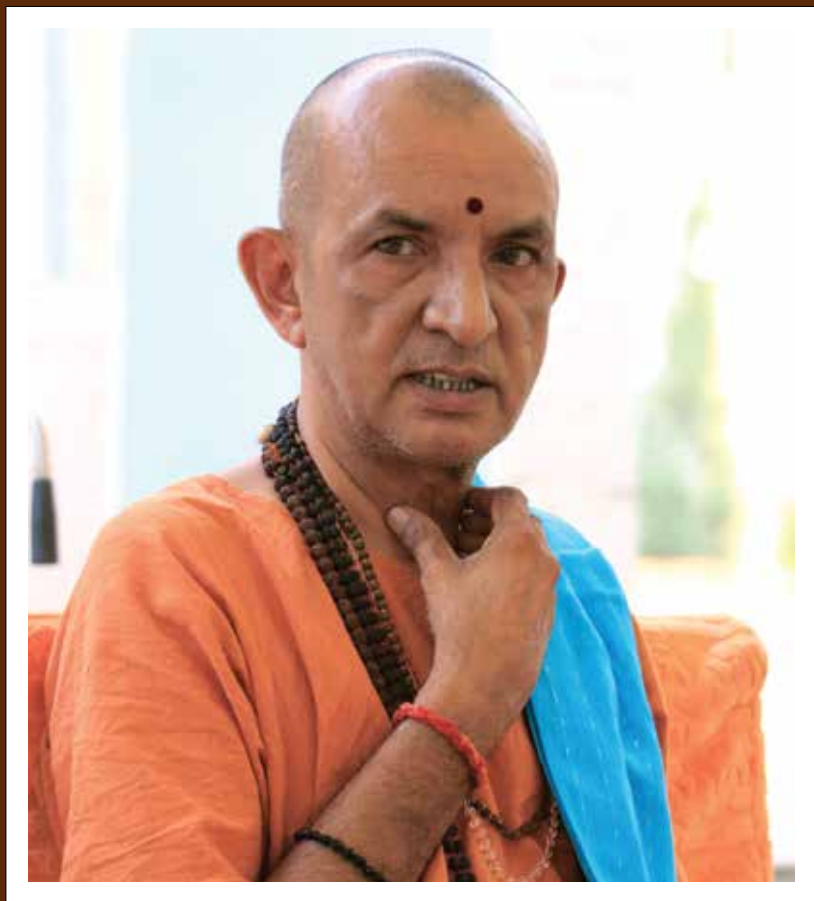


Hatha Yoga Yatra 5

From Pranayama to Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Hatha Yoga Yatra 5



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Hatha Yoga Yatra 5

From Pranayama to Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
during the trainings of Hatha Yoga Yatra 3 & 4, held from
13th to 19th May 2019, at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth,
Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Hatha Yoga Yatra 5 – From Pranayama to Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

© Bihar School of Yoga 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission.

The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

Published by Yoga Publications Trust

First edition 2023

ISBN: 978-93-94604-26-1

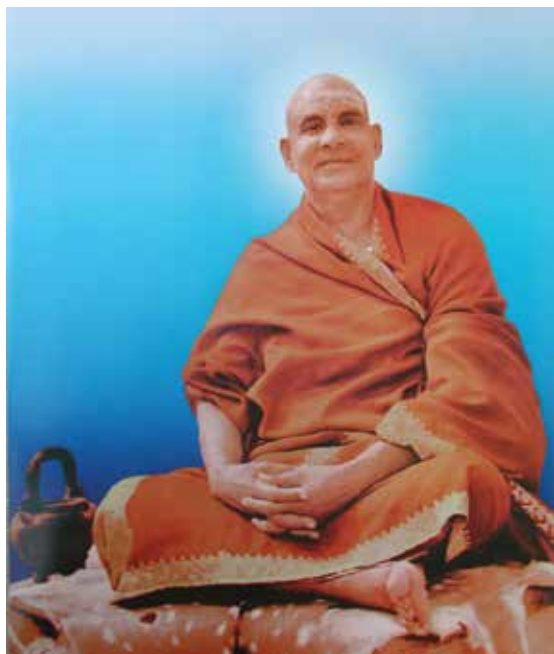
Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan, Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

www.sannyasapeeth.net

www.satyamyogaprasad.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

Contents

Preface: The 2nd Chapter of Yoga	<i>ix</i>
Journey with Sri Swamiji	1
Exploring the Dimension of Prana	18
Hues of Pratyahara	40
Impressions of Participants	49
The Opening of the Bud	53
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Practical Session	61
Appendix 2: Hatha Yoga Pratyahara	80

Preface:

The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The mandate Swami Satyananda received was to propagate the science of yoga and take yoga from “shore to shore and door to door”. In the days of Swami Sivananda, yoga was far from the globally recognized and accepted word it is today. Yoga was considered a spiritual practice reserved for sannyasins and renunciates who had renounced society and were seeking enlightenment. It was not seen as something that could be incorporated into society and practised by the general public.

When the Bihar School of Yoga was established, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle of yoga as practical and scientific systems were unknown, even in Indian society. From the beginning, yoga training and propagation by the Bihar School of Yoga took the form of intensive residential programs, in which yoga was taught as a way to qualitatively enhance physical health, mental peace, emotional harmony. A sequence of progression in yoga was defined fifty years ago by Swami Satyananda, by giving systematic training first in hatha yoga, raja yoga, and kriya yoga, as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. Simultaneously, training in *antaranga*, internal, aspect of karma yoga, bhakti and jnana yoga was provided through the lifestyle and inspiration of the ashram environment. A holistic or integral yoga system developed in which the yoga aspirant

could awaken and integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands. The different *angas*, limbs, of yoga become the means of attaining this personal harmony and integrated expression.

In the early 1940s, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by teachers and masters of different traditions, introducing the idea that through the practice of yoga one could explore the body, mind, emotions, and have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. The first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to human society according to the need of the society at that time. In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety, tension and to improve the physical and mental functions. In the 1980s, research into the various possibilities and potentials of yoga to assist and promote physical and mental health took the forefront. By the 1990s, a rapid increase in the popularity of the practice of asana was evident across the globe. The asana component of yoga had been accepted worldwide and other components of yoga were relegated to the background and largely ignored by the mainstream practitioners and majority of yoga teachers. Today, 28 million people are practising yoga in the United States alone and statistics estimate 300 million practitioners worldwide.

In 2013, the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers, students and aspirants participated in this historic event either in person or through the internet. The Convention was a milestone that marked the completion of fifty years of yoga propagation. The mandate of taking yoga from shore to shore and door to door was fulfilled. Over a fifty-year period, with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance had taken place. The chapter of yoga propagation was complete and when one chapter closed, the next chapter opened.

Thus the World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga.

The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision of yoga not as a practice but as a *vidya*, a wisdom to be understood, imbibed and expressed in life. This understanding of the fundamental need for integral development was the vision of Swami Satyananda, which he imparted and taught through the concept of the *yoga chakra*, or the wheel of yoga.

The second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and the teachings which are being presented are not concerned with propagation of the practices of yoga. Isolated practices of yoga do not bring about the qualitative change and spiritual evolution intended and envisaged by the seers. The transcendence of the negative and restricting conditions and the real evolution and growth of the personality takes place only when the *vidya* of yoga is comprehended, absorbed and realized.

The profundity of yogic understanding must increase and the depths of yoga must be fathomed, if the *vidya* is to be realized and maintained for future generations. The experience and wisdom of accomplished yogis and spiritual scientists is recorded in the scriptural and classical texts detailing each *anga* of yoga. The second chapter teachings are a progressive effort to discern and elucidate the experiences and realizations of the ancient seers, within the blueprint of the *yoga chakra*.

For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The *yoga vidya* dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to *sadhana* and makes a sincere effort to experience the aims defined by the different *angas* of yoga. Until that sincerity awakens, the commitment to adhere to the system and the *vidya* of yoga is lacking. With sincerity, seriousness and commitment, each aspirant has to accept responsibility for their own development and betterment in life.

Ultimately, yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. For, once the yogic principles are imbibed and become part of life, the attitudes, perceptions, interactions, the mind, actions and

behaviours will improve. To meet the challenge of the second chapter, the expressive and the behavioural components of yoga, the antaranga and the bahiranga aspects, have to come together. When head, heart and hands unite, an ordinary moment can become divine. An ordinary life can become a divine life.

Journey with Sri Swamiji

13 May 2019



In this Hatha Yoga Yatra, we will go back into the original teachings of Sri Swami Satyananda, and try to imbibe what he has said about the different aspects of hatha yoga to refine and deepen our understanding of hatha yoga. We will look at what he said on the subject in different satsangs and lectures. First, a passage in which Sri Swamiji defines the classical sources of hatha yoga.

In yogic literature, we have a few reliable texts on hatha yoga. One is by Yogi Gorakhnath which is known as the *Gorakhsha Samhita*. Another text is *Gheranda Samhita* by the great Sage Gheranda. Besides these two, there is another very well-known text on hatha yoga which

is *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Yogi Swatmarama. There is a fourth text on hatha yoga known as *Hatharatnavali*. All of these texts were supposed to have been written between the 6th and 9th century CE.

There are also minor references to hatha yoga in the ancient Upanishads. The Upanishads date back further than the Buddhist period, which was around the 6th century BCE. The references to hatha yoga made in the Upanishads prove that the science was known much before this period. There is another very important text known as *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the story of Sri Krishna. In that voluminous book, there are several chapters containing references to hatha yoga.

This is just to give you a glimpse of the historical aspect of hatha yoga. For centuries these books have guided spiritual aspirants. Many sects were also formed in India, Nepal and Tibet on the basis of hatha yoga. What is the subject matter of these books? Is it just to maintain a youthful body, or to obtain *siddhis*, psychic powers, or is it to develop the capacity to awaken kundalini and attain samadhi? If we analyze these texts, the purpose becomes clear.

Sri Swamiji has mentioned four sources of information on hatha yoga. We are mainly using two, but there are two more. Yogi Swatmarama's *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is the most common version of hatha yoga, which can be practised even within the home environment. The approach is developing the awareness of energy and spirit while living in the community, therefore the presentation is much more social than hatha yogic in nature.

Gheranda Samhita is another book on hatha yoga, and it has more intricate details of practices, indicating that to practise this type of hatha yoga you have to be a recluse. In the social environment, you will not be able to attain the aspirations given by Sage Gheranda. He states that in the hatha yogic process, there is merger of senses with prana,

prana with mind, mind with spirit. This progression of merging is defined as hatha yoga where there is gradual dissolution of each aspect. If you go into this path of experience, the mental dynamism needed for surviving, working and being active in society is not possible; you will become a less effective person in society. As a recluse, you can devote yourself to the higher experiences and merge one aspect into another until you reach the apex of hatha yoga.

Similarly, *Goraksha Samhita* is one of the original books of hatha yoga, purely focused on defining the practices of asanas. *Hatharatnavali*, the fourth book that Sri Swamiji mentions, refers more to the chakra and kundalini aspect of hatha yoga, with references to the Upanishads and other scriptures.

The time log of humanity and yoga

There is a thought that has been developing since the last Hatha Yoga Yatra, and I would like to share it with you. The human civilization, from the time humans first emerged on this planet up to today, spans many millions of years. If you convert that entire time period into a scale of twenty-four hours, then for twenty-three hours and forty minutes we lived a nomadic life. Then came the agricultural age, the industrial age, the space age, the atomic age, the digital age. All this happened in the last twenty minutes of that timescale.

In what science calls the nomadic age, people were extremely physically active. They had to struggle for everything, from food to safety to security, so their need was not of physical yoga at that time. In addition, they were all connected with *satya*, truth. They were asking, ‘What is all this? Who am I? What is that thing blinking in the sky? What is the round white disk in the night sky?’ All these questions and enquiries gave birth to ideas, thoughts and philosophies about nature, God and the individual.

At that time, contemplation was the main theme. They would look at the stars and say, ‘These stars, one month ago I saw them there, now they are here.’ This is how they

discovered astrology and astronomy, the cycles of nature, weather patterns, months, seasons, confluences, conjunctions. Everything was being looked into with a new vision, with awe and wonder: ‘What is all this and where do I fit in?’ Therefore, most of the spiritual beliefs and philosophies emerged at that time, as human beings were connected with themselves, questioning themselves, looking for answers in nature, trying to discover what was all that above, whether they were connected to that or not, what was all this down here, whether they were connected to this or not. What was the power that moved them? What was the power that maintained and sustained the visible creation, the sun, moon, the stars? All this reflection gave birth to spiritual thoughts and ideas about body, mind, spirit, God, nature, and so on.

Contemplation was followed with discovery. The question ‘What is this?’ was followed with, ‘I think it could be that.’ ‘My experience and your experience match, and if we are having a similar experience, it might be a condition that we go into.’ If I was laughing, I heard my laughter for the first time. Then I saw another person making the same Ha-Ha-Ha sound, then another person, and I felt that energy rising, that happiness. I wondered what it was, from where I was getting that feeling. In this way, the whole time was spent on trying to figure out how this clock ticks. Thus *jnana yoga* was the first yoga to emerge, the yoga of enquiry.

Once the thoughts became crystalized through enquiry, then *bhakti yoga* developed: the connection, feeling, emotion, faith, the conviction and devotion. From rational thought, human beings moved into emotional participation in what they believed in. At this time, society changed. The agricultural society began to form, communities developed, settlements appeared; farming, storing and hoarding started. The whole set-up of nomadic life changed into a communal and domesticated life.

In the communal society, *karma yoga* developed: “There is a big rock, let us all go and move it together.” “There is a big tree. Let us all go and chop it together.” The mind

changed from the isolated individualistic aspiration to communal aspiration and communal bonding. At this time, the ashrams developed, where all the knowledge gained from enquiry in the previous era was imparted within the gurukul framework. Even in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in the fourth chapter on 'Jnana Karma Sannyasa Yoga', it is said that first this knowledge was known to such and such, then that person taught it to such and such, then that person told about it to such and such: information being transmitted from one person to the next. All this happened during what in modern terms are called the agricultural and industrial periods, the last twenty minutes.

Emergence of hatha yoga

During this period hatha yoga emerged, for now the life-style had changed. It was a more static life. Even sadhus, renunciates, would contemplate sitting in one posture for long periods. The body would become stiff, so hatha yoga emerged: 'This animal is stretching like this, I can do the same.' The cat pose: 'Ah, my spine feels relieved of pressure and tension.' In this way, by observing animals and nature, they started moving their bodies in the same manner. These movements were called asana. That was the beginning of the physical aspect of the so-called theoretical, philosophical, spiritual, contemplative system of that time. Thus, hatha yoga was not the first yoga to emerge. Historically, it emerged at a much later period, although the credit of information on hatha yoga goes to the first teacher, Lord Shiva.

When the yogis started to practise hatha yoga and go deep into the yogic experience, they said, "This has allowed us to know about our life and existence and we can use the energy within this body to attain something higher and qualitative." With this idea in mind, all the practices were gathered from all the sources and given a definite direction. Hatha yoga became the first in the sequence, although it was discovered later. For the body it became the first one. Hatha yoga was also incorporated into the lifestyle that people lived at that

time. It was not a practice for them. For us it is a practice, for them it was as natural and spontaneous as waking up, cleaning their teeth and taking a bath. The entire routine was different. It was not the routine that is followed today. They did not work in industries and factories. Therefore, it was a part of their normal activity.

Yoga today

In modern times, the appreciation of hatha yoga has gone. In the 1960s it was seen as a physical fitness program: trim your waistline, stretch your spine, look beautiful, the skin should have a glow. In the seventies, a lot of investigation and research commenced on the effects of asanas and how they improve health conditions. Along with this, there was also research on mind, mantra, psychic phenomena, and so on. There were also countries that undertook secret psychic research in yoga. Some of that was published in the book, *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*, which spoke about the army trying to use meditation for clairvoyance, to communicate in the absence of phones: “Telepathically I am sending you a message, go and shoot that person.” This was the trend in the seventies. In the eighties, there was a big thrust on including yoga in different strata of society such as educational institutions, medical and therapeutic centres, prisons, rehabilitation centres, old-age homes. Everywhere, yoga was making an inroad.

After this came the digital revolution which started in the eighties and grew to its full stature by 2000, in twenty years’ time. The social mind-set became extroverted and the practices that were used to promote health were now used as therapy. The whole aspect of yoga therapy emerged and people continue to focus on that, although therapy is not the aspiration of yoga. The external influences have given rise to a gross awareness so that the needs and demands have become physical, and a disconnection has taken place from the mental and the spiritual.

