing becomes normal again, repeat another round.

The time of breath retention should be gradually increased over a period of days and weeks.

Mistakes to avoid

Often agnisar kriya is done with only a slight movement of the abdomen. This is often due to pulling in and pushing out the abdomen too quickly. Try to regulate your practice so that the movement is reasonably rapid, yet simultaneously exaggerated.

Sometimes in stages 1 and 2 the breath is not synchronized with the movement. Try to

harmonize the breath with the movement and keep a constant rhythm throughout the practice.

Number of rounds and duration

Beginners may find this practice a little difficult because of lack of voluntary control over the abdominal muscles. Furthermore, you will quickly become tired because you are using your abdominal muscles far more than usual. Therefore, you must slowly and gradually develop and accustom the muscles over a period of time. At first contract and expand the abdomen no more than twenty five times before taking a short rest. Three rounds is sufficient. Practise this for a week or so.

When your muscles become stronger then you can gradually increase the duration of each round as well as the number of rounds. We leave the details of this to the discretion of the practitioner, for the choice will depend on individual capability.

Of course, the duration of each round in technique 3 will depend on how long you can hold your breath. We emphasize again that you should not strain. You will find that the duration of breath retention will automatically increase with practice.

Time of practice

Do not practise agnisar kriya with a full stomach. Wait until three or four hours have elapsed after a meal. The best time to practise is early in the morning before breakfast, preferably after going to the toilet. However, if you wish you can do this practice before going to the toilet to help induce a good bowel movement.

Limitations

Those people with high blood pressure, heart problems, ulcers and hernias are advised not to do this kriya.

Women who are pregnant should also refrain from doing the practice. However, they definitely should recommence it after childbirth to tighten up the abdominal and pelvic muscles and bring the internal organs back to normal.

Benefits

Agnisar kriya massages all the abdominal organs, strengthens the muscles and stimulates the associated nerves, encouraging the best

possible functioning of these organs. It promotes the correct secretion of digestive juices and thereby allows optimum assimilation of nutrients from the food that we eat. Furthermore, it prevents and removes various digestive maladies such as constipation, indigestion, hyperacidity, hypoacidity, flatulence and sluggishness of the liver, etc.

If a person has strong and efficient internal organs, he is far more able to avoid disease. Moreover, even if he mistreats his body the organs are easily able to cope with the situation and bring the body back into balance. Agnisar kriya strengthens the organs that lie in the lower part of the trunk. In this way it helps the individual to withstand the onslaught of disease and the general unhealthy conditions of everyday life. This is an important practice and we recommend everyone to try it on a regular basis.

Notes

¹ Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 5

² Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

Topic 4

Asanas: Practice

Both the abdomen and pelvis are important parts of the body, because it is here that the main organs of digestion, elimination and reproduction are situated. To maintain good health it is essential that these organs, together with the associated muscles and nerves, are kept in the best possible working condition. Many people suffer from different ailments, which are directly, or indirectly, caused by the poor condition of this neglected area of the body. Almost all asanas influence these organs, nerves and muscles in one way or another and regular practice of a selected number of asanas, supplemented by surya namaskara, will help to ensure their perfect functioning. The following three asanas are simple, yet they particularly influence this part of the body. They massage and stretch the organs themselves, strengthen the muscles and stimulate the nerves.

USHTRASANA (CAMEL POSE)

In truth we are not sure why this asana is called the camel pose. It is difficult to imagine. We can hazard a guess and say that it is because the thighs, trunk and head resemble the neck of a camel.

Ushtrasana is a reasonably simple asana which gives a wonderful stretch to the thighs, abdomen, ribcage and throat.

Technique

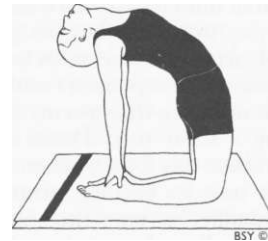
Place a blanket on the floor.

Kneel and adjust the knees and feet so that they are separated by the same width as the hips. This ensures firmness and balance throughout the movement.

The top of the feet should rest on the ground. In the starting position the thighs, trunk and head should all be vertical.

Lean backwards slightly.

Simultaneously turn to the right side and grasp the right heel with the right hand.



Straighten the arm, allowing the arm to support the weight of the body.

Then square the body and grasp the other heel with the left hand.

Allow the head to hang backwards.

