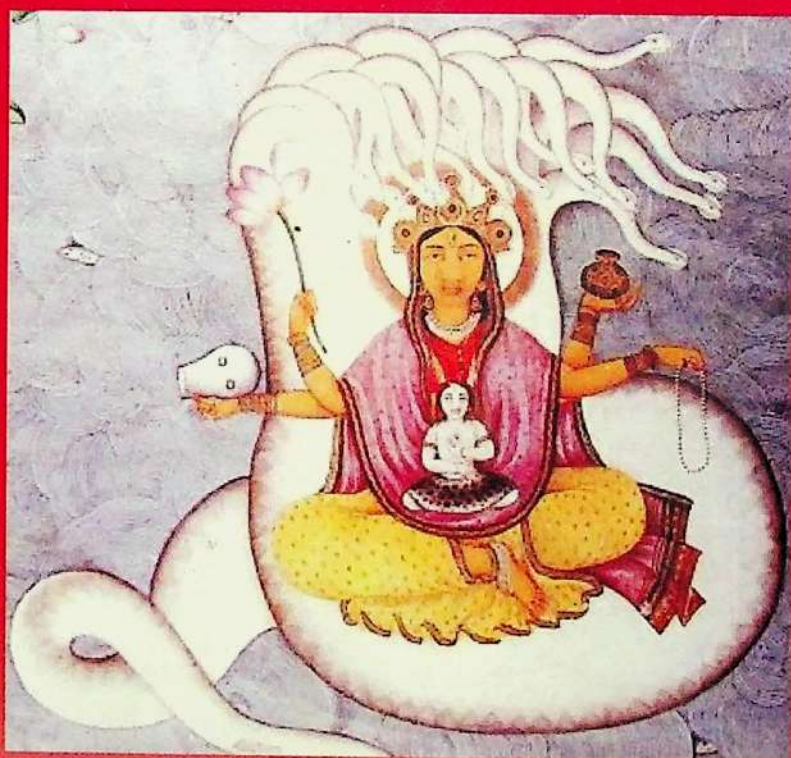


Tantra, Mantra, Yoga & Spiritual Bliss

The Holistic Yoga: Posture, Pranayama, Tattva-Shuddhi, Chakra-Dhyana
Kundalini Awakening, Mantrajapa & Svara-Vijnana



'ध्यायेत् कुलकुण्डलिनीं मूलाधार निवासिनीम्।'

J.L.Gupta 'Chaitanya'



Tantra, Mantra, Yoga & Spiritual Bliss



Essence of Yoga...

"Everybody should work hard to achieve success, growth and prosperity. But, this can be possible only when our health is good."
(Atharvaveda)

"Health, a light body, freedom from cravings, a glowing skin, sonorous voice, fragrance of body: these signs indicate progress in the practice of meditation."
(Shveta. Upa.)

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद् दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

(Yajurveda, 40.5)

"God exists; He runs the cosmos; He doesn't move away; He's even far away; He's even around; He's inside all of us; He's even beyond all."

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥

(Kath.Up., 2.11)

"The Contenance, (containment of all his organs for achieving inward concentration in the meditation of the Supreme), is known as Yoga. At that stage the practitioner of this discipline becomes alert and wakeful; because, just as the attainment to Yoga, it can also be dissipated (through the slightest weakness of the senses)."

"Live each present moment completely and the future will take care of itself. Fully enjoy the wonder and beauty of each instant."
(Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda)

"The best six doctors anywhere - and no one can deny it - are: sunshine, water, rest, air, exercise and diet."

(Nursery rhyme)

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Dhyana, Kundalini Awakening, Mantrajapa, Svarayoga



J. L. Gupta 'Chaitanya'

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Rs. 750/-

Prologue

‘आबाहु पुरुषकारं शंखचक्रासिधारिणम्।
सहस्रशिरसं श्वेतं प्रणमामि पतञ्जलिम्।।’

‘I salute Patanjali who having taken the form of a man to the shoulders holds a conch, a discus, and a sword and has one thousand white heads.’

While technology has made path-breaking progress, the human race is at the crossroads of existential angst. As Martin Luther King said, ‘Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.’ Engaged in the enjoyment of a variety of pleasant experiences of the temporal world, discontentment persists until sense organs are fatigued and man is unable to work further. He remains engrossed with stress and strain. Alexander the Great wept because he had no more worlds to conquer. The physical world out there has its limits, as Alexander discovered to his cost. Each one of us nurtures the wish for a greater life perfect in body and beauty, pelf and prosperity, but deprived of the knowledge of Yoga, we achieve just a little bit of it. Science tells that we use, at best, only 10% of our potential, and the balance 90% remains unknown.

That’s why Indian sages stressed on living a quality life. The life should be lived in such a way that success and satisfaction become our wings and we may

be able to achieve a meaningful goal. This can be possible by winning both inner and outer world because the inner winner gives one satisfaction and the outer one gives success. It is sad that most of us fail in this world due to lack of vision caused by ignorance.

Thousands of years ago Yoga was spread throughout the world, but with the ravages of time, this knowledge was lost and man forgot the purpose of birth on this planet and the huge potential he possessed. In India, experiments with Yoga have continued from centuries; the seers visualized man not merely a bundle of flesh and bones, but as an integrated personality consisting body, mind, psyche and spirit. They proclaimed that all the pains of man, and there are hundreds and thousands, can be overcome by ten minutes of meditation. The Master-minds had every reason to assure that all the wealth of man cannot equal ten minutes of Dhyana Yoga. The science of Yoga gave people the hope to recognize the latent cosmic energy inside each and every individual.

Sadhana or spiritual practice does accumulation of energy by preventing its leakage. The need is to be a sincere Yogi with no selfishness. Swami Ramdeo, who has brought about revolution in Yoga across the world, says that 'Intense work is rest'. Let's arise and awaken to the need of the hour. Awakening is to connect with the Higher by preventing energies from seeping out. Yoga scriptures aver that one of the biggest source of energy leaks in negative emotions like anger, jealousy, ego and hatred. It is full of conflict. The prevention is possible by the practice of Yoga. There is love, unselfishness, feeling of oneness, and friendship. That is why Krishna asked Arjuna to be a Yogi.

'तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन॥'

'The Yogi is superior to the ascetics, he is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some interested motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi.' (*Bh. Gita*, vi. 46)

Sage Gheranda addresses his disciple Chandakapali telling him the importance of Yoga in *Gheranda Samhita* (1.4-5):

नास्ति मायासमं पाशं नास्ति योगात् परं बलम्।
नास्ति ज्ञानात् परो बन्धुर्नाहंकारात् परो रिपुः॥४॥

'There is no greater snare than illusion, no greater friend than knowledge, no greater enemy than pride. Similarly there is no greater power than that of Yoga.'

अभ्यासात् कादिवर्णानि यथाशास्त्राणि बोधयेत्।
तथा योगं समासाद्य तत्त्वज्ञानं च लभ्यते॥५॥

'Just as by learning the alphabets (a, b, c, d, etc.) one is able to comprehend difficult treatises, so is the Supreme Knowledge gained by first mastering Yoga.'

Yoga takes you on the path of a beautiful journey of self-discovery acquainting with your true nature, the body, the mind and finally the spirit for a complete integrated personality. It is by harmonizing them that one can tap the infinite potential within. Here the focus is, in fact, on integrating the body, mind and soul for a harmonious blend of life, and this author has every reason to assure that Yoga, Tantra and Mantra can bring tremendous change in life. This state can be achieved by constant practice of certain Yogic postures, breathing

techniques, *Bhuta-Shuddhi*, Chakra meditation, intense inward contemplation, etc.

The necessity for such practices arises because the human body remains embroiled in *Malas* (impurities) - gross and subtle, and needs purification. When the body is in impure state one can't breathe properly and is bound to remain in chaos. Talking of spirituality is a faraway affair when even the body is laden with toxic matter. Maybe sometimes one has to go for medication to live comfortably or seek other modes of recreation to appease the helpless state. The practice of Yoga has proved very effective these days especially for those who are fed up with medications and other ailments in life. It can be said with great command that Yoga can transform life. It may fetch miraculous results for the practitioner. By its constant practice and Grace of God circumstances become propitious, company of great persons is facilitated, the mind becomes quiet, inner peace prevails and a person is able to enjoy a meaningful life. One can come true at the anvil of what Lord Krishna defines the vision of oneness as the culmination of Yoga - **यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति.**

Yoga teaches that living is an art, a skill, a technique, which has to be learnt by each one of us to live a meaningful and perfect life. This book that throws light on the eternal principles of life and living enshrines here the very secrets of life. Tantra, Mantra and Yoga, when put together and understood in proper perspective, can bring miracles in the life of a person. This demanding practice requires considerable effort and taps into and circulates a vital energy throughout the body, strengthening and purifying the nervous system. The mind then becomes lucid, clear and precise. Wherever you look you will see God. However it is

disheartening that this precious knowledge is found missing in our life today, and we have become victims of stress and strain.

The book is a humble attempt by a seeker who has deeply immersed himself in contemplation of the Supreme Soul. Since the *Paramatman* upholds all the acts of the universe, and, it is He Who constantly stood by me guiding in this earnest attempt, there is no word to utter in respect of His Gratitude. It is His Grace that the book has emerged in this form.

As a Sadhaka, practicing Yoga, say my *Puja*, the spiritual awakening was ingrained in my blood right from my school days. At the outset, I should record my gratefulness to all those great souls who virtually deserve the credit for this piece of writing. First, I should be loyal to my first school preceptor, Rev'd Shri Krishna Kumar Mishraji, who had kindly sowed the first seed in mind at the very fifth standard. I will remain indebted to him till the last breath of my life.

My parents have naturally played a major part in building my life instilling in me love for the people and imparting the very first lesson that Divinity dwells in everyone's heart - ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशे तिष्ठतिऽर्जुन. My father Shri R.S. Gupta's contribution in shaping me with inclination towards virtues and moral ethos needs to be gratefully acknowledged here. His constant inspiration for education paved my path for the present state. Tears roll down my eyes when I set to recall the dedicated upbringing rendered to me by my chaste-hearted loving mother, unfortunately no more to see the day, who despite of all the odds and miserable situations, never let me feel any dearth and borne them on her own.

As a child, born in a remote village of the Uttar Pradesh, when I used to see those saffron-clad alms-

begging ascetics visiting door-to-door playing on Sitar with holy *bhajans*, I could hardly form a good impression of a Yogi. 'They are Yogis and theirs is the best life', my father used to remark. Truly speaking that did not at all appeal me, and, since I had no inkling of a real Yogi, I had almost abandoned the idea of becoming one of the likes.

Years rolled by, and, so was the passage of life replete with days of vicissitudes. The Lady Luck favoured me and I had the first blissful experience of Yoga postures in a Yoga class run by Bharatiya Yoga Sansthan, Delhi. Since then I made it a habit and the practice of Postures and *Pranayama* had great healing effect on my body and mind. Attending to saints and spiritual masters' discourses, studying Scriptures and listening to the discourses of enlightened masters had become my routine. I am sad to record here that I had studied most of the works of Sir John Woodroffe and Gopinath Kaviraja but to little benefit. Even the study of *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramayana* was merely to satisfy the curiosity of my holy urge and the love for the Scriptures as ordained for a Hindu.

However I was able to discover their esoteric sense only after I got initiated by my Guru Rev'd Shri Ramasurat Shuklaji to the practice of Chakra meditation, the energy centres along the spine. His association for more than a decade was instrumental in unfolding several knots of my wavering mind. That brought a total transformation in my life. His very first lesson in the lush green garden of Roshanara Baug did enlighten me inserting superb vibrations of effulgence. This was like unlocking the doors of my subtle as well as causal bodies, and, I recall it was as if the Supreme Yogi Lord Shiva did it all in the scheme of things He does. It was

since then that I was able to comprehend the real purport of these Yoga treatises. The Great Master often remarked that it is important to awaken the *Chaitanya*, the principle of consciousness inside us, in order to make out some sense of divine scriptures. 'The Atman is the best teacher' he often remarked. Unfortunately he is not alive with his corporeal body to see the day, I shall ever feel his divine presence in my heart and shall remain grateful to him. With all humility I dedicate this book to his lotus feet.

I am also indebted to all great Yogis and scholars from India and abroad, whose works have been a big source of inspiration in writing this book. I bow to the lotus feet of all saints and great masters whose valuable discourses I availed of, as of Jagadguru Kripaluji Maharaj, Sw. Anubhavananda, Acharya Narasimha, Smt. Jaya Row, Sw. Sukhabodhananda, Sw. Ramdeo and some others.

Last, but not least, I extend my whole-hearted affection for my beloved daughter Svasti Shri for supporting me in the preparation of the typescript, and my spouse Rita for handling the daily chores of household activities all alone liberating me to dwell on this sacred lore.

'स्वस्ति प्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्तां न्यायेन मार्गेण महीं महीशाः ।

गोब्राह्मणेभ्यः शुभमस्तु नित्यं लोकास्समस्ता सुखिनो भवन्तु ॥'

(May all be well with mankind! May the leaders of the earth protect in every way by keeping the right path! May there be goodness for those who know the earth to be sacred! May all the worlds be happy!)

J. L. Gupta 'Chaitanya'

Shri Krishna Janmashtami,
August 16, 2006

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Introduction

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचा मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ।
योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥

'With folded hands I bow to the Great Sage Patanjali, who annihilated the impurity of Chitta by Yoga, impurity of voice by Sanskrit grammar, and impurity of body by Ayurveda.'

Yoga is an essential part of modern civilization. It is considered a global phenomenon and has a substantial base in science. Scientists today admit that the intrinsic organic health of a human being is of prime importance along with the outer development of the body. Indian Rishis and Yogis had realized it thousands of years ago. Yoga, as all of us popularly know, literally means 'union', union with the higher, the divine or whatever name we give. Indian culture has it to remind that the human incarnation is a rare privilege and should not be frittered away in the pursuit of physical pleasures and material gains. Life is a precious gift of God. Vedas proclaim that 'we are sons of divinity'- *Amritasya putrah* (अमृतस्य पुत्राः). Human life, being most perfect creation of God, should be utilized to get rid of worldly bondage. Yoga, for our life, is a potent power for the spiritual regeneration. As a holistic system, it forms an

integral part of Hindu's spiritual practice, Sadhana/Puja and aims at refining the body, the mind and the soul in unison.

Yoga is a practical doctrine that aims at bringing harmony in body, mind and soul. It's a powerful antidote to the stresses of modern day life. Through the practice of Asanas, the physical health is maintained keeping the body cleansed and fit. Its regular practice helps in easy removal of toxins, keeping blood circulation and all internal processes smooth. Pranayama or techniques of breathing exercises have power to calm the mind, increase concentration and bring inner peace. Dhyna, Dharana and Samadhi prepare the path for a life of higher consciousness.

The most fundamental thing about Yoga Sadhana is to be aware of one's inner core where lies the whole secret of one's existence. The Manipur Chakra or the navel region in the human body is said to be a storehouse of jewels. The various forms of Yoga like Ashtanga, Tantra, Mantra, Kundalini, Svava etc. have proved potent powers for people's spiritual regeneration. Tantra is a perfect Yogic discipline which stresses on harnessing the divine energy transcending the boundaries of conventional sexuality.

Moreover, Yoga developed in Hinduism and Buddhism as great spiritual disciplines. The prime objective was to attain consciousness and liberation from ignorance, suffering and the cycle of birth and death. The Vedic literature speaks a lot about Yoga and meditation. Lord Krishna delivered the great message of Yoga through *Bhagavad Gita*. Maharshi Patanjali laid down the aphorisms of Yoga in his

Yogasutras. Lord Shiva delivered the knowledge of Tantra. Master-minds, saints and savants of India concentrated on spiritual aspects from different angles for the well-being of humanity. Most of them stressed for the realization of the Ultimate Truth and deliverance of emancipation eliminating the human sufferings. Yoga is not merely physical and psychological way of life emphasizing harmony of body and mind but it is deeply rooted in Indian philosophy. It is also been laid down in form of aphorisms in one of the six systems (schools of learning among the *Shaddarshanas*) of Indian Philosophy.

Let's not forget that life is an art, a skill, a technique, and, a celebration. Life is not what it appears. It's a miracle. 'The miracle is not to fly in the air, or to walk on the water, but to walk on the earth'. If we just look around we feel that every ordinary thing is suffused with big miracle. In pursuit of acquiring the maximum of temporal things, we remain ignorant of invaluable latent treasure and potential inside the human body. We don't know how to learn it because it's not taught in schools or universities. But definitely Yoga can. In fact Yoga is designed to enable people to begin from there immediate, present state of consciousness and move forward into a state of wholeness, wellbeing and enlightenment. The miracle is that even a new entrant to Yoga is able to shed much physical tension, mental turbulence, and prepare the way for a life of higher consciousness. Yoga is a unique process of harmonizing body, mind, and spirit with the ultimate goal of freeing oneself from Samsara.

Krishna's message is to remain established in Yoga and live in this world consciously doing one's duty to the best of ability without any attachment.

'योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥'

'Arjuna, perform your duties established in Yoga, renouncing attachment, even tempered in success and failure; evenness of temper is called Yoga.' (Bh. Gita, 2.48)

Yoga teacher Carrmine Ireene says:

'The science of Yoga has much to offer to for physical, psychological and physiological benefit. The recession of energy can find a correction through certain mudras and pranayamas while Nadishodhana and Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama can bring integrity, force and harmony, Shavasana and Yoganidra heal the internal organs and repair, restore and renew, making energy available to fight stressful situations.'

The practice of Yoga takes to spiritual evolution. It requires patience for success. Yogeshvara Krishna says:

'Hardly one among thousands of men strives to realize Me; of those striving Yogis, again, some rare one (devoting himself exclusively to Me) knows Me in reality.'

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः॥

(*Bh. Gita*, 7.3)

Yoga should be made a habit for routine practice. It must form an integral part of life style virtually making it a meditative life. Ancient acolytes contemplated the divine not just a couple of hours a couple of times a week but all day long for years to attain mastery. Those folks who enter the path of Yoga and spirituality expect a physiological change to occur with the blink of an eye, or, have high hopes and dreams of great attainment. As the mind takes time to dissolve the blockages it creates, and finding that the path is slow and long, they are discouraged and drop in the midway. Yoga, Spirituality, Cosmic Reality or say Divinity, take years of constant and consistent practice to learn. Treading the Yogic path may be even more tough than those host of professional studies like C.A., M.B.A., Engineering etc., for which one has to do rigorous practice and hard study. In words of spiritual thinker Rev William Wong:

"The path holds great promise, and delivers great knowledge. ...First we must call forth the love to mount it, then the strength to stay on it and finally the wisdom to reach it's summit."

Albert Einstein discovered the law of relativity in a flash of intuitive insight but he was

able to justify his discovery logically only years later. Without devotion, indeed, in the form of deep yearning for the truth, one can't feel the incentive even to try to meditate deeply. 'If you look at yourself as a machine - you have brains, body, everything. But what you call as 'Grace' is the lubrication. Without lubrication you have a great engine but you get stuck at every point,... Devotion would be the easiest way to become receptive to this Grace, so that the process of life becomes graceful. The cunning mind, however, is unable to devote itself to anybody or anything. ...Calculating minds can't be devout. ...Devotion is a quality. Devotion means a certain single-pointedness. ... where there is a devotee, God exists. ...Without devotion there is no profundity in life.' (Sadguru Jaggi Vasudeva)

It is God Who moves the dew to drop, the lotus to bloom, the butterfly to flit and the Sun to rise. That is all the power, all the wisdom, all the love, all the miracle that ever was, is, and will be. Belief in God with pure heart is the first requisite to understand the sacred lores of Tantra, Mantra and Yoga. Indian saints and sages had got the vision of the Supreme in the recess of their heart. They were mastermind and propagated the glory of the Supreme Reality as the sole mission of their life. Worshipping the images of Gods and Goddesses through *Karmakanda* or celebration of rituals, invoking prayers and Mantras, contemplation through various other spiritual modes like Ashtangayoga, Hathayoga, Svarayoga, Pranic Sadhana, Mantra-japa, activation of the subtle channels (*Nadis*), Chakra activation or arousing

Kundalini, whatever it may, the fundamental aim is to have a tranquil mind and get established in the communion of the Supreme Soul (*Paramatman*), *Satchchidananda* reveling in the Supreme Bliss. The following verse by Adi Shankaracharya illustrates the bliss that actually matters.

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।

यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ।।

(*Bhajagovindam*)

God is one and He pervades everywhere, in each and every sentient and non-sentient in this world - *Eko vashi sarvabhutantaratma eko rupam bahudha yah karoti* (एको वशी सर्व भूतान्तरात्मा एको रूपं बहुधा यः करोति). Though path to reach the One Supreme are many in different religious beliefs and tenets, the destination is the same. Its like climbing on the Mt. Everest and the people willing to climb from the countries like Nepal, China, India follow their respective routes. However Love of Divine is rooted deep down in the inner landscape of heart. When the conscience is made pure by constant spiritual practice and inner contemplation, emotions get aroused. Devotion of God springs forth from there sometime in the form of tears also which can be said one common denominator like that of calculus where one can trace the love of divine in all the religions of the world. It is the inner landscape where the realised Yogi has to reach to pinnacle of perfection.

People usually don't want to go for such beliefs in these spiritual affairs and evade it with one or other pretext even denying the existence of

the Supreme Power That upholds the very function of the cosmos. Unbelievers fight over unnecessary rationation and mental jugglery. They want to understand the Supreme, the Infinite Principle, by finite sense organs.

People think that money in the bank, a great love life; and professional success are the keys to a happy and fulfilled life. But even scientists deny it as research leader Dr Bengt Bruelde of Sweden claims money, love and success bring only temporary joy. 'Striving to achieve something by work gives a purpose to life and this is the meaning of true happiness.' There are basically two bodies – Physical and Subtle or Pranic body. What normally happens is that we obviously do every possible effort to sustain the physical body and provide it with food, drink, rest, sex, wealth etc. On the other hand, the Pranic body, that sustains the Physical body by giving it vigour and vitality, remains uncared whereas it is more tender and deserves better care. Supporting the Subtle or Pranic body is like supporting our Being, the Inner Self. The Individual Soul with the actions of preceding births ingrained in the causal body (the mind, intellect and ego) carries along its software and it is the same that has unfoldment in life. 'As you sow so shall you reap' is what the Karma has to rest on.

Practices of Tantra, Mantra and Yoga have still potent powers for the regeneration of Indians continuing right from the days of yore. A Yogi constantly concentrates on expanding all levels of consciousness along the spinal cord to realise the Supreme Reality. In this endeavour of realisation, what a Yogi does is to remove all obstructions in

the flow of *Sushumna Nadi*, the meridian channel, in the spinal cord (*Merudanda*). Swami Rama writes in his book '*Rajayoga: The Path of Eternal Joy*' that people in general are not even aware of that sitting in randomly drains out energy. So one should always sit with spinal cord, neck and back straight. The moment one sits in this pose, energy starts flowing in the spine. Most of the uninitiated persons wallow beneath the *Sushumna*, in the *Muladhara Chakra*, ignorant of the path, being content with the experience of matter through their five sense organs. The mind together with its power to master the sense organs is busy in the mundane world draining out energy continuously. This is how death is occurring to us every moment with the flow of thoughts.

By the practice of Hathayoga, the body becomes lean, the face glows with delight, *Anahatanada* manifests, and eyes are clear, body is healthy, *Bindu* (seminal fluid) is under control and the appetite increases. One should then understand that the Nadis (subtle channels) are purified and success in Hathayoga is approaching.

‘वपुः कृशत्वं वदने प्रसन्नता नादस्फुटत्वे नयने सुनिर्मले ।
अरोगता बिन्दुजयोग्निदीपनं नाडीविशुद्धिर्हठयोगलक्षणम् ॥’
(*Hathayoga Pradipika*, 2.78)

Thus, practices of Hathayoga purify the Prana (vital force) making the mind calm and steady. The ultimate aim is to transcend the Subtle body, the *Pranamaya-kosha*, for then the dormant energies of Chakras and of Kundalini will awaken.

By gradually mastering the Pranayama, Bandhas, Mudras, Yoga-nidra, meditative state is achieved. In Mantra Yoga, chanting of mantras like *Om*, *S'oham* and *Gayatri* have miraculous power for healing.

Tantra, Mantra and Yoga, when put together and understood in their proper perspective can bring miracles in the life of the man. These secrets that expound on the eternal principles of life and living are enshrined in this book. The book teaches that living is an art, a skill, a technique, which has to be learnt by each one of us willing to live a perfect life. However it is disheartening that this precious knowledge is found missing in curriculum of the academic institutions today. Religious and moral preachers more often miss in their discourses, and we are doomed to live mechanical life without the fundamental knowledge of living, and have become victims of stress and strain.

There can't be any denial of the truth that blissful experience of Yoga Sadhana can be attained by constant practice and intense contemplation with patience and a mind resting in tranquility, no matter what path you choose. A believer or non-believer, there is no way out for celebrating the true happiness and purpose of life but constantly be infused with the thought of the higher failing which the mind creates blockage. Attachment for the mundane tires the mind. Once the mind is established in the thought of the Spirit, there is no fatigue and the body is energized to meet any challenge of life. The Sadhaka is sure to experience this Ananda someday or other without fail provided sincerity persists in practice. When the

lights of this indescribable joy appear inside the heart, it gives fabulous experience –

‘न शक्यते वर्णयितुं गिरा तदा स्वयं तदन्तःकरणेन गृह्यते।’

The joy realized by Yoga-sadhana becomes very individual. There is perfect silence inside, all the tumults and rivalries are dissolved with the sifting of attention to higher plane. As such, the science of Yoga has much to offer for our physical, psychological, and physiological benefit. It matters little whether the Sadhaka is a student, a householder, an executive, a writer, a business executive, a public servant or a professional, Yoga has miraculous gifts in store for each and every. Its practice gradually helps a lot to discover greater meaning and purpose of life by unfolding the secrets of inner core, the dwelling place of Divinity.

The sum and substance of this book is, therefore, to project the fact that the path of true worship lies in sublimating one's faculties casting aside all physical and mental associations with material allurements, directing the mind to ascend through the *Sushumna* path to the highest point in the head, the *Brahmarandhra*, joining with the Brahman/Parama Shiva abiding in the *Sahasrara Chakra* (the mythical thousand petalled lotus) thus envisioning the Reality behind all the composite creation – the cause of the worlds – the Supreme Brahman.

This is not something mysterious that this author wants to add to the knowledge of the reader, as is the popular belief with such type of writings among the believers as well as non-

believers. It is a practical science what one can do and see for himself/herself. Thus Tantra, Mantra, and Yoga is an integrated discipline of Integral Yoga that can bring us not only complete health and happiness - a combination of spiritual, mental and physical fitness but also prepare within us right kind of interior to welcome the Supreme Effulgence rejuvenating and enlightening every cell in our body. This is how the infinite bliss can be experienced from the all-pervading Infinite *Sachchidananda* alone as enunciated in the Vedas - 'Yo vai bhuma tat sukham' (यो वै भूमा तत्सुखम्) and 'Anando brahmeti vyajanat' (आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्).

Furthermore, its the book which contains holistic techniques of healing that a spiritual seeker would like to go through not merely for the purpose of Sadhana but for necessary guidance and its philosophical purport. It is then that one may develop one's consciousness and unfold the infinite energy, the fragrance, the beauty and the bliss. The culmination of complete Yoga can be perceived by the fact that the highest Yogi looks on all as one, on the analogy of his own self, and looks upon the joy and sorrow of all with a similar eye.

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।

सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥

Briefly, this state of equilibrium is the main objective of Yoga Sadhana which can be brought by constant practice in a disciplined way. The most emphatic message of Hindu scriptures is to arise and wake up to the clarion call to secure proper

guidance and obtain instruction - *Uttishthata, jagrata prapya varaannibodhata*, (उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत). Time is the most precious thing in one's life. Don't be lethargic even for a moment. Make the best use of each and every single minute. Saint poet Kabir warned to be aware of it in life:

रात गंवाई सोयके दिवस गवायौ खाय।

हीरा जनम अमोल था कौड़ी बदले जाय।।

(O Man, you wasted night by sleep and day by eating. You had been given an invaluable life but you are departing the world for no worth at all.)

The burning need is what Acharya Chanakya sums up in the following verse:

रात्रिर्गमिष्यति भविष्यति सुप्रभातं

भास्वानुदेष्यति हसिष्यति पंकजश्रीः।

इत्थं विचिन्तयति कोशगते द्विरेफे

हा हन्त हन्त नलिनीं गज उज्जहार।।

A bumble bee that was enjoying the makaranda (pollen) of lotus flower got enveloped into it in the evening. It thinks that I will enjoy this honey throughout the night, the night will go and there will be a beautiful morning, with sunrise, the lotus will bloom again and I will be free. But it is sad that an elephant comes into the tank even before the sunrise and having uprooted the lotus plant places it into mouth together with the bumble bee.

So, be brave enough to listen to the call of your heart and recognize the Divinity. You won't be satisfied from less than that - तद्प्राप्य तदेवावलोक्य. A Yogi cautions: 'You can have all the money in the world, all the power and the prestige possible, and still you will remain empty - unless your divine nature flowers, unless you become a thousand-petalled lotus, unless your divinity is revealed to you, you can never be content'. Life is slipping fast by every moment, and each moment gone is gone for ever. So arise and awake this very moment and start the spiritual practice with sense of detachment postponing all preoccupations (कोटिं त्यक्त्वा हरिं भजेत्) and see for yourself the kind of happiness you derive out of it, the sort of vibration that the body experiences throughout the day, the kind of feeling that makes your mind sing and dance, and the kind of refreshing energy, inner tranquility and cheerfulness that your body and face reflect.

The Holistic Health

India is the only place in the world, where people have devoted their talents in a concentrated effort to seek the real purpose of life for fulfillment and bliss. '....It was more than a century ago that Swami Vivekananda set foot on the American soil and planted the seeds of integrated vision of scientific spirituality in the U.S. ...The seminal contribution made by that Noble Swamiji has also been contemplated over the years by other seers of India who came to these shores to highlight and spread the ethos of the pluralistic Hindu culture and its religious heritage based on freedom of enquiry, universal relevance and the pursuit of truth.' (Sw. Jyotirmayananda Puri, *Dharma Summit*: 2005)

Things are changing fast with rapid decline in people's attitude towards India's traditional values. Overpowered by inertia (*Tamas* - irregularity and indiscriminate) people live with false vanities, unhealthy habits, negative thought processes, and misconceptions and, as a result, get bonded to the wheel of miseries in life. By coming closer and closer to the world of objects, feelings and thoughts through their body, mind and intellect,

they prepare a network of selfishness and sufferings. Unfulfilled desires create a havoc inside the body and the chattering of mind never stops. With the desire for possessing more and more a lot of stress and strain is generated finally turning into a whirlpool of miseries. Today, the general health is badly aggravated by the inimical tendencies like fear, anxiety, ego, anger, self-centredness, aversion, jealousy and ill-will latent within the system. With the running of our breath in wrong direction we are simply whiling away our days on this planet as death is sure to come. We are dying every moment as our breath is already counted. Even science has it to say that thousands of our cells die every moment. Even the whole of the body skin gets replaced in fourteen days. The whole of blood in one's body dries out and gets automatically replaced after 120 days. On the other hand, Scriptures aver that the individual soul is immortal, it never dies.

A larger component of Śadhana or spiritual practice is aimed at preventing leakage of energy. The *Yamas* of the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali are observances and attitudes that aim at preventing energy from seeping out. One of biggest sources of energy leaks in negative emotions. 'Making a habit of grumbling inwardly, wallowing in self-pity, brooding over unhappy incidents, repetitive thoughts loops that maintain one in a state of low-level anxiety – all contribute to negative emotion. Overcoming negative emotion is a large part of spiritual practice,' says a Yogi.

Health is the first requisite for survival on earth. Sanskrit poet Kalidasa wrote: 'शरीरमाद्यं खलु

धर्म साधनम्' – a healthy body is foremost means to Dharma. Gandhiji used to say: 'The body is a dwelling place of God. Its protection should be our top priority.' 'A healthy body is a guest chamber for the soul. A sick body is a prison.' (Bacon) Scriptures ordain for safeguarding the body leaving all other engagements aside - सर्वमन्यत् परित्यज्य शरीरमनुपालयेत्. The Vedic order for human values (Purushartha) are: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha which according to Ayurveda can be possible if the health is sound. A disease free body is the first necessity for the fulfillment of the *Purushartha-chatushtaya* (four human values): 'धर्मार्थकाममोक्षणामारोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम्।' (Ayurveda)

It is said that blessed is a person who enjoys a disease-free body, a house containing essential commodities, a virtuous spouse, and an obedient son.

पहला सुख निरोगी काया, दूजा सुख घर में हो माया।
तीजा सुख सुलक्षणा नारी, चौथा सुख पुत्र आज्ञाकारी।।

During the early days of childhood parents caution children to care for their health. The very quintessence of life lies there in the precious quotes, such as, 'Health is wealth', 'The wealth of a nation is the health of its people', '... if health is lost something lost, if character is lost everything is lost' etc. etc. 'A sound body is a first class thing, a sound mind is a even better thing, but the thing that counts for most in the individual as in the nation is character, the sum of those qualities

which make a man a good man and a woman a good woman.'

As a child we hardly ever follow these useful remarks about life, though the formative years of childhood are the very foundations on which the structure of the entire life rests. We rather misuse our health as youth, and it is only in the middle age that we get concerned for health and try to regain it desperately.

What is health (*Swasthya*)? What are the healthy and unhealthy states of the body? Self-control (*Atma-Samyama*) is the first requisite that Indian traditions stress on for holistic health. *Svastha* (स्वस्थ) is *sva+stha* i.e., one who is established in one's own blissful Soul - स्वस्मिन् तिष्ठतीति स्वस्थः and does not need any other external medicinal cure. Let us see what ancient physician sage Sushruta writes:

समदोषाः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः ।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥

(One whose *Tridoshas* (*kapha, vata and pitta*) are in balance, gastric fire (digestive power) is moderate, the *Saptadhatus* bearing the body (*rasa, rakta, mamsa, meda, asthi, majja, and virya*) are in right proportion, regular discharge of urine and defecation is on, all the ten senses (ear, nose, eye, skin, tongue, anus, generative organ, hand, foot and tongue), mind, and their Lord Atman also are in happy state, such a person is called healthy.)

This definition is very scientific and accurate and for its fulfillment three things have been basically determined for the maintenance of health. These are: 1. Food, 2. Sleep, and 3. *Brahmacharya*. Yogeshavara Krishna says in *Bh. Gita* (6.17):

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्त स्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

'Yoga, which rids one of woe, is accomplished by him who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleep and wakefulness.'

Food is the basic requirement for good health. That is why Indian scriptures instruct to take only *Sattvik* (pious) food.

यथाखाद्यतेऽन्नं तथा सम्पद्यते मनः ।

यथा पीयते वारि तथा निगद्यते वचः ॥

'As grains (food) one takes so is one's mind. As water one drinks so is one's speech.'

आहारशुद्धौ सत्वशुद्धिः सत्वशुद्धौ ध्रुवा स्मृतिः ।

स्मृतिलब्धे सर्वग्रन्थीनां विप्रमोक्षः ॥

By taking pure and moderate food not only one's body is made pure, good and free of diseases but all the activities are brought to be good and steady.

Brahmacharya is also the most vital aspect for good life. By Brahmcharya one should not consider that it is merely the observance of celibacy or restraint from sex. Brahmacharya is in fact a state of disciplined life and the person is required to revel in the Brahman (God) by leading a disciplined life.

प्रासादस्य विनिर्माणे मूलभित्तिः अपेक्षते।

तथा जीवनस्यादौ ब्रह्मचर्यमपेक्षते।।

Paramahansa Yogananda holds three states of an unhealthy body: (i) Physical, (ii) Psychical, and (iii) Spiritual. The *Physical* body may be unhealthy due to different types of toxic conditions, infectious diseases, and decompositions. The *Psychic* health may be affected by the inimical tendencies like fear, anxiety, anger and other emotional problems, and problems of *Spiritual* health can be attributed to one's ignorance of God's relation to man. The disease of ignorance is actually the most fatal. If a person dispels ignorance, the causes of physical, psychical and spiritual diseases also get eliminated.

'Every human being is the author of his own health and disease', said Lord Buddha. When talking about health William Londen holds:

'To ensure good health: eat lightly, breathe deeply, live moderately, cultivate cheerfulness, and maintain an interest in life'.

Let's look at the following beautiful Nursery rhyme quoted by Wayne Fields:

*'The best six doctors anywhere
And no one can deny it
Are sunshine, water, rest and air,
Exercise and diet.
These six will gladly you attend
If only you are willing
Your mind they'll ease
Your will they'll mend
And charge you not a shilling.'*

Efforts to remedy different types of pains by the limited power of physical treatments often bring disappointment. That is why Spirit is said to be the main source. If true remedy is desired, it has to be sought and justified at the level of Spirit. Body, mind and intellect have little to do with remedying your disease because you are not the body, you are not the mind, nor are you the intellect. You are Spirit. Unless and until you recognize this truth, life is of no avail, and, you will continue taking birth and death suffering the pangs of Samsara. It is only by the infinite power of the spiritual treatment that the unhealthy states of a person's body, mind and soul can be cured for ever. That Infinite Power has to be sought in the God That dwells in the very core of your heart. There is a beautiful verse in Sanskrit that unfolds the truth that if a person is ailing and his body has become invalid, Ganga water is then the medicine and Narayana is the Vaidya (doctor). (Spiritual masters advise the ailing ones to drink a lot of

Ganga water – any pure water if Ganga water is not available, and chant the name 'Narayana').

‘शरीरे जर्जरीभूते रोगग्रस्ते कलेवरे ।
 औषधं जाह्नवीतोयं वैद्यो नारायणो हरिः ॥’

Everything is possible by the will of God. One should therefore, have firm willingness for Self-realization and this must continue until the ultimate goal i.e., the *sumum bonum* of life is achieved. Intrinsically one should continue strengthening one's belief in the omnipotence of God without entertaining any doubt at all. Mystics and saints view life with a higher angle and recommend that we should live each moment with full trust in God. 'Trust in the Lord requires a conviction that there is an unseen power who created this world and who created us. No matter what traumatic situation you are trapped in, the cosmic law is so consistently designed that you will emerge victorious sooner or later. A career of rectitude has some times rewards for the mere consciousness of virtue. It means having knowledge that our soul has been created by God, and its journey is under God's will. It requires conviction that God has sent us into the world for a purpose and our destiny is to fulfil that purpose....It means certain events that happen to us are also preordained by God, and that what happens is already laid out for us,' says Sant Rajinder Singhji.

We normally live with the perception that health (*Svasthya*) is the maintenance of a disease-free state of body but this is a distorted definition

as the concept does not suffice to define health in entirety and the definition of health goes much beyond this. According to the World Health Organization, 1948: 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.' The Japanese spiritual master Lao Tzu defines health in a rather broader perspective: 'Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure. Confidence is the greatest friend. Non-being is the greatest joy.' To have a robust body and no disease at all does not necessarily mean that one is healthy. The fact is that the present definition of health delimits health to body only whereas the integrated personality of an individual combines the body, the mind, the intellect and the soul. A man of robust body and beautiful physique overtaken by the agitations of mind can't be termed healthy. During the Mahabharata war Arjuna is dejected and he denies to go ahead for fight. Krishna's message to Arjuna is to arise and be ready for war otherwise you will be sinful (नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि) is virtually a call for all of us. All the scriptures have it to proclaim - '*Uttishthata jagrata prapya varannibodhata*' (उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत) - 'Arise, awake and get ready for the pious duty assigned to you. Otherwise mental agitations are bound to perish you. There is no midway, either tread the path of Yoga or enlightenment to revel in blissful experience of the divine or perish in the trammels of agitations.'

Designed by the sages and savants of India in the days of yore, Yoga sadhana is the most suitable path, which can increase our physical

stability, emotional vitality, intellectual wisdom and spiritual bliss. Nothing can beat the aura and the rich fragrance that exudes from Yoga as a natural legacy of the sub-continent's abounding tradition. Through Yoga we can achieve a sense of wholeness in our life. It allows us to find an inner peace 'that is not ruffled and riled by the endless stresses and struggles of life.' The practice of Yoga gets us a new kind of freedom that we might have not known existed. In the book '*Iyengar's Light on Life*' he addresses the role that Yoga postures and breathing techniques play in our search for wholeness, the internal and external obstacles that keep us from progressing along the path and Yoga can help us live in harmony with the world around us.

Observances made by Chris Widener appear to be quite pertinent in this respect: 'You need to tend to your spiritual, emotional and physical health or you will crash. If you don't take time for yourself, both inwardly and outwardly, your body will catch up with you. ...We need to tend the fires of spirit and mind while keeping our physical bodies turned for success as well. If not, our bodies break down.'

Good health of body and mind both is a prerequisite for successful endeavors in Yoga practice. It is very difficult for a feeble and weak person to attain progress in Yoga smoothly. Upanishads aver that the Atman is not available to a person devoid of physical strength - '*Na'yam atma balaheenena labhyah.*' (नाड्यमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः।) Thus the aspirant of Yoga and spiritual seeker must be aware of the fact that they are well

at maintaining a sound mind and sound body for spiritual evolution.

Development is a much abused word these days – it is used to refer to material development, excluding the spiritual or holistic aspects. Development is equated with a culture of more – more GDP, production, sales, profits and salaries. It is a greed-based economic order migrating from the need-based one, said Gandhiji. Development relates to an individual's complete growth, not fractional. The four pursuits of Hindu thought: *Dharma*, *Kama*, *Artha* and *Moksha* were recognized for an individual's total development. *Kama* (desire) and *Artha* (wealth) are valid insofar as they are moderated and guided by *Dharma* or moral values which render sustainable and holistic development. It matters little that you are driving the car of your material life at a speed of 100 kmph but in reverse direction. On the other hand, take it for granted that an individual treading the path of spirituality along with the material life even at the speed of an ant will take him to destination some day or other. Maybe in another birth. Swami Ramakrishna used to say: 'Add 1 to all your activities of the world, then all the zeroes will add value to it.' This 1 is the realization of Atman/Paramatman in your life and then all the zeroes of material activities will be valuable. Our ancestors did not live for the enjoyment of physical pleasures of life. They transcended body, mind and intellect and established themselves in the blissful natural state of the Being, the inner self or Atman. This is verily the original state of one's true Being, the very existence that is termed perfectly

Svastha, or say of that, '*Svastha*' is '*stha*' in '*sva*' i.e., to get established in the Atman.

‘मिला राम मुझमें अब मैं राम में हूँ।
न कोई आरजू है न कोई जुस्तजू है।।’

Krishna therefore cautions in Gita to follow '*Svadharmā*' the basic Dharma of the Being, and not bother about '*Para Dharma*', the Dharma that belongs to some one else. It is so because the Dharma that keeps you away from your Atman is very fatal - '*Svadharme nidhanam shreyah paradharmo bhayavaha*' (स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः।). Then, there is *Svartha*, i.e., 'selfishness' which has badly maddened the minds of people today, particularly the youngsters. This is not the kind of self-centredness that has come to pervade the society polluting thoughts of virtue and purity of conscience throwing them in the race of hoarding pelf and prosperity by hook or by crook. *Svartha* is to live a purposeful life identifying oneself with the '*Sva*', the Atman. Thus, the terms like *Svasthya* (स्वास्थ्य), *Svadharmā* (स्वधर्म), and *Svartha* (स्वार्थ) should be grasped in proper perspective and dealt with accordingly.

There is no guarantee to health even after the best efforts of the physicians and medical experts. Each and every disease can't be cured by medicines and operational practices. Medicines and chemicals have effect on the cells of body only on its external physical structure. They can't at all transform the life-element of cells or the inner atomic structure. In several conditions the disease

can't be cured until the God's power of preventing the disease does not remove the imbalance caused to the life-force (प्राणशक्ति) of the body.

Ancient sages and savants of this land studied the infinity of the inner space and made dazzling discoveries. The sublime knowledge of Yoga emerged due to the acme of spiritual evolution of those saints and Acharyas of ancience. They taught us the real purport of life through Yoga Sadhana and they themselves lived Yogic life in perfect contentment, peace and bliss. The whole of human race is, in fact, running after to get peace of mind. But it cannot be achieved from accumulation of wealth.

Mental peace can be enjoyed by the person who has vanquished his ego, who has subdued his desires, and who has understood the fact that the world is a creation of five elements. Or one whose discretion has awakened to the eternal truth that it is the Brahman, the Atman, the Infinite Sovereignty transcending name and form that can deliver mental peace. No spiritual growth can be predicted unless and until peace dawns in one's psyche. Peace brings the sense of detachment, from detachment awakens one's inner power or the *Atma-Shakti*. What they implied from health was, therefore, the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being of an individual. With the evolution of consciousness in an individual, the onslaughts of life as happiness and misery, respect and disrespect, *Rupa* (form), *Rasa* (taste), *Gandha* (smell), *Sparsha* (touch) etc. cannot impress upon the mind.

With the practice of Yoga first the body becomes free of diseases and the breath is normal. According to reputed cardiologist Dr Naresh Trehan: 'Whether it is exercise, Yoga or meditation, they all are excellent stress busters. In today's stressful life, it is very important to practice any form of distressing activity. I do Vipassana and other forms of breathing exercises... Today I believe that spiritualism centres all of us. There is something high up there and we all function in relation to that being.'(TOI) When the fickleness of mind gradually calms down, a sort of inner peace and silence develops. 'The essence of the value of silence is to free ourselves from influences other than those from God. Silence then can open ourselves to God,' writes Richard B. Patterson (TOI). Yoga is instrumental in establishing this silence that even makes one to be a spectator, a witness to the happenings of life. Maharshi Patanjali, the exponent of Yoga, gives most emphasis on the manifestations of the *Chitta* or the mind. When the mind and thoughts are in harmony with the body, the inner joy is experienced - *Mana ki taranga maar de basa ho gaya bhajan.* (मन की तरंग मार दे बस हो गया भजन।)

'True silence is the rest for the mind. It is to the spirit what sleep is to the body - nourishment and refreshment'. 'The tragedy of life is not that it ends so soon, but that we wait so long to begin it,' observes W.M.Lewis. It is with the Yoga that we start a new life. In fact, Yoga was the only way to achieve all that and to make it sure for today, yoga is the only spiritual discipline to integrate body,

mind and soul paving the path of perfect and peaceful living.

It is heartening to know that the rising cases of spondilitis, hypertension, insomnia, nausea, chronic headache, coronary malfunctions, back pain, computer syndrome, and dry eyes among youngsters working in India's BPOs have prompted health ministry to undertake its first official study how yoga centres can help employees cope with stress and long working hours. According to Dr Kasliwal, 'Youngsters working in call centers are thronging hospitals, complaining of health problems, resulting directly from their work schedules. Pills are not always a solution. Yoga, during work will definitely work.' Shri Ishwar Baravaraddi, Director of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga spearheading the project said, 'It is believed that 20-minutes of meditation is equivalent to four hours of sleep. So those working all nights will get relief from Yoga and meditation.'
(TOI)

Efforts of Indian saints are going on and days are not far when even non-believers will come on terms with these spiritual masters and stop denying the existence of the Supreme Power. Recently Shri Shri Ravi Shankar, the premier of the Art of Living Foundation, was in Russia and he signed a memorandum of understanding with the head of the Krasnoyark State Medical Academy for collaborative research and healthcare initiatives. The Foundation has been active in Russia for the last few years, providing its stress elimination programmes to people from all walks of life. The Left bastion has thus opened for the art of living.

2

The Human System

The human system/body is an ensemble of the Physical (gross) body, Subtle (mental and energy) body, and the Astral body (the inner self or the domain of the soul). The existence of the three bodies is an integral part of the existence of any living being on this earth. These are like the confluence of three holy rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, being the interwoven segments of a single individual self. Yoga is of very little use, if studied theoretically. Merely books can't serve the purpose of a Sadhaka and he has to seek the guidance of some expert teacher. However an inefficient Guru may put one in jeopardy and there is every possibility of getting deprived of the real purport of Yoga, e.g., a Pundit without any knowledge of Materia Medica will explain *Kantakari* as *Kantakasyarih* or 'an enemy of thorns', though it is the name of medicinal plant. See that the methods followed by the founders of the system of Yoga and Spirituality and pursued thereafter by their followers, have been wisely done and are kept secret pregnant with deep esoteric sense. That is sublime knowledge and it can be given to a deserving person only. Shiva, the Lord of Yoga,

has cautioned in the Scriptural texts that the teachings of Yoga and Tantra should be imparted to a person according to his level of understanding and spiritual awareness. All men are not equally fitted to receive the instructions on equal terms. People are born with their different level of mental and physical abilities according to their past Karmas. From hundreds and thousands men hardly a few can know me in real sense.

‘मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः॥’

(*Bh.Gita*, 7.3)

When we talk about Yoga, it is not the Yoga that the people generally understand and normal perception that they carry about it. Merely doing certain Asanas and a little bit of breathing practices will never serve the purpose of Yoga, and it will rather loose the real sense of the spiritual discipline. Normally people know that the whole purpose of Yoga is to practice certain Asanas or postures to make the body free from diseases. Even in the present scenario such type of Yoga has assumed big popularity among the masses and it is widely practiced by the men and women alike.

Though the constitution of human body has got an uniform basis and it functions accordingly yet the state of awareness differs from individual to individual. The practice of Yoga therefore has to be determined according to the requirement of an individual. First of all the level and the capacity of the doer have to be assessed, for example, a student of class 1 is asked to study the books of

that standard only. Or say for it, the preparatory stage is to be cleared and the ground and basis for Yoga is made ready initially to enter the realm of this discipline. Will anybody like to sow seeds in an unfertile ground? A gardener willing to sow seeds has to prepare the soil for it: first removing the weeds from the ground, cleaning it properly, watering the ground and putting manure into it. He cannot straightaway go for sowing the seed that will bring him no crop at all.

Thousands of years ago Maharshi Patanjali gave a systematic pattern to Yoga by illustrating the actual sequence how it could be learnt. He gave stress on the *Ashtangayoga*, the eight limbs of Yoga that function as a channel reinforcing each limb in the said sequential order.

Let us now take for certain that Yoga is something very great Sadhana, something of sublime taste and bliss, something so deep that can be known or realized by plumbing the world within our own system, the body, the mind, the intellect and the heart. Sw. Vivekananda says: 'You may build a temple in which to worship God, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.' Even Shankaracharya says that the human body (Deha) is a temple (Devalaya) wherein resides the Atman (Dehi) - 'देहो देवालयं प्रोक्तः देही नित्य निरंजनः' (*Deho devalayama proktah dehi nitya niranjanah.*) While practicing Yoga one should be aware of the fact that every individual is like a deep fathomless ocean with invaluable treasures hidden within his body. People are generally not aware of the energy, the powers, the forces lurking behind that frame. Swamiji says: 'Millions of years

have passed since man first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested. You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite powers and blessedness.'

Before embarking on the path of spiritual journey or inner kingdom, one should be aware of the facts that the Physical or the corporeal body is not the only body that we have to live in this world and enjoy it. Ancestors, who were masterminds and great scientists, did a lot of researches and experiments to explore and realize the ultimate truth about life. They meditated in the sylvan surroundings of the Himalayas for years together, dived deep into their heart and discovered valuable treasures. Besides, what is there in the world that we see, they unfolded several techniques to know the secrets of the inner world. (The word 'secret' though occurs at several places in the books of Tantra and Yoga, it actually connotes that 'secret is some thing that can be attained by spiritual practice done with much perseverance).

We generally know the Gross or Physical body (or the Annamaya Kosha) and we stick with the presumption that we have to support, nourish and build this body. The whole of activities that we do remain confined to this thought until we stretch out our vision and look in broader perspective.

The human body is said to have been composed of three bodies - (1) The Gross or Physical body, (2) The Sukshma or Subtle body, and (3) The Causal or the Cosmic body. These three bodies function as a vehicle for the Inner Self or *Purusha*. We normally experience the Physical

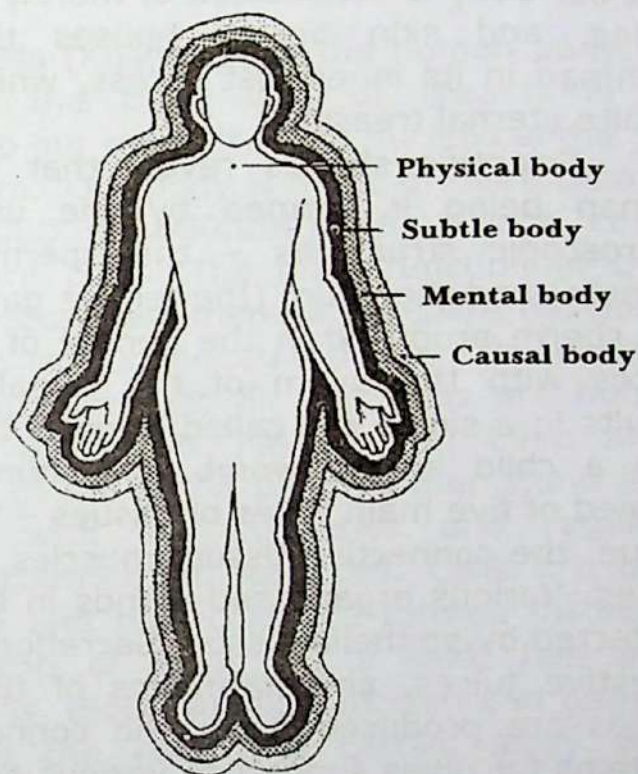
body that originates in the sexual union of the male and the female, and, hence, we can say that the Gross body is a parental heritage. Close to the inner of this physical body lies the Subtle body or the *Sukshma Sharira* which is the pure and energetic basis of the Physical body wherein exist the astral centres or the seven Chakras, with the force of Kundalini at the base allowing their full activation.

The Causal body or the *Karana Sharira* is another Subtle body within the *Sukshma Sharira* which is also called *Anandamaya Kosha* (bliss sheath) containing the three energies of the *Gunas* in dormant form - 1. *Sattva* (harmony), 2. *Rajas* (activity), and 3. *Tamas* (inertia or matter). These *Gunas* are actually related to the Prakriti of the Purusha or the energy of the Paramatman, and since the Jiva gets manifested through Prakriti, these *Gunas* are passed on to the mindstuff (*Chitta*) and the senses are involved in the world dominated by these three colours of *Gunas*. The Jiva, therefore, gets shrouded under the layers of these colours and experiences the world under their impact. Thus *Gunas* function under the Maya Shakti of the Ishvara and the Jiva is clouded by this. In this process of covering, the Jiva is not able to reflect on the Ishvara tattva. Even the intellect, the ego, the mind and senses are clouded and the Jiva functions in utter ignorance (*avidya*). As a result we make contact with the Samsara with our senses and the totality of our behavior is executed by the physical body. It is forgotten that there is some higher Reality transcending the joys and sorrows of the world.

All of these bodies link one another through the Chakras or energy vortices, five major and five minor Pranic fields of energy from 72,000 Nadis. All the nadis (channels) emanate from the Muladhara, the support of the Subtle body. Let us first try to understand these different bodies clearly in the following manner:

I. GROSS BODY (Corporeal Body)

The human being is said to be the rare and most valuable life among other creatures on earth-



The Human Body

'सर्वेषां जन्तूनां मनुष्यत्वं हि दुर्लभम्' '*Sarvesham jantunam manushyatvam hi durlabham*' and there is nothing greater than the human being - 'न मनुष्यात् श्रेष्ठतरं हि किञ्चित्' (*Mahabharata*). It is the best creation of nature. Mahatma Gandhi called the human body a *Chintamani* i.e., crest jewel which can confer anything that is desired of it, and if one could recognize it, one could recognize the whole world. Let us not be disappointed with the thought that God has not given us anything but be happy to have got this marvelous and mysterious instrument, i.e., human body. Let us not assume that our body is constituted of merely flesh, blood, bones, and skin but it houses the Supreme Brahman in its innermost recess, wherein lies the infinite eternal treasure.

Scientific studies reveal that the body of human being is formed by the union of two microscopic structures - the sperm (the male gamete) and the ovum (the female gamete). When the sperm produced in the genital of male parent unites with the ovum of the female parent, it results in a single cell called 'zygote' that develops into a child in the womb. The human body is formed of five main types of tissues - the epithelial tissue, the connective tissue, muscles, nerves, and bones. Various organs and glands in the body are protected by epithelial tissue. Secretions like saliva, digestive juices, and hormones of the endocrine glands are produced here. The connective tissue contains fat gives support to various organs. There are about 500 muscles which give shape to the body and the strength of the body depends upon their development.

Bones

There are more than 200 bones in the body that shape the body and protect its delicate parts. The backbone is composed of a chain of different pieces called the 'vertebrae'. Vertebral column has 33 vertebrae, the first 7 in the neck called cervical, the next 12 dorsal, 5 lumbar, below 5 sacrum and the formed by 4 is coccyx.

Cells (Koshikas)

The cells (Koshikas) in the human body, the smallest, is the basic unit of life. It is not perceptible to our eyes. It has a nucleus and a jilly-like cytoplasm. 'Our body is made of more than ten trillion (10,000,000,000,000) cells. Each cell is living. We are cells.' The main function of these cells is to procure raw material, prepare the goods, and work on the undesirable things. These are so related to our life that till new cells are born in place of the dead cells, life goes on. Even all the laboratories of the world put together stand in no comparison with the subtleties and regulated processes occurring in each cell. Cells are dying continuously and new cells are formed instead of them. A drop of blood, it is said, has about 5,00,000 cells. Blood supplies oxyzen and essential nutrients to the cells and carries away waste products. Death of cells testifies that we are also dying every moment. Cell are: 1. Mitrochodrion, 2. Nuclear membrane, 3. Necleoplasm, 4. Vacuole, 5. Centrosome.

Death can be called a continuous process in our life. But man is scared at the thought of death and makes all possible efforts to secure life and evade death. Osho, in one of his book says that he teaches death 'मैं मृत्यु सिखाता हूँ' (*Main mrityu sikhata hoon*), which, in fact shows that that is not the physical death but the death of the one's ego which is the main impediment in the path of one's spiritual upliftment. The death of ego leads to attain the level of higher consciousness and it is the stage when a person is free from the fear of death of the Physical body and human cells survive.

Tissue (Utaka) & Organ

The group of cells is called Tissue which function a definite type of work. When different tissues functioning differently come together to form such a part of body recognizable by its shape and function, is called organ eg., brain, liver, etc.

THE SYSTEM (PRANALI)

There are various groups of organs which function in the human body in co-ordination with one another like the digestive, circulatory, excretory, respiratory, endocrine, and nervous systems. We have nine types of systems that function in our body. This can be briefly introduced here for the benefit of Yoga practitioners.

1. Digestive System (*Pachan Pranali*)

This system functions to distribute the ^{Rasa} The to the entire body when the food is taken. are parts of digestive system in the human body, ^{um,} mouth, pharynx, foodpipe, stomach, duode ^{ires} small and large intestines. The body req ^{and} carbohydrates, proteins, fats, mineral salts ^{ing.} vitamins for energy and its smooth run ^{ie} Cereals, potatoes and sugar are the main sour ^{dried} carbohydrates. We get proteins from pulses, ^{fat} nuts, eggs, meat, fish, milk, etc. The body get ^S fat from meat, eggs, fish and milk products.

2. Circulatory System (*Rakta-sanchar Pranali*)

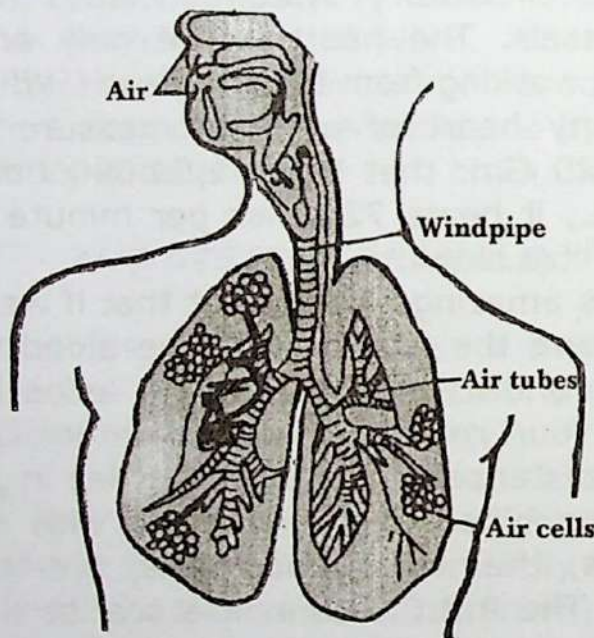
The circulatory system includes heart and blood vessels. The heart is the only organ that continues working from birth to death. What to talk of this tiny heart of a fistful measure weighing around 120 Gm. that beats 1,04,000 times in 24 hours, i.e., it beats 72 times per minute pumping out 7200 litre blood.

It is amazing to point out that if we combine and measure the length of all the blood vessels it will cover a distance of 1,00,000 miles that may equal to four rounds of the Equator. Our blood travels a distance of 168,80,000 miles in 24 hours. The human blood has 90% water with red blood corpuscles, the white blood cells, and the blood platelets. The R.B.C.s contain a scarlet - coloured substance - haemoglobin - which carries oxygen. The circulatory system thus supplies nutrients to

various parts of the body and collects waste materials from them.

3. Respiratory System (*Shvasan Pranali*)

The respiratory system forms the nose, the larynx, the wind pipe, its two branches and the lungs. The main function of this system is to provide oxygen to the body. Life is based on the energy received from the food we eat, particularly the carbohydrates, fats and proteins. Oxygen is the most important thing that the body requires for its survival. One can survive for a few days without food and water but can't live without oxygen even for a few minutes. The body produces carbon dioxide in the process of oxidation and it is very poisonous gas and should be removed from the body as early as possible.



Respiratory System

It is amazing to discover that we breathe 28040 times in 24 hours. As for the blood vessels that our liver contains they are said to be 300 Arabs. When we inhale air into the body through the nose, it goes to larynx, then to the wind pipe from where it is divided into the left lung and the right one. Then there are cells surrounded by capillaries through which the blood flows from heart to lungs, and back again to the heart. Lungs are formed of elastic tissues that expand and contract during respiration.