Today, if you look at the global scene, everywhere it is mainly ‘yogercise’: yoga exercise. You exercise in yoga. There



has been a shift of mind-set which has made people more physically-oriented. 'I can do this; it will improve my health, my looks, my body. It will make me feel lighter. It will firm up my body.' These are the ideas that people have when they go to a studio or a gym and take yoga lessons from a trainer. They go with the idea of physical fitness, not of a lifestyle or something to improve the quality of mind and spirit. Thus, the yogic system is on one side and personal aspirations of individuals are on the other side.

The fourfold path

Keeping the above in mind, you have to recognize that your involvement with yoga is fourfold. One, as a yoga practitioner. You come due to your need, or your curiosity, or maybe somebody has given you a free pass to a yoga class, or maybe you wish to become socially acceptable: people should see you walking around with your yoga mat and say, "Oh you are practising yoga. How spiritual!" In fact, at many places of the world today, carrying a yoga mat while you are walking on the street is a fashion.

In this way, at first yoga is more a practice to satisfy your own need, curiosity, manage your stress, anxiety and tension. After achieving that, people disconnect from yoga. After all,

you don't go to the doctor when you are healthy; you visit the doctor only when you are sick. However, there are some people who go deeper and try to explore and experience yoga, 'I feel like this when I do this. What is it?' These people come in the category of yoga sadhakas who want to deepen their understanding and awareness of yoga.

The third category is yoga lifestyle, 'Now I know enough to apply these principles in my normal routines in life: sleep, food, waking up, exercise, relaxation. I know what I can do whenever I feel a certain condition setting in, I can take preventive steps. Instead of falling sick for sixty days in one year, I will fall sick for maybe thirty days in one year. I will have fifty percent improvement.' Applying that knowledge and understanding to improve and promote health and happiness is lifestyle. When you begin to live that, then it becomes the culture of your life.

This is how the journey has been so far. However, the sources indicate that one has to be aware of the subtle things that everyone was aware of before, due to less distraction and more self-awareness. What people today call mindfulness is nothing but self-awareness. People are not self-aware. Last year, after a program in one of the European countries, a letter came to us thanking for the program and the content of the program. It said, "After this program, when I was walking on the streets of my city, for the first time I observed the trees. I have been living here for forty years but had never observed the trees. For the first time, I am noticing the nature in my city." It was a heartfelt letter, and it made us realize that people are so closed in the mind and so self-absorbed that they are not aware. They see things yet they do not register them. The mind has become totally connected to the material experience and expression rather than the mental or the spiritual.

When it comes to the mental experience, people try to suppress it, and when it comes to the spiritual, they become hypocrite saints overnight. They become prophets overnight with eyes on profit. There is this natural split.

Coming back to hatha yoga, the yogis classified it for wellbeing which is not only physical but also pranic. In the next talk, Sri Swamiji is talking on the term 'hatha yoga':

Intent of hatha yoga

Hatha is a combination of two letters, *Ha* and *Tha*. *Ha* represents the moon and *Tha* the sun. Sun and moon should not be understood as the external sun and moon. It has been explained in hatha yoga that sun represents *prana*, the life force, and moon represents the mind, the mental energy. So, hatha yoga means the union of the pranic and mental forces. When union between the pranic and mental forces takes place, then a great event occurs in man. This is the awakening of higher consciousness.

An important point is that hatha yoga is not only the union of prana and mind. In fact, it means the union of prana and mind with the Self. Now, let us make this a little more clear. In the spine, there are three nadis known as ida, pingala and sushumna. Nadi here does not mean nerve; it is not a physical channel. *Nadi* means flow, like the flow of electricity within a cable. One wire carries the negative force, and another carries the positive force of electricity. So, in hatha yoga, ida nadi represents the negative force, the flow of consciousness; pingala nadi represents the positive force, the flow of vital energy, and sushumna nadi represents the neutral force, the flow of spiritual energy.

The union, the connection between these three flows, occurs in ajna chakra. Therefore, let us revise the literal meaning of hatha yoga. Commentators have said union between ida and pingala is hatha yoga. But I am obliged to say that union of ida and pingala with sushumna is hatha yoga.

When this union takes place there is an automatic awakening in mooladhara chakra at the base of the spine. This is the seat of primal energy or *kundalini*

shakti. The awakening of kundalini is the subject matter of hatha yoga. Through the practices that are taught in hatha yoga, union is brought about. As a result of that union, the awakening of kundalini takes place. When awakening occurs, then kundalini ascends to higher realms of consciousness, and finally it is established in sahasrara chakra.

When kundalini is established in sahasrara chakra, that is called yoga, not hatha yoga. This is the difference between yoga and hatha yoga. By yoga I mean the union between Shakti and Shiva. Shakti is kundalini energy; Shiva is the supreme consciousness seated in sahasrara chakra. When awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra, then kundalini starts ascending.

She ascends through sushumna, not through ida and pingala. Sushumna is the highway for kundalini. It passes through various chakras, sometimes all of a sudden and sometimes very slowly. When it unites with ida and pingala in ajna chakra, that is called hatha yoga. Then, after this first union, it forges ahead to sahasrara chakra. There it unites with supreme consciousness, Shiva. That is called yoga, which means ultimate union. Therefore, the ultimate object of hatha yoga is to experience yoga.

Sri Swamiji has given a perspective of hatha yoga, using ideas from all the four books or branches of hatha yoga. Kundalini and chakra is the subject matter of *Hatharatnavali*. Pranayama, mudra and pratyahara is the subject matter of *Gheranda Samhita*. Shatkarma is the subject matter of *Goraksha Samhita*. Asana, pranayama, and the whole physical and social aspect is the subject of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Sri Swamiji has brought in all the four, saying that the ultimate aim is the coming together of ida, pingala and sushumna; positive, negative and neutral, through which kundalini ascends.

Thus, the awakening of kundalini becomes the aim of hatha yoga. From this perspective and also that of the

classical tradition, hatha yoga is seen as a preliminary practice to kundalini yoga. Sadhakas or adepts who have perfected kundalini yoga have gone through hatha yoga, not raja yoga. They have bypassed the whole raja yoga system dealing with the mind, using the concept of prana to awaken kundalini.

When you are driving a car, you use four gears and also the neutral gear. The neutral gear allows you to move into a higher or a lower gear. In the same manner, prana is the neutral gear in life, in the *koshas*, the sheaths of the personality. The starting point is *annamaya kosha*, the physical body. The next is *pranamaya kosha*, the neutral body. With pranamaya you can go into *manomaya kosha*, the mind; or into *vijnanamaya kosha*, the consciousness, or *anandamaya kosha*, the spiritual dimension. You can use prana to go straight from annamaya kosha to vijnanamaya or anandamaya. Therefore, hatha yoga can become an intense practice if done in the right manner. Just with this practice it is possible to awaken kundalini and experience bliss. This is the complete hatha yoga that Sri Swamiji has spoken of. Then he continues:

Now, coming to the practical side. In the raja yoga of Patanjali, you have eight steps: yama and niyama are the first two, asana and pranayama make it four, pratyahara and dharana six, and dhyana and samadhi make it eight. The contention of Patanjali is that you have to perfect yama and niyama first. Without the perfection of yama and niyama, asana and pranayama, etc. will not give the desired results.

The authors of hatha yoga do not say that yama and niyama form the basis of this system. The order is different – first comes shatkarma. Neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhati, trataka and nauli constitute shatkarma, and with these, hatha yoga begins. But shatkarma alone does not constitute the whole of hatha yoga. After shatkarma comes asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. Then comes pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

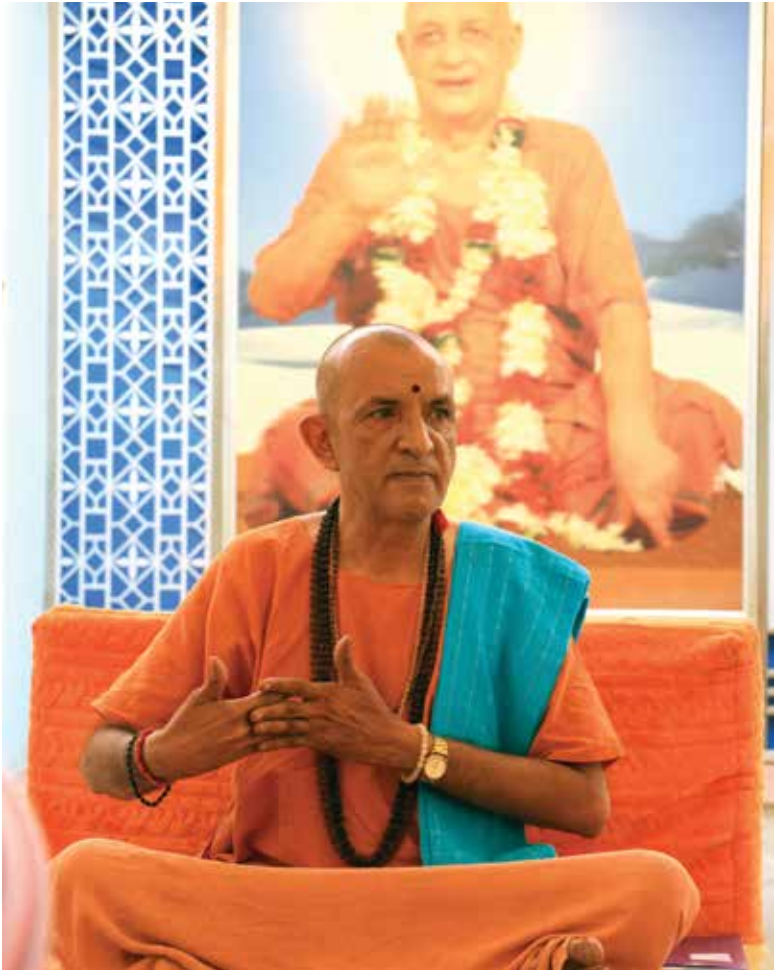
Hatha yoga begins with shatkarma, and it says that you should first purify the whole body – the stomach, intestines, nervous system and other systems. Then you should start asana and pranayama. After this you should go on to practise kriyas like vajroli, sahajoli, khechari, and shambhavi. Then you should practise mudra such as vipareeta karani mudra, yoga mudra and others. In this way, it will be possible to get into deep meditation.

The right conditions

Hatha yoga begins with purification, as it is a natural condition of the body to be blocked, to be stiff and tight. Thus, purification, looseness and flexibility, clearing of blocks, and bringing the body to its optimum state and then moving into the pranic dimension is hatha yoga. The first practices, or foundation of hatha yoga, are shatkarma.

Raja yoga is a mental practice; here you have to focus more on the mental behaviour. For this reason, Patanjali has made yama and niyama the primary conditions to perfect the raja yoga journey. He says that if you are able to hold the mind in the conditions of satya, ahimsa, asteya, aparigraha, brahmacharya, shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya, Ishwara pranidhana, then managing and transcending the mind becomes easier and you move into samadhi. You are creating the right conditions for that experience. Unfortunately, over a period of time, the yamas and niyamas began to be identified with religious ethics and beliefs. That is totally incorrect, for goodness in life is not bound by religion, ethics or morality; the good expression in life is the natural outcome of an enlightened person.

Hatha yoga speaks not of yamas and niyamas, but of *bhumikas*. Although there are twenty yamas and twenty niyamas given for hatha yoga, the starting is with *bhumikas*, conditions, that you need to develop to move on to a subsequent stage.



In the context of bhumikas, Sri Swamiji says in another satsang that he does not understand why yamas and niyamas have to be practised. He says the right condition has to be created so that yamas and niyamas can be spontaneously expressed. This shows the other side of the coin. If you say right now, “From today I will follow satya,” that will become a tension for you. In speaking every word, in thinking every thought, you will be under tension, ‘Satya satya satya, I should

not deviate.’ The whole intent of creating a harmonious condition of satya is gone, rather tension has been created, ‘Oh I have to be careful. I should not say this or do this.’ There is more self-obsession.

Sri Swamiji says that instead of imposing something on yourself, create the right condition for it to flower naturally. If you are able to disassociate from *asatya*, untruth, satya will emerge naturally, without any tension. Just as to grow a flower you create the right condition in the soil with water, compost, sunlight, air, porosity of soil. If the conditions are right, the emergence will take place. That is what Sri Swamiji is saying: create the right conditions. These conditions are known as *bhumikas* in hatha yoga. The *yamas* and *niyamas* of hatha yoga will help, but here they are secondary. Primary is the condition that you develop. This is a major difference in the *raja* yogic and hatha yogic understanding of *yama* and *niyama*:

The subtle force

The authors of the hatha yoga texts were very much aware of the difficulty of controlling the fluctuations of the mind. In fact, it is not possible to control the fluctuations of the mind. You may do it for some time, but still you will not be able to succeed all the time.

So they designed another method. The hatha yoga texts say clearly that by controlling *prana*, the mind is automatically controlled. It seems that *prana* and mind exert an influence on each other. When the *pranas* are restless, they affect the mind and vice versa. Some people do find it easier to control the mind than to control the *prana*. But I have given a lot of thought to this. Perhaps a few people may succeed, but most people cannot control the mind by the mind.

By practising *pranayama* correctly, the mind is automatically conquered. But the effects of *pranayama* are not that simple to manage. It creates extra heat in the body, it awakens some of the centres in the brain, it can stop the production of sperm and testosterone. It

may also bring down the temperature of the inner body. It may even bring down the rate of the respiration. It may change the waves of the brain. When these changes take place, you may not be able to handle it. Therefore, hatha yoga says that shatkarma must be practised first.

The purpose of emphasizing shatkarma is then to prepare a base for the higher practices of pranayama. Shatkarma purifies the whole system and removes blockages on the paths of ida and pingala. When there are no blockages on these paths, the breath in both nostrils flows systematically. When the left nostril flows, it means ida is active. When the right nostril flows, it means pingala is active. Again, when the left nostril flows, it means the mind is dominant. When the right nostril flows, it means the pranas are dominant. The flow of breath in the alternate nostrils indicates the position of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems.

Now, if ida is flowing and you are practising meditation, you will go to sleep and your brain will produce delta waves. If the right nostril is flowing and you are trying to meditate, your brain will produce beta waves and you will be thinking so many thoughts at the same time. When both nostrils flow equally, that means sushumna is flowing. When sushumna flows, you can meditate without any difficulty.

There are many varieties of pranayama, such as nadi shodhana, bhramari, kapalbhathi, bhastrika, ujjayi. These are not actually pranayama, they are varieties of the practice. In the hatha yoga texts, it is clearly indicated that retention of the breath is pranayama. The gap between inhalation and exhalation is pranayama. When you inhale and exhale, in between there is a gap. That gap may be for one second, ten seconds or one minute. This is called breath retention – *kumbhaka*.

When I use the word pranayama I do not mean nadi shodhana, bhastrika, bhramari. I am talking about the

retention. In the practice of pranayama, you should be able to retain the breath, but it is not that easy.

To practise pranayama with a proper base, you must be able to perform the bandhas. Pranayama without bandha has no meaning. First, you should know what the bandhas are. Pranayama should be practised with bandhas, in the proper sitting posture and in the appropriate mudra. Either *shambhavi mudra*, focusing the gaze on the eyebrow centre, or *nasikagra mudra*, focusing on the nose tip, should be used.

The combination of mudra, bandha, pranayama and asana will help you to conquer the mind. He who can conquer prana, can conquer the mind. And according to hatha yoga, it is easier to conquer prana first and then the mind.

The guru instructs his disciple on hatha yoga, and tells him about the universal Shakti, of which the individual Shakti is an aspect. At a certain moment of experience, one breaks the barriers of the limited mind. When the barriers are broken, then the individual Shakti merges with the universal Shakti.

The lower mind, which is not truth, becomes one with the cosmic mind. After all, the shakti is one. On account of our ignorance, we have perceived ourselves as different, and that erroneous perception has to be broken. I am not I, and you are not you. We are one. Even our bodies are not different. It is all one, but we are trying to realize this from a limited standpoint. That experience must dawn whereby we realize that the diversity is not true, only unity is real.

In the last forty to fifty years, hatha yoga has been accepted as a therapeutic science all over the world and many scientific studies have been conducted in this field. Today, we teach hatha yoga to people because it is very necessary. Man has become sick, and medical science is not able to meet the challenge. Hatha yoga, however, has been helping everybody, but at the same

time we should not forget what hatha yoga really stands for.

Behind every sick man, there is a spiritual man. Behind a diabetic, there is a yogi. Behind a man suffering from depression, there is an aspirant. When a patient comes for help, teach him yoga and make him better. Treat his sickness, but please, do not stop there. Take him further into the spiritual domain of life.