Try to relax your whole body, especially the back muscles.

By utilizing the muscles of the back, gently push the thighs, pelvis and abdomen forwards; the back muscles should remain relaxed and the hands in contact with the heels.

The more the back muscles are relaxed, the further one will be able to push the body forward.

While making this movement, one will find that the compression of the back will increase, especially the lower back (lumbar vertebrae). Be careful not to strain.

With practice and sufficient relaxation of the back muscles it will be possible to assume the final pose as shown in the picture above.

Make sure the leg muscles are relaxed.

The whole weight of the body should be supported at the knees; at first this may not be possible but with practice it will be easily achieved.

The arms should bear no weight; in fact they act in the opposite sense.

They should anchor the shoulders to maintain the arch of the back.

In other words, the arms hold the shoulders down so that the flexion of the back can be accentuated; the arms do not hold the shoulders up.

Relax the muscles of the neck, legs, arms and back as much as possible.

The optimum relaxation of the back is important, for this allows the upper part of the body to sag under the influence of gravity; this applies the best possible flexion to the back, without any muscular resistance.

Breathe normally, allowing the arch of the back to accentuate during exhalation.

Remain in the final pose for as long as comfortable.

Then return to the starting position by tensing all the muscles and reversing the method we have already explained.

Ensure that the body is supported and pivoted about one arm as the opposite side of the body is swung forwards.

Do not hurry during this movement.

Beginners

People with stiff backs may find this asana a little difficult at first. If this is the case, start the asana with the balls of the feet on the ground. This raises the heels and allows them to be more easily grasped by the hands.

Some people will still find that they are unable to hold both heels at the same time. A method of gradually overcoming this problem is to merely reach back with one hand and grasp one heel. Hold this position for a second or so, release, twist the body and then grasp the other heel with the other hand. Repeat this alternate twisting movement a number of times. There should be no violent movements, only smooth, slow and relaxed ones. This simple exercise will help to loosen up the back so that one can eventually hold both heels.

Awareness and duration

Maintain awareness of breathing and relaxation of the whole body.

It is difficult to stay in the final pose for more than a few minutes. Aim at eventually maintaining the asana for up to two minutes. Initially, hold the final pose for no more than a few seconds, increasing the duration by a few seconds daily.

Sequence

This is a backward bending asana. As such it should follow or precede any of the asanas which bend the spine forwards.

Limitations

Persons with severe back ailments such as lumbago should not attempt this asana without expert guidance. Those who suffer from an enlarged thyroid should also take care.

Mistakes to avoid

Often people allow the weight of the body to be supported on the arms and heels in the final pose. Although this does not cause any harm, it greatly reduces the efficiency of the asana.

Another common error is to tense the back muscles, which prevents maximum flexion of the spine. Try to relax the muscles as much as you are able.

Do not breathe too deeply in the final position - the chest and abdomen are already stretched, which imposes restraint on breathing. Any attempt to breathe deeply could easily strain associated muscles.

Benefits

This asana applies a wonderful stretch to the whole chest and abdomen, at the same time imparting a thorough massage to the internal organs. As a result, it is useful for alleviating various abdominal ailments associated with the kidneys, pancreas, intestines, liver, etc.

Shallow breathing is often caused by inflexibility of the ribcage. Ushtrasana expands the ribcage and the associated muscles are made more supple. As a result deeper breathing is facilitated.

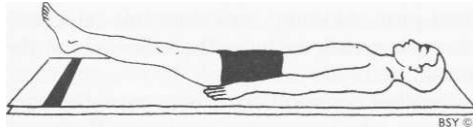
The spine is given a wonderful backward bend, loosening up the vertebrae and stimulating the spinal nerves. The shoulders are pulled backwards while the chest is pushed forwards, helping to correct rounded shoulders and a stooping back.

The front of the neck is fully stretched, applying a good massage to the nerves and organs in this region. In particular, the all important thyroid gland is regulated.

Those people who suffer from backache, neckache or general stiffness in the spine will gain relief through regular practice of this asana.

UTTHANPADASANA (RAISED LEGS POSE)

The Sanskrit word *utthan* means 'raised' and *pada* means 'foot'. Hence the name of the asana. It is a useful asana to perform as it helps to strengthen the abdominal muscles, remove wind and constipation.



