

Kriya Yoga Yatra I

Understanding Pratyahara Kriyas

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Swami Niranjan

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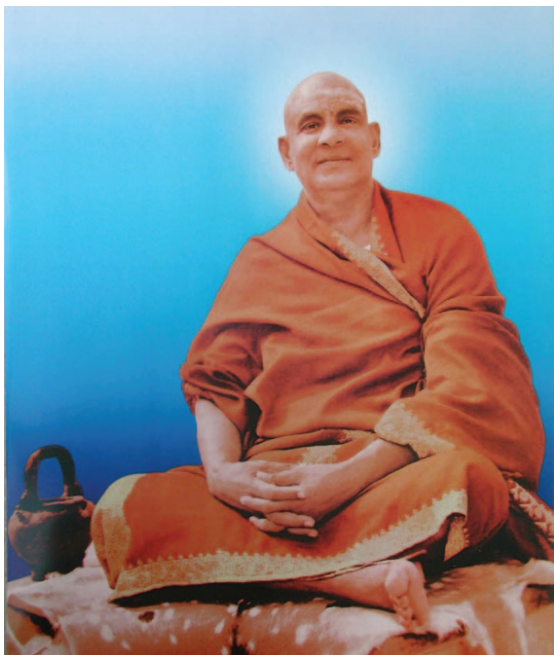
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Dedication

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

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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.

The Ground Rules of Kriya Yoga Learning

4 November 2016



Let me begin by saying that kriya yoga is for your personal sadhana and not for public teaching. If you think that what is being imparted here is a Kriya Instructor Course then I would advise you to pack up your bags and leave, as it is not the intention of the course to prepare teachers of kriya yoga.

Kriya yoga is always taught as a personal sadhana, as a personal experience. This is how our guru Sri Swami Satyananda developed the practices of yoga. He defined the progression of yoga. Just as in social education you have to go through primary class, then secondary class, then college, in the same manner, in spiritual education you have to go

through primary class, secondary class and then college. Primary class is hatha yoga, secondary class is raja yoga, and college training is kriya yoga.

People may teach up to hatha yoga and raja yoga, as they have the teacher training certificate, but no teaching certificate is given in kriya yoga. Since time immemorial, it has been an instruction given by the guru to the competent disciple and is not for public use. It is hoped that with the practice of hatha yoga and raja yoga, you have come to some level of mastery of yoga. If you have that mastery, then you are qualified to deepen your own yogic experience with the practices of kriya yoga. Therefore, at the very outset I am laying the ground rule: what you are learning represents an advanced yoga training for your own sadhana and deepening of your own experience and it is not meant for sharing in classes or in social media. I hope you remain sincere and committed to this.

Purpose of secrecy

Kriya yoga has always been so secret that there is no literature, neither in yoga, tantra or Vedanta, defining or describing its practices or ideas. Nevertheless, the understanding of kriya yoga comes from the tantras, and it is practised along with kundalini yoga, as they complement each other. In order to practise kundalini yoga and kriya yoga together, you need to have mastery and command over the previous branches of yoga, that is, hatha yoga and raja yoga, and all the branches of those yogas. Very few people have this mastery, and therefore kriya yoga has always remained a secret teaching and training.

With the practice of hatha and raja yoga, the mind is purified, the consciousness is elevated, some deeper understanding of your own experience takes place, and this enables you to practise kriya yoga. If you teach kriya yoga to the public in general in a class, like you teach other yogas, will you be able to assume responsibility for the psychic awakening that can take place? In fact, the experiences

awakened by kundalini and kriya yoga have been identified by scientists as ‘a state of positive psychosis’.

There is a whole book written on it by Dr Lee Sanella: *Kundalini, Psychosis or Transcendence?* He did research into people who claim to be advanced yoga practitioners and those who are psychotic, and compared the expressions of their minds, their behaviours, attitudes, reactions and responses. He came to the conclusion that the state of psychosis which people perceive as a negative psychological condition, can be in some ways similar to the positive ‘psychosis’ related to kundalini, where the negative aspects are not manifesting, instead the positive aspects are manifesting. However, as the kundalini practices have a deep effect on the human psyche, they are not ordinarily revealed.

Satyananda kriya yoga: commitment to sadhana

In the present age, there are two main streams of kriya yoga teaching. There might be others who teach this or that variety, but the main streams are two: one of Paramahansa Yogananda and the other of Paramahansa Satyananda. The teachings of kriya yoga of Paramahansa Yogananda are very secretive and people have to maintain the secrecy all their life. Here also, we have to maintain the commitment to practise kriya yoga as one’s individual personal sadhana to deepen one’s own experience.

Swami Satyananda became one of the first kriya yoga exponents who taught kriya yoga over a three-year period by postal correspondence course: ‘36 Lessons in Kriya Yoga’. Since then, the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger has conducted kriya yoga training in a specific manner. Other teachers and centres may teach all the practices of kriya yoga in three or four days. That is an exposure to kriya yoga, not a training in kriya yoga. After that exposure, most people don’t practise. The training at Ganga Darshan training is different. Here you have to commit to a three-year program. Since the beginning, the kriyas are taught here as a sadhana, not as something that fulfils one’s curiosity.

Therefore, if you want to practise kriya yoga as Swami Satyananda developed it, you have to keep in mind all the systems, rules and disciplines of the practice, and embark upon it with a serious understanding of what you are aiming for. The purpose here is to teach as Swami Satyananda taught, with the aim of developing spiritual awareness and not to satisfy anybody's curiosity as to what kriya yoga is and what special powers one can get from the practice. With this foundation clearly laid, we shall commence the kriya yoga course.

Maintaining the tradition

The kriya yoga course at the Bihar School of Yoga is divided into three one-year capsules. The first year it is pratyahara kriyas, the second year it is dharana kriyas, and the third year it is dhyana kriyas.

When you complete the first year's course, you are given a one-year sadhana program, and when you want to participate in the dharana course the next year, you are asked to fill in a questionnaire. That questionnaire tells us whether you have practised the sadhana during the year or not. In this way, there is a filtering process, and finally only a few people complete the full kriya training.

As we commence the second chapter of yoga, I would begin the kriya training with kriya yoga initiation. In the kriya tradition, aspirants are not authorized to learn kriya yoga without initiation. Without initiation, it has no meaning. It simply remains a practice that withers away after some time. There are so many people who have gone through kriya courses but haven't practised even for a day.

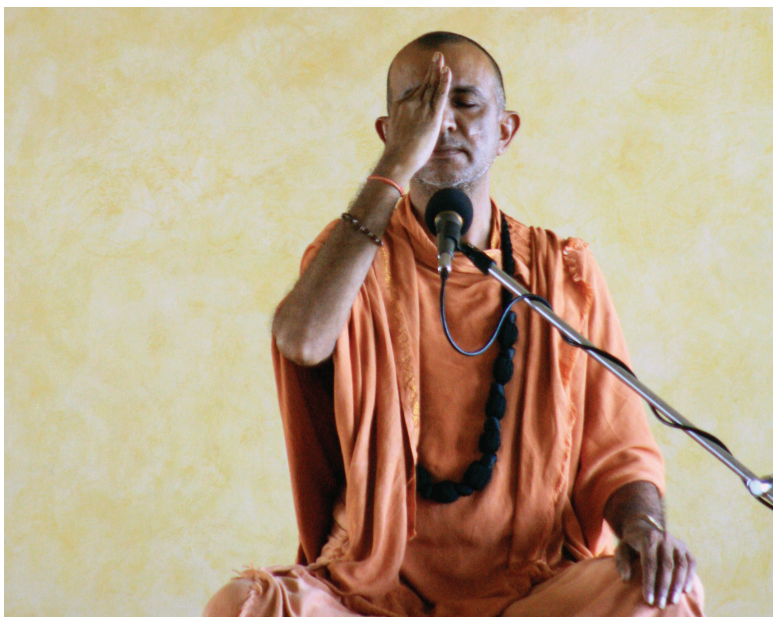
The kriya initiation is not a mantra initiation, it is initiation into the vidya of kriya yoga. It is not intended to make someone into a disciple but to ensure that the correctness of the kriya knowledge is maintained. To practise kriya yoga as sadhana, the correctness has to be there. Therefore we will again establish the kriya yoga initiation. The guru-disciple relationship takes place in mantra initiation, and that is different. You can be a disciple

of anybody, but the initiation in kriya yoga represents your seriousness, seriousness and commitment to the vidya.

Understanding pratyahara

The focus in this course is on the first group of practices in kriya yoga, known as pratyahara kriyas. In order to understand the pratyahara kriyas, you have to understand what pratyahara is. This term appears in raja yoga, where it is defined as the ability to disconnect from outside and turn inwards. According to this concept, pratyahara does not mean concentration or meditation; it means reversing the flow of awareness. From connecting with the outside world, you begin to connect with your internal experiences. This is the basic concept of pratyahara being given.

At present, your senses and all the attributes of your mind become active when you are connected to the outside world. As long as the eyes are open, the body and the brain are active and the mind is functioning, you are awake, alert



and dynamic. However, when the mind shuts down, when the brain slows down, when the eyes shut themselves and the body becomes inactive, what happens then? You go to sleep. In pratyahara, the concern is not waking or sleeping, but knowing which systems have to shut down.

You have to consciously shut down different systems which divert and distract the awareness from realizing the inner nature. Therefore, pratyahara is known as withdrawal of the senses and the mind from outside to focusing them inside. This withdrawal means knowing when to shut down which department of the body.

Shutting off is the system of pratyahara. You look at yourself and say, “This I need to shut off,” and you pull out the plug. “This I need to close,” and you pull out the plug. “This light I don’t need,” and you turn off the switch. Instead of lighting a thousand lamps in your mind and wasting the electricity of the brain, you use only the five lamps that you need to illumine the place you are in, and shut off the other 995. This results in an immense saving of energy, there is no wastage, and that is pratyahara. When you shut down all of the thousand lights except the five you need to use, then you have 995 less distractions, and the focus of your mind gains in potency 995 times.

During this teaching of the pratyahara kriyas, along with the kriya techniques, instructions and guidelines will also be given on how to maintain the pratyahara state. There are two practices, one yama and one niyama, which enforce the state and the condition of pratyahara. The yama is danti and the niyama is indriya nigraha.