Sri Swamiji now mentions the sequence in hatha yoga. We start with shatkarma, then go into asana-pranayama, then into mudra and bandha, then into pratyahara, dharana and samadhi. This is the sequence of hatha yoga. With shatkarma, detoxification takes place. With asana and pranayama, the flows or channels of prana are cleared and activated. In mudra and bandha, you have to sensitize yourself to the extent that you can feel the subtle movement of prana shakti.

Prana shakti is an interesting concept. How does one discover what is physical prana shakti? Or physical vitality? There are approximately 50 trillion cells in the human body and each gives an electric output of 0.7 volts. Each cell is a living entity and has negative voltage on the inside and positive voltage on the outside. That is the beauty, every cell has an electric charge and is alive. This means there is about 3.5 trillion volts of prana in the body.

You may see yourself as a physical entity; however, you are comprised of energy waves that are interacting constantly with the environment. A new electroencephalograph machine has been developed. Previously you had to put leads on your head for the brainwaves to be monitored, now it is a cap that hangs over the head and picks up the brainwaves. It is not looking inside your brain; it is picking up your brainwaves. How can this equipment which is hanging six or nine inches away from the head, pick up your brainwaves? Unless there is an emission, a pattern, a vibration, it will not be able to do so. That is the prana in the cells of the body, in the form of 0.7 volts of current.

Exploring the Dimension of Prana

14 May 2019



Hatha yoga is a very important science. In ancient times it was practised for many years as a preparation for higher states of consciousness. Now, however, the real purpose of this great science is being forgotten altogether. The hatha yoga practices which were designed by the rishis and sages of old for the evolution of mankind are now understood and utilized in a very limited sense. Often we hear people say: ‘Oh, I don’t

practise meditation, I only practise physical yoga, hatha yoga.' But now the time has come to correct this viewpoint. Sri Swamiji explains:

Ida and pingala

Hatha yoga concerns two important and vital systems in the physical body – the solar and lunar forces. In tantra and in hatha yoga these are known as ida and pingala. Ida represents the mental force, and pingala the pranic force. In the body these pranic and mental forces interact with each other, respectively controlling, guiding and directing the senses of action and of knowledge. Due to them we live, move, think and know.

Pranic and mental forces are conducted through ida and pingala nadis within the framework of the spinal passage. From each chakra they branch off via the network of nadis into all the respective organs and parts of the body. The scriptures and tantric texts state that in this physical body there is a complex of 72,000 nadis. I believe this is a conservative estimate. Nadi does not mean nerve. It means a flow, just as electricity, a radio wave or a laser beam is a flow. There are 72,000 channels or flows that carry these two interacting energies of ida and pingala from pore to pore of the human body. There is not one point in this body where you do not have the interaction of these two forces.

In the practices of hatha yoga we are concerned with the balance of ida and pingala – these two interacting forces of prana and mind. When the pranic force predominates and the mental force becomes subservient, there are physical imbalances due, to excess prana in the system. On the other hand, if the mental force is predominant and pranic force subservient, there are diseases related to the mind. This is the definition of somopsychic and psychosomatic diseases. Diseases do not originate only in the mind; they also originate in the body. Body is part of the mind, and mind is part of

the body. Mind and body are not two separate realities. At different stages of manifestation, we know them as body and mind, but in essence they are one.

Sri Swamiji has emphasized on certain points. One is, 'Utilize the prana shakti to bypass the mind'. Once in a satsang he said, "Have you ever thought that when you want to control the mind, who is wanting to control the mind? It is the mind wanting to control itself, you are wanting, you are desiring and saying, 'Settle down.'" When the mind is wanting to control the mind, you are not separate as the drashta. One side of the mind is telling the other side, 'Calm down'. There is a continued involvement, there is no separation, therefore you are not able to control the mind. You can struggle, fight with yourself, wrestle with your mind, and sometimes you may win and sometimes the mind wins.

In hatha yoga, you use prana to bypass the mind. That is the whole idea. Sri Swamiji says, "Utilize that prana shakti to bypass the mind and go into the state beyond mind, into the spiritual dimension, the *anandamaya kosha*." When you do so, it is the prana shakti that will become active in all dimensions of the human personality, from the physical, the gross, to the mental and the spiritual, the subtle.

Prana can be experienced at the physical level. All the cells of the body are firing off 0.7 volts of electricity every minute, indicating that each cell is alive. That electric emission is the physical prana. When you keep running from one thing to another the whole day long, fatigue sets in only if you are disorganized. If you move from one activity into another in a flow, you will not feel tired at all, as the energies of the body will be in harmony. That is why sometimes you feel that things are happening effortlessly. There are other times when you want to do something and you apply yourself and apply yourself, you struggle and struggle, yet nothing happens.

The opposite poles of a magnet will always repel each other. The more you try to bring them together the more

they will repel. If you bring the same poles together, they will stick together to the point that you will not be able to separate them. Thus, at one point there is coming together and separation becomes hard; at the other point, it is the reverse: no matter how much pressure you exert, you cannot make the two click together. Prana shakti also has magnetic properties. When you are disturbed, the magnetic poles change; when you are in harmony, the magnetic poles again change. No matter how difficult or trying a situation, if there is harmony of pranas, you will feel comfortable. Similarly, if the harmony of pranas is not there even in the most comfortable situation, you will want to leave. This is derived as a feeling: 'I like the feeling, the vibration, the ambience. It's peaceful, gentle, calm, quiet.' When you say, "I like the ambience, the environment," what you are picking up is prana shakti.

People often make the remark that so and so was giving off a negative energy when they spoke. How do you perceive that the person was giving off negative energy? Why the phrase 'negative energy'? Why not just say, 'I felt uncomfortable'? You use the word 'negative energy' as one aspect of yourself recognizes that there is some other level of interaction taking place beside the sensorial, the verbal and the intellectual. That subtle level is what you have to become aware of in hatha yoga. You need to cultivate the experience of this subtle level of pranic play. This was one aspect which Sri Swamiji defined, that the mind does not control itself. It is through prana that you can control the mind:

Monitoring the breath

In order to purify the mind, it is necessary for the body as a whole to undergo a process of absolute purification. Hatha yoga is also known as the science of purification, not one type of purification, but six types. If you take an enema, this is one type of purification; shankhaprakshalana is another. Purification of the whole nervous system is also a part of hatha yoga.

Besides purifying the physical body, we have to purify the nadis. The body has to be cleansed in six different ways for six different impurities. When you clear the body of these impurities, the nadis function and the energy blocks are released. Then the energies move like wave frequencies along the physical structure of the channel, and they go right up to the brain.

Therefore, we consider hatha yoga as the preliminary practice of tantra, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. When the rishis discovered the science of hatha yoga, they did not have yoga therapy in mind. Although yoga has proved to be very effective in the treatment of many impossible and incurable diseases, I consider the therapeutic effect of yoga as a by-product and incidental. The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance of the interacting activities and processes of the pranic and mental force. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give a call of awakening to sushumna nadi – the central force which is responsible for illumining the higher centres of human consciousness. So the real purpose of hatha yoga is not to build the body or improve the health, but to energize and awaken the higher centres responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose then its true objective is lost.

Basis of transformation

Solar energy represents the sun, prana. Lunar energy represents the moon, mind. These two forces maintain the rhythm of life and consciousness. This is one stage of evolution, but mankind has to evolve. If civilization is not structured along evolutionary lines, then man has to face disaster, death and absolute extinction. You cannot deny evolution.

Everything in this universe is evolving, even the rocks. If there is metamorphosis in every part of creation, why shouldn't man's consciousness undergo

this state of metamorphosis? Transformation is a scientific fact. It is not a philosophy, faith or creed. It is the path of evolution and it gives meaning to life. This physical body constantly undergoes various processes of transformation, which affect each and every molecule of its material substance.

Now people have begun to realize that matter in its ultimate form is energy. Therefore, we will have to reanalyze and redefine what the body is and how far this transformation can be effected. Can the body be turned into light particles? Think about it in terms of science, not in terms of the faith or belief that you have had up until now.

If this body can undergo a state of metamorphosis, then what is the way? The answer is yoga. Through the processes of yoga, the body is rendered so subtle and pure, that it is transformed into a yogic body which is unaffected by old age and disease.

Hatha yoga is practised in order to initiate a process in this physical body, whereby the pranic molecules and the mental forces, which interact with each other in the scheme of life and existence, may be transformed. Unless the physical molecules are transformed, it is no use to discuss compassion or unity.

A great challenge is open to us. If matter in its ultimate form is energy, then this physical body can be transformed into solid energy through systematic practice of the six cleansing techniques of hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka. After this, asana and pranayama should be practised.

Dimensions of prana

Hatha yoga is the preparation for pranayama. Most people think of pranayama only as breathing exercises but actually it is far more. In Sanskrit *ayama* means dimension, not control. So pranayama is practised in order to extend the dimensions of prana.

Years ago I wanted to know about the dimensions of prana. Has prana many planes of existence? In which planes does prana flow? What happens if prana does not flow? Around that time, I had a dream in which I saw a beautiful city with large roads lined with electricity poles. I went into the buildings and found lights, telephones, televisions, everything, but there was no electricity; the whole city was in complete darkness.

Similarly, within us are planes of existence, areas of consciousness which are in absolute darkness. These planes are much more beautiful and creative than the ones we live on now. But how are we going to penetrate and illumine them? It is useless to talk about the different states of consciousness. You must be able to experience them, even as you experience the state of dream or sleep. When the pranic energy is aroused and awakened through the practice of pranayama, it is circulated to these dark areas of consciousness. Then the inner city is illumined and man is reborn into a new dimension of existence, a new area of experience.

Pranayama

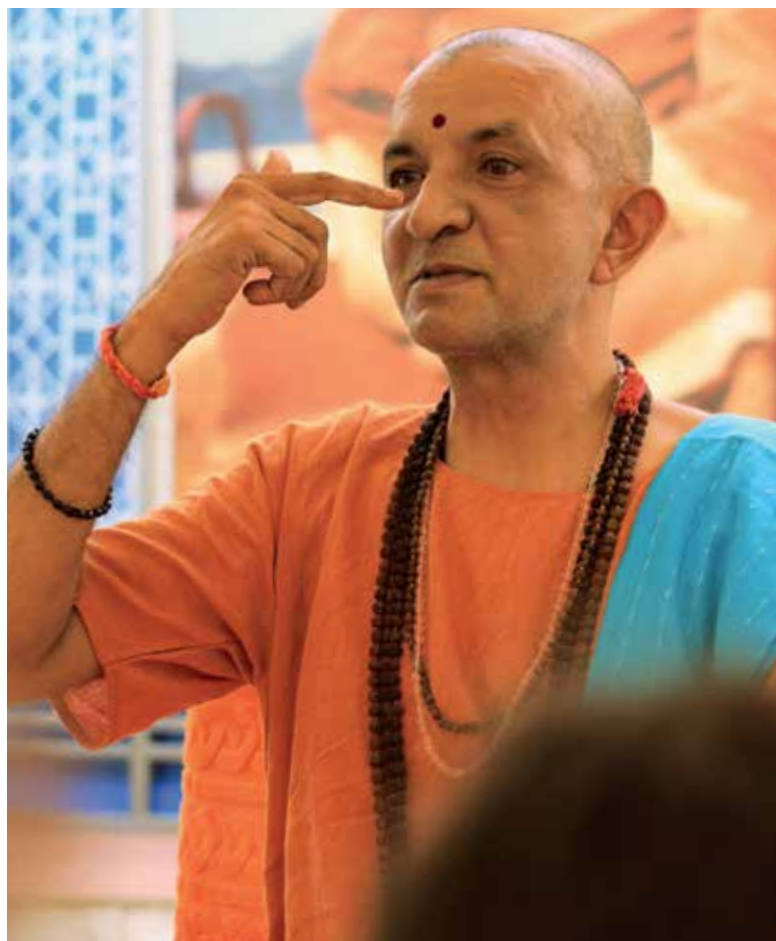
Much has been written about the science of pranayama. Nadi shodhana pranayama is purification of the energy channels. First you breathe in through the left nostril which stimulates the right side of the brain. Hold your breath. Then breathe out through the right nostril which stimulates the left side of the brain. Again hold the breath. Breathing in and out is an automatic process. Kumbhaka, holding the breath, is the actual pranayama, and it takes years of practice to perfect. When you have made some progress in the practice of pranayama, and can hold the breath without any discomfort, you have to add *moola bandha*, contraction of the perineum, *uddiyana bandha*, abdominal contraction, and *jalandhara bandha*, chin lock. These control and balance the increased energy throughout the system.

If you practise pranayama, you do not have to worry about the mind; the wild mind does not exist for you. As you go on practising pranayama, you push the pranic force into the different dark areas of your consciousness, and the mind evaporates. There is no thought process. Thoughts are impressions. You are reading this; it is an impression. You become aware of impressions stage by stage, and so you think that they are moving. But thoughts don't move – they don't travel into the past, present and future – they are just there, that's all.

When you change the structure of the physical material, the mental substance automatically undergoes a change. Mind is a further manifestation of the body, and when you influence the mind you also influence the spirit. So, body, mind and spirit are not 'the trinity' – they are the unity, one. This is the understanding behind the practices of pranayama and hatha yoga.

The left and right nostril synchronicity with the left and right hemisphere of the brain and meditation is an interesting physiological phenomena. There is a book, *A Storm Every Forty-Five Minutes*, written by a scientist. He researched changes in the brainwaves and brain functions when the respiration from one nostril changes to the other. Even if you check right now, the flow in one nostril would be more prominent. This prominence will remain for about forty minutes and then it will change to the other nostril. The changeover takes about five minutes, then the other nostril becomes stronger and remains active again for about forty minutes. The right side is connected to the left hemisphere and the left side to the right hemisphere.

The author of the book noticed that there was a high spike in the electroencephalograph, EEG, every forty-five minutes in the average person. He could not figure out why. He started looking into what was making the waves change their behaviour and discovered the correlation with the flows of breath: when the flow in the right nostril is prominent



the left hemisphere is active, and when the flow in the left nostril is prominent the right hemisphere is active. He also discovered that the flows actually cross over. He was one of the first persons to speak on pranayama and breath in the early days of the propagation. He said, “If you can maintain a visual balance of your brainwaves while you practise pranayama, by looking at the screen, you can go into deep meditative states.” He suggested that when you visually check your brain condition, you can alter it.

When I read this book I was in San Jose, California. I went to Radio Shack, which brings out special electronic gadgets, and bought one that could check the oxygen saturation in the blood. I bought a second one that would emit a sound based on the level of stress. The more you were stressed, the higher the pitch; if you were relaxed, a lower pitch. It was an electromyography, EMG, machine. I got about ten of them and started using them in class. The result was a surprise.

In yoga nidra the EMG machine started to whine in a high-pitched note. In fact, I had to turn it off. Later I started to think, why in the middle of yoga nidra, when people should have been relaxed, was this machine informing that they are stressed? I questioned the participants about what they were experiencing at that time. It emerged that they were experiencing the body jerks. You would have had that experience also: suddenly, in the middle of yoga nidra, the arm or the leg undergoes a jerk. The machine was registering that level of stress.

I thought then that maybe we can wilfully reduce the stress in yoga nidra. I asked the participants if, through their mind, they could reduce the sound. Within a few sessions, by playing with the breath and relaxation of the body, the sound was avoided. In addition, the quality of yoga nidra was different from the normal yoga nidra, as normally there is no indication of whether you are relaxing or not. You just drift off to a happy sleep and come back to a happy *Hari Om Tat Sat*. Here there was an indication of the deepening of muscular, nervous as well as pranic relaxation. Those jerks are also pranic in nature. When a block is removed, when a knot is straightened, then suddenly there is a movement and the flows become clear. The EMG was one aspect.

The second aspect was ECG. I also got some ECG machines with which I could observe the brainwaves of people during yoga nidra. Based on the observation, the spikes, I would tweak the instructions, and this changed the whole way of giving yoga nidra. Here a specific cerebral

activity was being observed. If the participants were focused, I could see the gentleness of the waves. If they were distracted, there would be spikes in the waves. From that perspective it was possible to see the condition of the practitioners and what they were experiencing, and modify the instructions to ensure that all of them were in one rhythm. This was an interesting experiment.

Managing the nostril flows

There are people here who have never meditated. One morning I took a video of one of the residents at the ashram who was meditating at five in the morning while I had gone for a walk. She was sitting cross-legged with the spine upright, and as I watched, the head began to come down and reached just above the floor. Again she jerked herself up and again it went down. This was her daily routine of meditation. She was sleeping. Now, interestingly, this person had ida nasal flow all the time. Then I started observing something else, that with the left dominance, the person could function yet not register anything. If someone was sitting beside her and later you asked her about it, she would say, “No, she wasn’t there.” The brain did not register that. If I said something, what I had spoken would not be registered. That is ida. If pingala is active, it is the normal state of interaction.