Technique

Lie flat on the floor, face upwards.
Place your legs together with the arms on each side of the body.
The arms should remain passive during the whole practice.
Close your eyes. Try to relax your whole body for a short period.
Breathe out deeply.
Then breathe in as deeply as possible.
Slowly raise your legs keeping them together and straight.
It is important that the arms remain as relaxed as possible. In other words, the arms should have no part to play in raising the legs.
The raising of the legs should be achieved by contraction of the abdominal muscles.
This is important for it ensures that the abdominal muscles are strengthened and the internal organs massaged.
Don't raise the legs too high; the feet should be held so that they are between 30 to 60 cms above the ground. If you raise the legs higher, then there is less contraction of the abdominal muscles and the asana loses much of its efficacy.
Hold your legs in the final raised position while simultaneously holding your breath.
Don't strain but remain in the final pose for as long as you can without experiencing any discomfort.
Then slowly lower the legs as you breathe out. On reaching the floor completely relax the entire body.
When your breathing rate has returned to normal the asana can be repeated.

Beginners

This asana is deceptive for it looks far easier than it really is. On the other hand, with a little

practice it can be quickly mastered. Reasonably strong abdominal muscles are required to practise it properly (i.e. with the legs raised only a short distance off the ground). With the majority of people this is not the case and so there is normally some difficulty in performing this asana. Under these circumstances a simplified version can be performed. First of all the arms can be utilized to help raise and hold the legs in the final position. Secondly, the legs can be raised higher so that they make an angle of forty-five degrees or even more with the ground. This reduces the contraction necessary in the abdominal muscles.

However, the practitioner should progressively try to perform the asana so that the arms remain relaxed throughout the practice and the legs are only slightly raised off the floor. This should be the final goal, even if it takes a few weeks or more. In this way the asana will give its optimum benefits and the condition of the abdominal organs and muscles will greatly improve.

Breathing, awareness and duration

Breathing should be normal while lying on the floor, followed by deep inhalation. Practise retention while raising and holding the legs in the final pose. Exhale while lowering the legs. Practise normal breathing while relaxing after completion of the asana.

Awareness should be on the abdomen and the breathing pattern.

Only hold the final position for as long as you can comfortably do so. Don't strain. Repeat the asana as many times as you wish, although three times is a reasonable number.

Sequence

This asana can be done at any time during your practice program.

Benefits

Utthanpadasana is an excellent asana for strengthening the abdominal muscles, massaging the internal organs, removing wind and eliminating constipation. In this respect it is particularly powerful when supplemented by pawanmuktasana¹. While utthanpadasana stretches the abdomen, pawanmuktasana compresses it. If you suffer from flatulence or constipation you should definitely practise these asanas one after the other. In this

context they can be practised at almost any time of the day (apart from after meals), but the best time is early in the morning before going to the toilet.

VYAGHRASANA (TIGER POSE)

This asana is so called because it emulates the stretching movement made by a tiger. A tiger, as well as various other animals, stretches its limbs generously and indulgently in a similar manner to the movements of the asana, especially after awakening from deep sleep.

Vyaghrasana is an excellent asana for exercising the digestive, eliminative and reproductive organs and the entire spine from top to bottom.

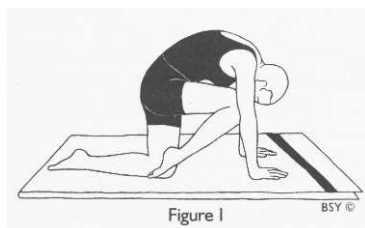
Technique

Kneel on the floor, feet and knees slightly separated.

Lean forwards and place both hands flat on the floor, palms downwards.

Adjust the position of the hands so that they are slightly apart and when your trunk is parallel with the ground the arms and thighs are vertical. The hands should be directly below the shoulders.

Relax your whole body.



Slowly bend the right leg and swing the thigh up to the chest.

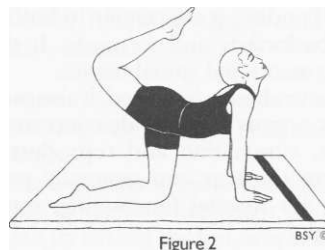
Simultaneously arch your back upwards and bend your head towards the upcoming knee while breathing out. The right foot should not touch the floor.

At the end of this movement try to bring your chin or nose in contact with the right knee while pressing the right thigh against the chest. Fix your eyes on the knee for a second or so. Hold your breath.

