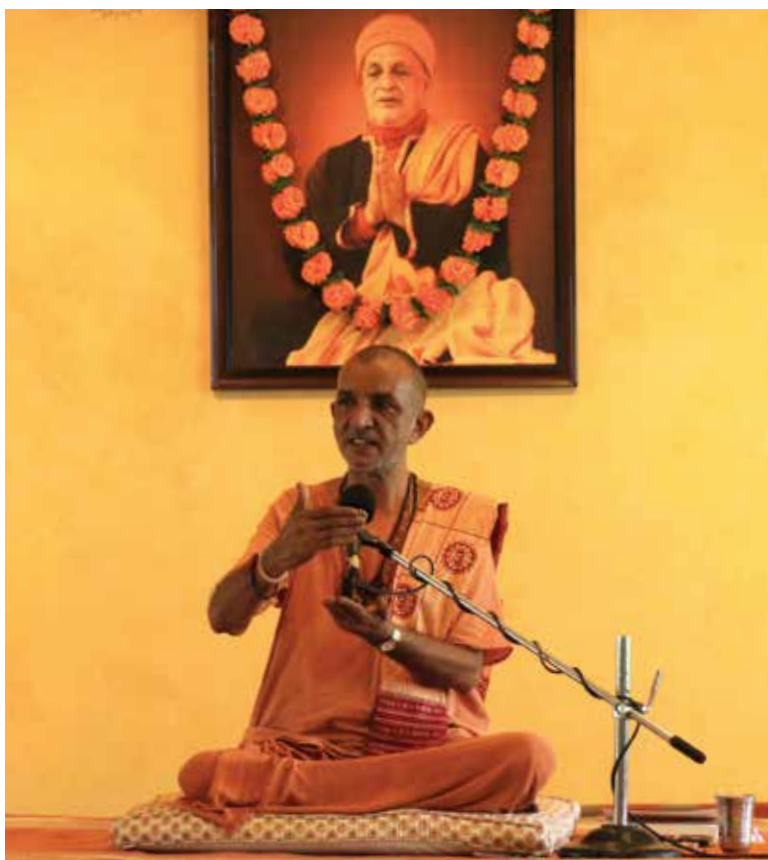


Raja Yoga Yatra 5

Satsangs: Yatra 3 and 4

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Raja Yoga Yatra 5



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Raja Yoga Yatra 5

Satsangs: Yatra 3 and 4

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during
the training of Raja Yoga Yatra 3: Practical Pratyahara,
and Raja Yoga Yatra 4: Chitta and Prana Pratyahara, held
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Raja Yoga Yatra 5 – Satsangs: Yatra 3 and 4

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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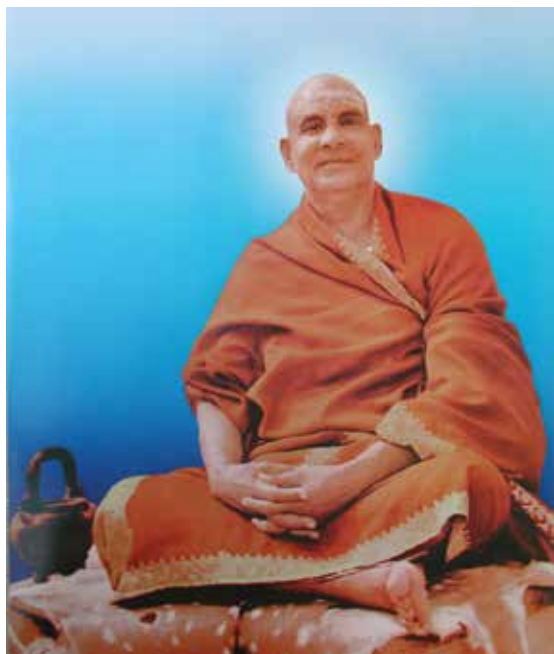
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Dedication

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



Dedication

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

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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*.

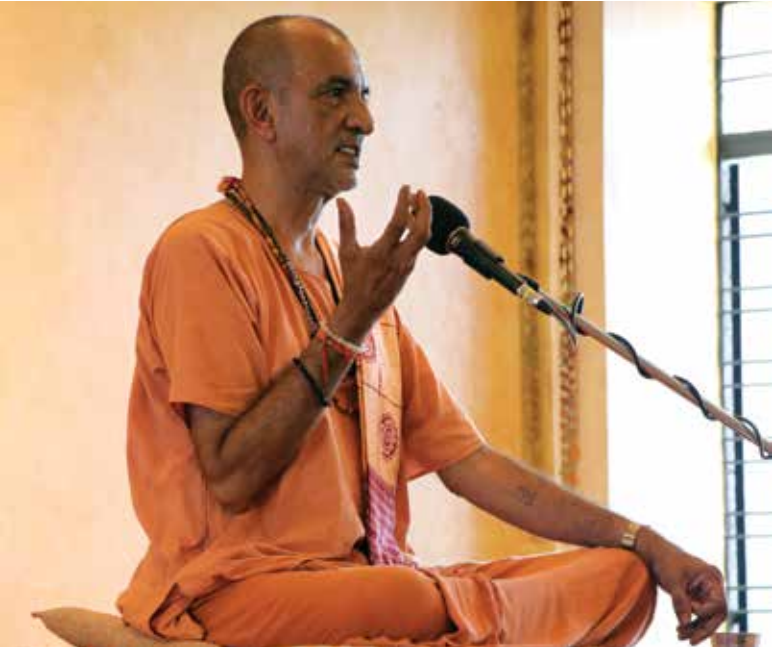
For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The *yoga vidya* dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to *sadhana* 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.

Pratyayas

23 August 2019



The first Raja Yoga Yatra explored asana and pranayama. Raja Yoga Yatra 2 was exploring pratyahara and Raja Yoga Yatra 3 is about practical pratyahara. Raja Yoga Yatra 4 is in relation to advanced practices of the pratyahara system. Out of the eight components of raja yoga, the yamas and niyamas belong to lifestyle. Asana and pranayama are the opening statements or entries to raja yoga, with the

understanding that you have perfected the asana and pranayama in hatha yoga. Then comes pratyahara as the main practice of raja yoga. The focus of raja yoga lies in the practices of pratyahara, not dharana or dhyana. As you move into experiencing pratyahara and experimenting with other techniques of pratyahara, there will be less practice of asana and of pranayama.

In Patanjali's raja yoga, no asanas have been described, yet in the classical raja yoga, eight asanas have been described. In the raja yoga of Sage Patanjali, the sutras define not the practices but the theory of raja yoga. In the classical raja yoga system even the practices have been defined.

Here is a simple comparison between the yamas and niyamas of Patanjali and those of classical raja yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali five yamas and five niyamas are listed. In the classical raja yoga, there are ten yamas and ten niyamas.

YAMAS

	Patanjali Raja Yoga	Classical Raja Yoga
1.	<i>Ahimsa</i> – non-violence	<i>Ahimsa</i>
2.	<i>Satya</i> – truth	<i>Satya</i>
3.	<i>Asteya</i> – non-stealing	<i>Asteya</i>
4.	<i>Brahmacharya</i> – appropriate conduct	<i>Brahmacharya</i>
5.	<i>Aparigraha</i> – non-covetousness	<i>Daya</i> – kindness, compassion
6.		<i>Arjava</i> – sincerity
7.		<i>Kshama</i> – forgiveness
8.		<i>Dhriti</i> – fortitude, endurance
9.		<i>Mitahara</i> – moderation in diet
10.		<i>Shaucha</i> – cleanliness, purity

NIYAMAS

	Patanjali Raja Yoga	Classical Raja Yoga
1.	<i>Tapas</i> – austerity	<i>Tapas</i>
2.	<i>Santosha</i> – contentment	<i>Santosha</i>
3.	<i>Ishwara pranidhana</i> – surrender	<i>Ishwara poojan</i>
4.	<i>Swadhyaya</i> – self-study	<i>Siddhanta shravan</i> – listening to the teachings
5.	<i>Shaucha</i>	<i>Astika</i> – faith in merit and demerit
6.		<i>Dana</i> – giving, generosity, sharing with others
7.		<i>Hri</i> – humility
8.		<i>Mati</i> – correct thinking
9.		<i>Japa</i> – repetition of mantras
10.		<i>Vrata</i> – following the guidelines

In his Samkhya raja yoga, Patanjali halved the ten yamas and niyamas of the classical raja yoga. This is the first basic difference. There are ten yamas and niyamas in hatha yoga, and ten in raja yoga, which indicates that each yoga has to be perfected by adopting its yamas and niyamas.

In the classical raja yoga, it is clearly stated that asanas, along with yamas and niyamas, purify the nadis and prepare you for pranayama. Asana is not taken to be a stand-alone practice before pranayama. Asana combined with yama and niyama prepare for the practice of pranayama. The classical raja yoga defines the importance of practising the yamas and niyamas in your day-to-day routine. You engage yourself in the performance of asana with the purpose of preparing you for other progressive practices of raja yoga.

There are two dimensions in which we function: the dimension of logic and the dimension of feeling. Logic is

manas and buddhi, and feeling is a pranic experience. Manas and buddhi represent logic, and pranic awakening represents feeling. The positive pranic awakening will lead you to a positive experience in life. Uncontrolled, unchannelled pranic awakening will lead to dissipations in life. These are the two components, mind and prana, logic and feeling. Patanjali deals only with logic, not with prana. Classical raja yoga emphasizes more the pranic component, and the mental component is secondary. This makes the classical raja yoga more complete and more intense.