Indriya nigraha: sensorial restraint

Indriya nigraha is observing the direction where the senses are flowing to, and then withdrawing them from there. “Oh this flower is very nice, so colourful, so beautiful . . .” and one picks the flower. In indriya nigraha, instead of plucking the flower to take it with you, you recognize that it is a flower; that it is beautiful, and you move on. You attach, and then you

withdraw. It doesn't even remain as a memory, it is cleared. If it remains as a memory, then even in deep meditation it will be triggered, the flower will be there and it will distract you. Therefore, indriya nigraha is not just withdrawing the awareness, but also cleaning and clearing the impression. You recognize the associations of the senses, withdraw them, clear the positive and the negative aspects both, and become neutral.

There are ten senses: five jnanendriya and five karmendriya, so indriya nigraha takes place at ten different levels. It is not just one thought, 'I am controlling myself and here I am.' No. Indriya nigraha, sensory observation, has to happen independently, individually, with all the senses. One by one you pull in the strings. You have ten fishing rods and all the ten are bitten. You don't grab the ten sticks together and go; first you take one fishing rod, reel it in, then the next rod, reel it in, then the third and reel it in: one by one, one by one, one by one. That is the concept of indriya nigraha, or sensorial restraint.

Danti: mental restraint

Danti is mental restraint. Indriya nigraha is sensorial restraint and danti is mental restraint. Here you have to deal with six conditions of the mind that are detrimental and destructive influences in life. These are: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*: passion, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy. These are the six basic tamasic traits of mind that have to be reined in. For example, when you feel the rise of anger and you are able to nullify the anger with your own peace, then that is danti, mental restraint. In this manner, at the mental level six traits have to be dealt with.

Indriya nigraha and danti constitute pratyahara sadhana. Even in kriya yoga, it is the application of these two that will help you perfect the first aspect of the pratyahara kriyas. Thus, at the first level of the practice of kriya yoga, while you do the practices, you have to also understand the concept of pratyahara and try to deepen its experience in your life.

The Moving Awareness

7 November 2016



There was a man who was digging the earth and he came upon a closed container. He picked it up and broke it, and out came a genie. The genie said, “What do you want? I will fulfil all your wishes.” The man rattled off all the wishes he

had, “I want this, I want this, I want this, I want this”, and everything the man wished for was fulfilled in a short time. Then the genie told the man, “Listen, while I am out of the container which you very judiciously broke, I need to work continuously, and if you don’t give me work, then I will be compelled to eat you up.”

The man gave him every kind of work, and the genie made him go from rags to riches within one hour. From being an absolute pauper, having nothing, he became the richest person in the whole world, having everything. Now there was nothing needed to be done. So he started fantasizing about travelling to different planets, and even that became possible through the genie’s powers.

This man was enjoying his life so much that he forgot the condition the genie had set: ‘If you don’t give me work, I will eat you.’ That day finally arrived when the man had no work at all to give to the genie. So the genie appeared before him and said, “Today you have not given me any work, and as per our agreement, this is your last day of life. I am going to eat you up.” As he started approaching, the man said, “Listen, I still have until midnight. You cannot eat me before midnight, and if I give you something to do before that, then also you cannot eat me.” The genie said, “Yes, that’s true.”

The man looked at his watch, there were still four or five hours left to midnight. He made a phone call to Ganga Darshan explaining his problem and asked what to do. Swami Shankaranandaji, the wise man of the ashram, told him, “Do one thing. You want to keep the genie engaged, right? Ask him to put a bamboo pole in the ground, smear grease on it, and manually climb it up and down. That will be his work.” The man said, “Will that save me?” Swami Shankaranandaji said, “Yes, try it.” At five minutes to midnight, the genie appeared before the man and said, “Are you ready to die or do you have any work to give me?” The person repeated the instructions from Swami Shankaranandaji, “Do one thing, one final job, put a pole in the ground, grease it and climb up and down that pole.”

The genie said, “No problem.” He put up the pole, greased it, and started climbing. But every time he would grab hold of the bamboo, he would slip down. So his task never ended, and the man lived happily ever after.

The moving awareness

This is the lesson of kriya yoga, where the awareness goes up and down, up and down. The genie is the mind, and in order to make the mind sublime you have to keep the mind engaged and not relaxed. Relaxation is done when you are stressed out. And when are you stressed out? When your mind and senses engage themselves in the outer dimension. You de-stress yourself in meditation when you divert the mind from out to in. So sleep and relaxation are for de-stressing the mind and the senses. To make the mind sensitive and more illuminated, it is not relaxation that works but engagement.

People think that when they practise yoga, they will experience silence, peace and quiet. That may be the final result, but the entire process from step one to the last step is not an experience of peace but continuous motion. As long as there is motion there is no peace; you will experience peace when you reach your final destination and stop your motion. When you are walking there is continuous motion rather than peace. Once you arrive, you can sit down quietly and admire the beauty of the sunset. That is the procedure that yoga adopts in dealing with the mind.

Even in kriya yoga you continuously move up and down the arohan and avarohan passages, to keep yourself engaged. That engagement allows you to focus on many different activities that happen simultaneously, which in a normal situation you would not be aware of. Even right now, you are performing many activities through your body and senses, but are you aware of them all? No. In kriya yoga, you become aware of multiple activities within one practice.

For example, in the first practice of kriya yoga, vipareeta karani mudra, you have to maintain the awareness of the

correctness of the posture, the balance, the weight on your hands and shoulders, everything has to be properly adjusted, and through that you come to a proper *sthiti*, stable condition, of the body. After adjusting yourself physically, you focus on the stability of the body. Thereafter you become aware of the breath, but instead of feeling the breath in the throat, you visualize it flowing in a smooth and gentle manner. Visualization also helps the physical condition: you do not focus on the contraction of the throat and feel choked as your throat is compressed; rather the breath becomes a way to lead the awareness to different areas of the body. Then you focus on the chakras. That awareness at specific points in the body triggers centres that are located in those areas.

In this manner, you are simultaneously becoming aware of and managing conditions that are both physical and mental. In this process, is the mind relaxed or engaged? It is engaged. It is not a fixed awareness, it is a moving awareness. You have to move your awareness up from manipura to vishuddhi to bindu, then come back down again. This builds up *dharanas*, or areas of focus, areas of developing the awareness and engaging the mind to create a particular type of experience, which may or may not be sensorial.

The safety valve

If kriya yoga is done right, it leads to certain psychic experiences and awakenings. For these awakenings and experiences to happen beneficially, you need to have gone through the proper sequence, which includes balancing of ida and pingala in hatha yoga and chitta vritti nirodha in raja yoga.

The way to stabilize the vrittis begins in hatha yoga with the balance of ida and pingala, the solar and the lunar activities of life, and the clearing of vrittis continues in raja yoga. If these two processes are not done, you will not be able to practise kriya yoga. No matter how hard you try to meditate and concentrate, with imbalanced energies you will not have sufficient depth and with disturbed vrittis you will not be able to go deep into your psyche.

With dissipated mental behaviour, you cannot derive the benefit from kriya yoga or even practise it; you will get bored after some time. That is the beauty of kriya yoga: many people learn it yet very few people practise it, as they are not psychologically inclined or ready for it. After a few weeks, days or months, it fades into the background and they return to their asana practice.

This, in fact, is one of the biggest boons of kriya yoga: that those who are not ready for it, even if they learn it, will not be able to use it. Those who are ready, by learning it in the right manner, will have quick results. They already have the necessary education from previous classes and have gone through the training of hatha yoga's ida-pingala balancing and raja yoga's *chitta vritti nirodha*. Their mind is already geared to go beyond annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya into vijñanamaya and anandamaya. There is no dissipation of annamaya, pranamaya or manomaya, as all the vrittis are stabilized. This is the inbuilt safety of kriya yoga.

Kriya yoga is not a common practice or learning, as not many people are able to fulfil its two basic requirements: balance in prana shakti and chitta shakti, and management of mental dissipations and distractions. It is possible only for those who have followed the proper sequence, which ensures that one's progress in hatha yoga has taken one through the first two koshas: annamaya and pranamaya. Then, in raja yoga, one works with pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha, and gains access to vijñanamaya kosha, the dimension of consciousness as a meditative experience. Thereafter, in kriya yoga one is able to access the depth of vijñanamaya and have the experience of anandamaya. Therefore, the practice of kriya yoga is dependent on the perfection of hatha yoga and raja yoga. It is not a standalone practice; its foundations are hatha yoga and raja yoga.

Contemplating the senses

Kriya yoga begins with a simple principle, indicated in the first group of kriyas known as pratyahara kriyas. Many people

believe that pratyahara in raja yoga is meditation. However, from the kriya yoga perspective, pratyahara is not seen as a meditative state but a contemplative state. You contemplate on a procedure. You contemplate on the links created by an experience, whereas meditation is a fixed visualization.

Antar mouna, for example, leads to the stopping of thoughts. When the thoughts stop, then meditation begins. You begin with mental blankness in meditation, not with mental chatter. Dhyana is the absence of chatter, and that to an ordinary person would be perceived as blankness of mind. That blankness does not indicate absolute absence; only instead of speaking loudly or screaming your thoughts, you are whispering them. Thoughts are there, but it is as if they are dispersed in the wind. Right now they are loud speeches in your mind, and at that time they are dispersed whispers in the wind. You don't even hear them, you have to try hard to pick on a thought; their frequency, intensity and potency is so low. Instead of high peaks, there are more flat lines on the graph. The activity goes on, yet the intensity and the dissipation is reduced by ninety or ninety-five percent. Something has to remain for the aspirant to survive, but the lessening of dissipation opens the possibility for the anandamaya experience to filter through.

Pratyahara, in the context of the kriyas, is continuity of a sequence, contemplating on each procedure, each step. Generally, the meditative state is: 'I am there', 'I have become the experience'. The contemplative stages are: 'I am aware of the process of becoming', 'I am aware of how I become', 'I am aware of the steps that I take'.