Then while inhaling slowly move your right knee backwards again. Don't lower your knee to the ground, but continue the swinging

movement so that the knee moves backwards and upwards behind the body, keeping the right foot off the ground. Simultaneously progressively stretch the right leg so that it is eventually straight and pointing away from the arms.

Then bend your right knee so that the right foot finally points in the direction of the back of the head.



From the position shown in figure 1 to the present position, the head should be slowly bent backwards and the spine arched downwards to attain the position in figure 2.

Try to bring the back of the head as near as possible to the right toes.

Hold your breath in this position for a short period.

Continue to hold your breath and straighten your right leg so that it points backwards again. Exhale while bending the right leg and returning to the position shown in figure 1. This is 1 round.

Do a few more rounds.

Then perform the same actions with the left leg, keeping the right leg fixed on the ground.

Breathing, awareness and duration

Exhale while bringing the knee and thigh towards the chest. Hold the breath while pressing the thigh to the chest and the knee to the chin or nose. Inhale while swinging the knee backwards and stretching the leg. Hold the breath and simultaneously bend the leg so that the foot points to the back of the head. Hold this pose for a short period of time.

Awareness should be on the physical movement and the breathing pattern.

Repeat this asana five times with each leg.

Time of practice

This asana can be done at almost any time of the day except after meals and at any stage during your asana program.

However, if you feel like imitating the animals, and in many ways we have a lot to learn from them, try doing this asana on waking up in the morning. It is a useful practice for stretching the muscles and stimulating the blood circulation.

Benefits

Vyaghrasana flexes and loosens the entire spine by bending it alternately in both directions - backwards and forwards. It thereby tones the associated spinal nerves.

As we have already indicated, it also massages the lower organs of the body concerned with digestion, elimination and reproduction. It loosens up the legs and generally prepares the body for normal functioning, especially after sleep.

Women who suffer from sexual ailments like leucorrhoea should do this asana on a regular basis. It is very helpful, especially when supplemented by other asanas, in rectifying this type of problem. Women who have just completed childbirth should also do this asana to bring about normality and firmness in the relevant areas. Sufferers of sciatica have obtained some relief from the asana, but one should be careful.

Notes

'Book I, Lesson 3, Topic 2

Asanas: Pre-Meditative Exercises

Premeditative exercises are intended to prepare the body for meditative asanas, in which one remains in a specific sitting pose for a certain duration of time. This is the second group of such exercises given¹, and in the next lesson we will introduce all the important classical meditative asanas². It is necessary to describe these asanas at an early stage in this book so that you are able to participate effectively in the meditative practices described in the future, as well as the ones already covered. To practise these meditative asanas one must have reasonably supple legs; they are very difficult with stiff legs. For this reason we intend to recapitulate the relevant exercises that we have already discussed for loosening up the legs, and introduce you to a few more.

Regular and earnest practice of the following exercises will help to loosen up even the stiffest legs and help to prepare you to at least attempt some of the advanced meditation asanas².

Practices

The following exercises are excellent for loosening up the legs:

1. Ardha titali asana (half butterfly)⁰
2. Kawa chalasana (crow walking)⁰
3. Shroni chakra (hip rotation)¹
4. Poorna titali asana (full butterfly)
5. Kashtha takshanasana (chopping wood)
6. Vayu nishkasana (wind releasing pose)

These last three exercises we will cover in this topic. Actually all asanas loosen up the legs in one way or another, but the six that we have given are particularly useful for people initiating a serious practice of meditation.

POORNA TITALI ASANA (FULL BUTTERFLY POSE)

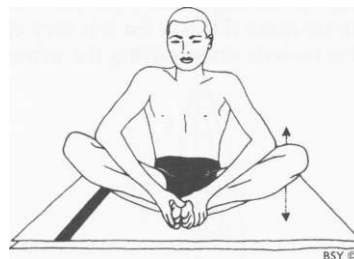
This practice is so called because the legs move up and down like a butterfly's wings, and when mastered it loosens the rigidity of the muscles and tendons in the groins which prevent the

knees from touching the ground during meditative asanas.

Technique

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

Bend the legs sideways and place the soles of both feet in contact with each other. Don't strain, but try to slide the feet as near as possible towards the buttocks keeping the soles in contact.



Stage 1

Hold the feet with the two hands.

Place both the elbows in contact with the inside tops of the thighs.