There is always a problem when you work with prana as it is a subtle activity. When the pranas awaken, they bring out impressions of chitta. The mind becomes sensitive and the suppressed items of your mind suddenly come up to the surface. Whether it be a memory, a good feeling, good, bad or traumatic experience, whatever is contained in your chitta in form of memory comes up with the awakening of pranas. Therefore, you are not able to deal with the influence of the inherent samskaras and pratyayas at the conscious level.

Patanjali carefully removed the concept of prana, questioning the use of teaching it to people unable to deal with the experience of prana shakti. He maintained a basic understanding of concentration and meditation, which he said was pratyahara and dharana, related to mind, not in relation to prana. You look at your manas, see the thoughts, stop the thoughts, bring thoughts, create thoughts, eliminate thoughts, it is a mental process. The idea of becoming the *drashta*, the witness, the overseer of what is happening is again observing the mental process. The pranic component has been removed by Patanjali. However, to understand and perfect raja yoga, the pranic component has to be realized, understood and awakened.

Prati-ahara

There are two definitions of the word pratyahara, *prati-ahara*, reverse feeding, and *pratyaya-hara*, eliminating the impressions. These are the two focuses of pratyahara.

Prati-ahara pratyahara is the aspect related to the body, the senses and the environment, and to what they are feeding you and how you respond to it. For example, heat is an environmental factor. When it affects the body, the body begins to feel the heat and to sweat. What is your response at that time? You try to cool yourself. You try to wipe the sweat. You make the effort to move away from those causes which create heat. If it is the sun, you come back inside the room. If you need the fan, you come under the fan. Whatever your response, it is a reaction to *prati-ahara*, to what is being fed from outside. It can be the environment or an individual.

A person who you consider to be your friend has the biggest influence on your mind and belief system. A person, who you consider a friend is an external agent influencing the mind. The friend can change your opinion about anything and anyone, without you applying your own logic and common sense, for you believe in that friend. You do not believe in your own experience; you believe in the input of your friend. The influence from outside is always greater than what you believe in and what your own intentions are.

That is *prati-ahara* and it has to be reversed by saying, 'No, you can tell me anything, but I won't believe it until I have my own understanding, experience and knowledge. You can tell me anything, but I will apply my wisdom and understanding. You don't influence me through your speech. I will take my own decision'. That is reversing and that is self-empowering.

People talk of self-empowerment. *Prati-ahara* is the beginning of self-empowerment when you start to reject the influences coming from outside and take charge of your own life. *Pratyahara*, the first stage, is not meditation, but to return everything that you receive from outside, the environment, people, sense objects and sensory perceptions. You begin to believe in your own wisdom and understanding and you are not influenced by outer influences. That is the external aspect of the *pratyahara*.

Pratyaya-hara

The internal aspect of pratyahara is pratyaya-hara, to eliminate impressions. It becomes a passive process. Initially prati-ahara is a dynamic process, when somebody says something, and you reply, ‘Thank you, but I will make my own decision. It may be your experience, yet my experience may be totally different’.

Pratyaya are the impressions, at the conscious level from the present experience and at the unconscious level from the past. In a meditation practice you can eliminate daily pratyaya, daily impressions. It is like clearing, brooming or vacuuming the room on a daily basis to remove the dust that gathers. The spring cleaning, which you do once a year, is the passive clearing when all the nooks, crannies and corners are looked into and cleaned. On a daily basis you do a general clean and on a yearly basis, the spring or complete clean is going into areas where you have not gone before. This has to be seen in your life when you are dealing with pratyayas – what is a present and what is a previous one. With this understanding, it becomes easier to deal with the present impressions as they have not gone deep into our psyche.

Then you deal with the ingrained pratyaya in your psyche and the clearing of these impressions happens. With the clearing of these impressions, the nature changes. It is no longer a reactive, instinctive nature but a responsive, understanding nature. That is the biggest change that one can expect in pratyahara – controlling the expressions and the behaviours of the mind.

Prana shakti

The logic, rational, mental component is more obvious, and feeling, the pranic component, is secondary. The mind is more visible; thoughts are more observable, so you deal first with the mind. Prana is not visible, prana is not observable, so it comes later. First you deal with manas and buddhi, the aspect of logic, then you deal with feeling, the *bhava*, with chitta and smriti, the containers of pratyayas. When you are

dealing with logic, you go through the normal practice of observing the mental response. When you are dealing with prana, you are not looking at the mental picture or response, but at that aspect which empowers the memory to be still as powerful and strong today as it was twenty years ago.

What empowers the memory and triggers all the bullets? It is prana shakti. After going through the mind, prana shakti has to be removed from the memory. You take a photograph, you put the picture in the album and close the book. As long as sunlight does not affect the picture, the picture will have the same crisp colours and sharp focus even after ten years. Everything will be clearly visible. If you place the picture in the sun, after a few days it will begin to fade. The colours will become lighter and lighter, until one day the picture will be black and white and sepia. The picture you had taken has become a blank sheet of paper after one month in the sun. When you open the album the picture has the same colours and evokes the same memory even after twenty years. That is prana shakti.

Prana shakti gives life to memory. A memory can be good, positive and a memory can be bad, negative. You are observing the memory as a mental process, yet you are not taking away the prana from the memory. When you observe the memory as a mental process, you see the picture in colour. Only you know that you are observing it. However, it does not die; it remains there. The only change is that your instant reaction is more controlled, yet the emotions are the same, they have not changed. Only the reaction slows down. The intensity of emotion is still the same and the feeling that the emotion evokes is still the same. It has not changed at all.

When you are doing your antar mouna, you are observing the memory, yet you are not clearing the memory. Here prana pratyahara comes in. You are putting light on the image, the picture. The light is so intense that the picture begins to fade, faster than it would through a natural process. Once life goes away from that picture, the paper becomes white, and the pratyaya has been cleared. There are many ways to clear the pratyaya, meditation is one way.

Removing pratyayas

Doctor Swami Shankardevananda wrote the book, *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes*. He was suffering from asthma and became a medical doctor to treat his own asthma. Nothing would help him overcome the asthmatic attacks, no medicine, no visit to specialists and hospitals. He would have asthmatic attacks on a daily basis. When he came to Munger, Paramahamsaji asked him to meditate. After a few months of meditation, Swami Shankardevananda saw an image in his mind of himself as a young boy. The parents had gone to work, and he was with the maid at home. She was spoon feeding the baby. Children have their likes and dislikes, they like this vegetable and don't like the other. They are finicky. This little boy was not eating, saying, "I don't like this." The maid threatened the boy, "If you don't eat, I will tell your parents and they will punish you." That was the vision, the impression that Swami Shankardeva saw in his meditation.

After this meditation he discovered that from that day onward there was not a single asthmatic attack. "My asthma was not due to pollution or environmental factors, no allergy, my asthma was psychological." It is an established fact that whenever there is any kind of suppression in life, the first thing to be affected is breathing. When the maid threatened the little boy, he became frightened. He continued to eat with the hope that she would not complain to the parents. That suppression, however, became the cause of asthma. Medication and bronchial dilators would give temporary relief but not help. Ultimately, it was meditation which brought out the pratyaya, and after he acknowledged it, he was free from the attacks.

Similarly, it was for Swami Nischalananda from the UK. He was a bright person, yet he had intense phobia to closed rooms. When he was living in the ashram, it was impossible to close windows and doors. At night no matter what the temperature was, hot or cold, he would keep the windows and doors open and never close them. The moment somebody would close them, he would go through a violent cycle of

reaction, yet he did not know why it was happening. He was one of the sanest persons around, however, with doors and windows closed, insanity would come up.

One day while he was meditating he had a vision, an impression. He saw himself as a child going fishing with his father. Beside the river, he opened the box where he had kept the worms as bait. When he opened the box, those worms had turned into flies and flew at him. That was a shock, and from there the impression came, "I cannot live in a closed environment." The moment he saw that memory, his fear of closed rooms or lifts disappeared. The pratyaya was cleared and he became alright.

More than one life

Some impressions of this life and some impressions of your past life are inherent in your own unconscious mind. It has been scientifically proved that there is past life. Christians and Muslims have gone through past life experiences, although their religions do not believe in it. A lot of research has been done to indicate that the past life experiences leave their impressions in this life.

At the University of Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, a researcher, Professor Doctor Stevenson, has written a book on reincarnation. He interviewed over one hundred and fifty thousand people and children in Germany, France, Austria, England, in South America, North America, Canada, in Japan, China, India, and the Middle East who claimed to have had past life experiences and awareness. He has given descriptions of how those past life impressions are carried forward into this life. There were many examples of Japanese soldiers who were shot during World War 2. In this life they remembered the shot and the body showed a spot where the bullet had entered in their previous body. The spot was in an arm, in the chest or stomach, and that was where they were hit with the bullet. They were able to recall these impressions, verify and confirm them.

This type of research indicates that whatever has happened to you, the experiences that the mind has gone through

are retained by the mind in form of pratyaya. In childhood, when there is no congestion of mind, these impressions are remembered as they are the most powerful last experiences of the past. They are not the pleasant experiences. They were experiences where you were threatened and killed; and that impression is the strongest, not like eating something nice, but dying. That impression carries forward.