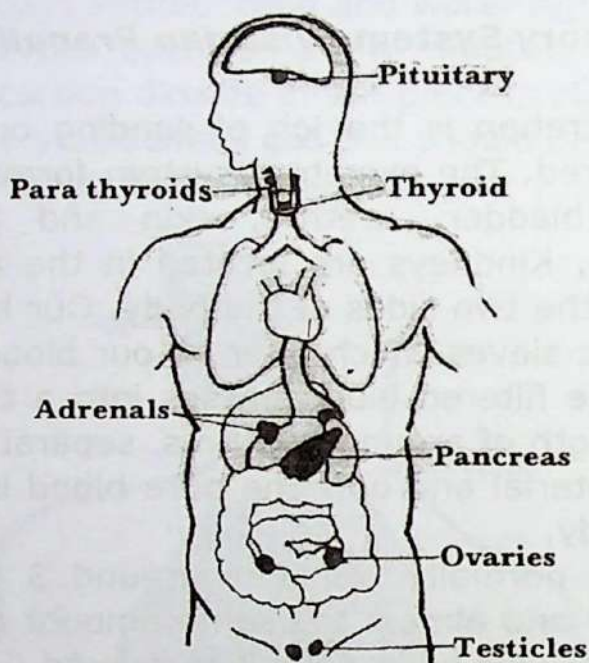
4. Excretory System (*Visarjan Pranali*)

Excretion is the job of sending out what is not required. The excretory system forms kidneys, ureters, bladder, urethra, skin and the large intestines. Kindneys are located in the abdominal cavity of the two sides of the body. Our kidney has got 10 lac sieves which filter all our blood daily 30 times. The filtered blood passes into a thin vessel of the length of around 300 Kms. separating all the waste material and only the pure blood is supplied to the body.

We normally consume around 3 pounds of food daily and almost the same amount of liquid is also taken. Our body detoxifies around 6-7 pounds of foreign material daily. The digestive system functions automatically digesting the food and detoxifying the foreign material from the body and simultaneously fighting with the attack of external diseases and replacing the old and dying cells and tissues.

5. Endocrine System (*Granthi Pranali*)

The endocrine system is formed of glands like the pituitary, the pineal (both in the head), the thyroid, the parathyroids (both in the neck), the thymus (in the thoracic cavity), adrenals, and the sex glands (in the abdominal cavity). The hormones produced in the endocrine glands mix directly in the blood flowing through them and are made available to the different organs and tissues of the body. These are necessary for proper development of the body.

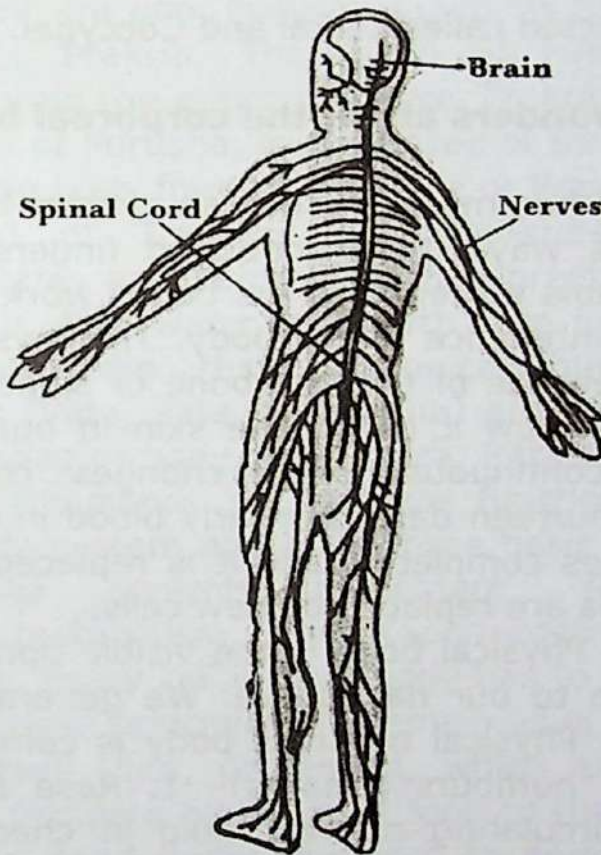


Endocrine System

6. Nervous System (*Snayu Pranali*)

The nervous system is the main controlling system and has two main divisions - central

nervous system and the autonomous nervous system. The central nervous system has the brain, the medulla, the spinal cord, and the nerves. The functions of the brain in the human body are superb and it can't be compared with even the most sophisticated computer of the world. It weighs around one and half Kg. and it is divided into four parts. It has got memorizing capability of innumerable things. It preserves several scenes too. It can keep in memory about 10,000 smells. Our brain utilizes about 70,00,000 tiny parts daily. Cells of the brain number around 55,00,000.



Nervous System

A scientist once said that if we install a laboratory in a 27-storeyed building it will not suffice to spread the parts of the human mind. Notwithstanding the development of scientific researches today, the mind still remains a great mystery for the scientists of the world.

Spine is also an extension of the brain. Its length is about 45 cm. It has 33 vertebrae. It has five points where from it bends. Upper part of the neck is Cervical containing 7 vertebrae. Below it in the back is Thoracic with 12 vertebrae. In the waist, there is Lumbar with 5 vertebrae. Then there are 2 vertebrae in the lower back near anus region interconnected called sacral and Coccygel.

Certain wonders about the corporeal body

God has made the human system in a most miraculous way. Our hands and fingers contain great curable powers and the bones work wonders in the maintenance of the body. The mystery and divine relevance of the backbone or spine is great and Yogis know it better. The skin in our body is changing continuously and it changes completely in every fourteen days. Similarly blood in our body too changes completely and it is replaced by new blood. Cells are replaced by new cells.

The Physical body is the visible body that is perceptible to our naked eye. We generally know the visible Physical or Gross body is composed of the seven humours (Dhatus)- 1. *Rasa Dhātu* or Plasma (circulating nutrient fluid in channels for nutrition), 2. *Rakta Dhātu* or Blood (hemoglobin part of the blood for oxygenation), 3. *Mamsa Dhātu*

or Muscle (muscular tissue for movement), 4. *Meda Dhatu* or Fat (lubricating fat for the function of lubrication), 5. *Asthi Dhatu* or Bone (supporting), 6. *Majja Dhatu* or Nerve (nerve tissue), and 7. *Shukra Dhatu* (reproduction).

The *dhatu*s or tissues are the constituents that do not get eliminated from the body, except the reproductive. They remain within the limits of skin, gastro-intestinal tract, bladder, joints, cerebral linings, etc. These tissues develop with the strength of the body.

The Purusha of Samkhya is the supreme God that runs the cosmic functions. Though Purusha and Prakriti are one, Purusha functions through His energy or Prakriti. The union of Purusha and Prakriti forms the entire universe. Prakriti, which is the power of Purusha, is composed of three Gunas. The human body formed of nature or Prakriti is also composed of *Trigunas* or *omni-substances* – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the five great elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) are formed and from them the three biological humours or *tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) are formed. The three doshas or body types, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, regulate thousands of separate functions in the mind-body system and have three basic functions. *Vata-dosha* controls movement, *Pitta-dosha* controls metabolism, and *Kapha-dosha* controls structure. 'Every cell in your body has to contain all three of these principles. To remain alive your body has to have *Vata*, or motion, which allows it to breathe, circulate blood, pass food to the digestive tract, and send nerve impulses to and from the brain. It has to have *Pitta*, or metabolism, which

processes food, air and water throughout the entire system. It has to have Kapha, or structure, to hold the cells together and form muscle, fat, bone, and sinew. Nature needs all three to build a human body,' says Deepak Chopra (TOI). The inimical tendencies like Vasanas (unmanifest desires), anger, and temptations too have a great role in the formation of *tridoshas*, i.e., Vata, Pitta and Kapha. We come across with the following observation in the *Ramacharitamansa* of saint Tulasidas:

‘काम वात कफ लोभ अपारा, क्रोध पित्त निज छाती जारा।
जो रूठहिं ये चारिउ भाई, उपजहि सन्निपात दुःखदायी।।’

(1) **Vata** (*Vayu*) is formed with the combination of ether and air. It is, in fact, responsible for all the gross and small movements in the body. It is prime energy force of the body, and it governs the transportation of all fluids, secretions, and elimination of waste products. It is Prana, the vital force of the body at the subtle level. (2) **Pitta** is responsible for heat and transformation of food to body elements like tissues and waste products. The digestion and metabolism in the body is governed by *Pitta*. It is formed with the combination of fire and water. (3) **Kapha** works on the principle of cohesion. It is the energy that keeps the molecules together. It is formed with the combination of water and earth. It protects from heat and bear and tear.

The visible Physical or Gross body has five Cognitive Sense Organs (Jnanendriyas) of hearing (ear), touch (skin), sight (eye), taste (tongue) and

smell (nose), which apprehend their respective objects - namely, sound (Shabda), touch (sparsha), colour (rupa ranga), taste (svada) and odour (gandha). Then, there are five Cognitive Sense Organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion and procreation, which have as their respective functions speaking, moving, grasping, excreting and enjoying. The Five Pranas (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Samana, and Udana) or the vital airs perform the function of five in-breathing. Again there is the thinking principle, i.e., the mind.

This Gross body or the Annamaya Kosha has 24 subtle body energies divided into mental faculties like mind, intellect, ego etc., five sense organs (five organs of action, ten Pranas, and five elements. But it is not the only body, it is only the uppermost shield of several other bodies.

II. SUKSHMA SHARIRA (Bioplasmic Body)

Besides the Sthula Sharira, there is another body which is said to contain the Pranic energy. What normally happens is that we obviously do every possible effort to sustain the physical body and provide it with food, drink, rest, sex, wealth etc. On the other hand, the Subtle or Pranic body, that sustains the Physical body by giving it vigour and vitality, remains uncared whereas it is more tender and deserves better heedfulness. Supporting the Subtle or Pranic body is like supporting our Being, the Spirit in the inner core of our heart that can be realized at the level of higher consciousness.

Just as the visible physical body has blood vessels through which the blood flows, the subtle or bioplasmic body has invisible channels or meridians which carry Prana and distribute it all over the body. 'Clairvoyants have observed that every person is surrounded and interpenetrated by a luminous energy body called the bioplasmic body. Just like the visible physical body, it has a head, two eyes, two arms etc.' says Choa Kok Sui. He further writes, 'Bioplasmic body means a living energy body made up of invisible subtle matter or etheric matter. Science, with use of Kirlian photography, has rediscovered the bioplasmic body. With the aid of Kirlian photography, scientists have been able to study, observe, and take pictures of small bioplasmic articles like bioplasmic fingers, leaves, etc.' (p. 4)

It is very clear that the first shield (body) that is immediate behind this Physical body is Pranamaya Kosha (etheric body) which provides energy and vitality to the Annamaya Kosha just like the electric current. Interestingly, it has seven places of contact in the body along the spinal column known as Chakras. These Chakras are the energy centres that function under the impact of five great elements of nature i.e., the *Pancha Mahabhutas* and their *Tanmatras* - creating imbalances in them.

The Sukshma Sharira again contains three sheaths (Koshas) - First, the *Vijnanamaya Kosha* with potentiality of intellect and ego; second, *Manomaya Kosha* (ectoderm) with the potentiality of mind and sense organs; and *Pranamaya Kosha* (Mesoderm) containing the vital energies. Those

who are unaware of these Yogic principles act erroneously and go on supporting only the Physical body, i.e., they identify all activities only with their body and mind. Such people are in majority today, and, therefore doomed to remain in ignorance. They think that money in the bank, a great love life and professional success are the keys to a happy and fulfilled life. Researches conducted by scientists in a Sweden University have, however, ruled out this presumption. Dr Bengst Bruelde claims money, love and success bring only temporary joy. On the other hand, the Subtle body as delicate as even an instant's unrequired recreation may jeopardize the leading to great fall. It is a matter of utmost care that the Subtle body remains cool and calm. If it is disturbed, the disquietetude can't be pacified even by serving the best of victuals. On the contrary, if the Subtle body is in harmony, even little bit of food or no food at all for sometime, may not be able harm it. In this respect, the episode of Devahuti from the Bhagawat Purana shows that her body did not subside even she took no food, and she remained cheerful due to the best reasons of her penance and divine vibrations - '*taddehah paratah posho'pyakrishashchadhyasambhavat.*' (Bhag. Pr., 3.33.28).

III. KARANA SHARIRA (Astral Body)

Atman dwells in the heart. It's not the Physical heart that matters here but it's the cosmic heart which is the very core of one's existence. Upanishads say that Atman is under the cover of

three sheaths being the three bodies – the physical, the subtle, and the astral or causal bodies. The Causal body or Karana Sharira is another subtle body within the subtle body and it is called *Anandamaya Kosha*, the bliss sheath. The sheath of bliss is the seat of Atman. A person does not experience Atman in Jagarat state because he is identified with the physical body, in dream state he is with the subtle body and things of unconscious mind still get reflected there. When he is in Susuhpti (dreamless sleep) he comes in touch with Atman but when awake can't express and forgets. The three Gunas of Prakriti i.e., *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* remain in dormant form in this body. All the three Gunas are, in fact, the classification of thought into three distinct grades done by the philosophy of Vedanta. In *Sattva*, one is closest to divinity. There is purity of knowledge. In *Rajasa*, one is full of activity and there is only little *Sattva*, but in *Tamas*, there is total inertia, total ignorance. For example, in the Mahabharata, we come across with the *Sattvika* Arjuna, *Rajasika* Duryodhana and *Tamasika* Dhritarashtra.

WHAT IS DEATH?

Mrityu or death is a real possibility in our life and hardly does anyone think of it in normal life. Death is sure but uncertain as to when it will lay its icy hands on the human being. But it may come any moment, hence don't take this life for granted for ever. Once you become aware of death you will start living a better life. The Yaksha Prashna in the *Mahabharata* is well known to at least educated

Hindus. One of the questions the Yaskha asked Yudhishthira was: 'What is the greatest mystery in this world?' Yudhishthira replied to the Yaksha's satisfaction: 'Although many people are dying everyday, most of us don't realise or think about our death. Isn't the hope that we'll be living forever, the greatest mystery of all.'

Hindu scriptures aver that death is nothing but change of one gross body by the Soul and opting for the other in its reincarnation. It is simply like a person who changes clothes to put on new ones - वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय ...तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णानि अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही. (*Gita*) With this process of death ends the existence of the gross body which is constituted of the five great elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether. The Subtle and Causal bodies survive even now. When Jiva leaves the gross body it departs with the subtle and causal bodies containing mind, intellect, ego and Vasanas (unmanifest desires). Birth has to happen again due to the fact that Vasanas are still left unfulfilled. The more Vasanas are there the more time the Jiva has to take get reborn. When Yogis get all their desires obliterated they get rid of subtle and causal bodies, hence become liberated attaining to Moksha.

GUNAS: SATTVA, RAJAS & TAMAS

Krishna's message is there are three types of bases provided for in our body- *Sattva*, righteous characteristics; *Rajas*, pollutive characteristics; and *Tamas*, highly distortionary characteristics. 'The whole of this creation is deluded by these objects evolved from the three modes of Prakriti: *Sattva*,

Rajas and *Tamas*, that is why world fails to recognize Me, standing apart from these and imperishable.' (*Bh. Gita*, 7.13)

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः।

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम्॥

(*ibid.*, 14.5)

The Causal body or the *Karana Sharira* contains the three energies of the *Gunas* in dormant form: (1) *Sattva* (harmony), (2) *Rajas* (activity), and (3) *Tamas* (inertia or matter). These *Gunas* are actually related to the *Prakriti* of the *Purusha* or the energy of the *Paramatman*, and since the *Jiva* gets manifested through *Prakriti*, these *Gunas* are passed on to the mindstuff and the senses are involved in the world dominated by these three colours of *Gunas*. The *Jiva*, therefore, gets shrouded under the layers of these colours and experiences the world under their impact. It is forgotten that there is some higher Reality transcending the joys and sorrows of the world. The world perceptible to the senses thus appears in three colours of *Sattva* (Purity), *Rajas* (Passion), and *Tamas* (Inertia).

The whole evolution is passing through three stages of *Tamoguna*, *Rajoguna*, and *Satoguna*. *Tamoguna* is the lowest inertia and potential energy. There is laziness and no activity. Hindu scriptures don't regard the categorization of *Varnas* according to birth. Those under the impact of *Tamas* have been called *Shudra*. So is the *Rajoguna*, the second one. *Rajoguna*, the dynamism manifestation is above it. Those men of army alert at the border or engaged in safeguarding the country are *Kshatriyas*. It is

followed by *Sattvaguna* being knowledge, light and equilibrium in the forces of creation. Those predominantly under the influence of *Sattva* are Brahmins. When a *Sadhaka* is under the impact of *Tamas*, and he goes to perform some devotional act or *Dharma*, he adores ghosts or other *Tamasic* elements. When the *Sadhaka* is under the impact of *Rajoguna*, he performs rituals, goes on visiting places of pilgrimage or does any other outwardly acts of propitiation. But when he is under the impact of *Sattva*, he internalizes his feelings and becomes introvert and enjoys the inner peace and bliss.

THE FIVE KOSHAS

The *Yogashastra* establishes the theory – *Ya pinde sa brahmande* (या पिण्डे सा ब्रह्माण्डे) i.e., what is there in the macrocosm that is in the microcosm. It means individual consciousness is the partial expression of cosmic consciousness. Indeed, there should be no denial to the principle that individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness are one. It is subjectivity that separates them. The *Tulasi's Ramayana* speaks:

ईश्वर अंश जीव अविनासी । चेतन अमल सहज सुखरासी ॥

Consciousness is the ultimate reality out of which mind and matter originate. It is said that of all existing bodies, human body is the most highly evolved and capable of self-expression and the realization of Truth – *Satyam param dheemahi* (सत्यं परं धीमहि) (*Bh. Purana*). It is learnt from the

Scriptures of Yoga and Vedanta that the human consciousness is folded into five layers, or sheaths (*Koshas*) around the central point, containing the Self (Atman). These *Koshas* or sheaths are five: (1) *Annamaya Kosha* (Sheath of matter), (2) *Pranamaya Kosha* (Sheath of vital air), (3) *Manomaya Kosha* (Sheath of mind), (4) *Vijnanamaya Kosha* (Sheath of ego and intellect), and (5) *Anandamaya Kosha* (Self seated in Sheath of bliss).

1. Annamaya Kosha (Sheath of Matter)

'*Anna*' can be spiritually termed the secretion of flavour from the earth. The physical body that appears before us as factory housing so many instruments is formed of *Anna*. *Annamaya Kosha*, the sheath of matter, forms the first layer of Atman. When a mother conceives, the first part of the organism that develops after conception is the cerebrospinal system. It gradually grows into a complete body form. This system is a great generator of electrical energy that is constantly supplied to the internal organs with a network of nerves of the subtle body which connect the internal organs from the cerebrospinal system. The entire human body functions under the control of cerebrospinal system. The Chakras or the psychic centres are also located therein. *Annamaya Kosha* does not die with the death of the body. Hindu Scriptures prescribe four measures to purify the *Annamaya Kosha*: fast, Asana, purification of Tattvas, and penance.

2. Pranamaya Kosha (Sheath of Vital Air)

Prana is the symbol of energy and vitality. *Pranamaya Kosha* forms the second layer of the five Koshas. The body is a big factory where mind functions as a manager of a branch. Mind with the help of brain has a major role to do. Brain uses breath or *Prana* (life force) to distribute it to the senses through nerves. Prana or energy is the moving force. This Kosha of Vital air supplies energy to the whole system and keeps it alive. Pranic energy that contains oxygen together with cosmic energy enters each and every cell and every pore. All neuromotor activities, all sensory and motor functions of the body are executed with through breath. Breath is the most essential thing for the survival of life. Hathayoga gives more importance to Pranayama because it is the most effective technique to control the flow of breath. There can be no better proof than those displayed by Swami Ramdeo in his camps telling people about the utility and effectiveness of Pranayama for elimination of even most deadly diseases. By mastering the Prana or breath by the practice of Pranayama, one can master the mind.

3. Manomaya Kosha (Sheath of Mind)

Mind is the tool of consciousness that enables us to perceive the world and process the incoming information. We experience the world before us through our five sense organs of knowledge – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin. Mind is not the functional aspect of the brain as some

people generally think. Mind and brain are different things. Mind uses brain as a tool. Mind pervades everywhere. Each and every cell of the body is pervaded by mind. The mind is the greatest obstacle in the process of systematic thinking. Every moment mind sifts our attention from one thing to other. Mind is strange mistress. It clings to one thing at one time and then loses interest and sifts to other without any lapse of time and in moment it takes us to wilderness losing all. Ego, mind, intellect and the Self form three of the five Koshas, and, they travel together from one body to the other body, from one life to other life.

4. Vijnanamaya Kosha (Sheath of Ego & Intellect)

We require knowledge (*Jnana*) for the accomplishment of the acts of the temporal world. This knowledge identifies one with the ego that says, 'This body is mine'. When the body breathes, he says, 'I am breathing'. When you close his nose, he says, 'You are suffocating me, I am dying.' Then there is intellect that is what we experience in life by different modes of learning and assemble in our brain. Intellect gets a part of genetic information from seven generations of the father, and seven generations of the mother. Intellect carries with it the past and the present, and also speculates about the future. Intellect assists ego. It advises and comments but the final decision is left on the ego. But in order to know the Atman we have to acquire some special knowledge that is called *Vijnana*. So one has to transcend ego and intellect both for the realization of Atman.

5. Anandamaya Kosha (Sheath of Bliss)

The Atman is enveloped in the sheath of bliss. It is eternal and immutable. There is no change. Atman is pure and immaculate. According to Raman Maharshi, the Atman is like a screen. When the film is going on the screen is full of colours and all that. But as soon as the film is over, the screen is as white and clean as it was before. Nothing of the world can disturb it. It can be happy by its own realization - '*Atmaneva atmana tushtah*' (आत्मनेव आत्मना तुष्टः) (Bh. Gita).

Shiva-Shakti

Revelations of all the Hindu Scriptures including those of Vedas have set norms and practices for contemplation, prayer, and propitiation of One God only of the name of Shiva/Vishnu etc. as the indweller of the Cosmos. The Vedic mantra - '*Ishanaḥ sarva vidyānam ishvaraḥ sarvabhūtanām*' (ईशानः सर्वं विद्यानां ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानाम्), implies that *Ishvara*, God, is the Lord of all the lores of knowledge and controller of all the creatures. The *Amarakosha* defines that *Ishvara* is for Mahadeva - '*Ishvaraḥ sarva ishanaḥ shankarashchandrashekharah.*' (ईश्वरः सर्वं ईशानः शंकरश्चन्द्रशेखरः।) Shiva is the only refuge of all creatures- *viśramasthānamēkam* and even '*shērate pranino yatra sa shivah*' (शेरते प्राणिनो यत्र स शिवः). The word '*shiva*' derives from the root '*sheeng svapne*' (शीङ् स्वप्ने). Shiva is the Supreme Cosmic Principle of Consciousness that transcends perception and the three states (*Jagarata, Svapna, and Sushupti*). He is Supreme Brahman self-effulgent, and Truth, Consciousness, Bliss. Equipped with His great powers (*shaktis*) He creates, sustains and destroys infinite number of worlds assuming the forms like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

When the Supreme Consciousness desires to express as an organism, it requires the physical body as tool. The idea of Shiva and Shakti can be well illustrated as a playing couple. Shiva represents the divine lover and Shakti represents the energy and the beloved. When she wants to play a game, she creates a world of her own and invites Shiva inside. "Hey, I have created a world, will you come?" He says, "Sure, but I cannot live in it, because its ever changing, and I am never changing, so what should I do?" She replies, "If you get into everything as the centre of everything, then the centre never changes, everything around you changes. You are always surrounded by eternal bliss, you remain in your bliss. And around you I will put a network of my powers which will intermediate between you and the outside world. That way you will not have to do anything. You can remain never changing and I can remain ever changing and we have fun." (quoted from an article on 'Five Koshas' by Wil Geraets)

Veda is the prime source of Tantra. The *Vagambhrini Sutra* (10.125) of the *Rigveda* propounds Shakti. As for Tantra, the very same Goddess Shakti has been propitiated here. There are two aspects of Tantra - 1. Shaiva, and 2. Shakta. Shiva is the predominant deity in the former, and Shakti predominates in the latter. Both of them have their ways of worship a bit differently.

The fundamental principle of Hindu philosophy is that the Supreme God has three powers (Shaktis) which function in the universe. These are: (1) *Chit Shakti* or *Para Shakti* or

Yogamaya or internal potency, (2) *Maya* (illusion) or external potency, (3) *Jiva Shakti* or Lord's manifested living beings.

The *Chit Shakti* of God is His greatest power because it leads to the Supreme God. It is also called *Antaranga Shakti*, the internal potency. That is why Shakti has to be first adored in order to have communion with the Supreme. Devotees of Krishna sing a very popular verse - '*Radhe Radhe kaho chale ayenge bihari*, i.e., 'Go on chanting the name of *Radha*, the beloved of Krishna, and He will come to you.' So is with the practice of Yoga and Tantra that the Kundalini, the dormant inner potency lying within the body, is aroused from sleep and then starts the journey to Sahasrara Chakra, the abode of the Supreme. *Jiva Shakti* or the individual soul is poised in between the Chit Shakti and the Maya Shakti and is clouded by the Shakti of the Lord called Maya. Under the cover of this illusion the Jiva forgets all about the originality it actually belongs, and, as a result, the Jiva suffers the agonies of life in this world. The pangs of birth and death are also caused due to the impact of Vasanas (unmanifest desires) of the previous births. Maya is Shiva's *Bahiranga Shakti*, external potency which overwhelms and enchants us with His external features, taking us away from God. Maya veils the original divine nature of the Jiva and it gets shrouded in the order of Supreme Brahman-Individual soul (Jiva)-intellect-mind-senses-Samsara. The Supreme Brahman, beyond the duality of Maya, is a difficult subject as our mind is circumscribed by limitations of time and space. There are various levels of consciousness and one

can understand this thing according to the level he has evolved in spirituality. Shiva-Shakti are not two separate aspects of God but Shiva and Shakti is together in One Supreme Consciousness, the Ultimate Truth. Shiva and Shakti is like body and soul. Shakti is, thus, Shiva's energy. Shakti is not separate from Shiva, but Shakti is in Shiva and becomes manifest when He wants so. Similarly Shiva is of no effect without Shakti –*Shaktya vina shivam shunyam* (शक्त्या विना शिवं शून्यम्).

SHIVA, THE SUPREME MASTER OF YOGINS

Amongst the abounding traditions and myths of the Sub-continent, Lord Shiva enjoys universal appeal. From the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the ocean-washed shores in the south, Lord Shiva has been propitiated and adored through the ages, by Grihasthins (householders) as well as Sannyasins (ascetics) as their Supreme Master.

In the entire Godhead of the Hindus, Shiva is the God with unique characteristics. He is unique in the sense that He is inhibition-free, easy to please and the protector of all, be it gods, human beings or demons, ghosts or goblins. The Supreme manifestation of Shiva is known as Parama Shiva or Parama Brahman. He is one in whom the universe 'sleeps' after destruction and before the next cycle of birth and death.

That Lord (Shiva) is omnipresent. The following verses of *Shvetashvataropanishad* (3.11,12,17.18) present the very form of the Lord:

‘सर्वाननशिरोग्रीवः सर्वभूतगुहाशयः ।

सर्वव्यापी स भगवान् तस्मात् सर्वगतः शिवः ॥’

‘All faces, necks and heads are His, He is in all creatures, reposing in the recesses of the heart. The Divine Lord is all-prevading, and therefore, He, the Gracious Shiva, is present everywhere.’

‘महान् प्रभुर्वै पुरुषः सत्त्वस्यैष प्रवर्तकः ।

सुनिर्मलामिमां प्राप्तिम् ईशानो ज्योतिरव्ययः ॥’

‘The Supreme Person is indeed the Great Master, the Author of goodness. Within His reach are all things, such bright power is His. He is light, He is undying.’

‘सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।

सर्वस्य प्रभुम् ईशानं सर्वस्य शरणं बृहत् ॥’

‘As seeming to possess the powers of all the senses, yet of all senses devoid; as Master and Lord of all, as the great Refuge of all – thus do we know Him.’

‘नवद्वारे पुरे देही हंसो लेलायते बहिः ।

वशी सर्वस्य लोकस्य स्थावरस्य चरस्य च ॥’

‘Embodied in the city of nine Gates as the indweller, That Hansa, the Effulgent God, does turn aside towards outward things. Yet in His (Shiva’s) hands lies all the world with all that rests and all that moves in it.’

In the trinity of Gods, like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva representing creation, preservation and dissolution respectively, Shiva is there for the task of dissolution. In the form of Trivikrama, Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, all are manifestations of the same Supreme God. Puranas expound on the glory of Shiva and Vishnu both. There are not separate gods for separate functions but God is one and the same One God manifests in different forms. According to *Skanda Purana*, Shiva and Vishnu are alike. There is no difference between Shiva and Vishnu.

यथा शिवस्तथा विष्णुर्यथा विष्णुस्तथा शिवः ।
अन्तरं शिवविष्णोश्च मनगपि न विद्यते ॥

(*Skanda Pr.*, Kashi Khanda, 23.41)

(यो विष्णुः स शिवो ज्ञेयो यः शिवो विष्णुरेव सः ।)

(*ibid.*, Mahe. 8.20)

'Vishnu should be understood Shiva and Shiva should be understood Vishnu.'

Lord Shiva says: 'O Vishno, as I so are you'-
'*Yathaham tvam tatha vishnoh*' (यथाहं त्वं तथा
विष्णोः ।) (*ibid.*, Kashi., 27.183)

Even Krishna says that I am Shankar amongst the Rudras - '*Rudranam shankaro'smi*' (रुद्राणां शंकरोऽस्मि). Shiva is the infinite power where the Jiva sleeps after the creation is dissolved into nothingness.

Shiva is known with many epithets like Shankara, Shambhu, Mahadeva, Mahakala, Mahayogi, Rudra, Digambara, Chandrashekhara,

Gangadhara, Girisha, Pashupati, Vishwanatha, etc. As Mahadeva (the Great God), He is adored by the gods and even the godheads like Brahma and Vishnu. To some, Shiva is the embodiment of asceticism. In His fierce Rudra aspect, He releases men of bondage and wanders in the cremation ground. To others, He is the Universal Father, Bhole Baba, Who blesses all. From Lal-Ded or Lalleshviri in Kashmir to Karaikal Ammiyar and the Nayanars of Tamilnadu, from Vivekananda who had a vision of Shiva at Amarnath to Ramana Maharshi who found Him at Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai, devotees have all been drawn to the magnetic appeal of Shiva. When He is Mahakala, He destroys all the things. It is also His Rudra form He has been depicted in the Rigveda. But as Shankara, He dispels the sufferings of the people.

Shiva is Godhead of strange apparel – the *Digambara*, which means only directions are His clothes. He is as white as camphor, His body is besmeared with ashes. He is three-eyed, blue-throated (Nilakantha), He has four arms. The sacred river Ganges rests in His long matted hair. He has crescent moon as His diadem. He has a long retinue comprising Nandi, the bull, Bhiringi, his sons – Ganesha and Kumara, a host of ghosts, goblins and imps.

A symbolic mystical understanding of Lord Shiva unfolds that the snow white colour in Him stands for light that dispels the darkness of ignorance as Shiva is the personification of cosmic consciousness. The Shivalinga, phallus, signifies Advaita – non-dual, indivisible, unattached. His phallus also symbolizes the reproductive organ. His

three eyes represent the sun, moon and fire. His blue stained neck is a symbolic reminder of His capacity to remove toxins from the world. He drank the fiery poison but did not allow it to pass down His throat, hence the name Neelakantha. This again shows that one should not allow any toxins to enter the body. The tiger skin, which He puts on as His lion-cloth symbolizes that the Lord has subdued all the desires. The garland of skulls and the ashes besmeared on His body reflect his destructive aspect. Trishula represents the three Gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, His holding incates that He transcends these Gunas.

The dance of Shiva is a path to evolution. Everyone of us has Shiva in our inner self. As Jeevatman or individual soul we are *Pashu*, animal. The glitters of the outer world and its temporary pleasures mesmerize us and we are overwhelmed by senses. If a dancer has to be happy and peaceful, he/she should have to go through a purification, wherein the three *malas* or impurities – *anavamala*, *mayiyamala*, and *karmamala* – are annihilated. Yoga can help every dancer attain Samyoga, the union of the Pashu to Pashupati. Ananda Coomaraswamy observes Shiva as the fountain-head of all Indian dance and culture. Fritjof Capra says that the *Tandava* dance of Shiva is primordial dissolution and creation that is an allegory of the movement of sub-atomic particles.

Shiva is Supreme Yogi and He often remains sitting in deep meditation immersed in the enjoyment of the bliss of His own self. It is very significant aspect of Shiva that His sitting posture

itself represents Yoga. He is the Supreme Guru of all the Yoga practitioners.

Shiva not only dissolves the creation but He reproduces it again. This can be well understood by the symbol of the *Shivalinga* (the phallus of Shiva) adored with equal sense of devotion. Shivalinga, therefore, stands for the reproductive power of the Lord. As also can be substantiated by some of the stories of the Puranas, Shiva is not different from Brahma and Vishnu. God is one, wise call it many – एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति।, declare Vedas.

As for the conjugal life of Shiva described in the Puranas, He is married twice, first with Sati, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati, and later in her next birth, as daughter of the Mount Himalaya and christened with the name of Parvati or Uma. As Mahakala, He has his better half Mahakali. In His Rudra form, the terrific form, He has the terrific Goddess Kali or Durga. Goddess Parvati is the most important Shakta divinity being consort of Lord Shiva.

According to the *Shiva-tantra*, the entire universe is permeated with Shiva-Shakti – *Shiva-shakti samayogad jayate srishti kalpana* (शिवशक्तिसमायोगाद् जायते सृष्टि कल्पना।). Shiva has been extolled as infinite, master of all the world creatures and godhead. At the time of dissolution, Kali becomes steady with a single form together with Mahakala. There is no difference between Shiva and *Shakti – Shiva-shaktimaya-deham-ekikriya sada sthita* (शिवशक्तिमय देहं एकीकृत्य सदा स्थिता।). This very well illustrates the *Ardhanarishwara* (half man and half woman) aspect of Shiva.

Among the Puranas, it is the *Shiva Purana*, which dwells on the form of Shiva-Shakti in a very comprehensively. It puts emphasis on the integration of the principle of the both Tattvas, i.e., Shiva and Shakti. None of them can be active in the absence of the other. It is said that Shiva is left as a *Shava* (corpse) without Shakti. No difference can be established between the two like the moon and the moonlight or the fire and its heat.

Mahashivaratri that falls on the 12th of the dark lunar night of the Hindu month Phalguna every year is celebrated as the cosmic night of Shiva. It is said to be His marriage anniversary. 'Hara (Shiva) became Hari (Vishnu) and Keshava (Krishna) became Shiva. Narayana is the non-dual form of Shiva and Vishnu,' says Krishnajoo Razdan. With the marriage over, the groom and the bride, Shiva and His Maya, depart, accompanied by the eight siddhis amidst recitations from the *Panchastavi*, and Shankaracharya's *Saundarya Lahari*. This is said to be the best night for the devotees to adore the Lord with austerities and worship. Bhisma in his discourse on Dharma to Yudhisthira in the *Mahabharata*, describes the observance of the *Mahashivaratri* fast by king Chitrabhanu. The king was a hunter Susvara and had sought refuge on a *bilva* tree in one night. In order to assuage his fears he dropped down the leaves of *bilva* tree on a phallus of Shiva hidden in the earth, and thus he worshipped Shiva unwittingly. This allegorical story represents the human journey. The *bilva* leaves, with three leaves on one stalk, symbolizes the working and surrender of Ida, Pingala and Sushumna nadis to the higher

self, Shiva. The *bilva* tree shows the spinal column in Kundalini. The *Dakshinamurti Stotram* describes Shiva as the youthful Guru, facing southward, teaching His elderly disciples through Jnana Mudra. The *Shivamahimna Stotra* of Pushpadanta presents the inexpressible Truth which Yogis realize by concentrating their minds on the Self.

SHAIVISM

Shivadvaita Darshan: This philosophy is based on puranas. In this philosophy the puranas like Shiva Purana, Linga Purana, and Kurma Purana have been included. This philosophy was propagated by Acharya Shri Neelkantha. His commentary on *Brahmasutra* is known as *Shaivabasya* or *Shivadvaitabhasya*. The following verse of *Shatarudra Samhita* (2.12) has been quoted in his *Shaivabhasya*:

‘आत्मा तस्यष्टमी मूर्तिः शिवस्य परमात्मनः ।
व्यापिकेतरमूर्तीनां विश्वं तस्मात्छिवात्मकम् ॥’

Maheshvara Darshan: In the Maheshvara pantheon, there are primarily four divisions: (i) Pashupata Dharshana, (ii) Shaiva Darshana, (iii) Pratyabhijna Darshana, and (iv) Veerashaiva Darshana.

Pashupata Dharshana/ Nakulisha Pashupata: This philosophy is elaborately described in the Puranas. This philosophy was founded by Nakulisha or Lakulisha as it is also clear

from the name. A combined study of the *Kurma Purana* and *Linga Purana* reveals that Lord Shiva, at the close of Dwapara and start of the Kaliyuga, entered some dead body and incarnated in human form. He was called Nakulisha. After living in a cave of the Sumera mountain for some time, He made stay at Siddhakshetra in Kachha (Gujarat), that later became a pilgrim centre of Shaivas. The main treatise of the Nakulisha Pashupata is Pancharthasutra. This philosophy is founded on five things, i.e., description of cause, effect, Yoga, Vidhi and the end of the misery. All the sentient and non-sentient have been termed Pashu. All are governed by their Lord Shiva-Maheshwara. Miseries of life can be obliterated by practicing the Yoga of Japa, meditation, Vratas etc.

Kashmira Shaivism or Pratyabhijna

Darshana: The philosophy of Pratyabhijna or philosophy of recognition resembles to the Philosophy of Advaita Vedanta to some extent. It is considered a kind of Maheshvara Darshans. There are 92 popular treatises of this philosophy and the major are Malini, Siddha and Kamika Agama. Pratyabhijna Darshan is also known as Kashmira Shaiva Darshana or Trika Darshana. The literal meaning of *Pratyabhijna* is 'to recognize'. The main thrust of this philosophy is to invent the *Dikkriyashakti*, the ever self-effulgent one, i.e., the Atman is Supreme God. Recognition of the Atman and the Paramatman in proper way is the real recognition. The main treatises of this philosophy is Shivasutra etc.

SHAKTI, THE PRIMORDIAL POWER

The cosmos functions on basically two principles: Purusha and Prakriti – life and matter. Purusha is the God that represents life, and Prakriti represents matter. According to the Samkhya school of thought, Prakriti does the work of creation with its instruments, and the twenty five principles. It comprises *Mahat tattva*, five great elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether), their five attributes (touch, taste, sight, smell and sound), five organs of perception, five organs of action, mind, intellect and ego.

There is nothing that can operate without Shakti. The creativity of Brahma, the all-pervasiveness or the preservativeness of Vishnu, the Shivata or the dissolutionary activity of Shiva - all are instrumental due to Shakti. Shakti from lexicographical view in Sanskrit can be derived from the root '*shak*' (शक्) and the prefix '*ktin*' (क्तिन्), which means the instrumentation by which one is capable of accomplishing whatever one wants. Shakti, therefore, denotes different existence in different ways. Various forms of Goddesses are considered One as stated in the *Rigveda* (10.125.1):

‘अहं रुद्रेभिः सुरभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुता विश्वदेवैः।

अहं मित्रवरुणोवुभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्निहमश्विनोभा।।’

‘The Goddess herself says that I move in the form of Rudas and Vasus. I dwell in the form of Adiyas and Vishvedewas, I bear

Mitravaruna, and it is I who is the base of Indra, Agni and Ashwinikumaras.'

Evidences reflect on the fact that Lord Rama and Lord Krishna both had adored Shakti. Acharya Shankara had propitiated the great Goddess Jagadamba in '*Saundarya-lahari*', e.g.,

शिवः शक्त्यायुक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभयितुं।
 न चेदेव देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि।।
 अतस्त्वमाराध्य हरिविरंचादिभिरपि प्रणतुं।
 स्तोतुं वा कतहंकृतपुण्यः प्रभवति।।

The concept of mother Goddess is perhaps the most widespread sect in India. Every aspect of the world is assimilated in this cult right from nature to energy. People find it rather easy to adore the mother form of God. The first syllable that a child or a quadruped utters is the 'Maa', the beloved Mother. Is there any child which does not owe its all to the affection and love of its mother? It's the mother who protects, consoles, cheers and nurses. She is friend, philosopher, protector and guide throughout one's life. Human mother is a manifestation of Divine Mother, Universal Mother. The worship of mother goddess in one form or the other is in practice not merely in India but in Egypt, Greek and even far beyond. The vibrant and unbounded compassion and bountiful mercy were regarded as the divine attributes of the Goddess. The relation of child and mother cut across all barriers and refuge in the lap of mother gave peace

and solace. The Hindus have great devotion for the goddess as the Supreme Mother. She is epitome of all energy, the symbol and the one who bestows knowledge, happiness, wealth, prosperity and strength.

Shakti is the symbol of energy which permeates the universe, creates it, sustains it and destroys it. Hindus have the first nine days of the second half of the month of Ashwin and Chaitra, known as Navaratri, when the entire atmosphere is charged with gaiety and piety and worship of Shakti (universal energy) is performed with great dedication and devotion. According to the Puranas Shakti, in Her three main manifestations, Lakshmi (the Goddess of spiritual and material wealth), Saraswati (the Goddess of knowledge and wisdom) and Durga/Mahakali (the Goddess which grants power to destroy evil) is worshipped in nine forms.

Lord Krishna, enunciating the feminine form of God, says in the *Bhagawad Gita*: 'I am the sustainer and ruler of this universe, its father, mother and grandfather - *Pitahamasya jagato mata dhata pitamaha*' (पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामह). (9.17) Even Kirti, Shri, Vak etc. are the forms of the Lord - *Kirtih, shri-vak cha narinam smritih medha dhritih kshama* (कीर्तिः श्रीवाक् च नारीणां स्मृतिः मेधा धृतिः क्षमा). (ibid., 10.34)

The Lord Himself says that 'You are the mother of the whole universe, and the creator of the world. You, verily Nirguna, by sheer will adopt the three Gunas and become Saguna to act. Yours is the form of Supreme Brahman, the Eternal and Real One. The verses quoted here enunciate the nature of Goddess:

त्वमेव सर्वजननी मूलप्रकृति,
 त्वमेवद्य सृष्टिविधौ स्वेच्छया त्रिगुणात्मिका ।
 कार्यार्थे सगुणा त्वं च वस्तुतो निर्गुणा,
 परब्रह्म स्वरूपा त्वं सत्य नित्य सनातनि ॥

.....

(*Brahmavaivarta Pr.*, Prakriti Khanda, 2.66.7-10)

Shakti or *Adya Shakti* (Primordial power) is being propitiated by many names – all derived from her different forms. The concept of Shakti depicted in the *Rigveda* records as many as forty Goddesses. These are Aditi, Usha, Saraswati, Prithivi, Rudrani, Ratri, Illa, Mahi, Gauri, Urvashi, etc. The Samhitas and Brahmanas have accounts of Goddess Ambika. Grihyasutras mention Kali, Durga, and Jyestha forms of Shakti. In Upanishads Shakti is portrayed as Brahmi, Kali, Karali, Manojava and Vishwarupa. The *Shaiva Upanishad* (शैव उपनिषद्) reveals Shakti as the power of Shiva, which is instrumental in the creation of the world. When called Prakriti, she is the mother of the creation. As for the *Shakta Upanishad* (शाक्त उपनिषद्), we find names like Mahatripura Sundari, Matangi, Kalyani, Bhuvaneshvari, Chamunda, Varahi, Savitri, Saraswati, etc. The embodiments of Shakti recorded in the *Devopnishad* (देवोपनिषद्) are Durga, Mahalakshmi, Saraswati and Vaishnavi.

Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is the most important Shakta divinity. An infinite power of Shiva, she is known with different names like Haimavati, Girija, Shailaputri, Shivani, Uma; Rudrani, Aparna, etc. The Goddess has been

addressed by the following names by Acharya Shankara in *Saundaryalahri* (सौन्दर्यलहरी) :

'You (Devi) are the mind, you are akasha (ether); you are also fire, you are water and earth too. When you have transformed yourself in this way into the form of the universe, there is nothing beyond (that is) not (already) included in you. It is to transform yourself into the universe that you assume this form of consciousness-bliss as Shiva's consort, His Shakti.'

The word '*parvati*' derives its origin from the '*parvata*', which means mountain. The word also implies the backbone, the spine of human body. Besides the general acceptance of her being the daughter of the Himalaya, Yogis adore her as the *Kundalini Shakti*. This is also called Serpent Power or the Supreme Energy that lies in the end of the spinal cord at the Muladhara Chakra. It is latent energy that lies in dormant state in serpentine form with three and a half coils around the phallus of Shiva and lying asleep at the perineum plexus. By spiritual practice the Yogi awakens this energy that rises upward through Sushumna Nadi, the middle channel, and reaches the Brahmastrandhra near the Sahasrara Chakra, the thousand petalled lotus where She unites with the Supreme Lord, Parama Shiva, and the Yogi then enjoys supreme bliss. The energy of consciousness, *Chit Shakti*, of the Supreme is the ultimate reality behind the universe and that is masculine-feminine, Brahmamaya, Shiva-Shakti and Impersonal-

personal. Shiva-Shakti represents the unity of eternity and time. She is Mahavidya and Mahamaya, supreme knowledge and illusion.

TATTVAS IN SHAIVA-SHAKTA TANTRA

Shiva and Shakti are the two forms of the Parama Shiva or the Supreme Principle. Shiva is the substratum and basis of Shakti, manifest in the multifarious and spectacular form of the world. Shiva is the unmanifest, imperceptible, omnipresent, and unmoving soul. Shakti is perceptible, movable and manifest existence in name and form. Shakti is, therefore, shown dancing with tri-play of creation, preservation and dissolution acts in the cosmos over the infinite, calm and deep chest of Nati Shiva also in the form of wielding infinite cosmos.

The eternal cause of all gods, Shakti is formed of the three Gunas - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. She is all alone and pervades the whole world. She has been prayed in the following verse as Matrika, Jnanarupini, etc.:

‘मंत्रानां मातृका देवी शब्दानां ज्ञानरूपिणी,
ज्ञानं चिन्मयातीता शून्यानां शून्यसाक्षिणी।

.....

नमामि भवभीताऽहं संसार्णवतारिणीम्।

The Lord replete with Shakti attains the cosmic form as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. (*Tripuropanishad*, 14) Whatever is seen in the world is a vibration of the

Chiti. There is none else that can live here but the *Chiti* -

सर्वं किञ्चित् इदं दृश्यं दृश्यते यद् जगद्गतं,
चिन्निष्पन्दशमात्रं तन्नान्य किञ्चन शाश्वतम् ।)

(*Annapurnopanishad* , 1.47)

We endeavor to make our life fruitful by praying to that all-pervading *Chiti*:

‘चितिरूपेण या कृतस्ममेतद् व्याप्य स्थिता जगत् ।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥’

Now the question arises how one can achieve the emancipation and bliss in life by acquiring knowledge about both of these forms of the God. The answer is by rising above the level of microcosm by the realization of Shiva. This microcosmic life is shrouded with the knowledge of the life of nomenclature and corporeal world that is cause of ignorance and misery. Self-surrendering to the lotus feet of Shakti has been considered the path for the realization of Shiva. By self-surrender the meaning is the renunciation of one's identification with body or rising above the egoist intellect. Whatever acts of transformation and endeavour happen in the gross and subtle life of a person are caused by Shakti. This Shakti is that Tattva of Ishvara which pervades the whole of sentient and insentient world and is manifest in the form of world. The state of realization is got by knowing this Tattva.

When the individual soul realizes the Shiva-tattva or Supreme Soul by self-surrender or the

microcosm coming in communion with the macrocosm, then it attains the Parama Shiva in the totality, which is Shiva and Shakti both, or, transcending it. Jiva then becomes aware of the manifest and unmanifest tattvas, and, enjoys the utter independence relishing the nectarine bliss in their communion.

When we study the Mantra Shastra, it is studying the thirty-six Tattvas like Shakti in the Shakti Tattva, Nada in Sadakhya Tattva, Bindu in Ishvara Tattva. Without having complete idea about these Tattvas one can't get much progress in the Mantra Shastra. The Shaiva-Shakta Shastras call experience as Shakti by the term Vimarsha. This experience has the elements 'I' (*Aham*) and 'This' (*Idam*), subjective-knowing aspect of the Self and the objective or known aspect of the Self. The experience of the element 'I' is the one in which the Self rests in the light of one's own Self - *Ananyonmukhah aham pratyayah*, (अनन्योन्मुखः अहं प्रत्ययः) whereas the element 'Idam' is for the experience Vimarsha, looking for another - *Yastu anyonmukhah so idam iti pratyayah* (यस्तु अन्योन्मुखः सो इदं इति प्रत्ययः). It is to be noted that in the Pure experience this *Idam* remains in union with the *Aham*, but governed by Maya, it appears to be different in impure experience. The supreme experience is called *Parasamvit*.

Shiva is the *Prakasha* aspect and Shakti is the *Vimarsha* aspect, but the two are undistinguishably one. The supreme experience is Bliss (Ananda) defined as 'Resting in the Self' - *Svarupa-vishranti*. The experience of the universe through Maya is said to be different world of

objects from himself. Supreme Shiva and Shakti exist in mutual embrace and love. In the supreme state there is no difference of lover and the loved. This experience is timeless, spaceless, full, almighty, in this state Shiva is without Kala (Nishkala), or Parama Shiva. Parama Shiva is the experience of the perfect universe, of Paranada.

The first manifestation (Abhasa) of and by consciousness is called the Sadakhya or Sadashiva Tattva. This Abhasa is like the Vivarta or Mayavada of Shankara. In Sadashiva Tattva there is the beginning of the first subjective formation of ideas. It is called *Nimesha*, closing of the eyes. It is first experience in evolution. This Tattva of Sadashiva is what Vaishnavas call Mahavishnu, and Buddhists Avalokiteshvara. Tradition has it to say that Avatars come from this source. Mantra Shastra calls it Nada Shakti.

The third stage of developing consciousness is *Ishvara* Tattva, that is called *Bindu* in the Mantra Shastra. Consciousness here completely identifies itself with the universe as unmanifested Idam. The fourth Tattva is known as *Vidya*, *Sadvidya*, or *Shuddhavidya*, being the intermediate stage between the pure and impure. The experience is said to be in the nature of Mantra, because here we are in the region of pure ideation. It is said that at this stage Maya-Shakti intervenes and the divides *Aham* and *Idam*. This is the Purusha-Prakriti Tattva. 'Purusha in Shaiva-Shakta philosophy is the Atman or Jiva subject to Maya and the Kanchukas which are limiting forces whereby the Self as Pure Consciousness loses its natural perfections.' (*Garland of Letters*)

Purusha and Prakriti pervade the entire universe not merely man. Every single thing in the universe is Purusha. Prakriti is the Shakti of Shiva in contracted form existing as the equilibrium of the Gunas. Prakriti differentiates into the Tattvas of Mind (antahkarana), Senses and Matter (Bhuta) constituting the universe.

'From Sakala-Parameshvara vested with the wealth of Sat, Cit, Ananda issued Shakti, from Shakti came Nada, and from Nada issued Bindu.'

‘सच्चिदानन्द विभवात् सकलात् परमेश्वरात्।

आसीच्छक्तीस ततो नादो नादाद् बिन्दु समुद्भवः॥’

(*Sharada.*, Chap. 1, verse 2)

Shakti-tattva and Shiva-tattva are inseparable, the former being only the negative aspect of the latter. Both exist even in dissolution, the first emanation proper being Sadakhya, which corresponds with Nada. Siva-tattva is defined in the *Tattva Sandoha* (1) as: 'That beyond which there is none other, moved of His own will in order to create the whole world. The first movement (spanda prathama) is called the Shiva-tattva by those who know.'

The two principles – *Shiva-Shakti Tattva*- are the ultimate potency of creation, and when commence to act, the first movement towards manifestation takes place, this union and mutual relation is called *Nada*. As the relation is not some substantial thing apart from Shiva-Shakti, Nada is really Shiva-Shakti, only being in the process of evolution of the world. It is said that Nada is the Maithuna of Shiva and Shakti and that when

Mahakala was in Viparita Maithuna with Mahakali there issued Bindu. *Mithasamavaya* is the other term for Maithuna i.e., Kriyashakti. From Nada came *Mahabindu*, and this letter differentiated into the Tribindu which is *Kamakala*, the root of all Mantras.

From the Sakala-Parameshvara vested with the wealth of Sachchidananda appeared Shakti, from Shakti Nada, from Nada Bindu (Mahabindu). Sakala means with Kala, i.e., the Brahman with what the Samkhya calls Mula-Prakriti, Vedanta calls Avidya, and Shakta Tantras call Shakti. Nishkala Shiva is actually Nirguna Shiva or that aspect of Brahman not linked with the creative Shakti. Shakti associated with the Parama Shiva is *Chidrupini* and *Vishvottirna* or beyond the universe. On the other hand, Shakti associated with the creative Shiva appears as Universe (*Vishvatmika*). The Parashakti is one with Chaitanya at rest. (*Sharada Tilaka*, 1-7)

The term Nada means sound also that is concerned with Mantravidya. Nada is the most subtle aspect of Shabda, as the first putting forth of Kriyashakti, Paranada and Paravak that develops into Bindu, that is the source of Shabda for Mantra aspect. Mahabindu is called Shabda Brahman. This Shabda Brahman appearing in bodies is Kundalini Shakti – *Kundalini shabdabrahmayi* (कुण्डलिनी शब्दब्रह्ममयी). The ultimate substance is Shakti, which is of dual aspect – *Chit Shakti*, representing the spiritual, and, *Maya Shakti*, representing the material aspect.

The Conquest of Mind

Mind is the tool of consciousness that enables us to perceive the world and process the incoming information. We experience the world before us through our five sense organs of knowledge – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin. Mind is not the functional aspect of the brain as some people generally think. Mind and brain are different things. Mind uses brain as a tool. Mind pervades everywhere. Each and every cell of the body is pervaded by mind. The mind is the greatest obstacle in the process of systematic thinking. Every moment mind sifts our attention from one thing to other. Mind is strange mistress. It clings to one thing at one time and then loses interest and sifts to other without any lapse of time and in moment it takes us to wilderness losing all. Swami Chidananda says:

'The mind is a mysterious power of Atman. Mind is a screen between man and God. The mind makes a man its slave, again the same mind liberates him. ...Mind is the inner Kurukshetra. In the mind war takes place between virtue and vice, between lower mind and higher mind, between Sattva and Rajas-Tamas and between the lower

instinctive urges and the higher spiritual aspirations.'

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः - It is mind alone which is responsible for bondage or liberation. (*Manusya* is one who can think, understand, ruminates, ponder - मनु अवबोधने is the root behind the word.) The mind is very fickle, unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful - चंचलं हि मनः कृष्णः प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम्. (*Bh. Gita*, 6.34) On the helplessness state of mind, Krishna suggests Arjuna that it can be brought under control by repeated practice of meditation. 'One can obtain occult powers and perfections (*Siddhis*) by overcoming the distractions of mind'- 'एक एव मनो देवो ज्ञेयः सर्वार्थं सिद्धिदः', says Sage Vasishtha to Lord Rama (*Yogavashistha*). No achievement of Sadhana can be imagined unless and until the activities of the mind are not suspended by the regulation of Prana - 'प्राण स्पन्दजये यत्नः कर्तव्यो धीमतोच्चकः'. (ibid.)

The mind is the total sum of memories and each of our action is governed by the memories of mind or the Sanskaras. Moreover, a toxic mind is very dangerous and can't help at all in spiritual evolution. Poets and spiritual masters were very skeptical about the worship generally performed by devotees without controlling the mind and the senses. It is of no use to worship a deity or God simply by showing incense sticks in a mechanical way and be proud that the worship is done. Chanting the names of Lord is similarly of little benefit if it is done in a state of distracted mind. Saint Kabir warned people that they should not live

in confusion that their mechanical prayer is heard. He said: माला तो कर में फिरै...मनवा तो चहुं दिस फिरै यह तो सुमिरन नाहिं. Swami Sukhabodhananda says:

'A mind filled with tension and unhappiness is the result of a toxic centre. Such a mind creates problems for self and others. In contrast, a mind which is relaxed and happy comes from a nourishing centre. Transforming a toxic centre into a nourishing centre is the hallmark of wisdom.'

Osho writes that the mind always splits things, it functions like a prism. When a white sun ray passes through the prism it becomes divided into seven colours creating a rainbow. (Rainbow is created by very small drops of water hanging in the air, those drops of water function like prisms and the sun rays passing through them become divided into seven colours.) He continues:

'The mind is a prism: it divides every thing into many. The truth is one, but if you look through the mind everything appears to be many.'

Insofar as proper application of mind is concerned, it has been rightly summed up in the following lines of Sri Sathya Sai Baba:

'The mind... serves as the supreme benefactor of those, who engage themselves in the contemplation of God, in good thoughts, good words, and good acitons. On

the other hand, the same mind brings disaster to those who take to wrong path of unrighteousness or outright wickedness.'

By the practice of Yoga of all kinds, say Hathayoga, Tantrayoga, Mantrayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Jnanayoga, Karmayoga, Rajayoga, or Kundaliniyoga, the Chakras in the body get activated and the dormant energy gets aroused. After the practice of inhalation by *Chandra Nadi* (the left nostril or the *Ida*), exhalation by the *Surya Nadi* (the right nostril or the *Pingala*), and Kumbhaka (the retention of the Prana) in Pranayama, wonderful experiences take place in life. In the very first aphorism of his treatise on the Yoga, Maharshi Patanjali instructs the Yogis to suspend the modification of the thinking principle – *Yogah-chitta-vritti-nirodhah* (योगश्चित्तवृत्ति निरोधः). It can be possible by controlling the Prana or breath that very closely linked to the states of the mind. It has been said in the *Shivagita* that the vehicle of mind is Prana, and therefore mind is present where Prana is. The relation between the mind and the Prana has been thus described by Sage Vasishtha:

मनसः स्पन्दनं प्राणः प्राणस्य स्पन्दनं मनः ।

एतौ विहरतौ नित्यमन्योन्यं रथसारथी ॥

(*Yogavashistha*)

('O Rama, For the motion of the chariot which is the body, Ishvara has created the mind and Prana, without which the body cannot function. When the mind works Prana works.')

The mind is field for righteous thoughts, dutifulness and evil thoughts. The happiness and misery experienced in this world are caused by the working of the mind. By controlling the mind all occult powers are acquired. If the mind is not controlled, all else becomes useless and painful.

We are constantly under the imprisonment of body, mind and intellect, and behave under their impact. They attach us to world. What we need in Yoga is to develop the knack of detachment from the world and get established in our natural self or Spirit. We are Atman, pure and immaculate, we should not be sabotaged by intellect.'

We always think something about the outer world and thereby drain out energy tiring the whole system and distracting the smooth flow of our inner process. Our thoughts-mind and ego, are our own creation. We run away with them, we make them real by copperating with them. To dissolve them, as says Patanjali we should simply observe our thoughts. By looking at our thoughts with the breath we inhale, the manipulation of Prana (vital air), has the proper cure. In spiritual practice, as said, we gradually get our inner core purified ridding off all the impurities by controlling our Prana. When human bodies, both gross and subtle, are purified, the heart itself reflects the Divinity from within. See how the following verse of Sw. Yogananda Saraswati reveals our real abode:

*'When waves of your mind keep on coming
Why wait for them to subside?
There is place of calm at your centre
And that's the place to reside.'*

The ho'ble President of India A.P.J. Abdul Kalam rightly knows the nerve of people when he emphasises on igniting the mind of children for a better tomorrrow. We have every reason to assert that it is our child/youth who have total upsurge of energy in them, and it is they who can cause great miracle to the present turmoil and deteriorating state of the society. Harmony in the today's world can't be brought about by opting hatred and illwill for one another, or taking recourse to violence. A lot of spirituality has come of age today and there is everywhere one or the other affair going on. The present author believes that such a social transformation can be brought about by creating awareness among our children and the youths who are surging with energy, and it is they who can actually contribute in transformation of the present social set up seething in chaos and curruption.

Prana, The Life Force

Vedas are the oldest scriptural records of Hindus containing the quintessence of India's spiritual thoughts. The original exposition of the Vedic philosophy that we come across is contained in the great Indian scriptures known as Upanishads. *Prana* or the vital energy as well as *Nadis* or the subtle channels of the body find mention in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (1.3.3; 8.6.1; 8.6.3), *Brihadaranykupanishad* (1.5.3) and *Kathopanishad* (2.3.16):

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः, तासां मूर्धान्मिभिः सृतैका ।
तयोर्ध्वमयन्ऽमृतत्वमेति, विश्वधुन्य उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥

Prana is that vital energy or life force which keeps the body alive and healthy. *Prana* is called *pneuma* in Greek, *mana* in Polynesia, and *ruah* in Hebrew. It means breath of life. The major sources from where *Prana* is received are the Sun, the air, and the ground. Sunlight is one of the most important source from where *Prana* is got. Exposure in sun for some time invigorates the body and keeps it healthy. Even water energized by the

sun prana can be drunk for good health. The air we breathe for life is known as air prana and it invigorates lungs. This Prana from the air is also absorbed by the energy centers of the subtle body which are called Chakras. By walking barefoot on the ground one absorbs the ground prana through the soles of the feet.

Prana is the life energy or life force that activates all the functioning of mind, body and senses. It is responsible for maintaining our physical and mental health. When the *Prana* gets eroded or stymied, the body reaches a state of atrophy. There are five types of Pranas: *Prana* at the heart, *Apana* at the rectum, *Samana* at the nerve, *Vyana* in the entire body, *Udana* at the throat. Located at different parts of our body, these Pranas keep the health of the body.