Ida dominance is always more difficult to manage as it leads to introversion and sleep. Pingala dominance is manageable as you can force yourself to close your eyes, focus on the breath, stop moving. The pranic or the solar can be managed, but ida or the lunar dominance is hard. If you want to correct the ida flow, then you have to force it through some method.

Once I had gone to a centre where catatonics were being treated. In the catatonic condition of the body, the person remains immobile in a given position. If someone puts their arm up, it will remain there for hours until someone brings it down. There is no physical coordination, control or movement. People go into a catatonic state due to some

psychological or emotional shock so they cannot react or respond anymore. They just freeze and that is how they remain.

The directors of the institute were showing me around and then asked, “Is there anything in yoga that can help them?” At first, I could not figure out anything, for how would they follow any instruction? Then a thought came. I said, “Let us try one experiment. Let us put cotton balls in their left nostrils and leave these in for twenty-four hours.” We did that and then I came away. The next morning when I went back to check on them, the director was beaming. He said, “I don’t know what happened, but some of them responded after about six or seven hours to stimulations and movements.” I said, “Okay, we leave the cotton ball in for one more day. That will force them to breathe through the right nostril.” The next day he said, “If we move or shift them, they are responding.” This was the change within two days, from being absolutely rigid and stiff to responding to stimulations and suggestions to move. That was an indication of how the pingala activity returned to them their control of movement. Eventually they were regaining their sense of motion, activity, and grasping.

We do not realize what change we can create in ourselves. By applying the yogic principles, you can change your physiological and mental conditions while going through daily life. Then use that changed nature, the changed prana for whatever activity you desire, whether spiritual or material. Sri Swamiji continues his discussion:

The pranic field of kumbhaka

The practice of pranayama forms the core of spiritual awakening. To most people pranayama means control of breath for physical health, but it has been misinterpreted and wrongly explained. Prana is universal in nature. The individual prana is a microcosmic representative of the universal system and should not be mistaken for the air that we breathe.

A certain quantum of prana exists in each human body. By enlarging the scope of prana we awaken the inner recesses of the brain. Prana flows in the body on a superficial level to maintain our body and its organs. It is a force or energy which is resonant throughout the physical system of man. According to the science of hatha yoga, pingala nadi, which flows on the right side within the framework of the spinal column, is the channel of prana from mooladhara to ajna chakra. The distribution of prana takes place throughout the physical structure by a different system made up of thousands and thousands of nerve channels which carry the force of prana to each and every atom in the body, for its growth and maintenance. Pranayama attempts to extend the scope of prana beyond the frontiers of the physical body. Force has many manifestations. Energy can assume any dimension. It can be minimal as well as cosmic.

Prana and the brain

The brain is divided into ten compartments of which nine parts are silent. Scientists have divided the brain into three sections: the new brain, the middle brain and the primitive brain. This primitive brain is the nine parts of the whole brain, which are existing but not participating in the scheme of man's life. These areas of the brain are called 'the silent areas' and their qualities are unknown. If these nine silent portions of the brain were operating, one's human faculties would be greatly expanded and they would not undergo degeneration.

In the course of man's evolution, the silent areas are slowly developing and coming into active participation. Imagine a big city with beautiful houses, roads and buildings, but without electrical energy. In the same way, these areas of the brain are not functioning due to the absence of force or energy. The present amount of pranic energy is insufficient to activate these silent areas.

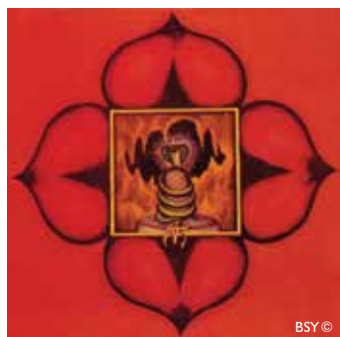
The prime objective of pranayama is to create a greater quantum of prana, change the nature of the electrical forces within this pranic body, and then transmit it to the silent areas of the brain. The different forms of pranayama prepare the channels or media through which the energy must flow.

Before this higher form of energy is conducted to the brain the channels must first be purified. Pingala nadi is the vehicle which carries the pranic force from mooladhara chakra to the higher centres in the brain. Ajna chakra, known as the medulla oblongata, situated on top of the spinal cord is the monitoring centre for the entire silent area. When this fantastic amount of energy is regenerated in the system, it is conducted through pingala nadi up to ajna chakra and from ajna chakra this energy flows into the silent areas of the brain.

Seat of pranashakti

The pranas which are universal in nature exist as dormant potential energy in mooladhara chakra. This great prana shakti is also known by the name of kundalini, and awakening kundalini means awakening of the great universal pranic force in the individual human system. This tiny little centre or gland in mooladhara chakra is not a myth, a story or a fable. It is a scientific formula of utmost importance in man's evolution.

Mooladhara is the centre of creation. It is not an impure centre because it is situated in the sexual area. Many people feel hesitant and shy about believing kundalini is in mooladhara and claim it to be in manipura, because they do not want to associate this holy kundalini shakti with the unholy sexual system. But it has been scientifically shown that this tiny gland in mooladhara chakra contains infinite energy. Many psychic and spiritual experiences originate from mooladhara chakra.



Hindus believe that in mooladhara there is an oval-shaped Shivalingam, resembling an egg. In modern physics we know about the egg which is made up of proto-matter. In the centre of every matter there is a nucleus and in tantra and yoga this nucleus is known as bindu, the centre of matter, object and creation. In bindu the complete cosmos is compressed in exactly the same way as a great tree is contained within one seed. Around this nucleus is infinite proto-matter in the shape of an egg, with two poles of positive and negative energies known as time and space. This is how the whole scientific concept of kundalini has to be understood. It is the point where infinite time and infinite space unite. When these positive and negative energies join each other, an explosion occurs either in the nucleus or in the matter.

Although mooladhara chakra is situated in a physical gland, energy is inherent within it as in all matter. Matter is nothing but a different form of energy and energy is nothing but a different form of matter. At every stage of creation, matter and energy are inter-convertible. Therefore, we should not wonder how this physical organ could be the source of infinite energy.

Prana and pranayama

Through the practices of pranayama a certain amount of heat or creative force is generated in the entire body, which influences the existing quantum of prana. For example, if you produce heat in this room, it will heat the existing amount of air. There is a certain amount of prana within us giving us life, and pranayama heats that quantum of prana, which then makes its way through pingala nadi into ajna chakra. When sufficient heat is

generated within the system ajna chakra monitors the message back to the base of kundalini and the actual awakening of the great prana takes place. This in short is the purpose of pranayama.

Pranayama is not specifically intended to awaken kundalini. Certain pranayamas are done to purify the carrying channels, i.e. the nervous system. Some are intended to create heat in the system while others stimulate ajna chakra to monitor. For example, there is a very important pranayama known as ujjayi which clears pingala for the ascension of prana.

The whole science of pranayama is based on retention of prana, known as kumbhaka. Inhalation and exhalation are incidental. Kumbhaka means pranayama and pranayama means kumbhaka. Those aspirants who are keen and working on this new project of awakening the silent areas of the brain should prepare themselves slowly by perfecting kumbhaka. From results of scientific studies on pranayama we have found that during kumbhaka an increased supply of blood is poured into the brain and at the same time extra heat is generated within the system.

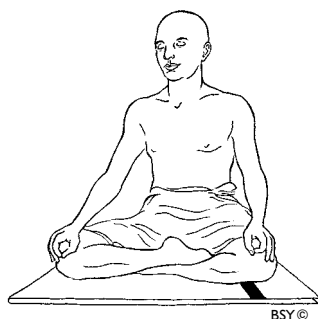
Pranayama also influences the cerebral fluid in the brain. When energy is generated it changes the chemical structure of the cerebral fluid surrounding the brain within the skull. When this fluid is chemically influenced it acts on the behaviour of the brain. For example, when you take a narcotic drug it produces an immediate chemical reaction within this fluid. As a result, you experience certain psychic phenomena. During the state of kumbhaka extra energy in an electrical form is generated and in the course of time it changes the chemical structure of the fluid in the brain. This is why one experiences the feeling of dizziness.

This dizziness occurs in the brain, and you have to superimpose this state on the mind. All the great explosions of experiences take place in the firmament

of this dizziness and very few people know how to manage it. When awakening takes place and dizziness comes, a visual aid is necessary. That is why the practice of pranayama should be combined with the practice of *dharana*, concentration. There are thousands of symbols for concentration such as a small dot, a candle flame, a star or the symbol *Om*. When you have visualized the symbol you can immediately superimpose it on the condition of the brain. When this internal awareness becomes vivid, simultaneous awakening of kundalini takes place. Therefore, the practice of pranayama has to be done very intelligently and patiently. Pranayama must be seen in relation to the awakening of yoga.

The practice

First perfect siddhasana, the best of all the postures. Then begin the practice of nadi shodhana pranayama. Inhalation, internal retention, exhalation, and external retention in the ratio 1:2:2:1. When you practise internal retention combine it with jalandhara bandha and moola



BSY ©

bandha. With external retention practise jalandhara, moola and add uddiyana bandha. Gradually try to improve the quality of your breath by controlling the inhalation and exhalation.

Breath is both gross and subtle. The gross breath is perceptible and the subtle breath is imperceptible. Heavy and gross inhalation and exhalation is not pranayama. When the breath becomes subtle it improves the quality of awareness. The ingoing and

outgoing breath should be uniform. It should not be thick or thin, broken or in waves.

After practising one round of nadi shodhana sit down quietly and fix your awareness at the mid-eyebrow centre. When everything becomes calm once again, then commence a second round.

Pranayama is very important in the role of yoga. You must have a well-trained and experienced teacher. It cannot be done from books alone. With the help of pranayama, you can awaken kundalini and accelerate the speed of individual evolution.

Most people think of pranayama as breathing exercises, however, the yogic texts say, “Pranayama is not breathing. It is holding the breath.” The breathing patterns are for training to breathe longer, slower, deeper, to train the lungs to take in a greater volume of air, to be able to hold the breath for a longer period. All this is done when you are following the breath as the pathway to pranayama. However, the yogic texts, including the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali say, “Pranayama is retention of breath.”

When you are holding the breath and there is no external movement affecting the absorption, consumption and generation of prana shakti, then that prana shakti is utilized for mental purposes. There are two types of prana: the physical and the mental. The physical prana is divided into five types: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. Similarly, the mental prana is also not of one type, but includes several types. These are five subtle pranas of chitta shakti, just as there are five subtle pranas of prana shakti.

The five subtle pranas of chitta shakti indicate the progression from the outer realms of the mind to the inner realms. The prana that controls manas and its activities, the thinking process, the reflective process, is one type of prana. It is called manas prana. Its quality is like that of apana. The purpose of apana is elimination and expulsion, and manas prana also carries out expulsion. When you think,

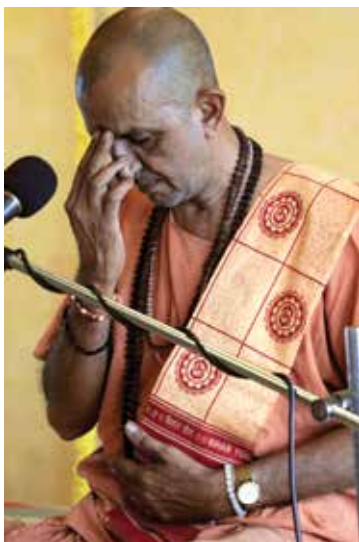
you have given something a form, a shape, a language, an understanding, and then that thing disappears. Manas prana is the first prana at the mental level. As you go deeper, you discover pranas of other aspects of the mind, as each level has its own battery system to make itself work.

Coming back to kumbhaka, retention, there is another aspect. When there is no distraction of inhalation and exhalation, no muscular movement that is required for inhalation and exhalation, the body is in a state of repose and balance. At that time, the electrical charge of the cells which is negative on the inside and positive on the outside, changes. It is like the change that takes place in the air after rain and thunderstorm.

Air contains both negative and positive ions. When there is a thunderstorm and downpour, the environment becomes electrified, and the quantity of negative ions increases while that of positive ions decreases. If, at present, there are eight thousand particles of negative ions in one square inch of air, after a good rainstorm there will be seventy to eighty thousand negative ions in the same air. That is the difference.

When you hold the breath, a similar transformation of prana takes place. The negative charge comes up, then it goes back, then again comes up – like a firefly. When the negative charge is released by the cell, you feel light, dynamic, happy, as if floating in the air. The whole body becomes light. That is one of the results of pranayama practice, *laghavam*, the feeling of lightness in the body.

The scriptures also state that with pranayama practice the body glows. To interpret that from the modern perspective,



when there is more saturation of oxygen in the body, the cheeks become pink and the glow of the skin is different.

Sri Swamiji also says, “Bandhas should be practised.” When you combine mudras and bandhas with pranayama, the whole experience changes. All other things drop away and only your effort remains, and then pranayama becomes a powerful technique of hatha yoga. Sri Swamiji continues:

Redirecting prana with mudra and bandha

One gains the maximum benefits from pranayama when the bandhas are practised with kumbhaka, breath retention. Pranayama stimulates the flow of prana, and the bandhas control the flow and direct it to the required areas. When you perform moola bandha (locking the perineum) and jalandhara bandha (chin lock), you are forcing apana (the vital energy in the lower part of the body below the navel), to flow upwards and unite with prana (the vital energy in the region of the body between the larynx and the base of the heart). When prana and apana unite it is a fantastic experience which generates vitality and helps to awaken kundalini.

Mudras and bandhas are practices of hatha yoga that are directly connected to the pranic movement. For example, hridaya mudra has been found to be effective in people going through cardiac problems, as it increases circulation of blood in the heart. The yogis who discovered these practices had that level of understanding and the subtle awareness where they could sense and experience the effect of the practice on the heart and therefore called it hridaya mudra. Today the same is verified with scientific technology and equipment.

The attempt of a mudra is to either activate the pranas or reverse the flow of the pranas, redirecting the pranas or using the pranas to internalize oneself. The different approaches of mudras are given in the classifications in which they are placed. The first category is known as *hasta mudra*, hand mudras. These include jnana mudra, chin mudra and other

mudras which you can practise with your hands and use in meditation. Each mudra creates a circuit of prana shakti, which in the course of time affects the corresponding chakra. By practising a mudra during meditation, you are creating a change in the flow of prana in the nadis. The hand mudras reverse the energy back into the body. They do not allow the extremities to release energy and waste it outside. Instead, it is allowed to flow back into the body. Therefore, they lessen the loss of prana.

Shirsha mudra or head mudras induce pratyahara and help one go into the meditative state. Shambhavi mudra, bhoochari mudra, khechari mudra, nasikagra mudra, all these different head mudras induce pratyahara and allow you to go into deeper meditative states. *Kaya mudras*, postural mudras, such as tadagi mudra or yoga mudra, are performed in an asana. *Adhara mudras*, base mudras, influence the chakra system.

In hatha yoga, four chakras are important: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata. It is the conditions of these four chakras that hatha yogis work through, as purification and activation is needed at these levels. Bandhas are specific to three chakras: mooladhara, manipura and vishuddhi. The entire range of mudras and bandhas work at the chakra and pranic levels. Mudras take the prana to a chakra while bandhas remove the blocks, the knots, the ties, the compressions.

When you are tense or under stress and anxiety, you will find that you either tighten up your abdominal muscles, or tense the neck muscles and shoulders, or pull in tight the perineal muscles. These are the three areas where tension is always experienced: perineum, abdomen and neck. These three are also the weakest areas of the body. Bandhas work at these levels.

The neck is the narrow pathway from where all the nadis and nerves go into the brain, so it is a most sensitive area. Jalandhara bandha exerts a powerful influence on vishuddhi chakra, which represents transcendence of the lower instincts. Therefore, jalandhara bandha is a higher bandha, indicating



that all the lower instincts of mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura and anahata have been transformed. Uddiyana bandha and agnisara kriya exert influence on manipura chakra. It is the centre of power, prana shakti, so the bandha activates this prana shakti. Moola bandha is for mooladhara chakra. The fears, the sexuality, all that that goes on in the unconscious is managed there. Thus, the three bandhas work at three levels: the unconscious at mooladhara, the vital prana at manipura, and the instinctual at vishuddhi.

When mudras and bandhas are practised in conjunction with asana or pranayama, the effects are different. There are psychological benefits and greater body-mind harmony. If mudras and bandhas are used in meditation, there are spiritual benefits. Depending on what kind of condition you want to develop or manage, whether manage the psychological or develop the spiritual, both possibilities are there. If you are keen on spiritual development, then mudras and bandhas can become effective tools of pratyahara and dhyana. If you want to fine-tune and tweak yourself mentally or psychologically, replenish what you have lost, then combine mudras and bandhas with asana rather than doing stand-alone asanas. You will see the difference in the practice and in the deepening of your experience.