In the Asian tradition it is said that the last thought that you have at the time of death is what you will become in your next life. This has also been proved by people who have gone through the experience of reincarnation and rebirth. Therefore, it is said in the Asian tradition that at the time of death the mind has to be absolutely free and clear. In Asia, many books have been written about death and dying in the different traditions and cultures such as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

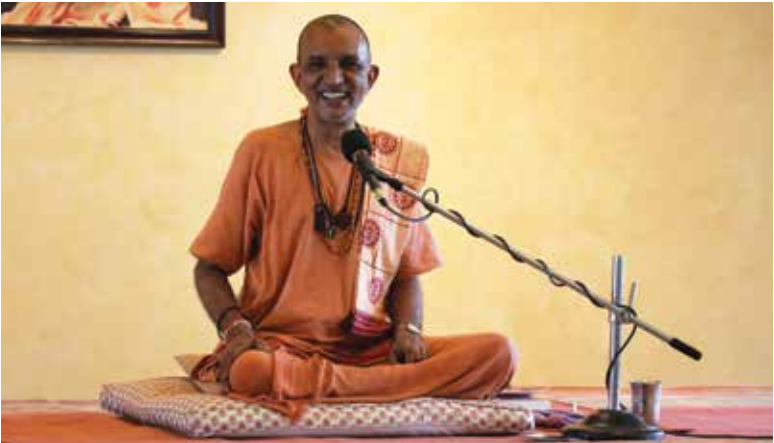
Another example of pratyaya was an experiment done in the United States in a movie theatre. Frequent movie-goers were asked, "You have come to this theatre many times, can you tell us without looking around how many rows of chairs there are, how many lights, vents, windows and drapes?" Nobody could answer. When the same people were under hypnosis, they were able to give an accurate description of how many rows of chairs, how many chairs in each row, how many ventilators, drapes, windows, exit doors and entry doors were in the theatre. With absolute accuracy they were able to give the description of the theatre under hypnosis. When they came out of hypnosis, they could not answer or remember anything.

The theory was that when you enter a place, your subconscious mind captures the scene, not the conscious mind. The conscious mind is too distracted, however, the mind has taken a picture and if you can see the picture of the mind in the subconscious, you will know everything that you have missed. This picture which is retained by the subconscious mind is a pratyaya. In hypnosis people are taken back to remember events that have happened ten, twenty,

thirty years in the past with accurate description of details. If you try to think back and remember those events today, you may remember the major events of what happened but not the accurate description of details.

This is an indication that the mind is continuously receiving impressions, yet you are not able to process them. Many billions of input are received by the brain every second. Are you aware of those billions of input or just the one you are focused on? What happens to the other billion that have entered without you knowing about it? These pratyayas clutter the mind, and that clutter has to be cleared. Therefore, *smriti* or memory, is identified as an aspect of chitta – what you can remember is held together; it is also a vritti which sucks you in. At night when you cannot sleep, and instead of counting sheep, see yourself as the astronaut going on a flight to the moon. You are creating imagery, an impression to divert yourself from the deeper impressions. You are creating a lighter impression to remove your mind from the heavy one, and then you go off to sleep.

The outer and inner pratyayas, the one which you create in order to get rid of the heavy stuff and the one which is already there, have to be dealt with. That is the theory of manas and prana pratyahara, logic and feeling.



PRATYAHARA PRACTICE

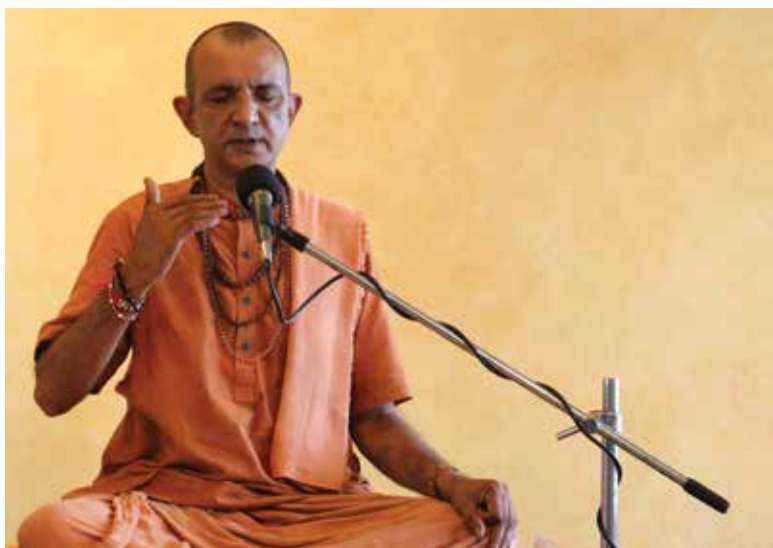
So sit down comfortably, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, eyes and mouth gently closed.

Become aware of the whole physical body, become aware of the whole physical body, surrender the whole body to the floor.

There should be nothing tight, there should be no tension, the body should be free and relaxed. If you need to adjust your posture, do so now.

Once you have adjusted your body posture, become still. Once you have become still, imagine that there is a full-length mirror in front of the body, and try to see the reflection of your body in that full-length mirror. Complete awareness of the body reflected in the mirror.

See the whole body from top of the head to the toes, as you are seated right now, as your body posture is right now. Now imagine that there is a triangle drawn on the floor, a red triangle and you are sitting on top of that.



If you are lying in shavasana then see yourself not lying down but sitting on top of the red triangle. Whether you are lying or whether you are sitting, the visualization has to be that of sitting.

You are seated on the red triangle.

The apex of the triangle, the tip of the triangle is in the coccyx region, mooladhara area, and the sides of the triangle are the two thighs and the base of the triangle is the line drawn from one knee to the other.

The triangle follows the contours of your body from the buttocks, from mooladhara along the thighs to knees and then across in front.

Experience your body seated firmly on top of the triangle, the shakti triangle.

And as you merge and as you identify with the triangle and the body seated on top of it, you will discover that your body becomes more stable and firm and unmoving.

Now develop another awareness of a pyramid. This time the top, the crown of the head, is the apex of the pyramid, the top of the pyramid; from the crown of the head down to the arms on the knees are the sides of the pyramid, and the line from one knee to the other is the base of the pyramid.

And your whole body is encased in this triangular pyramid. Develop this awareness of stability, of firmness, of immobility by seeing your body as a pyramid, three-sided, triangular pyramid.

And experience the stability, observe the stillness, the firmness of the body.

Now while your body is encased in this triangular pyramid and is perfectly still and stable, become aware of your skin and the air against the skin. The parts of the body which are exposed to air and environment.

Become aware of those parts, like the head, the face, the neck. Feel the movement of air against the skin. Your lower arms are exposed to the environment and air. Your feet are exposed to the environment and air.

See those parts of the body which are not covered by cloth and feel the caress of air against the skin.

Go from one part to another, first the head, the face and the neck. In detail develop the awareness of air brushing against the skin.

See the feeling, see the sensation, see the experience.

Move down into the arms, parts of the arms, lower arm which are exposed to air and the environment. Feel the movement of air on the arms. Feel the movement of air on all the exposed parts of the body, including the feet.

And now see the contact of the fabric and the skin. The fabric touching the skin, the T-shirt, the pants and all the different sensations that you can experience. The feeling of heat and sweat as well, in the covered parts.

Become aware of the contact between the fabric and the skin.

Move your awareness from your shoulders, downwards, through the body, to the legs. Noticing, seeing, feeling the fabric against the skin.

Now stop this practice and again become aware of the contact between hands and the thighs, buttocks and the floor, back of the thighs and the floor, the red triangle and the body, the pressure of body on the floor, the weight of hands on the knees, the touch of fingers in jnana mudra or chin mudra.

Be aware of your body and the support of the body, the floor.

Now, stop this practice and bring your attention to the eyebrow centre and visualize the image of a candle flame. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me. Breathe in, *Om . . . Om . . . Om*.

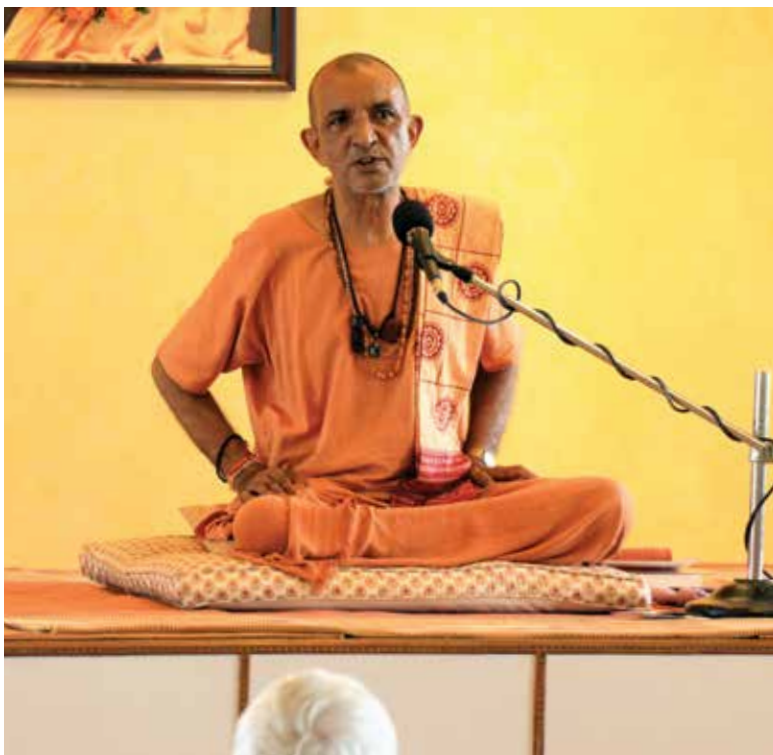
Repeat after me. *Om shanti, shanti, shanti. Hari Om.*

Hari Om Tat Sat. Slowly rub your hands and place them over the closed eyes and slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Mind and Prana

24 August 2019



The two components, the mental and pranic, logic and feeling, are unique to the classical raja yoga. In Patanjali's raja yoga, there is only awareness of the vrittis and the different aspects of *vrittis*, known as modifications.