Exploring the subtle aspects of the senses

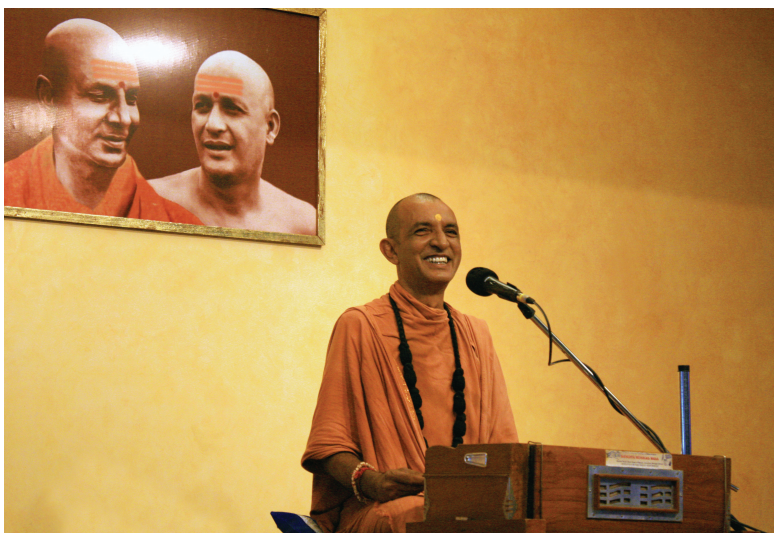
If you observe how your senses gradually withdraw in pratyahara, then you will find that the whole process follows a sequence. Kriya yoga defines this sequence, these stages and steps of sense withdrawal. In the first group of kriyas, the pratyahara kriyas, all the senses are engaged, yet the practices lead you to experience their subtle nature.

Eyes and vision: In the first two practices, you close your eyes to induce a level of introversion. Introversion here means lessening of the visual inputs to the brain. When you shut your eyes, at least seventy-five percent of the visual inputs going into the brain through the eyes are cut down. Only twenty-five percent remains active. Imagine a torch light which can be turned on to shine in its full potency and which also has the possibility of being dimmed. When you close the eyes, it is similar; you don't need as much brain battery and introversion takes place.

The eyes are closed in the first two kriyas. In the next seven they are partially open and different mudras are practised with the eyes open. Unmani mudra is one of these; it blanks the mind from any conscious activity, as you move into a blank space. It is the same with shambhavi and other mudras of the eyes; they all induce a still behaviour in the mind.

Ears and hearing: The auditory senses are also engaged fully in practices like shabda sanchalana. One is encouraged to hear the inner sounds. Yoga perceives sounds from different perspectives: the sensorial, the mental, the psychic, the spiritual. Sensorial sounds come in through the ears, from zero decibel to the highest level of sound that you can hear. Mental sounds can be memories. You are talking to your friend in your mind; you are articulating sounds in your mind, your friend is articulating sounds in your mind. They are part of the sound-memory. Other impressions, like the noise of a bomb, may also be imprinted on the memory. Everything that you have heard in the past is imprinted on your memory, and therefore even when the outer senses are inactive, even when you plug your ears, the inner chatter continues.

The psychic sounds are beyond the mind, and are known as anahata sounds. Non-psychic sounds are known as *hata* or struck sounds, which means two objects coming together to create sound, like the lips come together to make the sound of 'p', or the tongue and the upper palate come together



when you say 'two'. Speaking combines physical, sensorial and mental memory. The third level of sound, *anahata*, unstruck, is something that is already there. It has not come into the bank of information in your brain and mind due to any external factor. A person who has no awareness of music suddenly begins to hear music. Such abilities and skills that surface from the psychic dimension represent psychic sounds. In deep meditation sometimes you hear music, you hear the sound of a flute or bells or conch. These are all psychic sounds.

The highest level of sound is spiritual sounds; they represent an experience where words and sentences appear in your inner perception to guide your progress on your path.

In kriya yoga, when you follow and then shut the sensorial and the mental levels, the psychic sounds begin to develop. The catch is that you may be able to practise physical restraint up to a point but mental restraint is difficult to attain, therefore most people are not able to reach the level of psychic sounds. Any mental chatter is part of a *vritti*, so you have to revert back to raja yoga to overcome the mental chatter and then you can experience the purpose of kriya yoga.

Nose and the sense of smell: When you practise mudras such as the manduki mudra in kriya yoga, they sensitize the nose and you are able to experience subtle smells. In your meditative practices you might have come across an experience where suddenly there is a smell; you are not burning any incense yet there is a smell of incense, or there is nothing rotten near you yet there is a putrid smell. These are called astral smells.

The nose functions at two levels: one as a sense organ to pick up outer smells, and two as a subtle perceiver where the same sense of smell is so refined and sharpened that you can even identify something or someone merely through smell, like animals do. A sniffer dog can smell a cloth and locate its owner five kilometres away by following the trail. It has the ability to experience smell like you see colours; its nose can sense smell like your eyes can see colours. This ability cannot be compared to your faculty of smell; it is another faculty altogether where the sense is sharpened to a high degree.

The sense of smell is also experienced at another level, where nothing is destroyed. In the physical or sensorial level, all smells can be destroyed; however, at the astral level no smell can be destroyed. The purpose of kriya yoga is to access that level.

Tongue and taste: For the sense organ of tongue, the practice is that of khechari mudra. Its purpose is to refine the taste so you are able to taste *amrita*, nectar. Even the sense of taste is refined in kriya; it is not the sensorial taste but something inner. Those who have experienced that taste say that it is intoxicating. That indicates perfection of khechari mudra, which, according to the yogic texts, leads to freedom from all diseases and to longevity.

Sensorial engagement and inner exploration

If you analyze the pratyahara kriyas further, you will find that all the karmendriyas – the excretory organs, the sexual organs, the feet, the hands, the organ of speech – are also engaged in the practices. Along with this, you also explore

the chakras and the psychic passages, which deepens the awareness by focusing your attention to non-sensorial, specific inner experiences. This combination of sensorial engagement and inner exploration leads to the experience of the subtle or psychic dimension of the senses.

If you observe one of your chakras, whether ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, or any other, and keep on observing for five minutes, what are you doing? You are cultivating an awareness of the experience that is taking place there. That awareness will identify you with that experience. If the awareness was not there, the experience would still be there but there would be no identification. Therefore, awareness is the key here.

You are cultivating awareness of the chakras and the psychic passages, leading to a balance between the outer world of the senses and the inner world of the energies and the pranic flows. Thus, one of the things you learn from the pratyahara kriyas is managing all the sense organs and using them for a positive purpose. You develop their subtle faculties and use that for psychic exploration.

Sensorial and mental control

In the practice of pratyahara, the yama and niyama that assist the process are indriya nigraha for the senses and danti for the mind: they give the outer sensory control and the inner mental control. They prepare a person for developing the yogic awareness.

How one can observe and control the senses and the mind has to be understood in the right manner. Say, you grab something and you are holding it with a certain force. At first you may not know how much force you are using to hold the object, but once you become aware of the intensity of your grip, you can lessen it. It is the same with your association and attachment, asakti, with the senses and sense objects. With awareness you can lessen the grip from hundred percent of pressure to ninety, to eighty, to seventy, to sixty, rather than trying to pull your hand away in the first instance. If

you pull away from your attachments in the first instance, it is not going to work. It will become a painful experience, as it is not relaxed. You have to gradually release the hold. That is the first level of *indriya nigraha*.

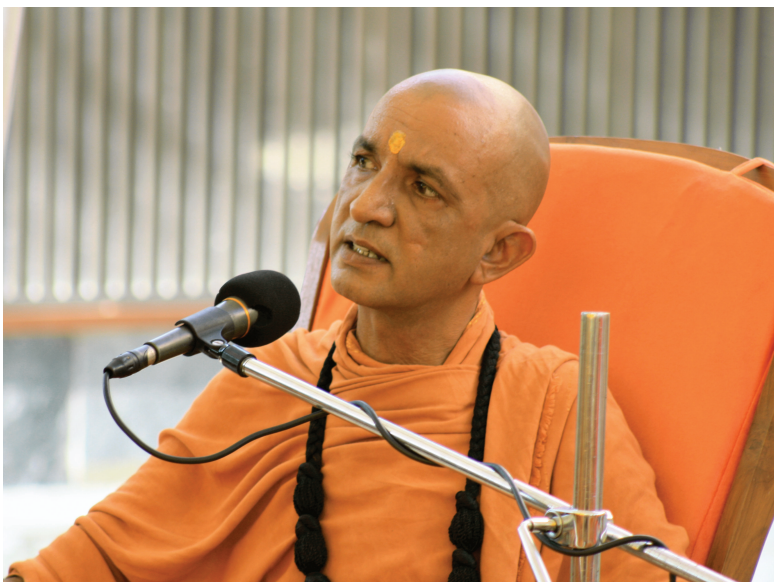
The second level is removing the hold, the attachment. The third level is learning to apply the appropriate force to perform an action and knowing that after the action is done, the purpose of the hold is over. It is knowing that you don't have to keep holding on to that interaction, association or attachment. The senses and their interactions are only there for you to carry on happily in life. It is not necessary to become attached due to your greed and suffer in the process.

This is the concept of *indriya nigraha*: reduce the hold, withdraw, and then again apply the right pressure for the work that you need to do. You don't have to clench your fist to hold a glass, it is unnecessary. You have to only hold it in a way that it does not slip. This form of awareness of your sensory as well as mental associations has to develop, and that is the lessening of *raga*, attachment.

Attachment is generally considered as something personal, something to do with your near and dear ones, 'I am attached to them'. That is a self-centred concept of attachment. Attachment means that with whatever you do, you are creating an association, then retaining it in your mind, and holding on to an impression. It is that impression which has to be released. Ultimately, it is the mind that has to be made to understand when to disconnect and when to connect. With that understanding one becomes a *kriya yogi*.

The Balance Between This and That

8 November 2016



Somebody has asked a question: “As we follow the yogic path, sometimes our family says, ‘You are becoming distant from us’, or, ‘We don’t seem to be first in your life any more’, and sometimes one feels this internally. Is this part of the continuing process as we follow the yogic path? While practising the kriyas, are we going to feel ourselves more distant? What can we do to balance this?”

The answer is: it is not the yoga practices that distance you from others, but the mental process that you go through in

your practice. This is something that you should understand clearly and properly.

What is the purpose of yoga? The first purpose is internalization, and the second purpose is internal awakening. These are the only two purposes of yoga, cultivating the ability to withdraw and to internalize, and later on to use that state of concentration to experience the spiritual nature.

If you read the book *Pravritti or Nivritti*, in the Yoga Drishti Series, it mentions that *pravritti*, or material life, is one socket on the wall, and *nivritti*, spiritual life, is another socket on the wall. You, the individual, is the plug that is put in, and when you are connected to a socket, the current flows through. When your plug is connected to the material socket, the *pravritti* socket, then those external mental associations and identifications develop. They connect you with the world. Me, mine, my family, my son, my daughter, my sister, my brother, all that.