Hues of Pratyahara

16 May 2019



Pratyahara is identified as going within. It is disconnecting from outside and going within. The references to pratyahara are found in Patanjali's raja yoga and also in classical raja yoga. From these sources Sri Swamiji discovered the different techniques of pratyahara and dharana, such as antar mouna, ajapa japa, chidakasha dharana, and other meditations.

From the raja yoga perspective, pratyahara is for the mind, therefore you have to observe your mind. You have to

observe your vrittis, your thoughts, stop them, create them, eliminate them, bring them together. All these processes go on in mental pratyahara. Until now, across the world, whenever people think of pratyahara, they think of it as mental pratyahara. However, every yoga has pratyahara as a topic, indicating that pratyahara is not only mental; there are other levels as well.

Annamaya pratyahara

Take the practice of kaya sthairyam. Although the name means ‘stillness of the body’, it is applied in a larger sense. The senses constitute the physical experience, so kaya sthairyam begins with fixity and firmness of the body. In that firm state, you pick one sense-perception organ. You begin with touch: the air and the skin, the clothes and the skin, the body and the floor. You explore all the experiences that belong to the touch sensation, *sparsa*, and practise pratyahara of that sensation. Next you do sound, then vision, then smell, then taste. If you build this up gradually over a period of time, you will discover that you are able to instantly shut off your senses. That is annamaya pratyahara, or the sensorial pratyahara.

I first experienced this pratyahara in December 1981, Christmas time. I was in the US, and every Christmas and New Year I used to go away from the city to some National Park, pitch my tent, carrying enough food to spend one week there. While the world used to celebrate Christmas and New Year, I used to celebrate quietness and solitude, as that was the time when no student would come for yoga classes. I used that opportunity to do my sadhanas. In 1981 I was focusing on kriya yoga practice. I was the only person there and the whole park was empty. I did my sadhana and went to sleep.

Suddenly, I woke up to loud music. I thought somebody had come to the next spot and was playing the radio or had turned on the television full volume. I thought that maybe after a few minutes the person will shut it down or lower the volume and go to sleep, so I did not bother. However, the

sound kept on going and it eventually became annoying, as I was unable to sleep. So I came out of the tent and looked around. I could not see anybody, yet I was hearing the music. I got in the car and turned on the headlights to see if anyone was around. No one, yet the music was still going on, jazzy rock music.

I started thinking, 'From where is this noise coming?' When I could not locate any outside source, I thought maybe it was my own head. I went back, lay down and thought to myself, 'If I can lower the volume, I will be able to sleep.' I found that I was able to reduce the volume. Suddenly, there was interest! 'Can I raise it up again?' Again it went up, again it came down, again up, again down, and it became a game at night.

The sound lasted for about three days. After that I found that I could replicate any type of music. I only had to hear it once and then I could play it. I felt a bit unsettled, 'How is this happening?' 'What is happening?' Not 'why is it happening' but 'what is happening'.

I wrote to Sri Swamiji about the experience and he replied, "This is the outcome of kriya yoga and it is a practice of kaya sthairyam." That was the first time I came across the words 'kaya sthairyam'.

In hatha yoga, kaya sthairyam begins with sensorial stillness for annamaya kosha. After that you move into pratyahara of pranamaya kosha. Raja yoga pratyahara is manomaya kosha pratyahara. Kriya yoga pratyahara is vijñanamaya pratyahara. At different levels there are different techniques which still that dimension of the mind and allow you to move into deeper meditative states. Kaya sthairyam is one of the primary meditations in hatha yoga which leads to annamaya pratyahara.

Pranamaya pratyahara

There is not much theory of pranamaya pratyahara, only practices. A technique similar to yoga nidra, known as prana nidra, is a practice of pranamaya pratyahara. Yoga nidra is

conscious sleep, prana nidra is pranic sleep. That is the first practice that allows you to enter into the pranic dimension.

After prana nidra comes prana vidya, and this is a more advanced and intricate practice; here you learn to control and use the prana for healing, whether yourself or other people. You also learn to use prana to achieve whatever you want to achieve: physically or psychologically, build up strength, stamina, immunity, power, *sankalpa shakti*, willpower. You also learn to access chakras, nadis. All this happens in prana vidya. People identify it as a practice of distribution of prana. That is due to lack of understanding and words. It is not only distribution of prana, it is the *vidya* of prana, the knowledge of prana. That vidya involves everything: the personal, the public, the outer, the inner, the spiritual.

Pranic healing is part of prana vidya. However, you should know that there are two levels of experiencing something: the basic and the advanced. Reiki is pranic healing for dummies, not for experts. A few years ago there was a wave of Reiki. Everybody was learning Reiki, the placing of hands. Now the whole thing has disappeared, nobody knows what Reiki is. So many people became Reiki masters and they have all disappeared into the woodworks. That is because people experiment with these things at the gross, material, social level without having the understanding or the experience of what they are dealing with.

If you are aware of prana and practise Reiki, you will be more successful than a person who has become a Reiki master without any experience of prana. For them it will only be placing the hands to get money. For the person who has experienced prana shakti, it will be a healing process, a balancing process. Such people can sense the process that is taking place, and the other person can sense it too.

There are two levels of application: one is the outer, which you like to flirt with. This includes all the new fads that emerge globally. They survive for a few years and then dissipate. The other level of application is where mastery and perfection are demanded, and the results are different there.

In Malaysia and the Philippines there are pranic healers and what they can do with their bare hands is incredible. I have been a witness to one such pranic surgery, watching from only four feet away. The patient was lying on the table. The healer came and with his bare hands opened the body, took the tumour out and then healed the body. There was not even any scar tissue. It was like a miracle. After half an hour the person walked away carrying the packet of tumour. There are many people who have gone through this. That level of pranic healing is not under the jurisdiction of a Reiki master; it is a much more advanced level and indicates the actual application of prana.

Therefore, when you hear that by paying so much you will become this master and that master, you should know that it is only the social presentation and a wave that will last for a few months or years. It is like somebody writing a book, *How to Become a Multimillionaire Overnight*, selling it and becoming a multimillionaire. While everybody is trying to buy the book to know how to become a multimillionaire, he has become one.

In yoga we are not concerned with this socially applicable level. Therefore, these techniques have not yet been publicly exposed. Sporadically, here and there, a few people do their practice and teach five or ten others, yet they are not practices that have become known to people. They have remained in the background.

The role of mudras

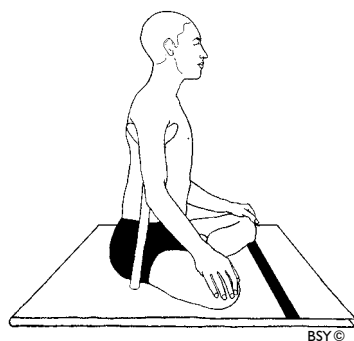
Prana pratyahara has a direct connection with mudras, for mudras redirect the flow of prana shakti and also activate chakras. If you think of yourself in the form of koshas, at the annamaya level, at the physical body level, the focus is only on maintaining the physical health. Yet all the work is being done at the pranic and mental levels. The pranic dimension includes vitality, pranas, chakras, nadis, ida, pingala, kundalini. In the mental dimension, conversion of the tamasic nature into a sattwa nature is the focus. Even the

mental dimension is limited, as it only involves conversion of the negative into the positive, whether emotion, thought, interaction or communication. This is *pratipaksha bhavana*, converting the limiting, the destructive, the tamasic into the expansive, the creative and the sattwic. Thus the actual work takes place in pranamaya kosha.

When you practise pranayama, you are trying to access pranamaya kosha. When you practise prana nidra, you are removing the spikes of the pranic activity, you are harmonizing and balancing it. When you practise prana vidya, you are able to access the prana shakti for self-healing or for helping others, and for awakening and opening the dormant centres. From this perspective, prana pratyahara is much more relevant, as it opens many new doors of the human experience. Mental pratyahara is only to manage the condition of the mind: converting a destructive and negative condition to a constructive and positive condition.

Mudras play a role in this, as they have a direct influence on the *nadis*, the flows of prana or pranic channels, and they also stimulate the prana of different chakras. When you practise shambhavi mudra and gaze up, besides feeling the pressure on the eyes, a sensation is created at the eyebrow centre and the awakening is felt there. Although muscles and nerves are being pulled when you look up, the result is being experienced in ajna chakra. When you practise nasikagra mudra, again the muscles are involved yet the outcome is not physical. The outcome is pranic. Mudras and bandhas are used to allow the flow of prana to become flawless and natural.





Yogis also control the flow of breath in the two nostrils, as that activates different nadis. The yoga danda is used for this purpose. If you keep it under the left armpit, there will be compression on that side and the right lung will open up, so naturally the breath will begin to flow more on the right.

If you keep it under the right armpit, the respiration will change to the left side. Simultaneously, the quality of your brain and mind will also change.

Similarly, mudras also change and remove blocks. If you have one blocked nostril during a cold and it begins to open, the feeling that you experience is the same as when pranas begin to be activated. In meditation you use chin mudra or jnana mudra as there is a nerve, a nadi, at the root of the thumb, which is activated by performing the mudras and this creates a state of mind conducive to meditation. Beyond ida, pingala and sushumna, there are ten other important nadis which are conductors of prana shakti. It is one of these nadis that becomes activated. Therefore, to perform the mudra correctly, the index finger should be pressing on the third line at the root of the thumb. That is when you influence that nadi, and it balances ida and pingala. Even for a blocked nose, if you perform jnana or chin mudra for five or six minutes, it will open up and you will discover that there is a balance in the nasal flow, an equal flow in both nostrils.

Hridaya mudra is another important mudra which works on the heart. Many heart patients feel an improvement, when they practise this mudra. Their condition sustains for months and years, so it cannot be auto-suggestion – ‘I am feeling better with heart mudra.’ Somehow it connects with the heart and helps in managing the condition. It may not alleviate the condition but it will help you manage it better. In this way, all the different mudras that have been given in yoga also have

a connection with an organ, whether the heart, liver, kidneys, stomach, intestines. In fact, yogis are able to acquire health through their knowledge of the nadi system and mudras.

There is an ancient therapy originally known as *marma yoga*, yoga of the skin. Over a period of time, this developed into acupuncture and acupressure and the nerve meridian system. *Marma* means skin. It also means ‘to feel’ and ‘essence’. In Hindi a phrase is used, *Uska marma jaan lo.* – “Know the essence.”

It was marma yoga that gave birth to mudras, as it involves the knowledge of nerve meridians throughout the body. You can superimpose the Indian version of the nadis on the Chinese version of the acupuncture meridians, and you will find only minor differences. All the major meridians are the same. Mudras and bandhas are part of this science and they activate the prana shakti and also lead you to pratyahara.

Thus the three – mudra, prana and pratyahara – are connected. The moment you practise a mudra, you are in reality practising prana pratyahara. In the course of time, when you are able to experiment with prana nidra and prana vidya and develop the ability to withdraw the energy from an experience, that will be the real pratyahara.

Swami Sivananda has also spoken on prana pratyahara. He has given a similar version of yoga nidra: a pranic yoga nidra. He uses sixteen points of the body for this practice while in yoga nidra we use more than sixty-four points. Swami Sivananda says that once you gain mastery over this practice, you can clear the mind of all impressions. Everything remains in your mind in the form of impressions and memory. It does not die, it remains alive. A memory of childhood, when it comes to you, is as real as it was then. If a disturbing memory of a previous life comes, it will be as disturbing now, for it has come alive and has prana in it.

A beautiful colour picture, kept in your trunk, fades over time. It turns sepia and then black and white. The image becomes less sharp and can also fade. In the same manner, Swami Sivananda says, “The impressions of the mind, the

pratyayas, the memories, are all alive in you.” You may not be aware of them yet they evoke reactions and responses from you. If you remove the prana from them, the colour goes away from the photo, and then it dies. Memory dies, the hold it had on you is gone. This is a thought-provoking topic.

When you are going through emotional and psychological suffering and you want to come out of it and not be dragged into the pits of dejection and depression, if in that moment you can practise prana pratyahara and take away the life from the memory that is causing the suffering, the mind will become clear. According to Swami Sivananda, this is the application of prana pratyahara in daily life.

Swamiji, how is prana generated in manipura?

It has been found that a manipura practice such as agnisara kriya is very effective in increasing vitality. I have tried it with people who are depressed, and after three days they become like jumping jacks. Therefore, at the physical level agnisara kriya helps in activating manipura.

If you visualize manipura chakra and try to develop the sensation of heat there, even that visualization activates the chakra and you experience an increase in heat.

The best way to increase prana shakti, however, is by practising heating pranayamas. Do bhastrika, pump yourself with prana shakti, then do nadi shodhana to balance it out, and then go for your triathlon and you will come first or second.

Karmendriyas also control jnanendriyas. It is like a mosquito biting your toe, yet you feel the pain in the brain. There is a connection. The experiencer of the pain is up there, in the brain. Here karmendriyas and jnanendriyas, the sense organ and perception, are both functioning together. The body and mind are both there, the mind is recognizing and the body is experiencing. The senses experience, the mind recognizes. You are feeling the heat, the mind is recognizing that you are feeling the heat, though it is the skin that is saying, “It is hot, it is sweaty.”

Impressions of Participants

19 May 2019



Being with an SES

I came for this course for the first time in 2016. I was practising yoga before that for many years, but after I did this course I realized that what I had been doing was not real yoga.

What we learnt were simple asanas, simple pranayamas and we were told to practise these daily after the Hatha Yoga Yatra 1. So for one year I did the practice and realized an improvement in my progress in yoga. Then I came for Hatha Yoga Yatra 2 where we learnt a little more advanced asanas and pranayama, and an introduction to mudras. Now in Hatha Yoga Yatra 3, it has gone to another level, where it

is not only the physical component or the breath. There is awareness, going into the internal dimension.

I am very grateful that I did these courses, as they have really changed my life. The thing is not to just do this course, you have to go back and practise on a daily basis. Every day in the morning listen to or repeat the three mantras, do simple asanas like TTK and surya namaskara, and in the evening try to do two rounds of japa. By doing this, I have become calmer and more relaxed in life, and I feel that I have become a better human being. I would like to thank Swamiji for creating these modules which has helped all of us, and I personally feel that he deserves an additional title, SES: Spiritually Evolved Soul!

—*Taroon Vaswani, Mumbai*

On the path of freedom

After three years of hatha yoga sadhana, I realized what is meant by 'hatha yoga leads to raja yoga'. Three years ago when my mind became angry, I became angry, my body became stiff and my breath short. The results of the practices I had been doing were few and frustrating. However, with this sadhana I started experiencing some of the conditions that hatha yoga creates in us, such as harmony, stability, stamina and lightness.

Now even if there is a Third World War, I remain calm, my body is relaxed and full of energy, and my breath long. So thank you Swamiji for taking us along this path of freedom and happiness.

—*Sannyasi Sadhanashakti, Italy*

Threefold learning

When, after the World Yoga Convention, Swamiji announced that there would be a new chapter and re-initiation into yoga, I was wondering what that could be. Now after going through the progressive stages in hatha yoga, I have realized how one can go into new dimensions of experience.



My observations are threefold. First, on the physical level. When I came for Hatha Yoga Yatra 4, I thought I wouldn't be able to do the practices fully because of the weather. There was a thirty-degree change from where I came from. But then the focus on the process totally did away with these ideas and I was able to get fully involved in the practices. The asanas were the same as what we had been doing, for instance TTK, but we did it for a different purpose, for shatkarma. This was a different feeling.

Second, the pranic level. Doing the asanas with the pranic awareness took us to a subtler dimension. Swamiji reminded us that we are walking power stations, every cell of our body has so much voltage that if we focus on the positive and transmit it in terms of ideas, behaviour and perception, then we would be more powerful and successful in our life.

Third, the mind level. When we did this remote-control practice with lowering and increasing the sound and shutting down the sound, I thought that if I can implement this in my daily life, not only observing in my sadhana as a practice, but

if I can do this while interacting and be selective to go only for the positive and the uplifting side, then I would be in harmony with the message of the Symposium: ‘Moment-to-moment awareness’.

—*Sannyasi Vidyadhara, Bulgaria*

No other place

Yoga has been and is my best friend. It is something that wakes me up in the morning and brings me to bed at night. It is what guides me, inspires me, motivates me. It has helped me overcome many difficulties and distresses, and it reminds me to put the positive side out and fly the flag high. On a daily basis, it gives me strength. It gives me the courage to sit here and speak. It gives me this lengthening, this opening, this awareness of my heart, my intellect and my hands, trying to keep them connected. On a daily basis it reminds me of the higher path of life and to walk that path, to put one foot in front of the other with that in mind.