Choa Kok Sui, a great Pranic master writes:

'We get most of our *ki* or vital energy from the air we breathe. Every living thing depends upon breathing and cessation of breathing is cessation of life itself. From the first cry of an infant to the last grasp of a dying man, there is nothing but a series of breaths. We constantly drain our life force or *ki* by our every thought, every act of will or notion of muscles.'

Though Prana has many a connotations, we breathe Prana each and every moment. Breath is Prana. Prana does not mean that it is merely the oxygen inhaled in breathing but it is energy filled with several other cosmic elements inhaled during

the breath. It is something very subtle. It functions in the body.

Pranayama is the Yogic practice that does the function of distributing throughout the whole of the body system. *Pranayama* has three aspects – *Rechaka* (inhalation of breath), *Kumbhaka* (retention of the breath), and *Puraka* (exhalation of the breath). In Pranayama, by inhaling (*Rechaka*), retention (*Kumbhaka*), and exhaling (*Puraka*), the *Prana-vayu* at the heart place moves down and mixes with *Saman Vayu* at the navel, then it mixes with the *Apana-vayu* at the rectum and proceeds upward to take the company of the *Udana-vayu* at the throat and then mixes with the *Vyana*, the all pervading *Vayu* and thus the Pranayama is completed to benefit the whole system.

FIVE MAJOR PRANA-VAYUS

Life force or *Prana Shakti* also manifests in five major Prana-vayus so that the different functions of the body is maintained properly and it is under control. These are: *Prana*, *Apana*, *Samana*, *Udana* and *Vyana*. Upanishads call it 'in-breath'. Prana is inhalation, Apana exhalation, Samana the time between the two, and Udana is the extension of Samana. Both Prana and Apana can be controlled by through Tantric and Yogic practices. Writing about Prana Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati says:

'Prana has been described as a type of complex multi-dimensional energy consisting of a combination of electrical, magnetic,

electromagnetic, photonic, ocular, thermal and mental energies. The five principal subdivisions of Prana, which exist in the different parts of body, have varying densities of ionic fields. They may be visualized as swirling clouds of differing colours and hues.'

(*Prana Pranayama Pranavidya*, p. 5)

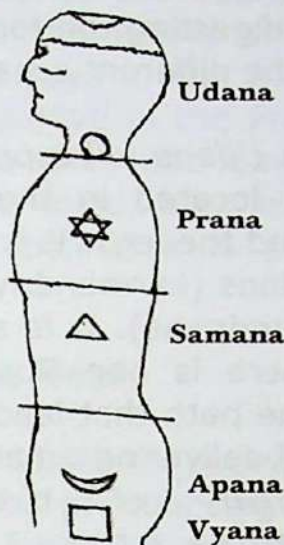
The *Pancha Pranas* or the five sub-pranas, (Prana, Apana, Samana, Vyana and Udana) as collectively known, function in relation to the five lower psychic centres and the various channels of energy. These are being described hereunder:

1. Prana: *Prana* is the vital force constantly flowing from heart. The sub-prana called Prana belongs to a specific part of the body between the larynx and the top of the diaphragm. Let us see what Swami Niranjanananda writes about Prana:

'It controls the functioning of the heart and the lungs and all the activities that take place in the chest region such as breathing, swallowing and the circulation of the blood. This manifestation of Prana is experienced in the form of light particles moving upwards.'
(*ibid.*, p. 62)

Prana and Apana are the most influential of the five *vayus* (air). Prana is the inward moving force which is said to create a field moving upwards from the navel to throat. It also flows through the mouth and nose and rests in eyes and the ear. It

complements inhalation. The foetus in the mother's womb survives upto four months on the mother's Prana. Prana enters the foetus after four months and the individual life begins thenceforth.



Five Pranas

2. Apana: It is responsible for downward movements. It is active at anus and genital region. Located in the pelvic region between the navel and the perineum, Apana is the second manifestation of Prana. It does the function of controlling the kidneys, bladder, bowels, the excretory and reproductive organs. Apana is the outward moving force which is said to create a field moving downwards from the navel to the anus. It produces semen. It eliminates gas, faeces, urine, and clears other toxic materials. It does function of excretion and pulls out semen etc. It also causes the birth of baby in the delivery a conceiving mother.

3. Samana: It does the function of firelike vibrations of solidification. As the name *Samana* implies, it functions as an equalizer between the two opposite forces of Prana and Apana. Its place is said to be between the navel and the ribcage. Samana helps in digesting the food and distributing its secretions to the different organs of the body.

4. Udana: *Udana* is responsible for upward movement. It is located in the extremities: the arms, the head and the legs. It is responsible for all the organs of actions (karmendriyas) and organs of knowledge (jnanendriyas). It is said in that out of several Nadis there is one Sushumna Nadi that journeys along the path that leads to eternity, i.e., that is capable of delivering emancipation from the world of sorrows of birth and death. (*Kathopanishad*, 6.16)

5. Vyana: *Vyana* does vibrations of spaciousness. This Prana is said to pervade the whole body, the eyes, the ears, the private parts and circulate the blood. It keeps some energy in reserve to boost some particular organs which require some extra energy. It functions as a coordinating vital force.

UPA-PRANAS

Yogashastras describe five Upa-Pranas which are linked to these Pranas. For example, *Naga* is with Prana, *Kurma* with Apana, *Krikala* with Samana, *Devadutta* with Udana, and *Dhananjaya* with Vyana. *Naga*'s function is spreading air,

causing hiccup etc. Eyelids are up and down with shame Naga. Krikala does in hunger and thirst. Devadutta is for yawning and twisting the body. Dhananjaya is at the medula oblongata. The electro-magnetic power of the Dhananjaya can grasp the thoughts of the cosmos. As it in our brain, it pervades the whole universe. It is like God. Lord Krishna says in the Bh.Gita: 'I am the great Prana Dhananjaya in the Pranas.' Even after death, Dhananjaya does not leave the body with Subtle body unlike mind, ego, intellect. It leaves only when the Kapalakriya is performed to the dead body.

Pranic Mantras at Meal

The Yoga of ideation (*Bhavayoga*) prescribes specific mantras for pronouncing mentally at the time of taking the food. It is advised to recite these mantras with the first five morsels and simultaneously take the will of ideation. These mantras are given below:

The person who is going to take meal should say '**Pranaya svaha**' (प्राणाय स्वाहा) with the first morsel dedicating it to Prana and feeling that the Prana is satisfied. It is said that if the Prana is cool and contented, the vision i.e., our eyes are too so. Then with the second morsel one should say the mantra '**Vyanaya svaha**' (व्यानाय स्वाहा) and feel that the senses of hearing, i.e., our ears are satisfied. With the third morsel say the mantra '**Apanaya svaha**' (अपानाय स्वाहा) and have the feeling that the sense of speech has become cool and calm. Then with the fourth morsel pronounce

the mantra '**Samanaya svaha**' (समानाय स्वाहा) and feel that the Mind has become peaceful, and with the fifth morsel recite the mantra '**Udanaya svaha**' (उदानाय स्वाहा) and imagine that the skin has cooled down.

Distribution of Pranas & Diseases

Indian thoughts contained in the Vedas and even in the Ayurveda admit that the whole of the creation is made of five basic elements, *Panchabhautika*. The constitution of human body, its preservation, birth of diseases and their elimination all happens undoubtedly by the functioning of the five elements (panchamahabhutas) – earth, water, fire, air and ether. The basic cosmic energy, its kinds, its forms, the three Gunas, the five great elements and the three Doshas, all are inevitably inter-related. The Pranic energy is stored in the physical body where it is subdivided into five components according to its interaction with the five great elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Later it transforms matter and for that it manifests into more gross forms of energy like mechanical, chemical, thermal and electrical. It is necessary to maintain these energies and have a balance between body and mind with proper care about the physical, subtle or mental aspects of our being failing which one may fall ill. Sometimes Prana runs in excess either in the Ida Nadi or in the Pingala Nadi or simultaneously in both creating problem in the body.

Nadis, The Psychic Channels

Chakras, Nadis, Lingas, Vyoma-panchaka, Shiva-Shakti etc. form the very core of Tantric Yoga. The idea of subtle vital force (Prana) and the channels along which it flows (Nadis) appear in the earliest Upanishads (7th-8th century B.C.). The heart was said to be the centre of the 72000 Nadis or subtle cannels, and the place into which senses are withdrawn during sleep. The very first verse of the *Shatchakra-Nirupana*, a modern Yoga treatise, illustrates the whole gamut of Yoga and Tantra where it has been very clearly stated that one should have the awareness of these constituents of Sadhana. Nadis are subtle channels of energy in the human being (*shakti ka vivara*). Though *Nadi* means a nerve or artery in the ordinary sense, the Nadis that we talk about in Yoga are not of physical nature. The Nadis of Yoga are psychic channels supposed to distribute Pranic energy throughout the entire human body.

Nerves are the conduits of Pranic or vital force known to exist in thousands in the body like the minute fibres of the Ashvattha tree. These Nadis are innumerable and have spread in the body like a net. According to *Nadi Vijnana* (I.4-5) the

number of Nadis in the body are three and half crores, both gross and subtle. Both physical and psychic, there are as many as 3,50,000 Nadis as has been stated in the *Shiva Samhita* (2.13). However the *Shatchakra-Nirupana* records 72,000 Nadis (quoted from the *Bhutashuddhi Tantra*, comm. on verse 1 by Woodroffe). Some are gross Nadis, such as the physical nerves, veins and arteries, known to medical science. But the Nadis known as Yoga-Nadis, are not of gross or physical character, they exist in subtle forms described as subtle channels (vivara) of Pranic or vital energy. Solar and lunar currents run through these channels. The importance of Sadhana, according to Hindu beliefs, largely depends on the purification of the body and mind. Purification of the Nadis is perhaps the chief factor in the process of purifying the body and then the mind. It is because the purity of Nadis facilitates the ascent of the Kundalini Shakti. 'Only when all the Nadis are and Chakras, which are full of impurities, are purified is the Yogi able to retain Prana.' (*Hathayoga-Pradipika*, 5.2) The great Kundalini Shakti can be awakened if the all the Nadis (energy channels) are cleared and the quantity and quality of Prana (vital force) is increased and even stored in the body.

Out of the Nadis described, the principal Nadis are fourteen: *Sushumna, Ida, Pingala, Gandhari, Hastijihvika, Kuhu, Saraswati, Pusha, Shankhini, Payasvani, Varuni, Alambusa, Vishvodari and Yashasvini*. (*Shiva Samhita*, 2.14-15) Among them *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna* are the chief. And even thereto *Sushumna* is the greatest. *Sushumna Nadi* is in the centre threading

through the vertebral column, i.e., Merudanda. Thus Ida is in the left and the Pingala is in the right, in the middle way is the Sushumna. This the middle channel in the body. It is most beloved of the Yogis. Buddha called it '*Majjhima-nikaya*'.



Network of Subtle Channels(Nadis)

According to *Yoga-Chudamani*, there are ten major Nadis – *Pradhanah pranavahinyo bhuyastasu dasha smritah* (प्रधानः प्राणवाहिन्यो भूयस्तसु दश स्मृतः।) (*Yoga-Chudamani*, 17) : *Ida, Pingala, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hastijihva, Pusha, Yashasvini, Alambusha, Kuhu, and Shankhini*. The group these Nadis is called *Nadi-Chakra* or *Mahachakra*. Though differences persist there among the scholars as far as the number and function of these Nadis is concerned.

The number of Nadis is 14 according to *Jabaladarshan Upanishad* and *Trishikha Brahmanopanishad*. They reveal that there is a Kanda or Nabhikanda that is 9 inches above the Muladhara. It is like an egg of a hen. In the middle of it, there is Sushumna Nadi that keeps attached to all the Chakras. Though the number of Nadis that arise from this Kanda is 72,000, there 14 major Nadis. Out of the 14 Nadis, three Nadis – *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna* - are most important, and even thereto *Sushumna* stands unique. It is also called *Brahma Nadi*. This *Brahma Nadi* is spread through the middle of the spinal cord to the forehead. *Kundali* is situated below the *Nabhikanda*.

Breath or *Prana* is the main source of *Prana-urja* (life-force). The experience of breath can be both gross and psychic. The basic of psychic breath is the gross physical breath. It is in the form of the air moving through the nostrils at a approximately 15 times per minute, 21,600 times every twenty-four hours, knowingly or unknowingly. The experience of this breathing through *Pranayama* or concentration can be termed psychic breathing.

This can be experienced in the Ujjayi Pranayama. Psychic breath is the first awareness to Pranic awareness. The first experience of Prana is got in the chest. As soon as it becomes psychic, it manifests at the nerve centre i.e., Manipura Chakra, from where the umbilical cord of the new born baby is linked to the mother's womb. The Nadi system in our body or the psychic patha is the second key to Pranic awareness through which awareness, breath and Prana are directed in one stream of combined force. Out of the several Nadis, three Nadis Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are the most important ones and work as major pathas for the flow of Prana.

The Yoga Shastra is an important component of Vedic understanding which can be affirmed by the following verse of the *Kathopanishad* which discusses about unlimited number of nerve currents spreading all over the body. 'Among them, a large number (described for the sake of brevity as 101) enter the top of the cranium, streaming upwards ex-heart. One Nadi out of them, acclaimed as Sushumna through which, if the soul passes out of the body, it journeys along the path leading to Eternity, on the other if the exit of the Jiva happens through through any other Nadi, results in Samsara bondage to the cycle of birth and death.'(extracted from *Five Principal Upanishads*, p.261):

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः, तासां मूर्धान्निभिः सूतैका ।
 तयोर्ध्वमायन्नऽमृतत्वमेति, विश्वशून्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥
 (Kathopanishad, 2.16)

'There are unlimited number of nerve currents, spreading all over the body. Amongst them, a larger number (described for the sake of brevity as 101 here) enter the top of the Cranium, streaming upwards ex-heart. One Nadi out of them, acclaimed as Sushumna through which, if the soul passes out of the body, it journeys along the path leading to eternity, on the other if the exist of Jiva happens through any other Nadi, results in Samsara bondage to the cycle of birth and death.'

(Five Principal Upanishads, p.261)

Sw. Niranjanananda Saraswati writes:

'The first psychic passage usually experienced is that part of the frontal passage which extends between manipura kshetram at the navel, and vishuddhi kshetram at the throat pit. This is the passage used in the first steps of ajapa japa. The full frontal passage, like sushumna nadi in the spine, extends from mooladhara to ajna. The *kshetrams* which are the trigger points for the activation of the chakras in the spine lie along this passage.'

(Prana Pranayama Pranavidya, p. 66)

IDA NADI, THE LUNAR CHANNEL

Ida Nadi starts from the left side of the Muladhara Chakra and ends at the left side of the Ajna Chakra in between the eyebrows. Besides

Sushumna and Pingala, Ida Nadi is also very important psychic channel used as a psychic passage. It is noteworthy fact that 'when Ida is used as a passage, the mental force becomes dominant, which can cause one to lose pranic vitality and mental stability.' (Sw. Satyananda) It is also called Chandra Nadi because it gives cold air. Starting from the base of the spine it rises upward in a curved way and crosses the middle channel, *Sushumna Nadi* at four points in the spine where the Chakras are located. It also meets there with the Pingala Nadi at those energy vortices. It also called Ganga. Bija mantra '*Thum*' is located at the left in the forehead. Inhalation by the left nostril brings cool air to the body.

In the *Shiva Svarodaya*, the Ida Nadi is said to be very auspicious one because breathing by this leads to mental peace. Inhalation by this Nadi is suggested by the wise when one wants to perform some mental acts, like study, prayer, contemplation or any other act related to mind and peaceful atmosphere. Even when sleeping in the daytime, one should lie taking to right side so that the breath may run from the Ida Nadi cooling the body for the simple reason that the daytime is supposed to be hot. Thanks to our Yoga teacher Revd. Acharya Ram Surat Shukla, who, while giving us guidance about Yoga, always made it a point to change our Svara (breath) and start breathing from the left nostril, i.e., Ida Nadi, and, for this change of Svara he taught a unique methodology called '*Vishnu Mudra*'. In this Vishnu Mudra, one has to lie in the right side with head resting on the elbow and start breathing from the

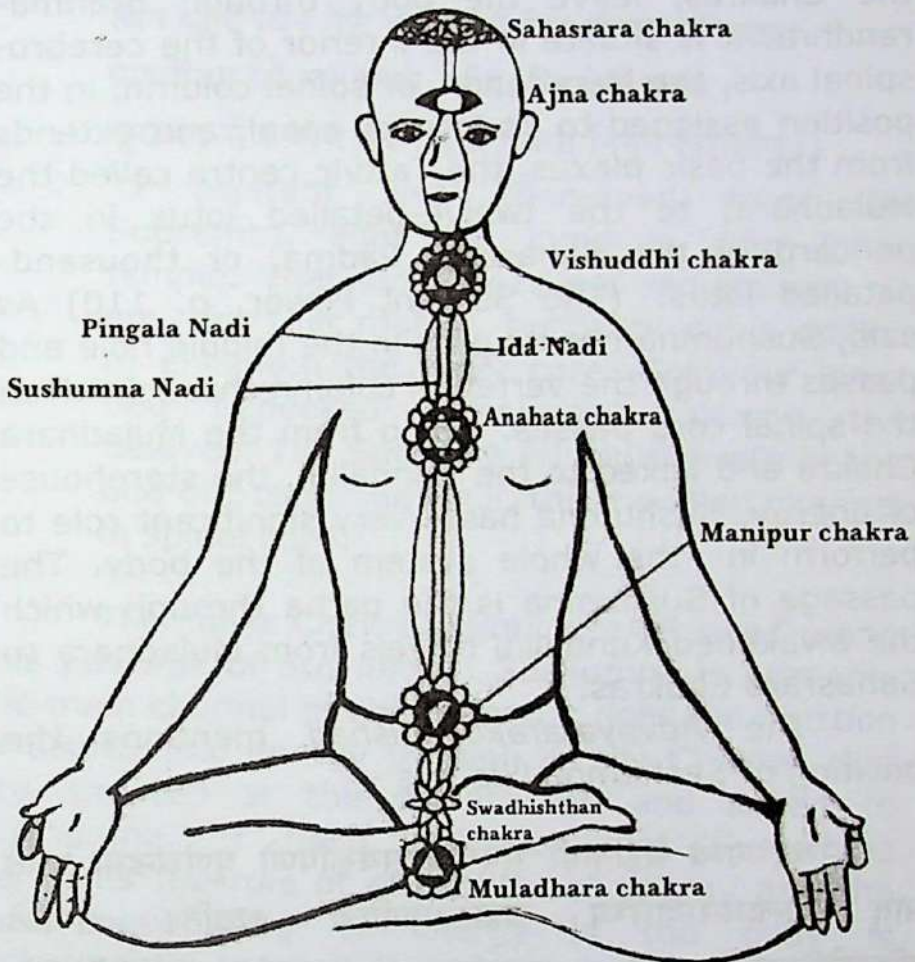
left nostril unlike the very same pose often seen in the pictures where Lord Vishnu is shown reclining on the bed of Shesha, the serpent God. Our Acharya also taught us to chant the mantra 'Shiva', pronounce 'shi' while inhaling from the left nostril and 'va' while exhaling from the right nostril. Thus harmonizing the mind by changing Svara and start the inhalation by the Ida Nadi. This is a prerequisite for the successful performance of Yoga.

PINGALA NADI, THE SOLAR CHANNEL

Outside the spine and on each side of Sushumna are the Nadis, Ida and Pingala. Pingala Nadi also originates from the Muladhara Chakra and meets with the Ida and Sushumna at the Ajna Chakra. It is on the right side, and coiling round Sushumna, has its exit in the right nostril. After Sushumna, Pingala Nadi is also very important psychic channel used as a psychic passage. It is also called Surya Nadi. Breathing by this nostril gives heat. Known as Yamuna, it is also said to be sun-like (*surya-svarupini*) and carries poison like fluid causing death. Rising from the base of spine it crosses the Sushumna Nadi at the point of Chakras in the spine. All the three Nadis meet at these Chakras drop the flow of Prana.

Pingala Nadi is a hot channel and breathing by this produces heat in the body. The experts of Svara Vijnana, therefore, suggest that one should inhale by the right nostril while performing such actions which require the heat of the body, like taking food, doing physical works, discharging

water or faeces, having intercourse, etc. Even while going to sleep in the night one should remember to lie taking to the left side so that the right nostril may run in the night giving heat to the body. This will protect the body from cold.



Major Nadis & Chakras

SUSHUMNA NADI, THE MERIDIAN CHANNEL

Sushumna Nadi is the most powerful passage rising straight up through the centre of the spinal column. 'It is the greatest channel and others are subordinate to it, as, by the power of Yoga Prana is made to go through it, and passing the Chakras, leave the body through Brahma-randhra. It is situate in the interior of the cerebro-spinal axis, the Merudanda, or spinal column, in the position assigned to its interior canal, and extends from the basic plexus, the Tattvic centre called the Muladhara, to the twelve-petalled lotus in the pericarp of the Sahasrara Padma, or thousand-petalled lotus.' (The Serpent Power, p. 110) As said, Sushumna has its path in the middle hole and passes through the vertebral column through which the spinal cord passes. Rising from the Muladhara Chakra and linked to the Kundalini, the storehouse of energy, Sushumna has a very significant role to perform in the whole system of the body. The passage of Sushumna is the patha through which the awakened Kundalini travels from Muladhara to Sahasrara Chakras.

The *Advayatarakopanishad* mentions the position of Sushumna like this -

देह मध्ये ब्रह्मनाडी सुषुम्णा सूर्यरूपिणो पूर्णचन्द्रमा वर्तते
सातु मूलाधारादाराभ्य ब्रह्मरन्ध्रगामिनी भवति। तन्मध्ये
तडित्कोटिसमानकान्त्या मृणालसूत्रवत्सूक्ष्माङ्गी कुण्डलिनीति
प्रसिद्धास्ति।'

According to Saint Kabir, the Inner self which is eternal and immaculate shines brilliantly and there is no need for any temporal light. Close to it is the Sushumna Nadi where the Supreme Soul resides.

बिरहिनी मंदिर दियना बार ।

बिन बाती बिन तेल जुगति सों बिन दीपक उजियार ।

प्राणपिया मेरे घर आयो, रचि रचि सेज संवार ।

सुखमन सेज परम तत रहिया, पिया निर्गुन निराकार ।।

'O aspirant Jiva (bereaved from the Supreme), light the lamp in your inner temple. That lamp does not require any oil etc., for that matter, but work out a device to enlighten the inner core. Get your inner bed bedecked nicely to welcome the Beloved. The Supreme Principle dwells at the bed of Sushumna Nadi, the meridian channel in spinal cord.'

The main Chakra points are situated along this passage of Sushumna. Sushumna is primarily the main channel of energy and it does the function of distributing energy through all the Chakras that are situated at the spinal cord and linked to Sushumna. It need not say that Sushumna performs the role of distributor of energy and the total networking of energy in the body is instrumental through this channel as it is through this Nadi that the Chakras are supplied energy from the Kundalini, the powerhouse of energy.

Sushumna is called Saraswati. Names after all the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati,

all the three Nadis – Ida, Pingala and Sushumna unite at the Ajna Chakra and flow separately from that point. Sushumna extends from the Muladhara centre to the cerebral region. It is in the form of Fire (*vahni-svarupa*). It has within it the *Vajrini Nadi* in the form of the Sun (*surya-svarupa*), within it is the pale-nectar dropping Chitra or Chitrini Nadi, which is also called Brahma-nadi. In fact, *Chitra* is the name of Sushumna. Sushumna carries five colours of rainbow, i.e., red, purple, blue, green and yellow. *Chitra* is the innermost Nadi there and in that is the subtlest of all hollows called Brahma-randhra, the Nadi through which the entry to Brahman is open.

Sushumna is of three Gunas (*trigunatmika*): *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamasa*. It is important for the Sadhaka that he should have the knowledge of all the Chakras for the practices related to this Nadi.

Nadis (described in the *Sangita-Ratnakara & Yogarnava*)

The Tantra texts like *Sangita-Ratnakara* (Shlokas 144-156) present a description of as many as 14 Nadis (energy channels in the body which are as follows:

1. *Sushumna*, in the central channel of the spinal cord.
2. *Ida*, the left sympathetic chain, stretching from under the left nostril to below the left kidney in the form of a bent bow.
3. *Pingala*, the corresponding chain on the right.

4. *Kuhu*, the pudic of the sacral plexus, to the left of the spinal cord.
5. *Gandhari*, to the back of the left sympathetic chain, supposed to stretch from below the corner of the left eye to the left leg.
6. *Hasti-jihva*, to the front of the left sympathetic chain, stretching from below the corner of the left eye to the great toe of the left foot.
7. *Saraswati*, to the right of Sushumna, stretching upto the tongue.
8. *Pusa*, to the back of the right sympathetic chain, stretching from below the corner of the right eye to the abdomen.
9. *Payasvini*, between Pusa and Saraswati, auricular branch of the cervical plexus on the left.
10. *Shankhini*, between Gandhari and Saraswati, auricular branch of the cervical plexus on the left.
11. *Yashasvini*, to the front of the right sympathetic chain, stretching from the right thumb to left leg.
12. *Varuna*, the nerves of the sacral plexus, between Kuhu and Yashasvini, ramifying over the lower trunk and the limbs.
13. *Vishvodara*, the nerves of the lumbar plexus, between Kuhu and the Hasti-jihva ramifying over the lower trunk and the limbs.
14. *Alambusa*, the coccygeal nerves, proceeding from the sacral vertebrae to the urinogenitary organs.' (Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power*, pp. 113-114)

Secret of Nadis

Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are said to be the three fold aspects of *Shabda Brahman*. Within

the fiery red Tamasic Sushumna is the lustrous Rajasic Vajra or Vajrini Nadi, and within the latter the pale nectar-dropping Sattvic Chitra or Chitrini. The interior of the latter is called Brahma Nadi. The first is said to be fire-like (Vahni-svarupa), the second sun-like (Surya-svarupa), and the third Moon-like (Chandra-svarupa). The opening at the end of the Chitrini Nadi is called the door of the Brahman. It is said that Goddess Kundali enters to ascend through it. It is called Royal Road.

Ida is feminine (Shakti-rupa) and the embodiment of nectar (Amrita-vigraha) on the left side, and the second, Pingala is masculine, Rudra (Raudramika) on the right side. Both of these Nadis indicate time or Kala, but Sushumna devours the Kala. These are connected with the alternate breathing from right to the left nostril and vice versa. (The Hindus have long known that breathing is done through one nostril for a period of time and then through the other. In Pranayama to make the breathing change one nostril is closed. But the skilled Yogi can shift the breathing at his will without closing a nostril with his fingers. At the moment of death breathing is through both nostrils. – *ibid.*, p.111)

Thus it becomes clear that there are various energy pathways or matrices within the body but the three most important paths of Pranic energy are only Ida, Pingala and Sushumna nadis. Ida and Pingala nadis which coil around Sushumna in three dimensions like a spiral staircase are flows of charged ions able to exert an influence upon the flow of Prana. Ida Nadi is a negatively charged flow of Prana and Pingala Nadi is positively charged

flow of Prana. 'Discharges occurring between them are likely to influence all the dimensions of consciousness of one who meditates upon them. In fact, it is believed by some scientists that the psychic centres, or chakras, in the body are nothing more than areas of immense radiation caused by localized accumulations of pranic energy emitting various sub-atomic or 'elementary' particles.'(ibid., p.5)

Dimensions of Yoga

Today when people have little concern for the Scriptural texts like Vedas, Samhitas, Smritis and Upanishads, Yoga Sadhana has become more and more relevant for their well being. The etiology of maladies today including the deteriorating environment, stems from an erosion of sanctity. Lack of spiritual hygiene is a precarious thing. This may endanger the entire social fabric. The fact of unveiling the splendors of human person lies at the core of spirituality which is instrumental through Yoga. It gets one the true exhilaration in life and never there remains dryness. The spiritual discipline and techniques of meditation enable an aspirant to attain the self-realization of the Supreme Reality, the *Paramatman*.

There was a time when Yoga was considered a taboo and people had a very dismal outlook. With the trend of rising popularity and relevance of Yoga today, its therapeutic procedures have caught the attention of even medical experts world over. In the words of Robert Arnett:

'Through the science of Yoga, India has given the West a far more valuable gift than all the material wealth or technology the

West could give in return. Even today, India offers great inspirations to those persons who are seeking oneness with God and through Yoga anyone can find the direction; he or she needs to succeed. That is India's gift to world. ...Of all the nations in the world, India is the most spiritually blessed. More and more Americans are learning that materialism does not give lasting satisfaction, and they are turning to India for spiritual guidance....'

The word 'Yoga' gets origin from the root 'yuj' of the Sanskrit grammar which means 'to yoke', i.e., union of the *Jivatman*, the Individual Soul with *Paramatman*, the Supreme Soul. Patanjali in his *Yogasutra* defines Yoga as 'योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः' i.e., restriction of the fluctuations of the mind stuff (*vrittis*). Yoga arises in a person when the five *Vrittis* of mind (प्रमाण-*Pramana*, विपर्यय-*Viparyaya*, विकल्प-*Vikalpa*, निद्रा-*Nidra* and स्मृति-*Smriti* - 'प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः'- *Yogadarshan*, 1.6) get absolved in the mind by practice and detachment, and the mind gets established in the *Atman* (*drashta*) - 'तदा द्रष्टुं स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम्' (ibid., 1.3). Here *Chitta* is required to be free of any kind of contact with the objects (*vishayas*). Defining Yoga Maharshi Dattatreya calls it the unity of *Prana* and *Apana*, *Manas* and *Prana*, and *Atman* and *Paramatman*. Panini has used the root 'yuj' of the Sanskrit language in two different meanings - 'युजिर् योगे' and 'युज् समाधौ' which means 'to yoke', i.e., union of the *Jivatman*, the Individual Soul with *Paramatman*, the Supreme Soul. So

there is no contradiction since it is essential for the *Chitta* to be free of contact with desires or objects while uniting the *Prana* and *Apana*. Bhagawat Vyasa terms Yoga as *Samadhi* - 'योगः समाधिः' (Vyasabhasya, *ibid.*, 1.1).

Why do we need Yoga today is the most burning point? Before answering this question we will have to delve deep with the state of people today desperately inclined to amass wealth either by hook or by crook. The alarming conditions of degradation in human values and rising of terrorism, rioting, corruption, anarchy, chaos and disorder in society, self-centredness, and diseases of body and mind are what we are confronting with and that has to be tackled. The various aspects of Yoga that are supposed to be dwelt with here in this book will focus on the awakening of our latent consciousness. Yoga enlivens the dead cells and tissues of the body and creates new cells. The subtle nervous system in the body is activated by the practice of Yoga and the body gets rid of diseases. Asanas and Pranayamas have tremendous effect on the inner system of the body toning up muscles and oxygenating the blood vessels. Practice of postures stretches and shrinks the body organs and relaxing poses accelerate the power of resistance from diseases. Pancrease become active and formation of insulin starts to combat diseases like diabetes. The digestive system which is the basis of the functioning of most of the systems also gets improved.

Yoga is designed to enable people to begin from their immediate, present state of consciousness (*Chaitanya*) and move forward, day

by day, into a state of wholeness, well being, and enlightenment. Even a beginner in Yoga can reap much dividends by adapting it in life. Initially he can shed much physical tension, mental/emotional turbulence, and prepare the way for a life of higher consciousness. Yoga is the process of harmonizing body, mind, and spirit with the ultimate goal of liberating oneself from Samsara, the wheel of death and rebirth.

Yoga has a marvelous history. There was a time when the entire life of an Indian was permeated with the thought of the higher, and they prayed for the welfare of the whole world -

‘सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयः।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग् भवेत्।।’

(May all be happy! May all be disease free!

May all be auspicious-looking!

Let there no body remain miserable!)

Indian sages first wrote of Yoga in the *Rigveda* over 5000 years ago. The system of Yoga was developed and passed down primarily through oral teachings from Guru to the disciple in an unbroken tradition for thousands of years. It was almost the same Yoga as of today. The teachings of Yoga are not relics of the past, neither are they unattainable, they are timeless universal truths, accessible to anyone willing to practice them. Maharshi Patanjali made the provision for Ashtangayoga where Yama, Niyam and Asanas form the External Yoga for purification of mind and body, and Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi form the Internal Yoga for self-development and attainment of liberation and Moksha.

Yoga is virtually synonymous with *Bharata* (India) (*bha* = light, and *rata* = that revels in, i.e., one that revels in the effulgence of light = Atman) which is meant to inspire millions and millions. There is no denial of the world but the world can be lived well by a Yogi – ‘*Yohgah karmashu kaushalam*’ (योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्). What one has to relinquish is attachment (*sangah*). As long as one is unconscious, negativity or sufferings, in forms of resentment, hatred, depression, jealousy, is inevitable. Seeking oneness with the Creator or Self-realization is the ultimate goal of Yoga. A contemporary German spiritual leader and Yoga master Heinz Grill says:

“It is an infinite, mental, internalized and joyful attempt to realise the highest, most widely conceived and perfect ideal of humanity.”

Sw. Sukhabodhnanda says:

‘Yoga is a wonderful science to dismantle this negative system and create a great inner order. When the inner world of our mind is orderly then we will see the external order as being more orderly.’

(*The Speaking Tree*)

The individual soul is an integral part of the Supreme Soul, and the realization of this truth is called Yoga. Yoga is to evolve one with the sense of equanimity. It is to make one realise that ‘I am not body, I am not mind, I am not intellect but I am

consciousness (Chaitanya). Yoga is what the great master minds, the saints and savants and the great Acharyas have given to this land for the transformation of our consciousness and the well being of the humanity. With Yoga we constantly ask to affirm in our divine prayer:

'O mighty source of all that is right and good, help me to seek my strength as an expression of Thy Infinite power. Let me banish the darkness of disease: It is for ever foreign to Thy light.'

Yoga is a great gem of Eastern wisdom, particularly India. Yoga sadhana is the best path to accomplish the highest aims of human life. Yoga has been practiced in India from times immemorial. Besides the Yogic and Tantric texts, Yoga occupies very important place in most of the Indian scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Puranas etc. Traditions record that it has been more in practice for over two millennia. Though practiced in the same spirit of elevating the humanitarian outlook, Yoga has been popular in many different ways. If some one is really determined to go for Yoga, one has to think over the possibilities and methods of eleven types of Yoga, like *Bhaktiyoga*, *Karmayoga*, *Jnanayoga*, *Rajayoga*, *Mantrayoga*, *Layayoga*, *Tantrayoga*, *Hathayoga*, *Kundaliniyoga* or *Kriyayoga*, *Svarayoga* and *Bhavayoga*.

Though these kinds of Yoga have different techniques and methods for practice all are interwoven and interlinked and lead to the same

goal. However Dattatreya's Yogashastra mentions only four categories of Yoga - 1. *Mantrayoga*, requires chanting of Mantras for getting *Siddhis*, 2. *Layayoga*, remembering God while performing daily duties, 3. *Hathayoga*, cleansing the body and concentrating the mind by the practice of different Mudras, Asanas, Pranayamas and Bandhas, and, 4. *Rajayoga*, purifying the Chitta and establishing communion with the effulgent Atman by the practice of Ashtangayoga (eight limbs of Yoga like Yama, Niyama, etc.). *Bhagawadgita* presents a systematic account of *Dhyanayoga*, *Samkhyayoga*, *Karmayoga*, and *Samnyasayoga* also.

This country has a vast storehouse of knowledge enshrined in the Vedas (books of scriptural knowledge), Upanishads (philosophical wisdom), Puranas (ancient cosmologies), the epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and within the *Mahabharata* that masterpiece of Indian scripture, the *Bhagavadgita*. The word 'Yoga' first occurs in the Vedas, the treasure trove of Hindu wisdom (2nd millennium B.C.) where the Vedic Rishis used Yoga in the eulogy of Indra or Agni. 'O Indra, come with us so that we may acquire what had not yet been achieved.' (*Rigveda*, 9.5.3) Though ancient wisemen were adept in keeping their bodies clean and mind pure by constant contemplation of the Divinity, there was hardly any need for practices like Kriyayoga. Yoga, for the first time, occurs in the *Kathopanishad* (6.11):

The sages and saints of ancient India had made all provisions for the human being to get spiritualized, no matter what path one chooses from amongst the several ways offered by them.

So it is for the practicant what path of Yoga or which Yoga one chooses for his practice in life. Let us consider which form appeals us out of these. Yoga is a great gem of Eastern wisdom, particularly India. Yoga Sadhana is the best path to accomplish the highest aims of human life.

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरमिन्द्रियधारणाम्।
अप्रमत्तस्य तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ।।

'The continence, (containment of all his organs for achieving inward concentration in the meditation of the Supreme), is known as Yoga. At that stage the practitioner of this discipline becomes alert and wakeful; because, just as attainment to Yoga, it can also be dissipated (through the slightest weakness of the senses).'

(*Five Principal Upanishads*, p.257)

Acharya Narasimha expounds on the import of Yoga in his commentary of *Kathopanishad* (ibid): Yoga actually means, the communion of the Soul and the Super Soul. Yoga demands our moving away from the experiences of indulging in the material pursuits and directing our mental energy towards God-realization.

Krishna's message is obviously perceptible throughout all the eighteen chapters of *Bhagawad Gita*. The following verse depicts the actual basis to recognize Yoga.

तां विद्याद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम्।
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ।।

'That state, called Yoga, which is free from the contact of sorrow (in the form of transmigration), should be known. Nay, this Yoga should be resolutely practiced with an unwearied mind.' (Bh. Gita, 6.23)

As for Chakras in the body, Acharyas admit that Yoga was in practice during the time of the *Atharvaveda* (10.2.31) as reflected in the mantra – (अष्टचक्रा नवद्वारा देवानां पूरयोध्या । तस्यां हिरण्यमयः कोषः स्वर्गो ज्योतिषावृतः ॥), i.e., there are eight Chakras (energy centers) and nine doors (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, mouth, anus and the genitals) in this body of Ayodhya, the city of gods. In this city, there is also effulgent *Hiranyamayakosha* full of infinite, unlimited divine peace and bliss.

Moreover, Upanishads are great Indian scriptures which contain the original exposition of the Vedic philosophy. *Prana* (the vital energy) as well as *Nadis* (the subtle channels of the body) find mention in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (छान्दोग्य उपनिषद्)(1.3.3; 8.6.1; 8.6.3), *Brihadaranyakopaniṣad* 'बृहदारण्यकोपनिषद्'(1.5.3) and *Kathopanishad* 'कठोपनिषद्' (2.3.16).

Furthermore, *Bhagavad Gita* too, reflecting the quintessence of Vedas dwells on the origin of Yoga - God first gave the teaching of Yoga to Sun God Vivaswan, who passed it to Manu, from Manu to Ikshvaku, and thenceforth the tradition of Yoga continued further –

'इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम्।

विवस्वान मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत्॥' (Gita, IV)

Though we don't come across the words, like Chakras (the energy centers in the body) and the Kundalini Shakti in the Shrutis, there is no denying the fact that our sages and great Acharyas were adept in the awakening of the inner energy leading to emancipation. However in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the process of raising the Prana to the brain has been described (1.6.1) for establishing communion with the Atman. Commenting on this Mantra of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Adi Shankaracharya writes that the *Sushumna Nadi*, the middle channel is the door for self-realization. Unfolding the value of *Prana*, Upanishads aver, 'A man may have ears, eyes, all faculties and parts of the body, but unless he has Mahaprana there is no consciousness.' The *Saswata Samhita* (2.58) of the *Vaishnava Pancharatra Agama* describes only four Chakras.

Though the tradition of Yoga has continued from the days of yore, the credit for its systematized presentation goes to Maharshi Patanjali who composed all the extant knowledge of Yoga into 196 Aphorisms called *Yogasutras*. The philosophy of Yoga revealed through these aphorisms focuses on the duty of a person to live a life of fulfillment by the practice of Yoga. The Yoga of Patanjali does not mean that you go on doing only the external practice. He stresses on the inner Yoga and that is why the Asanas he has elaborated aim at meditation and Samadhi (Super-consciousness).

However the number of Asanas which are in practice these days were devised by later exponents of Yoga. Prominent Yoga texts available in

published or unpublished forms are: *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, *Goraksha Samhita*, *Yogabija*, *Shatchakra-Nirupana* from the *Shri Tattva-Chintamani* by Shri Purnananda Paramahansa, *Yogashastra* of Dattatreya, *Amanaska Yoga*, *Chandrodaya-Vilasa*, *Yoga-Ratnakara*, *Yoga-Chudamani*, *Yogatattva*, *Yogashiksha*, *Yoga Kundali*, *Yogaraja*, *Jabaladarshan*, *Shandilya Yoga*, *Mandala Brahmana*, *Dhyana-vindu*, *Nada-vindu*, *Yogashikhopenishad* etc. Out of them, the *Shiva Samhita* and the *Satchakra-Nirupana* are the most valuable texts which expound the fundamental philosophy of Tantric Yoga. Even the treatises like *Hathayoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Goraksha Samhita* etc. are based on Tantra.

There are hundreds or more of such techniques, and, therefore, as many different Yogas. According to Swami Vishnudevanada, the vast science of Yoga can be summarized into 5 principles for easy practice in one's life. These are: 1. Proper exercise, 2. Proper breathing, 3. Proper relaxation, 4. Proper diet and, 5. Positive thinking and meditation.

Yoga has been misused today by those those who think that it is meant for curing diseases of the body and their aim ends there only, and, thus original Yoga hardly survives today. The actual purport of Yoga has lost in the crowd of emerging Yogis today. They think that it is a marvelous means of exercising, stretching and freeing the body so that it can be healthy, long-lived, and vital instrument of the mind and soul. Of course, it is. But the most important benefit which Yoga carries

is that Yogis can become extremely clear-minded and can concentrate well. However a few Yogis who practice Hathayoga with the aim of spiritual development and realization of the self, do have clear minds and pure, healthy bodies are enabled to meditate easily and go for Samadhi (super-consciousness).

People have become more inclined to physical awareness. They do not have a sound health and a sound mind that was a pre-requisite for Yoga. *Hathayoga* has proved very helpful in controlling the manifestations of the mind. Mind is the most effective tool for gaining progress in spiritual practice. Right from Brahmarsi Vasishtha in his *Maha-Ramayana* or *Yoga-vasishtha* to *Bhagavadgita* taught by Lord Krishna and the *Aphorisms of Yoga* composed by Maharshi Patanjali, Mind has been enunciated to be very crucial in the practice of Yoga as well as other spiritual practices. The ancient Yogis therefore designed ways for bypassing the nature of the mind. With this purpose in view, Yoga has been categorized in the following manner:

KINDS OF YOGA

1. Rajayoga (The Royal Path)

Rajayoga is the royal or psychological Yoga that involves the mind. Rajayoga is said to be the highest form of Yoga. This system of *Yoga* is based on the process of changing the mind through the mind. Hathayoga is a branch of Rajayoga which prepares the Yogi for the higher stages of

Rajayoga. In fact, Rajayoga begins where Hathayoga ends, says Acharya Shankara:

एभिरङ्गैः समायुक्तो राजयोग उदाहृतः ।
किञ्चित् पक्वकषायाणां हठयागेन संयुतः ॥

(*Aprokshanubhuti*, 143)

It is also considered by some as a name for *Ashtangayoga*. The word 'Rajayoga' means 'Raja' which is 'full of effulgence' and 'Yoga' is 'Samadhi' or 'realization'. The main purpose of Rajayoga is to purify the mind by the practice of Yamas and Niyamas etc. and establish communion with the Supreme Soul. Rajayoga is the path of Self-Realization by way of meditation.

2. Jnanayoga (The Yoga of Wisdom)

Jnanayoga stresses the use of the mind to transcend the mind. Here the human mind has to strive incessantly to know and understand. It requires detachment, self discipline, longing for freedom, desire to hear the truth, reflection upon that truth, and meditation. It is to possible only after one reflects the knowledge which has been assimilated. When the mind is influenced through self-enquiry, it is called *Jnanayoga*. *Jnanayoga* or *Jnanamarga* is the Yoga of wisdom and develops the intellect or will. It leads the devotee to experience his union with Paramatman.

3. Bhaktiyoga (The Yoga of Devotion)

Bhaktiyoga or Yoga of love is the system in which love and devotion is emphasized.

Transforming the mind through emotion is called *Bhaktiyoga*. *Bhaktiyoga*, the Yoga of devotion, opens the heart. This path was meant for specially those who are emotional in nature. It is, therefore, motivated by the power of love. Here the God is an embodiment of love. The Sadhaka surrenders his all to God through prayers, worships, rituals and dedicated love. Singing the glory of Lord and chanting his Mantras form the quintessence of *Bhaktiyoga*. Singing the name of God aloud can elevate consciousness, clear the mind and even charge the environment with pure energy. Prayer and chanting can be better way of adoring God for those who find it difficult to concentrate during meditation or for whom the approach of calm discernment is too subtle.

4. Karmayoga (The Yoga of Action)

Changing the mind through selfless service and detachment is *Karmayoga*. The message of *Karmayoga* is 'to work in harmony with the Power that runs the universe, not being egoistically motivated, and having no compulsive desires relative to the future.' *Karmayoga* is the path of action of selfless-service. Yogeshvara Krishna says - 'योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा आत्मशुद्धये'. Even further *Karmayoga* is elaborated:

"*Karmayoga* is a selfless devotion of all inner as well as the outer activities as a Sacrifice to the Lord of all works, offered to the eternal as Master of all the soul's energies and austerities."

(*Bh. Gita*)

The job that one does is whether a liberating job or a binding one is determined by the attitude the particular job is done. Your motive for the work must be pure. You are merely an instrument and God is the doer. The Self does not function directly in absurd situations, it is the Gunas of the Prakriti. Sw. Sivananda advises us to 'give your hands to work, and keep your mind fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord.' Duty should not be avoided. The duty is towards God, or Self, who stands through all the specific circumstances of life. Try to be perfect in your work as much as possible.

5. Tantrayoga (The Yoga of Extension of Wisdom)

Tantras, also known as Agamas-revelations, are the ancient scriptures meant to spread the light of knowledge of our True Self and bring the humanity out of ignorance. *Tantrayoga* offers an alternative, and practical individual Moksha. Besides the Vedic one, it is called a Sadhana. When spirituality is declining these days due to the impact of Kaliyuga (iron age), and man is desperately trying to reinterpret himself in a spiritual reality, Tantra may prove the last way of salvation. *Tantrayoga* had been one of the potent powers for the spiritual regeneration of Sadhakas right from the days of yore. Tantra focuses on the dynamic aspect of divinity called Shakti, Energy, Kundalini or the Cosmic Mother. The Tantra Yogi endeavors to attune with the spiritual dynamic energy in order to transform personal limitations.

Tantrayoga is a pure path, but it has been abused by some self-proclaimed adherents. Tantrayoga is a special branch of Mantrayoga. It deals with the development of mechanisms for direct, fast and high-intensity physical impact of power of *Shabda* on specific targets. Compilations of the harsh vowel 'am' with some hard some hard syllables of the Sanskrit script are commonly used here. There are single letter mantras like *Kam, Kham, Gam, Gham, Yam, Cham, Chham, Jam, Jham, Pam, Pham, Bam, Bham, Shrim, Klim, Hrim, Phat*, etc. are frequently used as bija mantras in the creation of a Tantra.

6. Mantrayoga

As has been discussed under the topic 'The Human Body', a human being is defined to be an ensemble of the Physical (Gross) body, Subtle (mental and energy) body and an Astral body (the inner self or the domain of the soul). Pt. Shri Rama Sharma Acharya says: 'The refinement and development of any of these bodies would be incomplete without the other two. When we talk the role of *Shabda* or *Mantra Vijnana* in human life, we must analyze the respective effects on each of the three forms (bodies) of a human being...Our Gross body is a physical system consisting of bio-physicochemical components. The impact of sound on this system results in corresponding vibrations in the molecular, cellular (eg., an enzyme in a cell or membrane, or a hormone...) or organ (eg., the liver, uterus, or ears...) componets and generates isolated or cascade effects (positive or negative,

depending on the type of sound) on the interconnected subsystems.

Mantrayoga is an exact science. Mantrayoga seeks its origin in the Vedic science and also the Tantra. In fact, all the verses in the Vedas are called Mantras. A Mantra is a sound, word, or phrase that is repeated to yourself. A Mantra is a Divinity. By constant chanting of the Mantra the Sadhaka imbibes the virtues and powers of the Deity. So any person who can chant or sing Vedas is said to attain Moksha or union with God. It is merely chanting the Mantras that can do all miracles. Mantrayoga is the easiest way to achieve difficult state of *Pratyahara* or the withdrawal of senses. Chanting done in this way is able to internalize the sense oriented mind from the external world and focus on inner consciousness.

Mantra is nothing but a combination or grouping of various alphabets (*Akshara*). The effect of sound vibrations can be observed on physical plane, particularly on brain. Chanting Mantras like Om, Gayatri etc. affect the brain wave emission patterns. A alpha activity in brain can be seen during chanting. It also affects the subconscious mind. It removes negative impressions like fear, anger, jealousy etc.

7. Hathayoga (The Yoga of Vitality)

Hathayoga or Yoga of vitality, is the foundation of all Yoga systems. Hathayoga is a preparation for higher Yogas. Influencing the mind by adjusting and balancing the chemicals in the body, is *Hathayoga*. It is to make the body clean

and the mind steady by the practice of Asanas, Pranayamas, Mudras and Bandhas. The Hathayoga, a great Yogic discipline, forms the very core of Yogashastra narrated by Lord Shiva, the Yogishvara to His consort Parvati for deliverance of Moksha.

Swami Sivanada recognized that every Yogi, or human being for that matter, possesses and identifies with each of these elements: heart, body and mind. He therefore advocated everyone to practice certain techniques from each path. This came to be known as Yoga of Synthesis.

8. Kundaliniyoga

Tantrayoga or *Kundaliniyoga* is science, art and technology, enabling one to utilize his or her own creative power for elevation of consciousness for other purposes beyond reproduction. It is the most powerful and inclusive of all Yogas. Its very much like Hathayoga, i.e., union with the Supreme Soul but brings faster results compared to Hathayoga.

9. Layayoga

Layayoga is contemplating on God while engaged in the worldly activities and performing the obligatory duties. Its like that what Sw. Vivekananda used to say – ‘hands to work and heart to GOD’- ‘Padmapatra ivambhasa’ – as lotus leaf in water that remains in water but not dirtied by it and remains undrenched. The sense is that life should be like a lotus leaf i.e., while living in

the temporal world one should not be affected by the trammels of sinful acts.

10. Svarayoga (The Yoga of Breathing)

Svarayoga is related to our psychic energy channels *Ida* and *Pingala* and the breathing system and it allows one to get in tune with the lunar and planetary cycles and to change left and right hemisphere dominance at will. The right nostril is solar and it gives heating effect to the body increasing acidic secretions. The left nostril being lunar is cool in character and increases alkaline secretions. It has great healing effect on our body.

11. Bhavayoga (The Yoga of Ideation)

Bhava is a marvelous mental state that manifests both supernatural and mundane elements in one's *Sadhana*. It was due to *Bhava* that God had to make the creation – *Eko'ham bhusyama*, i.e., 'I am one, would that I become many'. According to Aurobindo, *Bhava* is the realization of Truth in consciousness. In his work '*The Life Divine*' he has discussed about the Real idea (*Yathartha Bhava*).

Hathayoga & Ashtangayoga

There was a tradition in Yoga and Tantra that the ancient Sanskrit treatises are ascribed to Lord Shiva who exhorted the knowledge of Yoga and Tantra to His consort Parvati. Shiva is addressed *Yogishvara*, the Lord of Yogis. When the people from different walks of life have got their mind vitiated in this age of Kali, the degenerated age, they have little interest in spiritual matters. They are less educated in scriptures and are unable to understand the real purport of Vedas, Samhitas, Smritis and Upanishads. That is why Lord Shiva promulgated the knowledge of Sadhanas related to Yoga and Tantra as easy ways for deliverance of Moksha and human well-being.

It is pleasing to know that Yoga is given importance on behalf of the Health Ministry, Government of India, and efforts are being done to document over 1500 Asanas (postures) in Yoga dug out from ancient Vedic texts like *Hathayogapradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Gorakdha Paddhati*, *Yoga-Vashistha* etc. They will then be put into the ministry's Digital Traditional Knowledge Library (DTKL). The library is being set up at a cost of Rs. 15 crore. According to ministry officials Yoga

is a \$ 225-billion market in the West. Health Minister A. Ramadoss said that the library will protect India's traditional knowledge base. (TOI, 12.9.05)

ASHTANGAYOGA

Maharshi Patanjali is the incarnation of Ananta (the *Adishesha* or the divine serpent) and is the promulgator of the science of Yoga. Shankaracharya writing on the systems of Patanjali says: One who knows the twenty five principles and the Purusha (or the Lord) beyond the Prakriti, acquires perfection in Yoga. The 25 principles are: the *Purusha* (the individual soul), the *Prakriti*, the *Mahat* (or the great principle of intellect), the principle of egoity, the sixteen principles consisting of the rudimentary elemental principles with their modifications, and also the five great elements (*Panchamahabhutas*). These principles have also been well explained by sage Kapila.

Maharshi Patanjali conceived of primarily the *Ashtanagayoga* amongst all the Yogas and enunciated it in the aphorisms of Yoga (*Yogasutras*). He lays stress on the eight limbs of Yoga (*Ashtangayoga*) that should be followed by an aspirant in thought, speech and action to derive the optimum benefit of Yoga. Enumerating all the eight limbs of Yoga in the *Yogasutra*, Patanjali writes:

‘यम-नियम-आसन-प्राणायाम-प्रत्याहार-धारणा-ध्यान-
समाधयः अष्टौ अंगानि।’

'*Yama-niyama-asana-pranayama-pratyahara-dharana-dhyana-samadhyah ashtau-angani.*'

(*Yogadarshana*, 2.29)

Thus, these eight limbs are: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dhyana*, *Dharana* and *Samadhi*. These branches support each other. *Asana* practice must be established for proper practice of *Pranayama*. It is a key to the development of abstinences (*Yamas*) and observances (*Niyamas*). The first four limbs are external-oriented and once these are firmly rooted, the next four internal-oriented ones will evolve over time spontaneously. The path of *Ashtangayoga* is the only path that been set forth by Patanjali for the total well-being of the humankind. There is no discrimination/barrier of caste, class or religious tenets or nationality. India's ancient sages were concerned for the welfare of the whole world.

Moreover, there are three groups of sequences in the *Ashtanga* system in the tradition of Yoga set by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois, writes Annie Grover Pace: 1. *Yoga Chikitsa* or Primary System, that detoxifies and aligns the body. 2. *Nadi Shodhana* or Intermediate System, that purifies the nervous system. 3. *Sthira Bhaga* or Advanced Series, that integrate the strength and grace of the practice. Here is a brief introduction of all the eight limbs of *Ashtangayoga*:

1. Yama (Abstinences/Self-Restraint)

Yama or self-restraint is the first step of Yoga. *Yama* is divided into five moral injunctions,

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1. Yama (Abstinences/Self-Restraint)

Yama or self-restraint is the first step of Yoga. *Yama* is divided into five moral injunctions,

aimed at destroying the lower nature – 'अहिंसा-सत्य-अस्तेय-ब्रह्मचर्य-अपरिग्रहः यमाः।' '*Ahimsa-satya-asteya-brahmacharya-aparigraha yamah*'. (ibid., 2.30) They should all be practiced and developed by the letter but also more importantly in the spirit. Unless there is self-restraint the life will go astray and there will be no direction in life. No conscious life may be possible if there is no Yama. The five principles of Yama are – *Ahimsa* (not to harm others) or non-violence, *Satya* (to be truthful), *Asteya* (not to steal), *Brahmacharya* or moderation in all things, control of senses (celibacy or contemplation of God), and *Aparigraha* or non-covetousness (not to possess beyond actual needs). It is important to understand these *Yama-Niyama* in proper perspective as enunciated in our Yoga and other scriptural texts.

(i) Ahimsa or non-violence does not mean that it is killing or causing death. *Ahimsa* is not to harm any body in any manner whatsoever. Practicants of *Ahimsa* should take it for granted that causing any harm by calling his/her name, abusing, inflicting sarcastical remarks or cheating in any manner should be taken in this definition as also suggested in our scriptures.

(ii) Satya or truthfulness is understanding and believing in true nature and form of things. Being truthful and behaving ethically with fellow beings is what *Satya* is all about. It is to be true in action, in speech and in mind. Vedavyasa begins Bhagawat Mahapurana with the contemplation of *Satya - Satyam param dheemahi* (सत्यं परं धीमहि).

(iii) **Asteya** or stealing is taking possession of another's things without his/her permission.

(iv) **Brahmacharya** or celibacy means maintaining chaste, moral behaviour under all circumstances. *Brahmacharya* is discipline of life and love for the divine and not merely abstinence from sexual life. It is to perform one's duty honestly and have dignity for one's spouse, if leading a married life.

(v) **Aparigraha** or non-covetousness is not to possess beyond one's actual needs. It is applying self-imposed limits for worldly possessions. Even the desire to have more wealth and material gains is kept in check through constant practice of *Aparigraha*.

2. Niyama (Fixed Observances)

As for *Niyama* (fixed observances), it forms the second limb of Yoga. It is a life of discipline. It is a life which has regularity. Without *Niyama* or discipline, an individual becomes a slave of his own instincts. The five principles of *Niyama* are: 'शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायईश्वरप्राणिधानानि नियमाः' '*Shaucha-santosha-tapah- svadhyaya-ishvarapranidhanani niyamah*' (ibid., 2.32) - *Shaucha* (external and internal purification), *Santosha* (contentment), *Tapa* (to make right efforts to achieve goal in the teeth of all austerities and obstructions), *Swadhyaya* (to study right scriptures to acquire correct knowledge of self and the Supreme Divinity), and *Ishwara-Pranidhana* (complete surrender to divine will).

(i) Shaucha means cleanliness or freedom from defilement. It involves keeping the Atman free from the impurities and other vices of the world. *Shaucha* or purification is of two types: inner purification and outer purification. The aspirant should purify his body by bathing with water, his mind by good and truthful conduct, his Atman by learning and penance, and his intellect by knowledge. (*Manusmriti*, 5-9)

(ii) Santosha or contentment is one of the finest qualities for a happy life. Be satisfied by what you get out of your sincere effort and work.

(iii) Tapa or penance is to make right efforts to achieve goal in the teeth of all austerities and obstructions. *Tapa* is not torturing the body by subjecting it to rigorous practices like observing fasts unwillingly and making oneself hungry and thirsty - '*na sharirasya shoshanam*' (न शरीरस्य शोषणम्).

(iv) Swadhyaya is to study right scriptures to acquire correct knowledge of self and the Supreme Divinity. According to Vedavyasa, Swadhyaya is the chanting of the Mahamantra *Om* and study the liberating scriptural treatises like Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga Darshana, Bhagawadgita, etc.

(v) Ishvara-Pranidhana is complete surrender to divine will. Working according to one's own Dharma or true nature (*sva-dharma*) is the basic requirement of it. To surrender to God whatever you do, eat, etc. is the basic principle of *Bhakti* (true devotion to the Supreme).

3. Asana (Postures)

Asana or Posture is the third limb in the sequence of the *Ashtangayoga* (eight limbs of Yoga). It gets perfection with a person who lives a life of restraint and fixed observance (*Yama-Niyama*) regularly. Asanas are practiced for the physical well being of the body and to keep the health in good condition. But the prime aim of Asana is to prepare the body so that it may be steady (*Dridha*) to allow the aspirant to sit in a particular posture for a longer period of time without any difficulty. Asana or Posture is the practice of exercises meant for harmonizing the body. There are as many as 84,00,000 Asanas keeping the number of species on the earth. Our Yoga experts have selected some 84 Asanas for practice according to one's requirement. These poses are adopted according to the poses we generally note these cattle and animals do. As for Yoga Sadhana, a few postures had been selected for the purpose of meeting the requirement of spiritual practice by the Yogis to attain Samadhi.

Maharshi Patanjali has not given any stress on the practice of so many Asanas. Sitting in any one of Padmasana, Bhadrasana, Siddhasana, or Sukhasana with pleasant experience and steadiness is Asana. 'स्थिरं सुखमासनम्' - *Sthiram sukham asanam* (ibid., 2.46), i.e., the practice of Asana gives a lot of pleasant enjoyment to the body and the body cools down and gets prepared for further spiritual practice. We will discuss all the major Asanas in the coming pages.

4. Pranayama (Breath-Regulation)

Pranayama is regulation or control of breath. Once perfection in Asanas is achieved, the Yogi has to regulate the flow of inhalation and exhalation by Pranayama- 'तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिर्विच्छेदः प्राणायामः' '*Tasmin sati shvasa-prashvasayoh gatih vichchhedah pranayamah.* (ibid., 2.49) Postures and Pranayama form the sub-division of Rajayoga known as Hathayoga.

There are four types of Pranayama according to Yogadarhsana: *Bahyavritti*, *Abhyantaravritti*, *Stambhavritti*, and *Bahyabhantaravritti*. The following pages in the coming chapter will present different types of Pranayamas.

5. Pratyahara (sense withdrawal)

Pratyahara forms the fifth stage of the eight limbs of Yoga (*Ashtangayoga*) and it is practiced after Pranayama. The Yogi desiring to go ahead to get perfections (*Siddhis*), should first discipline oneself with *Pratyahara*, i.e., control of senses which is instrumental by concentrating on Chakras. *Pratyahara* is withdrawal of senses in order to still the mind - 'स्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्वरूपानुकार इवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः' (ibid., 2.54) *Pratyahara* (abnegation) helps overcome the heart while Asana and Pranayama counter the infirmities of the body.

सुगन्धो वापि दुर्गन्धो घ्राणेषु जायते मनः ।

तस्मात् प्रत्याहारं देतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् । ।

(*Gheranda Sam.*, IV.4, & 5-7 also.)