Pravritti is a perfectly fine social mentality. However, with these associations and identifications comes another state: indulgence. You begin to indulge in your relationships, whether it is your son, daughter, sister, brother or friend. There is a feeling that you can demand and expect more from them than you can from others. This dependency on each other, the expecting and the demanding, gives rise to a condition of mind known as *asakti*, attachment.

It is similar to being on a drinking binge, where instead of controlling your behaviour to a glass or two, you down a whole bottle and get drunk. That is indulgence. If you have one glass of champagne or whiskey, the effect is different from having one whole bottle. When that threshold is crossed, it becomes indulgence. When a normal connection turns into an overbearing relationship, the threshold has been crossed, and this often happens in social situations, and therefore there is indulgence and attachment in social situations.

When you practise yoga and meditation, the first thing that you go through and experience is *pratyahara*. Whether you practise *asana* or *pranayama*, your awareness becomes

centred, and the outer distractions and dissipations become less. From the threshold that you had crossed, you come back gradually to the threshold. At that point the indulgence is reduced, and that is what people feel and express, 'I used to be able to down ten glasses of beer, now I don't feel the need, I don't have the desire, am I a misfit? Previously I used to enjoy going out, but now I like to remain quiet and alone. Is this the doing of yoga?'

It is not the doing of yoga. Yes, as you practise yoga, pratyahara develops, which makes you more centred and more aware, and stops you from crossing the threshold. However, you and others around you are not used to your un-indulgent nature. Before you were always indulging, always wanting and demanding. When you begin to observe yourself and suddenly see, 'Hey, this is not me or my requirement', your behaviour changes. Then the thought comes, 'Am I a social misfit?' That thought is not true. In fact, by becoming non-indulgent, you can live a better life in society. Therefore, when you say that your behaviour is changing, it is that indulgent behaviour which is changing, not the natural behaviour. From that perspective, change does come from within.

Inner change and yoga

As practitioners of yoga, and in relation to kriya yoga in particular, there should be an awareness and understanding that the mind is going to change. All the processes that you become exposed to in yoga, whether ajapa japa, antar mouna, yoga nidra, kriya yoga, or anything else, do involve a degree of pratyahara.

When you disconnect from the outer associations and become more aware of yourself, when you disconnect from what is happening out there and become more aware of your own inner perceptions and experiences, the normal distracted and dissipated behaviour will definitely be the first to stop. The problem is, you have lived with this behaviour for thirty, forty or fifty years of your life. When it stops, you

feel, 'What has happened to me? I am not following my normal behaviour? For the fifty years of my living existence I'd never had this stopping of mind. I was always following my mind, but today I am able to stop it.' That is the first revelation. When that revelation comes, or even when you experience deep relaxation in meditation, it is an indication of the withdrawal process taking place in you. In this process, the unnecessary connections are disconnected.

The process of disconnection happens in a natural way, but people who expect the previous 'normal' behaviour to go on, find themselves unable to understand it. The so-called normal behaviour changes when you come to yoga, as that behaviour is dissipated. Therefore, even within a family there can be two groups of people: those with yoga, who are more silent, quiet and contemplative, and others who are not in yoga and are more boisterous and raucous.

This is the path of yoga. If you don't like it, don't practise it. Enjoy your parties and your indulgences. However, to practise yoga and then to ask, "Am I distancing myself from society and family?" indicates a lack of understanding of what yoga is giving. You are going against your own mental conditioning, which is happening naturally, and resisting that.

Introversion is the result of awareness extending within oneself; extroversion is the result of awareness extending outside and forgetting oneself. The introverted nature is developing awareness of oneself and reducing extroversion, the awareness of the outside. Both states are there all the time, but how do you know whether you are extroverted or introverted?

Just because the eyes are open does not mean you are extroverted. Even with the eyes open you can be lost and not notice many things. Even if an elephant crosses in front of you, if the awareness is not there, you will not notice the fifteen-foot tall elephant. If the awareness is there, even an insignificant thing, like a mosquito fluttering beside you, will be noticed instantly.

The faculty of perception

Ultimately, it is not introversion or extroversion that is important, but how you use and extend the faculty of perception at gross levels of awareness and at high levels of consciousness.

It is this faculty of perception that energizes and stimulates the mind. Awareness is one activity of perception, memory is another activity of perception. You can remember what you don't perceive, what you have just thought, or things you have come across, but you don't know what they are. Perception is always something that you know, experience and retain.

It is the nature of the senses to create a picture all the time. A particular sound which you are hearing will always be identified as the chirping of a bird, not as the roar of a lion, as that image is imprinted in your brain. You hear a barking noise and know, 'That is the bark of a dog', as the sound is clearly imprinted. Even though you may not see, touch, feel or taste, just the sound, through previously created impressions, will give you the knowledge of what is taking place.

Sitting here you hear a boom. For somebody who does not recognize the noise, it may be a firecracker, but for somebody who knows and recognizes the pitch and everything, it is a bomb. There is a fine line of awareness there. Something extra is added to your perception, which makes you know that this is not a firecracker, but a bomb. What is that?

The same thing happens with all other sense impressions, whether visual, tactile, or other. Anything that is seen can be recreated in the mind. Anything that you touch, can be recreated, again felt and experienced. All the senses are conduits of the impressions in your consciousness, and these impressions are known as *pratyaya*.

Pratyaya: impressions in the mind

The word in English is impression; the word in Sanskrit is *pratyaya*. Imagine your mind to be like a passport. Your passport contains information from every country that you

have visited: the date of entry and departure, by which port you entered, by which port you left. The passport is a record. In the same way, the mind is a record, and it keeps track of everything that has happened, in the form of pratyaya, or impressions.

Pratyahara is managing those pratyayas and releasing them, clearing them, cleaning them, just as in your home you keep clearing old diaries, files, documents and papers. If you don't clear but keep piling every document that comes on to your table, within one week you will not be able to find anything; there will be piles and piles of papers and you won't be able to see what you are looking for. It is the same with the mind. Everything is being filed and filed and filed, and there comes a time when you have to sit down and sort everything. In the process of sorting, you clear out many irrelevant things.

The same principle applies to the senses and the impressions that you receive from the senses. They have to be sorted through. The redundant ones have to be chucked into the rubbish bin, or into the shredder if you don't want people to see them. This destruction is of something you don't want other people to look at. Can you destroy something that other people look at all the time and say, "This is bad"? If you can do that, then you are a yogi worth his salt! Rather than fantasizing about your own nature, try to identify the pratyayas of what others have identified as your bad behaviour, trait or nature. This clearing has to go on, and this system of clearing the pratyayas and managing them is known as pratyahara.

Dealing with pratyayas

There is a statement in the *Gheranda Samhita* (4:3-7):

*Yatra yatra gataa drishtirmanastatra prayachchati;
Atah pratyaaaharaedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet.
Puraskaaram tiraskaaram sushraavyam vaa bhayaanakam;
Manastamaanniyamyaaitadaatmanyeva vasham nayet.*

*Sheetam chaapi tathaa choshnam yanmanassamsparshayogatah;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet.
Sugandhe vaa'pi durgandhe mano ghraaneshu jaayate;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet.
Madhuraamlakatiktaadirasam gatam yadaa manah;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet.*

The verses state that in relation to sight, wherever one looks, the mind follows. The mind is always following the vision, therefore withdraw it and put it under the control of the self. Similarly, with speech: take the mind off words that are respectful or insulting, pleasing or displeasing to hear, and put it under the control of the self.

The verse reminds me of a true story. There was a professor who had retired from service, and was living a comfortable life. Three months after his retirement, he developed hypertension and high blood pressure. He came to the ashram, I met him and asked what we could do for him. He said, "I want to find a cure for my hypertension." After learning his history, I said, "It seems you have lived a successful and happy life, and you have developed hypertension only recently. Is it physical or is it psychological?"

He said, "Swamiji, actually I do know the day I felt the rush of blood in my head, and from that day onwards I've had high blood pressure." I said, "What happened that day which you remember so clearly?" He said, "That was the day I was sitting in the living room having my morning cup of tea. I was very relaxed and happy, thinking, 'I've retired, I have everything: a nice family, children, daughter-in-law'. At that time, my daughter-in-law was cleaning the room, and it seemed she'd had a fight with her husband the night before, so she was in a foul mood and I heard her say to herself, 'Look at my father-in-law, he is sitting there on the couch like a dog.' I know she did not mean it, but those words hurt me, 'Sitting there like a like a dog.' I was disturbed that she could say those words about me."

When he told me this, I said, “Yes, that is the reason of your hypertension.” He said, “What can I do? What yoga can I do?” I said, “Well, yoga is not necessary here, you have to remove that impression, that visualization that has entered your mind.” He said, “How do I do that, Swamiji?” I said, “When you thought you were being abused, what was the image in your mind?” He said, “Well, when she said, ‘He is sitting there like a dog’, I visualized a street dog, you know, with one broken leg, one blind eye, one ear drooping, with fleas and sores all over the body; that was the image that came to my mind.” I said, “Yes, it is that visualization which you have to change. You are not a sick dog, rather you are a five-star dog. Just think that you are a nice Alsatian, who has everything given to him, who is healthy and happy, who travels in an air-conditioned car, eats the best food, and is living a happy, stress-free life.” He said, “Swamiji, you must be joking.” I said, “No, I am serious.” He was totally confused. He said, “You are sure that I don’t need to practise any yoga?” I said, “Yes.” “No relaxation, no de-stressing, no meditation?” I said, “No, nothing.” “No asana, no pranayama?” “Nothing.”

I think he was a bit disappointed when he left. But he came back after about two or three months when I had forgotten about the incident. He said, “Swamiji, I am healthy now, I don’t have blood pressure anymore.” I said, “Really? What did you do? What type of medicine did you take?” He said, “Nothing. I simply followed your advice. I changed my visualization of the dog, and the moment I disconnected myself from the image of the sick dog, I became a happy dog.”

This is a true story, and it reflects what it says in the verse: take the mind off words that are respectful or insulting. He heard those words which were insulting, and he was affected by them, they became a *pratyaya*, an impression, and that impression remained in his unconscious. He was called a dog, up to that point, fine. But then, how did he visualize the dog? He saw the dog as a sick dog, and that became his impression, his *pratyaya*. If he had seen the dog as a happy, healthy dog, then that would have been his *pratyaya*.