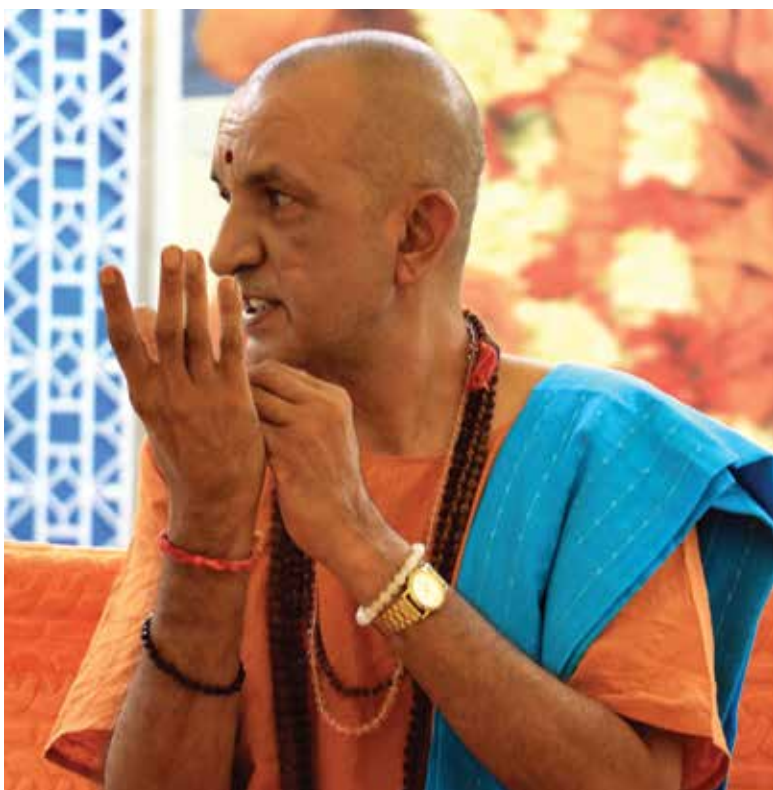
In 2016 I came for Hatha Yoga Yatra 1. It was my first experience of coming to an ashram and meeting Swamiji and all the sannyasins and swamis here. It was as if a huge new door opened up for me. It definitely changed my life, my views, my belief system, and helped me to let go. I remember the first satsang with Swamiji, what struck me was the gentleness of the way he spoke, the softness. At the same time, he had that deep connection, which went with extreme purity and respect, heart-felt and heart-filled. That was really the start of my journey of hatha yoga. I knew I had someone I could trust.

Going through the program for the last three years has opened many doors, unfolded many things, some ups some downs, but it has been there. It has guided, glided and the trainings here have been absolutely amazing. There is no other place I would want to be in to learn anything else. People suggest other places, but there is no other place for me.

—*Eilish, Ireland*

The Opening of the Bud

19 May 2019



Listening to all the impressions, not only of this training but to those of others in the past, makes me happy that the revival of Yoga Chakra has been a positive event.

For the last fifty years the Bihar School of Yoga was involved in yoga propagation around the world. The practices that were being taught were mainly physical in nature and we saw that yoga was becoming more like an aerobic exercise and going away from its true intent of harmonizing and developing the qualities and faculties of head, heart and hands. Keeping this in mind, the original teachings of Sri Swamiji from the 1960s were revived as Yoga Chakra. Your impressions indicate that as aspirants you are able to go deeper and experience what yoga desires of you, not what you desire from yoga. That is the main difference between yoga practice and yoga sadhana.

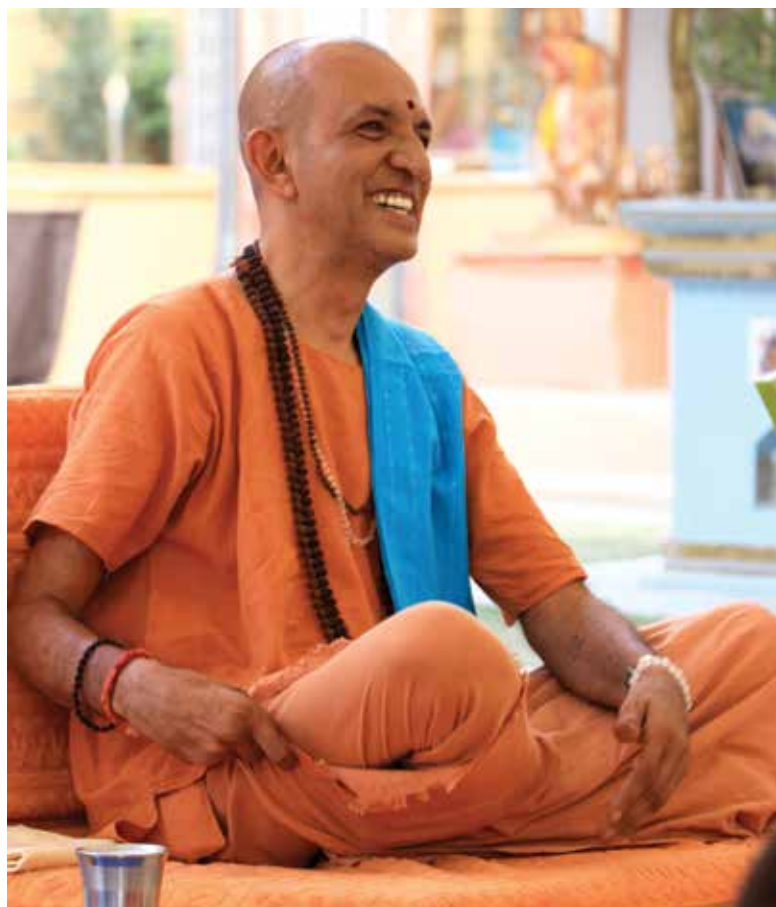
People come to practise yoga for many reasons. However, the yoga which they practise is taught by a teacher who is not proficient in yoga, and who has had a limited training in yoga. There are people in society who have learned ten or fifteen yoga asanas in one week and have been given the certificate of a yoga teacher, and they are happily teaching away. They are getting good returns and a good number of students, but how can one expect such people to represent yoga? They can represent twenty asanas, as that is what they have learnt, but they cannot represent yoga. Most people come with that idea, even our present four-month Yogic Studies students. They came with the idea that ‘after spending the time here, we will receive our certificate and then we will go out and teach’. Over these few months that I have been observing them, I have seen a big shift in their health, in their mind, in their performance and in their interactions.

I do not know whether they realize it. As an outsider I can see it and it makes me happy that they are making the effort, not only to do the physical postures but also to integrate the principles of yoga in their life, including karma yoga. For the first one to two months all of them used to cry when they had to clean. They are all spoilt brats; their parents have never allowed them to hold a broom. Here, from the first day they had to hold the broom, and there is no orientation program

for holding the broom. There is orientation for yoga and ashram, but there is no orientation program for holding the broom. They went through a mental crisis. Many of them used to cry and think, 'Why? What? Where have we come? We are made to sweep here, we are made to wash our own clothes, we are made to clean our own pots and pans.' Yet slowly, slowly, the bud became a flower, it started to open. They are not fully opened yet, they are half-open, in the process of opening, not a SES yet, a Spiritually Evolves Soul!

I am happy that with this exposure to yoga you can make the effort to improve the quality of your life, your appreciation of life and begin to appreciate life as beautiful and not as a struggle. That is the main thing. For how long are you going to live in this body? Eighty years on an average. If you pull a little more, ninety or plus ninety. Beyond that, you leave. In these eighty years, you are awake for only forty years. The other forty years you spend sleeping at night. Therefore, awake life is forty years. In that wakeful life, the cumulative period of school education, from kindergarten to high school, is about fifteen to sixteen years. So take away that much from the forty years. How much time do you spend in eating breakfast, lunch and dinner? Say one third, so remove that much of time from the forty years. How much time do you spend gossiping and wasting your time? Say thirty percent, which is generous; it is much more than that. Remove that much of time from forty years. You will discover that cumulatively you only live for ten to fifteen years. Therefore, these few years should be lived in a manner that is appropriate, correct, skilful and creative.

When we came to the ashram, in the early days, we learnt everything. From plumbing to electricity, to carpentry, to yoga, to asana, to pranayama, to meditation, to kitchen, to office, to managing keys, to correspondence. We learnt everything, not only asana and meditation. Therefore, today we have the confidence that no matter where we are in the world, we can survive, even in a forest. That participation has to come in life, which the students are lacking. They avoid



participation. You have to learn to participate to develop your skills, creativity, understanding and appreciation of life.

Yoga opens a doorway by which you can begin to explore your own nature and personality, know your limitations and strengths, overcome the limitations and use the strengths to achieve success in life. This is important to be able to live as a human being. Yoga and also the ashram environment provide that opportunity.

In the ashram everything is not peaceful. It is always chaotic. Just as in a hospital or a health-care centre, nobody

is healthy, everybody is sick. Yet they do not call it 'sick-care centre', they call it health-care centre. In the same way, everyone who comes to the ashram is not a balanced spiritual person. They are people who are struggling in life, struggling with themselves, with their body, their mind, their ambitions, their stress. People come to the ashram in a state of struggle and then try to overcome or manage that. While managing that, they also try to look at the other aspects of their nature which can enhance their creativity and productivity. All this happens.

What is important is the start of the journey, and these Yoga Yatras indicate that yogic journey where you can explore yourself and the possibilities that yoga provides. Therefore, I am happy that Hatha Yoga Yatra 3 and 4 have concluded successfully.

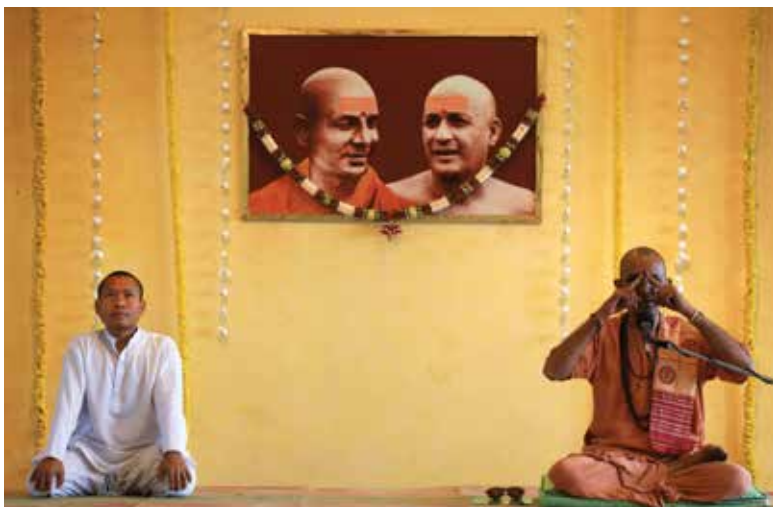
There is one thing you have to remember. As you progress, the timespan for you to perfect and develop the sensitivity and awareness increases. You can learn and practise as many asanas and pranayamas as you like, however, when you come to mudras, bandhas and pratyahara, you cannot change them every three or six months. You have to practise them for at least one year and try to become an adept in the practice, try to master the aim of the practice.

Every yoga has its own set of practices which are physical, psychological and spiritual in nature. Pratyahara is not limited to Patanjali's yoga. There is pratyahara in hatha yoga too, and it is much more defined in other raja yoga literatures than in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Every yoga is a complete yoga in itself, and it is a progressive system. In hatha yoga also you can come to pratyahara, dhyana and samadhi, but then it is a state of mind that takes you into raja yoga. Although they are independent yogas, they are also progressive, and they support, complement and nourish each other. There is always a forward movement. You have started that journey, so wish you all the best.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Appendices

Practical Session



The actual intent of hatha yoga begins with mudra and bandha. However, pratyahara, dharana and meditation also form part of hatha yoga practices. They are different to those mentioned in raja yoga. Pratyahara in raja yoga is for the mind, whereas pratyahara in hatha yoga is for the senses and the pranas. Hatha yogis believe that with the practice of hatha yoga it is possible to bypass the mind. From hatha yoga itself you can go into higher states of meditation without having to go through the practices of raja yoga. These are finer details that you will get to know with your own practice in the course of time.

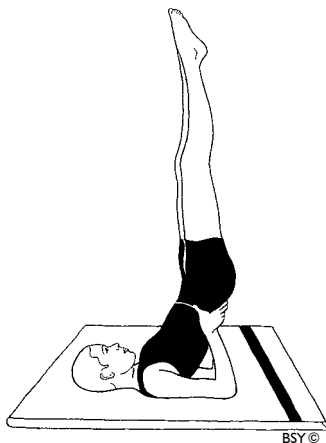
VIPAREETA KARANI – ASANA AND MUDRA

Vipareeta Karani Asana (inverted pose)

Lie flat on the back with the legs and feet together in a straight line. Place the hands and arms close to the body with the palms facing down. Relax the whole body.

Raise both legs, keeping them straight and together. Move the legs over the body towards the head.

Push down on the arms and hands, raising the buttocks. Roll the spine from the floor, taking the legs further over the head.



Turn the palms up, bend the elbows and let the top of the hips rest on the base of the palms near the wrists. The hands cup the hips and support the weight of the body. Raise the legs to the vertical position and relax the feet. In the final position, the weight of the body rests on the shoulders, neck and elbows, the trunk is at a 45 degree angle to the floor and the legs are vertical. Note that the chin does not press firmly against the chest.

Close the eyes and relax in the final pose for as long as is comfortable.

To return to the starting position, lower the legs over the head, then place the arms and hands close to the body, palms facing down.

Slowly lower the spine, vertebra by vertebra, along the floor.

Do not lift the head.

When the buttocks reach the floor, lower the legs, keeping them straight.

Relax the body in shavasana.

Breathing: Inhale while in the lying position.

Retain the breath inside while assuming the final pose.

Retain the breath inside while lowering the body to the floor.

Duration: When first practising, hold for a few seconds only, gradually increasing the time over a period of months to an optimum of 3 to 5 minutes for general health purposes. This practice should be performed only once during the asana program.

Note: *This posture provides the basis for vipareeta karani mudra.*

Once you have made your body physically comfortable in vipareeta karani asana, start ujjayi breathing and direct the awareness from manipura to vishuddhi, and from vishuddhi to manipura. When you inhale the breath comes from manipura to vishuddhi, and when you exhale the breath goes from vishuddhi to manipura. Now slowly bend your knees, hands on the floor, roll your back gently on the ground, and lie down in shavasana.

Now what makes this asana a mudra? First it is pranayama. You are not breathing soundlessly through the nostrils, but from the throat in *ujjayi pranayama*, creating the gentle breathing sound. In ujjayi breath you are constricting the throat a little bit and focusing on manipura chakra and vishuddhi chakra, the navel and throat. When you breathe in, you bring your awareness from manipura to the throat, when you breathe out, you take the awareness from the throat, vishuddhi, to manipura. With ujjayi breath you follow the movement of breath between the chakras, manipura and vishuddhi. You maintain this for as long as you can comfortably. Then, bend the knees, bring the hands back on the floor, and gradually roll the back, without lifting the head from the ground, and place the legs on the floor.

MUDRAS

The word mudra is derived from two different words: *mud*, means to be happy, and *ra* is the abbreviation of the mantra *Ram* of manipura chakra and means pranas. *Mudra* means that the pranas become happy. Thus mudra works at the pranic level. The entire hatha yoga system works at the pranic level, using the body to activate prana and sensitize the mind to experience the pranas. There are many classifications of mudras. *Mudra* is also defined as attitude.

There are different connotations to the word mudra, depending in which context it is used. When used in the context of yoga, it means to make the pranas happy. The pranas become happy when they are activated, awakened, moved, when the blocks are removed and when there is a proper flow of prana. So the smiley face actually depicts the intention of the mudras. When you are happy, you feel light and buoyant. There is no heaviness; and lightness is the feeling of prana shakti.

There are four categories of mudras used in yoga. One is *kaya mudra*, or mudra of the body, *kaya* is the body. A mudra, which is performed during an asana is known as kaya mudra, like vipareeta karani mudra, yoga mudra and pashinee mudra. These physical mudras combine breathing, mantra and chakra awareness. These three aspects constitute the mudra during asana. Kaya mudras are also part of asana. That will help us understand the idea of mudra before we move into the subtle mudras. The outcome of mudra is to be pranically aware of the condition and state of the pranas in the body.

There are also *adhara mudras*, base mudras, which affect, awaken and stimulate mooladhara chakra. For example, vajroli and sahajoli are adhara mudras. Moolabandha is an adhara mudra to activate mooladhara and allow the pranas to ascend to sahasrara.