6. Dharana (Concentration)

It is called concentration and this practice precedes the subtle practice of Dhyana (meditation). Dharana is concentration of mind at any of regions of the body like Navel centre, heart, between the eyebrows, Brahmastrandhra, tip of the nose, tip of the tongue. etc.- 'देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा' 'Deshabandhashchittasya dharana. (Yogadarshana, 3.1)

7. Dhyana (Meditation)

The state of oneness with God or the Supreme Soul achieved by concentrating at the places like Navel centre, Bhrumadhya, or at the heart centre etc. as in Dharana is called Dhyana - तत्र प्रत्यैकतानता ध्यानम् 'Tatra pratyaiikatanta dhyanam'. (ibid., 3.2) Dhyana or Meditation is the state of pure thought and absorption in the object of meditation. It is the stage when duality remains.

8. Samadhi (Contemplation)

It is the state of superconsciousness. It is the state when non-duality or oneness is experienced. This is the highest state of consciousness and in this state the body and mind transcend the physical and mental level uniting with the Self or God. In Samadhi one forgets oneself after immersing in the Supreme so deeply that one identifies oneself with the God - तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासम् स्वरूपशून्यं इति समाधिः (ibid., 3.3).

HATHAYOGA

The *Hathayoga*, a great Yogic discipline, forms the very core of Yogashastra narrated by Lord Shiva, the Yogishvara to His consort Parvati for deliverance of Moksha to the Jiva from this Samsara. It was for the first time that this Yogic discipline was learnt by the great Yogis like Matsendranatha and Gorakhanatha, and the latter was kind enough to give this knowledge to Svatmarama.

Hathayoga is a basic foundation for a Yogi. It plays a very important part in awakening the spiritual energy. To illustrate, if we take an automobile, there must be harmony between the functioning of brakes, accelerator and steering, etc. Similarly the different systems in our body must function in harmony. As we would read in a separate chapter, our body that appears in external look is not the only body, but there are two more bodies - Physical body, subtle or pranic body and the causal body. What normally happens is that we obviously do every possible effort to sustain the physical body and provide it with food, drink, rest, sex, wealth etc. On the other hand, the Pranic body, that sustains the Physical body by giving it vigour and vitality, remains uncared whereas it is more tender and deserves better heedfulness. Supporting the Subtle or Pranic body is like supporting our Being, the Spirit in the inner core of our heart that can be realized at the level of higher consciousness. It is only through awakening our

dormant spiritual energy - Prana Shakti or Kundalini.

The Yoga does balancing in two principal forms of energy in our body - Mental energy and the Pranic energy. In Hathayoga, *ha* (ह) means sun and *tha* (ठ) means moon. Thus Hathayoga refers to positive (sun) and negative (moon) currents in the system. The two energies are known as lunar energy, represented by the syllable 'ha', and solar energy, represented by the syllable 'tha', together they form 'hatha'. These currents have to be balanced and mastered so that vital force (prana) can be regulated, the mind cleared and subconscious state be experienced. This yoga is the practice of harmonizing the body's inner currents, principally the currents of feeling, thinking, willing and acting, until they are in perfect balance. According to the modern science, 'lunar energy corresponds to the mental functions of man and is a composite of knowing, thinking, reasoning, remembering and analyzing process. The solar energy on the other hand, encompasses movement, locomotion and life. The processes of breathing, digestion, secretion, circulation and conception are all in the realms of solar energy.' (Yoga, Journal from the Bihar School of Yoga, Munghyr) These things are also taught in the topic relating to science of breathing or Svava Vijnana.

In Hathayoga, it is important to understand that one attains a milestone when harmony between mental and pranic functions is created. Generally it is either solar or lunar energy that dominates. It means that the breath or Svava is running from the right nostril in case of solar, and

in case of lunar energy, the breath is running from the left nostril. Solar energy manifests Rajoguna and lunar energy Tamoguna. An excess of solar energy leads one to violence, it may cause restlessness and can make one schizophrenic. On the other hand, a stronger lunar energy causes depression or frustration. Hence by balancing these two energies one can attain higher state of meditation. It is, therefore, advisable for the Hathayogi to focus on the Ajna Chakra, the centre half an inch above where the eyebrows join, with a calm mind and direct awareness to move through that centre into a superconscious state. It is here that the individual life, the finite life, meets and fuses temporarily, at first, with the infinite life.

Techniques of meditation in Hathayoga should be properly learnt by an able Guru. In fact, the purity of life required in order to do Hathayoga meditation well requires more time and application than more people are willing to give. However, those few dedicated Yogis practicing true Hathayoga live in abundant well being and universal harmony.

There are as many as 72,000 Nadis or the channels of energy that distribute Prana in the entire body and control all the functions of the body. The major Nadis are – Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. The solar energy is carried by the Pingala Nadi. The Prana Shakti flows through it. Ida carries the lunar or the mental power. Sushumna or the meridian channel is the one through which rises the Kundalini Shakti activating all the Chakras situated along it. It creates harmony in whole body. (Nadis and Kundalini Shakti will be studied in

a separate chapter). The various aspects of Hathayoga are:

1. Surya Namaskara,
2. Asanas (Postures),
3. Dhyana (Meditation),
4. Shat-Karmas: Six purificatory practices,
5. Pranayama (Breath-Regulation),
6. Bandhas and Mudras, and
7. Awakening the Kundalini Shakti.

SHATKARMAS (Purificatory Practices)

Prakriti causes the functioning of world's activities. It gives rise to three *Gunas* that affect the body of human being by *Tridhoshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta* (bile) and *Kapha*. *Vata* is composed of air and space. *Vata* is airy dosha and too much air in the form of wind creates too much *Vata*. A *Vata* person typically complains of gas in the intestines. A *Pitta* person who feels warm is prone to sweating. A *Kapha* person is prone to congestion in the chest, blocked sinuses and other mucous problems. Thus most of the bodies happen to be dominated by one or other *Dosha* (humour) out of them. *Kapha* dosha leads to impurity causing problems to stomach and deposit of toxin. This may cause diseases. The etiology of maladies today including the deteriorating environment, stems from an erosion of sanctity. Lack of spiritual hygiene is a precarious thing.

मलाकुलाषुनाडीषु मरुतो नैव मध्यगः ।
 कथं स्यादुन्मनीभावः कार्यसिद्धिः कथं भवेत् ॥
 शुद्धिमेति यदा सर्वं नाडीचक्रं यथाकुलं ।
 तदैव जायते योगी प्राणसंग्रहणे क्षमः ॥

(*Hatha. Pr.*, 2.4-5)

Texts of Hathayoga expound on various measures of purging of the body from these malas by Shatkarmas. But this is not bounding on any one to go for these purificatory practices for certainty. One can do them even by Pranayamas. However the six purificatory practices which have been developed should be taken by practice by those who have more problems with their body. Suppose there is excess of fat or phlegm in the body, Shatkarma should be performed first. These are *Dhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Trataka*, *Nauli* and *Kapalabhati*.

धौतिर्बस्तिस्तथा नेतिस्त्राटकं नौलिकं तथा ।
 कपालभातिश्चैतानि षट्कर्माणि प्रचक्षते ॥

Neti: The Neti Kriya is performed for cleaning the nasal system. A cord made of threads and about six inches long, should be passed through the passage of the nose and the end taken out in the mouth. Adepts call it *Neti Karma*. The Neti is cleaner of the brain and giver of divine light. It soon destroys all the diseases of the cervical and scapular region.

Dhauti (Wash): *Dhauti* is performed for cleaning the mouth and digestive system.

1. Vastra Dhauti: A strip of cloth, about three inches wide and fifteen cubits long, is pushed into (swallowed), when moist with warm water, through the passage shown by the Guru, and it taken out again. By the practice of Dhauti Kriya, cough, asthma, enlargement of the spleen, leprosy, and twenty kinds of diseases born of phlegm are cured.

2. Dental wash: Cleaning teeth is very necessary because it is also connected with the digestive system. Ayurvedic paste or powder should be preferred for good teeth.

3. Eye wash: Fill your mouth with water and sprinkle eyes with clean water. Use eyewash to clean eyes by Triphala water.

4. Tongue root wash: Use the instrument of steel for washing the tongue root. It also removes phlegm deposited in the throat.

5. Washing ear hole: Use Johnson buds to clean ears.

Nauli: *Nauli* is the process of giving a massage to the abdominal parts and it gives them strength too. Sitting on the toes with heels raised on the ground, and the palms resting on the ground, and in this bent posture the belly is moved forcibly from left to right, as in vomiting. This can also be done in bent up position and placing both hands on the knees. It has been well displayed by Swami Ramdeoji.

Nauli is an excellent exercise in Hathayoga. It removes dyspepsia, increases appetite and digestion. It dries up all the disorders.

Basti: *Basti Kriya* is done to cleanse the large intestine in two ways, i.e., *Jala Basti* and *Sthala Basti*. Squatting in a navel-deep water, and introducing a six inches long, smooth piece of half an inch diameter pipe, open at both ends, half inside the anus, the anus should be drawn up (contracted) and then expelled. This washing is called *Basti Karma*. Colic, enlarged spleen, dropsy, arising from the disorders of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are all cured.

Kapalabhati: *Kapalabhati* is an easy process to purify the area of brain and the entire system. When the inhalation and exhalation are done very quickly, like a pair of bellows of a blacksmith, it dries up all the disorders arising from excess of phlegm. This Kriya has proved very effective these days as instructed by Swami Ramdeo to millions of people over the world. This is termed one of the best Pranayamas for cleaning the body. Even this alone is enough for cleaning purposes from amongst the other six Kriyas.

Trataka: *Trataka* is the act of looking at some object with fixed gaze without diverting the eyelid until tears tickle down from the eyes. It is also a way of concentration. It makes the eye sight better. It develops the hidden spiritual power in the practitioner. It is generally practiced at some natural object, particularly green object or the leaf of tree or plant. It may be moon of the bright lunar night. The act of *Trataka* activates the Ajna Chakra instantly and facilitates meditation. The meridian

channel i.e., Sushumna Nadi is activated and the body is ready to tread the path of Yoga.

WHAT IS ASANA (POSTURE)

Asana or posture is the third limb of Yoga in the sequence of the eight limbs of Yoga (Ashtangayoga). It comes to a person who lives a life of restraint (*Yama*) and fixed observance (*Niyama*). Proper sequencing of Asanas within a practice session plays an important role in achieving a maximum benefits from the session. After a well sequenced session one can reach below the surface of the body and get in touch with the energetic body at a more cellular level. When the body and mind are in a state of relaxation – *Sthiram sukham asanam*, (स्थिरं सुखम् आसनम्) it is understood that the doer is perfect in that posture. Asanas are actually practices for the physical well being of the body and to keep the health in good condition and to prepare the body so that one may sit for a longer time in a particular posture and meditate. The Asanas are a means of gaining steadiness of position and help to gain success in contemplation and prepare the mind for peace.

Asanas have direct bearing on the activation of Chakras of the body and their aim is to move the Prana or the life force to the different Chakras causing the state of thoughtlessness and thereby arriving at the desired state of Yoga, i.e., *Unmani Avastha*. Asanas thus prepare the body for the higher spiritual experience. For a practicant of Yoga, it is seen today that their thrust is only on the practice of Asanas and not bothering to know

the relevance thereof for the purpose of spiritual development.

There are as many Postures as the Yonis of the creatures numbering in several crores. Out of that, only 84 were chosen by the masters of Yoga to be practiced. Doing Asanas depends on one's stage of achievement in spirituality. It is just like the standards of students which class they study. But a perfectionist does not need do much Asanas as he becomes steady and cool after practice of years. However, postures like *Siddhasana* 'सिद्धासन', *Padmasana* 'पद्मासन', *Sahajasana* 'सहजासन', *Pashchimottanasana* 'पश्चिमोत्तान आसन', *Shavasana* 'शवासन', *Shithilasana*, *Bhujangasana* 'भुजंगासन', *Makarasana*, etc., should be done to keep the body in good health.

PREPARING FOR YOGA POSTURES

It is necessary to warm up the body first before going for the practice of the postures. One should not straightaway start Yogic exercises. It is advisable to do at least 25 minutes' walk in a park or at any other place where the air is fresh. Walking too is a good exercise and heals the body and mind. Walking is the simplest thing of all that keeps one fit and healthy. World Health Organization recommends that about 60 minutes of walking or 30 minutes of brisk walking for seven days helps in improving the health of a person. It also says that a person should walk 10,000 steps a day, irrespective of the walking speed.

Brisk Walk: Two types of walking can be said to be useful for people of different climes and body makeup – light walk and brisk walk. It is generally brisk walk what the doctors advise to those who have fat deposits in their body. In brisk walk one has to walk fast with heavy strides. Dr K.K. Aggarwal, President, Delhi Medical Association says, 'Brisk walking means walking at least one kilometer in 7-10 minutes. As a health conditioning exercise one should , while to improve the heart one should do brisk walk.' Brisk walking also helps in inhaling a lot of oxyzen and some other Pranic energy by making the maximum use of lungs. It perspires the body and makes it light. A brisk walk can burn up to 100 calories per mile. Walking improves cardiovascular fitness. However Dr Anoop Mishra of AIIMS says, 'If one is above the age of 40, then one should get himself checked before beginning walking. Walking for 45 minutes for five days a week on an empty stomach helps a lot.' For people with poor circulation to the arms and the legs, walking can improve efficiency of tiny vessels that supply blood for cellular respiration. Psychologically, walking generates an overall feeling of well being. Dr Mishra says, 'The glucose and cholesterol levels start to improve. The BP comes down and it helps in sleeping better.'

Yogic Walk: Walking is also a kind of Yoga if done with full awareness of the breath and a conscious mind. So it is important to remember that while going for a walk, try to walk alone and concentrate on your breath inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly. Reputed philosopher J.

Krishnamurty recommends this practice of walking and he calls it a kind of Pranayama. It should be a light walk and not brisk walk. When walking one should enjoy the beauty of the nature and the blowing of the cool air, chirping of the birds and silence of the trees and plants. Please don't be overtaken with your personal household problems and other trivialities. Try to be one with the nature around. This instills one with a lot of energy and healing effect.

It will surprise you if someone walking in a beautiful park reacts disappointedly and shows apathy towards the kind of enjoyment and blissfulness that can be derived from such a pleasant environment. Sometimes they say that they don't see any enjoyment in walking, they simply come for a walk because the doctor has advised to walk. It is the same problem that such people who don't derive pleasure in walking alone are, in fact, deprived of the sort of awareness in walk as has been pointed out above. Walking with full awareness that you are walking is a prerequisite for the walker, otherwise it is of little use and one can't get full benefit of walking. Awareness is the Mulamantra of Yogic walking. Walking can be really converted into a meditation is a good proposition presented by Thich Nhat Hanh:

'Walking meditation is like eating. With each step, we nourish our body and our spirit. When we walk with anxiety and sorrow, it is a kind of junk food. The food of walking meditation should be of higher quality. Just walk slowly and enjoy a banquet of peace.'

Preparing the Body next

Walking prepares the body for further practice of Yoga. It is therefore advisable to take a little rest after walk and then go for the postures. But before you go for practicing a posture, see that the body is ready for it, eg., it is fully relaxed and there is no fatigue. For the purpose of relaxation, the Shava posture may be done, or sit for a few minutes in natural posture and feel the lightness in the body relaxing it by feeling the Prana running in harmony in and around you.

Obeisance to Guru & God

In all the pious activities of a Hindu, Guru has got a paramount place. As customary in India, one should begin all the activities of life by offering, first of all, to Guru, and then to God. By doing so one may unburden one's mind with the tension of the fruit, as the Lord Krishna says: 'I will take care of your works. Offer it to me honestly and get absorbed with your sincere efforts to accomplish the work.' (तेषां नित्ययुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्) and (सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज।-Gita) It is important to remember first the Guru, who is none but the God Himself. Shiva is Yogeshvara, the Lord of Yoga, hence do offer all your Yogic practice first to Lord Shiva, the Guru. So first recite the following 2 verses for the Guru offering an imaginary flower. Then pay obeisance to Lord Vishnu with the next verse and a flower :

अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम्।

तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः॥

अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानाञ्जन शलाकया ।
 चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥
 शान्ताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं
 विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभांगम् ।
 लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिः ध्यानगम्यं
 वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम् ॥

Salutation to the Sun God

First of all, lie down to the side of stomach and offer obeisance to the Sun God. Stretch your hands in full in folded pose and put your forehead on the ground. This is also very relaxing position for the body and particularly for the spine. Stay in this pose for about five to six minutes and feel that that the body is getting fully relaxed with the energy got from the sun.

Vishnu Mudra

Vishnu Mudra is very interesting pose for the Yoga sadhaka when one is going to begin Yoga practice. After offering obeisance to the Sun God, turn to the right side resting the head on your hand's elbow. Now after resting for a while, pay our attention on the breath being inhaled and exhaled by the left nostril. Then lift the head stretching the elbow while still resting the head on the right palm. This is Vishnu Mudra. Imagine Lord Vishnu reclining on the bed of serpent in this very pose. Recite the above mantra of Lord Vishnu - 'शान्ताकारं भुजग.....'

Remain in the pose of Vishnu Mudra for a few minutes and concentrate on the breath of the Chandra Nadi. Then start chanting the Mantra

'Shiva', *shi* from the left nostril and *va* from the right nostril. This practice will set the left Nadi in flow and then one can go ahead for Yoga. It is very important that in every activity related to mind, the left Nadi should be in flow.

Precautions for the Yoga practice

It is important to remember that the place is quiet, fresh, well ventilated with natural light, preferably a park or open club ground, or any other place with fresh air and natural light. It should not be too cold or too hot. For hot days of summer, it is better to practice Yoga postures early in the morning to prevent the onset of heat. For cold days of the winter season, it is better to practice in the warmth of morning sun. Cold waves would cause problems if not properly taken care of. So one can do Yoga practices even upto 10.00 or 11.00 A.M. Performing Yoga Asanas in hot summer days late hours should be avoided. It is better to complete upto 8.00 A.M. The following instructions should be kept in mind:

1. Yogic postures should be practiced 4-5 hours after meal, and 2-3 hours after a light snack.

2. Empty the bladder and move the bowels. It is advised to practice Sarvangasana and Ardha Halasana at this time.

3. Be barefoot and put on loose-fitting clothes while performing Asanas.

4. Avoid cold seat in winter.

5. Beginners should start practice by simple Asanas and Pranayamas. It is important to remember that if there is any stiffness in the body, Yoga should be started with relaxing poses.

6. If there is any disease in the body it is better to seek the advice of some expert before starting Yoga. Diseased body may have adverse effect if Yoga is not properly done. There is no doubt that Yoga practice cures diseases but it is important to practice in proper way.

7. Don't do Yoga if body does not permit to do it. Don't do it by force. In case of any serious problem or when the body is weak, only simple Pranayamas and easy postures should be practiced. Gradually you will find that the body is in better position to perform better.

8. The practice of Yoga should be done regularly without making breaks. Remember that it is constant and regular practice that can bring perfection (Siddhi) in your life. By skipping over the days of regular practice may rather harm you. The Yogi should avoid laziness and other negative demerits. It is said that laziness (pramad) destroys one's life – *Pramadam vai mriyuh* (प्रमादं वै मृत्युः).

9. For those, who are good at Asanas and Pranayamas, should go ahead with the practice of meditation. Since it is for them to gradually advance further in this Sadhana, it is better to go alone on the path of Yoga. Yoga Sadhana is very individual. Joining groups will not help you in meditation as it may cause distraction to your mind. Solitude and aloneness is the best advised. My Yoga teacher used to quote Kabir's verse here:

सिंहन के नहिं लेहडे हंसन की नहिं पांत।

लालन की नहिं बोरियां साधु न चले जमात।।

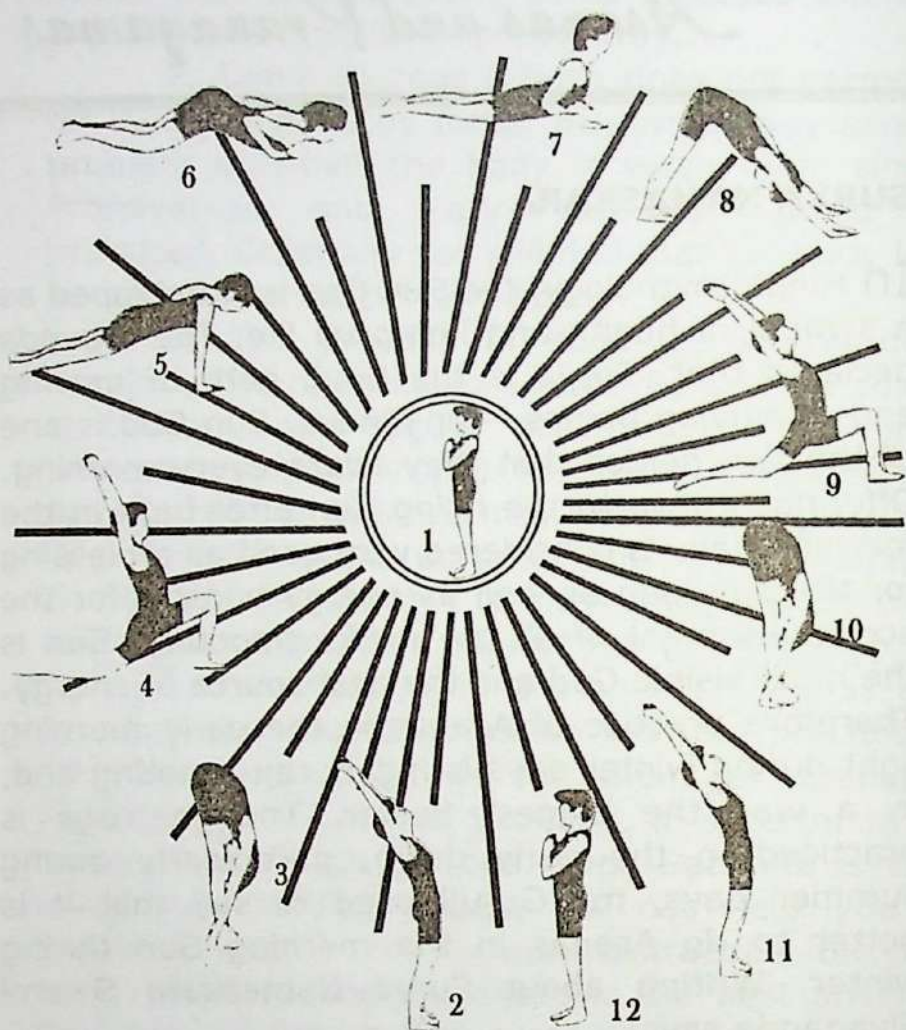
9

Asanas and Pranayamas

SURYA NAMASKARA

IN Hindu mythology, the Sun God is worshipped as a symbol of health and immortal life. The *Rigveda* declares that 'Surya is the Soul, both of moving and unmoving beings.' For Hindus, Sun God is one of the five deities that they adore every morning. Offering Arghya to the rising Sun after bath in the morning daily is considered very good as a blessing for the day-long as well as energy booster for the accomplishment of all the works smoothly. Sun is the most visible God and the best source of energy. Therefore practice of Asanas in the early morning light during winter days is highly rejuvenating and, in a way the biggest healer. Though Yoga is practiced in the early dawn, particularly during summer days, my Guruji used to say that it is better to do Asanas in the morning Sun during winter. Writing about Surya Namaskara Swami Sivananda says:

'Sun Salutation originated as a series of prostrations to the sun. Traditionally, it is performed at dawn, facing the rising sun. In time, each of the twelve positions came to have its own mantra, celebrating aspects of the sun's divinity.'



12 Actions of Sun Salutation

Surya Namaskara or the Sun Salutation is graceful sequence of twelve positions performed as one continuous exercise. Each position counteracts the one before, stretching the body in different way and alternately expanding and contracting the chest to regulate the breathing. It limbers up the whole body in preparation for the Yoga postures. It can be practiced by all. Each action carries a mantra that has to be invoked. These Mantras are as given below:

1. *Om hraam mitraya namah.* ॐ ह्रां मित्राय नमः।
2. *Om hreem ravaye namah.* ॐ ह्रीं रवये नमः।
3. *Om hroom suryaya namah.* ॐ ह्रूं सूर्याय नमः।
4. *Om hraim bhanave namah.* ॐ ह्रैं भानवे नमः।
5. *Om hraum khagaya namah.* ॐ ह्रौं खगाय नमः।
6. *Om hrah pushne namah.* ॐ ह्रः पूष्णे नमः।
7. *Om hraam hiranyagarbhay namah.* ॐ ह्रां हिरण्यगर्भाय नमः।
8. *Om hreem marichaye namah.* ॐ ह्रीं मरीचये नमः।
9. *Om hraam adityaya namah.* ॐ ह्रां आदित्याय नमः।
10. *Om hraim savitre namah.* ॐ ह्रैं सवित्रे नमः।
11. *Om hraum arkaya namah.* ॐ ह्रौं अर्काय नमः।
12. *Om hrah bhaskaraya namah.* ॐ ह्रः भास्कराय नमः।

Benefits: *Surya Namaskara* has a lot of good effects on the body. It is a complete posture. It activates the glands of the endocrine system. It makes pancreas, adrenal, thyroid, pituitary and other glands work normally. The disorders of stomach, spine, lungs, and chest are removed. Blood circulation improves in the body and several other organs function properly.

Actions of Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskara)

Action 1: Stand erect with feet together and palms in prayer position in front of your chest. Make sure your weight is evenly distributed. Invoke the mantra '*Om Mitraya Namaha*'.

Action 2: Raise both of your arms above the head, inhale deeply, retain the breath and bend backwards from the waist and stretch the body along with the legs. Pronounce the mantra '*Om Ravaye Namah*'.

Action 3: First exhale and bend forward, place both the palms on the ground by the side of the feet. Remember to keep your fingers and toes and legs straight. Try to touch your knees with head and pronounce '*Om Suryaya Namah*'.

Action 4: Rest your palms on the ground along side feet and stretch the left leg backward. Bend the right leg placing between the two arms and sit on it. Look above in the sky and say the mantra: '*Om Bhanave Namah*'.

Action 5: Put your palms on the ground and straighten both the arms. First exhale and open the right leg backward now placing both the legs straight. Keep palms, heels and knees together. Feel the weight of the whole body on the toes and palms. Pronounce the mantra '*Om Khagaye Namah*'.

Action 6: Put your hands and palms on the ground and breathing at the same time. Let the body come down so that the forehead, the chest, two palms, two knees and two feet touch the ground. Now exhale slowly and utter the mantra '*Om Pushne Namah*'.

Action 7: First inhale, put your palms on the floor, straighten your arms. Put the chest forward while lifting the body up to the navel. Look towards the sky by bending the neck backward. See that the legs are stretched backward. Breathe out. Pronounce the mantra '*Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namah*'.

Action 8: Breathe in. Palms should be allowed to remain in the ground. Now lift the buttocks and keep the head between the two arms, heels and toes should remain on the ground. Stretch the waist. Say the mantra '*Om Marichaye Namah*'.

Action 9: No breathe in slowly fixing the palm on the ground. Keep the left leg forward with a bend at knee near the palm. Pronounce the mantra '*Om Adityaya Namah*'.

Action 10: While fixing both palms on the ground, put both the legs parallel to each other. While breathing out keep the head between the legs. The mantra for this action is '*Om Savitre Namah*'.

Action 11: Breathe in slowly. Stand straight, raise hands upward. Bend neck, back, head and arms backwards. Stretch the body and say the mantra 'Om Arkaya Namah'.

Action 12: Fold your hands and palms and stand erect. Be prepared to say the mantra 'Om Bhaskaraya Namah'.

YOGA ASANAS (YOGA POSTURES)

There are as many Asanas as the number of living beings. Lord Shiva spoke about 84,00,000 only. (*Gheranda Sam.*, 2.1) Of these, 1600 are important ones, but out of these again only thirty two are suitable for this world. (*ibid.*, 2.2) Yogic texts like *Hathayoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita* have described the number of eighty four major postures. Yet another important text of Yoga, *Shiva Samhita* mentions eighty four Asanas but only four are to be adopted: Siddhasana, Padmasana, Ugrasana and Swastikasana.

1. Siddhasana (Perfect Posture)

There are eighty four Asanas but Siddhasana is the best of all - चतुःशीतिपीठेषु सिद्धमेव सदाभ्यसेत्. (*Hath.*, 1.41). Other postures are of no use when success has been achieved in Siddhasana - किमन्यैः बहुभिः पीठैः सिद्धे सिद्धासने सति। (*ibid.*, 1.43). There is no Asana like Siddhasana - नासनं सिद्धसदृशं। (*ibid.*, 1.45) Siddhasana is the chief of all Asanas - मुख्यं सर्वासनेष्वेकं सिद्धाः सिद्धासनं विदुः। (*ibid.*, 1.40) Even

Shiva Samhita has great appreciation for this Siddhasana. It says: A Siddhasana brings to the Yogi the desired occult powers and the Yoga is soon completed. (Verse 99) There is no other Asana than Siddhasana that is prized more in this world. Even the very thought of it saves the Yogi from sin. (Verse 101)

Press firmly the heel of the left foot against the perineum, and the right heel above the male organ. With the chin pressing on the chest, one should sit calmly, having restrained the senses, and gaze steadily the space between the eyebrows.

(*Hath*,. 1.37) or

Sitting in comfortable way with straight spine without least bending and pressing with care by the heel the Yoni, the other heel the Yogi should place on the *Linga*, he should fix his gaze upwards on the space between the two eyebrows, should be steady, and restrain his senses. This is for consummation of Yoga and by contemplating in this posture the Yogi is freed from the sin.

According to *Hathayoga Pradipika* (1.39), some call it *Siddhasana*, and some *Vajrasana*. Others call it *Muktasana* or *Gupta Asana*.

Siddhasana purifies all the malas (impurities) of the 72000 Nadis. (ibid., 141) The Yogi obtains success by contemplating on oneself, by eating sparingly, and by practicing Siddhasana for 12 years. (ibid., 1.42) It is also said that by practicing Siddhasana, the Yogi Unmani at once and the three bandhas are accomplished by themselves.

2. Padmasana (Lotus Posture)

The word *Padma* means lotus. This Asana is called so because in this posture the sitting posture looks like a blooming lotus. It is one of the most popular Asanas among the Yogis.

Sit comfortably. Having crossed the legs, carefully place the feet on the opposite thighs, i.e., left foot on the right thigh and vice versa), cross both the hands and place them similarly on the thighs, fix the sight on the tip of the nose, pressing the tongue against the root of the teeth, (the chin should be elevated and the chest expanded) then draw the air slowly, fill the chest with all your might, and expel it slowly, in an unobstructed stream. Place of concentration is Ajna Chakra. It is practiced by the wise and it cures of all diseases.

The *Hathayoga Pradipika* (1.47-48) presents like this:

Place the feet on the thighs, with the soles upward, and place the hands on the thighs, with palms upwards. Gaze on the tip of the nose, keeping the tongue pressed against the root of the teeth of the upper jaw, and the chin against the chest, and the air up slowly, i.e., pull the Pranavayu gently upwards.

This Padmasana is the destroyer of all diseases. It is difficult of attainment by everybody, but should be learnt by an able Guru.

When Padmasana is practiced, the vital air promptly gets regulated, and there is no doubt that with regular practice it can be fully controlled by the Yogi.

3. Svastikasana (Auspicious pose)

This is called Auspicious pose. Place the soles of the feet completely under the thighs, keep the body straight, and sit at ease. The wise Yogi should practice Pranayama in this posture. No disease can attach his body, and he obtains *Vayusiddhi*.

According to *Hathayoga Pradipika* (1.21): One should sit silently in a posture keeping both the hands under both the thighs with the body straight.

According to *Shiva Samhita* (Verses 113 & 114), insert the two feet into the opposite knee-bends, and then sit erect in an easy (relaxed) pose. Concentrate at Ajna Chakra. This is called Swastikasana. When the wise Yogi practices breath-control in this manner, his body is no longer afflicted by diseases, and he soon masters breath-control.

4. Sukhasana (Easy Pose)

Sukha as the name implies, this Asana is certainly very easy to practice and it is giver of happiness. This is the same as Swastikasana. Any body who is new to Yoga can opt for this sitting posture easily. It is an easy posture for meditation or for the purpose of sitting comfortably for longer period of time.

Spread your seat meant for the purpose of Yoga. Stretch your legs first in straight direction. Place first foot under the knee of the second foot and the second foot under the first knee. Backbone

and head should be straight with no stress at all. Both hands should rest at the knee in Jnana Mudra. Breathe in normal way. Close eyes lightly. Concentrate at the Ajna Chakra.

5. Shavasana (Corpse Posture)

The word '*shava*' means corpse. So it is also called the Corpse Pose. One should lie flat on the back resting arms in sides and the palms put upward. Loosen the entire body on the ground feeling that it is lying without least tension. Then inhale slowly and deeply and imagine that the breath is filling the feet and tension, if any, is being released. Now feel the muscles, bones and skin getting permeated with the Pranic energy or the energy got from breathing and the entire body is rejuvenated. Continue the same imagination for the rest of the body parts, like, calves, thighs, hips, abdomen, hands, forearms, upperarms, chest, shoulder, back, neck, throat, jaw, tongue, facial muscles, eyes, ears, brain, forehead etc. releasing tension and invigorating with Prana. Remain in this posture for some ten minutes and you will find that the entire body is relaxed and energized. Even it works wonders instilling into the body a lot of energy, and, it also works as a good ailment for all. If the time for this posture is increased it becomes Yoganidra. Swami Ramdeo generally calls it Yoganidra. According to *Hathayoga Pradipika* (1.34), Shavasana has been defined as below:

उत्तानं शववद् भूमौ शयनं तच्छवासनम् ।
शवासनं श्रान्तिहरं चित्तं विश्रान्तिकारकम् ।।

(Lying down on the ground like a corpse is called Shavasana. It removes fatigue and gives rest to the mind.)

6. Sarvangasana (Neck Balance Posture)

'*Sarvanga*' as the name implies is 'all the parts of the body' and this Asana benefits all parts of the body, particularly the thyroid gland, digestive system, blood circulation and breathing system.

In this Asana, lie down flat on back. Keep your feet close, hands in both sides also close and palms facing the ground. Inhale deeply and lift your feet upward unto waist starting from 30 degree to 120 degree. Put your hands at the back of the waist, elbows resting at the ground. Keep feet close and straight. Paws should be stretched upward and eyes closed. Place of concentration is Vishuddhi Chakra. It should be practiced from 2 minutes in the beginning to half an hour. When returning, keep feet straight and bend it a little towards the head. Place hands on the ground and keep them straight. Take rest in Shavasana as long as you have done the Sarvangasana.

It is one of the best Asanas for all and understood to be good next to Shirsasana which is the king of all Asanas. It is good for thyroid as it promotes secretions toning up the whole body. It removes fatigue and benefits in dyspepsia, constipation, gastrointestinal disorders, and varicose veins. Women should avoid this Asana.

Heart patients should also consult their doctor before doing it.

7. Uttanapadasana (Lifting Feet Pose)

Uttanapada is the lifting of feet upward. This Asana is related to feet. To begin with, lie down flat on back. Keep both paws close, hands facing the ground and feet straight. Now inhale deeply and raise your feet upward gradually to 30 degree i.e., one fit. Remain in this pose for some time. If feet don't tremble, then know it to be a perfect posture. Place of concentration in this Asana is Manipura Chakra. When returning, don't give it a push and place your feet gradually on the ground with as much as possible. This practice of easiness should be followed with each and every pose. This Asana can be repeated for 3 to 6 times. Remember that this does not tire you, if so, then stop immediately. Take rest in between while doing this posture.

This Asana strengthens the arteries and keeps all diseases off. It cures constipation, gas trouble, fat etc. and increases appetite. Remember that those who have backache should do it by each foot separately.

8. Halasana (Plough posture)

It is called Halasana because in this pose the body assumes the form of Hala, i.e., a plough. This Asana follows the Sarvangasana.

To start with, lie down flat on back. Start this Asana just like the Sarvangasana. While inhaling raise your feet together gradually to 90

degree, then lifting the back take feet to the back of the head and breathe out. Put your feet on the ground in the back of head. Keep your breath normal. Your hands may be placed at the back for convenience. In case of perfect posture, hands should be on the ground. Concentrate at the Vishuddhi Chakra. Continue in this state for about 30 seconds. This time can be raised to 2 minutes.

This Asana stretches the muscles of the back, the spinal column is strengthened and thyroid glands are well massaged. It checks obesity, cures diseases of stomach, liver and spleen.

9. Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)

This Asana too is named after the name of Makara or Magaramachchha, i.e., crocodile because it makes the shape of it. The most spectacular thing about this Asana is that it gives a good twist to spine.

To begin with, lie on a seat on the back side. Put your heels and paws together and stretch the paws. Fold the knees and put both heels closer to buttocks. Stretch both hands straight in the left and right of the shoulders. Palms should face the sky. While inhaling take your knees to right side (touching the ground) and the left ear should touch the ground. Concentrate at the Swadhisthana Chakra. Come back while exhaling. Again while inhaling take knees to left and the ear touching the ground. Come back while exhaling. Repeat this both sides twice or thrice and then come back and relax.

This Asana makes the body flexible and cures the problems of lungs, breath, and diabetes. It helps in cure of constipation and digestion. It has several other benefits too.

10. Shirshasana (Headstand Pose)

This is called Shirshasana because in this Asana one has to rest the entire body on head only. This also called the king of Asanas. Though most of the benefits got from this Asana are the same which are from the Sarvangasana, it is advised to follow the rules strictly in this Asana failing that it may prove harmful. The following are some of the instructions to be kept in mind while doing this Asana:

1. One should take care that the very part of the head that is close to forehead be appropriate for this Asana.
2. One's stomach should be free from constipation, etc.
3. Celibacy (*Brahmacharya*) should be maintained.

Sit on your seat on paws and knees. Interlock the fingers of both hands and place it on the front side of seat and rest your elbows. Place your head in palms in such a way as the front part of the head is set to stay on the ground. Take help of both palms for the rear part of the head. Balance your paws and raise upward slowly and slowly. Straighten the paws and folded knees. Also

straighten the back. Increase the time gradually. Concentrate at the Sahasrara Chakra.

To come back first fold the knees and take them forward and then rest the paws on the ground. Take rest. Do *Shavasana*.

11. Pavanamuktasana (Wind-Relieving Pose)

The word *Pavana* is used for air, and hence this Asana is called *Pavanamuktasana* because it relieves one from the problem of air or gas.

To start with, lie down straight and place your right foot on stomach. Interlock the fingers of your hands and put them on knee. While breathing out press the knee and rest at your chest. Raise the head and touch it by nose. Remain in this pose for about 10 to 30 seconds and then return while breathing out. Repeat this Asana for 3 to 4 times by each foot. This act should be done by both feet also. One should also roll the body forward and backward and from right to left and vice versa. The place of concentration in this posture is Manipura Chakra.

This is said to be the best Asana for those suffering from Vatadosha. It is good for women diseases too. It is beneficial in Amlapitta, heart problems, arthritis and backache. Don't raise your head if you have trouble in your back.

12. Matsyasana (Fish Posture)

Here again the word 'matsya' means fish. The body takes the shape of a fish in this Asana.

To perform this Asana, first sit in Padmasana. Stretch your legs in front and with the help of your hands bring your right foot on the left thigh, and the left on the right thigh. This is called Padmasana or Lotus pose. Thereafter lie down on the ground with legs crossed in Padmasana. Take out your hands and hold your toes and lift the chest and waist upwards curving spine so that the top of the head lies flat on the floor. Put your concentration at the Ajna Chakra and have deep breathing. You can do it for few seconds to 2 minutes.

It makes spine flexible and removes the diseases of lungs, stomach, and neck.

13. Vajrasana or Virasana (Hero Pose)

The word 'vajra' means thunderbolt. This Asana makes the body hard and strong like the thunderbolt of Lord Indra. This Asana is known as Virasana. This Asana is also recommended for the purpose of meditation.

To do this Asana, first sit on your heels and keep both hands at knees. Keep the spinal cord erect while sitting and look at the space between your eyebrows or at the tip of the nose. You can sit in this pose for about half an hour. The Manipura Chakra is the centre for concentration.

This Asana is also good for meditation. It strengthens legs and thighs. It helps in concentration and digestion. The disease of Varicose Vein gets cured by this Asana. It is the best Asana recommended for sitting after taking meal.

14. Yogamudra (Yoga Pose)

Mudras are mystic exercises and they occupy greater value than Asanas. They prove more effective compared to Asanas.

In order to do this, sit in Padmasana keeping the back and neck straight. Take both hands backward and hold the wrist of the left hand by the right hand. The toe of the left hand should be kept close within the fist. Keep the chest forward. Stretch the back while inhaling and bend the lower back forward. Now exhale and take the chin forward and rest the forehead on the ground. Keep the breath normal. Come back while in the same pose and take rest. The Chakra for concentration is Manipura.

This Asana benefit the doer in many ways. When the arteries of stomach don't function properly, they shrink and create knots. This Mudra cures all these problems. It removes appetite and digestive power. Constipation is cured and the body gets detoxified. Problems of liver are also eliminated and blood formation starts in the body. All the organs related to urine start functioning properly and prostate gland does not increase unnecessarily.

15. Shashankasana (Rabbit Pose)

'Shashanka' is the word that means 'rabbit' and this Asana is called so as it makes the shape of a rabbit. This is Up-asana of Ushtrasana. So it should follow the same.

To perform this posture, first sit in Vajrasana keeping the waist and neck straight. While inhaling stretch both hand towards the sky. Now while exhaling bend forward with the back as much as possible. Place the forehead on the ground to touch it. Loosen the hands and rest on the ground on elbows. Take breath in normal way while concentrating at the Ajna Chakra. Come back with inhaling and stretching hands above and slowly take arms in side. In this Asana the concentration should be on the Ajna Chakra. Remember while bending forward, buttock should not be raised.

This Asana gives relief to spine. The whole of stomach functions including the liver are activated. It good for removal of ego and it brings humility.

16. Pashchimottanasana (Forward Bend Pose)

'Pashchim' is the word used for back. This posture is related to bending the back forward. In order to perform this Asana, first lie down flat on back with hands outstretched. Make your legs and thighs stiff. Then lift the head and the chest to a sitting pose. Let your legs remain fully stretched without folding them. Now bend your body forward and hold your toes with fingers. Your body should be bent further down until your head is put between knees. One should concentrate at the Manipura Chakra while doing it. It can be performed from two to five times.

It increases flexibility of the spinal cord. It tones up the nerves, the bladder, and the prostate gland.

17. Ardhamatsyendrasana (Spinal-twist)

This Asana has become popular in the name of Yogi Matsyendranath who used to accomplish his Spiritual practice in this Asana. In this posture the backbone revolves on its own in a circular way.

To start with, sit on your mat. Fold your right leg so that the heel should reach near the buttock. Keep the left foot straight, the paw stretched, both knees should be together and parallel. Put the left foot erect outside the right foot. Knee should be near chest. While exhaling press the knee by the upper part of the right arm and hold the paw of the left foot. Put the left hand behind the back. Turn your neck to left as far as you can. Breath should remain normal. Repeat this act from the other side. Take that much time as earlier. Slowly come back and relax in Vajrasana.

This Asana too carries a lot of benefits for the doer. All the problems relating to spinal cord like cervical, migraine, etc. are removed. Stomach problems do not trouble any further. Secretion of fluid in the pancreas gland is regulated and the diseases of diabetes get eliminated. Menses in women also gets regulated.

18. Ushtrasana (Camel Pose)

This Asana has been named Ushtrasana in the name of Camel (Ushtra) which has a very flexible body. So in this Asana, the body is curved to backward.

First stand on your knees, with knees a little apart and feet stretched out. Lean back and catch

hold of right heel with right hand left heel with left hand. Now take abdomen forward, drop head back and arch backward as far as possible. Keep your breath normal and remain in this pose as long as you can comfortably. Slowly come back in the position by releasing one hand and then the other.

This Asana is a panacea for the problems of spine. All the three parts of spine - cervical, dorsal, and lumber, become flexible. Diseases like slip disc, spondulysis, etc. are cured. It is good for thighs, chest, stomach, lungs. It helps increasing the heights girls and boys. It benefits women in their problems in menses.

19. Bhujangasana (Cobra Posture)

Bhujānga is the name used for the snake. As the name implies one has to do this posture like a snake lifts its upper portion of the body.

To start with, lie on the stomach side. Put your legs together and toes pointing away. Chin should touch the ground and palms on the sides of the chest. While raising head, neck and shoulder like a cobra breathe in slowly. See that your back is bent from neck to the base of the spinal cord. Raise your head back as far as possible. Remain in this position for as long as you can remain comfortably. Then slowly come back and relax. The Chakra for concentration in this posture is the navel region called Manipura Chakra.

This Asana is called Bhujangasana because it forms the shape of a snake raising its hood. It benefits the body in many ways. The body becomes flexible, cervical problem is removed in a

few days. All the stomach problems get solved. Irregularity in menses among women is cured. Problems like slip disc are also cured. It builds stamina, and, is beneficial in chest infections and gynaecological disorders. People suffering from backache, ulcer and hernia should avoid this Asana.

20. Dhanurasana (Bow Posture)

The word *Dhanu* means bow, and therefore, *Dhanurasana* is the posture that makes the shape of a bow.

In order to do this Asana, lie on the stomach with head turned to one side and the arms alongside the body. The palms of the hand should face upward. Now bend both of the legs from the knees with a distance of a half fit. Stretch your hands to hold both legs firmly near the ankles. While raising your head towards the back and exhaling, pull the legs upward with your hands giving a curve to the body in the shape of a bow. Remain in this position as long as you can do comfortably. Breath should be normal. Release the ankles slowly and come back to the position and relax. This Asana removes fatigue making the spine flexible. It cures digestive problems. Those having backache, ulcer, hernia and pregnant women should not do this Asana.

21. Shithilasana (Relaxing Pose)

The word 'shithila' means rest or relax, so is the name *Shithilasana*. Relaxation has great role in the performance of postures.

Shithilasana is one of the best posture for relaxing the body. Lay upside down on your stomach side comfortably stretching legs and hands. When taking the left side, bend the left leg and stretch the left hand forward keeping in bend shape not very far to your head. When lying in this pose try to breathe deeply and comfortably. Feel the kind of relaxation the body should get in this pose. Observe all the parts of the body from thumb to the upper head and feel that these are one by one getting relaxed. After some time take the right side and stretch now the right hand and bend the right leg as earlier. Remain and relax in this posture also for some time. You will see that it is very much like the pose that a child finds comfortable to sleep. So you too may fall asleep. But try to remain awake and resume to the next posture.

This is one of the best postures for heart and blood pressure. This is also good for removing fatigue. This should also be done at the time of practicing Asanas by the stomach side.

22. Gomukhasana (Head-of-Cow Pose)

First sit on Virasana or Sukhasana. Bend the right arm behind the back, and stretch the hand and forearm up along the backbone. The palm should face out. Now bring the elbow in with the other hand. Stretch the left arm up, turn it so that the palm faces back. Here bend your elbow and hold the right hand. Remain in this pose as long as you can possibly 30 seconds to 1 minute. The

centre for concentration in this Asana is Muladhara Chakra.

It cures excess urine, diabetes, aches in the back and neck, weakness in the veins of hand, and Asthamatic problems. It helps in removing the weakness in nervous system and making the mind steady. It controls unnecessary increase in testicles.

23. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Tadasana appears a deceptive pose in that it appears so simple that

Put your feet together in standing pose. Let your big toes, heels and ankle bones be touching. Keep the knees erect and pull up the thigh muscles. Now stretch the legs up, extend the spinal cord, lift the front of the body. Let your shoulders be back, shoulder blades in, arms hanging. Hands should be allowed to remain in relaxed pose and palms facing the hips. Keep the neck up and relax. Look ahead. Remain in this posture for about half to one minute.

Avoid practice during menstruation or in case of any body injuries.

24. Trikonasana

Spread your feet 3-4" apart and keep feet parallel. Turn your left foot at 90 degrees to the left and your right foot about 45 degrees inward. Breathe in and raise both hands parallel with the floor. Breathe out and turn your head to the left and look down your left arm towards your

outstretched fingers. Check that your left knee is aligned to left ankle. Inhale deeply and outward to the left, tilting the left hip down and the right hip up. When you have stretched the maximum possible, pivot your arms, letting your left hand reach down and come to rest against the inside of your calf, while your right arm points straight up. Inhale deeply for many times. Breathe in and straighten up. Breathe out, lower your arms. Put your hands on your hips and pivot on your heels, bringing your feet to face front. Repeat the posture on the other side.

This posture stretches the spine, opens the torso, improves balance and concentration.

25. Setubandhasana

Lie on your back with your knees up and hands at your side. Your feet should be near your buttocks about six inches apart. To begin, gently raise and lower your tail. Then slowly raise the tailbone and continue lifting the spine, trying to move one vertebrae at a time until your entire back is arched upward. Push firmly with your feet. Keep your knees straight and close together. Inhale deeply into your chest. Clasp your hands under your back and push against the floor. Inhale deeply and slowly for five times. Repeat.

PRANAYAMA (BREATH-REGULATION)

Pranayama is loosely translated as *Prana* or breath control. The ancient Yogis developed many techniques of breath control as a separate practice

to help clear and cleanse the body and mind and prepare it for meditation. In *Ashtangayoga*, the eightfold stages of Yoga, the channel starts from *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana* and then comes *Pranayama* at the fourth stage. All the eight stages are channelised in a very harmonious way. Each of them support one another. Once the body loses restlessness, it becomes ready to sit and breathe easily. This breathing, in fact, needs restraint and regulation, and this regulation is called *Pranayama*. On breath Annie Grover Pace writes: 'The continuity of deep, even breathing cannot be overemphasized in the *Ashtangayoga* system. When breath feeds action, and action feeds posture, each movement becomes gentle, precise, and perfectly steady.' In Yoga, this regulation of breath is called the doorstep of the spiritual journey that functions as a bridge to the soul and mind.

The word *Pranayama* is formed by joining two words, *Prana*, i.e., life force and *Aayama*, i.e., dimension. The *Pranayama* is therefore, meant to give dimension to the vital force of life. It is our life blood. It is the strengthening and expanding the life force. As for the source of Prana 'We get most of our *ki* or vital energy from the air we breathe. Every living thing depends upon breathing and cessation of breathing is cessation of life itself. From the first cry of an infant to the last grasp of a dying man, there is nothing but a series of breaths. We constantly drain our life force or *ki* by our every thought, every act of will or notion of muscles,' observes Choa Kok Sui, a Korean writer on Prana. Prana does not mean that it is merely the oxygen

inhaled in breathing but it is energy filled with several other cosmic elements inhaled during the breath. It is something very subtle. It functions in the body. Yoga master Surakshit Goswami says: 'Pranayama can do wonders for our health and keeps us fit as a fiddle. It also keeps away many diseases'.(TOI)

In Pranayama, *Prana* is *ki*, the life energy or life force that activates all the functioning of mind, body and senses. It is responsible for maintaining our physical and mental health. When the *Prana* gets eroded or stymied, the body reaches a state of atrophy. There are five types of Pranas: *Prana* at the heart, *Apana* at the rectum, *Samana* at the nerve, *Vyana* in the entire body, *Udana* at the throat. Located at different parts of our body, these Pranas keep the health of the body. Let us take into consideration the view of Deepak Chopra about the simplest Pranayama: 'The simplest Pranayama is alternate nostril breathing, which helps balance Prana throughout the mind and the body. This is an easy breathing exercise and doesn't require personal guidance to learn. With easy attention on your breath, the inhalation, retention, and exhalation of your breath will spontaneously lengthen in a way that will find its optimal balancing rhythm'.

Pranayama has three aspects - *Rechaka* (inhalation of breath), *Kumbhaka* (retention of the breath), and *Puraka* (exhalation of the breath). In Pranayama, by inhaling (*Rechaka*), retention (*Kumbhaka*), and exhaling (*Puraka*), the *Prana-vayu* at the heart place moves down and mixes with *Samana Vayu* at the navel, then it mixes with

the *Apana Vayu* at the rectum and proceeds upward to take the company of the *Udana Vayu* at the throat and then mixes with the *Vyana*, the all pervading *Vayu* and thus the *Pranayama* is completed to benefit the whole system. From the point of view of an advanced student, *Kumbhaka* is traditionally considered to be the most important component of *Pranayama*. However it has little significance of the beginners.

As for the basic kinds/varieties of *Kumbhaka Pranayama*, there are only two: 1. *Sahita Kumbhaka*, and 2. *Kevala Kumbhaka*. The word *Sahita* means accompanied by. So *Sahita* is accompanied by *Puraka* and *Rechaka*. This can be again subdivided into inner *Kumbhaka* and outer *Kumbhaka*. *Kevala Kumbhaka* is alone and it is not associated with *Puraka* and *Rechaka*. It means that the *Kevala* is not practiced but it just happens on its own. Breathing stops in *Kevala Kumbhaka* without any effort and a complete stillness of mind is experienced. It is a state of *Sahaja Samadhi*. It is higher state of *Pranayama* and *Yogis* experience at advanced stage.

Pranayama is important for us to keep good health. Practice of *Pranayama* in proper manner eradicates diseases completely. Ancient Hindu scriptures are rich in lauding the importance of *Pranayama* in the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and several of *Yoga* treatises. In the channel of the eight-fold *yoga (Ashtangayoga)*, *Patanjali* has described four types of *Pranayamas*: *Bahyavritti*, *Abhyantarvritti*, *Sthambhavritti* and *Bahya-abhyantarvritti*. However, *Hathayoga* mentions eight types of *Pranayama*: *Suryabhedan*, *Ujjayi*,

Shitali, Sitkari, Bhasrika, Bhramari, Murchchha and *Plavani*. The major Pranayamas that people generally practice today and are also instructed by Swami Ramdeoji are *Bhasrika, Nadi-shodhana, Shitali, Shitkari, Bhramari, Kumbhaka, Kapalabhati, Ujjayi, Suryabheda, Udgitha* etc.

Four things are necessary in practicing Pranayama. First, a good place, second a suitable time, third moderate food, and, lastly the purifications of the Nadis.

आदौ स्थानं तथा कालं मिताहारंतथा परम्।
नाडीशुद्धिं ततः पश्चात् प्रणायामं च साधयेत्॥

(*Gheranda Sam.*, 5.2)

प्रणायामं ततः कुर्यात् नित्यं सात्त्विकया धियः।
यथा सुषुम्ना नाडीस्थ मलः शुद्धिं प्रयान्ति च॥

(*Hatha. Pr.*, 2.6)

It is also necessary to understand the fundamental techniques of Pranayama. Sitting posture should be maintained properly. Siddhasana, Padmasana, Sukhasana, or Sahajasana are good postures. The back, neck and the head should be kept straight. The pressure of the body should rest on the two pelvic bones, and not on the thighs or legs. Morning is the best time for Pranayama. It should be done empty stomach. One should not eat anything before doing Pranayama at least 5 hours before practicing it. It should be done in the evening also.

Pranayama Mudra is used for pressing nostrils through thumb, ring finger and the little finger. The first and the middle fingers are not used. While inhaling the breath it is called *Puraka*, retention is called *Kumbhaka* and the exhaling is

called *Rechaka*. Before inhaling the breath it is important to exhale first and then inhale.

Nadishodhan (Purification of subtle channels)

The human body is like a workshop where a number of machines are put to constant work. It is but natural that such machines create toxins. These toxins have to be inevitably cleansed. If this is not done, it will invite diseases. Yoga scriptures aver that when these Nadis are blocked with impurities of toxic material, Prana (vital air) can't move into the middle channel (Sushumna) easily – मलाकुलाषुनाडीषु मरुतौनैव मध्यगः. When Nadis are cleansed, the inner and outer body obviously looks thin and shines forth.

यदा तु नाडी शुद्धिस्तथा चिह्नादि बाह्यतः ।
कायस्थ कृशता कान्तिस्तदा जायते निश्चितम् ॥

It is very clearly written that no body can get success in Yoga without the purification of Nadis. With the body becoming pure, all the passages of the Nadis are clear facilitating smooth flow of Pranavayu (vital air). The intake of adequate amount of Pranavayu, the kindling of the gastric fire, the manifestation of Nada and redemption of diseases are the essential gestures of a Yogi.

यथेष्टं धारणं वायोरनलस्य प्रदीपनम् ।
नादाभिव्यक्तिरारोग्यं जायते नाडीशोधनात् ॥

Nadi means a channel and *Shodhana* is the purification. *Nadishodhana* is called the purifier of the Nadis, the subtle channels, especially because it helps to clear both nostrils which are used alternatively for inhalation and exhalation. *Nadishodhana* is not merely meant for the purification of this much but it is much beyond. All the 72000 Nadis of the body should be cleansed. From *Muladhara* in the lowest space of the spine to the *Brahmarandhra* should be clear for the movement of *Prana*. Some Yogis don't make difference between *Nadishodhana* and *Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama*, but there is a little difference. Though all the varieties of *Pranayama* cleanse the body, *Kapalbhati* is the best one for this purpose.

1. Nadishodhana Pranayama

First sit in any of *Dhyana* posture and close your eyes. You may also sit cross-legged. Press the right nostril by your right thumb and exhale completely from your left nostril. Now inhale from the same left nostril to your fullest capacity but slowly. Please see that there is no sound. Then do the *Jalandhara Bandha* by putting pressure on your neck muscles and bending the chin forward, *Uddiyana Bandha* by holding the stomach inward after exhaling, and *Mula Bandha* by contracting the rectum upward. Keep on holding the breath as far as you can. Thereafter release the *Bandha*. Close the left nostril with the middle finger and the ring finger. Release the breath very slowly from the right nostril. Do inhale through right nostril and exhale from the left. This practice completes one

round of Nadishodhana Pranayama. Repeat it for five to ten minutes. Those who are freshers in Yoga should not do Bandhas and practice without it. Those who have high blood pressure or heart problem may practice this Pranayama without holding the breath or doing the Bandhas.

Benefits: It calms the mind, soothes anxiety and stress, balances right and left hemispheres, and promotes clear thinking. It purifies all the nerves of the body which number about 72,000. It improves vitality and gives strength to the body. It cures several stress-born diseases.

2. Bhastrika Pranayama

Bhastrika is actually the sense derived from the bellows (*Dhaunkani*) of a blacksmith that produces heat by constantly pulling it for giving air. So is the Bhastrika Pranayama. This variety of Pranayama is different from all others because it has a few strokes of Kapalhati in the beginning. In fact, it is a combination of Kapalhati and Suryabhedana.

This may be done in various ways as explained in the *Hathayoga-Pradipika* (11.64). First sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana, and go through a round of rapid exhalations and inhalations, moving the belly like the bellows (*Dhaunkani*) of a blacksmith. To start with 10 exhalations and inhalations will do. After the last exhalation of this round one should take a deep breath through the right nostril and close both the nostrils and apply the bandhas. Exhalation should follow slowly through the left nostril.

Benefits: This Pranayama is recommended for the purpose of arousing the Kundalini quickly. It removes Asthma and Catarrh and improves the condition of the throat. It is recommended for the purpose of arousing the Kundalini quickly.

3. Kapalbhati Pranayama

Kapalbhati Pranayama has been highly popularized in the recent past since Sm. Ramadeo's Yoga programmes have been telecast on different channels of TV. Swamiji understood the value of this Kriya and he made efforts to recognize its hidden value for the welfare of the mass of people suffering from various deadly diseases. He made experiment on millions of people and propagated its practice with more confidence and precision. Millions and millions have been so far cured and have got rid of even most fatal maladies.

Though traditionally *Kapalbhati* has been enumerated under the Six Purificatory systems of Hathayoga. These days it is observed that this Kriya has become most effective for removal of several problems. Yogi Ramadev has guided this Kriya in a bit different way stressing on the function of the stomach and doing it more effectively. In one of his speeches, Osho Rajneesh too recommended this Pranayama to his Sadhakas asking them to donate their breath by the act of exhalation.

First sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana and put your hands on the knees. Inhale and while pushing back the region below the navel exhale slowly as if divided in many parts. At last exhale completely

and do Mahabandha. Exhaling is done quickly. This causes the muscles of the abdomen to go back and forth. Repeat this act again. It should be practiced at a speed of 60 pushes per minute. Those who are new practitioners should do it 25-30 times. It can be increase to 120 times.

This Pranayama has been proved to be highly successful in curing people from various problems. If done with care and with regularity, it has tremendous effect on the body and mind. Millions of people have been benefited from this Pranayama after Sw. Ramadeo made it a necessary practice to learners. It is good for lever and heart. It removes all the problems of digestive system. It is also good for blood circulation and several diseases.

4. Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama

Viloma means produced in the reversed order. This Pranayama got this name because the order of using the nostrils for Rechaka and Puraka is reversed every time. *Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama* is very much like Nadishodhana Pranayama the act of purifying the Nadis or subtle channels is done in this act by the inhalation and exhalation of both the nostrils. The word *Viloma* is used to denote that the order of using the nostrils for inhalation and exhalation is reversed every time.

To do this, sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana or sit in any Asana that is comfortable for sitting. Remember whenever you sit for practice the spinal cord should be erect. Put your pressure of the body

on your pelvic bones and not on thighs. Exhale through the left nostril and then inhale from the left nostril and do Kumbhaka and then exhale through the right nostril and then again inhale from the right nostril and exhale from the left. Thus it makes one round of Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama. Avoid Kumbhaka next time. Swami Ramdev says that one should do from both the nostrils alternatively for making rounds for 5-10 minutes.

Benefits: This is a wonderful Pranayama. It is a process of silencing the breath resulting in silencing the mind. Even a few rounds of Pranayama practiced regularly can give the does an experience of peace mind. It helps in concentration and meditation. It gives a lot of energy to our body and has got several benefits.

5. Shitali Pranayama

Shitali means pleasantly cold. This variety of Pranayama has a cooling effect and hence it is called so.

Sitting on a mat in a suitable posture or in any meditative pose. Close your eyes slightly. First inhale deeply and exhale. Then round your tongue and stick it out, and inhale deeply. Perform all the three bandhas – Jalandhara, Mula and Uddiyana bandhas. Here the breath has to be held as long as possible. Then release all the bandhas and exhale slowly through both nostrils. This is one round. This can be repeated from 3 to 6 times as per requirement. According to *Hathayoga-Pradipika* (2.57) the tongue to be protruded a little out of

lips, when the air is drawn in. It is kept confined, as before, and then expelled slowly through the nostrils.