Negative pratyayas will create negative conditions in the body, positive pratyayas will create positive conditions in the body. Therefore, yoga always says, don't be negative, try to be as positive as you can. Total positivity may be an impossibility in life, but try to manage and overcome your negativity. Don't fall prey to your negativity. Connect with your positive nature. Create better pratyayas so that the mind can be free from its own self-imposed concept of bondage, suffering and pain.

After all, it all depends on the attitude. If you call me a dog, I will say, "Thank you, it is good to meet another dog, because only a dog can recognize another of the same kind. So I am very happy to meet you." The whole thing is gone. But if I hold on to the idea, "This person has called me a dog", then my expression, my behaviour, my actions, everything changes colour according to that thought.

What is important is the impression that you are creating yourself, not what is coming from outside. This impression generally comes from a self-oriented and self-centred perception, so everything is seen as 'me'. 'Something is being said to me.' A general statement can be taken as, 'Oh no, that was said only for me.' Such thoughts do come into the minds of people, indicating a self-centred personality that is caught up in its own negativity and feels guilty about it. That

is human psychology. If you feel guilty about something, it means you are the culprit. If there was understanding, the behaviour would be different. When the understanding is not there, you keep swinging from normal behaviour to guilt, and these are all impressions.

Similarly, cold and heat affect the mind through the sense of touch, therefore the sloka says, withdraw the mind from these experiences and put it under the control of the self. Smell: take the mind away from both fragrant and obnoxious odours that distract it and put it under the control of the self. If the mind becomes attracted towards tastes that are sweet, alkaline, sour, etc., take it away from them and put it under the control of the self. These are the statements that define the state of pratyahara. Whatever is there in the five senses, the visual impressions, the auditory impressions, the smell impressions, the tactile and taste impressions, the positive and the negative both, all have to be withdrawn and put under the control of the mind.

Pravritti and nivritti

We come back to the example of the socket and the plug. When you are not in control and the senses are all extroverted, then your plug is connected to the material socket where the senses and the extroverted mind are vibrating and pulsating at their maximum frequency. Then there is pulling that plug out in order to put it in the other socket. You cannot have one plug in two sockets, although that is what people want. Spiritual people want to bring materialism into their life and material people want to bring spirituality in their life. The two cannot mix, they are like water and oil. Up to a point it is fine: one can live a comfortable and happy life and also try to incorporate a few spiritual practices and ideas in one's life. However, if you go into pure spirituality, then the plug will have to be separated from the material socket and inserted into the other socket.

Pravritti is when you are plugged into the material, and nivritti is when you plug into the spiritual. Therefore, there

is a point when there will be denial of either the material or spiritual. In order to connect with the material, even people who were on the spiritual path, deny their spirituality. They say, “Now I have come back to the world to work through my karmas.” That is a denial of spirituality. Then there is the person who denies the material life, who says, “No, I have left that. I have come to the spiritual path.” It works both ways.

You can deny that and come here, or you can deny this and go there; ultimately the current will flow through the socket to which you are connected. If you are connected to the material socket it is the material power that will flow through, if you are connected to the spiritual socket then the spiritual power will flow through.

The yogic journey is from extroversion to introversion, with the right understanding and the application of one’s abilities, to achieve perfection at both levels: the material and the spiritual. That is the path that everybody has to walk. To go beyond that path, there has to be renunciation. Everybody to whom yoga is taught is part of the first group. There are only a few who say, “No, we shall explore further.” They are the ones who remove themselves from the comfort, family, society and friends, to discover something else. Those who take to this path are called recluses or *tyagis*, renunciates. One by one, they leave behind things, renounce them. What is left behind is that which they were involved with until now. All renunciates globally, whether they be Islamic renunciates, Christian renunciates, Hindu renunciates or Buddhist renunciates, follow the same path: letting go of their material associations one by one.

The concept of renunciation begins with pratyahara where you learn to gradually pull back. At the extreme end, the plug is pulled out totally, but that is not the path for everybody. You have to work to attain the state where the plug is semi pulled out, and there can be a balance. That is what you have to aim for, so there is a lessening of distraction, dissipation and suffering, and an increase of positivity and creativity along with a greater sense of balance.

Levels of Sense Perceptions

10 November 2016



Indriya nigraha: sense control

We have been talking about *indriya nigraha*, sensorial restraint. To practise sense restraint you have to first understand the senses, the *indriyas*. This understanding should not be

limited to the way you ordinarily understand or know them, but you have to also understand their functions at deeper and subtler levels.

Normally, you think of your indriyas only at the physical level, with relation to the physical actions that you perform. However, there are various other levels of the indriyas at which you are constantly using them, whether or not you are conscious of that. This applies to both the *karmendriyas*, the organs of action, and *jnanendriyas*, the organs of cognition.

The indriyas operate at the levels of all the koshas. Yoga believes that the human personality is not made up of only the external physical level. Like the Russian dolls which have a doll within a doll within a doll within a doll, within this sheath of the external physical body, there are various other levels, known as the five *koshas*. *Annamaya kosha* is the physical body. *Anna* means grain or matter, it is the body of matter, it is the body that is built up by food. Beyond that is the *pranamaya kosha*, the pranic body, the energy body. Then there is the mental body, the *manomaya kosha*; beyond that is the *vijnanamaya kosha* which is the deeper mind or the consciousness, the intuitive mind. And beyond that is the *anandamaya kosha*, the most subtle kosha, which is the bliss body. Each indriya, each sense organ, can be experienced at all these different levels.

Different kosha levels of karmendriyas

Hands: Usually you think of your hand as something that you use to handle objects, whether to hold something, release something, put something away, or even perform actions like playing instruments. Whatever it may be, you use your hands to handle objects. But then the hands are also a tool of expression at the mental level. When you are talking you make hand gestures to emphasize a point; the hands are being used as a tool of expression at that time.

Then at the level of *pranamaya*, the hands are continuously channelling prana. Whether or not you are aware of it, the hands are a potent medium of channelling prana.

When you do a handshake, it is not just a greeting, it is an exchange of prana. In the Indian tradition, the wedding ceremony is known as *panigrahan*, acceptance of the hand. The bride and the groom hold and accept each other's hands, which means they are accepting each other's energies. This is how the indriya of hands work at the pranamaya level.

At the intuitive level, in the vijñanamaya kosha, the hands make mudras. The mudras that you consciously make are intended to channel prana consciously. The hands may be channelling prana in any way all the time, but in the relationship of hands with vijñanamaya kosha, you are consciously channelling prana through the use of mudras. The mudras have been given to us by the sages who first experienced them in states of meditation. Their hands spontaneously formed a mudra as their intuitive mind was directing the body to form that mudra to channel the prana in a particular way.

Then at the transcendental level, in the anandamaya kosha, the hands also become the medium to receive the higher energy, which is the energy of grace. All the prayer mudras are hand mudras, where you are using your hands to receive that grace. So that is about the indriya of hands, working at all these different levels.

Feet: It is the same with the feet. You normally use your feet for motion, for locomotion, for moving from one place to another, for walking, for kicking objects, and so on. But then, at the mental level the feet give you the experience of being grounded. The experience of stability is directed by the experiences of the feet.

The connection with gravity is at the pranic level. It is an energy exchange that is taking place between the body and the earth, and the feet are the medium of that exchange.

At the intuitive level, the feet represent your connection with your earthly existence, which also translates to what your purpose in life is. Your connection with your earthly existence defines why you are here, your dharma. The

understanding of that dharma exists at the intuitive, vijñanamaya kosha level.

The feet also symbolize taking the right steps, of walking towards what is right. At the transcendental level, they represent walking towards a higher awareness.

So the feet represent all these different facets of your life. Even though you think of them only as instruments for moving you from one place to another, they have a deeper significance in your life.

Reproductive organs: Similarly, the reproductive organs, at the physical level, are used for procreation. At the mental and pranic levels they give pleasure, as pleasure is both a pranic and mental experience.

At the intuitive level, they give the experience of sublimation. When through moola bandha or other practices such as the kriyas, you use your reproductive organs to raise your energy, then they become the medium of the experience of sublimation. Brahmacharya comes in this third category, where you sublimate the gross energy into a higher experience.

Beyond that is the union, at the higher level. That experience of union with the higher awareness is what the reproductive organs represent at the transcendental level.

Excretory organs: The next karmendriya is the excretory organs. At the physical level they excrete the waste from the body and keep it healthy. If they are healthy then your digestion is good, and the body is healthy. That is their function at the physical level.

At the mental as well as the pranic level, you release whatever is not required, through that action of the excretory organs. It is a subtle experience no doubt, but it is there. This experience of releasing whatever is not needed for the body is felt through the action of the excretory organs. You digest something and then you let go of the extra, the waste. The excretory organs represent that in your life, whether at the physical, pranic or mental level.

At the deeper level, the intuitive consciousness level, they represent freedom from all vrittis. With the action of the

excretory organs, even from the deeper mind, whatever is not needed goes out. Not only the vrittis that exist at the superficial level but also those in the deeper mind are thrown out.

When all of this is thrown out, the experience is that of shoonya, and that is in the transcendental state. This is not emptiness, this is a luminous shoonya. It is like a relief, everything gone, everything negative is gone and there is a state of complete balance and luminosity.

Organ of speech: The final karmendriya is *vak*, the organ of speech, the vocal cords. At the physical level they represent speech. That is at the annamaya level. At the mental level, they represent communication and connection with everyone. With my speech I am connecting with all of you. I am conveying my ideas. So speech represents that at the mental level.

Speech can also access different energy centres in you. When you are angry and speak angry words, your speech is accessing the manipura chakra in you and also in the person with whom you are speaking. Or it may access the swadhisthana chakra in someone else because the other person becomes afraid. In the same manner, sometimes when you hear a sad song, you feel a heaviness in the heart, at that time the speech affects your anahata chakra. Therefore, the way you use speech can affect different energy centres in the body, and that is the pranic aspect of speech.

When you move into the vijñanamaya level, you consciously use speech to shift energy. When you chant mantras or sing kirtan, you are consciously using this attribute of being able to use your voice, your vocal cords, to shift energy to a higher centre. Also, when people are able to communicate with someone telepathically, that is an aspect of speech being used at the vijñanamaya level.

At the anandamaya level, communication with the higher self, ishta, guru or God, is through this higher level of the speech ability. Even there it is communication, and sometimes you even use the concept of words to communicate with that higher awareness.