Patanjali's vrittis

Vritti defines a mood, which envelopes the entire personality and nature to think, behave and act in a particular manner. For example, if you consider anger to be a vritti, then in that anger you see the thought, behaviour and action, becoming the medium through which the anger expresses itself. The senses become the medium through which anger expresses itself. This mood envelopes the entire personality. Fear is a mood, a state of mind, which envelopes the entire personality. Frustration, anxiety are all different vrittis. Sage Patanjali had chosen five vrittis, which he considered superior to other vrittis, like the master trigger, or the knowledge vritti.

Therefore, he put *pramana* first, recognizing the evidence and existence. It is a realistic approach. You acknowledge what is there; that is *pramana* for you, your evidence. That acknowledgement has to happen with full understanding of the appropriate and the inappropriate, the result and intention. *Pramana* is not only picking up what you want to, it is also seeing the complete, the whole picture.

Viparaya is confusion. When you don't know or your mind is not clear, then confusion comes in. One cannot choose between the right, correct or appropriate options. These thoughts become brooding thoughts. That brooding leads to confusion, *viparayaya*.

Vikalpa means finding the appropriate and correct options, paths or ways to deal with something. These three vrittis relate to your outer conscious behaviour. They also control other aspects of human experience, including dreams and memories, for memories are also founded in *pramana*, evidence. You have been to Mount Everest. You have been to the Caribbean. The memory is there and that is the *pramana* of your visit. You have seen the craters of the moon. That is the visual *pramana* of the craters on the moon. That information came from this source. It is accurate, appropriate, incorrect or false.

Understanding has to be there and the link has to be created between events. The camera, moon, capturing the

image, the astronaut, the rocket, the details – in that way you know that it is a real picture. When you connect the dots, you see the picture. That picture allows you to either accept or reject something according to your wisdom.

These external vrittis are governed by logic. Pramana is logic. Viparayaya is confused logic. Vikalpa is optional logic. All three are logic, guided by the buddhi principle, representing your interaction with the world.

Patanajali uses two primary vrittis from the feeling component – *nidra* and *smriti*, which are pranic in nature. In *nidra*, there is absence of consciousness, yet the body and mind continue to live. Feelings, thoughts, emotions, desires, ambitions, everything continues to live, even when you are sleeping. The only difference is that the light of the torch is not shining on those objects with which you identify. In sleep the torch of awareness, the torch of wakefulness is shut off. Although everything exists in the darkness, you are unable to see it. That is sleep or absence of consciousness. In that state, all the other experiences can be felt. Even when you are sleeping and you feel hot, you feel the trickle of sweat on your body, and it will wake you up. If you are cold, the shivering will wake you up for a few moments until you take your blanket, cover yourself and snuggle back to sleep.

The external senses remain active, and when they cannot handle the state of comfort, they give a signal and you have to adjust and accommodate, even in sleep. If a mosquito bites you in sleep, your hand will automatically go there. You won't even know, yet your hand will scratch that part of the body, while you are sleeping. There is no awareness. The mind is active, just as the senses are active. Dream is a creation of the jigsaw puzzle by the mind. In that jigsaw puzzle, you have all the components of all the senses.

A group of blind cricket players spent one week in the ashram. They were practising visualization, so they were asked, "Do you see colours?" They said, "Yes. When we visualize, when we dream, we don't see anything in black and white; we see everything in colour." That mental component

goes through its own level of experience, whether the senses are active or not, it doesn't matter for each one is a self-contained unit, the jnanendriyas and the karmendriyas. Why are they self-contained? They contain in them prana shakti, the vital force, the life force, which makes them active. When they become active, they come in the range of awareness, consciousness and are seen as dream.

Witness and experience

Memories are of two kinds: conscious and deep-rooted memories. You can deal with the conscious memories. You can deal with the things you remember and which are in your consciousness, positively, neutrally or negatively. The deeper, unconscious and subconscious memories are cleared with prana. The conscious memories are cleared by logic, and the deep-rooted, unconscious memories are cleared by prana.

This pranic component has not been emphasized by Sage Patanjali. Although he described the external vrittis and the subtle vrittis, *nidra* and *smriti*, he did not highlight the pranic component. That pranic component has been highlighted in the classical raja yoga. There is a lot of emphasis in the classical raja yoga on understanding the nadis, chakras and kundalini. The integration of chakra, mantra, kundalini and pranic awareness takes the mind from the outer participation with the senses and sense objects to the experience of something deeper and inner.

Sage Patanjali speaks of *drashta*, the witness. Classical raja yoga speaks of feeling and merging. Do these two ideas oppose each other? You will discover that there is a state of drashta that you go through and a state of experiencer that you go through.

Drashta is necessary for fifty percent, and experience is necessary for the other fifty percent. In drashta you are aware but there is no experience. You can see somebody eating a juicy, crispy apple, yet you don't have the experience. Experience is when you eat and taste the juicy, crispy apple in your mouth. The experience is totally different to observing

someone eat. When I am observing you eat, I am the drashta. When I eat myself, I am the experiencer. Therefore, you go through both processes.

Patanjali spoke of drashta and the classical raja yoga spoke of feeling and merging. Realistically, you go through both states. For a sadhaka, there should be no confusion about Patanjali saying this and classical raja yoga saying that. You are looking at how you can utilize both. There is value when you begin to observe. There is extension of awareness, extension of knowing, perceptions, alertness, and the ability to contain yourself, *sanyam*.

Sanyam comes when you observe. If you see two children fighting, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Do you tell them, “Keep on fighting and kill each other?” Or do you tell them, “Contain yourself; be quiet and peaceful?” In a conflict there is always an aspect of sanyam that comes forward to manage the conflict. Through sanyam you are able to separate two people who are in a conflict. If you go between the two and start punching them, there is no sanyam, and the situation is aggravated. When there is drashta awareness, there is also the desire to contain the negative and connect with the positive. That is the value of becoming the drashta.

After observing, you begin to experience within yourself, to develop the experience, which fills you, elevates you and removes all barriers and boundaries. Your body, your atoms, your spirit are experiencing the same effulgence of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. Even the body becomes vibrant. The mind become Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram, and the spirit experiences Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram.

Witness and experience are the two sides of the coin. Without these two sides, the coin will not be made. We are not negating anything of the *Yoga Sutras*. The *Yoga Sutras* do not prescribe any method; therefore we are looking into the methods which have been prescribed. The *Yoga Sutras* speak of theory, yet after understanding the theory, you have to invent the wheel.

The methods

The classical raja yoga system gives you indications and a little push to go in that direction. It provides you with a guideline. The focus of the classical raja yoga is more a pranic focus. Therefore, it starts with the knowledge of the nadis and chakras. Where the nadis converge, the chakra is identified as a plexus. Similarly, the potency in each chakra, known as kundalini shakti, takes with it and brings forth the potential of each chakra as it travels through the chakras. There is also the entire subject of prana and the marma, the location of pranas in the body, and how to activate them.

There is an understanding and application of each mantra in pranayama, or in meditation. One aspect of the mantra that people know in relation to pranayama is the *Gayatri*. One breath is one *Gayatri*. That is the vedic tradition, *parampara*, and system. In the Upanishads and in yogic literatures, other mantras are used in pranayama, not only *Gayatri*, also the mantra *Aum*. The three letters which make up the word *Aum*, are used as mantras for pranayama.

There is also a lot of emphasis on mudras, especially khechari mudra, shanmukhi mudra. These mudras, apart from internalizing the mind, also instigate secretion of relaxant hormones, including the happy hormones. It is said that when you are able to perfect khechari mudra, you experience the drop of nectar inside. What is that nectar drop? It is not nectar which makes you immortal, but it induces chemical changes in the body. The tongue is able to taste it, further it is absorbed more deeply through the tongue into the blood stream, where it changes the entire physical condition. If you are stressed you suddenly feel relaxed; if you are sick you suddenly feel able to walk not only three steps feeling exhausted, but thirty steps and going further. There is overall euphoria – physical, psychological and spiritual. This happens due to the chemical changes of the body, as they are also affected by what you do and what you think. What you do and what you think changes the entire disposition of the chemical, mental and sensorial systems of the body.

Patanajali mentions only one pratyahara – withdraw your senses to yourself. According to classical raja yoga, there are four different types of pratyahara. The first aspect of pratyahara is external, the second aspect of pratyahara is seeing everything emitting from you, so it is not external. Whatever you see, look upon all of it as being in the self and as the self. It is your experience. If you like somebody, if you dislike somebody, it is your experience. The other person is not the cause. First you think the other person is the cause, that is the external association. Later on you realize that it is your own projection, and that is your self-revelation.