जिह्वाया वायुमाकृष्य पूर्वकुम्भसाधनम्।
शनकैर्घ्राणरन्ध्राभ्यां रेचयेत् पवनं सुधीः॥

Benefits: It is the best Pranayama for the summer days. It cures burning in stomach, acidity, hypertension, and skin problems. It cures colic (enlarged spleen), fever, disorders of Pitta, hunger, thirst and counteract poison. It is best purifier of the blood. It has tremendous effect on the inner system and its regular practice gives glow to one's personality.

Caution: Those suffering from cold, cough, asthma. Bronchitis, sinusitis and low blood pressure should avoid this Pranayama. Don't do it when the weather is very cold.

6. Sitkari Pranayama

Sitakara is a sound made by inhaling the breath. *Sitkari* is the name derived from its sound that is produced while inhaling the breath (Puraka) which is done through mouth. .

First sit in any meditative posture or any comfortable position. Close your eyes and breathe in deeply, and then exhale. Now close your mouth by pressing the teeth easily with tongue at the back of the teeth. Now breathe in deeply through mouth and do Jalandhara Bandha, Mula Bandha and Uddiyana Bandha. Hold the breath in as long

as possible. Gradually release all the Bandhas while exhaling through nostrils. It makes one round of Sitkari Pranayama. This can repeated 5 to 6 times.

भवेत्सत्त्वं च देहस्य सर्वोपद्रववर्जितः ।
अनेन विधिना सत्यं योगीन्द्रो भूमिमण्डले ॥

Benefits: As the name implies from the word 'shit', this Pranayama means the one that brings coolness. It is one of the best Pranayama for the summer. It cures the problems of skin, blood, acidity, hypertension, and bad breath. The whole of stomach gets very cooling effect and the heat therein is also cured. It refreshes the body and removes fatigue, lethargy and drowsiness. It controls upon hunger and thirst and even desire for more sexual indulgence .

Caution: As it has been said earlier, this Pranayama gives cooling effect to the inner body. It should not be done by those who are suffering from low blood pressure, cold, cough, asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis, etc.

7. Ujjayi Pranayama

Ujjayi is often called the sounding breath. This Pranayama is said to give heat to body and have hot effect. This is better done during winter days. In this Pranayama both the nostrils are used for Puraka and the left one for Rechaka. It involves constricting the back of the throat while breathing to produce an 'ah' sound.

Come into a comfortable seated position or in a crossed legged position with your spine erect. Close your eyes and inhale deeply, then exhale. Tighten your neck muscles and make a sound with your closed mouth while inhaling. The sound represented by the letters Am' is to be produced by a partial closure of the glottis. When it is inhaled completely, then make Jalandhara Bandha, Mula Bandha and Uddiyana/Bandha. Hold your breath as long as possible. Release Bandhas and close the right nostril. Then exhale through the left nostril. This is one round of Ujjayi Pranayama. It can be repeated 3-6 times. It should not be practiced if the weather is very hot.

मुखं संयम्य नाडीभ्यामाकृष्य पवनं शनैः ।

यथा लगति कण्ठात्तु हृदयावधि सस्वनम् । ।

Benefits: This Pranayama clears the throat, removes cough, and cures snoring and thyroid problems. It cures heart problems and strengthens heart muscles. It also helps in maintaining good mental health. All diseases of stomach, dyspepsia, enlargement of spleen and liver are cured. It gives heat to the body.

8. Bhramari Pranayama

Bhramara means bumble bee. The humming sound is imitated in this variety of Pranayama. This sound is produced by the friction of the air with the thin edge of the soft palate which hangs like an arch in the poster or part of the mouth. This sound is unlike the one produced by some sleeping

person in snoring. That is produced due to the vibrations of the edge of the soft palate. Let us see what our Yoga text has to say:

वेगाद्घोषं पूरकं भृङ्गनादं भृङ्गीनादं रेचकं मन्दमन्दम्।
योगीन्द्राणामेवमभ्यासयोगाच्चित्ते जाता काचिदानन्दलीला॥
(*Hathayoga.*, 2.68)

(By filling the air with force, making noise like Bhringi, and expelling it slowly, making noise in the same way, this practice causes a sort of ecstasy in the minds of Yogindras.)

Sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana and close your ears by both thumbs. Place the first fingers at the place between the two eyebrows. Rest of the three fingers should lightly touch the eyes. Now inhale slowly and completely. Then exhale from the nostrils very slowly making the sound of a bumble bee and pronouncing Om. This is one round. This can be done 6-8 times. While doing this Pranayama it is advisable to be a bit mystic and experience the presence of the Supreme power everywhere.

Benefits: The sound produced soothes the mind and body and gives concentration. It increases circulation of blood, cools the brain and gives immense pleasure. It creates an atmosphere for meditation.

9. Murchchha Pranayama

Murchchha means fainting. It is so named because by practicing this Pranayama one goes

into the state of stupor. No doubt this is meant for the advanced practitioners.

Sit comfortably in Padmasana. Press the left nostril with the thumb of the right hand and inhale from the left nostril. Retain the breath as long as possible while making Jalandharabandha. Then exhale slowly from both the nostrils. During this act, eyes should be centred at the Ajna Chakra, i.e., between the eyebrows. The practice should be repeated by the other nostril. By prolonging the practice one attains mental peace.

पूरकान्ते गाढतरं बध्वाजालन्धरंशनैः।

रेचयेन्मूर्च्छनाख्येयं मनोमूर्च्छां सुखप्रदा। (ibid., 2.69)

(Closing the passages with Jalandharabandha firmly at the end of Puraka, and expelling the air slowly, is called Murchchha, from its causing the mind to swoon and giving comfort.)

10. Plavini Pranayama

Plu means to swim or float. *Plava* means floating. *Plavini* is the one that makes one float.

अन्तःप्रवर्तितोदारमारुतापूरितोदरः।

पयस्यगाधेऽपि सुखात्प्लवते पद्मपत्रवत्॥

(ibid., 2.70)

(When the belly is filled with air and the inside of the body is filled to its utmost with air, the body floats on deepest water, like the leaf of lotus.)

13. Bahyavritti Pranayama

This is one of the important Pranayama enunciated by Maharshi Patanjali. The practitioner should sit in any Dhyana posture with hands placed on knees as in Jnana Mudra. Inhale deeply with both nostrils, then exhale to the maximum capacity and stay in this state as long as possible. Remember that this should be followed by the three bandhas – *Mulabandha*, *Uddiyanabandha* and *Jalandharabandha*. This should be practiced five to six times.

Benefits: This is one of the best Pranayama for detoxification and its regular practice cures ailments like indigestion, constipation, lack of appetite, acidity, obesity, diabetes, and all the problems related to stomach. It is good for liver, pancreas, intestine, rectum and urinary system. It purifies the inner system and awakens the Kundalini Shakti.

14. Abhyantarvritti Pranayama

Sit in the same posture as above and place hands in Jnana Mudra. First exhale completely from both nostrils and then inhale slowly to the best capacity. Do Jalandharabandha, then Mulabandha pulling the stomach inward. The breath should be held as long as possible, then exhale slowly with all the muscles of the body loosened. This is practiced five to six times.

It is good for lungs, heart, nervous system and endocrine glands. Improves vigour and vital air in the body and concentration of the mind. Those

having heart problem or have undergone stomach operation should not practice it.

15. Stambhavriti Pranayama

Sit in some meditative posture conveniently keeping the back straight and eyes closed. Place your hands on your knees in Jnana Mudra. First concentrate on your breath at whatever stage it is, no matter you are inhaling or exhaling. Then do Jalandharabandha followed by Uddiyanabandha and then Mulabandha. Remain in this position as long as possible and then release the bandhas. It is good for meditation purpose and one can enter into meditative state immediately after doing it. It harmonises senses, mind and Pranas.

16. Bahya-Abhyantara Vishayakshapy Pranayama

This Pranayama is a state of meditation which, in fact, happens automatically. It is a higher state of Pranayama generally practiced by Yogis. This is not practiced deliberately.

How Pranayama benefits in general?

Pranayamas give soothing effect to the body and mind in different ways. The lung, the heart, the nervous system and endocrine glands become healthy. The mind and senses are vitalized and the body is strengthened. The body gets charged by their practice and the Sadhaka is able to control

the mind or *Chitta*. Pranayama helps expand our life energy and get rid of negative feelings. Once the mind is brought under control, the rhythm of the breath flowing in both of the nostrils, the Chandra and Surya Nadis changes and there is automatic feeling of ecstatic joy. In this state the bliss of life is enjoyed. There is tremendous change in the mind and the journey to Inner Self begins from the very moment. Impurities of the senses, thoughts, and the intellect get eliminated and the diseases of the body are destroyed - *Pranayamadiyukten sarvarogakshayo bhavet* (प्राणायामादियुक्तेन सर्वरोगाक्षयो भवेत्) (*Hathayoga.*, II.16). By Asana and Pranayama in Hathayoga, 'the body becomes lean, the face glows with delight, Anahatanada manifests, and eyes are clear, body is healthy, Bindu (seminal fluid) is under control and the appetite increases. One should then understand that the Nadis are purified and success in Hathayoga is approaching.'

‘वपुः कृशत्वं वदने प्रसन्नता नादस्फुटत्वे नयने सुनिर्मले ।
अरोगता बिन्दुजयोग्निदीपनं नाडीविशुद्धिर्हठयोगलक्षणम् ॥’

Mudra, Bandha, Dhyana & Yoga-Nidra

Mudras and *Bandhas* form integral part of Hathayoga. Mudras and Bandhas are certain postures of the body by which Kundalini is successfully awakened. The *Gheranda Samhita* describes 25 Mudras and Bandhas. This book presents here the following 12 which are the most important: 1. Mula Bandha, 2. Jalandhara Bandha, 3. Uddiyana Bandha, 4. Maha Mudra, 5. Maha Mudra, 6. Maha Vedha, 7. Yoga Mudra, 8. Viparitkarani Mudra, 9. Khechari Mudra, 10. Vajroli Mudra, 11. Shakti Chalana Mudra, 12. Yoni Mudra.

These are most effective Yogic exercises and, if these are practiced in correct way, several perfections can be achieved. It is said: 'There is nothing in this world like Mudras for giving success,' - नास्ति मुद्रासमं किञ्चित् सिद्धिदं क्षितिमण्डले.

Mudras are Bandhas cure a number of terrible diseases like dyspepsia, constipation, piles, cough, asthma, enlargement of spleen, venereal diseases, leprosy, etc. These exercises are very helpful in maintaining Brahmacharya, that is a pre-requisite for treading the path of spirituality.

1. Mula Bandha

Mula is name ascribed to the root which is located at the root of Spinal cord in the Muladhara Chakra. In *Mula Bandha*, sit in some meditational posture like Siddhasana or any other Asana. Press the Yoni with the left heel. Keep the right heel pressed at the space just above the organ of generation. Loosen the entire body while closing eyes. Inhale deeply from both nostrils and hold it. Contract the anal sphincter muscles, draw the Apanavayu upwards, and tighten the abdominal muscles at the same time. Hold as long as you can. Concentrate on the anus and the breath. Hold it as far as you can and then loosen slowly and come in normal position. Initially repeat it five times.

The Apana vayu, that does the function of ejecting excreta, moves upwards naturally. Through the practice of Mula Bandha, the Apana Vayu is made to move upwards by contraction of anus and drawing it upwards by force. The Pranavayu is united with Apana and the united Prana-Apana vayu is made to enter the Sushumna. Thus the Yogi attains perfection in Yoga. This awakens Kundalini and makes the Yogi drink the nector or ambrosia. This is the most significant purpose of Yoga that the Prana-Apana should come in unison. Here the Yogi enjoys the bliss of Sahasrara Chakra. Most of the divine bliss are attained here. This is possible only by constant practice.

Benefits: This is very helpful in awakening Kundalini Shakti. It helps improving excess of sexual desire and preventing energy. It helps curing impotency and several mental problems. For women, this will help flatten the tummy and keep the hips and buttocks in good shape. It helps in improving the menses problems. It will strengthen the pelvic floor muscles and will remove the problem of stress, urine leakage and make the vaginal muscles firmer post childbirth disability. Those who have problems in their lower back or abdomen should consult some able teacher before practicing Mulabandha.

2. Jalandhara Bandha

To begin with, sit in any comfortable posture with your knee touching the ground. Place your palms at the knees. Loosen the whole body and sit with your back straight. Close your eyes lightly. Inhale from both nostrils and hold it. Then contract the muscles of throat and press the chin on the breast. Hold on in this state as long as you can while concentrating at the Vishuddhi Chakra. Come back to normal state while exhaling from the left nostril and keeping the neck straight.

This Bandha is generally done during Kumbhaka only. The gastric fire which is situated in the navel centre, consumes the ambrosia that exudes out of the Sahasrara Chakra through the hole in the palate. The practice of this Bandha prevents the consumption of that ambrosia.

Benefits: This Bandha is particularly practiced to awaken Kundalini and arousal of Prana. It carries following medicational benefits.

Thyroid and para-thyroid glands start functioning properly by this Bandha. Mental stress, depression, fear, etc. disappear by this Bandha. It reduces anger and it is panacea for blood pressure. Jalandhara Bandha is very helpful in curing heart problems. This Bandha is said to be of great value as even Gods reckon it inestimable. (The nector oozing from the Sahasrara Chakra, the thousand petalled lotus (the place of moon) gets consumed by the fire (Sun) in the navel. By *Jalandhara Bandha*, the Yogi intercepts this nector and drinks it himself. It prolongs life.

3. Uddiyana Bandha

The Sanskrit word 'Uddiyana' derives from the root 'ut' and 'di' which means 'to fly up'. Prana flies up to Sushumna Nadi by the practice of this Bandha.

Sit in Siddhasana or in any comfortable posture and let the knees touch the ground. Place your palms on the knees. Loosen the whole body with your neck and spinal cord straight. Close your eyes lightly. Now exhale completely from both of your nostrils. Then put the abdominal region towards the spine and then lift it towards the diaphragm creating the Bandha. Stay in this position. Now do Jalandhara Bandha, i.e., bending your neck touching the chin. Let your abdomen muscles remain stucked inside as long as you can. Concentrate at the Manipura Chakra. Come to normal posture. When the intestines above and below the navel are brought to the left side, it is called *Uddiyana Bandha*.

Benefits: This Bandha is used to open up Vishnu Granthi. It is practiced in the process of awakening the Kundalini for activating the Manipura Chakra. By awakening this Chakra, one gets the power of energy preservation. The medicational benefits of this Bandha are - It purifies the navel and through that it purifies the winds. It is very helpful in diabetes. It is helpful in curing all the abdomen problems like constipation, indigestion, gas formation, and loss of appetite. It strengthens liver, and brings glow on the face. Heart muscles are strengthened. Benefits in stress-born diseases.

4. Jivabandha

Jivabandha is the locking the tip of the tongue on to the hard palate which works on the pituitary and pineal gland and helps correct blood pressure problems and works on the sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous system. My Yoga Guru Acharya Ramasurat Shukla called it Khechari Mudra. This practice should also be adopted by those who have completed their practice of Yoga or meditation as it prevents the energy from getting wasted. According to Carrmine Ireene, this practice balances emotional upheavals, relaxes and soothes nerves and nervous system.

5. Maha Mudra

This is the most important of all Mudras as denotes the name. This Mudra should be performed followed by *Mahabandha* and *Mahavedha*.

To do this Mudra, sit in a position that the Kanda (space between anus and the generative organ) is pressed by the left heel. Perform Mulabandha and keep the left leg straight. Bend down and hold the big toe of the right foot with both hands. Then put down the head until it touches the knee. This is also called Janushirasana. Repeat the same act by the right leg pressing the Kanda by the left leg.

Benefits: This Mudra helps the Prana and Apana to come in synchronized form and pass through the Sushumna channel. It helps in awakening the Kundalini. The practice of this Mudra also cures gastritis, constipation, and tones up the nervous system. It cures obstruction of the bowels, the enlargement of spleen, indigestion and fever. It cures all diseases. See the *Gheranda Samhita* (3.8):

क्षयकासं गुदावर्त्तं प्लीहाजीर्णाज्वरं तथा ।
नाशयेत्सर्वरोगांश्च महामुद्रा च साधनात् ।।

6. Maha Bandha

Maha Mudra is the preliminary exercise for this. Sit in Vajrasana or in any comfortable posture and let the knees touch the ground. Place your palms on the knees. Loosen the whole body with your neck and spinal cord straight. Close your eyes lightly. Inhale from both nostrils and exhale it immediately. In Mahabandha, we have to do all the three Bandhas together starting from Mulabandha

going to the Uddhiyanabandha, and then Jalandharabandha. Hold on in this state and concentrate respectively at Vishuddhi, Manipura and Muladhara Chakras. Come to normalcy. Do five times. Remember when we release the Bandha, we start in the reverse order releasing Jalandharabandha, then Uddiyana and finally Mulabandha.

Benefits: Mahabandha is practiced at advanced stage by Yogis for awakening the Kundalini. Its practice produces excessive energy which should be controlled under the guidance of a Guru and it should be directed for good cause. It is very helpful in de-stressing bring mental peace and tranquility.

7. Maha Vedha

It is said that as the beauty, youth and charms of women are in vain without men, so are Mulabandha and Mahabandha without Maha Vedha.

रूपयौवनलावण्यं नारीणां पुरुषं विना ।

मूलबन्धमहाबन्धौ महावेधं विना तथा ॥

(Gheranda Sam., 3.21)

First sit in Mahabandha posture. Inhale the breath slowly. Press the chin against the chest and place the palms on the ground. Rest the body on the palms. Raise the buttocks slowly and strike them gently against the ground.

The Yogi who regularly practices Mahabandha and Mulabandha accompanies with

Mahavedha, is the best of the Yogis. He gets control over his mind and there is no fear of death for him, and decay does not approach him.

8. Yoga Mudra (Yoga Pose)

The technique and benefits of this Yoga Mudra has been described under the Asanas in the preceding chapter of this book.

This posture benefits the doer in many ways. This Mudra cures all the problems related to arteries of the stomach removing constipation.

9. Viparitakarani Mudra

The sun (the solar nadi or plexus) dwells at the root of the navel, and the moon at the root of the palate; the process by which the sun is brought upward and the moon carried downward is called *Viparitakarani*. *Viparita* is a Sanskrit word used to make out the sense inverted. It is a secret Mudra in all the Tantras.

Lie down in relaxed state. Lift your legs and the hip slowly and slowly. Support the back with your hands. Remain steady. This is somewhat close to the Sarvangasana.

It has been stated in the Yogashastra that the sun is positioned at the navel centre and the moon at the Sahasrara Chakra of the body. The moon exudes nectar like fluid that is consumed by the fire at the navel. It causes death and decay to human body. By the practice of *Viparitakarani* the positions of sun and moon are reversed and the nectar is preserved.

10. Yoni Mudra

Sit in Siddhasana and close both ears with the thumbs, both eyes with the index fingers, both nostrils with middle fingers, mouth with ring and small fingers. Breathe in and hold the Kumbhaka (retention). Repeat Om and concentrate on the Ajna Chakra. Perform Mulabandha. Now imagine in your mind that the Kundalini Shakti is rising to the Middle channel having penetrated the six Chakras. Breathe out and release the fingers. This is practiced by the Yogis to awaken Kundalini and for higher Sadhana.

11. Khechari Mudra

Kha means Akasha and *chari* means to move. The Yogi moves in the Akasha. Its called *Khechari* as the tongue and the mind remain in the Akasha. This Mudra can be performed by an aspirant, only if he has undergone the preliminary exercise under the direct guidance of a Yoga teacher.

The preliminary aspect of the Khechari Mudra is to lengthen the tongue so much that when drawn out it may touch with its tip the space between the eye-brows. This can be done by cutting away the lower tendon. (*Gherand Sam.*, 3.25) It takes about three years to cut away the whole tendon. The Guru cuts the lower tendon of the tongue with a bright, clean knife little by little every week. Salt and turmeric powder is applied to it so that it may not join again. The tongue is rubbed with fresh butter and the practice of drawing it out is done. Take the hold of the tongue

with fingers and move it to and fro. It is done like the milkman who does with the udder while milking. Thus the tongue gets lengthened to the forehead. (It is strictly prohibited for the new Yogis.)

When the preliminary part of this Khechari Mudra is over, then sit in Siddhasana and turn the tongue upwards and downwards so as to touch the palate and close the posterior nasal openings with the reverse tongue. Then fix the gaze at the Ajna Chakra, i.e., the space between the two eye-brows. It is then that the vital air will move in the Sushumna Nadi. The inhalation and exhalation will then stop and the tongue will taste ambrosia that exudes from the Brahmarandhra. This is Khechari Mudra.

(Note: There are some other important Mudras and they will be discussed in other books of Yoga meant for advanced practice.)

YOGA-NIDRA (Yogic Sleep)

Yoga-Nidra is a Sanskrit word which means Yogic sleep, but it is a fantastic technique to relax the body and mind creating a melody and harmony to our Being, the Soul. Hindu Shastras mention that Lord Vishnu reclining on the coils of the Serpent King, Adi Shesha, in cosmic latency is always contemplating on measures to protect the worlds. All those who are familiar with *Yogabhyasa* practicing postures know it well that Yoga-Nidra tremendously soothes the body after performing Asanas and Pranayama. For Yoga-Nidra, one has to lie down in the Shavasana, then one should take

one's awareness to the right toe, and the left toe, slowly raising his awareness to the right foot and left foot, then the right leg and the left leg, then feel good at thighs releasing all the tension or stress, if any, and gradually raising awareness to the middle part and the upper part releasing tensions whatsoever. One should try to continue looking at each and every organ of the body from the buttock to pelvic region, then intestines, then abdomen, then chest, both lungs, then heart, and both hand, arms releasing tensions and feeling the these organs are functioning well and smooth, then neck, mouth, tongue, teeth, nose, both eyes, both ears, the head back and forth, the forehead and slowly the entire body.

This practice of looking at all parts with awareness be repeated for some time, at least two to three times. Now breathe deeply and leave loose the whole body and imagine that it has become cool and calm. Now chant the mantra Om while breathing deeply and continue. Now imagine that you are body, you are soul and see your breath while inhaling and exhaling. Keep in awareness that when the breath is going out your own existence is also going out, and when it is coming in you are too coming in, and, vice versa. After some time, say around ten or fifteen minutes your whole body start becoming silent and feeling Yoga-Nidra. There will be total relaxation just like you have slept for two three hours. It will be a totally blissful experience.

Sleep is one of the supporting pillars of life. Along with diet and lifestyle, sleep is critical to good health and wellbeing. What can be more

frustrating than not being able to sleep, and tossing and turning in bed with a racing mind. According to Ayurveda, perfect sleep can be achieved when the mind is disconnected from the senses. Yogi Ashwiniji of Dhyana Foundation says: 'Deep sleep is possible only if there are no energy blockages.' Yoga has a miraculous way of good sleep and one can avail it by practicing *Yoga-Nidra*.

DHYANA (MEDITATION)

What is Dhyana

Dhyana or meditation is a way of life. This is the right path to tread on. We have been taught in the Ashtangayoga that Dhyana is preceded by *Dharana*. Dharana is to concentrate at different regions of the body like the navel centre, heart centre, in between the eyebrows, Brahmastrandhra, tip of the nose, tip of the tongue, etc. When mind gets concentrated at these places, senses together with the mind start becoming introvert. Gradually the mind is diverted from gross to subtle and then to Atman and Paramatman. When this Dharana is established there arise scope for Dhyana or meditation – *Tatra pratyaiikatanta dhyanam* – तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् (*Yoga.*, 3.2)

Dhyana or meditation has been practiced for thousands of years by those searching for spiritual enlightenment. Today, one of the main reason for the popularity of meditation is that a proven side-effect is a marked improvement in both mental and physical health. Above all, it is an effective antidote to stress. *Dhyana* releases the muscular and

mental tension in everyday life, leading to serenity and providing a glimpse of the enlightened state. *Dhyana* has been found to stem the flow of stress hormones. Regular meditation is accompanied by a significant decrease in heart rate, lowering of blood pressure, cooling the nervous system, and improving depression, migraine, and insomnia.

Let us see what Upanishads have to say about meditation:

'Meditation in truth is higher than thought. The earth seems to rest in silent meditation; and the waters and the mountains and the sky and the heavens seem all to be in meditation. Whenever a man attains greatness on this earth he has his reward according to his meditation.'

Thousands of years ago the sages of ancient India formulated, experimented with and perfected a special science of Self called Meditation. The aim and object of this Yogic science was to give expansion to one's consciousness. Sage Patanjali writes in his *Yogasutras*:

'When the mind is dissociated from the sensory experiences and made constant and consistent on one subject, one point or one topic, the state of meditation develops.'

Our Rishis have since then been making constant effort to invite the attention of the people of the world that evolution of the mankind is not

possible without following the path of meditation. Swami Sivananda says:

'Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in eternal awareness or pure consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging finitude into infinity.'

The mind gains knowledge of the world through the senses of perception and cognition. If the mind is led into meditation, it is taken off these frontiers. By doing this, one can experience the expansion of consciousness. During this state the mind becomes a very sensitive instrument in hands of man as it learns to see, hear, feel and know without the medium of senses.

Someone may question why to meditate as goes the practice of non-believers in India and elsewhere. The Yoga of answering is that when the body is put to anger or stress, or say multitasking, the brain requires more energy, which in turn tries to compensate by breathing more and by increasing heartbeat. Meditation is a tool for the multitasking humanity to free itself from stress, anxiety, depression, and many other ailments. Though the practice of meditation is gaining popularity day by day, the need of the hour is to understand the real purpose of meditation. Practitioners are generally opting it for the purpose of making their agitated mind calm and cool and, thus get relief from stress and strain. But this has only temporary effect on their mind. The agitations of mind (vasanas) rise again as soon as the effect of breath-regulation or Pranayama settles down. It

is because deep down inside you there still remain the domain of Vasanas (unmanifest desires). The main purpose of meditation is, therefore, to relinquish these desires for real meditation that will eliminate the cause of the agitations of the mind.

Thus, having been duly initiated under some able master, do the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Bhuta-Shuddhi, and meditation to cool down the mind and awaken the hidden energy within the body. This practice, if gradually continued for some time, creates right kind of interior in the body and makes one tranquil and introvert. Regular and continued practice of meditation transforms one's vision of life and life style. It changes one's outlook. Then arises the state for invoking Paramatman in the very inner core of the heart. Thus the ultimate purpose of meditation is self-realisation.

Mystics and saints view life from a different angle and recommend that we should live each moment with full trust in the Lord. Sant Rajinder Singh says: 'One way to feel God's presence is to meditate. The energy emanating from God is a principle that manifests as light and sound. The light is greater than any other light one experiences on earth. The sound is a divine melody that reverberates without instrumens or vocal chords. ...Let us offer thanks for the myriad ways in which God's love surrounds and protects us.'

Certain Techniques of Dhyana

There are several ways and techniques of meditation and one should follow which suits

oneself. The *Vijnana Bhaira Tantra* alone has outlined 101 ways of meditation which are generally followed by different schools of thought in India. Meditation for different levels of Sadhakas are practiced differently according to their requirements. It is learnt under the able guidance of some experts or Yoga teachers who impart lessons on Yoga and meditation. There are many techniques offered by great masters of Yoga. Following are given a few techniques for the convenience of the readers and practicers.

1. Sit comfortably in any Dhyana posture and loosen the body. Remember the body should be ready and warmed for meditation. One must perform some Asanas, Pranayama before going for meditation. It is because the body should be not stiff and have impatience. Gradually relax and feel the surroundings as great healers and imagine that all is one with you. See that both of your hands are placed in the lap or rest at the knee in Jnana Mudra, the tip of the index finger touching the tip of the thumb.

Now start inhaling comfortably with the mental chanting of O----and exhale ending with ---M, thus chanting the Pranava Mantra. While doing this practice fix your mind at the Ajna Chakra, in the between the eyebrows. Continue this practice for some time till you feel comfortable. This is the most simple method of meditation for the beginners.

2. Sit comfortably in some Dhyana Posture, start inhaling and exhaling concentrating on your

breath, 12 angulas above and down the nostrils, continue to equalize the Prana running in the nostrils keeping the worldly objects out of the mind. This practice develops an intuitive faculty within the Sadhaka. When the mind becomes cool and the Pranas are also in the harmony, then fix your attention at the Ajna Chakra and let your consciousness enter the inner body. It is the centre of Sankalpa and will power and boosts of dynamism of determination making the will power invincible.

When exhorting the lesson of Yoga Dhyana, Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, to follow the practice of meditation in this above manner to bring the balance in Prana. Balancing the smooth flow of Prana is the most requisite aspect of Yoga. Though this state is easily available in children and young ones, it is not so easy for the elders to arrive at this state. This requires some practice and at least hours of walk in a fresh air or in a park. This practice is easily gained by Asanas and Pranayamas. The following verse of Bhagavadgita illustrated that it is the observance of the inhaling and exhaling of the breath that the Pranas are regulated. This then becomes instrumental for the Yogi to divert the mind from the outer world towards the Inner Self.

स्पर्शान्कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः।
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ ॥

(Bh. Gita, V.27)

3. In the process of meditation, there are certain other similar techniques. Sit comfortably

and start inhaling with the left nostril with the Pranava Mantra O--- and exhale with ----M, chanting should be mental and it should be practiced for some time till you can. This is a kind of *Japa Yajna* as says Lord Krishna. Herein the oblation (Ahuti) of breath (Svasha) is offered. In the form of *Ajapa-Japa* this Yajna is going on continuously from days unknown. By becoming aware of this, one becomes a Yogi.

4. According to *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, a great technique of meditation is watching the breath. Sit in a relaxed posture and start watching your breath when it touches your nostrils, feel it there. Follow the breath when it goes out. Follow it consciously. Be careful to watch the breath when it comes in and when it goes out. You will find there is a gap in between, it is there that the mind is calmed down and meditation occurs. Be a Sakshi to this breath and gradually you will discover that the gap between the breaths has expanded and then the experience of peace is realized.

5. According to spiritual master Deepak Chopra: 'Live in the present, for it is the only moment you have. Keep your attention on what is here and now, look for the fullness in every moment. Accept what comes to you totally so that you can appreciate it, learn from it, and then let it go.' He continues: 'Take time to be silent, to meditate, to quiet the internal dialogue. In moments of silence, realise that you are recontacting your source of pure awareness.' Silence is the birthplace of happiness. It is where

we get outbursts of inspiration, feelings of compassion, empathy and love. This silence can be brought by meditation.

This perception has been repeatedly stressed by several other Yogis like Yogananda Paramahansa, and it very much simulates to what Lord Krishna has said: (ब्रह्मभूत प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति).

6. Sit comfortably in some Yogic posture and relax. Place your hands lightly on your lap or on the knees. Breathe lightly. While breathing in have your concentration on your breath and follow it to your nostrils and the lungs, similarly while breathing out follow your breath out of the lungs and your nostrils. Let your breath take a balanced state.

When the body comes in harmony with the Pranas in balanced state, then chant the *So'ham* (सोऽहम्) Mantra. Do the mental Japa of *So* (सो) while inhaling from the left nostril, and *ham* (ऽहम्) from the right nostril while exhaling. With this Mantra feel that you are in communion with the Supreme Reality, the God. Continue for 10-15 minutes.

Fundamentals of Tantra Yoga

Right from the pre-Vedic period Tantra Sadhana has remained one of the potent powers for the spiritual regeneration. Agamas are a class of popular scriptures as theological treatises and manuals of divine worship. The Agamas include Tantras, Mantras and Yantra. All the Agamas treat of (i) Jnana or Knowledge, (ii) Yoga or concentration, (iii) Kriya or esoteric ritual, and (iv) Charya or esoteric worship. The Agamas are divided into three sections, the Vaishnava, the *Shaiva* and the *Shakta*. The Tantra Agamas belong to the Shakta cult and they glorify Shakti as the World-Mother.

Shaktism is not mere theory or Philosophy. It prescribes systematic Sadhana, discipline according to the temperament, capacity, and degree of evolution of the Sadhaka. Shaktas dwell on the Shakti or Energy aspect of God and prescribe numerous courses of ritualistic worship of Divine Mother in various forms. In Tantrayoga, the aspirant arouses Kundalini and unites Her with Lord Shiva and enjoys the supreme bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. When Kundalini is asleep, man is awake to the world. He has objective consciousness. But

when Kundalini is awake, man sleeps losing all consciousness of the world and becomes one with the Lord. In Samadhi, the body is maintained by the nector which flows from the union of Shiva and Shakti in the Sahasrara Chakra.

Scientists say that everthing is only energy and that energy is the physical ultimate of all forms and matter. The followers of Shakti worship have discovered this long ago. This energy is only a limited manifestation of the Infinite Supreme power of Maha Shakti.

People in India and particularly in the West associate the practice of Tantra to sex due to lack of proper knowledge of Tantra. Physical contact with a female is a gross *Maithuna*. Tantra calls that it is due to *Pashu Bhava* or animal disposition or brutal instinct. Mother Kundalini Shakti unites with Lord Shiva in Sahasrara during *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* which is real *Maithuna* or blissful union. This happens due *Divya Bhava* or divine disposition. So in Tantra one must rise from Pashu Bhava to Divya Bhava by practice of Yoga Sadhana, service of Guru, Satsanga, dispassion, discrimination, Japa and meditation.

The Shakti Tantra is Advaitavada which proclaims that Paramatman, the Supreme Soul and the Jivatman, individual soul are one. Tantrayoga lays special emphasis on the development of the powers in the Chakras, the psychic centres of energy, from Muladhara to Ajna Chakra. Kundaliniyoga actually belongs to Tantrayoga.

Tantra has two aspects of worship - *Bahya-varivasya*, i.e., external worship, and *Antara-varivasya*, i.e., internal worship. Shakti Sadhana

requires certain practices for preparation of the worship. These are Bhuta-Shuddhi, Nyasa, Kavacha, Mudra, Yantra, etc. *Bahya-varivasya* focuses on the worship of Goddesses by the Upacharas. The Sadhaka first meditates upon the Devata or Deity and then invokes the Devata in himself. He then communicates the divine presence to the Yantra and invokes the Devata by the appropriate Mantra, the vital airs of the Devata are infused by the *Prana-pratishtha* ceremony. The Devata is thus installed in the Yantra.

1. THE GURU TATTVA

As it has been stated elsewhere in this work, India has a unique tradition set by the sages and savants of this country. It has remained a stronghold of spiritual traditions from the days of yore. Acharya, Master or Guru is the most venerable person for a disciple in India. Guru is considered God-incarnate for the Hindus. The full moon day of the month of Ashadha (July) is celebrated as Guru Purnima, a day dedicated to the Guru. Devotees make offerings to their Guru who showers them with blessings. Maharshi Vedavyasa who composed the eighteen Puranas is said to be the originator of this day of celebration. Celebrated saint Swami Sivananda makes the following observation about Guru:

'Realise the sacred significance and supreme importance of the Guru's role in the evolution of man. Year after year, India commemorates Guru-Tattva. The Guru is the only guarantee for the individual to

transcend the bondage of sorrow and death, and experience the Consciousness of Reality.'

The ancients had the Gurukula system of education and the disciple had to dwell with the preceptor until he could complete his studies in all walks of life. Tantra adores one Guru, i.e., the Supreme Adinatha Mahakala abiding in Kailasha – *Guru sthanam hi kailasham* (गुरु स्थानं हि कैलाशम्). (*Yoginitantra*, ch. I) (There is one Kailasha in the Himalayas and the one in the upper region of our head as described in the *Yogashastra*.) Though there is plethora of literature available in the scriptural works of Hindus like Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and Tantric texts for our Sadhana to study and follow, yet it is not easy to understand unless some able Guru explains to you. So Guru of physical body is a must for the new Sadhaka to learn the basics of Yoga and Tantric practices. Kabir says:

यह तन विष की वेलरी गुरु अमृत की खान।

शीश दिए जो गुरु मिले तो भी सस्ता जान।।

'This human body houses poison whereas the Guru is a mine of nector. Even if one gets a Guru by sacrificing one's head (pride), its very cheap.'

Guru is the root of initiation, Diksha. Without Diksha one can't learn the practice of Mantra that is the root of Devata. No perfections, Siddhis can be achieved without Devata. It is Guru who

initiates the disciple first in the Mantra and practice of Yoga.

The popular belief is that Guru is something mysterious one and the word Guru itself appears to some very traditional and orthodox when it is talked with reference to ancient texts. It is very humorous to say even Indian brethren are seen talking ill of Guru. But none can deny the fact that Guru occupied most sacred place in the earlier history of India. With the passage of time the very sacred thought has declined much and people now nourish a lot of rubbish about so called modern Gurus. But days are far when the sacred aspect of Guru will be restored in India. The problem had been with a host of pseudo Gurus who appear to mushroom the metros today cheating people in the name of high place given to them.

But one should not be disheartened in non-availability of a wise Guru. The wise masters make us believe that one should go on with the practice of Sadhana and when the preparation is ripe, Sadguru will appear before the aspirant automatically. Swami Ramakrishna says:

"When flowers bloom, bees show up automatically. They don't need an invitation. In the same way, it's law of nature that when love for God blossoms in your heart, a spiritual teacher will come and find you."

Upanishads have extolled these venerable masters highlighting the real aspect of Guru and Shishya. The story of Nachiketa and Yama, the Death God, is well known as enunciated in the

Kathopanishad, where having obeyed the words of his father Nachiketa goes to hell. As the God Yama was not present there he waited and waited for three days until the Death God returned. Finding that brave Nachiketa waiting for death, he was wonderstruck by this thought and went to Nachiketa asking him to demand some boons for the wellbeing of his life. Initially he demanded, but later he became firm to know about the Atman. God Yama maintained restraint in unfolding the secret of Atman and gave many temptations to Nachiketa evading latter's quarry about Atman, and finding that he was so adamant he had to disclose it observing the best of an inquisitive and deserving disciple in him. The moral of the story is that a disciple has to develop the kind of merit in order to acquire the knowledge about the Atman.

Next to the great God in his threefold aspect, and His Emanations, there is no higher object of veneration and homage to man, than his Guru. This word Guru is sometimes very vaguely employed both in Sanskrit and English to designate every kind of teacher. But strictly speaking, this word should be exclusively applied to the highest spiritual teachers of humanity. It is the words Acharya and Upadhyaya that should be reserved for indicating secular and semi-secular teachers. For a Hindu, the Guru is a liberated soul – Jivanmukta – the person who has united his lower self to the Higher Self.

The word 'guru' is formed of two letters – *gu* and *ru*, *gu* means light or Prakasha and *ru* is the one who takes to. Thus Guru is the one who takes you to enlightenment from the darkness of Tamas

(inertia) and from mortal to immortality. Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Guru Nanak, Kabir were Mahagurus and showed us the path of immortality.

Saint Kabir sang:

'It is the mercy of my true Guru that has made me to know the unknown, I have learned from him how to walk without feet, to see without eyes, to hear without ears, to drink without mouth, to fly without wings. I have brought my love and my meditation into the land where there is no sun and moon, nor days and night.'

Guru is the one who has gravitation, around whom you suddenly feel as if you are being pulled. He is tremendous magnet, with only one difference: he has charisma. When one is pulled towards Guru, one is pulled inwards. Be assured that a true will meet you when the sort of studentship or *Shishyata* awakens in you. You need not bother about it and should make no quest of a true master. Only qualification is that you should create right kind of interior within you. And when a Guru comes across you, see that you should come before him with a vacuum inside (*समित्पाणिर्गच्छेत्*).

Since the God or Atman is Guru and each and every action is performed by His will, a deserving person is sure to get enlightenment sooner or later as Atman is ever present – *आत्मा तु सततं सुलभः*. The Tantric theory too believes that Shiva is the Guru. Shiva reflects Atman, which when awakened, is ready to offer the whole galore

of knowledge. So be sure that our Sadhana is not postponed for lack of a Guru. Guru of the external world will definitely come before you or get you to him when time comes.

Sadhana should therefore start with the invocation of the following Mantra. All the actions of Sadhana should be surrendered to the Great Yogishvara Shiva, the most venerable Guru. This is called *Ishvara Pranidhana* in the Hathayoga. The verse for invocation to Guru follows:

अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम्।
 तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः॥
 अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानाञ्जन शलाकया।
 चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः॥
 गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।
 गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः॥

'Salutations to that glorious Guru who has shown to me that Supreme Being, who in the form of a sphere of unbroken glory pervades this universe of the moving and non-moving beings.'

'Salutations to that glorious Guru who, when my sight was blinded by the darkness of ignorance, restored to it the light of knowledge and truth.'

'Salutations to the glorious Guru; for Guru is Brahma, He is Vishnu, and even the Lord Mahadeva is He; nay Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself.'

2. WORSHIPPING AN IMAGE OR YANTRA

The word *Puja* (पूजा) is of great meaning. It is formed of two words - *pu* (पू) and *ja* (जा) i.e., पूर्णता से जन्म लेने वाली. Thus the actual meaning of *Puja* is that which is born of fulfillment. In order to offer *Puja* to a particular deity, there are two ways to worship - 1. External worship and 2. Internal worship. External worship requires certain modes and practices known as *Upacharas*. Then sixteen *Upacharas* are given as below:

(1) *Asana*, seating of the deity, (2) *Avahana*, invoking the Devata (deity), (3) *Padya*, water for washing the feet, (4) *Arghya*, water for ablution, (5) *Achamana*, sipping water for purification purpose, (6) *Madhuparka*, honey, ghee, milk and curd etc., (7) *Snana*, bath, and (8) *Vastra*, cloth, (9) *Abharana*, jewels and ornaments, (10) *Gandha*, perfume, 11. *Pushpa*, flowers, 12. *Dhupa*, incense, (13) *Deepa*, light, (14) *Naivedya*, food and *Tambulam*, betel leaf, (15) *Nirajana*, Arati, and, then (16) *Vandana*, prostration and prayer.

The deity is invoked and revoked after the *Puja* in one's heart. Of the Mantras in worship, the *Matrika* mantra which is the mother of all Mantras should be pronounced. Without the *Matrika*, the Mantra loses its significance.

3. PURIFYING THE BHUTAS (Elements)

Bhuta-shuddhi is an important Tantrika rite. It means purification of the five elements of which the body is composed of. As we are aware of the fact that our body is made up of five great

elements called *Pancha-mahabhutas*, i.e., earth, water, fire, air, and ether, there is a continuous change that goes on with them. As these five elements make the composition of our body, the balancing of these Tattvas (Bhutas) is must for upkeeping proper health. Due to changes in life-style and environmental conditions, these Bhutas get imbalanced, and, as a consequence, the body suffers pangs of diseases. In that case their purification becomes a prerequisite for the well being of our body and mind to run the life. In Bhuta-shuddhi, all the elements right from Earth, at the Muladhara Chakra to Ether at the Vishuddhi Chakra have to be dissolved by practicing their purificatory rites and exercises. By contemplating the respective Tattva at concerned Chakra with its colour and seed mantra they are purified. Inhaling done from the left nostril starting with the first letter of the seed mantra, like 'Lum'(लं) at the Muladhara, inhale with 'la' (ल) and exhale from the right nostril saying mentally 'ma'(म्). (Detailed discussion will follow in a separate chapter on 'Bhuta-shuddhi'.) By practicing it the Sadhaka (aspirant) dissolves the sinful body and makes a new divine body. He infuses into the body the life of the Devi.

4. TATTVA AND NYASA

There is another Tantric rite that is required to be performed while doing the Tantra Sadhana. It is Nyasa which is a very important and powerful Tantric rite. It is placing of the tips of the fingers of the right hand on various parts of the body with invocation, accompanied by Mantra.

1. **Rishhi:** The Sadhaka or the sage who first had the vision of the mantra is the Rishi of the mantra. The Nyasa of the Rishi of a particular mantra should be done in the forehead.
2. **Devata:** Devata is the life force or Prana Shakti which inspires, activates and controls all the activities of the individual self, Jiva. This life force rests in the heart, so the Nyasa is done in the heart.
3. **Chhanda:** Chhanda is formed of letters and terms. Its Nyasa is done in the mouth.
4. **Bija:** Bija, seed is the Tattva that motivates the power of Mantra. The generative organ is its place of Nyasa.
5. **Shakti:** The Tattva which helps the formation of Bija-mantra is called Shakti. Its Nyasa is done in the feet.
6. **Viniyoga:** Viniyoga is necessary to empower the Mantra. Its places of Nyasa are all parts of the body.

5. KAVACHA (Protection Sheath)

Kavacha means sheath or protection. In Sadhana it is applied for the protection of the different parts of the body by invoking Mantras. The Sadhaka invokes one Brahman by different names in order to protect different parts of body. For example, Parama Shiva is invoked in the Sahasrara Padma in the crown chakra in the head. The Supreme Lord is meditated upon in the heart.

Lord Vishnu, the protector of the world is invoked to protect the throat, so that the aspirant may chant the Mantras of his Ishta Devata properly.

May the Supreme Brahman protect the head!

May the Supreme Lord protect the heart!

May Lord Vishnu protect the throat!

May the Lord protect the face!

May the Lord protect my hands!

May He protect my feet!

May He protect my body in all its parts!

6. MUDRAS (Gestures)

Mudras are rituals of mental gestures. In external worship certain manual gestures are done as a part of ritual to please the Devata. There are 108 Mudras and an appropriate gesture is done in invoking the Devata. While invoking the Devata an appropriate gesture is made. For offering *Arghya*, Matsya Mudra is made. The right hand is placed on the back of the left and the two thumbs are extended finlike on each side of the hand. There are other Mudras as well for other acts of rituals during worship.

7. YANTRA (Amulet)

Yantra literally means support and instrument. Yantra or amulet is an object of worship used as an image. A Yantra is a geometric design acting as a highly efficient tool for contemplation, concentration and meditation. It is a diagram drawn on a paper or engraved on a

metal sheet. Yantras carry spiritual significance and pertains to our levels of consciousness. It is appropriated to a specific Devata only. It is, infact, the body of the Devata. These Yantras are peculiar to each Devata. All the Yantras have a common edging called Bhopura. The Yantra has a quadrangular figure with four doors.

The Yantra provides a window into the Absolute. When the mind is concentrated at a single, i.e., Yantra, the mental chattering stops. In most advanced cases it is possible to have union with God by the geometric visualization of a Yantra. The most celebrated Yantra for the Hindus in India is known as Shri Yantra, the Yantra of Tripurasundari. It is a symbol of entire cosmos that serves to remind the practitioner of the non-difference between subject and object.

As for the core of the Yantra, it is composed of one or several simple geometrical shapes like dots, lines, triangles, squares, circles, and lotus representing different ways of the subtle energies. The Dot or Bindu is symbolic of Shiva, the source of all creation in Tantra, and it is concentrated at. The Triangle is the symbol of Shakti, the feminine energy or aspect of creation. The Triangle pointing down reperesents the Yoni, the feminine sexual organ and the symbol of the supreme source of the universe. When the Triangle points upward, it shows intense spiritual aspiration, the sublimation of one's nature into the most subtle planes and the element of the Fire. Similarly the others are symbolically designed to represent deities.

The abode of Tripurasundari, the Divine Mother, is called Shri Nagara. The abode known as

Manidwipa is surrounded by twenty five ramparts which represents the twenty five tattvas. The resplendent Chintamani palace is in the middle. The Mother sits in the Bindu Pitha in Shri Chakra in that wonderful palace. There is similar abode for Her in the body of man also.

8. FIVE TATTVAS (Five Makaras)

Tantra Yoga has proved one of the potent powers for the spiritual regeneration in India, particularly Hindus. The Pancha Tattva is essential for the worship of Shakti. These Five Tattvas are Madya, Mansa, Matsya, Mudra, and Maithuna. Since these all start with M, the ignorant ones define them differently and take in wrong sense.

When practiced by the ignorant, unknowledgeable and unenlightened persons, it has led to certain abuses. An instance of the perverted expression of the truth is the theory of the Five Makaras – *Madya* (wine), *Mansa* (meat), *Matsya* (fish), *Mudra* (symbolical acts) and *Maithuna* (coition). Some people have distorted the real sense of these five things as stated. This has led to utter disregard for Tantra among the mass in Indian society and a lot of abuses have been brought to it. These Five Tattvas don't carry literal meaning as there is danger of great sin. The esoteric meaning of these five Makaras is : Kill egoism, control flesh, drinking the nectar of God-intoxication, and rejoicing in the blissful union of Lord Shiva. See how a devotee of Lord reacts about the sort of intoxication called Madya:

‘तुमको नशा है दुनिया का,
 मुझको है नशा दुनिया बनाने वाले का।
 तुमको है नशा शराब का,
 मेरा तो माशूक ही शाकी है।’

The word *Mansa* in ancient India did not mean meat as it is known today. Even the derivation of the word does not come to this conclusion. (I will discuss this meaning in detail in some other book.) *Mansa* is the act by which the aspirant consecrates all his actions to God. *Maithuna* is the union of Shiva and Shakti in the upper brain centre known as Sahasrara or thousand petalled lotus. *Matsya* is the Sattvika knowledge by which the Sadhaka sympathises with the pleasure and pain of all beings. *Mudra* is the act of abandoning all associations with evil which leads to bondage. Wine is the fire, flesh is air, fish is water, cereal is earth, sexual union is ether.

It is therefore advisable at the outset that people should not be misguided by the wrong perception and lead a pious life. A sacred life alone is able to deliver success in Tantra Sadhana.

9. BIJA-MANTRAS AND DEVATA

In Tantric Yoga, the Bija-Mantras and its Devata have got great importance. In fact, the knowledge about this aspect of Mantra-shastra is superb. It is very criptic when we go through it and and adopt in our spiritual practice. This was not meant for general mass, and this is the reason that Tantra scriptures do not miss to remind time and again that it is *Gopyam* and *Gapaneeyam* as the master-minds were scared of getting them misused

or misinterpreted, which could jeopardize the life of the practitant. So we must know the depth of the sacred knowledge enshrined therein.

When there is Spanda or movement, the perceiving subject, when heard, is called sound. One may hear it or not that is another thing. Similarly there is a sound which cannot be heard by any material instrument but it is experienced by a Yogi. There was no sound in the beginning as there was no movement for the fact that the natural Principle, the Prakriti, was in a state of equilibrium. On the disturbance of this equilibrium there was a movement in the whole mass of Prakriti, then the first vibration that took place at the commencement of the creation, was the Pranava Dhvani of Om Sound. The first equally distributed motion throughout the mass is Om, which is the great seed-mantra (Mahabeeja), for it is the source of all others and all compounded sounds. Just as Om is the general sound, the other Bija-mantras are the particular sounds which are the letters of the alphabet.

According to the number of syllables, Mantras are given various names. A Bija-mantra or Seed-mantra is a Mantra of single letter such as *Kam* (कं), which is composed of the letter *K* (क) together with Chandrabindu which terminates all Mantras. For the purpose of pronouncing vowel and consonant both are necessary. The termination is *M* (म) in the form of nasal breathing called Chandrabindu which is Nada and Bindu. In all the other letters one or other of the five Bhutas or forms of sensible matter (Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Ap, Prithivi) predominates. The Yoga teacher knows it

well which Mantra one has to take according to the excess or deficiency of a Bhuta. 'Where there is excess of a Bhuta, the letter in which it predominant is said with the outbreathing. Where there is deficiency it is said with the inbreathing. M is chosen to end the Bijas because here Bhutas are said to be in equipoise.'

(*Garland of Letters*, pp. 249-50)

It is said that the Bija is of one letter and the Mantra springs from that but there are other Bijas like *Hrim*, *Shrim*, *Krim*, *Hum*, *Aim*, *Phat*. Though Bijas have no meaning, the initiated one however knows that their meaning the own from Svarupa of the particular Devata whose Mantra they are. Each Devata has His or Her Bija, eg., the Devatas of *Hrim*, *Krim*, and *Ram* are Kali, Maya and Agni respectively. The primary Mantra in the worship of any God or Goddess is known as the Root Mantra or *Mulamantra*.

In Mantra Shastra, every letter, syllable and Mantra is then a form of Brahman, and so is the image and all lines of Yantra and all objects in the universe. It must be understood that no image is merely a stone when Prana is invoked into it. And similarly no letter can be called merely a alphabet. Therefore all letters of alphabet should be known that they are forms of Shakti and contain sound powers. The Shakti of which they are a manifestation, is the living energy which projects itself into the form of the universe. Sir John Woodroffe writes: 'The rhythmical vibrations of its sounds not merely regulate the unsteady vibrations of the sheaths of the worhispper, thus tansforming him, but through the power of striving (Shadhana-

shakti) of the worshipper, there arises the form of Devata which it is.' (ibid., p. 251)

The following verse makes it very clear:

‘शृणु देवि प्रवक्ष्यामि बीजानां देवरूपताम्।
मंत्रोच्चारण मात्रेण देवरूपं प्रजायते॥’

(*Brihadgandharva Tantra*, Chap. V)

Here follows twelve popular Bija-mantras which are given in the Chapter Six of the *Varada Tantra* as quoted in the Bengali book titled *Pranatoshini*, and quoted again by Sir John Woodroffe in his book '*Garland of Letters*' (pp. 252-56) and I would like to quote then for the purpose of benefitting the people:

1. **Haum** (हौं) : In this Bija-mantra, *Ha* means Shiva, and, *Au* is Sadashiva, Shunya is that which dispels sorrow. Shiva is worshipped with this Mantra.
2. **Dum** (दुं) : *Da*, O Devi, means Durga, *U* also means to save, *Nada* is the mother of the universe. Bindu means pray, do.
3. **Kreeng** (क्रीं) : *Ka* is Kali, *Ra* is said to Brahma, *I* means Mahamaya, *Nada* means mother of the universe, Bindu means dispeller of sorrow. Hence with this Mantra, Devi Kalika should be adored for cessation of sorrow.

4. **Hreng** (ह्रीं) : *Ha* means Shiva, *Ra* is said to be Prakriti, *I* means Mahamaya, *Nada* is mother of the universe, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow. With this Mantra Bhuvaneshvari should be worshipped.
5. **Shreeng** (श्रीं) : *Sa* means Mahalakshmi, *Ra* is said to mean wealth, *I* means satisfaction, *Nada* is *Apara* or *Ishvara*, *Bindu* is dispeller of sorrow. This is the Bija-mantra of Goddess Lakshmi and she should be worshipped with this Mantra.
6. **Aing** (ऐं) : *Ai* means Saraswati, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow. This is the Bija-mantra of Saraswati.
7. **Kleeng** (क्लीं) : *Ka* refers to Kamadeva, or according to some Krishna. *La* means Indra, *I* means contentment, *Aim* is that which grants happiness and sorrow. This is for Maheshwari.
8. **Hum** (हुं) : *Ha*, O Devi, is said to Shiva. *U* is said to be Bhairava, *Nada* means Para, Supreme, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow.
9. **Gam** (गं) : *Ga* is Ganesha, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow. This is for Maheshwari for Love.

- 10. Glaum (ग्लौं) :** *Ga* is Ganesha, *La* means that pervades, *Au* means Tejas, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow. This Mantra is used for the worship of Ganesha.
- 11. Kshraum (क्ष्रौं) :** *Ksha* is Nrisimha and *Ra* is Brahma, *Au* means teeth pointing upwards, *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow. Lord Nrisimha should be adored by this Mantra.
- 12. Streng (स्त्रीं) :** *Sa* means deliverance from difficulties, *Ta* means saviour, *Ra* means salvation, *I* means Mahamaya, *Nada* means mother of the universe. *Bindu* means dispeller of sorrow.

Tantra Practice in India

Tantrayoga has proved one of the potent powers for the spiritual regeneration of the Hindus and Buddhists right from the days of yore. The word '*tantra*' literally means expansion. That is why a Tantra Yogi constantly concentrates on expanding all levels of his consciousness to unbind and realise the Supreme Reality. Herein the knowledge concerning Truth or Brahman and Mantra, mystic syllables is explained. Tantra focuses on the dynamic aspect of divinity called Shakti, or the Cosmic Mother. The Tantra Yogi endeavours to attune with the spiritual dynamic energy in order to transform personal limitations. Tantra is a pure path, but it has been abused by some self-proclaimed adherents. Tantra is not concerned with sexuality as goes the popular belief among those who have simply heard it. Tantra is concerned with the creative force and transmuting this energy to the higher channels.

The ancient Yogic masters of the Indian subcontinent studied the infinity of the inner space and made dazzling discoveries. Be it Yoga, Mantra, Tantra or other prolific literature that we come across today is the outcome of the continuous

spiritual practice of the Master Minds for years together. The Hindu Shastras are classified into four categories: 1. Shruti, 2. Smriti, 3. Purana, and 4. Tantra. The four Vedas (*Rig, Yajuh, Sama, and Atharva*) and the *Upanishads* are known as *Shrutis*. The philosophical interpretation of the Vedas called Vedanta is enunciated in the *Upanishads*. *Smritis* contain the Dharma Shastra of Hindus known as Manusmriti, and others. The *Puranas* are the most significant works of Hindu Shastra containing Samhitas (collections), Dharma Shastra, Smritis, Puranas, Upapuranas, Itihasa, the treatises of Vasishtha, Valmiki and others.

Scriptures have been created in all the ages. The Veda is the root of all the Hindu Scriptures. The Tantra is known as the fifth Veda. According to Kulluka-Bhatta, the celebrated commentator on Manu, Shruti is of two kinds: *Vaidika* and *Tantrika* 'वैदिकी तान्त्रिकी चैव द्विविधा श्रुतिः कीर्तिता'. There are primarily three types of Tantras: 1. Dakshina-marga, 2. Vama-marga or Kaula-marga, 3. Mishra-marga. These are also sub-divided into Damara, Yamala etc. Chapters 64 to 91 of the previous part of the *Narada Purana* are full descriptions about Tantra. Likewise the Agni and Garuda Purana are also full of Mantras and Tantra. Several works of Hindu Tantra which occur today are very much like the Puranas that consist of dialogues relating to the worship of Gods and Goddesses, with Shiva, the godhead, and Shakti, the premier goddess. Shiva exhorted various religious topics to His consort Parvati that took the form of Tantra worship.

The two streams of Indian thought representing *Agama* and *Nigama* are there since

the days of yore and they are equally unique in their own way. Both of them ultimately lead to one goal, i.e., the welfare of people in this world (*Bhukti*) and at the abode of the Supreme (*Mukti*). Whereas the Nigama stream belongs to Shrutis and Smritis, Agama is the scripture that contains prescribed ways of adoring one's deity with proper knowledge of the Tattvas. Here is an important verse illustrating the very origin of Agama.

आगतं शिव वक्त्रेभ्यो गतं च गिरिजाश्रुतौ ।
एतस्मादागमः प्रोक्तः विद्वभिस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

It is said that the Tantra contains the very core of the Veda as describes the relation of *Paramatman* to *Jivatman* in the same way. The books of Tantra are available in the form of dialogue between Shiva and Shakti.

Tantra is one of the oldest spiritual disciplines of India. But unfortunately today nobody is keen to approach God by practicing Tantra in proper way. Infact the original spirit of Tantra has got distorted and it has assumed the form of physical enjoyment (*Bhoga*). People now concentrate on achieving perfections in various fields of Tantra for the purpose of possessing the material things. Paramatman does not figure in the list of modern Tantrikas and that is why it has taken a totally different form and has lost the real spirit. The difference actually lies in the fact that the Tantrikas are mushrooming and they are practicing it for accomplishing petty things of life. They are merely Tantrikas who are prone to only *Bhoga* (enjoyment) and not the Yoga that brings

communion with the Supreme. The main thrust of Tantra Yoga is to concentrate on the Supreme soul in the very recess of the heart centre by practicing the *Saakshi Bhava*, and then proceed further to subjective awareness, the enlightenment, the *Shuddha Chaitanya*.

Derived from the root 'tan', *Tantra* means the Shastra which propagates the knowledge of delivering *trana* or *Moksha* - तन्यते विस्तार्यते ज्ञानमनेन इति तंत्रम्। The word 'tantra' is formed of two words, *tanoti* and *trayati* which respectively imply *vistara* (expansion) and *Mukti* (liberation). Tantra is therefore the science of the expansion of consciousness that liberates itself from its own limits. It is the path where one can liberate from worldly limits and bondages despite of one's capability to enjoy the world. It is rightly said:

'तनोति विपुलानर्थास्तत्त्वमन्त्रसमाश्रितान्।
त्राणं च कुरुते पुंसां तेन तंत्रमिति स्मृतम्॥'

The origin of Tantra as delineated in the *Kularnava Tantra* (Chap. 17) is the one prescribed in the Shastras depicting the way of adoring one's deity to please them so that the devotee is liberated from the miseries of the world.

मुदं कुर्वन्ति देवानां मनांसि तरयन्ति च।
तस्मात् तंत्र इति ख्यातो दर्शितव्यः कुलेश्वरी॥

INNER JOURNEY & TANTRIC YOGA

Before trying to understand Tantra Yoga it will be advisable to know the Yoga. Yoga is the science that connects one to one's inner core. It is

the science of *Samadhi* (trance), virtually the science that establishes communion with the Shiva (Atman). At the outset, it is advisable that no confusion should be entertained about Atman and the human body as the Atman is the indweller of the body. The body is like a temple and in the sanctum sanctorum, i.e., in the recess of the heart, resides the Atman - देहो देवालयं प्रोक्तः देही नित्य निरंजनः। (*Deho devalayam proktah dehi nitya niranjanah*)(Acharya Shankara). There is the physical body, inside this body is the mind, inside the mind is *Atman* - 'कोठरे महि कोठरी परम कोठी विचारी' (*Kothare mahi kothari param kothi vichari*)(Kabir). Yoga, in fact, is the process to make our journey smooth to Atman/Paramatman. Obviously, the basic purpose of all spiritual practices is to revel in the bliss of Self-realization, no matter whether it is Yoga, Tantra, Mantra or any other spiritual discipline. Unless and until the awareness that there is Atman inside each and every creature dawns in the heart of a person, he simply gropes in darkness.