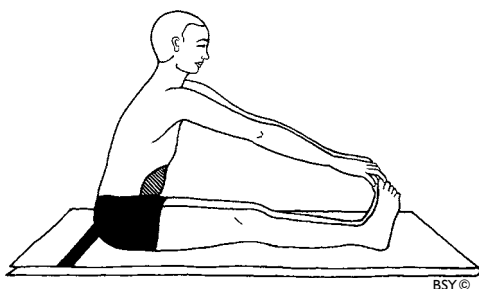
The third category is *hasta* mudras, done with the fingers, like jnana mudra, chin mudra, yoni mudra and other mudras

performed in meditation. These mudras divert the pranic flow back into the body. They stop the wastage of prana from the body by re-diverting the pranic flow into the body.

The fourth group are head or *sirsha* mudras which are pratyahara mudras, like *shambhavi*, gazing at the eyebrow centre, *unmani*, the attitude of mindlessness, and others which internalize the mind, the external expression of the pranas, and focus them inwards.

These are the four divisions. Kaya mudra is to activate the prana, sirsha mudra to induce pratyahara, hasta mudra to redirect the pranic energies, and adhara mudra are kundalini techniques which allow the ascent of kundalini to happen. Apart from these mudras there are many more, like those used in dance which are called attitudinal or expressive mudras, with which one can express anger, fear, joy or any attitude. They are not yogic mudras.

There is one more group, the bandhas. The word bandha is not a standalone word, it is mudra bandha. What we call *jalandhara bandha*, chin lock, *uddiyana bandha*, abdominal lock, *moola bandha*, perineal lock, are mudras. Their full name is jalandhara bandha mudra, uddiyana bandha mudra, moola bandha mudra, so they come in the category of mudras and belong to the kaya mudras.



Tadagi Mudra (barrelled abdomen technique)

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body and the feet slightly apart. The legs should remain straight throughout the practice. Place the hands on the knees, keeping the head and spine straight.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body, especially the abdominal area.

Lean forward and grasp the big toes with the thumbs, index and second fingers. Keep the head facing forward. Inhale slowly and deeply, expanding the abdominal muscles to their fullest extent.

Retain the breath inside for a comfortable length of time without straining the lungs in any way.

Exhale slowly and deeply while relaxing the abdomen.

Maintain the hold on the toes.

Repeat the breathing up to 10 times.

Then release the toes and return to the starting position. This is one round.

Note: *The word tadagi literally means ‘water pot’, which resembles the shape of the extended abdomen.*

The simple practice is sitting with legs in front, bending forward and grabbing hold of the toes. Instead of humping the back, keep the back straight so that the arms are stretched, look up in front at a thirty-degree angle, not up and not straight. Take a deep breath in and as you breathe in fill up the stomach, hold the retention for seven seconds, and then breathe out and relax your

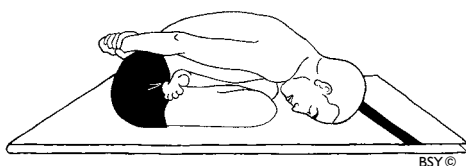
arms. After a few breaths again bend, grab the toes, look up, breathe in, push the stomach out, hold that for seven seconds, and then breathe out and relax.

This was the simple variation. Now from the same position when you breathe in, see the breath coming through the toes, up to the stomach, and then push the stomach out. So you are breathing in and when the breath has come to manipura, expand the abdomen fully. Breathe in to the count of seven, and while keeping the breath in for seven seconds, say the mantra *Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram* – seven times. Then push the stomach out, and when you are breathing out, at that moment you will say one long *Om*, mentally. So seven *Ram* at the time of inhalation, and one *Om* mentally with a long exhalation.

SWAN tip: In this practice you only have to bend forward to grab your toes, you are not arching your back, you are keeping your spine straight.

Variation 1: Bend the right leg and place the right foot against the left thigh. Bend forward, grab the left toes, spine straight, head up, inhale from the toes to the stomach, *Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram*, push the stomach out. Release, and exhale with *Om*. After three rounds change the side.

Variation 2 – half vajrasana: Stretch the leg in front, and sit in half-vajrasana, keeping the left leg extended in front. Bend forward, grab the toes, spine straight, head up, inhale through the toes, come up to manipura, hold with *Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram*, exhale with *Om* and relax. After three rounds change the side. Stretch your legs in front, and pump the legs up and down for a while. Release the pressure, tightness and tension from the knees. Pull the kneecaps, and release them. Do this five times.



Yoga Mudra (attitude of psychic union)

Sit in padmasana.

Take hold of one wrist behind the back.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Bring the awareness to mooladhara chakra (slight moola bandha may also be performed).

Inhale slowly and feel the breath gradually rising from mooladhara to ajna chakra. Retain the breath for a few seconds and concentrate on ajna chakra.

Exhale slowly while bending forward from the hips.

Synchronize the movement with the breath, so that the forehead just touches the floor in yogamudrasana as the air is fully expelled from the lungs.

Simultaneously, feel the breath gradually descending from ajna to mooladhara chakra.

Retain the breath outside for a few seconds while concentrating at mooladhara chakra.

Inhaling, raise the trunk to the vertical position. Be aware of the breath moving upward from mooladhara to ajna chakra.

All the movements should be performed in a harmonious, smooth and synchronized manner.

Remain in the upright position, holding the breath for a few seconds and concentrate on ajna chakra.

Exhale slowly, moving the awareness back down the spine to mooladhara chakra.

This is one round.

Immediately start another round, performing a light moola bandha with the breath held outside and the awareness at mooladhara chakra. Beginners may take a few normal breaths before starting the next round.

Perform 3 to 10 rounds.

Breathing: The respiration should be as slow as possible without the slightest strain.

Variations: The hands may also be placed:

- a) on the heels of the feet, with the elbows pointing out to the sides,
- b) palms down on the soles of the feet,
- c) palm to palm with the fingers pointing upward in the middle of the back (this is *hamsa* or swan mudra).

Practice note: People with stiff backs and those unable to sit in padmasana comfortably may perform the practice from sukhasana or vajrasana. If adopting the latter, bend forward into shashankasana with the hands clasped behind the back. If vajrasana is still uncomfortable, the knees may be separated slightly, allowing the chest to come closer to the floor.

Note: *Yoga mudra is so called because it unites the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness, or the outer nature with the inner nature.*

SWAN tips:

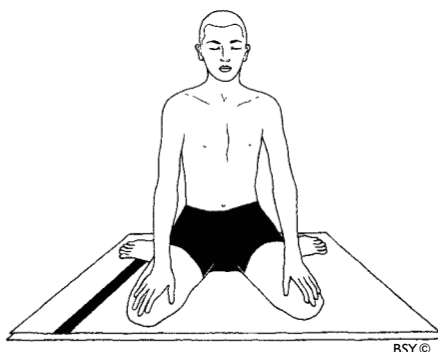
- One side, where the foot is on top, is always difficult. Therefore, if you change the position of the foot which is on top, it makes it more easy. To practise yoga mudra, the butterfly pose is very important. Practise five minutes of butterfly, and then try *padmasana*, the lotus posture, and you will find it easier every day.
- Increase the time you spend in the lotus by two seconds every day, and you will be able to sit in padmasana for one hour of pratyahara practice, which is the next stage.

Saral Yoga Mudra

Come into full butterfly pose. Once your feet are in position keep your hands in front. Inhale raise the arms up, exhale bend forward. Inhale arms up, exhale bend forward, inhale arms up, exhale bend forward, inhale arms up, exhale bend forward.

This practice is good for the ankles and will also prepare you for the padmasana.

Manduki Mudra (gesture of the frog)



Sit in bhadrasana. If possible without straining, adjust so that the toes are pointing outward.

The buttocks should rest on the floor. A folded blanket may also be placed underneath the buttocks to apply firm pressure to the perineum, stimulating the region of mooladhara chakra.

Place the hands on the knees, holding the spine and head straight.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

This is manduki asana.

Open the eyes and perform nasikagra drishti.

When the eyes become tired, close them for a few seconds.

Continue the practice for 5 minutes, until the mind and senses become introverted.

Note: *The word manduki means 'frog'. This mudra is so named because the sitting posture resembles a frog at rest. This practice also gives the basis for the kriya of the same name.*

In this posture, as you breathe in the head will go up, and the eyes will come to the centre and gaze at the eyebrow centre in *shambhavi mudra*. You breathe in for

seven seconds, you hold the breath for seven seconds, then exhaling for seven seconds you bring your head back to the centre, release shambhavi, move your awareness down to the nose tip, and then look at the nose tip for seven seconds.

Seven inhalation, seven internal retention, seven exhalation, seven external retention for five rounds.

Then bring the head to the centre, keep the eyes closed and observe the physical sensations. There may be a feeling of lightness; you may feel slightly disorientated, whatever the feeling may be, become aware and observe it.

PRANAYAMA

Pranayama is a technique that works with pranas. Pranas become activated in the body during retention not inhalation or exhalation. When you inhale and exhale it is the air going in and out, when you hold the breath and there is no input and output of air, then the body begins to extract oxygen from the air in the lungs which you have taken in. Inhalation and exhalation is training the breath to become deep, long and slow. However, the pranas are activated at the time of retention. Yogis have maintained this concept of pranayama.

Nadi Shodhana

Variation 1 – with internal retention:

Ratio: 1:2:1 to the count of seven

Variation 2 – with mudra and bandhas:

Inhale through the left nostril counting seven, then raise your head. Hold the breath, practise shambhavi mudra, then exhale through the right. Hold the breath out, practise all the three bandhas: jalandhara bandha, uddiyana bandha, moola bandha. Hold for as long as you can comfortably, there is no ratio.



Whether it is two seconds or twenty seconds, does not matter. Hold all the three bandhas, and release moola bandha, uddiyana bandha, jalandhara bandha.

Then breathe in to the count of seven, and go up straight away, practise shambhavi to the count of seven, breathe out to the count of seven. Lower your head and practise jalandhara, uddiyana, moola bandhas, holding for however long is comfortable. Then release moola, uddiyana, jalandhara bandhas. Practise three rounds.

Remain seated quietly with the eyes closed. Become aware of all sensations in the body; heat, warmth, lightness, whatever the sensation in the body may be. If there is

tingling or if there is heat in any part become aware of it. Regulate the pranic flow in your body by practising psychic alternate nostril breathing. Imagine that the breath is coming in through the left nostril during inhalation, going out through the right in exhalation, again coming in from the right with inhalation, and going out the left. Practise only mental visualization, for you are breathing in through both nostrils, yet you have to imagine that the breath is coming in through the left nostril, going out through the right, coming in through the right, going out through the left. In this manner develop an awareness of the natural breath.

As you visualize the breath flow in the two nostrils, you will discover that both sides of the body, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic, the sensory and the cortex, come into a state and condition of harmony and balance. This gives you the experience of relaxation and vitality. Now bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre, and visualize the image of a candle flame. Maintain the awareness on the image of the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times. Slowly bring the hands together, and rub them. Once heat is generated place the palms over the closed eyes, and slowly open your eyes.

Sheetali Pranayama

In India we practise pranayama according to season. When it is hot, the cooling pranayamas are to be practised, when it is cold, heating pranayamas are to be practised. This is a general condition. For a specific conditions, the teacher can guide the student to practise different pranayamas at different times.

Technique I

Sit in any comfortable meditation posture.
Close the eyes and relax the whole body.



Extend the tongue outside the mouth as far as possible without strain. Roll the sides of the tongue up so that it forms a tube. Practise a long, smooth and controlled inhalation through the rolled tongue.

At the end of inhalation, draw the tongue in, close the mouth and exhale through the nose.

Practise yogic breathing throughout.

The breath should produce a sucking sound.

A feeling of icy coldness will be experienced on the tongue and the roof of the mouth. This is one round.

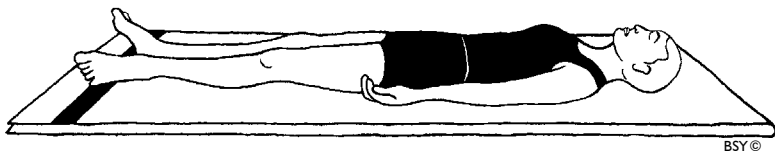
Duration: With practice, the duration of the inhalation should gradually become longer to increase the cooling effect. Gradually increase the number of rounds from 9 to 15.

Note: *Sheetali* is derived from the root *sheet*, which means 'cold'. *Sheetal* means 'that which is calm, passionless and soothing'.

SWAN tips:

- Your concentration has to be in vishuddhi chakra, the throat. Vishuddhi represents space, and one of the attributes of space is being cold or cool, it is not hot. That is the normal condition of space and this is where we concentrate in vishuddhi, either in the form of light or space.
- As you practise this pranayama feel the coolness spread to the whole body from the throat, vishuddhi chakra. When you complete the seven rounds feel the coolness in the mouth, the throat and the body, and develop the sensation of coolness.

PROGRESSION OF SHAVASANA



Short shavasana between asanas

Relax the whole body.

See the whole body mentally.

What are you experiencing? What are you feeling in your body? The sensations, the tightness, the aches and pains, the stiffness? Whatever the feeling may be, become aware. Become aware of the sensations in the neck and shoulder areas.

Now stop this practice. Slowly move the toes, feet, legs, fingers, hands and arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body.

Then gently sit up.

Short shavasana between asanas with breath awareness

Lie down for a few moments in shavasana. Become aware of the whole body, feet are apart, arms are beside the body with palms open, head in a straight line with the body, eyes and lips gently closed. Surrender the whole body to the floor. Move your awareness from different areas of the body, and check that there is nothing tight, there is no tension.

Now observe the flow of breath in the body. As you inhale experience the rise of the abdomen, the rise of the navel, and as you exhale see the navel come down. Complete awareness of the breath in the abdominal region. See the movement of breath, with the rise and fall of the navel.

Now stop this practice, and externalize the mind, slowly move your toes, feet, legs, fingers, hands, arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body, and then gently sit up.

Shavasana – breath awareness at the abdomen

Lie down comfortably in shavasana. The feet are slightly apart, arms beside the body with palms open, head straight. Gently close your eyes and surrender your whole body to the floor.

Move your awareness through the different parts of the body and make sure that there is no tension in any part, nothing tight in any place.

Physically you are in a state of deep relaxation.

Observe the flow of breath in the abdominal region. See the expansion of the abdomen as the navel rises up with inhalation, experience the relaxation of the abdomen as the navel comes down with exhalation. Observe and experience the expansion of the whole body like a balloon at the time of inhalation, and relaxation of the whole body at the time of exhalation.

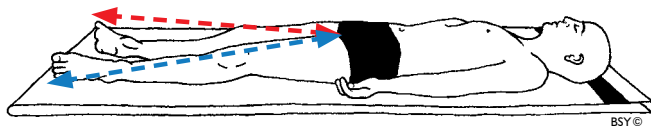
During inhalation the whole body expands like a balloon, filling up with air, and during exhalation the whole body relaxes like a deflated balloon. Be aware of every inhalation and exhalation by watching the rise of the navel, and relaxation of the navel.

Now stop this practice, externalize your mind, your awareness. Slowly move your toes, feet, legs, fingers, hands, arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body, and then gently sit up.

Shavasana – breathing from the toes to mooladhara with colour visualization

Lie down comfortably in shavasana, feet apart, arms beside the body with palms open, head straight, and eyes closed. Mentally observe the whole body, right from the toes to the top of the head. Loosen all parts of the body, there is nothing tight, and there is no tension. Your body is like a ragdoll on the floor. Observe the state of your body right now, observe the condition of your body, the feeling in your body right now.

Now become aware of your breath. See the breath coming in from the left toes up to the perineum, mooladhara, and going down the right leg from the perineum and out the right toes. Then again it comes in through the right toes up to the perineum, and goes down from the perineum into the left leg and out through the left toes. Develop this awareness of breath, inhaling from the toes to the perineum on the left side, exhaling from mooladhara to the right toes on the right side, inhaling from the right toes to the perineum, mooladhara, exhaling from mooladhara, into the left leg, out of the left toes. In this manner develop the awareness of breath movement in the legs.



When you inhale, see the breath in the left leg as blue in colour, when you exhale, see breath in the right leg as red in colour. Again inhaling in the right side the breath colour is red, exhaling through the left side the breath colour is blue. Blue in, red out, red in, blue out. Colour awareness, breath awareness, and flow of breath should move as one unit, from toes to mooladhara, from mooladhara to toes, from toes to mooladhara, from mooladhara to toes.

Now stop this practice, externalize the mind. Slowly move your toes, feet, legs, fingers, hands, arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body, and then gently sit up.