You might have heard that when Sri Swamiji was in Rikhia, in his sadhana he heard the command in words, “Help your neighbours as I have helped you.” With that one command, the whole Rikhia movement started. That was one instance of the transcendental speech in Sri Swamiji’s life. On another occasion, he intuitively heard that there was a woman who had been widowed in a nearby village through a fire accident. No one told him that, but he knew that intuitively, through his higher awareness, through his connection with something else. It took the people in the ashram a few days to locate that lady, but they did find her widowed in a nearby village. She was just sitting under a tree, she had nothing, no shelter, nothing, with her three children she was sitting under a tree.

Help was provided to her because Sri Swamiji, who was connected with that higher awareness, could communicate with that higher awareness and hear the divine instructions. In this way, our guru has shown us how speech and words are not only a gross expression, but they also exist at the transcendental level, and if you have that awareness you can access it.

Different kosha levels of jnanendriyas

Now we move into the jnanendriyas. The karmendriyas, the organs of action, are what you use to extend yourself into the world, to communicate with the world, to convey yourself to the world. The jnanendriyas, the organs of perception or cognition, are the senses with which you receive inputs from the world: through your eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin you receive inputs from the world.

Eyes: Beginning with eyes, we will look into each jnanendriya. Normally you use the eyes for seeing, for seeing everything that is around you, but then this action of seeing is used by the mind to separate one thing from another, to develop concepts and ideas. You separate black from brown from yellow from green, you separate colours. You separate shapes and forms: one person looks like this and another person looks like that, the pillar looks like this and the spoon looks like that. Through this separation and identification you form concepts in your mind.

Along with those concepts you then develop your preferences and conditionings. You think, 'I like red, I don't like blue.' As you see different things, you develop preferences within yourself. You develop mental concepts through the process of seeing. That is the mental component of the eyes as a jnanendriya.

At the pranic level, there are people who can see auras. That is a pranic manifestation, it is not at the spiritual or transcendental level, but it is simply being more aware of pranic manifestations. When the sight becomes subtle, it can see pranic manifestations.

The intuitive aspect of sight is represented by discrimination. If you reach this level, you are able to see the true nature of things. When you see something, the surface seeing may tell you one thing but the intuitive mind knows more than that. For example, someone may come and smile at you beautifully, but somehow you know that the smile wasn't genuine. Here the physical, the external aspect is the seeing, but then the intuitive mind comes in and adds its discrimination to that external vision.

The other aspect of the intuitive mind with regard to sight is seeing inner visions; one may see yantras in meditation, forms, shapes or colours. Those are the inner visions at the intuitive level. However, that is not the transcendental level. These experiences take place in the vijnanamaya kosha, the deeper mind, the intuitive mind, and are not yet a truly spiritual anandamaya experience.

Here, the differentiation between the vijnanamaya experience and what constitutes a spiritual experience is relevant. Many times when you see these yantras, forms, colours, lights, etc., you begin to believe that you must have attained spiritual heights. All they indicate is the beginning of the ability to experience your inner mind, your deeper mind. At that level you could go either way: you could again fall down into tamasic states or you could rise further into the sattwic state. So they represent an entry into spiritual life, not the end of the journey. You have merely come to the first milestone.

At the transcendental level, sight becomes *divya drishti*, the divine vision, the ability to see divinity, like the vision that Sri Swamiji had. When he looked at you, he knew everything about you, all your flaws and faults, yet he penetrated through those layers to see the God in you, the divine in you. By seeing that in you, he made you connect with that also.

When you are limited to the intuitive vijnanamaya kosha, you may look at the not-so genuine smile of a person and know it for what it is, but if you have divine vision, then you would be able to see something more in that person, the divinity in that person. That is the transcendental aspect of the eyes.

Ears: The external, physical aspect of the ears is hearing sounds. The mental aspect, like with the eyes, is separation of different sounds to develop mental concepts, preferences and conditionings. For example, 'I like this kind of music and I don't like that kind of music', 'I like soft sounds and I don't like noise', whatever it may be. Therefore at the manomaya



level, with the help of ears, you develop your preferences and establish certain conditionings within your mind.

At the pranic level come subtle sounds, when you develop the ability to hear sounds beyond the normal range. Even in yoga nidra when you are moving from sound to sound, you become aware of so many sounds that you normally would not be aware of. Moving into the subtle level of sounds begins with that: being able to hear what you normally would not hear, but then the awareness of sounds becomes subtler and subtler. All this is still at the pranic level.

When you move into the intuitive level with the help of sound, you can realize the true nature of any given situation. If you tune yourself to a vibration, what you would not otherwise know is revealed to you. At the intuitive level there are also the inner sounds, the *anahata* sounds, the sounds which are not made by two objects striking each other, but which are without the help of objects. They are inner sounds, which may sound like the blowing of a conch, flute, bells or mridang, as the texts on nada anusandhana describe.

These anahata sounds are not indicative of the spiritual level. Like the inner visions, they also indicate a milestone in your journey. However, it is when you are able to hear higher sounds, which the rishis for example did, that it can be said that you are perceiving sound at the transcendental level. The rishis heard mantras in their meditations or words of guidance which were not mental formations but sure guidance from something beyond the known. That is sound at the transcendental level; that is the faculty of hearing at the anandamaya level.

Tongue: With the tongue, taste is the physical aspect which you all experience. Again the mind uses this experience of taste to develop its mental concepts, form preferences and conditionings. ‘I like sweet and I don’t like sour.’ This ability to differentiate gives the mind a better understanding of the world.

At the pranic level come subtle tastes. Sometimes in meditation you will experience a taste: bitter, sour, sweet, and it is the memory of taste coming alive. It is a mental-pranic manifestation. That memory is there in you, and when that memory comes up to the surface, it becomes so alive that it feels as if you are actually experiencing that taste. You feel that you are actually tasting lemons.

Then when you go into the intuitive level, the experience is again different. For example, when you practise khechari mudra, you can trap the amrita that falls from bindu visarga so it does not go down into the manipura chakra and get destroyed. At the vijñanamaya level, this is a real experience, it is not just an idea, but that amrita is actually there and in that intuitive state it is possible to experience it.

When you move into the anandamaya level, the taste becomes the experience of rasa. The word ‘rasa’ is difficult to translate in English. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* it is said (2:7:1): *Raso vai sah*. The word *rasa* here is used to mean ‘source of joy’. *Yadvai tatsukritam raso vai sah* – “He who is known as self-made is truly the source of joy.” The rasa keeps you connected, whether with the material world or with the

spiritual world. At the material level, rasa is the pleasure that you derive in tasting anything; at the spiritual level it is the ananda, the juice of bliss that you experience.

Nose: The next jñanendriya is the nose. As a sense organ, the nose is connected with smelling, but it also performs another important function: that of breathing.

At the mental level, as with all other jñanendriyas, it becomes a medium of knowing: through the nose you are able to separate different smells. It tells you that this smell is bad and this smell is good, don't go near that object, go on and accept that object. Therefore smell is a good indicator of the world around you, and of what you want to accept and what you don't want to accept in your life.

At the pranic level are the subtle smells. Your sense of smell can become acute when you do practices like the kriyas. For example, when you do manduki mudra, there is a conscious effort to make the sense of smell sensitive so that you can be aware of smells that you normally would not notice. Also, when you begin to practise breath control in pranayama, the nose becomes the medium to bring about an understanding of the pranic aspect of the breath.

At the intuitive level, the action of the nose leads to better discrimination. You can smell the true nature of anything, like dogs do. They come and sniff you and know what you are feeling and thinking. In the same way, at the intuitive level it is possible to smell something and know what the true nature of that person or object is without any association or previous conditioning. At the vijñanamaya level, you are also able to smell astral smells, such as a beautiful sandalwood smell described in the texts.

The experience of kevala kumbhaka, spontaneous retention of breath, also represents that you are at the intuitive level. Sometimes when you practise pranayama or other meditative or yogic practices, the breath just stops. That is kevala kumbhaka, and that is an indication that you have reached beyond the body, the senses and the mind into a deeper awareness.

At the transcendental level, the sense organ of nose represents complete absence of *raga* and *dvesha*, like and dislike. More than any other sense perception, the sense of smell connects you strongly with like and dislike. If you smell something bad, you immediately say, “I don’t like this.” You won’t even go near that object. If you smell something nice, you think, ‘Oh, this is wonderful. I want to eat that’ or ‘I must have that’ or ‘I would like to have these flowers next to me.’ Here is an immediate *raga* and *dvesha* connection, like and dislike connection. Therefore, at the transcendental level the same sense organ represents a complete absence of that *raga* and *dvesha*, there is no sense of like or dislike.

With regard to the breath, the function of breathing stops at the transcendental level, in the *samadhi* state which is beyond *kevala kumbhaka*, beyond the spontaneous retention of breath, as yogis stay in *samadhi* without breathing for days and months. That is the symbolism of the nose.

Skin: The final *jnanendriya* is the skin. The normal physical function of the skin is touch, keeping the body healthy with sweating and protecting the rest of the internal body. At the mental level, the mind is able to separate one experience from another through the experience of touch. You can know, ‘This is a feather’, ‘This is cloth’, ‘This is a metal object’ just through the sense of touch. When this separation is possible, then the corresponding mental concepts are formed, and along with those your preferences are also formed: ‘I like this, I don’t like that.’

At the pranic level the skin acts as an antenna. For example, you are walking through a certain place and suddenly you feel all your hairs rising up. The skin becomes an antenna at that time. It gives you an indication of what that place is. You may not be able to tell exactly why you have that experience, but the skin can become your first indicator of what a given environment contains, as it is able to catch the pranic vibrations, the energy vibrations, and respond to that.

When you move into the intuitive state, it is the skin that allows you to disconnect from the external world. Whenever you are trying to internalize and move into a deeper state of mind, awareness of this outer layer of the body is not there, you are somewhere deep in your own consciousness. So at the intuitive, *vijnanamaya* level, your skin becomes the symbol of disconnection from the outer world.

Then, at the transcendental, *anandamaya* level, the skin represents your oneness with everything that is, for you don't perceive your skin as a barrier any more. When you are willing to connect with everything and everyone, then that barrier that the skin creates for you normally is not there. So at the *anandamaya*, the transcendental level the skin represents this final union with everything, which is the *vibhu* experience, the interconnectedness.

Indriya nigraha and kriya yoga

This should clarify the multi-dimensional role of the sense organs and sense perceptions in your life, and what you have to manage when you practise sense restraint and *pratyahra*.