First comes projection and then self-revelation. You were seeing that person in this light for that reason. Your attitude, perceptions and behaviours also change with the person. Suddenly you realize that you are seeing through your own eyes, not through somebody else's eyes. You are the perceiver of all the good that you feel and all the negative that you feel. You are the experienter. Can you transform it into beauty which enhances your life?

This is the second part of pratyahara, which is beautiful. In this pratyahara, prana is again emphasized as prana pratyahara. Prana pratyahara starts with pranayama. Then comes prana nidra, where you harness the potential of the pranas. In prana vidya, you master the pranas and use them to move from gear one to gear two to three to four to five. The neutral gear is pranamaya kosha, which links all the other aspects of your life. There is prana pratyahara, prana vidya, and the practice of yoga nidra with the nyasa mantras. These are part of raja yoga with focus on the pranic experience.

According to scriptures, you can visualize the pranic experience in the form of electrical pulses, which is the most common visualization for prana. The symbol of prana shakti is circular sparks, going in circles. Vibrations, movement, heat can also be felt. You can feel the blood going through your arteries and veins. The awareness becomes subtle and you become aware of what is happening inside the skin. Now

you are only aware of what is happening around the skin, outside the skin. Can you develop the experience of prana shakti under the skin in the different layers of the body? You are able to experience it when you connect with prana shakti. The classical raja yoga is complementary to Patanajali's raja yoga. Patanajali speaks of mind and the classical raja yoga speaks of prana.

The mind is the first component, as the senses are extrovert. You identify with the extrovert world and nature. The mind is interacting with them and prana is in the background. You deal with the first aspect standing in front of you – the mind. When you are able to manage the mind, ask it to be your friend and sit beside you, you look into the second aspect of prana, pulling the strings from behind. Then you pacify the prana and say, "You become my friend." When both of them, mind and prana, become your friend then that is a good achievement.

PRATYAHARA PRACTICE

Sit down comfortably for fifteen minutes, twenty minutes. Sit in a comfortable posture, body upright and straight. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Eyes and lips gently closed. Mentally observe the whole body. Become aware of the whole physical body mentally and see the physical body sitting on the floor on top of a red triangle. See the body seated firmly on the image of the red triangle. The point of the triangle is at the base, the tip of the coccyx. The sides of the triangle follow the contour of the thighs. And the base of the triangle is one straight line from one knee to the other. And that is the triangle of prithvi tattwa, Shakti tattwa, the prakriti tattwa, red.

You are seated on the red triangle and there is firmness in the body, stability in the body. And there is an upward triangle as well from the crown of the head, which is the top point. The sides of the triangle are the two arms resting

on the knees. And the base of the triangle is a line drawn between the right knee and the left.

On the side too, on the right side and left side, there are triangles. Crown of the head is the tip, right arm is the side, right side of the back is the other side and right thigh is the base. Similarly, on the left side. Crown of the head is the tip of the triangle, left arm, left side of the back and the left thigh. See the whole body as a pyramid. See the whole body as a pyramid.

And see a stream of white light from the tip of the pyramid, the crown of the head to the centre of the bottom pyramid. A pillar of light, a stream of light from crown to bottom along the spinal path in the middle of the body. That is the pole of light on which consciousness and breath will ascend and descend.

Now slowly turn your tongue backwards and practise khechari mudra. The back of the tongue touches the upper palate. The tip of the tongue is towards the back of the throat. And with ujjayi breathing, slight constriction of the throat, breathe in and out, up and down along this luminous passage.

Whenever you need to swallow release the tongue, swallow, and then again practise khechari and ujjayi.

And with inhalation the awareness ascends from the base of the spine up along the central path to the crown of the head. A slow, a long and deep breath. When you exhale the awareness descends along this luminous path. All around is shimmery light, just like a gentle moonlit night. Radiating peace, radiating contentment.

As the breath moves up along this luminous path from the bottom triangle to the top, as the awareness moves along with breath, cultivate and identify with this feeling of peace, coolness, quietness and gentleness, a gentle vibrancy.

Now release khechari mudra but continue with ujjayi breath, the deep throat breathing. And continue with the ascent and descent of consciousness with breath.

You inhale from mooladhara to sahasrara and you exhale from sahasrara to the mooladhara region. Ujjayi breath makes the breath longer. Ujjayi breath makes the breath slower. Ujjayi breath makes the breath deeper. Focus on the movement of ujjayi breath.

Now listen carefully to what I am saying and continue with the practice that you are doing. After long and deep inhalation, we shall hold the breath in for as long as possible, comfortably, up to a minute and then with slow exhalation bring the awareness back. Then again a few normal inhalations, three normal inhalations, ascending and descending.

Then again, after three normal inhalations and exhalations, holding the breath, inner kumbhaka. And when you are practising inner kumbhaka, focus on both sides of the stomach as the abdominal region will be extended like a barrel. Focus on both sides, not front or back but on the sides of the stomach, the abdomen. Retain the breath for as long as you can comfortably and then again exhale in ujjayi. Three normal breaths in ujjayi. Then again, inhaling and holding the breath for as long as you can comfortably, focusing on both sides of the abdomen. And when you exhale, the awareness comes down. Then normal breaths and practise this six more rounds at your own speed.

Seventh, eighth and ninth round include khechari mudra along with ujjayi breath. So three rounds, seventh, eighth and ninth round, will be practised with khechari mudra.

Once you complete the nine rounds, release khechari, release ujjayi, maintain the awareness of breath going up and down this luminous path, in the centre of the body, starting from the top of the head and going down to the middle of the red triangle on the floor.

Now ascend the awareness, inhale deeply, bring the awareness to sahasrara, and we shall chant *Om*, and as we chant *Om*, awareness of *Om* will come back down to mooladhara.

Breathe in, *Om*, breathe in, *Om*, breathe in, *Om*.

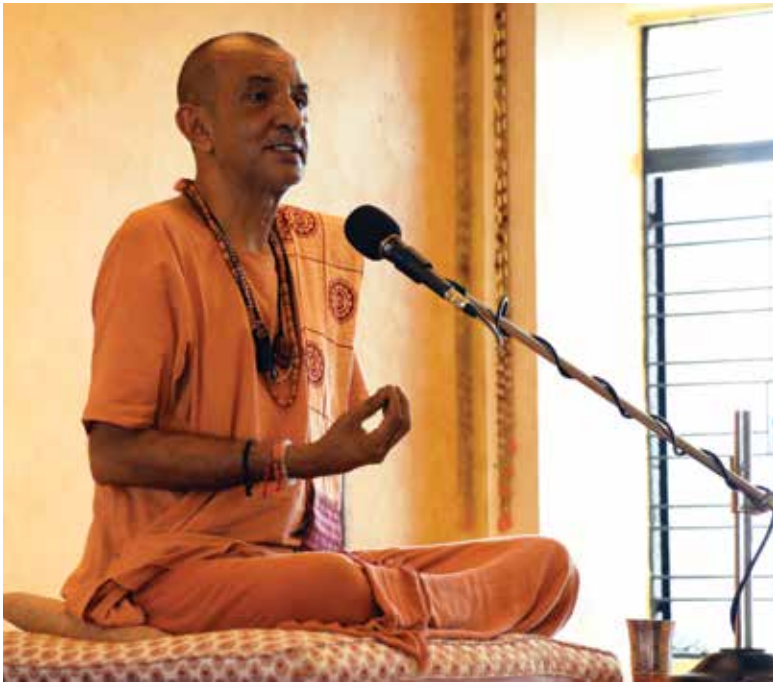
Maintain the awareness on the centre point of the bottom triangle and see the white light, the white path dissolve into the centre point in the bottom triangle, experience the lightness, externalize the mind, connect with the outer environment. Slowly move the body, bring the hands together, rub the palms, generate heat, place the palms over the closed eyes, and when you are ready gently open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

It is the peculiarity of these pranic meditations, that instead of focusing on the chakra, where you feel the most extension, you are developing the awareness of the sides, and there is a reason for it. Each meditation gives you awareness and experience of a different location, area, organ or part of the body, for it sees the whole body as a play of prana shakti, as matter is just a compressed form of energy. Prana is interacting at gross, subtle and causal levels. When you have to activate a prana, it is not just by poking the centre, you can also do other things to activate it. There is a lot of importance given to the area from the navel to the perineum. The entire region from the navel down is a natural triangle, which is an important aspect of pranic pratyahara.

Prana Shakti and Nadis

26 August 2019



The shakti region in the body is from the navel to the perineum. It is also the region of *Brahma granthi*, the knot of creation. Digestion and the womb are there. The function of Shakti is to create, maintain and sustain life, so all the Shakti elements are in this region. At the bottom is *Brahma granthi*, creation, and at the navel region is the *Vishnu granthi*, life.

Creation and life constitute the two aspects of Shakti. Creation is the Brahma granthi, and life is the Vishnu granthi. The entire range of experience between the Brahma granthi and Vishnu granthi is the Shakti element. Paramahamsaji has spoken about a peculiar understanding of kundalini. Although kundalini resides in mooladhara, it can move to swadhisthana, to manipura, to swadhisthana, and back to mooladhara. It can keep moving between the three. As long as kundalini is moving between the three, it does not indicate awakening, yet the entire kundalini shakti is moving in the dimension of Shakti. Therefore, it is not considered to be an awakening of kundalini when you move from mooladhara to swadhisthana, from swadhisthana to manipura. The actual awakening is described when you go from manipura upwards. Then kundalini is awakened. In the book *Kundalini Tantra*, Paramahamsaji said that kundalini can go up to manipura, come back to mooladhara and go to sleep again there. Kundalini remains awake and keeps on ascending once it crosses manipura.