The spiritual masters, therefore, stress on the fact that one should constantly think over the divinity that dwells in the inner recess of the heart. The 'I', that we generally talk about, is not the body, it is the eternal and immaculate Atman residing in the body. This has to be borne in the mind that 'I' should not be identified with the body. The body is perishable but Atman is eternal. Masters stress to constantly follow and remember to be a witness (*Saakshi*) to the Atman residing in the body. Let us be a *Nimitta* to our actions, and not presume that we are the doer - '*Nimitta*

matram bhava savyasachin.' (निमित्त मात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन।) The Atman is the part of Paramatman or, say, is Paramatman Himself. Krishna, revealing the secret of Atman, says: अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूतशयात्थितः।, ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशे तिष्ठति अर्जुन। (Gita) and एको वशी सर्वभूतांतरात्मा.

CHAKRA ANUSANDHANA IN TANTRA

Chakra Pranayama

Chakra Pranayama means the Pranayama which is done in a circular way following the network of Nadis and Chakras. It is rarely known by the Yogis as it belongs only to Gurus who impart this knowledge to their disciple during initiation. The journey to the inner core can be performed by the different centres of energy in our body known as Chakras. Chakras will be studied elsewhere in this book, at this place only this much has to be revealed that there are seven Chakras in the subtle body which have to be concentrated for this inner journey through Prana and Nadis. This is also called Kriyayoga. This practice is done without involving the mind unlike what is done in the Rajayoga where the mind has a crucial role to be handled very carefully. As has been pointed out elsewhere and even studied by most of the spiritual practices of Yoga and Bhakti, mind is the main impediment. At the base of the spine is Muladhara Chakra, then above the Muladhara Chakra is the Swadhisthana Chakra behind the sexual organ, then are the Manipur, Anahata, Vishuddhi, Ajna and the Sahasrara Chakras respectively located at navel, heart, throat, between the eyebrows, and the

crown. What happens in Yoga is that we make our journey to the inner of the heart centre from different Chakras.

Chakra Anusandhana

In *Chakra Anusandhana*, the consciousness is rotated through Chakras and their contact points and there is no tension about mind because the mind will itself take its course during the process of Chakra Anusandhana. Sadhakas should remember that all the Chakras have contact points at the front side of the body except the Muladhara and the Bindu. These contact points are parallel to the Chakra centres in the spine.

In Tantrayoga, when practicing the process of Chakra purification, one has to ascend to the Bindu in the top back of the head. (Bindu is the space behind the Sahasrara Chakra, thousand petalled lotus, where Hindus have their tuft.) When ascending 'through the contact points in frontal passage, say the name of each one to yourself and touch it mentally: 'Muladhara - perineum, Swadhisthana - pubic bone, Manipura - navel, Anahata - sternum, Vishuddhi - throat-pit, Ajna - eyebrow center, Bindu - top back of the head.'

(*'Yoga' Journal*, Bihar School of Yoga, Munghyr)

Similarly, in this process of Chakra Anusandhana, once you have reached the top contacting the these points from the front side, then you have to descend from the top to bottom. 'As you descend through the Chakra points in the spine say the name of each and touch it mentally:

Bindu – top back of the head, Ajna – top of the spine, Vishuddhi – behind the throat-pit, Anahata – behind the sternum, Manipura – behind the navel, Swadhisthana – coccyx, Muladhara – perineum, and terminate.’ (ibid.) Yogis is of the view that one need not have concentration in this practice but the awareness should keep moving as quickly as possible from one Chakra to other Chakra otherwise the mind will create problem. It is advised to practice Chakra Anusandhana nine rounds.

DIMENSIONS OF TANTRA

When the spiritual journey to Atman/Paramatman is taken from the Swadhisthan Chakra located behind the sex centre, from where the senses are governed, it is called Tantra Yoga. Kabir says: '*Kothare mahi kothari param kothari beechari*'. The sense is that the journey has to be covered to Atman or Individual soul to the Paramatman, the Supreme soul. The Atman being a part of the Paramatman is divine and eternal. By establishing communion with the Atman the Jiva comes in communion with the Paramatman and enjoys the bliss of life.

Tantra is the first step to enter the kingdom of Paramatman and to ultimately reach the acme of perfect bliss. The various pathas that lead to Paramatman from the Swadhisthan Chakra can be performed through the sense organs. The number of doors to this journey are tantamount to the number of senses. The senses of action are five – eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. Eyes to perceive

the things of the world, ears are to hear, nose are for smell, tongue is for taste and the skin for touch. These all senses derive pleasure by indulging in the things of the world, and in every indulgence lies a peculiar way of practicing Tantra Yoga.

TANTRA RELATING TO SENSES

Tantric Yoga through senses has a very tremendous role. Yoga through the eyes can be accomplished by seeing the things as they are but the approach of perception should vary. There are several beautiful things in the world, maybe things of nature, say a beautiful flower. And, we see a flower and enjoy its beauty through eyes and feel pleasure from outside, it is, of course, no use at all as the viewer is enjoys the beauty only from the sense organ i.e., eye. See it from a different angle, see the beauty and the excellent art of the Maker and the mystery in it. Here the enjoyer discovers a totally different flower. The enjoyment should actually appeal to the soul, to the inner core of the viewer, and it should appeal to the extent that the viewer is fully immersed in its enjoyment forgetting all his surrounding. Then it becomes the enjoyment of the Atman, the Supreme soul. As far as indulgence of the outer beauty of the flower is concerned it does not reflect the Soul/God. There is a vibration in the onlooker and he is filled with undescrivable joy. When this vibration becomes serene and calm, a sort of harmony is pervades the whole of inner kingdom and the enjoyer is filled with bliss.

Similarly the practice of Tantra Yoga can be done by the other sense organs of action, like the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin. In hearing music or songs of devotion, the hearer can enjoy the melody and song from ways. When the hearer pays attention at the song and his passions are aroused, it is one aspect, and when the melody and the sweetness of the song moves one from the very core of his heart, and gradually the enjoyer gets immersed with the Supreme and enjoys the bliss of it, then it becomes Tantra Yoga. The seven *svaras* of music *sa re ga ma pa dha nee*, actually activate the seven Chakras.

TANTRA OF LOWER CATEGORY

The basic purpose of Tantra was to practice this discipline for the upliftment of Self and the society. Days are no more when spiritual masters used to acquire great perfections by their continuous practice. They used those Siddhis for the betterment of people and so was there Tantra for some higher cause. The general practice that prevails among the Tantrika practicants today is known as *Vibhuti Tantra*. These types of Tantrikas actually acquire some power by adoring certain ghosts and other smaller elements and show their feats in the masses, establishing their image among people. They perform certain miracles and attract the public for meting out their petty ends and minting money. Such Tantrik *babas* are seen roaming about the streets and cheating the public in one way or the other. *Vibhuti Tantra* comprises a

lot of such practices when they acquire powers by getting perfection in pleasing smaller elements.

This author was born in a village of Uttar Pradesh and has since come across many more such practitioners who indulge in these practices due to lack of proper schooling. Most of such people who adore *Bhutas* and *Pretas* belong to the lower strata of the society and their education is almost nil. During the childhood days of this author there used to be *Ojhas* in the villages who survived on curing the impact of elements like *Bhuta-Pretas*, *Shaitanas*, witches (*Chudails*), *Pishachinis*, etc. Mostly such persons belonged to the lower communities. Children in those days were scared of such elements and were not allowed to go in dark nights and the places haunted by such ghostly elements. Elders in the family, most of them being unlettered, used to relate many unbelievable stories about such elements and instill in the young minds a kind of fear which is a bad practice and should be avoided. Children should not be taught such feary tales as it leaves bad impression on their ignorant mind and that haunts them throughout the life. Such elements actually belonged to them as might have died violent deaths (*Akalamrityu*). Though such happenings of ghosts and witches still persist among the uneducated scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and several other people of backward communities and unlettered mass inhabiting the Indian villages, trends have changed to a great extent and such beliefs and practices are gradually declining.

Indian scriptures reveal that when somebody dies the Jivatma has to wait for some time to get

the new birth or life. It all depends on what is there in store for that Jiva. If the Jiva has done good Karmas, it is very likely to be promoted to heaven and life like gods and goddesses, remains there, enjoys the pleasures of heaven till the virtuous deeds are in store, and as soon as the it exhausts, that is thown down onto the earth in new birth – *Ksheene punye mrtyu-lokam vishanti* (क्षीणे पुण्ये मृत्युलोकं विशन्ति ।) (Gita). Maybe, the Jiva is liberated from the bondage of Karma and gets freedom from the cycle of birth and death after attaining to the Supreme abode, or the Karmas are not good and the Jiva is left to suffer in the state of a ghost. In the latter situation, the Jiva remains in the *preta Yoni* and suffers the pangs of helplessness. But they do have existence and they do have some unmanifest desires or Vasanas for which they torture one or the other.

These things are very scientific and you will be surprised if you discover that there is an aura around your body depending on your Pranic capacity and spiritual health. It varies from person to person as it is related to one's level of spiritual awareness, virtuous character and the progress achieved by the spiritual evolution of a Yogi. The aura with its colours can be perceived by Yoga contemplation in the *Nirati Samadhi*. Our sages and greatment had huge sphere of aura around their personality. We can notice it with the photographs available to us of incarnate Gurus, Gods and other greatmen and women. An American scientist of the name of Kirlian has discovered a unique process of photography called Kirlian photography. By this technique photograph of anyone's subtle

body/pranic body can be taken and the aura can be studied.

The thing is that we can know the aura of a person and see if there is any evil spirit on a person. Evil spirits and ghosts can torture only such people as are weak in aura or whose Pranic energy have got depleted due to bad actions. But one thing is noticeable that no evil spirit can harass directly to a person. So what actually happens in this case is the person lacking in larger aura first get frightened and then he goes in depression. Then the aura gets shrunk. It is only in the state of shrunk aura and depression that an evil spirit can do some damage to such people. Many people try to learn about these elements and get success to treat some affected persons. These are actually Tamasic things and good thinking people evade this knowledge. Palatudas says: '*Puje bhuta-baital mare par bhutai hoyi.*' (पूजे भूत-बैताल मरे पर भूतै होई।) Krishna says in Gita that one should not waste one's precious time in jargons like this. It is because one attains the same after death whom one adores in life.

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजन्ते कलेवरम्।

तं तं वा आप्नोति सदा तद्भाव भावितः।।

Spiritual master Osho Siddhartha says that one can cure the effect of bad spirits by a simple method. 'Put a stone on your navel of 3% weight of the total weight of your body, then your aura will spread, and the anti-element in the body gets detoxified. There is a saint in Rajasthan who puts a stone of 5 Kg., sometimes 10 Kg. weight at the

navel and keeps it there until the evil element is not gone.

AGHORA TANTRA

Aghora is a strange way of practicing Tantra. The word 'aghora' is a word of Sanskrit origin which means 'one that is not very serious'. The practicants of Aghora are called Aughari. Some call them Aughari Baba. Aghora Tantra is a system of Vamamargi Tantrics who practice this Tantra in an entirely different manner. The practitioners of this Tantra are called Aghoris. An Aghori is a practitioner of Aghora, the spiritual discipline that takes Tantra to farthest limits. Aghori Vimalananda says that Aghora was a wholly internal process that eliminates all commonly accepted restrictions to the human faculties of perception. He defined an Aghori in this way: 'An Aghori is beyond the bounds of the earthly shackles, nay, something above the elements which shape the universe, and you. He takes a short of intoxicant and and thus gets intoxicated in Supreme Love which emanates from the innermost recesses of his heart. It is that part which is beyond awareness. During this stage he merges with his own deity so that he becomes Him.

Though the Aghora Tantra has been given recognition somewhere by the Indian philosophers and some research scholars have been awarded Ph.D. degrees (A Professor and Head of Philosophy Department, University of Delhi once told this author that he had come across one such research in M.P.), this practice does not conform to our Hindu way of life as it is totally against our ordinary

and regular life style. The practice of this system does not even suit to normal people as the practitioners of Aghora Tantra behave against the human habits of eating and drinking. What we generally prefer to eat and drink they do it otherwise, e.g., they eat even their faeces and the urine for perfection. What we hate in normal life is actually loved and adopted by them in practice. It is low type of practice and they are called Tamasic people. Hinduism does not permit to do such practice as one has to violate the norms of a normal life.

RECOGNIZING VARNA AND CASTE

Ancestors had made an arrangement in the Hindu way of living by giving them *Varna-Ashrama-vyavastha*. They did it with the purpose of creating harmony in the life of people. Scriptures like Samhitas and *Yajnavalkya Smriti, Manusmriti* etc. are some examples where these principles have been enshrined. The Hindu society is divided into four Varnas: Brahmana (Priestly class), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (merchant), and 4. Shudra (servile). The Scriptures come out with the interpretation that by birth one is born *Shudra*, by sacraments one becomes *Dvija* (twice born), by study of Vedas one attains the state of *Vipra*, and that who has the knowledge of Brahman is a *Brahmana*.

‘जन्मना जायते शूद्रः संस्कारात् द्विज उच्यते।
वेदपाठात् भवेत् विप्रः ब्रह्मं जानाति ब्राह्मणः।।’

All the four Varnas are said to reside in the same body and should be considered that it is manifested according to the evolution of our consciousness. For example, a Jain monk said that the same body in the morning is a Shudra before taking the bath. It becomes a Brahmana when performs Puja etc. after the bath. It turns out to be Vaishya when one starts the work and deals with money matters. If there is a fight or quarrel or hot exchange with someone regarding this business etc. he becomes a Kshatriya.

There is no restriction for entry in this arena of spirituality, no matter what caste, creed or community one belongs to. The practice of Yoga and Tantra was, infact, meant for any one willing to do it. Even if a person is from a criminal background, or whichever field he belongs he should approach Guru or an expert of Yoga, and he can learn Yoga. It does not matter whether he has some leanings in spirituality or not, he can straightaway start it. And I have every reason to assure that even a worst person, if follows the techniques and guidance of a good master, can do it and his life be transformed. He will stop doing wrong practices and harming others. Even if a mentally upset person or one who nurtures ill-will, jealousy, hatred for others will undergo a tremendous change and will start loving all. Even a hard hearted person will develop a soft inner. All negativities will turn to be positive. All are therefore welcome.

It matters little for the practican^t of Tantric Yoga whether one is a Brahmana, Shudra, Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnava, Grihastha or an ascetic, one

can proceed with the Sadhana (spiritual practice) recognizing his essential nature i.e., Shiva (Atman) in perfect and blissful state. Adi Shankara says: 'Na brahmana na kshatriya na vaishya na shudra chidananda rupam shivo kevalo'ham' (न ब्राह्मण न क्षत्रिय न वैश्य न शूद्रो चिदानन्द रूपं शिवो केवलोऽहम्।).

These days a lot of hallaballoo is going on about the concept of Varna and caste, and a lot of stupidity is practiced by the self-centred and vested interests in the name of caste and community. The concept of Varna and caste has been very clearly elucidated in the *Bhagavadgita* by Krishna. Everybody is born Shudra by birth and it is by enshrining in the Hindu sacraments that one becomes *Dvija*, the twice born. For general understanding this is the base of these Varnas, but to speak the truth, there is total ignorance since God has created everybody without any room for discrimination. Even there is no scope for any feeling of discrimination or ill-will for anybody whatsoever as divinity is inherent in every creature and the whole creation is pervaded by the God - *Mamaivamsho jivalokah jivabhutah sanatanah* (ममैवांशो जीवलोकः जीवभूतः सनातनः।) (Gita). The Ramayana of Tulsidas gives clear indication for determining the Varna of a person:

‘तुलसी हरि के भजन विनु चारिउ बरन चमार।’

(There is a very interesting description about the Chamar, the untouchables. The literal meaning is one whose prime focus is on the physical body, or say who has totally identified oneself with the body. He is also called Jada or insentient. One who

is identified with Jada or insentient, as the case happens with majority in this age of degeneration, Kaliyuga, lives in inertia and sees only the same. The story goes like this that once sage Ashtavakra went to attend an assembly of King Janaka. There were large number of people in the assembly including those of kings, sages, ministers and many more. When they saw Ashtavakra they laughed at him because Ashtavakra's body had got twists in eight parts due to the curse of some sage. If one's body is in such a crooked state it is but natural that people laugh at that person. But Ashtavakra was a master genius and great savant. When somebody asked why others laughed at him, he replied that those who laughed were Chamars, i.e., their only focus was on the gross body and not on the inner depth. (N.B. The author is sorry here for citing the word 'chamar' which has become obsolete these days having been replaced by 'harijan'.)

To explain the concept more minutely or at the subtle level of our consciousness, as it ought to be, there is the criterion of Gunas that lie at our level of consciousness. We can follow this criterion more clearly if we first try to know the why and wherefore of our consciousness and the Gunas – the *Sattva* (pure knowledge), the *Rajas* (activity) and the *Tamas* (inertia or ignorance). The division of Varna was, in fact, devised keeping in mind the proportion of these Gunas. Brahmana is the one where Sattva predominates, Kshatriya is the one where Rajas predominates and Shudra is the one who is predominated by Tamas (inertia).

TANTRAYOGA: THE ESOTERIC SENSE

At the outset it is necessary to point out that the literal meaning in spiritual concepts is not enough to know the real purport, they, in fact, carry esoteric sense. When one reads the verses on extreme tantrika practices one must take for granted that the language used is deliberately cryptic and it gives a deep esoteric sense. In fact Hindu tantra developed as a form of devotion. It was the product of a society that was not sexually repressive, where even mystics and seers had wives and lovers. Sage Vatsyayana wrote *Kamasutra*, a book on standard practice of sex. The percentage of those practicing tantric ritual related with sex, were quite few. The major part involved the chanting of mantras, the creation of mandalas and the worshipping of various deities.

From the very beginning Tantra has been recognized as *Guhyagyana* (secret knowledge). Sadhaka must be cautioned 'to be aware of the knowledge of the Supreme and should not be ignorant of the ethical and esoteric nature of the Scriptural conduct.' Even all the spiritual practitioners should be aware of the fact that 'superstitious performance of *Karmakanda* without the perception of their esoteric knowledge and dedication to a pious life of detachment, only result in bondage and not to emancipation and it leads one into greater misery in life.

The teaching of Tantra was therefore meant for the initiates and it passed on orally. See, for example, the following verse where the literal meaning denotes drinking of liquor. Can it be true

that repeated drinking of liquor brings any mental peace?

पीत्वा पीत्वा पुनः पीत्वा पीत्वा पतति भूतले ।
पुनरुत्थाय च पुनः पीत्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

Definitely the answer will be 'no'. The above verse points out towards an esoteric sense where *Peetva* does not mean the drinking of liquor. The drink (*Madya*) here refers to the nectarine stream of fluid issuing from the cavity of the brain plexus or *Sahasrara Chakra* near the *Brahmarandhra*. (*Shiva Samhita*, V. 129-30) A person practicing Yoga should remember that this nector can be relished by any Yogi by turning the tongue upward touching the upper part of mouth in *Kechari Mudra*. This will even prove helpful in the retention of the Pranic energy gathered from *Yogabhyasa*. When *Yogabhyasa* is complete, *Kechari Mudra* is important to curtail the energy lest it should be drained out.

BODIES, KOSHAS, CHAKRAS & KUNDALINI

In Vedantic, Yogic and Tantric system, the human body is said to have been composed of three bodies: (i) physical, (ii) subtle, and (iii) causal. These different bodies function as vehicles for the Inner Self or the *Purusha*. We normally perceive and experience the physical body which has got origin due to the sexual union of parents. The subtle body is the 'pure form' or energetic basis of the physical body wherein exist the seven

Chakras or astral centers, with the force of Kundalini at the base allowing their full activation.

The causal body (Karana Sharira) is another subtle body which is called Ananandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) containing the three energies of Gunas in dormant form – *Sattva* for harmony, *Rajas* for activity, and *Tamas* for inertia or matter. The bodies link one another through these Chakras or energy vortices, five major and five minor Pranic fields of energy from 72,000 channels of energy (nadis). All these Nadis emanate from the Muladhara, the support of the subtle body.

The subtle body again contains three sheaths (koshas) – *Vijnanamaya Kosha* with potentiality of both intellect and ego, *Manomaya Kosha* (Ectoderm) with the potentiality of mind and sense organs, and *Pranamaya Kosha* (Mesoderm) containing the vital energies. The physical or gross body is the *Annamaya Kosha* (Endoderm), and has twenty-four subtle body energies divided into mental faculties, sense organs and organs of action, Pranas, and five elements (*vyomapanchaka*).

The human body is like a deep fathomless ocean with innumerable treasures hidden within. What the Yoga and Tantra actually teach us is learning the technique of unfolding the secrets of the inner world. Before embarking on the path of inner kingdom, one should be aware that the physical body is the uppermost shield (body) of several other bodies. And as it has been said earlier, it is the Pranic body that provides energy and vitality to the physical body just like electric current, and, interestingly there are seven places

of contact in the body known as Chakras or centers of energy.

These Chakras are, in fact, extrasensory nuclei along the endocrine column. These energy centers are the milestones of inner journey that starts from the level of consciousness in the body at Muladhara activating Karma (action), senses at Swadhisthan arousing passion, Prana (vital air) at Manipura for respiration, Heart at Anahata for saturation of love, Manas at Vishuddhi for feelings, thoughts and speech, Chitta at Ajna for will power and decision making and Self (Atman or Parama Shiva) at Sahasrara Chakra for realization of the Supreme Truth.

However the different pathas taught by various branches of Yoga and Tantra cater to varying temperaments, attitudes and stages of spiritual evolution and people follow them what suits them. But Chakra meditation and Kundalini Yoga is a unique Sadhana. The purification of the five elements (Pancha-mahabhutas) and activation of Chakras (whirling energy vortices) situated along the endocrine column have miraculous effects on the body, mind and spirit.

The aspirant should start his spiritual practice from the level of the physical body at Muladhara. This is a place of infinite energy called Kundalini Shakti (Serpent Power) which has to wake up and rise upward to unite with Shiva to the uppermost level at Sahasrara. The Kundalini Shakti remains in dormant state at Muladhara Chakra, the perineum plexus at the end of the spinal column of the Linga Sharira (subtle body). Parama Shiva illuminating the Sahasrara Chakra in the head is

the destination or the ultimate goal of Kundalini Shakti arising from the Muladhara Chakra.

As stated above, by purifying the Pancha Mahabhutas, the five gross elements and their *Tanmatras*, potentials of the subtle energies, merging one element into other - '*svadhisthanam samaniya tattvam tattve niyojayet*' (स्वाधिष्ठानं समानीय तत्त्वं तत्त्वे नियोजयेत्।), and thereby traversing along the path of Ida and Pingala Nadis and the taking the Prana (vital air) to the Sushumna, this can be accomplished.

Thus we see that the practice of Yoga and Tantra is not any difficult thing, even an ordinary person can do it. Not merely this Chakra and Kundalini Yoga has holistic healing effect on our body generating tremendous energy but enlightens the mind and intellect facilitating Jiva's communion with the Supreme Soul. It is the firm conviction of this author that only the practice of Yoga can liberate one from the clutches of worldly bondage and there is no alternate to get rid of the sorrows and miseries of life.

Tantra is actually that mode of spirituality which when practiced penetrates the inner knots of impurity within us. (The three granthis placed in the Sushumna are: *Brahmagranthi* in the chest, *Vishnugranthi* in the throat, and *Rudragranthi* between the eyebrows. - *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, 1.66-67) Since divinity dwells within us (*sarvasya cha'ham hridi sannivishto* (सर्वस्य चाऽहं हृदि सन्निविठो) - *Bh. Gita*), it is total purity and integrity of the heart that can make any room for the manifestation of the Supreme Truth or *Paramatman*. Kundalini Shakti is an extremely

brilliant effulgence of light which remains in dormant state at the base of the spinal column in the form of a serpent with 3.5 coils surrounding the Shivalinga there in the Muladhara Chakra. In awakening this power, the Yogi should concentrate on this Kundalini Shakti in the very base Chakra. By doing so, it rises upward to the heart lotus penetrating the other Chakras on the way through the Sushumna Nadi. It has to be united with the burning effulgence of Jiva there and should thenceforth be brought to Sahasrara Chakra in the *Brahmarandhra* to have communion with the Parama Shiva and relish the taste of supreme bliss.

Bhuta-Shuddhi

PANCHA-MAHABHUTAS

The five basic elements of gross manifestation of the world are known as *Panchatattvas* or *Pancha Mahabhutas*, namely, 1. *Prithivi* (earth), 2. *Jala* (water), 3. *Agni* (fire), 4. *Vayu* (air), and 5. *Akasha* (ether). The inevitable significance of these Pancha Mahabhutas (five great elements) which form this vast infinite universe of sentient and non-sentient beings cannot be denied in the study of spiritual science. The first Tattva that came out of Supreme Reality is Akasha, then came the others the Vayu, the Agni, the water and Prithivi. Akasha is the sonoriferous ether, Vayu the tangiferous ether, Jala gustiferous ether, and Prithivi odoriferous ether. Wherever we look, we find our body is doing something unique with every molecule of air, water and food we take in guided by our innate tendencies. Even in the Ayurveda it is strictly advised for the man to live in tune with nature easily, comfortably and without strain.

Pure Brahman is ever associated with the Supreme Knowledge (Consciousness). With the immanence of consciousness, Brahman appears as

void (space), from space appears air (Vayu), and from air fire (Agni), from Agni rises water (Jala), and from that earth (Prithivi). From space is born air, space and air produce fire, then space, air and fire produce water, and the earth is formed by space, air, fire, and water, all the four mixing in differing quantities.

All the Tattvas are evolved from Akasha Tattva that is present in all. At the time of dissolution, all the four tattvas merged in the Akasha and Akasha in Brahman. Thus the process of evolution, involution and absorption have been going on in this universe. Sometimes even some big stars are consumed in the Black Holes and are lost. As long as these Tattvas in harmony in the body, it remains healthy. So, it is due these Five Tattvas that the human body also takes form, sustains life, gets diseased and ultimately dies. Lord Krishna says that the earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, reason and ego, these constitute my nature, Prakriti.

In *Shiva Svarodaya*, the process of knowing the five tattvas has been elaborated and their application has also been given. Every tattva has distinct vibration. Akasha produces sound, Vayu touch, Agni colour, Jala taste, and Prithivi smell. Every tattva takes from the preceding tattva's an attribute. Akasha has one tattva, i.e., Shabda, Vayu is double, Agni triple, Jala four attributes and Prithivi has five attributes. There is higher vibration per second as we go ahead from Prithivi to Akasha tattva.

The five basic elements of the gross manifestation of the world are called Panchatattvas

or Panchamahabhutas, namely, Prithivi, Jala, Agni, Vayu, and Akasha. While we are studying the preliminary stages of spirituality, it is a prerequisite to understand the fundamentals of Yoga and the techniques of purification. These Tattvas form this vast infinite universe of sentient and non-sentient beings. It is due to these five bhutas that the human body takes form, sustains life, gets diseased and ultimately dies. Lord Krishna (*Bh. Gita*) says that earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, reason and ego, these constitute my nature eight fold divided.

‘भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥’

Expounding on the philosophy of Kshetra (body) and the Kshetrajna (soul), Lord says: ‘O Arjuna, know Myself to be Kshetrajna (individual soul) also in all the Kshetras (bodies). And it is the knowledge of Kshetra and Kshetrajna (i.e., of Matter with its evolutes and the Spirit) which I consider a Wisdom.’ (ibid, 13.2)

Stating about the *Kshetra* (body) with its evolutes, He says that these are the five elements (Pancha-mahabhutas), the ego (Ahamkara), the intellect (Buddhi), the Unmanifest (Primordial Matter), the ten organs (of perception and action), the mind, the five objects of sense, tanmatras (sound, touch, colour, taste and smell); and are desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the physical body, consciousness and patience. (ibid, 13.5 & 6)

The *Shiva Svarodaya* also presents an elaborate process of knowing the five tattvas and their application –

पृथिव्यापस्तथा तेजो वायुराकाशमेव च ।
पञ्चभूतात्मकं विश्वं यो जानति स पूजितः ॥

In every breath, there is an order of the prevalence of elements. In that order, first flows the air, then fire, then earth, and then the water.

प्रथमं वहते वायुद्वितीयं च तथानलः ।
तृतीयं वहते भूमिश्चतुर्थं वारुणो वहते ॥

(*Shiva Svarodaya*, 71)

The air (vayu) first flows for twenty palas or 8 minutes, fire for thirty palas or 12 minutes, earth for fifty palas or 20 minutes, water forty palas or 16 minutes, space ten palas or 4 minutes.

Astrologically, Akasha is influenced by Jupiter, Agni by Sun and Mars, Water by Moon and Venus, Earth by Mercury and Air by Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.

Each Tattva has distinct vibration. Akasha produces sound, Vayu touch, Tejas (Agni) colour, Apa (water) taste and Prithivi smell.

Every Tattva takes from the preceding Tattva an attribute. Akasha has one Shabda, Vayu is double, Agni triple, Jala four attributes and Prithivi has five attributes. There are higher vibrations per second as we go ahead from Prithivi Tattva to Akasha Tattva.

COLOURS OF THE TATTVAS

These tattvas have colours – Vayu is green, Agni is red, Prithivi is yellow, Jala is white and Akasha is dark. The Akasha tattva is present in all the tattvas since all the tattvas have evolved from the Akasha tattva.

WHAT TATTVAS CREATE IN OUR BODY

Prithivi Tattva: It creates bones, muscles, nails, skin, and hair.

Jala Tattva: Jala Tattva creates blood, semen, majja, urine and saliva.

Vayu Tattva: It creates movement, spreading, stretching and contracting the body.

Agni Tattva: It creates sleep, hunger and thirst.

Akasha Tattva: It creates anger, energy and passion.

TATTVAS AFFECTING THE MIND

Tattvas affect the mind during their duration in the following way:

Prithivi Tattva gives courage, peace and satisfaction.

Jala Tattva gives joy, mercy, good deeds, sweetness.

Agni Tattva gives anger, dissatisfaction, pride, irritation or disturbance.

Vayu Tattva gives impatience, disturbance, indecision.

Akasha Tattva gives sound meditation, Yoga practice and concentration.

TATTVA, MANTRA, CHAKRA, PRANA

1. Prithivi Tattva, Lam Mantra, Muladhara Chakra, Vyana Vayu in the excretory, Wakeful state of Jagarata.
2. Jala Tattva, Vam Mantra, Swadhishtana Chakra, Apana Vayu in Evacuatory, Dream state of Svapna.
3. Agni Tattva, Ram Mantra, Manipura Chakra, Samana Vayu, Deep sleep state of Sushupti.
4. Vayu Tattva, Yam Mantra, Anahata Chakra, Prana Vayu for respiration, State of Turiya, awakening to higher consciousness.
5. Akasha Tattva, Ham Mantra, Vishuddhi Chakra, Udana Vayu doing the work of transforming energy, state of mystical vision.
6. Om Mantra, Ajna Chakra, Cosmic Ego, State of Savikalpa Samadhi.
7. So'ham Mantra, Sahasrara Chakra, Cosmic Mind, state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

MANTRAS & BIJA-MANTRAS OF BHUTAS

When there is Spanda or movement, the perceiving subject, when heard, is called sound. One may hear it or not that is another thing. Similarly there is a sound which cannot be heard by any material instrument but it is experienced by a Yogi. There was no sound in the beginning as there was no movement for the fact that the natural

Principle, the Prakriti, was in a state of equilibrium. On the disturbance of this equilibrium there was a movement in the whole mass of Prakriti, then the first vibration that took place at the commencement of the creation, was the Pranava Dhvani of Om Sound. The first equally distributed motion throughout the mass is Om, which is the great seed-mantra (Mahabeeja), for it is the source of all others and all compounded sounds. Just as Om is the general sound, the other Bija-mantras are the particular sounds which are the letters of the alphabet.

According to the number of syllables, Mantras are given various names. A Bija-mantra or Seed-mantra is a Mantra of single letter such as *Kam*, which is composed of the letter *K* (KA) together with Chandrabindu which terminates all Mantras. For the purpose of pronouncing vowel and consonant both are necessary. The termination is *M* in the form of nasal breathing called Chandrabindu which is Nada and Bindu. In all the other letters one or other of the five Bhutas or forms of sensible matter (Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Ap, Prithivi) predominates. The Yoga teacher knows it well which Mantra one has to take according to the excess or deficiency of a Bhuta. 'Where there is excess of a Bhuta, the letter in which it predominant is said with the outbreathing. Where there is deficiency it is said with the inbreathing. *M* is chosen to end the Bijas because here Bhutas are said to be in equipoise.'

(*Garland of Letters*, pp. 249-50)

It is said that the Bija is of one letter and the Mantra springs from that but there are other

Bijas like *Hrim*, *Shrim*, *Krim*, *Hum*, *Aim*, *Phat*. Though Bijas have no meaning, the initiated one however know that their meaning the own from Svarupa of the particular Devata whose Mantra they are. Each Devata has His or Her Bija, eg., the Devatas of *Hrim*, *Krim*, and *Rum* are Kali, Maya and Agni respectively. The primary Mantra in the worship of any God or Goddess is known as the Root Mantra.

PURIFICATION OF BHUTAS

All the Hindu scriptures prescribe such practices that purify the inner constitution of the human being so that the spiritual evolution can take place smoothly. In Tantric Yoga, purification of the *Panch Mahabhutas* or Five elements - Earth, water, fire, air and ether - forms the core of this spiritual practice.

In *Shiva Samhita*, Lord Shiva expounds on the process of Bhuta Shuddhi or purification of these elements. There is guidance for the aspirant or Sadhaka to absorb one tattva to other by regulating the breath or the practice of Pranayama. The process of *tattvam tattve niyojayet* (तत्त्वं तत्त्वे नियोजयेत्) elucidated in the *Mahanirvana Tantra* has great significance. Several other works of Yoga and Tantra outline their respective guidelines for the practice of Bhuta Shuddhi or purification of the elements.

Chanting of the Names (nama japa) and Mantras, and regular practice of meditation causes the body purification. The important thing is that the process of chanting should be done through

respiration or *Shvasa* by Chandra Nadi or Ida channel, the left nostril. While chanting the Bija mantras of these Bhutas (elements), as will be discussed here later, the Chakras from Muladhara to Sahasrara, and the colour of the respective Bhuta (tattva) is also put in concentration. Here in this respect, as it is called *Bhuta Shuddhi*, the purification of the five tattvas is what matters most significant. Thus each tattva right from the Muladhara upward gets purified. With the purification of the Akasha tattva at the Vishuddhi Chakra where the place for the Manas or mind is indicated, it is also purified simultaneously.

Thus, the mental chanting of these mantras with inhaling the breath from the left nostril and exhaling from the right nostril and concentration of the Chakras at the same time activates these Chakras and does great healing to them. After these tattvas have been purified by the chanting of the above Bija-mantras while keeping the respective colours in mind and concentrating on the respective lotus petals of these centres, the practicant or the Sadhaka is instrumental to activate the Chakras and arouse the Kundalini Shakti. While embarking on this spiritual path, one should keep in mind that all the six Chakras that are placed in the spine (Merudanda) are the mystic centres which also carry lotus petals, as discussed elsewhere in the preceding pages, with mantras inscribed on them. The number of lotus petals as well as the letters of the alphabet vary from Chakra to Chakra rising from Muladhara to Sahasrara.

When the Sadhaka proceeds ahead with the chanting of Hamsa mantra as described in the

Shiva Samhita, an important text of Tantra and Yoga, and also elsewhere in the other texts, the vibration of the mantra, purifies the Tattvas at these Chakras of energy, and ultimately it has holistic effect rejuvenating both the human physique and the psyche. Noteworthy is the fact here that insofar as these tattvas are in harmony and regular and balanced in the body, one remains healthy. On the other hand, in case of disharmony or imbalance of these tattvas, the normal functioning of the body is disturbed and very likely it may get diseased.

HOW TO KNOW TATTVAS

There are various ways of knowing the flow of Bhutas in our nostrils. If the breath is running from the middle of the nostril, it is *Prithivi Tattva*. If it is running from the bottom of the nostril, it is *Jala Tattva*. Know it *Agni Tattva*, if it is running from the top of the hole of the nostril. When flowing from the side know that *Vayu Tattva*, and when the breath is circling around inside the nostril, know it *Akasha Tattva*.

The other methods which can be applied to judge the Tattva are: Feeling sweet taste is Prithivi, Alkaline taste is Jala, Pungent is Agni, Sour is Vayu, and bitter taste is Akasha.

Chakras, The Energy Centres

Yogis, rishis and the sages of the various traditions of India and throughout the world discovered that the human body has got some Psychic centres or Chakras which function as a key to the awareness of the vital force or the Prana. These centres are vortices of subtle Prana located at specific points along the Sushumna channel. These psychic centres can't be known by dissection of the body, but by psychic introspection. The great science of Kundalini Yoga has developed from the knowledge of these psychic centres. As has been stated elsewhere in this book, Yoga is the science of Samadhi and connecting oneself to one's inner core. It is the science of establishing communion with the innerself. Kabir says: '*Kothare manhi kothari parama kothi beechari.*' The sense is that there is body, then mindstuff inside the body, then the Atman inside the mind. Yoga is virtually the practice of the journey from body to soul. There are many routes to this journey. This journey to soul can also be done by the different Chakras.

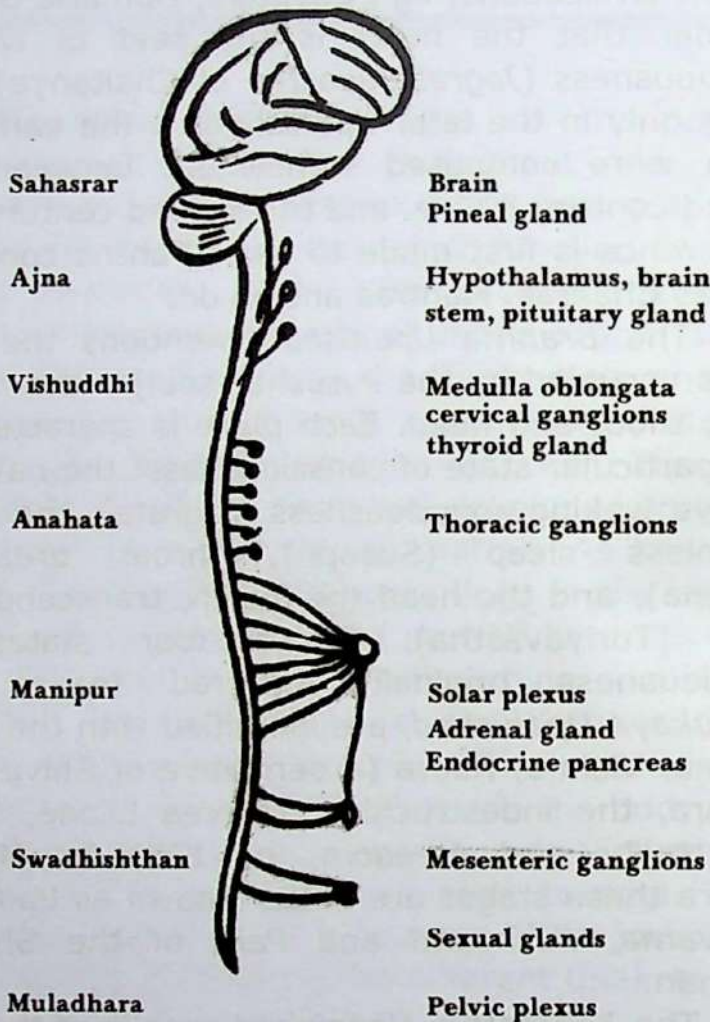
अष्टाचक्रा नवद्वारा देवानां पूरयोध्या ।
तस्यां हिरण्मयः कोशः स्वर्गा ज्योतिषावृतः ॥

As for early doctrines regarding the Chakras are concerned, the idea of Prana (subtle vital force) and the Nadis, subtle channels along which it flows appear in the earliest Upanishads (7th -8th century B.C.). The heart was said to be the centre of 72000 subtle channels (Nadis), and the place into which the senses are withdrawn during sleep. Several ancient civilizations, eg., Egyptian, Homeric Greece consider that the heart is the seat of waking consciousness (*Jagrata avastha* of Chaitanya). But it was only in the later Upanishads – the earlier of which were composed somewhere between the second century B.C. e. and the second century c.e. – reference is first made to basic Tantric concepts such as Chakras, Mantras and so on.

The *Brahma Upanishad* mentions the four places occupied by the Purusha (soul) – the navel, heart, throat and head. Each place is characterised by a particular state of consciousness: the navel or the eye waking consciousness (*Jagrata*), the heart dreamless sleep (*Susupti*), throat dreaming (*Svapna*), and the head the fourth, transcendental state (*Turiyavastha*). These four states of consciousness originally referred to in the *Mandukaya Upanishad*, are identified with the Gods Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (a derivative of Shiva) and Akshara, the indestructible. (Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, p. 128) In Mantra Shastra these stages are better known as *Vaikhari*, *Madhyama*, *Pashyanti* and *Para* of the Shabda Brahman.

The *Yogatattva Upanishad* speaks of the five parts of body corresponding to the five great or cosmic elements (*Pancha-mahabhutas*) – Prithivi

(earth), Ap or Jala (water), Agni (fire), Vayu (air) and Akasha (space or ether). Each element corresponds to a particular Mantra a seed vibration or mystical syllable and a particular deity. Emphasis is also given to Siddhis (supernormal powers) that can be attained through mastery of Yoga and of the different elements. (Eliade, *ibid.*, pp. 131-1)



Chakras and Nerve centres

With the practice of Kriyayoga or Hathayoga, the Sadhaka rises to the psychic plane, gets in touch with the psychic forces within him that lie in the centres of the Subtle Body or Bioplasmic Body called Chakras. Chakra is a Sanskrit word implying wheel, or vortex, and it refers to each of the seven energy centres of which our consciousness is composed. Thus the subtle body is composed of seven Chakras or energy centres. As Chakra signifies a wheel, in Yogic terminology it is called Vortex or Whirlpool. These are vortices of psychic energy and function as pumps or valves, regulating the flow of energy through our energy system. They are visualized and experienced as circular movements of power at particular rates of vibration. These whirling energy centers are located along the spinal column which work as gateway to the physical body for supply of vigour and vitality. Sw. Niranjanananda Saraswati says: 'The pranic network which comprises the pranic body is fuelled by the psychic centers or Chakras. These Chakras are very subtle and high-powered vortices of energy. They receive the cosmic prana and act as transformers to step down or reduce the voltage, so that it can be used by the different organs and parts of the body'. (p.48)

In *Yoga Chudamani*, six Chakras have been placed under the practice of Yoga and it is necessary for the practicant of Yoga that he should have complete knowledge of the six Chakras for perfection in Yoga. Besides these Chakras, the Sadhaka should be aware of the sixteen bases, three aims and the *Vyoma-panchaka*.

‘षट्चक्रं षोडशाधारं त्रिलक्ष्यं व्योमपंचकम्।
स्वदेहे यो न जानाति तस्य सिद्धिः कथं भवेत्॥’

(*Yoga Chudamani*, 2-3)

There are lotuses placed at six points alongside the spinal column and to the head. Unlike the therapy of acupuncture where they have earmarked seven hundred points in the entire body to cure the ailing person from different problems, we in Yoga have seven (or somewhere eight) centres in the body called Chakras starting from the base of the spinal cord.

Choa Kok Sui, a renowned author of books on Pranic healing, writes: ‘Chakras or whirling energy centres are very important parts of the bioplasmic body. Just as the visible physical body has vital and minor organs, the bioplasmic body has major, minor, and mini chakras. Major chakras are whirling energy centers which are about three to four inches in diameter. They control and energize the major and vital organs of the visible physical body. Major chakras are just like power stations that supply vital energy to major and vital organs.’ (*The Ancient Science and Art of Pranic Healing*, p.12)

Ted Andrews also writes about Chakras in his book titled ‘*Healing Sounds*’ (p. 34): ‘The Chakras are the primary mediators of all energy already in the body and all energy coming into the body. They mediate the electro-magnetic impulses of our energy system. The Chakras take the energy expressions and help the body distribute them for

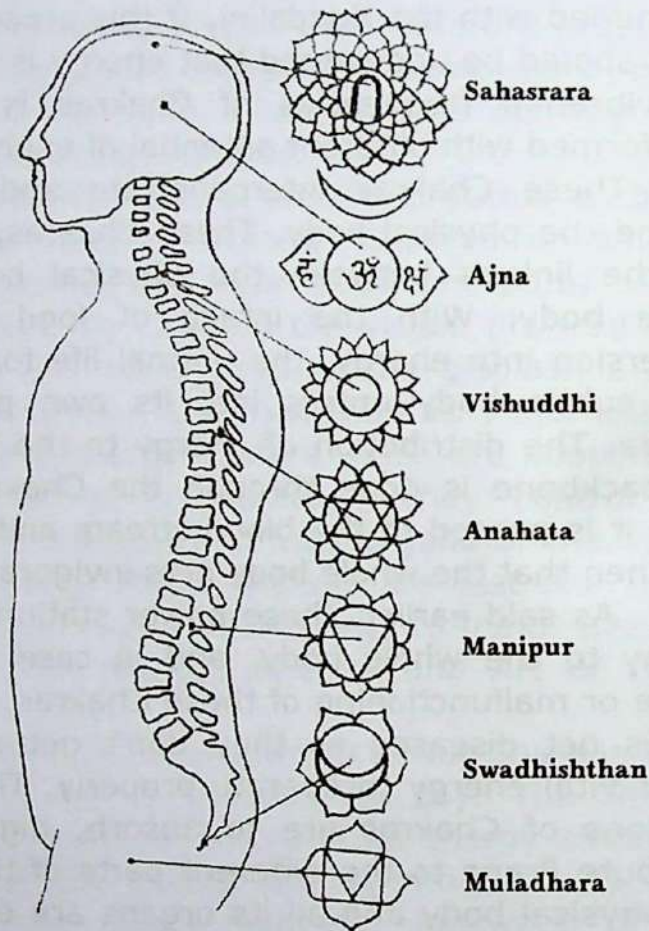
various physical, emotional, mental and spiritual functions.'

Chakras are represented as lotuses. When Kundalini reaches each Chakra, the lotus opens and lifts its flower. With the rising of the Kundalini upward to a higher Chakra, the lotus closes its petals. It symbolizes the activation of the energies of the Chakras and it also shows how it get communed with the Kundalini. If this process goes on, it should be understood that energy is rising or the vibration frequencies of Chakras is getting transformed with different potential of energy.

These Chakras interpenetrate and extend beyond the physical body. These Chakras, in fact, are the linkers between the physical body and subtle body. With the intake of food and its conversion into energy, the normal life force from each subtle body enters into its own particular Chakra. The distribution of energy to the Spine or the backbone is done through the Chakra, from there it is passed to the blood stream and organs. It is then that the whole body gets invigorated.

As said earlier, these power stations supply energy to the whole body, and in case of some failure or malfunctioning of these Chakras, the vital organs get diseased as they don't get sufficient power vital energy to operate properly. The major functions of Chakras are to absorb, digest, and distribute Prana to the different parts of the body. The physical body and all its organs are energized and controlled by the Chakras. The endocrine glands are under the control of these Chakras and can be stimulated and inhibited by them.

Reputed Korean writer Choa Kok Sui is of the opinion that 'among the easiest and safest chakras to activate are the hand chakras. These are located at the center of the palms. By activating the hand chakras, one develops the ability to feel subtle energies and the ability to feel the outer, health and inner auras. This can simply be accomplished by regularly concentrating on them.' (Ibid.,p.13)



Chakras in the Body

As for the Shakta doctrine of Chakras is concerned, it is highly developed doctrine and postulates seven Chakras. These are called (1) the *Muladhara* or the Root Support at the base of the spine with four petals, (2) the *Swadhisthana* or Own abode at the root of the genitals with six petals, (3) the *Manipura* or fullness of jewels at the level of the navel with ten petals, (4) the *Anahata* or Unstruck melody at the heart centre with twelve, (5) the *Vishuddha* or complete purity at the throat with sixteen, and finally (6) the *Ajna* or Guru's command at the brow with two petals. And (7) the Crown centre, the *Sahasrara Padma* or Thousand petalled lotus, located at the very top of the head, is technically speaking not a Chakra, but the summation of all the Chakras.

Fortunately this author had the opportunity to perform Sadhana under the able guidance of revered Acharya Ramasurat Shukla in the beautiful lush green parks of Roshanara Baug in Delhi. **Acharya Ramsurat Shukla** (Yoga Guru), who initiated this author in Yoga-Sadhana, was very particular about the practice of Chakra-Dhyana. He preferred to call it *Tantrayoga* or *Vishishta Yoga*. While offering lessons on Yoga practice to his disciples he cautioned that no Yoga could be complete without the knowledge and practice of Chakra meditation. He even made a pinpoint at the modern Yoga teachers who claim to be expert teachers but don't know even a bit of Chakras in the body. Since all the postures and Yogic efforts ultimately help in activation of Chakras and the energy is supplied to the whole body through these centres, it should be the first attempt of the Yogi to

focuss on these centres of energy. He often used to question me, 'How can you say that you are a Yoga practicant unless you sit for at least half an hour in some Dhyana posture like Padmasana etc. and do some practice of Chakra concentration?' I don't remember how many times he used to say me for propagating about this rather subtle form of Yoga and let the people know what actually Yoga is. His main thrust was on teaching Yoga to youngsters. These youngsters must be taught to start with sitting practice, i.e., Dhyana based on this particular aspect of Chakras. He had a very systematic way and taught his disciples very easily. (He was a great Atman. He instructed most of his disciples about the practice of *Bhuta-Shuddhi*, *Chitta-Shuddhi*, and *Asana-Shuddhi*. He gave much stress on the Japa of *Shiva Mantra* by *Svasha*.) He instructed us for inhaling from left nostril and exhaling from the right with mental chanting of the respective Bija-mantras, concentrating on each Chakra and thus purify the Pancha-mahabhutas or five elements. He also guided several Yoga learners who used to visit Roshanara Baug, Delhi. He also taught them to practice *Chakrayata Pranayama* (discussed under the Chapter on Pranayama) by both nostrils thereby activating Chakras and healing them deriving the full benefit of Yoga.

Thanks to that great master who is known to have devoted his entire life for the pious cause of propagating the Kundalini Yoga and taught the practice of concentrating on the Chakras to more than one thousand people, the maximum number being the visitors of the Roshanara Baug, Delhi. The best treatises he advocated for study to Yoga

students was the *Shiva Samhita* and *Shiva Svarodaya* which respectively expound on the practice of Kundalini Yoga and the science of Yogic breathing. He quite often asked us, even if somebody wishes to enter the spiritual world, let him make practice to silently sit in some meditative posture at least for some 15 to 30 minutes' time daily and regularly. Then he should start concentration on the Chakras as it is the first requisite and then follow other things. 'So, just make it a practice to sit for a few minutes initially to awaken your consciousness, the *Chaitanya*', the great master used to say.

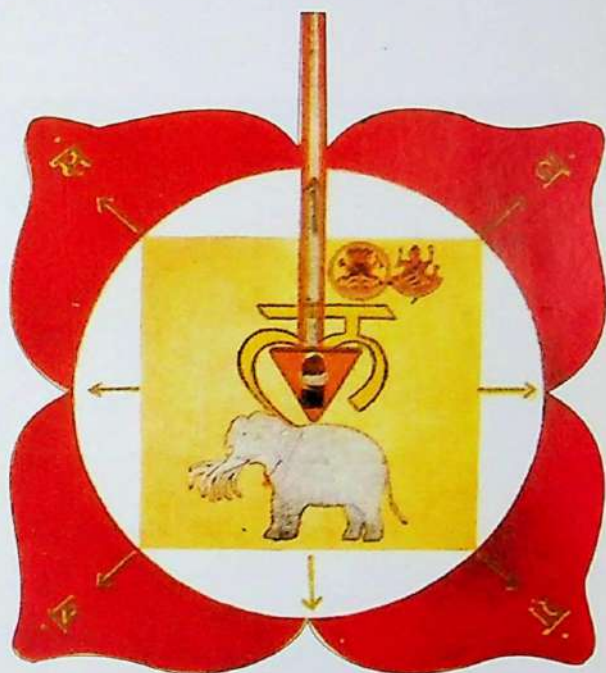
Even all the Asanas have been designed in a way to activate these Chakras and bring vitality to the Physical body by motivating them in the Subtle body. Say, for example, the *Bhujangasana* helps activate the Manipura Chakra and the Svadhisthana Chakra. And so is the case with Pranayama that helps activating several Chakras, first and foremost the basic Chakras like Muladhara, Svadhisthana and the Manipura. The breathing exercises done through Kapalabhati and Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama have direct bearing on the Manipura Chakra, a place highly characterized by the Yoga masters. This Manipura has been said to carry the Prana Shakti through the umbilical cord (Nala) whereby the baby remains attached to his mother in the womb. When a baby is born, first the nurse cuts this cord to separate the baby from the mother, and it is only then that the baby begins to heave sigh of his own. This place of Manipura Chakra is also known to be the place of the Vaishwanara Agni, as has been said by Yogeshwara

Krishna - 'अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा.....पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम्' (*Bh. Gita*).

The functioning of these Chakras reflects decisions we make concerning how we choose to respond conditions in our life. We open and close to these valves when we decide what to think, and what to feel, and through which perceptual filter we choose to experience the world around us.

These Chakras are aspects of our consciousness in the same way as the auras are aspects of consciousness. Chakras are more dense than the auras, but not as dense as the physical body. They interact through that physical body through two major vehicles, the endocrine system and the nervous system. Each of the seven Chakras is associated with one of the seven endocrine glands, and also with a group of nerves called plexus. Thus, each Chakra can be associated with particular part of the body and particular functions within the body controlled by that endocrine gland associated with that Chakra. So as per seven Chakras, there are seven categories to experience our senses, perceptions, states of consciousness. Even experiencing stress in our consciousness is related to the Chakra associated with it.

There is nothing new about these centers of energy called Chakras. From thousand of years Indian sages and mystics have sung in their divine songs about the Supreme Self and the primeval power called *Adya Shakti*. Kabir, Mirabai, Tulasidas, Sant Tukaram etc have virtually propagated about the love of the Supreme Atman and His Energy called Mother Goddess that runs the cosmos. In



Muladhara Chakra



Svadhishthana Chakra

Yoga and Tantra, Shiva and Shakti are adored and contemplated for the accomplishment of Sadhana.

Since the philosophy of Yoga conceives of cosmos within the body – *Ya pinde sa brahmande* (या पिण्डे सा ब्रह्माण्डे), all that exists in the three worlds is also in this body. It is said that all the gods and goddesses reside along the backbone of the body. We will study in the discussion about the different Chakras how they function situated along this spinal cord though they are contemplated from the front side.

Thus, it becomes clear that Chakras are actually seven extra-sensory energy centres along the endocrine column (Merudanda) in the subtle body that have the most important role in vitalizing the organs, tissues, and cells by giving them energy for various uses. These seven Chakras are: 1. Muladhara Chakra, 2. Svadhisthana Chakra, 3. Manipur Chakra, 4. Anahata Chakra, 5. Vishuddhi Chakra, 6. Ajna Chakra, and 7. Sahasrara Chakra.

Some Yoga masters have discussed only the Six Chakras (Satchakras), the Sahasrara Chakra and the Anahata Chakra are respectively hidden in the upper brain and the heart. Prana Shakti or microcosmic energy manifests as six main centers or Chakras, storehouses of Prana located along the spinal column. Muladhara is the lowest Chakra in the energy circuit. The next Chakra, Swadhisthana, is two fingers width above Muladhara and corresponds to the sacral plexus. The third is Manipura Chakra which is located behind the navel and it corresponds to solar plexus. Then, in the region of heart at the spinal column lies Anahata Chakra connected to cardiac plexus. The Vishuddhi

Chakra, situated in the middle of the neck, corresponds to the cervical plexus. Then there is the Ajna Chakra or the Third Eye, at the top of the spinal cord, and, at the *medulla oblongata*, which is connected to the pineal gland in the physical body.

These Chakras are described as stations or centres of pure consciousness (Chaitanya) and consciousness power. They are focal points of meditation, iconographic structures within the occult or subtle body. Each Chakra has a specific position in the physical body, element, mantra and deity. There are particular number of petals, colour, shape, animal, plane of existence, sense organ, mantric sound, and so on. In addition to the seven major Chakras arranged along the spine there are also Chakras in the hands, feet, genitals, and so on. Syam Sunder Goswami has described thirteen Chakras. However the Six major Chakras of the human body (in the Sukshma Sharira) starting right from the base of the spine are given below with greater details:

I. MULADHARA CHAKRA (THE BASE CHAKRA)

The Muladhara Chakra as the name indicates rests at the base of the spinal column (Merudanda) also called the root centre. Located at the area of the coccyx at the base of the spine, it is also called Base Chakra. Muladhara Chakra in men is situated at the perineum near the excretory organ below the genitals. In women, it is located at the posterior side of the cervix, midway between the vagina and the uterus.

Yoga is to make journey to our inner centre, the soul, through the different pathas of energy vortices or Chakras. The process of Yoga varies from Chakra to Chakra. Journey to the Atman by Muladhara Chakra is called Karmayoga. Each Chakra has its distinct level of consciousness.

The Muladhara Chakra is the controller of the body. This Chakra governs the developmental process of the body. It is tied to the functions of the circulatory system and the reproductive system. If the Muladhara Chakra is weak or inactive, the growth of one's body gets retarded. One's health is very likely to get affected by tonsillitis, knot in the throat. The height of children is badly affected. It also affects the activities of the testicles and ovaries, legs, feet, and the pelvic regions of the body.

The location of this Chakra given in the *Shiva Samhita* is that it is two fingers above the rectum and two fingers below the *Linga* (genitals), four fingers in width, a space like a bulbous root. Between this space is the Yoni having its face towards the back. There dwells the Goddess Kundalini. It surrounds the Nadis, and has three coils and a half, and catching its tail in its own mouth, it rests in the hole of the Susumna.

गुदाद्वयङ्गुलश्चोर्ध्वं मेढ्रैकाञ्जुलतस्त्वधः ।
 एवं चास्ति समं कन्दं समताच्चतुरङ्गुलम् ॥
 पश्चिमाभिमुखी योनिर्गुदमेढ्रान्तरालगा
 तत्रकन्दंसमाख्यातं तत्रास्ति कुण्डली सदा ।
 संवेष्ट्य सकला नाडीः सार्द्धत्रिकुटलाकृतीः
 मुखे निवेश्य सा पुच्छं सुषुम्णाविवरे स्थिता ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, 5.56-57)

Muladhara Chakra is our basic life force centre and it is also called Muladhara Padma. It is the seat of primal energy, Kundalini Shakti. In Philosophy it is called Mula Prakriti, the transcendental basis of physical nature. It is the basis of everything that manifests in this world of name and form. By activating this Chakra, one can tune to one's awareness about the past life.

This Chakra controls, energizes and strengthens the whole visible physical body. It affects the adrenal glands and sex organs. The whole physical body like bones, muscles, blood and the internal organs are affected. If this Chakra does not function well, the diseases like cancer, leukemia, low vitality, allergy, asthma, sexual ailments, arthritis, backache, etc may take place. Close to it, there is a Granthi (knot) called *Brahma Granthi*. The Prana Shakti remains blocked here until it is awakened by Yogic practice.

Muladhara is the field related to *Apanavayu*, the downward flowing energy responsible for the excretion of urine, faeces, wind, the ejaculation of semen, the force that causes the birth of a baby out of the womb. The circulatory system, the reproductive system and the functions of the lower extremities are connected to this Chakra. This Chakra is in corelation to the inferior hypogastric plexus of nerves. The areas of the body around this region that get influenced are the testicles and ovaries, the legs and feet, and the pelvic parts.

This Chakra has in its centre a triangle, from which the Sushumna Nadi begins and which ends at the top of the head. The Muladhara Chakra

activates Karma (action). All the worldly comforts are attainable by the activation of this Chakra.

Shri Purnananda Paramahansa writes in the text of '*Satachakra-Nirupanam*':

अथाधारपद्मं सुषुम्णास्यलग्नं
ध्वजाधो गुदोर्ध्वं चतुःशोणपत्रम्।
अधोवक्त्रमुद्यत्सुवर्णाभवर्णै-
र्वकारादिसान्तैर्युतं वेदवर्णैः॥

(*Shatchakra Nirupanam*, 1.4)

The *Prithivi tattva* (earth element) is related to this Chakra. The Bija-mantra of this tattva is *Lam* (लं). The sense organ of the nose is related. There are four petals of lotus at this Chakra and each petal has the letters *Vam*, *Sham*, *Sham* and *Sam* – वं, शं, षं, सं. It bears crimson colour. Dakini Shakti enumerated among the Bhairavi Shaktis dwells at this Chakra. Lord Brahma rests here in the form of a child wielding Danda, Kamandalu, Akshasutra, and Abhaya mudra.

It need not say that this is very important Chakra as it provides substratum to the human body by generation of Prana. The awakening of Prana starts from the Muladhara and ascends the spinal cord via Pingala Nadi.

II. SWADHISHTHAN CHAKRA

Swadhisthana means *own abode*. Unlike the Muladhara Chakra, there is Swadhisthana Chakra which is another centre of energy or place of consciousness. If one starts the journey to Atman

from the gate of Swadhisthana, it is called Tantra Yoga. This Chakra is located at the spine just behind the sex centre at the root of the genitals. In fact, the Swadhisthana Chakra is known as the sex centre as it rests in the base of the genitals. This Chakra is tied to the function of the adrenal glands. Also called Swadhisthana Padma, it is in the middle of the Sushumna. The colour of the lotus at this Chakra is blood red, its presiding adept is called Bala (Shiva) and its goddess is Rakini (Shakti).

द्वितीयन्तु सरोजं च लिङ्गमूले व्यवस्थितम्
 बालिदान्तं च षड्वर्णं परिभास्वरषड्दलम्।
 स्वाधिष्ठानाभिधं तत्तु पङ्कजं शोणरूपकम्
 बालाख्यो यत्र सिद्धोऽस्ति देवी यत्रास्ति राकिणी ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, 75)

'*Swadhisthana*' as the name implies is one's own dwelling place or abode. The senses are governed by this Chakra. When we start our journey to the soul, to the Paramatman, it is termed as the Tantra Yoga. The function actually conducted by the senses is indulgence or *bhoga*.