Then gently push the knees of both legs towards the ground, using the elbows as levers. After a short duration release the legs and allow them to rise upwards.

Again push the legs downwards.

Without strain, try to push the knees as close as possible to the ground.

Repeat this movement as often as available time will permit; up to 10 or 20 times is reasonable.

Stage 2

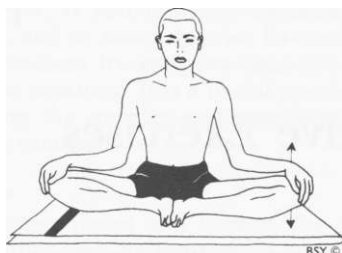
Release the hold of the hands on the feet.

Keep the legs in the same position.

Place the hands on the knees; some people will find this a little difficult, but try.

Relax the legs as much as you can.

Using the arms push the knees up and down.



Try not to utilize the leg muscles in this practice. Do this as many times as you want; 20 to 40 times is a reasonable number if you have the time.

KASHTHA TAKSHANASANA (CHOPPING WOOD)

This may seem a difficult way to chop wood but it is certainly an excellent method of loosening up the legs. Many people will find this exercise quite difficult for it is very easy to topple backwards when raising the arms.



Technique

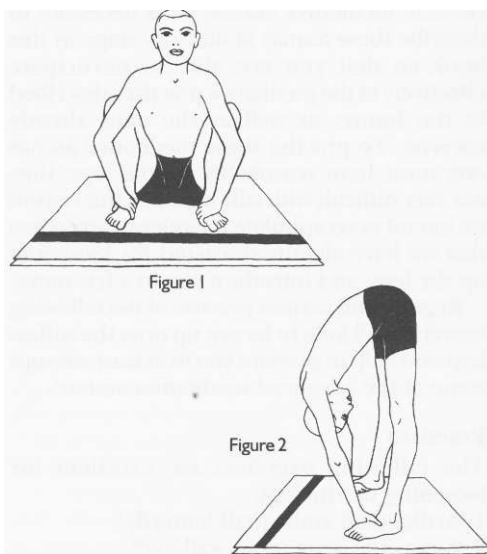
Assume a squatting position. Try to place the soles of the feet flat on the floor, with the knees fully bent and separated. Beginners, if they wish, can do this exercise with their backs close to a wall, but try to depend as little as possible on the aid of the wall for support. Clasp the hands together. Straighten the arms in front of the body. Then while inhaling raise your straight arms as high as possible above the head (see accompanying picture). Exhale while lowering the arms. This is 1 round. Practise as many times as you can - up to 10 or 20.

Don't strain, for this is a position that few people use in everyday life. However, in India, people habitually squat for long periods of time while eating, talking, working and many other activities.

In fact, many Indians are far more comfortable in a squatting position than sitting in a chair.

VAYU NISHKASANA (WIND RELEASING POSE)

As the name suggests this is an excellent practice for removing wind, and at the same time it stretches and loosens up the muscles of the legs.



Technique

Assume a squatting position. Again if necessary sit with your back to a wall. Grasp the feet with the hands, keeping the arms inside the legs (refer to figure 1). Then inhale and raise your head. Exhale and straighten the legs, while simultaneously pointing the top of the head towards the ground. This is shown in figure 2. The legs should be as straight as possible but without strain. Maintain this pose for a short period and hold the breath. Then while inhaling, bend the knees and return to the squatting position. This is 1 round. Do up to 10 rounds.

Note: the hands must hold onto the feet throughout the practice.

Summary

Many people will find some of these practices a little difficult at first. Do not become discouraged, only do your best. With regular practice these six exercises will definitely loosen up your legs, especially when supplemented with other asanas.

Practise these exercises whenever you have the time. They can be done at any time (except directly after meals) and in any place. Aim to do all six, for they each have a part to play in making your legs more supple. The more you practise them the more likely you are to achieve the flexibility needed to eventually master the classical meditative asanas. Remember, an essential factor in loosening up the legs is your mental attitude. If you attempt these six exercises and find that your legs are too stiff, don't immediately despair and stop the practices. In this case you have almost defeated yourself before you have begun. No matter how stiff your legs, you must believe that with practice and time they will eventually become supple.