The movement of kundalini from mooladhara to swadhisthana to manipura, back to swadhisthana and mooladhara, at random, indicates the interaction of the cosmic energy with the subtle and the gross. In all descriptions given in the literatures, there is mention of the subtle and the gross. The subtle and gross connect to the region between mooladhara and manipura. From there, it becomes transcendental, pure, sattwic, luminous and expansive.

These are the two components of life according to raja yoga. The first component is buddhi, the logic, the conscious, the pingala aspect, the vital force, the prana shakti. On the opposite side is *bhava*, feeling, which is pranic in nature and corresponds to ida or chitta shakti.

Journey of kundalini

In some literatures it is said that ida is tamas, pingala is rajas, and sushumna is sattwa. From that perspective, the sentiments, bhava or impressions that you receive are ida,

which is tamas. They are never released from the mind and remain contained in the mind. You are not able to clear the mind. The feeling takes on a life of its own and is retained. Once it is retained, there is a conditioning, a space, which is taken up by that feeling, and that is tamas.

Ida represents tamas not from a negative, bad, destructive perspective. Ida has a definite form, shape, is taking up space, and can be identified as a separate experience, awareness or knowledge. Your culinary knowledge and your yogic knowledge occupy space in your mind. When you want to connect with the culinary knowledge, you connect with that and see the files: what is there, what do I know, what can I do? When you see the yogic knowledge, you also see the files: what can I do, what should I be aware of, what should I know? Every experience occupies a space, and the space in which it is contained is conditioned. That is the tamas. Even thoughts are tamas in nature, as they occupy a space in the mind. Emotions are tamasic in nature as they occupy a space in your life.

Chitta, the inner prana, the inner vitality, also has five sub-pranas just as the physical prana has five major sub-pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, or prana divided into five. Prana moves from the navel upwards. Apana moves from the navel to the perineum. If the shakti region is between navel and perineum, then apana is controlling the shakti region.

Everything is being brought down to the gross dimension, to Brahma granthi, to creation, through apana. Even the desires, which you want to fulfil and actualize, are those shakti elements being pushed into Brahma granthi for actualization. An idea is being pushed for actualization. An action is being created for actualization. That is the apana factor. Whatever happens to your mind, if it can be actualized, created, performed, expressed, apana does it. Therefore, kundalini shifts between mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura and then comes back down with the force of apana, until it is in the gross region. Then prana is the ascent. Once kundalini

shakti crosses manipura, there is no backing down and she is carried by the current of prana. That current of prana carries kundalini up through the chakras. Apana pushes kundalini or shakti to creation and life, and prana enhances life. There is no creation in prana. Life begins with manipura which is enhancing life and leading to transcendence.

Nadis

The subject of prana is discussed in detail in the classical raja yoga. It is also said that the conductors, the channels of prana are as important as the energy itself. If the channels are blocked, there is no flow. These channels are the nadis. Three nadis are considered important ones – ida, pingala and sushumna. Theoretically there are approximately 72,000 nadis in the body according to yogic traditions. Out of 72,000 channels, through which prana flows, ultimately three are the most important, and finally, only one, sushumna. Ida and pingala converge and finish at ajna chakra. Beyond this, from ajna chakra to sahasrara, there is only one single nadi, sushumna.

According to tradition, there are 72,000 nadis with the final importance of only one and for a sadhaka the primary importance is of three nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna. The question is, what are the remaining nadis? They also have a function and a role to play. Ida, pingala and sushumna are only in the area from mooladhara through the chakras.

What about the arms and legs, vision, hearing and taste? They are also controlled by prana. Prana flows also into these different body parts and organs. The earliest description of nadis is in the *Prashnopanishad*, in which the spirit is seated in the heart. From the heart emanate one hundred nadis. As more understanding developed, it is still said that the spirit is situated in the heart from which one hundred nadis arise. From each of the one hundred nadis, one hundred more emanate. Fifty on each side, like a fir tree. From each of these there are thousands more through which vyana travels. Vyana is the all-pervasive prana, and responsible for giving

life to every cell. How many cells are there in the body? A healthy body, a young body may have 60 to 70 trillion cells. A middle-aged body, an elderly body may have anywhere from 40,000 to 50,000 trillion cells. Each cell generates 1.4 volts of electricity. Your body is a walking powerhouse. Ultimately, it is also prana shakti. The form of prana shakti, which travels through the thousand nadis which emanate from the hundreds that are formed, is vyana. Vyana fills each and every cell with vibrancy and life. In the physical body, as part of physical transformation and experience, you experience it as energy, as 1.4 volts in every cell.

Varaha group of nadis

One aspect of prana shakti is vyana. Imagine what will be the percentage of emission of prana in the other ones will be. You can see that in your day-to-day activity. You are always on the move. According to yogis, there is a group of nadis that penetrate the body from the soles of the feet to the crown of the head and in all of them there is prana. That group is known as the varaha group of nadis. When you prepare for surya namaskara, stand in posture one and place your weight equally on the soles of the feet, the heels, the front, the sides, you become firm without swaying. The experience of stability is the control of the varaha group of nadis. The pranas flow through those nadis, up and down from the feet to the crown of the head, from the crown of the head to the feet, energizing and activating everything. The varaha group of nadis is a vertical ascent and descent carrying prana shakti.

Alambhusa nadi

Alambhusa is an interesting nadi, which connects the mouth to the anus. It is a digestive nadi. The moment you begin to chew something, the nadi is activated. The activation of that nadi is the whole process of digestion. As you masticate the fluids in the mouth begin to break down the food, when you swallow, the juices in the stomach break down what you are eating even further, and the waste is pushed down.

Alambhusa is responsible from the first morsel to the final exit, it only controls digestion. The movement of food, taking the nutrients from the food, and the movement of waste matter is controlled by alambhusa. If somebody is sick and a specific practice is done to activate alambhusa, any kind of digestive problem can be helped.

Gandhari nadi

Behind the ida nadi, emanating from the left nostril and terminating near the left eye, is the gandhari nadi. From the left nostril it connects to the eye and is responsible for vision; the nadi supplies prana for vision. Traditionally, Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas and wife of the blind King Dhritarashtra, was the queen who had blindfolded herself. To remove the cover and regain vision is the purpose of gandhari nadi, which connects ida with the eyes.

When you practise trataka, it is the gandhari nerve which is activated. Through the activation of the gandhari nerve, the ida nerve is also activated, and there is a feeling of calmness, introversion and good sleep after trataka, as the mind is stilled. Vision improves, not due to the flame or the object you are gazing at. You only think in physical terms that the muscles are being pulled, pushed and stretched. With trataka, this nadi is being activated, vision is activated, and there is overall improvement.

There are also mantras, which through their frequency activate a specific nadi and the prana in them. In the *Chakshush Upanishad*, the Upanishad of the eyes, there are mantras mentioned to improve eyesight. We have experimented with elderly people. Chanting those mantras, in one to two months' time they felt that the eyesight improved, as the vibrations were stimulating the flow of prana in gandhari. The Upanishad clearly states, "Even a blind person can regain eyesight if he does it correctly." They placed so much faith in this mantra affecting the pranic flow in the nadi.

Kurma nadi

When your body becomes still in meditation and you are practising *kaya sthairyam*, there is one nadi which becomes active automatically, known as *kurma nadi*, the tortoise nadi. The *kurma nadi* is from the toes to the hips. When you sit, the posture becomes like the posture of the tortoise – the two legs sticking out, the two elbows sticking out, the four limbs. As soon as the *kurma nadi* is activated you become comfortable and stable, as *prana* becomes your seat, which flows through these nadis. Discomfort means that *kurma nadi* is not properly placed or balanced. Whenever there is discomfort, you want to move and find your stable posture. That is the effect of *kurma nadi*.

Vajra and Saraswati nadi

Vajra nadi is from the heels to the stomach. When you practise *vajrasana*, it is *vajra nadi* which is stimulated, so that digestion improves. Another important nadi in the stomach is the *Saraswati nadi*, which carries the essence of food from the actual digestive process into the blood. The absorption of nutrients into the blood is happening due to the flow of *prana* in the *Saraswati* channel. Yogis have described this in great detail. They also discovered that therapy is possible when you are able to activate these dormant or blocked nadis which impair the proper functioning of organs.

PRATYAHARA PRACTICE

So sit down in a comfortable pose. Feet in a relaxed posture. Both ankle balls on the floor. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Spine upright and straight. Eyes and mouth gently closed. Become aware of your physical body. Observe the physical body.

Make sure that there is nothing tight to distract your awareness. Make sure that there is no tension in any part which makes you uncomfortable. Make sure that there is no difficulty in any part of the body. Free yourself from all discomfort. Find your balance, find your harmony, find your space. No discomfort at all.

And visualize the shakti triangle on the floor over which you are seated. Visualize the red shakti triangle on the floor. As the body becomes one with the shakti triangle, you begin to experience firmness, steadiness, stillness.

And now gradually build the pyramid around you. Gradually build the pyramid around you, by becoming aware of all the triangular sections, from the knees to the crown of the head. From thigh to arm to the side of the back and behind you. See your body encased in a three-sided triangular pyramid. Now bring your awareness to the base, base of the pyramid. Become aware of the whole base.