This is the second Chakra in our body and perhaps the most important Chakra because we call it Sex Chakra. It is the most active Chakra in human body as it is the most wanted Chakra by the nature to produce further. It is by this Chakra that one is able give birth to new person and the whole process of creation is dependant on it. The person who is under the impact of this Chakra or the one whose Swadhisthan Chakra is more active, he is likely to be much sex-oriented person and passionate. Whatever he earns money, fame, or a higher post his prime concern is focused on

satisfaction of his sexual thirst. In fact, things in our life can be determined on basis of Chakra that is most active.

Purnananda in his *Satachakra-Nirupanam* says that the Swadhisthana Padma is located at the root of the genital and in between the Sushumna. It is extremely beautiful and of vermilion colour. It is also said to be red. Let's see the verse below:

सिन्दूरपूररुचिरारुणपद्ममन्यत्
 सौषुम्णमध्यघटितं ध्वजमूलदेशे ।
 अङ्गच्छदैः परिवृतं तडिदाभवर्यै-
 र्वाद्यैः सविन्दुलसितैश्च पुरन्दरान्तैः ॥

(*Shatachakra Nirupanam*, 2.14)

It is said to be the storehouse of all the impressions and Samskaras. The blockage of this Chakra poses big problem for the smooth flow of Prana. By doing exercise, Yogic practices and food intake this Chakra is first of all energized. Since it promotes pleasure and sex, it may create some obstacle in one's spiritual evolution. Firm determination is therefore required to overcome the hurdle posed at this stage.

It is very beautiful and of the vermilion colour. It is in close co-relation with the upper hypogastric plexus.

As said earlier, the Swadhisthana Chakra not only controls and energizes the sexual organs and the bladder, it also influences the activities of the eliminative system, the spleen, pancreas and kidney. It also does the detoxification of the body.

this Chakra may result in the problems related to sex. It is also to be noted that this Chakra gets affected even if the other Chakras are not in good condition.

The primordial element water (Jala tattva) is related to this Chakra. It has a white crescent moon in its centre. It is related to the organ of tongue. The presiding deity is Lord Vishnu.

There are six lotus petals on this Chakra, each petal bearing letters *bam, bham, mam, yam, ram,* and *lam* - बं, भं, मं, यं, रं, लं.

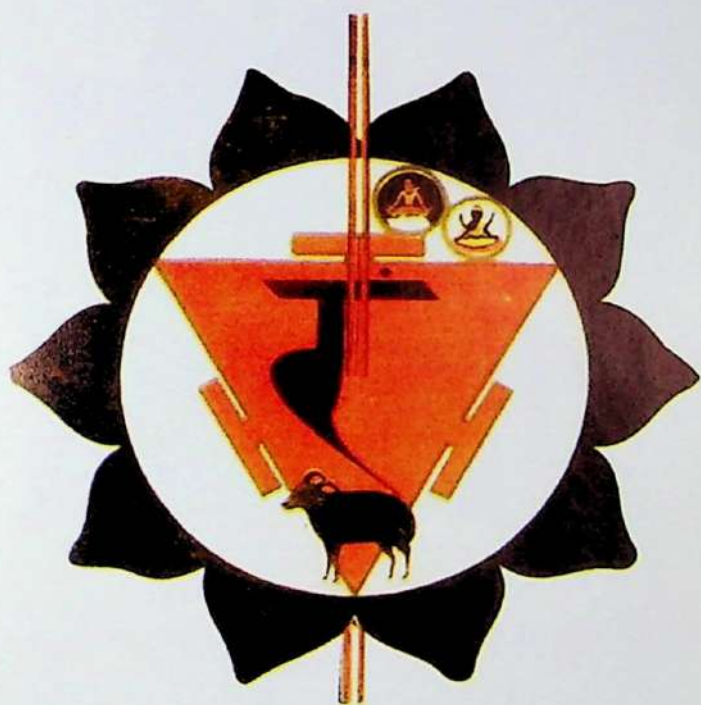
III. MANIPURA, THE CHAKRA OF JEWELS

'Manipura' literally means 'the city of jewel' or fullness of jewels. The Manipura Chakra or Manipura Padma is situated at the navel at the umbilicus along the Spinal cord. It is also called Navel Chakra. It is in close association with the coelic or the solar plexus. It includes the digestive system, the adrenals, the stomach, the liver, and the gall bladder. See the verses below:

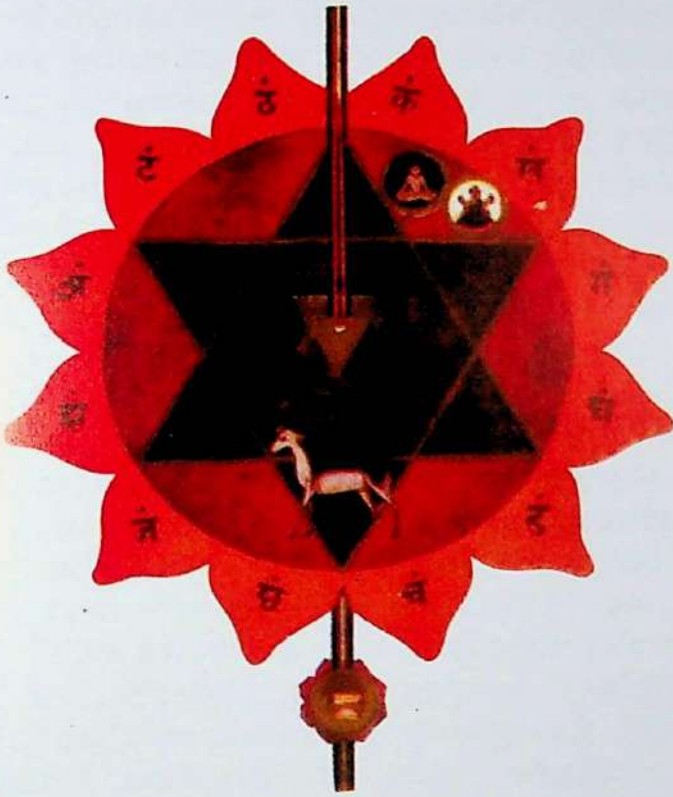
तृतीयं पंकजं नाभौ मणिपूरकसंज्ञकम्।
दशारण्डादिफान्तार्णं शोभितं हेमवर्णकम्॥

(Shiva Samhita, 79)

तस्योर्ध्वे नाभिमूले दशदललसिते पूर्णमेघप्रकाशे
नीलाम्भोजप्रकाशैरुपहितजठरे डादिफान्तैः सचन्द्रैः।
ध्यायेद् वैश्वानरस्यारुणमिहिरसमं मण्डलं तत् त्रिकोणं
तद्बाह्ये स्वस्तिकाख्यैस्त्रिभिरभिलसितं तत्र वह्नेः स्वबीजम्॥
(Shatachakra Nirupanam, 3.19)



Manipura Chakra



Anahata Chakra

As this Chakra is located near the navel, it is related to emotions like fear. If there is least problem to our body, the navel region gets excited. If somebody has an accident, the navel is first affected by it. Navel is the centre of fear. Those who are prone to fear should concentrate on this Chakra. According to Osho, people in olden days going for war were taught about strengthening one's navel as it is the most sensitive place in the body that is gripped by fear and the stomach gets disturbed. Women are most prone to this problem of fear as they have to conceive and their navel region gets weakened. Such people should concentrate on this navel Chakra.

Manipura Chakra is called Power Chakra. It is the center or storehouse of Prana since it gives heat, vitality, dynamism, generation and preservation. Sw. Niranjanananda compares this Chakra 'with the dazzling orb of the sun, without which there would be no life. As the sun radiates light and energy, so manipura radiates and distributes pranic energy throughout the body, regulating and fuelling life's processes.' (*Prana Pranayama Pranavidya*, p.50) This Chakra is dominated by Rajas or activity or dynamism.

Choa Kok Sui observes that there is 'synthetic ki', a type of Prana produced by the navel Chakra. 'This 'synthetic ki' is quite different from the Prana of the vital energy. ...During bad weather conditions, the quantity of air prana is quite scarce. Persons with lesser 'synthetic ki' have greater difficulty drawing in air prana; therefore, they tend to feel more tired or low than the

average person.' (*The Ancient Science and Art of Pranic Healing*, p.18)

This Chakra controls and energizes the small intestine, large intestine and appendix. It affects the general vitality of a person. It assists the body in its assimilation of nutrients. Diseases like ulcers, intestinal problems, and psychosomatic diseases are cured by activating or healing this Chakra. If it does not function well, there is possibility of constipation and diseases related to stomach and intestines. Appendicitis and difficulty in delivery in women and low vitality etc may be the other problems.

There is a triangular mandala at this Chakra bearing the seed mantra *Rum* (रं) and standing for the primordial element Fire as its Bija-mantra. It is very much the same mantra that is inscribed for the sacred fire offered to Gods and Goddesses during havans and Yajnas performed by the Karmakandin pundits and others. All the activities related to digestion are under the influence of this Chakra. Lord Krishna says that taking the form of fire lodged in the body of all creatures and united with the Prana (exhalation) and Apana (inhalation) breaths, it is I who consume the four kinds of food:

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।

प्राणापान समायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥

(*Bh. Gita*, XV.14)

The Pranic force at this Chakra is Saman that digests and absorbs nutrients from food. It is the seat of the Pranamaya Kosha.

There is a ten petalled lotus at this Chakra which has the letters *dam, dham, nam, tam, tham, dam, dham, nam, pam, pham* - डं, ढं, णं, तं, थं, दं, धं, नं, पं, फं. It has dark purple colour. The presiding deity of this Chakra is Rudra and the Bija-mantra is *Rum*.

IV. ANAHATA CHAKRA (UNSTRUCK MELODY)

Anahata means unstruck or unbeaten. The *Anahata Chakra* is located at the heart region. It is also called Heart Chakra - हृदयेऽनाहतं नाम चतुर्थं पंकजं भवेत्. (*Shiva Samhita*, 83) It is in correlation with the cardiopulmonary plexus. It influences the thymus gland and the entire immune system.

तस्योर्ध्वे हृदि पङ्कजं सुललितं बन्धूककान्त्युज्ज्वलं ।
काद्यैर्द्वादश वर्णकैरुपहितं सिन्दररागान्वितैः ॥
नाम्नाऽनाहतसंज्ञकं सुरतरुं वाञ्छातिरिक्तप्रदं ।
वायोर्मण्डलमत्र धूमसदृशं षट्कोणशोभान्वितम् ॥

(*Shatchakra Nirupanam*, 4.22)

'Above that, in the heart, is the charming lotus, of the colour of the Bandhuka flower, with the 12 letters beginning with Ka, of the colour of vermillion, placed therein. It is known by its name of Anahata, and is like the celestial wishing tree, bestowing even more than desire. The region of Vayu, beautiful and with six corners, which is like unto the smoke in colour, is here.'

(*The Serpent Power*, p. 371)

The Anahata Chakra is related to the Vayu Tattva and its seed mantra is *Yam* (यं). All the 12 petals at this centre contain 12 letters of alphabet are: *Kam, Kham, Gam, Gham, Nam, Cham, Chham, Jam, Jham, Nam, Tam, Tham* - कं, खं, गं, घं, ङं, चं, छं, जं, झं, ञं, टं, ठं.

This Chakra is the seat of *anahata nada*, the most subtle cosmic sound which is experienced only in the highest state of meditation. This *anahata nada* is a transcendental sound and not heard by physical ears. Such persons whose Anahata Chakra has awakened become very sensitive and they are concerned for others. They can cure/heal others by their inner radiating power or touch.

It is the most important center in the body for the spiritual practices. It is the seat of divine love. *Vishnu Granthi*, the second psychic knot, representing the bondage of emotional attachment, is located here. It is at this centre that emotion is rechannelled into devotion. It awakens love and compassion and its expression in life. This center is the seat of divine love. Yogis caution their disciples in their address to awaken the heart Chakra for spiritual evolution. No progress is, in fact, possible unless this Chakra is activated for it is saturated with love. And even no love can be virtually manifest without the activation of the heart chakra. Osho says that if somebody says he loves his wife and kids, it is false. Because it may be love of some selfish end, or passionate love, not actual love. No one can nurture true love for one's wife and kids without the activation of the Anahata Chakra.

The *Vishnu Granthi* situated here causes emotional attachment. By loosening this knot, one attains mental and emotional control. Once this Chakra is awakened there remains no ego or illwill and one becomes free of all bondages. It is associated with the *Manomayakosha*, the mind sheath, controlling the emotions.

Since it is located at the level heart, it energizes and controls the heart, the thymus gland and the circulatory system. Malfunctioning of heart chakra manifests as heart problems, lung problems such as asthma, tuberculosis etc.

V. VISHUDDHI CHAKRA (COMPLETE PURITY)

The word *Vishuddha* is the purified one. The Vishuddhi Chakra is located at the level of throat-pit (thyroid gland) in the region of the throat. It is also called Throat Chakra - (कण्ठस्थानस्थितं पद्मं विशुद्धं नामपञ्चमम्). (*Shiva Samhita*, 90) The Throat Chakra is linked to the functions of the throat, the esophagus, the mouth, the teeth, the thyroid and the parathyroid glands. There is *Udana prana*. It controls the vocal cords. Those whose Vishuddhi Chakra is more active are likely to remain silent.

विशुद्धाख्यं कण्ठे सरसिजममलं धूमधूम्रावभासं
स्वरैः सर्वैः शोणैर्दलपरिलसितैर्दीपितं दीप्तबुद्धेः।
समास्ते पूर्णेन्दुप्रथिततमनभोमण्डलं वृत्तरूपं
हिमच्छायानागोपरि लसिततनोः शुक्लवर्णाम्बरस्य॥

(*Shatchakra Nirupanam*, 5.28)

As *Vishuddhi* means purification, it is the Chakra of vitality as it is invigorated by the dripping of the nectar from the cavity in the *Brahmarandhra* (Bindu visarga). It causes a kind of bliss and intoxication. It is related to *Vijnanamayakosha*, the knowledge sheath. It causes good mental growth and the sense of hearing is improved both physically and mentally. Meditation at this Chakra brings a lot of benefits. Once this Chakra is awakened all the impurities get removed. Even effects of poison get neutralized by activating this Chakra. Lord Shiva, the Yogishvara (Lord of Yogis) was the one who showed the power of this Chakra when he drank the fatal poison at the time of churning the ocean and its effect was neutralized at this Chakra. Even an old man can be young by activating this Chakra. Malfunctioning of this Chakra manifests as throat-related diseases like goiter, sore throat, loss of voice, asthma etc.

There is pure blue circle containing the primordial pentad of space, the sense organ of hearing and sixteen smoky purple petals. The letters on the petal are: *a, aa, i, ee, u, oo, ri ree, lri, lrii, e, ai, o, au, am, ah* - अ, आ, इ, ई, उ, ऊ, ऋ, ॠ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ, अं, अः. The bija-mantra is *Hum* (हं). The element is Akasha (ether) and the color is blue.

VI. AJNA CHAKRA (GURU'S COMMAND)

As is clear from the name, *Ajna Chakra* is known for command. It is vitually akin to the head, the brain, from where the command goes for the entire body system. The functions of the mind in

the human body are superb and it can't be compared with even the most sophisticated computer of the world. It weighs around one and half Kg. and it is divided into four parts. It has got memorizing capability of innumerable things. It preserves several scenes too. It can keep in memory about 10,000 smells. Our mind utilizes about 70,00,000 tiny parts daily. A scientist once said that if we install a laboratory in a 27-storeyed building it will not suffice to spread the parts of the human mind.

Notwithstanding the development of scientific researches today, the mind still remains a great mystery for the scientists of the world. Scientists say that our mind is total sum of our memories which govern our actions. Our actions then reinforce our memories in a feedback loop type mechanism. Patanjali in his Yoga Aphorisms calls these memories or Sanskaras the genesis of Karma. Brain researches show that brain is pliable, capable of developing new neurons, neural pathways and hence memories. Thinking deeply allows very intense experience.

Ajna Chakra is situated in between the eye brows. It is in close relation with the hypothalamus, limbic system, and the neighbouring region with connections to pituitary gland. It controls and energizes the pituitary gland, the endocrine gland, and the brain. Let's see the verse:

आज्ञापद्मं भ्रुवोर्मध्ये हक्षोपेतं द्विपत्रकम् ।
शुक्लाभं तन्महाकालः सिद्धो देव्यत्र हाकिनी ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, 96)

'The two-petalled Chakra, called the Ajna, is situated between the two eye-brows, and has the letters *ha*, and *ksha*, its presiding adept is Shukla Mahakala (the White Goat Time), its presiding goddess is called Hakini.'

आज्ञानामाम्बुजं तद्धिमकरसदृशं ध्यानधामप्रकाशं
हक्षाभ्यां वै कलाभ्यां परिलसितवपुर्नेत्रपत्रं सुशुभ्रम्।
तन्मध्ये हाकिनी सा शशिसमधवला वक्त्रषट्कं दधाना
विद्यां मुद्रां कपालं डमरुजपवटीं बिभ्रती शुद्धचित्ता ॥

(*Shatchakra Nirupanam*, 6.32)

The word *Ajna* is for command and this Chakra is called Master Chakra as it directs and controls the other major chakras together with their corresponding endocrine gland and the vital organs. The sense organs like eyes and nose are affected by it. Diseases like diabetes and one's related to pancreas are caused by ignoring the activation of this Chakra.

This Chakra is a charismatic chakra for the Yoga practitioners, the meditating sadhakas and the Prana healers. It is, in fact, the doorway for entry into contemplation, and even much beyond the body and mind, say, the inner journey. Spiritualists also call it '*bhrumadhaya*'. In Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna while exhorting Arjuna about the Jnana Yoga tells him to give *Jnana Chakshu*, or *divya drishti*, or divine eye to perceive His Cosmic Form, which is not perceptible to the physical eye.

The Ajna Chakra has only two petals of pure white color. The letters on these petals are *Hum*



Vishuddhi Chakra



Ajna Chakra

(हं) and *Ksham* (क्षं). *Thum* (ठं) is the Bija-mantra. That is why the Yogins call it *Hathayoga* (हठयोग). This is also known as the 'Third Eye' of Shiva or *Shivanetra*. According some texts, Om (ओम्) is the bija-mantra and the presiding deity is Parama Shiva.

VII. SAHASRARA CHAKRA (CROWN CENTRE)

The Thousand-petalled lotus which is situated in the *Brahmarandhra*, or in the crown of the head is called *Sahasrara Chakra*. This Chakra is the brain and it is described to have one thousand and one petals. It controls and energizes the pineal gland, the brain and the entire body. It is one of the major centers from where the vital energy enters the body. When the Sahasrara Chakra is energized, the effect is on the whole body. When the Yogi reaches out to this Chakra, he transcends the experience of the world and enters into the realm of God. By transcending the world does not mean that he loses touch with the world but it comes to experience only and the Yogi tastes the flavour of divine bliss and beatitude.

सुषुम्णा मेरुणा याता ब्रह्मरन्ध्रं यतोऽस्ति वै ।
ततश्चैषा परावृत्त्य तदाज्ञापद्मदक्षिणे ।
वामनासापुटं याति गङ्गेति परिगीयते ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, 102)

'The Sushumna goes along the spinal cord up to where the *Brahmarandhra* (hole of Brahman) is situated. Thenceby a certain

flexure, it goes to the right side of the Ajna lotus, whence it proceeds to the left nostril, and is called the Ganges.'

ब्रह्मरन्ध्रे हि यत् पद्मं सहस्रारं व्यवस्थितम्।

तत्र कन्देहि या योनिस्तस्यां चन्द्रो व्यवस्थितः।

त्रिकोणाकारतस्तस्याः सुधा क्षरति सन्ततम्।।

इडायाममृतं तत्र समं स्रवति चन्द्रमाः।

अमृतं वहति धारा धारारूपं निरन्तरम्।।

वामनासापुटं याति गङ्गेत्युक्ता हि योगिभिः।।(ibid, 103)

'The lotus which is situated in the Brahmarandhra is called Sahasrara (the thousand-petalled). In the space in its centre, dwells the moon. From that triangular place, elixir is continually exuding. This moon fluid of immortality unceasingly flows through the Ida. The elixir flows in a stream, a continuous stream. Going to the left nostril, it receives from the Yogis the name of Ganges.'

The four petalled lotus at the Muladhara Chakra has Sun in the space between them. (ibid., 106) From the sphere of the Sun, poison exudes continuously and flows through the Pingala to the right nostril. (ibid., 107-08)

तदूर्ध्वे शङ्खिन्या निवसति शिखरे शून्यदेशे प्रकाशं

विसर्गाधः पद्मं दशशतदलं पूर्णचन्द्रातिशुभ्रम्।

अधोवक्त्रं कान्तं तरुणरविकलाकान्तिकिञ्जल्कपुञ्जं

लकाराद्यैर्वर्णैः प्रविलसितवपुः केवलानन्दरूपम्।।

(*Shatchakra Nirupanam*, 8.40)

Sahasrara or Crown Chakra 'is the master switch controlling the awakening of all the chakras from Muladhara to Ajna. The power of the Chakras does not reside in the chakras themselves, but in the Sahasrara. The chakras are only switches, with all the potential lying in the Sahasrara', writes Sw. Niranjanananda of the Bihar Yoga School. (p.56)

Close to Sahasrara, there is the place where the priestly class men used to keep a tuft of hair, *choti*. At this place there is Bindu, the source of creation. It is represented by moon. The texts like *Hathayoga Pradipika* record that Bindu exudes nectar that flows down to the Muladhara in the normal people. The fire in the Muladhara consumes the nectar, and, as a consequence people succumb to old age, illness and the death. Yogis have a technique to obstruct this fluid to the base chakra and they stop it at the Manipura or at the Vishuddhi from where it gives tremendous vigour and vitality to them.

It is the seat of Supreme Consciousness or *Parama Chaitanya*. Thus Sahasrara is the totality, the absolute, which results from the merging of the Cosmic Consciousness with Cosmic Prana. The meeting of the Kundalini Shakti in the Sahasrara is said to be the union of Shakti with Shiva. And with this union, the state of *Samadhi* or self-realization takes place. This Chakra is associated with the *Anandamayakosha* or bliss sheath.

CHAKRAS SYMBOLIZE PILGRIM CENTRES

According to Sri Sri Ravishankar, 'seven cities in India correspond to seven centers or chakras in our body. *Maya* or Haridwar correspond

to the Muladhara Chakra situated at the base of the spine. When the *jadata* or the lethargy goes and enthusiasm begins, you commence your journey. Haridwar, the starting point is 'the door to the house of Divine.' Kanchi corresponds to the Swadhisthana Chakra situated behind the genitals, as the presiding deity here is Kamakshi, the goddess of Kama or desire. Ayodhya corresponds to the third Chakra, the Manipura, situated in the navel region, where joy, generosity, greed and jealousy manifest."(TOI) Here is manifested the jealousy of Kaikeyi that took Rama to exile, and the generosity of Rama at the time of His return to Ayodhya turning in celebration of Deepawali, a festival of joy.

He says, 'Mathura is Anahata, the heart chakra. The heart is associated with love, fear and hatred. Mathura symbolizes the love and devotion of gopis for Krishna, as well as of the fear and hatred of Kansa, all the matters of the heart.' Avanthika, also called Ujjain, is related to the Vishuddha Chakra. It is city of art and literature. Kashi represents the Ajna Chakra situated between the eyebrows. Kashi has always been the seat of knowledge. That's why the Ajna Chakra is also called the *Jnana Chakshu*, the Third Eye. Dwarka represents the Sahasrara; the Crown Chakra on top of the head. It means 'where is the door?' Infinity has no walls. Krishna left his body at Dwarka. Sahasrara also means pathless path. The path liberation begins at Haridwar and culminates at Dwarka.

Chakra Meditation

AS revealed in the preceding chapters Tantric Yoga is a unique spiritual discipline. The aspirant of Tantra is like a deep sea diver, swimming expertly through all lurking dangers of human life, and help retrieve its lost treasure, i.e., realization of the Self. Bhuta Shuddhi, Chitta-Shuddhi and Chakra healing are all interrelated things and they work together activating the energy simultaneously. It is indeed an amazing experience to practice the Bhuta Shuddhi thereby purifying all the elements at the different Chakras.

Chakras prove a burnishing process in purging of the body and mind of the Yogi from all impurities and misconceptions. The kind of joy gained from the purification of each Bhuta (Tattva-element) predominant at each centre of consciousness in the body ultimately turns into divine beatitude and supreme joy.

As stated earlier, in this system of Chakras each phase of energy is represented by a Bhuta (element) – earth, water, fire, and ether. Each of the five elements signifies a new quality, and each is both an extension and a limitation of the other. Each Chakra is linked with a Seed mantra and the

mantra is used in mental chanting for activation that particular Chakra.

CHITTA-SHUDDHI

Chitta is the mental substance. It takes various forms which constitutes unities. It gets transformed (*Parinama*). These transformations or modifications are the thought-waves, whirlpools or Vrittis. If the Chitta thinks of a fruit, the Vritti of that fruit is formed in the lake of Chitta. When this subsides, another Vritti is formed. Innumerable Vrittis are rising and subsiding in the ocean of Chitta. These Vrittis cause restlessness of mind. These Vrittis arrive from Chitta because of Vasanas (unmanifest desires) and Sanskaras. If these are annihilated, Vrittis will subside automatically.

When these Vrittis subside, a definite impression is left in mind. It is called *Sanskara* or latent impression. The sum total of all Sanskaras is known as *Sanchita Karma*, accumulated works. When a person dies and leaves the physical body, he still carries with him/her the astral body of 17 tattvas. Maharshi Patanjali in the very first aphorism of his *Yogasutras* clarifies that Yoga is the restraining of the modifications of the mind - योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः (*Yogashchittavrittinirodhah*). When a Yogi attains to Asamprajnata Samadhi, he destroys all the Karmas in toto.

Moreover, Samadhi is of two kinds - *Jada Samadhi* and *Chetana Samadhi*. A Hathayogi through the practice of Khechari Mudra can shut himself up in a box and remain underneath the ground for months and years. There is no higher

supernatural knowledge in this Samadhi. This is *Jada Samadhi*. In Chaitanya Samadhi, there is perfect awareness, the Yogi comes down with new, supersensuous wisdom.

CHAKRAS AND MEDITATION

Thus we find that these energy Chakras are the milestones of inner journey that starts from the level of consciousness in the body at the Muladhara activating Karma (action), senses at Swadhisthana arousing passion, Prana (vital force) at the Manipura for respiration, heart at Anahata for saturation of love, mind at Vishuddhi for feelings, thoughts and speech, Chitta at Ajna for will power and decision making and Self or Atman (Shiva) at Sahasrara for realization of the Supreme Truth.

Every individual is like a deep, fathomless ocean with invaluable treasures hidden within. '*Deho devalayam proktah, dehi nitya niranjanah*' (देहो देवालयं प्रोक्तः देही नित्य निरंजनः।) , says Adi Shankara. What the aspirant is required to understand and practice is the technique of unfolding the secrets of the inner world. But before embarking on the path of the inner kingdom, the practitioner should be aware that his physical body (Annamaya Kosha) is not the only body, but it is the uppermost shield of several other bodies. The first shield (body) that is immediate behind the corporeal body is the etheric or subtle body (Pranamaya Kosha) which provides energy and vitality to the Annamaya Kosha just like electric current, and interestingly, it has seven places of contact in the body called Chakras as enunciated

earlier in a separate chapter introducing on Chakras.

1. Meditation at Muladhara Chakra

Muladhara or the base Chakra, is associated with the element earth, the quality being cohesiveness and inertia. It is just like the root of a tree that has the possibility of its growth, this energy centre of earth has an opportunity to expand the awareness. In words of Saint Poet Kabir:

मूल बांधे सर गगन समाना सुखमनि यो तन लागी ।
काम क्रोध दोउ भये पलीता जंह जब जोगन जागी ।।

So the first Chakra, lying at the root of spine and associated with the element of earth, is actually for the physical well-being and worldly enjoyments. This Chakra forms our foundation and therefore related to our survival instincts. It is the lowest Chakra and it does not warrant any solid spiritual achievements at this level, rather it helps in diverting the energy from downward to upward. But it definitely functions for survival, power, the promotion of vital energy and elimination of toxins. And it does influences at the root of all consciousness. This brings us health, prosperity, security and dynamism.

As the organs associated with this Chakra are large intestine and rectum, concentration and chanting of the mantras at this Chakra helps a great deal in healing the problems around. One

should start the Chakra healing practice from this base Chakra and do regular practice of *Chakrayata Pranayama*, circular Pranayama.

(My Yoga Guru often asked us to do this Chakrayata Pranayama for the purpose of meditation on Chakras. This practice instills one with a lot of energy and all the Chakras are activated and developed if it is done properly.) Then concentrate at Muladhara chanting the mantra 'Lum' (लं). The practice of chant is mental and through the breath. While inhaling with the left nostril produce the mental sound 'la' (ल) and while exhaling with the right nostril produce the sound 'um' (अम्). Taking light to this Chakra and keeping in mind the colour of that element is necessary while concentrating at this Chakra. One has to sit in some meditative posture and concentrate in order to activate the particular Chakra. When it is activated, the element rises upward and mixes with the earlier element. That purifies the Bhuta. Then the complete Chakra with colour and the seed mantra, the deity and the form – all have to be taken in concentration for perfect meditation. (For the form of Muladhara Chakra, see the picture given on separate page) But this is a deeper knowledge and it must be done under the guidance of a Guru.

Even practicing the postures helps in activation of Chakras, eg., if one does the Bhujangasana, the serpent posture, the base centre, the sex centre, the heart centre and the navel centre get activated. Likewise if one does the Pranayamas these energy centres get

activated, eg., even the Kapalbhathi Pranayama suggested by Sw. Ramdeo has proved most effective in activation of the base centre, the Muladhara Chakra.

It need not say that the meditation at Muladhara makes the body shine with brilliance and it insulates the Sadhaka from several diseases and fills with tremendous energy:

वपुषः कान्तिरुत्कृष्टा जठाराग्निविवर्धनम्।
आरोग्यं च पटुत्वं च सर्वज्ञत्वं च जायते ॥

.....
यं यं कामयते चित्ते तं तं फलमवाप्नुयात्।

(*Shiva Samhita*, V.65-70 et al.)

The activation of this Chakra increases the brilliance of the body, the gastric fire becomes powerful, and freedom from disease, cleverness, and omniscience ensue. The Goddess of Learning dances on his lips. He obtains Mantra-siddhi. He also masters the unheard of sciences and their mysteries. It destroys old age, death, and trouble innumerable – जरामरण दुःखौघ नश्यन्ति गुरोर्वचः.

All the functions of world can be accomplished by activating this Chakra as it is the basic Chakra for one's survival. Since it is the root centre of energy, it is the first requirement of all people to first concentrate on this Chakra for energizing the body and overcoming all the hurdles of divine pursuit. Those who are not aware of the importance of this Chakra may be committing great folly by delaying their interest. It is because the spinal cord rests on this centre and that is the most mysterious channel of the

body contributing the most important function in keeping a holistic health. It is advisable for all people to remember that the position of spinal cord should be kept in mind in maintaining any posture of the body and be careful that the spinal cord may not be in bending position. Let us feel free and keep in mind that as long as the spine is in good position there may be no health problem and even the spiritual practices may be facilitated. While sitting the spine should be kept in erectile position and one should not sit in bent state. Any damage to our spine may result in great damage to our body and particularly affecting our spiritual quest.

2. Meditation at Swadhishtana Chakra

Similarly, the second Chakra, *Swadhisthana*, has the nature of its corresponding element 'water' that tends to flow downward. It also shows that the energy is continuously getting dissipated through this Chakra if it is not curtailed by meditation. And thereby activate this Chakra for the upliftment of the energy for spiritual purposes. The Seed mantra for chanting is '*Vam*' (वं) and it has to be chanted mentally by both nostrils as said earlier. The functions of the second Chakra are - creativity, procreation, sexual function and promotion of vitality. The large intestine, bladder, kidneys and reproductive organs of the body are associated to this Chakra. Concentration at this Chakra stimulates *Pranavayu* (the vital energy) in the entire body and gives tremendous vitality to the sexual organ. This Chakras brings us fluid and

grace, depth of feeling, sexual fulfillment, and the ability to accept change. The following verse from *Shiva Samhita* clearly depicts the advantages of contemplation on this Chakra. It makes one's personality enchanting and beautiful, brings glow to the face and confidence in mind.

यो ध्यायति सदा दिव्यं स्वाधिष्ठानारविन्दकम्।
तस्य कामाङ्गनाः सर्वा भजन्ते काममोहिताः॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, V.100)

3. Meditation at Manipura Chakra

As the name indicates, Manipura Chakra is indeed full of *Manis* i.e., jewels. This is the centre where Prana (the life-giving air) and Apana (the air that helps detoxify the impurities) meet and from here the former moves upward giving vitality to body and the latter flows downward upto the legs. From Tantra viewpoint, it the most important centre. In case, a person is overtaken by some devil spirit, ghost or witch, place some stone of the weight of 3% of victim's total weight, he/she will be alright.

Further, when a new baby is born, the umbilical cord is linked to mother's body from this Chakra. This Chakra is known as the power Chakra. The third Chakra, *Manipura*, associated with element 'fire' has an upward-consuming movement like the flame of the fire. It again symbolizes that this Chakra is meant for the spiritual evolution and it helps in raising the trend upward. This Chakra is the centre of personal power and origin of will. It prepares us to meet the challenges of living in the

world, functions for digestion and assimilation of nutrients. It shows ego identity and oriented to self definition. It rules our personal power, will and autonomy, as our metabolism.

A developed Chakra brings us energy, effectiveness and spontaneity. The chanting of the Seed mantra 'Rum' (ॠ) at this Chakra can very well activate it and serve for the healing purposes. The chanting should be done mentally by both the nostrils pronouncing 'Ra' (ॠ) while inhaling from the left nostril and 'am' while exhaling from the right nostril. The process has to continue at each Chakra while concentrating at the particular Chakra.

The organs associated with this Chakra are - liver, spleen, stomach and small intestine. Here dwells the fire called Vaishwanara that helps in digesting the food - *Aham vaishwanaro bhutva--- pachamyannam chaturvidham* (अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा ...पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम्). (*Bh.Gita*)

In the process of meditation at the navel region in the spine, the Sadhaka attains several perfections (*Siddhis*) including the *Parakaya-pravesha*, inserting one's *Prana* into other's body. (*Shiva Samhita*, V.106-08)

4. Meditation at Anahata Chakra

The next is the *Anahata Chakra*, that lies at the centre of the chest and it is regarded the focal point of love. The element associated with this Chakra is air that is characterised by a tendency to revolve in different directions. It should not be mistaken that the air at this Chakra

is for the vital air that we breathe, 'but it is for the atmosphere, the immensity of space and the conveyor of the sound.' The name of the Chakra 'Anahata' means that 'it emits a mysterious cosmic vibration, as of struck (Anahata) sound.' This sound transcends the body and senses. The Seed mantra for chanting is 'Yam' (यं). The process of chanting and concentration should be done from the back side because heart is a sensitive organ.

Concentration at this Chakra causes the flow of energy for lower to higher awareness, from self-centredness to an awareness of the rest of the world. A healthy Heart Chakra, allows us to love deeply, feel compassion, have deep sense of peace and centeredness. Thus meditation at this place restores the pristine nature of Shiva. (*Shiva Samhita*, V.109-15) The heart and lungs are the associated organs.

5. Meditation at Vishuddhi Chakra

Vishuddhi, the fifth Chakra, located at the spine just behind the throat centre causes the flow of energy for the higher functions of communication, creativity and personal expression. Constant concentration at Vishuddhi Chakra have tremendous effect on one's personality. It works wonders in transformation of the life of people associated with singing, delivering lectures or speeches, or doing any other work related to throat. Those having hoarse throat should practice this Chakra or those having any problem in throat must regularly concentrate at the Vishuddhi Chakra and try activate it by chanting the 'hum' (हं)

mantra while breathing from the left nostril and exhaling from the right nostril. Great master Rev'd Shri Ramsurat Shukla, our Yoga Guru instructed several people suffering throat-related diseases and all were cured. One of our Yoga fellow, Shri Rajiv Khurana too gave this advice to several persons and he told me that they reported great improvement and relief to their throat. It is advisable to all students, teachers, media persons, reporters, interviewers, newsreaders, and all creative people to concentrate at the Vishuddhi Chakra. Even commentators and those doing recital of prayers will experience a different taste and zeal. Those practicing the work of telling Scriptural stories, *Katha-vachakas*, will avail a lot from the concentration at this Chakra. It is best assured that they would have miraculous effect of this practice and their performance would be more than doubled.

The element associated with Vishuddhi Chakra is ether (*Akasha tattva*), being the first element. If someone is chanting mantras right from the Muladhara, big transformations are noted because all the elements right from the base center each element is gradually purified and it mixes with the preceding element – *tattvam tattve niyojayet* (तत्त्वं तत्त्वे नियोजयेत्). So the centre at Vishuddhi is like a vessel in which all the elements mingle. Since this Chakra is associated with vocal chords, concentration here develops tremendous force in speech and persuasiveness. This is one of the most important stages in spiritual practice (*Sadhana*) because at this stage the Sadhaka begins to realize the insignificance of the material things and he

succeeds in dissolving all those external facts with internal or psychic facts.

In *Shiva Samhita*, the Lord Himself exhorts that such a person gets great potential of energy that does not exhaust and remains fresh.

तस्य न क्षतिमायाति स्वशरीरस्य शक्तितः ।

संवत्सरसहस्रेऽपि वज्रातिकठिनस्य वै ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, V.120 & 117-19, 121)

It is equally important to note that the element ether here gets mixed with all the other four elements and transcends them. It is also said that the Sakara Brahman becomes the Nirakara, formless from this Chakra onward.

6. Meditation at Ajna Chakra

Ajna, the sixth Chakra, is the centre between the eyebrows, *Bhrumadhya*, also called the Third Eye of Shiva. Here the *Sushumna Nadi*, the middle channel, links the Brahmananda through the spinal cord. The *Ida Nadi* reaches through the left nostril from the southern region of the Ajna Chakra also called Ganga, and the *Pingala Nadi* reaches from the right nostril also called Yamuna, the *Sushumna* reaches through the spine, the middle way and all of them form a *Triveni*. Here shines the brilliance of the moon. It the place of holy bath or dip for the Yogins for their entry into the inner world of spirituality. The mantras on both sides are 'Ham' (हं) and 'Ksham' (क्षं) in respectively in the right and left of the

Bhrumadhya. This is called the best centre for meditation. Importance of this Chakra is superb as it is the centre wherefrom the whole human system gets command. The name '*Ajna*' itself shows that it is the commanding centre of the body. Spiritual masters have written a lot about this centre as it is the doorway for spiritual journey that begins from here.

The Seed mantra is '*Om*' and it is chanted in the same way through the left and right nostrils, i.e., *Ida* and *Pingala*. 'The presence of '*Om*' within the inner triangle of *Ajna* Chakra is a clear indication of 'origin', the beginning of all things as also their end. *Om* is the sonic vibration from which all things emerge, and that into which they will eventually be reabsorbed at the end of the cosmic cycle,' observes a scholar.

The Yogi should do the chanting of the '*Om*' mantra at this centre adapting the same process of chanting through both nostrils each used for inhaling and exhaling. This is meant for the purification of mind (*Chittashuddhi*), i.e., the first step towards the inner kingdom. This practice is recommended for the practitioners so that they may get success in the *Yogabhyasa*. My rev'd Guru, Acharya Ramasurat Shukla, was very particular about the practice of *Chittashuddhi*, and he used to say that unless and until the *Chittashuddhi* is not performed you can't move ahead in spiritual practice, because by activating this Chakra the *Chitta* or the mind can be brought under control.

So this Chakra is for higher intelligence, insight and clairvoyance and it is associated with

brain. The Chakra is for the Paramahansa as stated in the following verse. There remains nothing to do in the world of attributes after this Chakra as it is this Chakra from where the journey to the inner world begins.

शरच्चन्द्रनिभं तत्राक्षरबीजं विजृम्भितम् ।
 पुमान् परमहंसोऽयं यज्ज्ञात्वा नावसीदति ।
 एतदेव परन्तेजः सर्वतन्त्रेषु मन्त्रिणः ।
 चिन्तयित्वा परां सिद्धिं लभते नात्र संशयः ॥

'Within the petal there is the eternal Bija (syllable *Tham* (ठं), brilliant as the autumnal moon. The wise anchorite, by knowing this, is never pulled down.'

'This is the great light held secret in all Tantras; by contemplating on it, one obtains the highest success without any doubt.'

(*Shiva Samhita*, 5.97-98)

7. Meditation at Sahasrara Chakra

The seventh and the last Chakra is *Sahasrara Chakra*, the thousand petalled lotus. It is not associated with any sound, element, colour whatsoever. In the form of pure lotus, this Chakra is considered to be the illumination of the mind. 'Just as the lotus grows in beauty and radiance but has its roots in the muddy clay, so too, must the human transcend his lower nature and allow the true nature of his soul to come forth and flower,' is what says a thinker of Yoga.

This is the crown Chakra that relates to consciousness and awareness. It is our connection to the greater world beyond a timeless, spaceless

place of all-knowing. This Chakra is in the root of *Brahmarandhra* and *Sushumna*. Continuous practice of meditation at this centre liberates the Sadhaka from the bondage of Karmas and he ultimately attains *Moksha*. When developed this Chakra brings us knowledge, wisdom, understanding, spiritual connection and bliss.

Saint Poet Kabir presents the philosophy of Chakras in a beautiful poem as follows:

अवधू सो योगी गुरु मेरा, जो यह पद का करे निबेरा॥1॥
 तरिवर एक मूल बिनु ठाढ़ा, बिनु फूले फल लागा॥2॥
 शाखा पत्र किछु नहिं वाके, अष्ट गगन मुख गाजा॥3॥
 पौ बिनु पत्र करह बिनु तुम्बा, बिनु जिभ्या गुण गावै॥4॥
 गावनहार के रूप न रेखा, सतगुरु होय लखावै॥5॥
 पन्धिक खोज मीन को मारग, कहैं कबीर दोउ भारी॥6॥
 अपरम पार पार पुरुषोत्तम, मूरति की बलिहारी॥7॥

'...There is one tree which is standing without having roots. There are fruits on it without flowering. The spine of the body is that tree. That is having fruits, i.e., *Shatchakras* without flowers. This is the mainstay of Hathayoga. That does also not have any branches or leaves. That roars, reaching the sky of eighth *Surati-Kamala*...The inside portion of the skull is the hallowed gourd of veena without a shaft. Praises are sung there without a song, i.e., the sound of *Anahatanada*. The singer there has no shape or form, i.e., *Sahaja-dhvani*. Some Yogi Guru can only reveal its mystery.'

(Bijak, 24)

Kundalini Yoga

Kundalini is an incredibly powerful storehouse of psychic energy, and it is symbolized as a coiled, sleeping serpent (*Kundalini* means coiled). Kundalini Shakti, coiled and dormant feminine energy, is the vast psychic energy contained within us all. This power (Shakti) remains dormant at the base/lower end of the spine called Muladhara Chakra. Once awakened it uncoils and ascends through the spinal cord and the subtle channel of energy called Sushumna, to the Sahasrara at the top of the head, empowering the individual with awareness beyond ordinary perception and perfections (Siddhis) beyond ordinary ability. When united with the Supreme Universal Soul, triggers a transcendent spiritual state leading to enlightenment.

Kundalini Yoga is an ancient art and science dealing with the alteration and expansion of consciousness, the awakening or raising of Kundalini Shakti. It is raised up to the spine by activation of Chakras (energy centres). This is accomplished by activating and uniting Prana (the cosmic energy) with Apana (eliminary energy). This synchronization of Prana and Apana generates pressure to force Kundalini to rise when the

practice of Asanas, Pranayama, Mudras, Bandhas and by chanting of Mantras is done. This science of Kundalini Yoga and meditation was developed over years by the sages of India. The origins of Kundalini Yoga are shrouded in the mists of the dawn of civilization on the Indian subcontinent. Kundalini Yoga is the art, science and technology enabling one to utilize his/her own creative power for elevation of consciousness for higher purposes beyond reproduction. No doubt, think the Westerns, its regular practice can greatly increase the level of energy leading to an enhanced sex life. But it is not meant for these trivial purposes of the temporal world. The focus has to be given on some higher and superb aim leading to the realization of the Self; living a meaningful quality life with full satisfaction, beatitude and bliss. Kundalini Yoga is the most powerful and inclusive of all Yogas.

CHAKRAS & KUNDALINI SHAKTI

The location of Muladhara Chakra given in the *Shiva Samhita* is that it is two fingers above the rectum and two fingers below the *Linga* (genitals), four fingers in width, a space like a bulbous root. Between this space is the Yoni having its face towards the back. There dwells the Goddess Kundalini. It surrounds the Nadis, and has three coils and a half, and catching its tail in its own mouth, it rests in the hole of the Susumna.

गुदाद्वयङ्गुलश्चोर्ध्वं मेढ्रैकाञ्जुलतस्त्वधः।
एवं चास्ति समं कन्दं समताच्चतुरङ्गुलम्॥

पश्चिमाभिमुखी योनिर्गुदमेढ्रान्तरालगा
 तत्रकन्दसमाख्यातं तत्रास्ति कुण्डली सदा ।
 संवेष्ट्य सकला नाडीः सार्द्धत्रिकुटलाकृतीः
 मुखे निवेष्ट्य सा पुच्छं सुषुम्णाविवरे स्थिता ॥

(*Shiva Samhita*, 5.56-57)



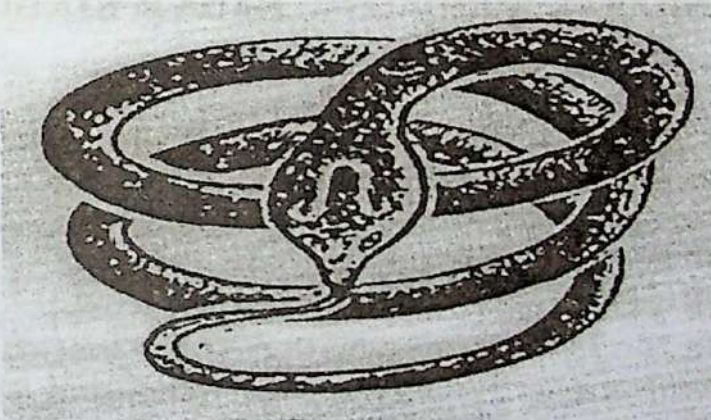
The Cosmic Energy Shiva resting within the folds of Devi (Kundalini)
 (Courtesy : Pahari School, c. 18th century, gonache on paper)

It has been stated that the aspirant has to start the inner journey from the level of the physical body at Muladhara. It is also the place of Kundalini Shakti, the infinite energy inherent within the matter of Muladhara Chakra, the dormant

center lying in the perineum in males and in the cervix in the females. Kundalini remains in dormant state at the base of the spinal column in the form of a serpent with 3.5 coils surrounding the Shiva-linga, the phallus of Shiva. The Sadhaka should concentrate on this Kundalini in the Muladhara Chakra. This is very gigantic serpentine fire symbolizing the sublime source of absolute life-force, the latent reservoir of supernatural powers. It is called Atma Shakti or the Universal Energy and the entire cosmic power of creation, preservation and dissolution is contained within the folds of Kundalini Shakti. This Kundalini has to be raised from Muladhara to the heart lotus through Sushumna and be united with the burning effulgence of Jiva, and thenceforth be brought to the Sahasrara in the Brahma-randhra.

'When the full potential of this energy is released it travels up through the central nervous system, in the physical body, or the Sushumna Nadi, in the Pranic body.'

(Sw. Niranjanananda, p. 2)



Kundalini in sleeping state

Thus, after purifying Chakras by Bhuta Shuddhi and activating them by concentration and chanting of the prescribed mantras for each Chakra, the petals and the colours, Kundalini rises upward to meet Parama Shiva to the uppermost level at the Sahasrara Chakra. Meditation with the recitation of the Hamsa mantra becomes instrumental in uniting the Kundalini with the Parama Shiva.

Even the modern science has proved that, corresponding to the Chakras, there are seven plexus which control the whole body. As for the Kundalini that is situated in the sacred bone of the spinal cord, and that traverses through the whole body (spinal cord) cleansing all the six Chakras and ultimately uniting with Shiva in the seventh center at the brain. The Sadhaka should be cautioned not to be misled by cheap practitioners of Tantra who malign the real purpose of this great practice. It is very unfortunate they derive the benefits of carnal pleasure by awakening Kundalini Shakti.

PARA SHAKTI, KUNDALINI, NADA & BINDU

Shiva-Shakti Tattva has the ultimate potency of creation, and when commence to act, the first movement towards manifestation takes place, this union and mutual relation is called *Nada*. As the relation is not some substantial thing apart from Shiva-Shakti, Nada is really Shiva-Shakti, only being in the process of evolution of the world. It is said that Nada is the *Maithuna* of Shiva and Shakti and that when Mahakala was in *Viparita Maithuna* with Mahakali there issued Bindu. It should be

noted here that this is not gross Maithuna as some western scholars call it. *Mithasamavaya* is the other term for Maithuna i.e., Kriyashakti. From Nada came *Mahabindu*, and this letter differentiated into the Tribindu which is *Kamakala*, the root of all Mantras.

From the Sakala-Parameshvara vested with the wealth of Sachchidananda appeared Shakti, from Shakti Nada, from Nada Bindu (Mahabindu). Sakala means with Kala, i.e., the Brahman with what the Samkhya calls Mula-Prakriti, Vedanta calls Avidya, and Shakta Tantras call Shakti. Nishkala Shiva is actually Nirguna Shiva or that aspect of Brahman not linked with the creative Shakti. Shakti associated with the Parama Shiva is *Chidrupini* (Conscious) and *Vishvottirna* (transcendental) or beyond the universe. On the other hand, Shakti associated with the creative Shiva appears as Universe (*Vishvatmika*). The Parashakti is one with Chaitanya at rest.

(*Sharada Tilaka*, 1-7)

The term Nada means sound also that is concerned with Mantravidya. Nada is the most subtle aspect of Shabda, as the first putting forth of Kriyashakti, Paranada and Paravak that develops into Bindu, that is the source of Shabda for Mantra aspect. Mahabindu is called Shabda Brahman. This Shabda Brahman appearing in bodies is Kundalini Shakti - *Kundalini shabdabrahmamayi* (कुण्डलिनी शब्दब्रह्ममयी) .

'As it consists of two coils (Kundalas), it is called Kundalini. It is seated in the heart of the fiery light residing in the centre known as Muladhara. It is the life-force known as Kundala,

which is of the shape of Prana and consists of light. It is also called Mahakundalini and is the same as the Transcendent Brahman having the form of one and many letters, and is white like the fibre of a lotus-stalk.' (Yoga Kundali Up.,)

‘स प्रसूते कुण्डलिनी शब्दब्रह्ममयी विभुः।
शक्तिं ततो ध्वनिस्तस्मान्निरोधिका,
ततोऽर्धेन्दुस्ततो बिन्दुस्तस्मादासीत् परा ततः॥’
(Sharada Tilaka, 1-108,109)

‘She who is Kundalini, all-pervading, Shabda Brahman, produces Shakti. From this came Dhvani, from Dhvani Nada, from Nada Nirodhika, from Nirodhika Ardhendu, from Ardhendu Bindu, and then comes Para.’ Further,

‘पश्यन्ती मध्यमा वाचि वैखरी शब्दजन्मभुः।
इच्छाज्ञानक्रियात्माऽसौ तेजोरूपा गुणात्मिका॥
क्रमेणनेन सृजति कुण्डली वर्णमालिकाम्॥’ (ibid.)
‘Then Para, and then came Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari-Shabda. In this order Kundali who is Will (Ichchha), Knowledge (Jnana) and Action (Kriya), who is both light (Tejorupa) and Chidrupa and in the form of the Gunas (Gunatmika, i.e., Prakriti) creates the garland of letters (Varnamala).’

Para is Shabda as Parabindu and is motionless (Nishpanda) and it has three-fold aspects from Shabda standpoint – Pashyanti,

Madhyama and Vaikhari. Para when unmanifest and motionless is called Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari speech (vak). Para is in the Muladhara Chakra, Pashyanti in the Svadhithana Chakra and upwards, Madhyama in Anahata and upwards, and Vaikhari in the throat.

In Kundalini, Shakti is subtle and in the form of effulgent light only. When she goes upward and becomes Pashyanti, self-manifesting in the Sushumna Nadi, she becomes *Madhyama* as form of Nada reaching the Anahata. It goes upward and becomes 'hum'. It then appears at chest, throat, teeth, nose, palate and head assuming the form of Varnas (letters) issuing from the root of tongue and lips becoming *Vaikhari*. In the Kadimata section of *Tantraraja*, the commentator Raghavabhatta says: 'Under the influence of one's own will a high form of Nada called Para generates in the Muladhara as Pranavayu. This when carried up by Ichchha and made to appear in the Svadhishthana is called Pashyanti associated with Manas. Gradually led up by Her it is called Madhyama associated with Buddhi in the Anahata. Carried still further upward it is called Vaikhari in the Vishuddha in the region of the throat. Thence it is generated as the Letters from A to Ksha through its presence at the head, throat, palate, lips, teeth, tongue etc. Vaikhari is a form of Bija (*Bijatmika*), Madhyama is *Nadarupini*, and Pashyanti is *Bindvatmika* manifested in the region from heart to mouth.'

According to Yoga Shastra, Devi is Vaikhari and is Viratashabda manifesting letters which make certain sounds called Mantras. Aurthor Avalon

says: 'Strictly speaking all uttered sounds are Mantras, all uttered speech having a common origin or development: but in the more usual sense, Mantra means those letters or combination of letters which are used in Upasana and Mantrayoga and are the Mantras of Devatas of Shastrik worship.'

The whole world process is a reawakening of the Cosmic Consciousness from sleep to world, into which it had fallen at the time of dissolution. The principles of Shiva-Shakti mark the gradual stages of reawakening, i.e., reawakening to the world, but a falling into sleep so far as true consciousness is concerned. In Kundalini Yoga, when Kundalini sleeps in the Muladhara, man is awake to the world, and when she awakes, the world vanishes from consciousness which then, regains in own state (svarupa).

सशैलवनधातूनां यथाधारोऽधिनायकः ।

सर्वेषां योगतंत्रानां तथाधारी हि कुण्डली ॥

'As of all with hills, woods and lands, the support is Lord of Serpents, so of all treatises of Yoga, the support verily is Kundalini.'

AWAKENING THE KUNDALINI SHAKTI

Kundalini Yoga is of great scientific, parapsychic, and metaphysical interest. It is called *Layayoga*, 'Laya' means absorbing and Kundalini means coiled up. Kundalini was recognized 5000 years ago as it is mentioned in the ancient Hindu

scriptures like *Saundaryalahari*, *Panchastavi*, *Yogakundali Upanishad*, *Jnanarnavatantra*, *Lalitasahasranama*, *Laghustuti*, *Vamakeshvaratantra*, *Yogaoshikhopanishad*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Satachakra-Nirupana*, *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, etc. It was from these scriptures that knowledge spread to far off places like Tibet, Egypt, Sumer, China, Greece, Mexico, and South Africa. Prince Mohd. Dara Shikoh has mentioned three Chakras in *Pasala-I-Haq-Nama* as Dil-I-mudawar, Dil-I-sanowbiri, and Dil-I-Nilofari.

Man is the epitome of the universe - *Ya pinde sa brahmande* (या पिण्डे सा ब्रह्माण्डे). What is present in the macrocosm is present in the microcosm. Kundalini is the basic energy, the creative force, a primal cosmic energy outside electromagnetic spectrum, lying dormant in the Muladhara Chakra in our body. Kundalini represents the feminine energy, which always tries to unite with Paramashiva in the Brahmrandhra in the head.

देह मध्ये ब्रह्मनाडी सुषुम्णा सूर्यरूपिणो पूर्णचन्द्रमा वर्तते
सातु मूलाधारादाराभ्य ब्रह्मरन्ध्रगामिनी भवति। तन्मध्ये
तडित्कोटिसमानकान्त्या मृणालसूत्रवत्सूक्ष्माङ्गी कुण्डलिनीति
प्रसिद्धास्ति। ता दृष्ट्वा मनसैव नरः सर्वपापविनाश द्वारा मुक्तो
भवति।

It is said that Kundalini can be awakened by different methods. Hathayogi does it by the practice of Pranayama, Asanas, Mudras. A Rajayogi does it by meditation on the Self. A devotee awakens by faith, devotion and self-surrender, and

a Jnanayogi by will power, concentration on the self. The Tantric awakens Kundalini by sublimation of sex and Siddha mantra. It happens by the grace of Guru or the grace of God. It is also learnt that some herbs are injected in the spinal cord to awaken the Kundalini.

The aspirant has to start the inner journey from the level of the physical body at Muladhara. It is also the place of Kundalini, the infinite energy inherent within the matter of Muladhara Chakra, the dormant center lying in the perineum in males and in the cervix in the females. Kundalini remains in dormant posture at the base of the spinal column in the form of a serpent with 3.5 coils surrounding the Shiva-linga, the phallus of Shiva.

गुदमेढ्रान्तरालस्थं मूलाधारं त्रिकोणकम् ।
 शिवस्य जीवरूपस्य स्थानं तद्धि प्रचक्षते ॥
 यत्र कुण्डलिनी नाम पराशक्तिः प्रतिष्ठिता ।
 यस्मादुत्पद्यते वायुः यस्माद् वह्निः प्रवर्तते ॥
 यस्मादुत्पद्यते विन्दुः यस्मान्नादः प्रवर्तते ।
 यस्मादुत्पद्यते हंसो यस्मादुत्पद्यते मनः ॥

(Yogashikhopanishad)

All the Yogic and spiritual practices aim at the release of this great Cosmic Power known as Kundalini Shakti (called Serpent Power by Sir John Woodroffe) that remains in every person in a sleeping state. The Sadhana is to awaken this power and make it rise upward. According to Sw. Niranjanananda '...the aim of all yogic and spiritual practices is to release the great cosmic power or kundalini shakti which lies coiled three and half times in mooladhara chakra.' Scriptures describe it

as, 'The flight of a bird rising from earth to heaven, tied to golden thread.' He says further:

'The earth is mooladhara chakra, heaven is ajna chakra, the bird is mahaprana and the golden thread is sushumna nadi which runs through the centre of the spinal column. My manipulating, storing and expanding the prana within the body it is possible to awaken the sleeping prana shakti.'

(*Prana Pranayama Prana Vidya*, p. 1)

The Prana or the vital force, which is said to activate the movement of this dormant power of Kundalini or *Prana Shakti*, has a got a vital role in the subtle body or, say, in the *Pranamaya Kosha*, where its activity introduces with two rival and competitive currents happening in this body. These currents move upward and downward or the right and the left assisted by subtle channels of energy like *Ida* and *Pingala*, and, the meeting point of these two currents, where the Prana or Shakti are available in their original form, is termed Kundalini.

Sw. Niranjanananda Saraswati puts it like this: "...the aim of all yogic and spiritual practices is to release the great cosmic power or kundalini shakti which lies coiled three and half times in mooladhara chakra.

The words like Kundalini or Bhujangini denote that the Tattva that was in dormant state is transformed to be vibrant having got momentum. The Tattva is said to rise upward and downward both. According to Yoga experts, Kundalini, which is the prime place of Prana, rises upward to the head from its place at the Muladhara Chakra, but it

is also said that, that it turns back to the Muladhara again.

Kundalini awakening is the basic purpose of all the Sadhanas for attainment of higher states of consciousness. All the discussions in the preceding pages of this book have consummation of awakening Kundalini Shakti. For some Sadhakas it happens naturally, for others it takes years of practice to attain this state. Be it Bhuta-Shuddhi, practice of postures and Pranayama, Mudras, Bandhas, Mantra-japa, activation of Chakras, praying the almighty or invoking any of the deities, the fundamental thrust is on the arousal of lower energy and take it to have communion with the Supreme Brahman.

There are several diseases that the human system generates - शरीरं व्याधि मन्दिरम्. The reasons are: sleeping in daytime, late vigils over night, excess of sexual intercourse, moving in crowd, checking the discharge of urine and faeces, unwholesome food and laborious mental operation with Prana. This is the first obstacle in getting success in Yoga practice. The others are: doubt, fear, carelessness, laziness, sleep, not leaving sense objects, erroneous perception, and failure to attain the truth of Yoga. A wise man should abandon these things and perform Pranayama regularly with mind fixed on Truth. Thus Chitta is absorbed in Sushumna having been all the impurities cleansed. Apana which has downward tendency is raised upward by practice of Mulabandha. The raised Apana mixes with the Agni and goes up quickly to the seat of Prana. When the synchronization of Prana with Apana takes place,



Muladhara & Kundalini



Seven Chakras

they proceed to meet Kundalini which is coiled up and asleep. Kundalini being heated up by Agni and stirred up by Vayu, extends her body in the mouth of the Sushumna, pierces the Brahmagranthi formed of Rajas, and flashes at once like lightning at the mouth of Sushumna, then through Vishnugranthi to the heart, then through Rudragranthi and above it to the Ajna Chakra (*Bhrumadhya*), and having penetrated it goes up to the Mandala of moon. There goes on a huge process and then Chitta is cooled. Kundalini assumes eight forms of Prakriti and attains Shiva by encircling and dissolves in Shiva. The seminal fluid (*rajas-shukra*) rises up goes to Shiva alone with Marut. *(Yoga Kundalini Up., I.56-74)*

Thus, in Tantra Yoga, the aspirant arouses Kundalini and unites Her with Lord Shiva and enjoys the supreme bliss of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. When Kundalini is asleep, man is awake to the world. He has objective consciousness. But when Kundalini is awake, man sleeps losing all consciousness of the world and becomes one with the Lord. In Samadhi, the body is maintained by the nectar which flows from the union of Shiva and Shakti in the Sahasrara Chakra.