Notes

- Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 3
- Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

Topic 4

Pranayama: Ujjayi Pranayama and Khechari Mudra

Most techniques based on tantric yoga utilize a pranayama practice called *ujjayi*, supplemented by a tongue lock called *khechari mudra*. Though extremely simple to perform, this combination contributes a lot to the efficacy of meditational techniques. For this reason we are explaining them to you at an early stage in this book.

Furthermore, *ujjayi pranayama* and *khechari mudra* can be immediately incorporated into the meditational techniques of *anuloma viloma* and *prana shuddhi*¹.

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA (THE PSYCHIC BREATH)

This is a unique form of pranayama in which one makes a hissing or whispering sound in the region of the throat. It is far easier to do than to describe.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable position. Any position can be taken but a meditational asana is preferred².

Fold the tongue into *khechari mudra*.

Close the eyes.

Relax the body, holding the neck and head upright.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Partially close the glottis in the throat.

This is done by slightly contracting the throat. If this is done properly you will simultaneously detect a slight contraction of the abdomen. We are a little reticent about writing this fact down for it is so easy for the practitioner to misunderstand and make a special point of contracting the abdominal muscles. This should not be done. If you merely contract the glottis you will automatically feel a slight pulling sensation in the region of the abdomen. As you breathe you should hear a continuous sound emitted from the throat. It should not be very loud, audible to yourself but inaudible

to another person unless he sits very close to you. This sound is caused by the friction of the air as it passes through the restriction that you have made in the glottis by contraction. The sound will be similar to the gentle sound that a baby makes while sleeping. This form of breathing, together with *khechari mudra*, is known as *ujjayi pranayama*.

General advice

It is possible that the reader is still not sure that he is doing this practice correctly. A similar contraction of the throat is obtained if you whisper aloud. Try to whisper loud enough so that a person can hear you a few meters away. This should help indicate the method of contracting the glottis. However, this is only intended as an illustration and whispering should not be incorporated into *ujjayi pranayama*.

Mistakes to avoid

Many people contort their facial muscles when they do *ujjayi*. This is unnecessary. Try to relax the face as much as possible.

Do not over-contract the throat. The contraction should be slight and applied continuously throughout the practice.

KHECHARI MUDRA (TONGUE LOCK)

This is a very simple practice that is also known as *nabho mudra*. Actually there is a far more difficult form of *khechari mudra* that involves various surgical operations to the tongue, lasting over a period of months. The practice we give here, however, can be done by everyone without any preparation or practice.

Technique

Roll your tongue upwards and backwards, so that the lower surface lies in contact with the upper palate.

Stretch the tip of the tongue backwards as far as is comfortable.

Don't strain, for you will be required to hold this position for the duration of ujjayi pranayama.

At first you will feel almost immediate discomfort, but with practice you will find that you can perform khechari mudra for longer periods of time.

When you feel discomfort, release the tongue for a second or so and then again repeat the tongue lock.

This mudra should be incorporated into ujjayi pranayama.

Awareness

This will depend on the meditational practice being performed. However, part of one's awareness should be on the sound emerging from the throat and the corresponding inhalation and exhalation.

Reasons for the practice

In the neck there are two remarkable organs called the carotid sinuses situated on each side of the main artery supplying the brain with blood, in front of the neck and just below the level of the jaws. These small organs help to control and regulate blood flow and pressure. If there is any fall in blood pressure, it is detected by these two sinuses and the relevant message is sent directly to the brain centre. The brain responds immediately by increasing the heartbeat and contracting the arterioles (tiny blood vessels), thus raising the pressure to its normal level. Any rise in blood pressure is also detected by the carotid sinuses, which inform the brain and the opposite steps are taken to rectify the situation.

Tension and stress are associated with high blood pressure. Ujjayi pranayama by applying a slight pressure on these sinuses in the neck causes them to react as though they have detected high blood pressure, with the result that the heartbeat and the blood pressure are reduced below normal. One becomes physically and mentally relaxed. This is the reason why ujjayi is so important in many meditational practices. It induces overall relaxation, which is essential for success in meditation.

Khechari mudra accentuates this pressure in the throat region and consequently on the two carotid sinuses. The reader can experiment

for himself by doing ujjayi firstly without khechari mudra and then with, and compare the difference in pressure.

Ujjayi pranayama is a simple practice but it has many subtle influences on the body and brain, both physical and mental as well as bioplasmic. The slow and deep breathing results in immediate calmness of the mind and body, as well as bringing the bioplasmic body into harmony. Furthermore, the sound at the throat tends to soothe one's whole being. If one remains aware of this sound for a reasonable period of time to the exclusion of other thoughts, then one will feel immediate benefits.