And now, from the ankle knob, begin to see the flow of a luminous light, travelling along the side of the shin, into the side of the thighs, up to the coccyx. And then from the coccyx into the other leg, towards the knee, following the side into the other ankle knob. See the movement of luminous shakti, moving with breath. With breath the shakti moves at the time of inhalation, from one ankle knob to coccyx. With exhalation, it moves from the coccyx to the other ankle knob. And in a circular motion, the practice continues.

And as the prana flows through this luminous path, feel comfort, warmth, vibration, lightness in the base of your

body, which is one with the shakti triangle. The flow of prana shakti, in the kurma nadi, kurma channel, making you physically more firm, stable, comfortable and light. There should be no feeling of heaviness. But a feeling of lightness pervades the whole body. You are not aware of any pressure. Only of lightness.

Now, stop this practice and visualize a string of light hanging from the top of the pyramid down to the centre, on the floor. Inhaling, the awareness moves up along this luminous path. From the base of the pyramid to the tip and with exhalation, awareness comes down along the luminous path, to the base. Breathing should be gentle, slow, long, deep and comfortable. Do not strain yourself in breathing. If any discomfort comes, check and regulate your breath.

Now, while the awareness moves up and down this luminous path, practise khechari mudra and breathe in ujjayi breath. Practise khechari mudra and ujjayi breath with awareness, moving up and down this luminous, central path. And now, once you inhale, hold the breath in for as long as you can, comfortably. And this time, instead of ascending with the breath to the crown of the head, maintain the awareness of the abdomen, the sides of the abdomen expanded like a barrel. And when convenient, exhale slowly, emptying the barrel of all air. Continue holding the breath and becoming aware of the sides of the body, as they expand. Awareness of space and openness. Awareness of shakti, the warmth and the heat.

Now, visualize a red triangle at the navel region. A small red triangle covering the navel. And as you inhale and as you exhale, just say *Om*. But when you hold the breath, focus on the triangle at the navel region and say the mantra, *Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram*, for as long as you are holding the breath. Continue with this practice for some rounds. Now, stop the practice of kumbhaka and the mantra, *Ram*. Just inhale normally, slowly, deeply, up along the luminous path, from the base of the triangle pyramid to the tip of the pyramid.

Now, when you come to the eyebrow centre at the time of inhalation, hold your awareness there and let the image of the luminous path dissolve. And at the eyebrow centre, visualize a point of light. Like a disc, the light is spreading in all directions. We are going to chant the mantra *Om* three times and as we chant *Om*, see this point of light move down to the base of the pyramid and as it moves down, experience the luminosity, the vibration of light and mantra spreading through the whole body. Breathe in. *Om*. Up again, *Om*. Up again, *Om*.

Let the light dissolve in the floor, in the triangle. Awareness of the body, sitting on the floor, the weight, the pressure of the body on the ground. Become aware of the external noises and sounds.

Slowly, move your body and bring the hands together and rub the palms. Place the palms over the closed eyes and gently open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

First it was movement, then it was the string, then it was the triangle at the navel and *Ram*. Then it was string, then holding and this ball moving down with *Om*, dissolving into the floor. And once it dissolves in the floor, then pranic awareness leaves the body. Physical awareness comes in, the weight, the pressure, the discomfort, the stiffness. So first you become aware of this body, as the prana is dissolved. Then you bring the awareness and extend it out to the sounds, then there is movement and then you end.

So even finishing is important. How you end the practice is also important. You don't just open the eyes because you don't have time. That will give a lot of *jhatka*, shock, to the subtle systems. You have to let go and dissolve everything, and extend your mind, open again to the world. And then you move. And don't think that because you chanted *Om*, so now you can move. Because *Om* is also used as a verbal tone to externalize the senses. And it is a gradual process. It has to happen slowly.

Kandas, Nadis and Chakras

28 August 2019



Last year, I completely lost my sense of taste, smell, and humour, for almost five days. I had no cold, sickness or fever, which means there was no humour in the body. Eating was done only to satisfy a physical hunger, and only the eyes could decide if something was fresh or spoiled. Is this a pratyahara experience?

If it was a pratyahara experience, you would be aware of the taste. You would be able to isolate the taste from chewing or swallowing, and the whole experience would be slightly

different, rather than losing taste and smell. Many times when you become aware of something intensely, there is a physical and psychological reaction. If you stand with your arms against the wall for one minute and then stand straight, after a few seconds, the arm will go up. It is not being induced; it is simply a physical reaction to something that happened. You are not willing to move it. You did not even think, 'I will lift it this way or that way'; it just happened. In antar mouna, when you observe your thoughts, they stop coming. Then you question, 'My mind is blank, what do I do to bring the thoughts?' Remove the mind from there, thoughts will again begin to flow. It seems that when you become aware of something, at one point the agitation, the activity of that something stops for some time. A reverse activity takes place. That is the pratyaya.

Looking at the sight and smell, in your practice, for a few moments, hours or days, you may lose that awareness as well. However, with a few days of practice you would not experience it. It takes a long time, and when it happens you are aware that it is happening and you can control it. This is the main aspect of pratyahara. If it is uncontrolled and you try to control it, it is a practice of pratyahara. If it is happening and you are watching and managing it, it is the state of pratyahara. If you lose or block it, it is a conditioning which has to be overcome by further enforcing the awareness of pratyahara.

Kandas

What is the importance of pranas as vital force for the body and as vital force for the mind? The body functions are controlled by different aspects of prana, identified as five pranas. In a similar manner, for the internal dimension, different aspects of prana govern different expressions or subtle behaviours of human nature. Manas is being controlled by one type of prana, so is buddhi. Chitta is controlled by a subtler type of prana, and ahamkara is controlled by another subtler form of prana. These subtle pranas are known as the

chitta shakti, internal powers, or internal forces. Just as prana shakti has five physical pranas – prana, apana, samana, udyana and vyana – chitta shakti has four mental pranas: manas prana, buddhi prana, chitta prana, and aham prana.

When the classical raja yoga speaks of merger, it is not happening between manas and buddhi, buddhi and chitta, chitta and ahamkara, it is the merger of pranas. One prana is merged with another one, and the functions become part of the next dimension. When manas prana is merged into buddhi prana, the functions of manas will become an extension of buddhi. When buddhi prana is merged with chitta prana, the functions of buddhi will become an extension of chitta. It merges into that and becomes contained in that. Similarly, when chitta prana merges with aham prana, only the self-identity of ‘I am’, remains.

This is an advanced sadhana, therefore, it is not spoken about openly. It is an indication that you should not consider mind as one thing only, as chitta shakti only, for there are progressions within the mind as well. As the energy, the function and the identity merge with the higher nature, it is known as merger or *laya*, in the classical raja yoga. Whether they be mental flows or physical, vital flows, they flow through a system called nadis. There are many different varieties, types and categories of nadis, which perform a specific function in relation to prana shakti, assisting the physical, organic body to move and function.

These nadis come in clusters in different parts of the body. Where the clusters are formed the areas are known as kanda. *Kanda* means a cluster of nadis or nerves. *Kanda* also means route. A ball children play with is also called *kanda*. In yogic terminology, kanda is referred to as a collection or a bunch of nadis, a cluster of nadis which form a ball-like shape. These kandas are in many parts of the body. The kanda of vajra nadi, which is coming from the ankle towards the digestive system, is in the ankles where the nadi begins.

There are different locations where these clusters can occur. The areas are also identified as the marmasthanas,

the place where prana is contained. Marmasthana represents the outer surface of the kanda, and kanda is the internal part. Imagine a big boil. The surface of the boil is the marmasthana, the sensitive part which you can touch. Everything is concentrated there, and it becomes the marmasthana. The roots of the boil are inside. It is hard. You can press it, you can feel it, you can have the pain and everything, yet the most sensitive part of the boil is the top. That is the kanda and the marma. Marma becomes the most sensitive point. There are sixteen major kandas, which form the sixteen major marma points through which the prana is moved. These sixteen major kandas are located in all areas of the body and are recognized as marmasthanas, the points of sensitivity at the surface of the skin.

In the spiritual dimension along the spinal cord, there are also kandas. One kanda is between manipura and swadhisthana chakras. One is between manipura and anahata chakras. In different regions are different kandas. The kandas along the spine are identified as nerve plexus. People associate nerve plexus with chakras, however chakras are slightly different to kanda, as they only indicate the criss-cross of the three major nadis. A chakra is not a bunch of peripheral nadis. They are located in other regions. A chakra is the point where ida, pingala and sushumna converge. That area is identified as chakra. From mooladhara to ajna are the chakras. Beyond ajna is no other chakra, as there is no further criss-cross of ida, pingala and sushumna. Sushumna flows as one and comes to the thousand-petalled lotus. Thousand is an indication of unity in diversity. There are thousands of petals yet they are contained as one experience.

Sahasrara is only an experience, it is not a physical chakra. This experience of sahasrara is only an experience. Sushumna is joined by ida and pingala, and the physical, psychological and spiritual become one integrated understanding. In this understanding, you live that state of mind. Therefore, sahasrara is never identified as a chakra. A chakra is mooladhara from where the three nadis start, they meet

in swadhisthana and criss-cross, they meet in manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna and then as one ascend. Up to ajna is the chakra system. Ajna, the last one, relates to the first one, mooladhara. It is like a G-clamp. The bottom of the G-clamp is mooladhara and the top of the G-clamp is ajna. They contain the other chakras in between. Therefore, due to this connection if you work with ajna you can activate mooladhara. That is the training of kundalini yoga.