Shavasana – breathing from the fingers to ajna chakra

Lie down in shavasana comfortably, feet slightly apart, arms beside the body with palms open, head straight, eyes gently closed. Surrender the whole body to the floor. If there is anything tight, if there is anything tense anywhere

in the body, become aware of those areas and relax those areas as much as you can, without distracting your mind from the state of relaxation.

Now feel the movement of breath in the arms, inhaling see the breath enter through the left fingers, travel up the left arm, come to the eyebrow centre, to ajna chakra, exhaling the breath goes down from ajna chakra into the right arm and out through the right hand. Then again inhaling from the right hand to the eyebrow centre, exhaling from the eyebrow centre into the left hand, and in this way develop the awareness of breath moving from left to right, right to left, creating a triangle. Inhaling from left fingers to ajna chakra, exhaling from ajna to right fingers, inhaling from right fingers to ajna, exhaling from ajna to left fingers. In this way, develop an awareness of breath movement. Maintain the awareness of breath. Stop this practice and simply maintain the awareness of breath in the nostrils. Be aware of every incoming and outgoing breath, while observing the temperature of breath inside the nasal passage.

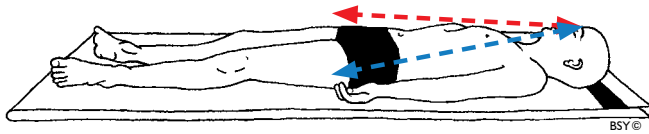
Now stop this practice and externalize the awareness, become aware of the outer environment, slowly move your toes, feet and legs, fingers, hands and arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body, and then gently sit up.

Shavasana – breathing from the fingers to ajna chakra with colour visualization

Lie down comfortably in shavasana, feet apart, arms beside the body with palms open, head straight, eyes closed. Surrender the whole body to the floor.

Observe the flow of breath in the arms. At the time of inhalation feel the breath move up the left fingers and up the arm to the eyebrow centre, at the time of exhalation feel the breath move down from the eyebrow centre into the right arm and out the right fingers. Then again inhaling through the right fingers, up the right arm to

the eyebrow centre, exhaling from the eyebrow centre into the left arm and out the left fingers. Observe this movement of breath in the upper body, from hands to eyebrow centre, from eyebrow centre to hands.



Now see the colour of breath, on the left side the inhalation and exhalation is always blue, on the right side the inhalation and exhalation is always red. Blue in through the left, red out through the right, red in through the right, blue out through the left. In this manner see the movement of breath. Complete awareness of this breath movement.

Now stop this practice, externalize the mind, slowly move the toes, feet and legs, fingers, hands, and arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body, and then gently sit up.

Appendix 2

Hatha Yoga Pratyahara



Practice of pranamaya kosha pratyahara in shavasana

Lie down comfortably, feet slightly apart, arms beside the body with palms open, head and spine in a straight line. Gently close your eyes and lips. With the eyes closed, mentally become aware of the whole body. Loosen all the parts of the body, check for any tension and release the tension from the body. Check for tightness and release anything tight in the body. Become physically comfortable.

Once the body has become physically comfortable, become aware of the natural breath.

See the breath in the body, moving from the toes right up to the eyebrow centre, ajna chakra, during inhalation and from ajna chakra right down to the toes during exhalation. Inhaling see the breath coming through both legs up to the eyebrow centre, and see the breath go down and out through both feet and toes when you exhale.

Visualize that when you inhale the breath flows in through both feet separately to mooladhara and there it joins, becomes one and flows to the eyebrow centre, ajna chakra. This is one full inhalation.

While exhaling, the breath moves down from ajna chakra to mooladhara, then separates into two flows and goes out through the legs and feet.

During inhalation two flows become one in mooladhara and come up as one flow to ajna; during exhalation, the flow moves from ajna to mooladhara, then divides into two and goes down into the legs and out the toes.

Develop this awareness.

Develop the awareness of breath in the body. Inhaling through both feet, the breath ascends to mooladhara, two separate flows becoming one and moving up to ajna. Exhaling, the breath moves down from ajna to mooladhara, then separates into two flows along the legs and out the toes.

Now develop mantra awareness.

When you inhale and the breath ascends from the toes to the eyebrow centre, mentally repeat the mantra *Lam*, the bija mantra of mooladhara chakra, the place where, the two separate flows become one.

At the time of exhalation, mentally repeat the mantra *Om* as the breath moves down from ajna to mooladhara and then separates into the two legs. You are inhaling *Lam*, you are exhaling *Om*. Maintain the awareness of mantra and breath. *Lam* when you inhale, *Om* when you exhale.

Now let the breath awareness drop and continue only with the mantra awareness. Observe the descent and the ascent of breath from mooladhara to ajna. The whole awareness is focused in the passage between mooladhara and ajna. Imagine the inner body like infinite space.

At the time of inhalation, the breath moves up from mooladhara towards ajna.

At the time of exhalation, the breath descends from ajna towards mooladhara.

See both extremes, mooladhara and ajna, as points of light, experience them as points of light. When you come to mooladhara, see the awareness move closer and closer to the point of light. When you go towards ajna, see yourself moving away from the point of light at mooladhara and then seeing the light of ajna and moving towards it. Develop the awareness of mooladhara and ajna chakra in form of light.

Maintain the awareness of breath between mooladhara and ajna. Effortlessly and naturally, the breath flows in and up, out and down.

As the awareness moves between the two points of mooladhara and ajna, all around you is the experience of the vast inner space.

As you move between mooladhara and ajna chakra, develop the awareness of manipura chakra in between the two points. See it as the third point where neither the breath nor the awareness stops. Manipura is simply visualized as crossing this point of light between mooladhara and ajna during inhalation and exhalation.

Now try to see the colour of the light.

In mooladhara, see the light as a deep yellow light.

At ajna, see the light as a shimmering deep silvery light. The transit of manipura is simply seen as a deep orange light.

Develop this awareness, the ability to visualize the colour. You are aware of the breath; the breath movement from

mooladhara to ajna and back down; the colour of the three centres; the awareness that moves up and down with breath.

Now let the awareness of breath, of colour, of ascent and descent simply dissolve into nothingness. Once the awareness dissolves into nothingness, become aware of the different parts of the body as I name them.

Simply move your mind to the part of the body which is being named, acknowledge the part, acknowledge the sensation of prana, heat, tingling in the part and move to the next part.

You are not observing any physical experience but the pranic experience. Your mind has to be attentive to the experience of heat, tingling or any other kind of vibratory sensation in any part of the body.

We start from the right side, then left, then back and then front.

Right hand thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, four fingers and thumb together, palm, back of the hand, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, armpit, side, waist, hip, thigh, knee, calf muscle, ankle, heel, sole, right big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe, five toes together. The whole right side, the whole right side, the whole right side.

Feel the warmth, the tingling, the life on the right side of your body.

Now bring your awareness to the left side. Left hand thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, four fingers and thumb together, palm, back of the hand, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, armpit, side, waist, hip, thigh, knee, calf muscle, ankle, heel, sole, left big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe, five toes together. The whole left side, the whole left side, the whole left side.

Now bring your awareness to the back. Right buttock, left buttock, right lower back, left lower back, middle of the lower back, right back, left back, right shoulder blade,

left shoulder blade, the whole spine, neck, back of the head, crown of the head. The whole back, the whole back, the whole back.

Now bring your awareness to the front. Forehead, forehead. Focus on ajna chakra for a moment, any sensation in ajna chakra. Come to the right temple, left temple, right ear, left ear, right eyebrow, left eyebrow, the eyebrow centre, right eye, left eye, bridge of the nose, right nostril, left nostril, tip of the nose, right cheek, left cheek, upper lip, lower lip, chin, throat, right collar bone, left collar bone, right side of the chest, left side of the chest, centre of the chest, upper abdomen, right abdomen, left abdomen, the navel, lower abdomen.

The whole body, the whole body, the whole body.

Complete awareness of the whole body. Mentally, internally observe all the sensations that come to your notice, which are pranic or energetic in nature, not physical.

The three points of light, the three centres that we looked at in the beginning of the practice represent the three activities of prana.

In manipura, the prana is generated and then brought up to ajna chakra.

From ajna chakra, the prana is distributed to the whole body and the remaining prana is stored in mooladhara chakra.

Mooladhara chakra is the storage, manipura chakra is the producing industry and ajna chakra is the distributing agency of the prana shakti.

Visualize manipura chakra and see a concentration of light, not heat but light.

With inhalation see that light move from manipura to ajna chakra and with exhalation see the light spread through the whole body in the form of a wave extending to each and every pore and region of the physical body like a wave. Then again your awareness comes to manipura and the light moves up along the central passage to ajna during inhalation.

During exhalation, the light travels from ajna chakra to each and every part of the body in all directions, filling the whole body with light in form of a wave.

You are bringing up the prana shakti from manipura to ajna during inhalation and you are distributing the prana shakti from ajna to each and every part, and pore and cell of the body during exhalation.

As the light fills your inner being, there is a deepening experience of relaxation, vitality, stamina, immunity and a general feeling of wellbeing.

Now stop this practice of spreading the light through the whole body and simply with exhalation, take all the light from ajna chakra and manipura chakra to mooladhara.

Inhale, the awareness ascends with breath to ajna chakra.

Exhaling, the light moves from ajna chakra to manipura and then from manipura to mooladhara.

The concentration of light is now in mooladhara, not in ajna or in manipura.

Once the prana is stored, once the concentration of light is experienced in mooladhara chakra, stop this practice and externalize the mind.

Gradually allow the mind to become aware of the external environment, the location, the sounds.

Slowly move the toes, feet, legs, fingers, hands, arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in and stretch the whole body and then gently sit up, keeping the eyes closed. Externalize your awareness and when you are ready, gently open the eyes.

Practice of annamaya kosha in kaya sthairyam

Sit in a comfortable pose that you can maintain for about ten to fifteen minutes.

Keep the spine upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Eyes gently closed.

Once again make yourself physically comfortable, adjust your body posture so that you are comfortable.

Once you have adjusted your body posture, become aware of the comfort level and relaxation in the whole body.

Now imagine your whole body in the form of a three-sided pyramid. The base of your body is in the form of a triangle. The two knees and the buttocks form a triangle. The top of the body forms the top of the triangle, the two arms, spinal cord meet at the head. Visualize the body in form of a three-sided pyramid.

As you visualize and feel your body in this triangular form, become aware of the firmness and stability of the physical body.

From the top of this three-sided pyramid, a string on which different pearls are strung comes down. They represent the chakras. See the pearls hanging in the body from the top right down to the base.

At the bottom is mooladhara, two inches above that is swadhisthana. Three inches above that is manipura. Six inches above that is anahata. Six inches above that is vishuddhi. Four inches above that is ajna. Two inches above that is sahasrara.

See the chakras in one straight line like pearls hanging on a string in the centre of the three-sided pyramid. Develop the visualization, develop the imagination.

Develop the awareness of the seven points of light.

Now you are going to use the mantra *Om* to link the vibration of the mantra with the chakras in the body.

You are going to breathe in and see the breath ascend up the silvery path in the centre of the pyramid to the top.

At the time of exhalation, we will chant the mantra *Om* seven times and with each mantra, move the mind to a chakra below it and come down to mooladhara.

Then again you are going to take a normal breath in and move the awareness up along the chakras to sahasrara and while exhaling, chant *Om* seven times. With the first *Om* become aware of the vibration in sahasrara; with the second *Om* become aware of the vibration in ajna; with the third *Om*, vishuddhi; with the fourth *Om*, anahata; with the fifth *Om*, manipura; with the sixth *Om*, swadhisthana and with the seventh *Om*, mooladhara.

Then again a normal breath will ascend, and you will take the awareness up to sahasrara.

Do it and your own pace and speed. Seven *Om* with every exhalation and one long and deep inhalation.

Now stop the chanting of *Om* and simply focus on the vibrations that you feel inside yourself, inside your body. Slowly externalize the mind. Connect your mind with the body, with the sounds, with the environment, with the location.

Slowly take a deep breath in and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me.

Om – Om – Om.

Repeat after me – *Om shanti, shanti, shanti. Hari Om.*

Slowly bring the hands together and rub them and place the heated palms over the closed eyes and then slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Prana pratyahara

This is the start of pratyahara in hatha yoga. Raja yoga deals with pratyahara from the mind perspective and hatha yoga deals with pratyahara from the prana perspective. Looking at the various kinds of pratyahara techniques available, it seems quite obvious that there has to be pratyahara at all levels of annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha and vijnanamaya kosha. When you are practising raja yoga, you are working with the mind, so thought observation, creating thought, stopping thought, all the practices of antar mouna and other similar practices come into play, including chidakasha dharana, where you create visualizations, mental images. Similarly, there is also a section for pranas, the pratyahara of pranas. In hatha yoga we also have pratyahara of the senses, the annamaya kosha, which you have been practising in the form of kaya sthairyam.

Kaya sthairyam, the stillness of the body, is the main technique of hatha yoga. Those people who are in raja yoga think of kaya sthairyam as only a transitory stage, transition from body awareness to mental awareness, but it is not. It is a complete set of practices which allows you to control the functions of the senses.

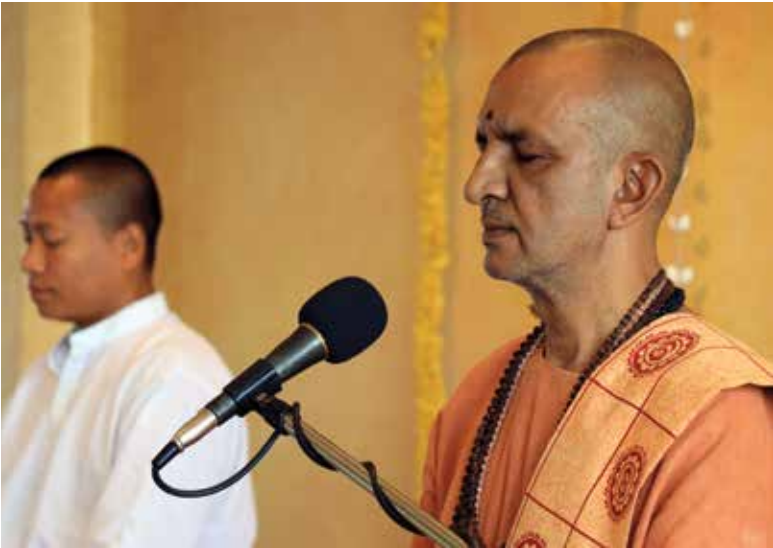
When you are able to cut off everything and become blank, *shoonya*, then that is the annamaya pratyahara or the sensorial pratyahara where all the senses have been stilled. Then you move to the pranic pratyahara. Pranic pratyahara has to be perfected by first perfecting pranayama, second prana nidra, third prana vidya and then pratyahara of pranas happens.

The relaxation that you did is one practice of prana nidra. Similar to yoga nidra, yet you did not use the sound or breath to internalize. You simply get the body in a state of relaxation and move in. The breath makes you aware from the toes to mooladhara and up to sahasrara then to mooladhara and separate. Separation, joining and movement. Then you add the third centre. These three chakras are used in prana nidra and prana vidya. Generation of prana in manipura,

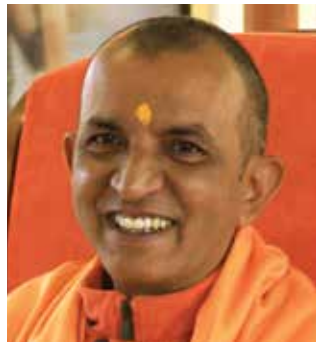
distribution of prana from ajna and storage of prana in mooladhara. That is also the concept of prana vidya.

Prana is something we have never experienced except as tingling or heat, yet we have not really experienced it as the life source, the actual prana shakti. When I was a kid, we had a game in which the finger used to come in front of the eye and a funny sensation used to be created at the eyebrow centre. What was that experience? It really used to feel funny. I could sense the point of energy and the movement as I shifted my finger away and when they came closer. That is the prana shakti of ajna chakra. When you are poking at it, you are feeling it in ajna chakra. As children we had more sensitivity to acknowledge and experience these subtle things. As we grow more conditioned and our mind becomes more material, we separate ourselves from those subtle experiences which were a normal part of life.

The yogis came up with a simple solution. Just by perfecting these practices, you can attain pranic pratyahara. You do not have to do much; you only have to do the practice. The accomplishment of the practice will be pratyahara.



Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda announced: “The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.”

In writing the second chapter, a complete change in the training programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth has come about since 2016. The new programs are setting a standard of understanding the practices and principles of yoga from the perspective of the original intentions of yoga.

Among these programs were the Hatha Yoga Yatras of 2019, consisting of modules 3 and 4: a journey from pranayama to pratyahara.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the programs, in which new dimensions of the yogic experience were unravelled in Swamiji's unique style, combining simplicity with profundity.