Benefits

As we have said, this practice is mainly used in conjunction with meditation techniques, and it is usually practised in this way. However, those people who merely want to relax themselves can do ujjayi in conjunction with a meditation practice or shavasana³.

People who suffer from insomnia will find it especially useful. Those who suffer from high blood pressure will find that ujjayi helps to reduce the pressure, even if only for a short period of time at first. However, during this period the body and mind will gain some much needed rest.

In general we can say that ujjayi is helpful for all ailments that originate from nervousness or chronic stress.

Notes

¹ Book I, Lesson 5, Topic 5

² Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2

³ Shavasana: Part I - Book I, Lesson 1, Topic 5;
Part 2 - Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 8

Meditation: Practices for Visualization

Many kriya yoga and meditational practices require mental visualization; this is the ability to create mental images at will. Without this skill the practices have less impact and fail to yield their highest fruits. Although not all kriya yoga and meditational techniques require mental visualization, most of them do in one form or another, so it is necessary for future practices to develop this important skill. For this reason, throughout the rest of this book we will describe various practices enabling the reader to gain competence in mental visualization.

Often meditational practices are taught to people who do not have the capability to visualize. Because they lack the necessary preliminary skill to gain the benefits their meditational practices become superfluous. Everyone has the ability to create mental images of objects at will, but like many of our powers it remains dormant.

A few people do develop this power of inner visualization, but they are generally people who must integrate it in their work, such as artists. Most of us spend our lives totally absorbed in the outside world and neglect our inner environment. It is only when we spend some time introspecting that we can develop our vastly untapped potential, including the faculty of mental visualization.

Because this subject is so very important, we therefore ask you to spend a few minutes every day practising inner visualization, beginning with the technique we will introduce you to in this lesson. At first you may find the practice a little difficult. This is to be expected, for as we have already explained most people have unfortunately neglected this aspect of the mind, but with perseverance you will achieve success. At first it seems impossible that a baby will eventually walk and run with sureness and steadiness when one sees him make his first few valiant, but faltering, attempts to stand up. Though the mother and father may

despair, the baby does not, because of this success is attained. It is the same with our efforts to develop the ability to create inner images at will. If you despair then you will defeat yourself before even starting. Be undeterred and determined like a baby. You cannot fail to accomplish your goal.

RECALL BY REVISUALIZATION

This technique is primarily intended to develop the ability to recall past events and to recreate them visually. Everyone remembers past events; in fact the mind is continually bombarded by them, especially highly unpleasant or pleasant ones. However, this process of remembering is generally imposed upon us; it occurs spontaneously and happens without conscious effort. Further, we rarely relive the past in the form of images, but generally in the form of thoughts and feelings. This practice requires conscious effort to recall specific past events in the form of mental images. One tries to watch a past event as though watching a television screen.

Time and place

This technique can be performed in almost any place and at any time. However, the atmosphere should be quiet and conducive to introspection. Furthermore, it should be such a time when you are not busy carrying out some form of work. For example, don't try to do this practice if you are driving your car down the main street.

If you are sitting in a bus or a train or if you are a passenger in a car then you can practise it. In other words, practise in any situation where your mind is unoccupied with the affairs of the world.

Technique

You can create your own technique for there are endless possibilities.

Each time you practice this method choose a new situation to recall and revisualize. The following are a few suggestions:

Practice 1

Remember a walk which you took recently beside the river. You are alone.

Keeping your eyes closed, try to mentally create the scenery that you saw.

Visualize in front of your closed eyes the river and the footpath, the trees and the grass, the fish and the birds.

As you walk try to see all these objects pass your vision.

Create the picture as vividly as you can and as close as possible to the scenery that you actually encountered.

View the scene as a whole but also try to discern the individual objects: the branches of the trees, the expressions on the faces of the people you met coming in the opposite direction.

Recall, visualize and relive every detail.

Practice 2

Imagine that you are driving your car or riding your cycle to a friend's house. Visualize the route and the cars that you overtake or meet. See the pedestrians, the colour of the sky and feel the sunshine warming your body. Visualize as closely as possible every detail as you actually saw it.