This is an indication that chakras are those areas in your spinal cord, more specifically, in the trunk region, where the three main nadis converge. Kandas are placed beside the chakras, they are not the chakras. The plexuses are below, beside or on top of the chakra, depending on the region where they are located. In classical raja yoga, knowledge of kanda is as important as knowledge of nadis. Each plexus represents an aspect of that prana shakti, which is different to chakra.

Chakra represents the spiritual dimension. Kanda represents the pranic, psychological and physical dimensions. When you work with chakras, you are working on the spiritual dimension. When you are working with kandas, you are working with your personality. Therefore, the classical raja yoga starts with cultivation of awareness of the marmasthanas. In Patanjali's raja yoga, you start with the drashta awareness. In classical raja yoga your journey begins with marmasthanas and the management of pranas in these marmasthanas.

Samadhi

Some literatures define sixteen kandas, others over thirty-six, including the minor kandas, and some literatures define up to seventy-six kandas, going even more deeply into the subtle physical and psychic anatomy, with emphasis on prana, nadis, kandas, chakras and kundalini, the ultimate aim.

Sage Patanjali identified the ascent of kundalini as different levels of samadhi. In this samadhi, this is the experience. In that samadhi, that is the experience. The samadhi of Patanjali is the kundalini experiences of a raja yogi: being absorbed in the experience, feeling, bliss,

ananda, the *drishya*, the vision, or *anubhava*, the experience. Therefore, in the samadhi described in the *Yoga Sutras*, there is samadhi with thought, without thought, with ego, without ego.

Why have these different definitions or classifications been given to samadhi by Patanjali, when samadhi is just a state of balance and harmony? He gave this indication that in mooladhara thoughts are active. In swadhisthana thoughts become subtle, under the layer, under the carpet. The mooladhara experiences are savichar samadhi; the swadhisthana experiences are nirvichar samadhi; the manipura experience is savitarka samadhi; the anahata experience is nirvitarka samadhi – nothing is there. Then there is another level in ajna, in sahasrara. Sabeej, nirbeej, all the different names only represent the awakening of a chakra at each level and the absorption into that state. The samadhi of Patanjali follows the mental train, and the chakra follows the pranic train. The samadhi of Patanjali merges manas with buddhi, and the classical raja yoga merges manas prana with buddhi prana. There is this separation, yet both paths move together.

Patanjali has defined samadhi, other literatures of yoga mention or refer to samadhi without defining it. They don't have to define samadhi as it is a state in which you are living. When you are absolutely thirsty, dying of thirst, in the middle of the desert and somebody gives you a glass of nice, cold water – then the ecstasy and taste of that water going down, the fulfilment that you experience, is samadhi. If you identify with that, it is samadhi. It is an experience which has filled you, taking you from dying of thirst back to life. The senses have become sharp and acute. As the water goes down you feel it travel down the oesophagus entering the stomach. The coolness is felt and it is a beautiful experience.

Antar mouna

With the practices focused on indriya nigraha and antar mouna, you begin to recognize how to access the thought dimension. When you practise antar mouna, you suddenly

find that there are no thoughts coming. So you have to find a way to distract yourself, allowing the thoughts to come and yet maintain the awareness of observing them as they come. It is not black and white. You bring the thoughts, you stop the thoughts, you bring the thoughts, you stop the thoughts. If there are no thoughts and you have to bring them, can you take a step back and not encroach upon the space of thoughts, let them flow in again, and maintain the awareness that these thoughts are coming? Try to know the behaviour, nature and personality of your mind. Try to know the nature of your mind.

Mind has a nature and a personality. Your personality is a projective personality. The mind's personality is the natural personality. When you are with other people, there is always self-projection. Can the nature of the mind be identified with antar mouna? Yes, it can be identified. It can be discovered by observing the reactions that are generated in the mind in form of thoughts, sentiments, feelings, responses and reactions. All this comes within the purview of antar mouna. This is an important practice, for once we have identified the mind, it becomes easier to deal with prana shakti.

Sri Aurobindo used to say, "Previously I thought, intellect was my friend but later I realized, that it was a barrier, so I left it behind." In your sadhana, you have to leave the intellect behind. Just listen and follow the instruction and guideline. If you bring in your mind, then your whole attention is diverted from focus to questioning. When you move from focus to questioning, you are not the experiencer anymore. Rather you become dissipated and the mind becomes agitated again. You are creating that situation for yourself. Then you ask how to stop the agitation of the mind. Therefore, sadhana has to follow in a progressive and systematic manner.

Pratyahara is the broadest subject, broader than meditation. Meditation is not a subject. Today, meditation has become a generic word used for everything and it is a mis-used word. Paramahamsaji said that there is no such thing as meditation. You have to go through the four states of

the mind before coming to the experience of peace. That is enough to guide. You have to go through the four experiences of the mind. Everything depends on how your interest is developed. That interest has to develop in a systematic and progressive manner, so that there is no set back as you embark on the journey on an unknown path.

For the majority of aspirants, prana is an unknown path, yet a powerful path. Once prana shakti awakens, how do you deal with it, how do you handle it? People who have just the first tremors of kundalini movement, lose control of body and mind, as there is so much inflow of shakti. Once you know the subject and vidya of prana, many topics begin to make sense, as pieces of the jigsaw puzzle come together and create the final picture.

Until now the practitioners of hatha yoga have not been able to put the jigsaw puzzle of hatha yoga together, thinking that bending, stretching and using props will make them better hatha yoga practitioners. In the modern age, even hatha yoga teachers and masters have not been able to put the pieces of the hatha yoga jigsaw puzzle together. Therefore, you have to be aware, sincere, practical and progressive, as you undertake your journey through the yoga yatra into yoga vidya.



PRATYAHARA PRACTICE

So, sit in a comfortable posture. Body upright and straight. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Eyes gently closed. With eyes closed, become aware of the whole physical body. Visualize the whole physical body. Experience the whole body in one thought, in one glimpse. Visualize your body encased in a triangular pyramid. The base, the front, the sides. See the whole body inside this transparent pyramid. See the extension of light, the string of light from the top of the pyramid to the middle of the floor triangle.

We are going to ascend and descend the breath, the awareness, and the mantra *Om* along this luminous path, the luminous string. When you are inhaling see the awareness and breath and the mantra *Om* rise from the floor up along the luminous path to the crown of the head. And when you exhale chant a soft *Om*, audible only to yourself. And with the vibrations of *Om* come down to the centre of the triangle along the luminous string. *Om*. Long and deep and slow inhalation without becoming breathless. Exhalation with chanting of *Om* audible only to yourself and feel the vibrations of *Om* as you chant in a whispered voice move down from the top of the luminous path, to the bottom, merging with the base triangle. *Om... Om... Om... Om...*

Now stop this practice. Continue to inhale and once you reach the top, hold the breath in for as long as you can comfortably and at that time bring your awareness to the sides of your abdomen, feeling the space and when you exhale after holding the breath in, then at that time chant the mantra *Om*, audible only to yourself. And with the chanting of the mantra *Om* bring your navel inside till the breath is fully out. Then again breath in raising awareness and breath up along the luminous path to sahasrara, hold the breath, bring the awareness down to the sides of

the stomach, the abdomen. And when you exhale with *Om*, bring the navel in, as if it is the abdomen, the navel, where the vibrations of *Om* are being felt. Continue in this manner for a few moments.

At the time of inhalation fill the stomach and the chest with full air, hold the breath, focus on the sides of the body. And when you exhale repeat mental *Om* and the navel goes in, expelling all the air out. Control and manage your breath now by the movement of the navel.

And while you maintain the awareness of the navel movement, stop the mantra *Om* and use the mantra *Ram*. Inhaling the navel comes forward, fills up the whole body, stomach and then the chest with air, holding the breath, awareness of the sides of the body and while exhaling feeling the navel expel the air, push the air out of the body as it moves inwards. Then again navel fills up the body with air as it moves outwards filling the stomach first, then the chest. Full breath, holding the breath. Awareness of the sides.

And while you hold the breath in repeat the mantra *Ram... Ram... Ram... Ram... Ram... Ram... Ram*. And when you are exhaling, stop chanting the mantra *Ram* and simply focus on the movement of the navel as it comes in.

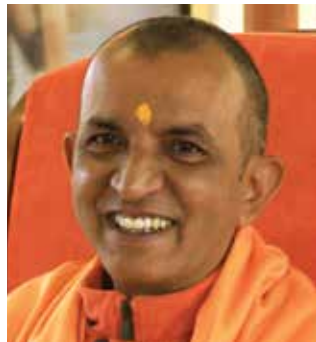
With inhalation navel expands, full breath in, holding the breath, the mantra *Ram*, awareness of the abdominal region, the sides; exhaling and observing the inward motion of the navel.

Now stop this practice and breathe normally. Let the awareness of the luminous passage fade out; drop the awareness of the pyramid around the body. Externalize the awareness, become aware of the noises, the sounds, the place, the location, the environment. Slowly move the hands, bring your hands closer and rub the palms and once heat is created in the palms, place them over the eyes and then slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Notes

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Among these programs were the Raja Yoga Yatra 3: Practical Pratyahara, and Raja Yoga Yatra 4: Chitta and Prana Pratyahara, during which the focus was on understanding the two components of pratyahara, the logic and mental component, and the component of feeling and prana.

This book presents the satsangs and practices given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program.



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