The term we have used for restraint of the senses is *indriya nigraha*. It is a very specific word: *graha* comes from *grahan*, meaning to hold, while 'ni' is a prefix indicating negation, so to not hold is *nigraha*. You are always connected with your senses, twenty-four/seven. Can there come a time when the grip of the senses is lessened, when the experience that the senses are holding on to is lessened? Therefore *indriya nigraha* is not controlling the senses, it is gradually decreasing the hold of the senses with which they are connected. This understanding plays an important part in practising the *niyama* of *indriya nigraha*, the discipline of sensory restraint.

Kriya yoga is a practice which is divided in three groups. In the first part of *kriya yoga*, the first module, we are dealing with the first group, which are known as the *pratyahara* techniques. While you are doing the practices of the *kriya yoga* from one to nine, the awareness and the attitude that

has to be maintained has to be that of pratyahara. That is why this information about the nature of senses is being given, otherwise it would be irrelevant. After all, how do you care what the psychological effect of touching and seeing is, what the pranic effect of touching and seeing is, what the effect is in the vijñānamaya kośha, or what the transcendental effect of touching and seeing is? However, this information has been given so you can learn to apply your senses in a different way, so you can integrate and understand your practices.



Use of Indriyas at Different Kosha Levels

	Gross (Annamaya)	Mental/subtle (Manomaya/pranamaya)
<i>Hands</i>	Handling objects	Additional tool of expression
<i>Feet</i>	Motion	Channelling prana Being grounded, Connection with gravity
<i>Sexual organs</i>	Procreation	Pleasure (both mental and pranic)
<i>Excretory organs</i>	Excretion, healthy digestion, healthy body	Releasing anything unwanted (both mental and pranic)
<i>Organ of speech</i>	Speech	Communication and connection Accessing different energy centres

<i>Eyes</i>	Seeing	Separation of colours, shapes, etc. to develop preferences and conditionings Seeing the subtle (auras, etc.)
<i>Ears</i>	Hearing	Separation of loud, soft noises, etc. to develop preferences and conditionings Subtle sounds
<i>Tongue</i>	Tasting	Separation of different tastes to develop preferences and conditionings Subtle taste (like in meditation remembering a taste)
<i>Nose</i>	Smelling, breathing	Separation of smells to develop preferences and conditionings Subtle smells, breath control
<i>Skin</i>	Touch, also keeping the body healthy with sweat, protecting the rest of the body	Separation of different forms of touch to develop preferences and conditionings Antenna

	Intuitive/spiritual (Vijnanamaya)	Transcendental (Anandamaya)
<i>Hands</i>	Formation of mudras	Receiving grace
<i>Feet</i>	Connection with earthly existence, taking the right steps in life	Walking towards a higher awareness
<i>Sexual organs</i>	Sublimation	Union with higher self
<i>Excretory organs</i>	Freedom from vrittis	Shoonya (all waste is gone)
<i>Organ of speech</i>	Shifting energy to higher centres, communicating telepathically	Communication with the higher self

<i>Eyes</i>	Discrimination, seeing the true nature of things; inner visions: yantras, etc.	Divya drishti: seeing divinity
<i>Ears</i>	Discrimination, hearing the true nature of things; inner sounds: nada	Higher sounds: mantras, words of guidance
<i>Tongue</i>	Tasting amrita	Taste of bliss: rasa
<i>Nose</i>	Discrimination, smelling the true nature of things; astral smells: kevala kumbhaka	Absence of raga and dwesha; samadhi
<i>Skin</i>	Disconnection from the outer world	Oneness with all; no barriers

Restraint and Pratyahara Kriyas

11 November 2016



Yesterday we spoke on the niyama of indriya nigraha, today we will understand the yama of danti, travelling from body to mind. *Danti* comes from the root *dama*, which means to control, and it indicates the process of controlling the mind. There are various words in Sanskrit which indicate the aspect of controlling, and each word has a different significance. Even the word *yama* itself indicates control. In the context of yama and niyama, yama indicates the control that you need to have over negative qualities. Similarly, the word *daman*, meaning suppression, defines another aspect of control. There is another word, *sanyam*, meaning total control.

The word we are concerned with, danti, indicates the entire process that one undergoes when one is practising mental restraint. This is also called *mano nigraha*. Just as we say indriya nigraha which indicates sensorial control, we say mano nigraha which indicates mental control.

The process of danti

In order to practise danti, you need to know what the process of mental restraint is. For this, you need to be first aware of what your mind is going through, the state of your mind, the tendencies, the vrittis of the mind that are manifesting. Once you are aware of that, you can apply the process of danti to bring those tendencies and indulgences under control.

We have been through the concept of sense perception and different levels of the senses. That should lead into an understanding of the mind. When you are able to control the senses at the outer level, then that translates to control of the inner mental traits as well. For example: you take off your shoes before entering a yoga class. Some people will place their shoes carefully, totally symmetrical and orderly. Some will just throw them about without any care. A small and simple action, which most of the times you are not even aware of, but it indicates a mental quality: either care, concern and respect, or carelessness, lack of concern and disrespect.

When you become aware of that action, you are able to bring in control or restraint. You can tell yourself, 'No, I will make an effort to place my shoes nicely.' The moment you do that, the mental quality changes. The qualities of carelessness, lack of concern and disrespect are brought under control and instantly the opposite qualities of care, concern and respect manifest in the mind. The more you bring your senses under control in this way, the more you are able to develop the positive mental qualities. That is the relationship between sensorial control and mental control.

What is mental control? It is not allowing something to build up in the mind to the extent that it goes out of control. Most of the times, without even being conscious of it, things

go out of control in your mind. You take up one thought or idea, brood over it, it goes on and on in your mind, and that is how it goes out of control.

When you begin the process of danti, at first there may only be the awareness that, ‘Yes, I know this is going out of control. I don’t want it to go out of control.’ Even with that awareness, emotions come into play, past conditionings come into play and their force can be so strong that despite wanting to, you cannot maintain control. Nevertheless, you begin with the point of awareness, trying to recognize what is going on: the thought that is going on, the emotion that is going on, and then you try to understand them.

You try to understand where they are coming from, the root emotion they are associated with, and you consciously pull in the reins. It is possible to do this by developing an opposite emotion, the opposite quality in the mind, and strengthening that. If, for example you are criticizing someone, then you think about their positive qualities. Or you can decide that you want to recognize positive qualities in people in general, and keep applying the idea. You keep reminding yourself, “I want to develop the state of mind where I am able to recognize positives qualities in people.” You have to not only say it once and then forget it, but you have to strengthen it. You have to give it energy. Through this you are able to gradually control a negative mental trait.

Thus, the process of danti begins at the sensorial level where you become more aware of how your senses are interacting and acting in the world. Once that awareness is there, then you try to perform every action in a better way and through that mental control develops spontaneously. Then at the mental level, you recognize the behaviour of the mind, practise pratipaksha bhavana, and keep strengthening it.

To give an example of our paramguru, Swami Sivananda, he was totally meticulous in everything that he did. If someone came to see him and he was writing something, he would carefully put the cap on the pen, fold the papers, place them properly and then talk to the person. This indicates a way of

dealing with the senses as one's natural expression. He had full awareness of the sense organs he was using at any given moment and full command over them, yet this was not a forced awareness but a natural awareness. This represents a mental quality, a mind that is completely under control. That is danti.

Observation and awareness

What you see in indriya nigraha and danti are two aspects: the yama aspect and the niyama aspect. Niyamas are easier to follow as they represent something external: an external regulation, discipline, system. Yamas become difficult to follow as they take place internally, in the mind.

To cultivate an awareness of the mind is not that easy. Which part of the mind becomes aware? Looking at Swami Sivananda's example, it wasn't that he had planned that he would keep the papers in this way and the pen properly. It was a natural expression, there was no deliberate thinking behind it. However, for any mental condition to become a natural expression involves lot of awareness and observation.

The point therefore is: practices are not important in themselves. They are there to bring you into one *sthiti*, one condition in mind and in life, but observation and awareness are more important than the actual practice consisting of step one, step two, and so on. Danti represents the three mental components of observation, awareness and restraint. Awareness is like a torchlight. Anything that comes in the field of the light is observed and restrained, and in this process the mental response has to be observed more than the external situations.

Awareness of responses

There are many different responses that a person can have. Let us think of a hypothetical situation. A person is giving a talk, and after the talk the person is congratulated, "You spoke very well." Where is the congratulation affecting the mind? At the level of ego. You can either feel happy that you are appreciated, or you can bring in the component of

humility and say, “It was all grace. I didn’t say anything.” Or you could say, “Yes, I did a lot of study and it was my effort and understanding that enabled me to speak.” There are different ways to respond. Although the action and appreciation are the same, the response to that can be either, “Yes, I acknowledge myself as having done well,” and boost the ego. Or to humbly say, “I am not the doer,” to keep the ego under check.

If somebody says, “You spoke very badly. What you said made no sense”, again the words are going to affect the ego. What will be the response this time? A punctured ego. These words are not feeding the ego but puncturing the ego. You will definitely not like it, and you will possibly ignore the person as if you had not heard anything, or you will retort in some manner.

The responses will be different towards something that boosts your ego and towards something that deflates your ego. So how do you practise danti here? Which mental awareness and which control will you apply here? There has to be an awareness of your own reaction, and that awareness has to be free from your ego-identification. There should be no thought in this observation that ‘I am hurt’ or ‘I am elated’. Can your awareness be separated from the experience of the mind so it remains objective and not caught up in the emotions that are expressed by the mind?

The state of drashta

If awareness can remain objective and not become caught in the mental behaviour, then that is the *drashta* state. Both the positive elation and also the negative rejection are to be observed objectively. Therefore, when it comes to mental restraint, more important than the practice is the attitude, more important than the attitude is the awareness, and more important than the awareness is the cognition of what is happening when you are aware.

Go back one step at a time. See whether you can have the same feeling and response irrespective of the words or situations you face. When somebody tells you, “You speak very nicely”, you are happy, and you express your humility with

“It is all God’s grace.” Somebody else says, “You spoke very badly” and you glare at that person and keep walking. You don’t express your humility, rather you glare at that person as he has deflated what you were feeling: the euphoria of having given the speech. Up to here it is okay. However, while you are going through that experience, is it possible to become aware of what you are feeling? Most people are not aware, and most people cannot cultivate the drashta awareness.