Practice 3

If you are reading a book, close your eyes and try to see a clear picture of the situation and environment that the book is attempting to describe and convey to you.

Practice 4

Sit quietly in a room and study the furniture and objects around you. Observe carefully, trying to see the positioning and nature of your surroundings.

Then close your eyes and visualize the outer environment in as much detail as you can remember.

General summary

As we have pointed out, there is no end to the scenes that you can recreate - the only limit is your inventiveness. We emphasize again that these practices may be a little difficult in the

beginning, but they will become easier and easier as you open up your inner faculties. These practices will also develop your memory power as well as increase your awareness and sensitivity to your surroundings. Most people walk around with their eyes closed, with little awareness of what is happening around them, until they suddenly come into conflict with the environment, when they are forced to become alert. If we were asked to remember what we had seen on our journey home from work, for example, how many of us could give a comprehensive description? Not many. This practice develops awareness of our surroundings.

But remember, the important purpose of this technique is to unfold your capacity to create mental images and to dispose of them at will.

Daily Practice Program

An integrated sadhana program should contain asanas, pranayama and meditational techniques practised in the correct sequence. To be able to gain optimum benefits it is essential that these categories of practices be performed for a reasonable period of time daily. We don't expect you to be overwhelmed by yoga practices, but at the same time at this stage a minimum of half an hour should be assigned every day to these techniques. In fact more time is preferred.

For those who have time we have now included a one and a half hour program. This can either be done at one time in the morning

or split into two and practised both during the morning and the evening. In this way the morning practice will set you up for the day ahead and the evening practice will slow you down, so that you have a good, refreshing night's sleep. The practitioner must use his discretion in this respect.

Keep on with the practices of nadi shodhana pranayama described in Lesson 5¹.

Anuloma viloma and prana shuddhi² should continue, but supplement them with ujjayi pranayama and khechari mudra.

Practise the visualization technique whenever you have spare time.

Practice	Rounds	Minutes
Program 1: duration 1 1/2 hour		
Surya Namaskara	to suit you	8
Shavasana	—	4
Ardha Titali Asana	50 each leg	3
Shroni Chakra	10 each way	3
Poorna Titali Asana	—	3
Kawa Chalasana	—	3
Kashtha Takshanasana	—	3
Vayu Nishkasana	10 rounds	3
Utthanpadasana	2 times	3
Vyaghrasana	—	4
Bhujangasana	—	3
Shashankasana	—	3
Ushtrasana	2 times	3
Meru Vakrasana	2 each side	3
Shavasana	—	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama:		
Stage 1	—	5
Stage 2	—	10
Meditation practice: Anuloma Viloma and Prana Shuddhi with Ujjayi Pranayama and Khechari Mudra		
	—	23
		90

Program 2: duration 1 hour

Surya Namaskara	to suit you	7
Shavasana	–	3
Ardha Titali Asana	35 each leg	2
Shroni Chakra	10 each way	2
Poorna Titali Asana	–	2
Utthanpadasana	2 times	3
Vyaghrasana	–	3
Bhujangasana	–	3
Shashankasana	–	3
Ushtrasana	2 times	3
Meru Vakrasana	1 each side	2
Shavasana	–	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama:		
Stage 1	–	3
Stage 2	–	7
Meditation practice: Anuloma Viloma and Prana Shuddhi with Ujjayi		
Pranayama and Khechari Mudra	–	14
		<hr/> 60

Program 3: duration 3/4 hour

Surya Namaskara	to suit you	6
Shavasana	–	3
Ardha Titali Asana	35 each leg	2
Shroni Chakra	10 each way	2
Poorna Titali Asana	–	2
Utthanpadasana	2 times	3
Vyaghrasana	–	3
Bhujangasana	–	3
Ushtrasana	2 times	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama:		
Stage 1	–	3
Stage 2	–	4
Meditation practice: Anuloma Viloma and Prana Shuddhi with Ujjayi		
Pranayama and Khechari Mudra	–	11
		<hr/> 45

Program 4: duration 1/2 hour		
Surya Namaskara	to suit you	6
Shavasana	—	3
Utthanpadasana	2 times	3
Ushtrasana	2 times	3
Shashankasana	—	3
Bhujangasana	—	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama:		
Stage 1	—	3
Stage 2		6
		30

Notes

¹ Book I, Lesson 5, Topic 4

² Book I, Lesson 5, Topic 5