People say drashta awareness is to observe. Yes, but to observe what? There are many levels of observation. What you observe is not necessarily what needs to be observed for the drashta to become active. You observe the achievement, not the response. By observing the achievement you don’t become the drashta, because success or failure is the result of whatever you have done anyway. That misses the point of the process. Observing your response has been missed, your involvement in the process has been ignored, the possibility of bettering the situation has been ignored, so that form of drashta is incomplete. When you say, “Observe yourself”, it does not mean anything; it is like sitting in front of the idiot box and observing the idiot box. It is like watching television. You are observing the idiot box of your mind. That is how the time passes in your attempt at becoming the drashta.

Sequential practice

To avoid such pitfalls, the sequencing in yoga becomes important, as it allows you to cultivate different levels of awareness progressively in the course of time. This is where the practice comes in: what to practise and how to practise.

You have to follow a sequence with regard to the kriyas. Each week practise the kriyas for four days, an average of two kriyas a day. Then for two days asana-pranayama, with nadi shodhana, ujjayi and other practices to focus concentration. Then one day rest and do shatkarma if need be, and one day a month you may practice all the nine kriyas. That is the practical side of it. Along with this, the practices of pratyahara should also be done, especially indriya nigraha and danti.

After you do your kriya practices, for fifteen minutes sit down quietly. For seven and a half minutes focus on indriya nigraha, and for seven and a half minutes focus on danti. In the seven and a half minutes of indriya nigraha, the niyama, go through each sense perception for one minute, acknowledging it, and allowing each sense perception to become comfortable. It should not create any type of mental distress, anxiety or worry. If it is too cold and the experience of cold is creating distress, put on warm clothes and then sit down. In this way, each sense organ has to be made comfortable. Once they are comfortable, then you move into the danti state. The comfort at the outer level is *kaya sthairyam*, stillness of the sensorial body, and then you move into danti. Pick one sense organ, whether sight, hearing, smell, taste or touch, or any of the karmendriyas, and then block out all the sensations of that sense perception.

Can you, for five minutes, become smell-less? While breathing normally, can you stop identifying the smells and have a perception of clean, pure air without any form of fragrance or smell associated with it? Even if incense is burning in the room, can you separate its smell from the normal environment? That separation is an exercise for the mind.

Close your eyes, observe, are you smelling or not? If you are, stop using the sense of smell. Can you create that block? Just as you can make the effort to block a thought, 'I don't want to think', can you also bring a thought, 'I don't want to smell', 'I don't want to hear', 'I don't want to have any visual impression, I don't want to see anything'? Try to come to the blank state without sense perception; reduce it from 100 to 50 to 40 to 30 to 10 to 0. It won't decrease from 100 to 0 in one go, but it will gradually reduce with practice. With that reduction, the mind will find more peace and comfort and will become more stable.

Thus, in the first half of the meditation, identify the physical experiences of the sense organs and stop them. In the second half of the meditation, identify the mental aspect of the sensory perceptions: the thoughts, the feelings, the responses, the reactions, and stop those.

In pratyahara, by stopping the sensory experiences, the aim is to come to a point where external activities do not influence or disturb the mind. You are cultivating the ability to separate the sensorial activity from the sensorial experience, and then going into *shoonyata*, nothingness. This progression will have to be followed: observation of the sensorial activity, observation of the mental sensorial activity, and then stopping, and finally: blank.

The practices of kriya yoga with this fifteen-minute meditation will deepen the experience of your sadhana. With the deepening of that experience, you will begin to notice small changes in life: in interests, in awareness, in attention, in involvement. Encourage these changes, as long as they are positive, creative and constructive. If you feel that it brings out the negative part of you, then discourage them. When the ocean is churned, everything comes from up from the bottom, both the good and the bad. A level of awareness has to be maintained where you know what is good and what has to be avoided. That comes intuitively and instinctively.

This is the sadhana for one year, and after that you can participate in the second module of kriya yoga.



IMPRESSIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

Meaningful pause

The best way I can share my impression of the kriya yoga training would be with a prolonged silence, but as that might be misinterpreted I will make an attempt to use some words.

Considering the fact that I am an absolute beginner to kriya yoga I was pleasantly surprised to see the impact of the fundamental kriya yoga practices. I experienced a spontaneous pause of my chronic mental chattering and at the same time an increased awareness to multiple subtle phenomena happening within and around me.

As they say a good teacher is one who makes a complex subject look simple. The teacher served us kriya yoga which is considered an advanced branch of yoga like baby food and every care was taken so that we assimilate the learning without any distortion or confusion.

Every aspect that Swamiji covered in his satsangs is a potent tool for self-exploration, self-understanding and self-actualization. Inspiration and information was shared in abundance to be able to integrate kriya yoga in our sadhana.

So I go home now with a heart full of gratitude and the commitment to continue my sadhana with seriousness and regularity.

—*Sannyasi Mangaldharma, Romania*

On a new path

The structure of the course was very accurate and the kriyas were introduced in a smooth way. We reviewed them many times, then practised them and then reviewed them again.

Through seva we were able to express and use the extra energy in a positive way. We have been taken on a new and unknown path under the guidance and protection of Swami Niranjanananda.

—*Sannyasi Vidyakiran, Colombia*



Fulfilment experienced

The impression of the course is absolute fulfilment. I had no any expectation at the beginning and I think I have so much to be grateful for during all these learning hours. They have given me a sure grounding to improve my practice and to go ahead. I can say thank you from all my heart!

—*Sannyasi Devatma, Bengaluru*

Light and deep

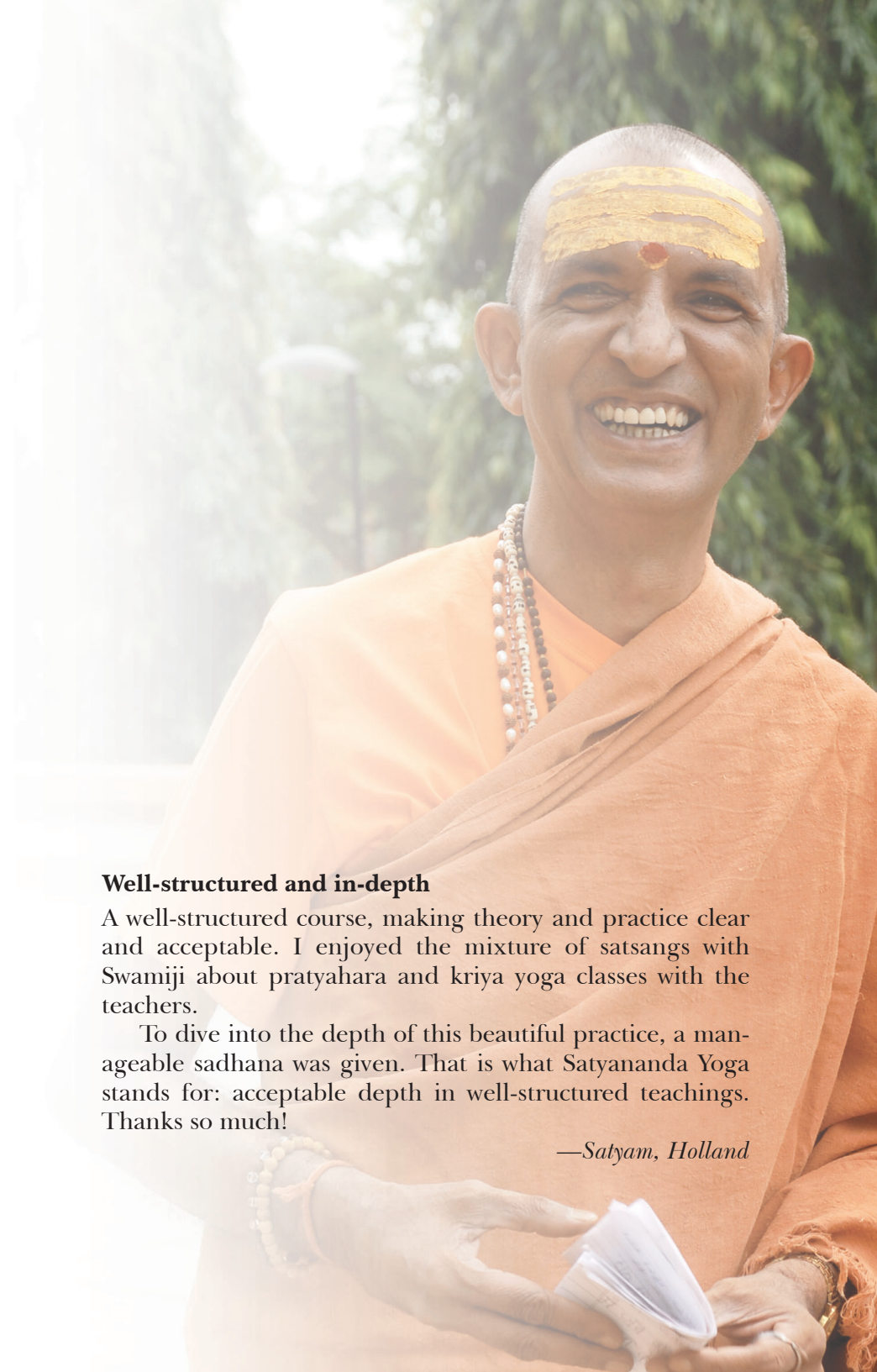
The kriya yoga experience has been amazing. The short practices were highly energizing and at the same time they took us to very deep and unique experiences. We felt so relaxed and light. I am looking forward to come again next year.

—*Venugopalan, Bengaluru*

Discovering the internal dimension

The satsangs with Swamiji were great as they gave a deeper insight into the fundamentals of why we are practising kriya yoga. My personal experience was discovering the internal dimension of which I had no awareness and observing the effect of each kriya on the body and mind.

—*Sadhana Jaipuria, Bengaluru*



Well-structured and in-depth

A well-structured course, making theory and practice clear and acceptable. I enjoyed the mixture of satsangs with Swamiji about pratyahara and kriya yoga classes with the teachers.

To dive into the depth of this beautiful practice, a manageable sadhana was given. That is what Satyananda Yoga stands for: acceptable depth in well-structured teachings. Thanks so much!

—Satyam, Holland

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.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

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 was Kriya Yoga – Preparatory, during which the focus was on understanding and practising the first group of kriyas, the pratyahara kriyas.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program, during which a new insight into pratyahara and its association with this group of practices was revealed.



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