Purification of Nadis for Kundalini awakening

When the two energies – lunar and solar – are harmonized, Nadis, primarily Ida and Pingala are facilitated to have communion with the Sushumna Nadi and Prana flows there, it is only then that Sadhana begins. First free flow of Nadis is required to energize the body. Ida and Pingala

carry a high range of energy to the Chakra points from where it is carried to different parts. By wasting unnecessary energy in futile thoughts one may become weak. When Ida and Pingala meet with Sushumna, which conducts a higher form of energy, the flow of energy in Sushumna is of cosmic nature. These three Nadis are like domestic electrical metre with three lines – positive, negative and neutral. Positive and negative lines are required to have proper conduction of energy, neutral line maintains the higher voltage. Ida Nadi - the negative line, carries cold energy, Pingala Nadi - the positive line carries hot energy, and Sushumna - the neutral line is booster. Pranic and mental energy conducted by Ida and Pingala is finite whereas the cosmic energy of Sushumna is infinite. Purification of Nadis is therefore the first requisite to awaken the Kundalini.

We have two important centres in our body – Muladhara, at the base of the spine and the Ajna Chakra, at the top of the spinal cord. Nadis like Ida, Pingala and Sushumna emanate from the Muladhara and unite in Ajna. Kundalini which resides at the Muladhara rises through the path of Sushumna. It is therefore important to continue practice of Yoga without giving halt to it otherwise the link between the three major Nadis is delinked. Trataka and Kapalabhati establish this link.

Kundalini awakening: Asanas & Pranayamas

Yogasanas are important preparation for Kundalini awakening because they give a mild push to the activation of Chakras. Swami Shivananda

says that Sarvangasana awakens Vishuddhi Chakra, Bhujangasana wakes up Manipura Chakra, and the practice of Sirshasana awakens Sahasrara Chakra.

Pranayama helps in organizing proper Pranic energy in the body. Supplying and balancing the Pranic energy in the different dimensions of body is basic function of Pranayama. It increases vitality and ensures good health. Pranayamas like Nadishodhan, Bhastrika, Kapalabhati, Sheetal, Sheetkari and Bhramari are intended to disturb the sleeping Kundalini.

Techniques of awakening the Kundalini

1. *Shambhavi Mudra and Trataka:*

Shambhavi Mudra is practiced to awaken Ajna Chakra and create union between the three conductors of energy in the body. Sit on some Dhyana posture and close your eyes. Concentrate at the Ajna Chakra between the eyebrow centre. After opening your eyes look at the Ajna Chakra, if there is light know that *Shambhavi Mudra* has become effective. *Trataka* can make this Shambhavi Mudra more effective. Trataka is merely gazing at some point, after sometime eyes concentrate at the Ajna Chakra and Shambhavi Mudra develops triggering the flow of Kundalini.

2. Sit in Siddhasana comfortably in perfectly relaxed pose both physically and mentally. (The left heel should be under the anus and the right one should be placed above. Both the ankles should be one upon the other.) The perineum (Yoni) is

pressed with heel. Spine and neck are to remain straight and hands are placed on the knees. Practice Mulabandha, Jalandharabandha and Uddiyanabandha, all together. Mulabandha is contracting of anus upward with deep and prolonged breathing. The inhaled breath is to be held as long as it can be done in comfortably into Jalandharabandha. Then in the Uddiyanabandha, start exhaling and contracting the pelvis (lower abdomen) till is completely flattened. All three bandhas help in preservation of semen. Jalandharabandha absorbs the flow of nectar from the Brahmastrandhra. This practice contributes to the awakening of Kundalini.

In awakening the Kundalini, it is strictly advised to follow the practice very wisely. It requires a lot of patience to start its awakening gradually. Any kind of haste may make waste and endanger the whole life. There are several instances of this hastily act which have caused the life of the doer or handicapped their organs. An able teacher is necessarily required for this purpose.

3. One should first of all start the practice from the Ajna Chakra, it is only after doing some practice here that the other Chakras should be activated. Then the Sadhaka should concentrate on this Kundalini in the Muladhara Chakra with the help of Prana or other techniques and activate the other Chakras.

Kula Kundalini is very gigantic serpentine fire symbolizing the sublime source of absolute life-

force, the latent reservoir of supernatural powers. It is also called *Atma Shakti* or the Universal Energy and the entire cosmic power of creation, preservation and dissolution is contained within the folds of Kundalini Shakti. This Kundalini has to be raised from Muladhara to the heart lotus through Sushumna and be united with the burning effulgence of Jiva, and thenceforth be brought to the Sahasrara in the Brahmastrandhra. 'When the full potential of this energy is released it travels up through the central nervous system, in the physical body, or the Sushumna Nadi, in the Pranic body.'

(*Prana Pranayama Pranavidya*, p. 2)

ज्वलनाघात पवनाघातौ रुन्दिदितोहहिराट् ।
 ब्रह्मग्रंथि ततो भित्त्वाविष्णुग्रंथिभिनत्ययः ॥
 रुद्रग्रंथि च भित्त्वैव कमलानिभिनन्तिषट् ।
 सहस्रकमले शक्तिः शिवेन सह मोदते ।
 सैवावस्था परा ज्ञेया सैवा निवृत्तिकारिणी ॥

It is said that after purifying Chakras by Bhuta Shuddhi and activating them by concentration and chanting of the prescribed mantras for each Chakra, the petals and the colours, Kundalini rises upward to meet Parama Shiva to the uppermost level at the Sahasrara Chakra. Meditation with the recitation of the Hamsa (So'ham) mantra becomes instrumental in uniting the Kundalini with the Parama Shiva. Even the modern science has proved that, corresponding to the Chakras, there are seven plexus which control the whole body. As for the Kundalini situated in the sacred bone of the spinal cord, traverses through

the whole body (spinal cord) cleansing all the six Chakras and ultimately unites with Shiva in the seventh center at the brain.

When Kundalini awakens and energy begins to flow, one experiences definite symptoms. There happens manifestation of Consciousness in the form of illumination. The experience is psychic where blazing of light is experienced and it may be called enlightenment. The Sadhaka should be cautioned not to be misled by cheap practitioners of Tantra and Kundalini awakening who malign the real purpose of this great practice. It is very unfortunate they derive the benefits of carnal pleasure by awakening Kundalini Shakti.

The noteworthy point is that Bindu and line (Kundalini) are not separate but the Bindu itself takes the form of line when it moves. Shiva is the dormant state and Shakti is the momentary state. This Kundalini is said to remain asleep having made three and a half rounds. These three rounds are said to be the three Gunas – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. At another place, Kundalini is said to make eight rounds which should be understood as unmanifest, Mahat, Ahankara, and five elements of the Bhutas (panchatanmatras):

‘नाभिकन्ददाधः स्थानं कुण्डल्यद्यमंगुलम् ।

अष्टप्रकृति रूपा सा कुण्डलीमुनिसत्तम्’ ॥

(*Jabaladarshan Upanishad*, 4.11)

The Ayurvedic treatise *Sushruta Samhita* (4.58) enunciates that Jyoti (Kundalini) remains in between the navel and Muladhara – ‘*Tasyantarena nabhestu jyotisthanam dhruvam smritam*’ (तस्यन्तरेण

नभेस्तु ज्योतिष्ठानां ध्रुवं स्मृतम्). It is considered that the place of Kundalini is between the Pranamaya sheath and the Manomaya sheath at the place of *Vasanagranthi* (the place of unmanifest desires). This granthi moves when hit by the Apanavayu and then it enters into the Sushumna, which traverses through the spinal cord, and, it generally remains in dormant state unless moved. Then it traverses upto the head. It is the pathway of Kundalini. In this path of journey, the Chakras (centres of energy) are milestones. When Kundalini is on its journey, different types of changes can be noticed in the speech, mind and body of the Sadhaka. These changes may well predict about the fact the Kundalini has awakened, and at which Chakra has it reached and which Chakras has it already penetrated.

Thus the practical techniques of Yoga involve awakening the energy of the subtle body as the Kundalini, the coiled energy or serpent power. This spiritual power is inherent in every human being in dormant state. By awakening Kundalini, man attains unique physical and psychical transformation, creative ability, and a total upsurge of consciousness. With the rising of the Kundalini upward from the base Chakra, the lotus petals at each Chakra open, the flower gets lifted and the Kundalini leaves for the higher Chakra having activated and merged itself with that. When it reaches to the next upper Chakra, there again the petals of that Chakra get blossomed and the Chakra activated, a sort of vibration of energy is felt by the Sadhaka. The Tattvas of that Chakra is also merged with the next element - *Tattvam*

tattve niyojayet (तत्त्वं तत्त्वे नियोजयेत्) and the process goes on with the further Chakra upto the end Chakra.

When Kundalini is awakened under the able guidance of some Guru, the person really feels a different taste of life. The intellect gets sharpened, and the talent grows spontaneously. When Kundalini awakens, senses derive marvelous experiences and the person becomes a saint, a musician, an artist, a promising writer, a poet, a messiah, foresighter or anyone like a Prime Minister, a President or a Governor. The awakening of Kundalini has its impact on one's mind and behaviour.

Kula Kundalini contains all the characteristics of evolution for the man in seed form. Man is different from the animal in at least three ways – in clear speech (Vaikahari-vani), sexual act when desires so, and the evolution of the Manomaya Kosha (psychic sheath). The centres of energy or Chakras and Shakti are not different. When Shakti rises upward and rests at different places, it is the process of vibrating the Chakra. (The six Chakras have been described elsewhere in the preceding chapter.) Muladhara or the base Chakra is triangular because the Mula Prakriti is of three attributes. 'Kula Kundalini that remains in the Muladhara, when made conscious enters into the Sushumna, and after penetrating through all the Chakras like Swadhisthana, Manipura, etc., it finally enters the forehead. This is called the movement of Mahavayu, in the end there is Samadhi.' (*Sri Ramakrishna Vachanamrita*, Part 3, p. 308)

In the ten-petalled lotus of Manipura Chakra, in the stomach at the novel and the sacrum, vertebrae starts. It is the place of fire. When Kundalini rises upto this place, its heaviness is lost. The elements like earth and water are eliminated. Here Shakti gets transformed into the form of light. In order to push forward the Kundalini upto this level, the Apanavayu lying in the inner core of the stomach has to be hit.

Situated above the diaphragm, the *Anahata Chakra*, is a favourable place for the Kundalini to rise easily. It can rise upward without striking at all. The hearing of the Nada becomes obvious. This inner voice (antarnada) is unstruck (anahata). The duality of attachment and illwill still persists at this centre. In the throat-pit at *Vishuddha Chakra*, when Kundalini enters in utterly purified state, there is no more any duality of attachment and illwill. Kundalini is here in its refined form. When Kundalini reaches the *Ajna Chakra*, in between the eyebrows, the state of psychic movement is still there. This is called the *Savikalpa Samadhi*.

From Ajna, the Kundalini rises to the Sahasrara in the headtop, the place of Purna Chaitanya, Supreme Consciousness. The *Chaitanyabindu* of finite energy falls into the ocean of infinite. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* takes place and the state of communion is realized. 'When that effulgent energy reaches the mind, the centre of all knowledge and all sensations, then each atom of the whole of mind and all its experiences produce some probable reaction. This results in total effulgence of knowledge or self-realization. As the Kundalini Shakti moves from one centre to the

other, so the layers of mind are removed one by one, and, the Yogi attains the subtle or causal state of the world.' (*Rajayoga*, Sw. Vivekananda, p. 35)

Sri Aurobindo says: 'Higher and deeper consciousness dawns upon the Sadhaka, there is effortless blossoming of the Lotuses. The hidden centres of the celestial force open like flowers in a heavenly atmosphere. As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep they blossomed and laughed, surcharged with Light and Bliss.' (*Savitri*)

The awakening of Kundalini creates motion and motion creates sound. It is called Nada which creates light. The light appears as Mahabindu. The sound of creation is AUM. It is not gross sound, it is cosmic sound. It is called Shabda Brahman. From AUM 52 letters of Matrikas are produced. Letters are types of sounds in their causal and subtle form.

The Human Life & Divinity

From time immemorial India has been a land of earnest inquirers who have probed into the mysteries of human life and the universe. The master-minds of ancient India, the Rishis, who lived in the sylvan surroundings of the Himalaya, could discover the great truths that give us in-depth understanding about ourselves and greater meaning to human life. There is a Power that enlightens our path to health, bliss, pelf, prosperity and peace, but we have to get aligned towards That.

The abounding traditions of India affirm that everything originates in the Infinite Spirit. The Supreme Principle of Consciousness is the source of all that happens in this universe - वासुदेवः सर्वं इति. Divine love is the most powerful force in this universe. Magnetism of every kind is born of the magnetic power of God's love. By the magnetic power of divine love all things can be accomplished. Faith in God and in our own self is an essential requirement. God-intoxicated savants of ancient India had got the vision of the Supreme in the very recess of their heart and they propagated the glory of the Supreme Reality as the sole mission of their life. God appears when the

time is ripe and the urge for God has really risen. The following verse reveals the Grace of God on love-lorn devotees and God-intoxicated saints:

‘उल्फत नशे का जिस दिन सच्चा शुरूर होगा।
परमात्मा उसी दम जाहिर जरूर होगा।।’

Desire for success underlines every venture that a person or society undertakes and all humans wish for a greater life perfect in all respects - perfect look, body, beauty, material things—the self and prosperity. Each one of us simultaneously engrossed in the thought of acquiring all these by focusing one's total energy but achieves just a little bit of it. Giving remarks on the untapped hidden energy in our body, Swami Vivekananda questions:

‘Do you know how much energy, how much powers, how many forces are still lurking behind that frame of yours? ...Millions of years have passed since man first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested. ...You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.’

The humankind has, one by one, conquered or crossed the farthest-flung frontiers of the planet. Super bizarre, science begins to take a leap into the unknown. Researches believe that 'quantum computing could address and solve complex problems upto a million times faster than even

today's mainframe supercomputers can. Among some of their future applications would be protecting encrypted financial transactions, deciphering codes and optimizing complicated systems like airline schedules, database searching, developing fraud-proof digital signatures.'(TOI) As science and technology make the world out there smaller, the infinite inner space of consciousness inherent in us seems correspondingly to increase, 'vast with the mystery of a horizon which draws away from us the more we try to approach it.'

Man's faculty of discrimination chooses the goal of survival, not for true happiness, that blurs his vision and he ends up buying stress and strain. Today, there are many more lifestyle disorders stemming from anxiety, depression, sexual tension, adjustment issues and substance abuse. Anxiety and depression are no longer dismissed as passing phase of adolescence, scoffed at as symptoms of a midlife crisis. Even doctors and psychiatrists have come to realize that medicine is not a solution to life's problems. Happiness remains a mirage simply because material abundance can assure better survival and not better living.

Hindu scriptures aver that such an enjoyer (the *bhogi*) ultimately groans in agony, dies with unmanifest desires (*vasanas*), and is reborn to suffer the pangs of life again. Life long efforts to satiate the thirst of senses ultimately proves futile and the state of the poor creature, the man, becomes pitiable. The body vanishes with aging, near and dear ones turn away their faces, and the oldies are deserted even by the closest kiths and kins. The man repents when he tries to discover

what he has earned in life, and to his horror he finds that there is nothing that belongs to him in this world. Days are no more the same when India was known for spirituality all over world, as for now India suffers from materialism and over-hype. People have become very materialistic and they talk only about money. Religion and spirituality have got confined into so-called fashionable rituals exhibiting only the outer aspect. Human values have declined in the show-offs of today's modernity, and, in a sense, it has taken the shape of barbarity. It reminds what Maharshi Aurobindo once said, 'If we pierce through the face of modernity and look at it, there emerges the primeval barbarism gazing upon us.' Commenting on India's spiritual significance, a foreign scholar said, 'Without spirituality not only India will lose its soul, but the planet will be deprived of something unique.' Though India is still considered spiritual Guru of the world, people will have to do a lot to maintain this recognition. The question is what is the purpose of one's birth in this world? Do we ever think of the true and eternal happiness?

Of course, no. In fact, there is a way to live life. If you don't live life, the life will live you. To speak the truth, we don't ever care for the destination of life, neither we bother about it. There must be some essence of this magnificent world, some goal of human life that the creator has bestowed upon us with infinite bounties.

The human personality is constituted of four ingredients - body, mind, intellect and Spirit. A person looks at the world according to the constitution of his personality and its evolution. By

identifying oneself with the body alone the life is entirely mundane, by functioning according to the dictates of mind, it's a mental life, by working according to the intellect, a person is called intellectual, and if the focus is on Spirit, the life becomes spiritual, which makes it an integrated personality. How we see the world depends on the reflection of the reflecting medium, our personality. If the mind and intellect are distorted, the world appears distorted. Looking at our own personality in different types of glasses shows different shapes, sometimes it becomes a laughing stock for others.

We are here in this world to play our role in the best possible manner. We are sports persons and the life is like a ball in our hands. It's up to us how beautifully we play it. Must see the difference between the reel life and the real life. The role played by Rani Mukherji in the movie 'Black' reflects her perfection as an actress projecting a deaf, dumb and blind. She knows it well that she is Rani Mukherji in her real life. The question is of identity crisis between real life and the reel life. The quintessence of Indian scriptures is to identify oneself with the Atman - आत्मानं विद्धि, rather being swayed away with mind and intellect. It is the stage when the focus is on the higher and the triviality of mundane world does not captivate the mind. The realisation of Atman comes when we apply a judicious mixture of discretion and detachment. There is complete harmony in body, mind, intellect and Soul leading to communion with the Supreme, the Yoga in real sense of the term. It leads to the acute awareness of a Divine

Providence functioning in life. Let us be prepared to open our heart and soul to That divine providence.

The basic purpose of Tantra, Mantra and Yoga delineated in this work is to awaken the people about the fact that the life is beautiful, divine and a constant celebration. We are essentially divine, no matter what we appear, divinity is at the core of our personality. Each and every creature of the universe belongs to the Supreme Soul, the *Paramatman*, the One God who is immanent everywhere as revealed in the *Shruti*-

एको वशी सर्वभूतांतरात्मा एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।

तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥

(*Kathopanishad*, 5.2.12)

"The Lord is without any 'equal'. All the worlds are within His Power. He is immanent in the souls of all creatures. Though His Form is Unique and Immutable, He has facilitated the devotees to realize in different modes, suited to their capacity. The Wise, who espy Him within themselves (as the indweller of their own souls) will attain to Eternal Bliss - not others."

Here the endeavor is to make us recognize our true nature, unfold the divinity within and get acquainted with the knowledge of our intrinsic Self. Insights of ancient Indian culture emphasised discovering the essence of nature through exploration of the Self, so vital to our consciousness, and as an extension of experience into the realms of intuition and mystic vision. Self-

unfoldment is the only destination of life. The real fulfillment and happiness of the Atman is possible by Atman alone - 'Atmanevatmana tushtah' (आत्मनेवात्मनातुष्टः।) (Gita). The poet Iqbal expresses this in the following verse:

ढूढता फिरता हूँ मैं, इकबाल अपने आपको।

आप ही गोया मुसाफिर, आप ही मंज़िल हूँ मैं।

(Oh, Iqbal, I have always been wandering, seeking my inner self, As if I am myself the voyager, and the destination.)

This can be achieved by developing our consciousness leading to detachment. Yoga plays an important role in awakening the vital energy of our innermost being and leads us to self-transformation. Though detachment including all the negativities pose a big challenge for life in the very beginning, yet they can be overcome gradually by constant practice of Yoga (*Abhyasa Yoga*). Yoga makes us live in the present. Living in the present is only mantra for happiness - *Yogayukta vishuddhatma na shochati na kankshati* (योगयुक्त विशुद्धात्मा न शोचति न काञ्क्षति।) (*Bh. Gita*). Some one has rightly remarked:

Thinking about past brings us tears

Thinking about future brings us fears

Thinking about present brings us cheers.

The knowledge and realization of this secret makes us live a life of perfect harmony, peace and

bliss. The very secret of happiness has been truly summed up below in words of Sw. Yogananda:

'Live each present moment completely and the future will take care of itself. Fully enjoy the wonder and beauty of each instant.'

Thanks to the change of winds in the West where the youths are gradually aligning to spiritual practices like those of ISKON's Mantra-japa, Patanjala Yoga, Tantra, and several other modes of spiritual practices leaving their impact on the far off psyche of Indian youths. Now spirituality has become a global trend. A recent online poll conducted by *Newsweek* revealed that 51% of the 1,20,000 surveyed called themselves spiritual and religious while 60% believed spirituality was important in their daily life. 'The increasing interest in spirituality is accompanied by a willingness to experient with belief systems that were once considered non-mainstream.' (*Xplore, TOI*). 'Welcome to the world of youthful faithful. Not for them the usual agonising angst, restless search for the self, or ritual obeisance to the deities of drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll. Delhi's young believers - who range from schoolkids to successful professionals - find their bliss in meditation and mantras, asanas and awareness - spirituality has become a way of life as the young seek salvation like never before.' (*TOI*) 'The most striking feature about the young believers is that they are completely regular.

In fact, delivering ancient wisdom in a manner that makes it relevant to modern times and that too in a different idiom and speech has

become the need of the hour. Scriptural Gurus will have to modernize their style of deliverations. The ho'ble President of India A.P.J. Abdul Kalam rightly knows the nerve of the people when he gives a lot of stress on igniting the mind of children for a better India. We have every reason to assert that it is our child/youth who have total upsurge of energy in them, and it is they who can cause great miracle to the present deteriorating state of our society. The young woman today is no more jacketed in the role of *saas/bahu* closeted in the fourwalls of house. She is fraught with many a responsibility within her career and her family, and not only is she striking a fine balance, but is also foraying into careers that have been male dominated for a long. If the society has to be transformed for a better tomorrow, some sort of changes have to take place. Harmony in the today's world can't be brought about by opting hatred and illwill for one another, or taking recourse to violence. Anger, hatred, displeasure, or a disquiet person should not look for the solution of these problems in the outside world or blame others. The verse below by Sw. Yogananda Saraswati points out to look within and see that it is not distracted:

*'When we are hurt or unhappy or angry within
And hateful to others, due to the state we are in,
When we snarl or bite back, it's the animal in us,
Our very grossest aspect, that's making all fuss.*

Man is endowed with the advantage of securing the best of life and revel in the ultimate experience of silence, of beauty, of bliss, a state of

inner celebration. The most fundamental thing is to be aware of his innermost core, as that is the secret of the whole existence. It is after turning inward and experiencing the Divinity within when one can discover greater meaning and purpose of life. Man, in fact, works as a bridge between the animal and the divine. The Grace of Divine is realized from within the body but the seeker is running after the external world like a mirage. The human being is virtually destined to live in state of utter ignorance. He is madly in race of acquiring the world and amassing pelf and prosperity in abundance. In this pursuit of physical merriments, the prime aim of life is lost. The *nara* - man, who was born to seek the path to spirituality, the eternal abode that could lead to *Narayana* (*nara+ayana*) (नारायण=नर+अयण), the actual end of life, has fallen in the *naraka*, the hell.

Realization of the Supreme in one's inner core is the only alternative for the attainment of the eternal and true bliss - आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्. The understanding about this truth dawns in one's mind only after the grace of God. It is, therefore, advised by our great masters that one should endeavor for excellence in the practice of Yoga for cleansing the body and mind and all the impurities of the head and heart. It is also equally necessary to surrender to the Supreme and have firm faith on God. In Yoga it is the self-confidence that matters most and one should follow the path of spirituality with unflinching faith in the Supreme Spirit. Yoga is the science of connecting one to the inner core, and establishing communion with the Self. Saint Kabir calls it - '*Kothare mahin kothari param kothi*

beechari'(कोठरे महिं कोठरी परम कोठी बीचारी), i.e., there is the body, inside the body is the mind, and inside the mind is the soul. Yoga is the process of accomplishment of journey from body to soul.

The abode of the Supreme Self is in the recess of your heart. That is our original abode too. There is *Paramatman*, the *Ananda*, the eternal bliss. Unfortunately we have lost the way to our eternal abode. The Individual Soul is living in the state of bereavement from the Supreme Soul. It is exactly the very same state as was of Gopis of Vraja for Krishna. The truth of this matter can be understood by those Yogis only who have experienced the state of bereavement. This state comes to a true aspirant of Yoga after a long practice. The purpose of Yoga is, therefore, to prepare the body so that the aspirant may creep into the innermost core, and open the door to that abode. Contemplation of the Supreme is the path that takes one to the inner soul.

India has been the centre for inventing religions for centuries. The four prominent religions of the world - Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism - were born here. Indians are the most creative believers in the world. Mystics and saints view life with a higher angle and recommend that we should live each moment with full trust in God. 'Trust in the Lord requires a conviction that there is an unseen power who created this world and who created us. It means having knowledge that our soul has been created by God, and its journey is under God's will. It requires conviction that God has sent us into the world for a purpose and our destiny is to fulfil that purpose....It means certain

events that happen to us are also preordained by God, and that what happens is already laid out for us,' says Sant Rajinder Singhji.

One should not feel that the life lived is just because there is a heartbeat. Whatever one has to do must be looked upon as something divine and noble. Sri Sathya Sai Baba says, 'God,...moves the due to drop, the lotus to bloom, the butterfly to flit and the sun to rise. That is all the power, all the wisdom, all the love, all the miracle that ever was, is, and will be.' The person who seeks God hopes to 'dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of her life', to 'taste the sweetness of the Lord' and to 'seek His face.' (Psalm 27) If we doubt the existence of a controlling power, we live in fear of chance occurrences and accidents –संशयात्मा विनश्यति.

Man is under the imprisonment of body (sharira), mind (mana) and intellect (buddhi), and behaves under their impact. They attach us to the world. The need is to develop the sort of knack for detachment from the world and get established in our natural Self or Spirit. We are Atman, pure, imperishable and immaculate, and we should not be sabotaged by the waves of mind or intellect. Lord Krishna Himself says that I am unmanifested and incomprehensible. The mind can't think about Me. So don't try to know Me by your mind – 'Avyaktashcha achintyashcha na tvam shoचितुमर्हसि।'. The Lord is known by love, by heart, not head. He says, 'If you can't steadily fix the mind on Me, Arjuna, then seek to attain Me through the Yoga of repeated practice.'(Gita, 12.9) God is a state of mind far above the rituals and festivities. One has

to be at peace, at ease and at a comfort to have one's personal equation with God. Even this state of tranquility of mind can be derived from belief in God. God is like a fragrance, like the scent of *agarabatti*, we feel His presence but don't see Him.

God is our constant companion, an inner friend whose love and support we can never lose. God is everything – He dwells in every heart - ईश्वरः सर्व भूतानां हृद्देशे तिष्ठति अर्जुन।). Divinity can be found all around us if we only look. The beauty of God's unseen hand is that sometimes we actively pray for help and receive it, but there are many times when we do not even ask for help, and help comes anyway. These times are reminders to us that we are not alone.

Man is like a machine and it needs lubrication for its smooth functioning. One has to be receptive to the Grace of God and several other spiritual masters for the energies that come from them to lubricate the machine of life. 'If you are not open to grace, everything will come to naught', says spiritual saint Jaggi Vasudeva. We must thank God what He has given us, at least for the beautiful body and its organs to accomplish different functions beautifully. If you are really loyal to His Love, there is no reason to worry and buy stress unnecessarily as He has miraculous scheming for you in store and He will be unfolding them one by one as the need be. He will make you what you want to.

Commenting on the presence of the Supreme and His reminder to people in their daily life, Eknath Easwaran says that 'Every day I see the verification of Karma. Ill health is often an

instance; if we do not take care of our body and maintain our peace of mind, our health is bound to suffer. When our breathing is laboured, when our digestion is upset, when our equanimity is destroyed, we do cry – and this cry is a signal, a red warning from body and mind, reminding us that something fundamental in our life is wrong. Pain, illness, insecurity, and mental turmoil are all loving signal from the Lord, Who is telling us, 'It is time you gave yourself a check up. It is time you learned to change your ways.'

DISEASES OF THE BODY & MIND

The world is normally afflicted by the three types of diseases – *Daihika* (bodily), *Daivika* (divine) and *Bhautika* (natural). The human body is full of diseases – 'यह तन विष की वेलरी.' Though medical science has progressed to a great extent yet there are still certain bodily diseases like cancer, AIDS, etc. which are not perfectly curable. The *Bhautika* diseases are like snake-bite, stinging of the scorpion, etc. The *Daivika* diseases are like falling of the vajra, earthquake, typhoon, storm, tsunami etc. Diseases of three types of *Daihika*, *Daivika* and *Bhautika* still persist there. Saint poet Tulasidas says – '*Tulasi yeh tan tavaa hai, tapat sadaa trai taap*' (तुलसी यह तन तवा है, तपत सदा त्रै ताप।). Despite of the best efforts of the scientific inventions these natural calamities still remain far from our control and the world is badly under the impact of these natural disasters. In fact, nobody has an inkling of when these events are going to happen. Several of such happenings which took

place in the recent past appear to burning examples.

Diseases are disastrous even more than an enemy – शत्रोरपि विशेष्यते व्याधिः. Gandhiji used to say if one's body and mind are in good health, one can't be ill. In the *Mahabharata*, two kinds of diseases are mentioned – Physical and Psychical that give birth to each other.

‘द्विधा जायते व्याधिः शरीरो मनसस्तथा।

परस्परं तयोर्जन्म निर्द्वंदं नोपलभ्यते।।’

There are three doors for the hell and instruments for destruction of the individual:

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः।

कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत्।।

(Gita, 16.21)

We are living in an age where only materialism matters to people of the world. Sw. Rama says that ‘material wealth hardens the heart and causes pride, making us forget our own real self.’ Though human reason has made tremendous strides in the field of science, we have not only scaled the width and depths of earth and water, our spacecrafts have set foot on moon and other planets and are busy exploring new horizons of space and life on planets. ‘Scientists have conquered the air and the atom, but, alas, people have not realized the mysteries of the inner self. We have journeyed to the moon and explored the outer space, but we have not conquered our archenemy – the mind.’ (Yoga International, p. 14) The malady of mind is the most fatal and all the creatures of the world are victim to this disease - जिनके बस सब जीव दुःखारी.

Diseases of the mind are very dangerous and the most cruel are the problems of fear, *Raga/Moha* or attachment. *Kama* or desire is also equally dangerous as Lord Krishna says that attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense objects. Man should never allow himself to be swayed by them, because they are two principal enemies standing in the way of his redemption:

‘इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्णवस्यमगच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपंथिनौ ॥’ (*Gita*, 3.34)

Attachment (Moha)

Moha or Attachment for mundane things is the basic cause of bondage and liberation. The Lord further says that ‘it is desire begotten of the element of Rajas, which appears as wrath, nay, it is unsatiated and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case.’ (ibid, 3.37) ‘Knowledge stands covered by this eternal enemy of the wise, known as desire, which is insatiable like fire.’ (ibid, 3.39) ‘The senses, the mind and the intellect are declared to be its seat, screening the light of Truth through these, it (desire) deludes the embodied soul.’ (ibid, 3.40)

मोह न अंध कीन्ह केहि केही । को जग काम नचाव न जेही ॥
मोह सकल व्याधिन्ह कर मूला । तिन्ह ते पुनि उपजहिं सब सूला ॥

Attachment is the biggest problem in this world and it has caused big damage to the cause of humanity. Even today we find that maximum

number of crimes are taking place due to this disease. It is the root of all diseases and all other diseases are born from it. There is hardly a person in this mortal world who has not been a victim of attachment or Raag. Attachment or Moha together with the vrittis of mind are cause of bondage and sufferings in one's life. The fever of youthfulness and the attachment have ruined several lives -
 जोबन ज्वर केहि नहिं बलकावा । ममता केहि कर जस न नसावा ॥

In words of Kabir Sahib, attachment is the most dangerous thing and it can't help rid of life, though the passionate and the one taken with anger may be rid of life:

‘कामी तरइ क्रोधी तरइ पापी तरै अनन्त ।
 लोभी जियरा न तरइ कहै कबीर बिरतन्त ॥’

Saint poet Tulasidas has given marvelous examples of these vicious aspects of human life. There is nobody in this world who has not been bitten by the serpent of anxiety and affected by Maya. There is nobody whose intellect has not been maligned in respect of son, wealth and fame.

चिन्ता सापिनि को नहिं खाया । को जग जाहि न व्यापी माया ॥
 सुत बित लोक-ईजा तीनी । केहि के मति इन्ह कृत न मलीनी ॥’

Desire to possess more and more is also a very bad disease and it has been compared to the problem of pot-bellied state of a person. Moreover the three desires—to acquire a son, self and reputation—are very troublesome. Jealousy and indiscretion are black fever, and it goes on.

'तृष्णा उदर वृद्धि अति भारी। त्रिविध ईष्णा तरुन तिजारी।।
जग बिधि ज्वर मत्सर अबिबेका। कंह लागि कहौं कुरोग अनेका।।'

Lord Krishna says: 'It is desire begotten of the element of Rajas, which appear as wrath, nay, it is insatiable and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case.' 'As a flame is covered by smoke, mirror by dirt, and embryo by the amnio, so is Knowledge covered by it (desire).' And, Arjuna, Knowledge stands covered by this eternal enemy of the wise, known as desire, which is insatiable like fire.' 'The senses, the mind and the intellect are said to be its seat, screening the light of Truth through these, it (desire) deludes the embodied soul.' (ibid, 3.37-40) The diseases are many whereas only one of them is enough to take one's life.

Anger (Krodha)

Krodha or anger is equally a very bad disease which can cause great damage to life. It is said that anger is caused due to the formation of idrinil hormone in our body. It is the biggest enemy of the man on the earth. Anger is aroused due to non-fulfilment of one's desires and once the person is overtaken by anger his intellect gets vitiated leading one to great fall. Several things of degradation have enumerated by in *Bhagavad Gita*. Lord says: 'The man dwelling on sense-objects develops attachment (Raag) for them, from attachment springs up desire (Kaam), and from desire (unfulfilled) ensues anger.' 'From anger

arises infatuation, from infatuation, confusion of memory, from confusion of memory, loss of reason, and from loss of reason one goes to complete ruin.' (*Gita*, 2.63-64)

Many more lessons and remedies have been taught by our ancestors to overcome these hurdles in life. (An interesting event once occurred with Lord Buddha. Somebody came to him and started shouting at him with abuses and he continued doing so from morning to evening. When Buddha saw that he had stopped, he told his fellow disciples to kindly give him something to eat since he might be tired and hungry. Seeing that the very person said, 'Oh gentleman, I have been abusing from mornig to evening but you are still asking for some food for me rather getting angry with me.' Then Buddha replied, 'Oh my friend, will you tell me that if somebody comes to your house and offers you some gifts but you don't accept it, then what? You shouted abuses at me but I didn't accept them.' The person fell at the feet of Lord Buddha and begged pardon.)

Ego (Ahankara)

Spiritual practices focus on teaching the human being the right path to live life. If one does not bother to know how to live life, the life will live him. Such a person is enslaved by his own superficial ego, the most difficult thing to explain and analyse as it lies ingrained in the very person. From amongst all the diseases of the mind, the ego or Ahankara is the most dangerous. It is as much painful as the problem of arthritis reveals the

Ramayana of Tulasi: 'अहंकार अति दुःखद डमरुआ। दम्भ कपट मद मान नेहरुआ।।'

Ego is the sense of feeling 'I'ness. In ego, the person is taken in the grip of his own inbuilt personality based on his Sanskaras that he has imbibed from the very beginning of his birth and the surroundings. It is a layer on his real personality that clouds the real nature and displays only the extrinsic self-built personality. Our spiritual masters call it the most invincible problem to be conquered by a person. Those who are victim of this disease are generally the affluent, the aged ones, or the maybe anybody who has identified oneself with the body and knows nothing but only the body under the impact of *Tamoguna* (inertia).

'With the submission of ego and the surrendering of the personal will, the individual becomes aware of the presence of a powerful and unyielding energy. That energy is the movement of the life-force in a self-propelled state of conscious evolution or becoming.' (Andrew Cohen) Ancestors were very wise and they recommended that one who pronounces '*main, main*' i.e., 'I' 'I', should be brought to book and be punished for that sort of ego or *Ahamkara* or false pride. This perception gradually declined with the passage of time and people starting sacrificing the goat in the name of some Hindu goddesses as the poor creature used to bleat in the similar voice. Similarly the cracking of coconut in the temples of mother goddesses also symbolized that one's ego should be sacrificed before praying the goddess that too has taken different perception. Even no learning is possible without deserting ego. In olden times the disciple

going to get education to his preceptor was required to go empty mind- समित्याणिं गच्छेत्.

Indian poets have time and again warned against the vicious impact of ego or feeling of 'I', identifying oneself with the body or the gross matter. It has been therefore advised that both ego, the sense of 'i-ness' and God cannot go hand in hand, one has to go. To say it metaphorically, the street of love is so narrow that two things can't be accommodated there - प्रेम गली अति सांकरि ता में दो न समाहिं।. And even more so जब मैं था तो हरि नहीं अब हरि हैं मैं नाहिं.

Ego bars the original and true personality and hinders the evolutionary process of the Spirit. Ego is automatically associated with passion or very strong self-sense and it restricts the upsurge of one's energy and creativity. When this ego is released, that creative impulse is unleashed within the individual and even extra-ordinary things become possible. An egoless person is able to create and manifest things that one would never ordinarily be able to do. By overcoming ego a person becomes conscious of his true self and he transcends fear and desire, awakening makes him very careful person. Andrew Cohen writes: 'The selfish ego is like a dam. Just as water gets stuck behind a dam, all that energy is stuck behind the fears and desires of ego. When we feel the spiritual or evolutionary impulse, our attention goes from ego to something bigger. Energy is released. This is the heroic spirit that we have to cultivate - to disregard all self-concern... It surges up, and then it becomes incredibly thrilling to be alive.'

'He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate, rid of 'I' and 'mine', balanced in joy and sorrow, forgiving by nature, ever contented and mentally united with Me, nay, who has subdued his mind, senses and body, has a firm resolve, and has surrendered his mind and reason to Me-that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.' (*Gita*, 12.13-14) 'He who has neither rejoices nor hates, not grieves, not desires, and who renounces both good and evil actions is full of devotion, is dear to Me.' (*ibid*, 12.17)

Fear (Bhaya)

When we are awake in the morning not knowing what to expect from the day ahead, not knowing whether the day will bring good fortune or pain, this uncertainty creates feelings of fear and instability. The state of uncertainty and instability in our mind is certainly difficult to deal with. Personal experience and historical evidence recorded in Scriptural texts make us believe that 'Fear' is the biggest enemy of the man on the earth. And the cruelest form of fear is carried by the idea of death or *Mrityu*. The *Bhagawata Purana* presents a burning example where Lord Krishna devises a plan to put Kansa to death. He creates constant fear in the mind of the demon and his death becomes easier. 'Fear arises from doubt and from the unknown. When we have doubts about something, it opens the door to fear. When we doubt ourselves, we fear making a wrong decision or mistake. If we doubt our abilities, we fear that we will fail in a competition or test. If we doubt the

existence of a controlling power, we live in a fear of chance occurrence and accidents,' says mystic saint Rajinder Singhji.

It is said that untruth also leads to fear. The liar has to live in constant fear of getting the truth revealed and to conceal it the liar weaves a web of lies but a lie remains and it is revealed one day or the other without fail.

Each of us is afraid of some aspect of life. Most of the people are ever scared about the arrival of death and be deprived of all their riches that they have amassed throughout their life. The fear about death is perhaps the biggest fear that has gripped the man today. People protect them by building great forts and huge mansions. But see when death lays its cruel hands it doesn't spare even the best protected states. Instances are many like the recent happenings in America where even the best protected fortress got ruined by the terrorists. Hindu believers in India when scared of some incurable disease perform rituals like Pujan and chanting of the *Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra* to ward off the perils of death and disease. Is it that they become immortal? No. The great mantra only removes the fear in the mind of the one who performs the chanting and Pujan. Saint Rajneesh stressed on the actual meaning of death where he means that the fear and ego have to be conquered by meditation. Several other saints endorse this view of death. Sant Kabir says:

कहन सुनन कछु नाहिं, नहिं कछु करन है।
जीते जी मरि रहै, बहुरि नहिं मरन है॥

Love of Divine eliminates diseases

'Creeds, ritual, religion and different theologies are all derived from man's yearning for the vast Reality beyond. They flow in thousand different forms, fertilizing many fields, calming many communities, refreshing tired people and, at last, carrying people to the ocean of Bliss.' (Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

The world's traditions teach us that change in the society begins at the individual level. Drawing on the philosophy of Yoga, Tantra, Mantra, and other spiritual disciplines, we can change ourselves bringing a complete transformation in our lives. Through Yogic acts, Bhuta-shuddhi, Chakra healing and constant contemplation of the Supreme, we can replace greed, desire, jealousy and anger with compassion, tolerance, and love for the divine and others. Cultivating these qualities in our daily lives gives us the power to change the world. A healthy body shelters a healthy mind. Krishna says that 'he whose mind remains unattached to sense-objects, derives through meditation the Sattvika joy which dwells in the mind, then that Yogi, having completely identified himself through meditation with Brahman, enjoys eternal Bliss.' (*Gita*, 5.21)

Love for the Supreme Lord is embedded in the consciousness of India and its people in one form or the other. The Divine Grace and the Master's overflowing kindness is apparently available to one and all alike. God is our ultimate resort - ईश्वरः एव अस्माकं परा गतिः. The name chanting of the Lord is the only panacea for all diseases,

destroyer of all troubles, and giver of peace to all evil effects as illustrated in the following verse:

‘सर्वरोगोपशमनं सर्वोपद्रव नाशनम् ।
शान्तिदं सर्वरिष्टानां हरेर्नामानुकीर्तनम् ॥’

The love of divine, the most convenient ailment, is the best medicine for the safety of these fatal mental diseases of body and mind. Saint poet Tulasidas writes in *Vinayapatrika*: ‘रघुपति भगति सुलभ सुखकारी । सो त्रयताप शोक भयहारी ॥’

The Lord provides complete cure for the maladies of the world. He says that man is bound by his actions except when it is performed for the sake of sacrifice. Therefore, Arjuna, do you efficiently perform your duty, free from attachment, for the sake of sacrifice alone.

‘यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबंधनः ।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥’

(*Bh. Gita*, 3.9)

‘Dedicate all actions to Me with your mind fixed on Me, the Self of all, freed from hope and the feeling of meum and cured of mental fever, fight.’

‘मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि सन्न्यस्य अध्यात्मचेतसा ।
निराशी निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगत ज्वरः ॥’

(*ibid.*, 3.30)

The Lord says that ‘he who acts offering all actions to God, and shaking off attachment, remains untouched by sin, as the lotus leaf of water.’ (*ibid.*, 5.10) ‘The Karmayogins perform action only with their senses, mind, intellect and

body as well, withdrawing the feeling of mine in respect of them and shaking off all attachment, simply for the sake of self-purification. '

‘ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि संगम त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।

लिप्यते स न पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवांभसा ॥

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति संगंत्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥’

(Gita, 5.10-11)

Lord Krishna says: 'Those who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, who are in eternal union with God, whose cravings have altogether ceased and who are completely immune from all pairs of opposites going by the names of pleasure and pain, reach that supreme immortal state.' (ibid, 15.5)

'Having offered the fruit of actions to God, the Karmayogi attains everlasting peace in the shape of God-realization, whereas, he who works with a selfish motive, being attached to fruit of actions through desire, gets tied down.' (ibid., 5.12) 'He alone who is able to stand, in this very life before casting off this body, the urges of lust and anger is a Yogi, and he alone is a happy man.' (ibid., 5.23) 'He who is happy within himself, enjoys within himself the delight of the soul, and even so is illumined by the inner light (light of the soul), such a Yogi identified with Brahman, attains Brahman, who is all peace.' (ibid., 5.24)

By constant and consistent practice of spirituality, the inner conscience, the mind, the intellect and the ego all get cooled down and the inner core itself reflects the true self, being the

original source of infinite energy. With the waning of desires, the mind is still. A tranquil mind no more gets disturbed like the light of a flickering lamp. When the mind is cool the energy is not any further getting drilled in waste. A peaceful mind automatically turns to higher leaving its agitations far behind. The body is no more in any turbulence and the mind is free from all flickerings, the intellect is transparent to discriminate between good and bad and the Ultimate Truth is revealed to it. At this stage it is important to remember that realization comes at this stage by the Grace of God. Tantrikas call it *Shaktipata*.

When you are at peace, you are available, you are conscious, you are aware, your personality is an integrated personality, say 100% integrated. Whatever you do, each and every action is powerful, potent and perfect as the action is sifted from deficiency to abundance, from lower to higher. There is no bereavement, no madness, no feeling for aloneness, no stress, no depression, no negativity, no complaint, no helplessness, and of course, no sense of insecurity. Here is a verse by Adi Shankaracharya glorifying the state of Realization of Brahman:

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।
 यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥ भज गो...
 (*Bhajangovindam*, 19)

'Let one revel in Yoga or in Bhoga. Let one seek enjoyment in company or let him revel in solitude away from the crowd. He whose mind revels in Brahman, he enjoys ... verily, he alone enjoys.'

Mantrayoga: Mantra Japa

LOVE for the Supreme Lord is embedded in the consciousness of India and its people in one form or the other. The Divine Grace and the Master's overflowing kindness is apparently available to one and all alike. There are many forms of energy manifesting in the universe around us, such as sound, light, heat and movement. The existence of universe goes simultaneously on different levels of manifestation, sound, light, heat etc. Mantra is the basis of many healing techniques which utilize sound energy. Science recognizes that sound is a vibration at a particular frequency. Practicants of Yoga and Tantra, focused on the subtle qualities of sound, and they used to hear such sounds in states of deep meditation and Yogic trance. The vibrations that came to their mind during these hours were called Mantras, revealed sounds. That is why it is said that our ancient sages had the vision of Mantras and they were recognized as Mantra-drashta Rishis (मन्त्रद्रष्टारः). Yogis use Mantra for raising consciousness and healing purpose. This makes the power of the Shabda Brahman available for the welfare of the people.

Shabda (word), Dhvani (sound) and Sangeeta (music) can be applied to many aspects

of development. They leave effects on the body and the entire system in one way or the other. They do heal the system to some lesser or larger extent. No matter to what extent they do, they are extremely powerful tools for heightened consciousness and perception, and they should be applied to alter states of consciousness, facilitate in harmonizing the functions of the subtle body and bring about transformation in the inner body.

Ancients used to adopt various ways of spiritual traditions like rituals, prayers, chanting of mantras etc. for altering, transforming and expanding the human consciousness. We should try to understand that this practice of rituals, name-chanting of Gods and Goddesses, prayers, and mantras is going on for years and years and will continue. But we must remember that names and words have their own magic if we learn how to use them. We must be careful in our use of the ancient words and mantras.

Mantras, or the ancient words of wisdom, encapsulate all the power of the cosmos in them. Mantra is word (or words), which provides a perfect safeguard having destroyed all the fear by chanting. There are several mantras, Mahamantras and Sabara mantras etc. Spiritual practice of mantras is a dedicated endeavor and experience of the subtle science of sound aimed at activating inherent power of the Mantras.

Words have power because they are auditory symbols of what they represent. If ordinary words have so much power, those words, which have come down the ages, sanctified their divine associations became veritable receptacles of the

divine. Once Shankaracharya was asked, "What is the path which involves little effort but gives great reward, the way which brings the fruits of all disciplines?" He replied, 'That is path of Yoga of Chanting.'

Sri Satya Sai Baba says, 'I shall give you one prescription which will give the peace and contentment which you seek. It is remembering the name of the Lord (*Nama-smarana*). Install on your tongue any one from the thousand names of the Lord.'

Mantra is the key that the spiritual teacher uses to unlock the door to our heart and installs the mantra to rest there. There is nothing new that he gives to the disciple but he simply shows what is already there, and awakens it from slumber. According to sages, Mantra is a bridge to our higher self. Writing on the rescue aspect of Mantra in 'Yoga International', Irene Petryszak says: 'It acts like a homing device that leads us through the maze of our unconscious mind, back to our inner light. It is the name of God, the scriptures tell us, and if we keep repeating it over and over with devotion and concentration, our minds and hearts and beings are saturated with its vibrant presence. The more we focus on it, the deeper our meditation becomes. And as we incorporate the mantra into our daily lives, it begins to cut away at the roots of our negative thought patterns - protecting and nurturing us, and giving us strength to overcome our weaknesses.'(p. 37)

Mantra is word (or words) which provides a perfect safeguard having destroyed all the fears by (a powerful mental) chanting. Mantra is formed of

two words 'man' and 'tra', 'man' is for concentration of the mind and 'tra' is 'trana', i.e., protection, that which provides desired fruit by chanting' - 'मननात् त्रायत इति मंत्रः। मननत्राण धर्मणो मंत्रः॥'

Thus, Mantra is the word/words that invigorate the mind with the power of contemplation (concentration) and completely safeguard it by eliminating all the fears through chanting.

Tantra Agama has the principle that illustrates that Ananda is Brahman - आनन्दो ब्रह्मणो रूपम्. Bhraman is known as Shiva here in Tantra. Scriptures of Tantra Agama propounded by Lord Shiva recognize Mantra Sadhana the best for realization of the Spirit, recognition of the one's true nature, ridding the afflictions of the world. One of the most important treatises of Tantra Agama, *Mahartha-manjari*, depicts a beautiful form of mantra in the following verse:

‘मननमयी निजविभवे निजसंकोचभये त्राणमयी।
कवलितविश्वविकल्पानुभूतिः कपि मंत्रशब्दार्थः॥’

The purpose of Mantras is said to make one realize the great infinite potential in one's own Being. It is to remove all kinds of worldly problems like poverty, paucity, etc. as stated in the verse:

‘मोचयन्ति च संसाराद्यौ जयन्ति परे शिवे।
मननत्रिणोधर्मित्वत्तेन मंत्र इति स्मृतः॥’

The popular text of *Netratantra* presents a detailed analysis of the secrets of Mantra tattva. It

says that 7 crores of mantras emanated from the mouth of Shiva - सप्तकोटि महामंत्राः शिववक्त्राद् विनिर्गताः. The fifty letters of the alphabet from 'A'(अ) to 'Ksha'(क्ष) are known as *Matrikas* (मातृकाः). All the Varnas have been formed from these Matrika-varnas. The word '*matrika*' connotes the meaning 'mother', so it is the mother of all literature (*Vangamaya*). All the mantras are *Varnatmaka* (वर्णात्मक) and are in the form of Mantra-shakti. This is Shakti of Matrika only, and that Shakti is of Shiva. So, all the Mantras are verily the form of Shiva-Shakti incarnate. Lord Shiva says to Mother Parvati:

‘सर्वे वर्णात्मका मंत्रास्ते च शक्त्यात्मकः प्रिये।
शक्तिस्तु मात्रिका ज्ञेया स च ज्ञेया शिवात्मिका॥’

The main foundation of Agama philosophy is based on thirty-six principles. These Tattvas are based on the thirty-six letters of Matrika. The creation, preservation and dissolution of both sentient and insentient world takes place by these Tattvas. So the Mantratmaka letters are called Shabda Brahman. Even the behavioural world is run by Shabdas, and, so is considered the biggest. Lord Parama Shiva was kind enough to form miraculous and desire-yielding Mantras for the wellbeing of the worldly people. See Saint poet Tulasidasa's line on Mantra: ‘मंत्र महामणि विषय ब्याल के। मेटत कठिन कुअंक भाल के॥’

Mantras comprise an important school of Yoga. With mantras the power of Dhvani is used to convey an overriding spiritual reality to our

consciousness. Mantras have creative power and can be used for various purposes. Mantras can attract specific situations. The auric field of an individual can be changed by the use of mantras. Be cautious while applying a mantra for one reason or other as they may create adverse effect on the practitioner, may bring about destructive power and leave negative effect.

Thus we find that the importance of mantra lies in making use of the power of Shabda Brahman on the basis of the science of consciousness and connecting it with the dignity of the Inner Self. Enshrined in the Vedas as the universal prayer the great incantations of Pranava (AUM), the Gayatri mantra, So,ham mantra, mantras of Shiva, Shakti and the other Gods and Goddesses lead to spiritual liberation, bliss and enrichment of life. Mantra chanting protects the human race in entirety from all sorts of panics and mental agonies.

STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The *Brahma Upanishad* mentions the four places occupied by the Purusha (soul) – the navel, heart, throat and head. Each place is characterised by a particular state of consciousness: the navel or the eye waking consciousness (*Jagrata*), the heart dreamless sleep (*Susupti*), throat dreaming (*Svapna*), and the head the fourth, transcendental state (*Turiyavastha*). These four states of consciousness originally referred to in the *Mandukaya Upanishad*, are identified with the Gods Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (a derivative of Shiva) and *Akshara*, the indestructible. In Mantra Shastra

these stages are better known as *Vaikhari*, *Madhyama*, *Pashyanti* and *Para* of the Shabda Brahman.

Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama & Vaikhari

Para, *Pashyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari* are the four important places in the human constitution. This is according to the potency of the Mantra. **Para** is the mantra in its extra superfine sound origin in the Muladhara centre of the human system. The form of this inchoat sound is describable only to advanced spiritual students who have become Jeevanmuktas and who have entered the portals of immortality, but will subsist in their bodily state as mortal men. **Pashyanti** is that form of this inchoat mantra which has been perceived by the Yogis in the part around navel or the Manipura Chakra. If the Mantra is uttered in its superfine state in the Para and Pashyanti stages, Mantric sound worship is said to be superfine type. **Madhyama** is when the same mantric sound is heard in the heart. **Vaikhari**: The fourth or final stage of the mantric sound becomes audible, as it enters the neck and comes of the throat and lips. It is called *Vaikhari*. It is now in gross form and can be heard by others too. If it is uttered in the stages of Madhyama and Vaikhari, the worship is of gross form.

MANTRAYOGA

From amongst the different facets of Yoga, following four Yogas have been primarily given: (1)

Mantrayoga, (2) Hathayoga, (3) Layayoga, and (4) Rajayoga. The spiritual practice of Tantra Agama instructed by Parama Shiva is known as Mantrayoga. Tattvas have been enunciated in the Mantra Shastra elaborately. These are presented in a comprehensive way and the process of spiritual practice is also delineated there. Mantrayoga protects the human race in entirety from all sorts of panics. The practice of mantra chanting is an esoteric science and it is also called Mantrayoga. Indian philosophy recognizes Nigama (Veda) and Agama (Tantra) as self-authenticated.

Unlike the sixteen Kalas of the moon, Mantrayoga is complete with sixteen organs. These organs can be described as below:

1. *Bhakti* (devotion), 2. *Purification*, 3. *Asana* (posture), 4. *Panchanga-sevana*, 5. *Achara* (conduct), 6. *Dharana* (contemplation), 7. *Divyadesha-sevana*, 8. *Prana-kriya*, 9. *Mudra*, 10. *Tarpana*, 11. *Havana*, 12. *Bali*, 13. *Yaga* (sacrifice), 14. *Japa* (chanting), 15. *Dhyana* (meditation), and 16. *Samadhi* (trance).

The first organ of *Bhakti* or devotion has been explained in the works like the *Bhagavata Purana*, *Bhagavad Gita* and even in the other Vedic texts. Here the devotee has to surrender completely in love for the Lord. Purification is both external and internal purification. It requires direction, place, bathing for the body. Pranayama is necessary Both for the inner and outer purification. In Yoga and Tantra, there is *Bhuta Shuddhi* or the purification of the five elements - earth, water,

fire, air and the ether. It is done for the inner as well as outer purification.

The word *Asana* in Mantrayoga is for the purification of the seat. The *Panchanga-sevana* consists of *Gita, Sahasranama, Stavana, Kavacha* and *Hridaya* of the deity being worshipped. Next is *Dharana* where the contemplation is done of some statue, or the mind is set to concentrate at some particular place in the body. *Divyadeshas* are the holy seats or Pithas like the space between the eyebrows or the Third Eye or the Ajnachakra, the heart region, navel region, statues or images, yantras etc.

In the Mantrashastra, unlike the Yogashastra, the Prana or the vital force has the most significant part. Pranayana or regulation of the Prana is equally important. In fact, it is a prerequisite for any type of Sadhana (spiritual practice). This Prana has to be brought to the different places in the body, and for this the process of *Nyasa* has been prescribed. Mudra is another component of Mantrayoga done to please the respective deity. Oblations and Havana are also performed in order to please the deity. As for *Bali*, it is required to sacrifice one's ego before entering the practice of Mantrayoga. The inimical tendencies like anger, desire, greed, attachment, ego etc. have to be abandoned. These are the six enemies that prevent spiritual progress which can only be uprooted by the experience of knowledge of the Supreme Lord as the Saviour and Refuge. The most important aspect of this practice is to forget one's identification with body, mind and intellect and do

practice with the sense that it is done for the Supreme.

MANTRA CHANTING

Chanting is the activity of repeated rhythmic enunciation with meditation. It is called *Japa* in Sanskrit language and it has been defined as – *Japa vyaktayam vachi* (जप व्यक्तायां वाचि), and *Japa manase cha* (जप मानसे च), which means enunciate the mantra clearly and also chant it mentally. So the chanting of the mantras is unperturbed chanting with full concentration. The chanting is instrumental in eradicating all the sins and liberating oneself from the bondage of transmigration. Swami Ramakrishna says that Japa or chanting is recalling the name of the Lord in silence through the mind and the inner self. It is consistent illumination of the inner self.

Mantra chanting can be grouped into the following six categories:

1. Nitya Japa (Daily chanting): As guided by the Guru, the chanting of the mantra daily is a must for the sustenance of the subtle body unlike the food for the body. It is a must for the flow and continuity in the Sadhana.

2. Naimittika Japa (Occasional chanting): This Japa done only occasionally as on the occasions of the Pitra Paksha, the fortnight of ancestors. It is performed to express gratitude to ancestors, friends, relatives, or great saints. The mantras are specifically taken from the Vedas for chanting. On the occasions like Amavasya (the

darkest fortnight), Purnima (the brightest fortnight), Ekadashi, Shivaratri, Navaratri the recital of prayers is also done.

3. Mantras for the fulfilment of worldly desires are more popularly chanted by the mass.

4. Prohibited chanting of mantras should be avoided. Necessary disciplines should be observed in spiritual practices. Purity of body, mind and character, avoidance of carnal pleasures is not important for success in mantra chanting.

5. Mental chanting is performed silently only in the mind. The mind is focused on the meaning of this mantra. This type of chanting helps the activation and proper utilization of the bioelectrical field inside the body of the Sadhaka. The chanting effects etheric vibrations with the help of the latent power of the Shabda indwelling the mantra.

Chanting or Japa for the Yogis and Tantrikas is done through breath. The aspirant should sit at any clean place and do it through the inhalation and exhalation. For example, the chanting of 'Om' can be done by doing mental practice and while breathing in say 'O', and, when breathing out say 'M'. It can be done any time whenever and in whatever position you are. The simple thing is that the aspirant has to identify oneself with breath and the chanting can be performed easily.

‘क्या है भरोसा देह का विनस जाय छिन माहिं।
स्वास स्वास सुमिरन करे और यतन कछु नाहिं।।’

6. Ajapa-Japa: *Ajapa-japa* is actually the natural way of chanting that goes on continuously

without any effort. It is God-gifted chanting. In the process of breathing when we inhale it produces the sound of 'so' and when we exhale there is sound of 'ham', thus it makes the Mantra *So'ham*.

This is also called *Hamsa* Mantra and this Japa goes on without any effort. In a time period of day and night we normally breathe 21,600 times. When this Japa is done consciously, the ego and vices inside an individual Jiva get eradicated and the states of meditation and Samadhi get facilitated. This is also termed *Ajapa Gayatri*. As this mantra is being continuously chanted automatically inside all of us, this is the highest mantra, the Mantra Maheshvara. According to Guru Gita, the sound of *Ham* (हं) is the seed of entire consciousness which pervades us. This mantra occurs in the *Vijnana Bhairava*.

NAME CHANTING (Naam-Japa)

Chanting the one or the other name of the God is also a way of Mantra-japa. This is done by repeating the same name by a number of times with the help of some rosary beads. It is said that Japa is ten times more effective compared to sacrifice (*Yajna*) where a lot of expenditure is also involved. Besides chanting the name of Lord can be even sung like Keertan. It can be simply chanted without rosary in style of a song being sung with melody. Greatmen proclaim that a devout doing the *Japa* definitely gets his desire fulfilled - *Japenaiva tu samsiddhyet brahmano natra samshayah* (जपेनैव तु संसिद्धयेत् ब्राह्मणो नात्र संशयः). Stressing on the importance of Japa, Krishna says

that in all the *Yajnas*, I am *Japa Yajna* - '*Yajnanam japayajno'smi*' (यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि). (*Bh.Gita*)

'Rama'-Naam Japa

Saint Poet Tulasidas writes - राम ते अधिक राम कर नामा - 'The name of the Rama is of more weightage than Rama'.

Lord Shiva says to Parvati in the Skanda Purana: 'The chanting of Rama, the two lettered mantra, destroys all the sins. One who chants the name of Rama while walking, standing or sleeping, be whatever the state, is blessed (goes to Lord's abode), and ultimately becomes a councilor of the Lord. Rama (राम), the two lettered mantra, is better than even hundred crores of mantras. There is nothing greater for Japa than the mantra of Rama. Those who have taken the shelter of Rama-naam don't have to suffer at the hands of Yama. One who pronounces the *Rama-naam* by heart and soul, moves among all the elements - sentients and insentients. Rama is the king of all the mantras and removes the disease of transmigration in this world. The pronouncing of the Mantra *Rama Rama*, enables one to achieve success in all realms of life. Even Gods sing this name Rama, the treasure trove of virtues. So, O Goddess of gods, you too do the Japa of *Rama-naam*.'

रामेति द्व्यक्षरजपः सर्वपापापमोदकः ।
 गच्छंस्तिष्ठञ्शयानो वा मनुजो रामकीर्तनात् ।।
 इह निर्वर्तितो याति चान्ते हरिगणो भवेत् ।
 रामेति द्व्यक्षरो मन्त्रो मन्त्रकोटिशताधिकः ।।

न रामादधिकं किञ्चित् पठनं जगतीतले ।
 रामनामाभ्यां ये वै न तेषां यमयातना ॥
 रमते सर्वभूतेषु स्थावरेषु चरेषु च ।
 अन्तरात्मस्वरूपेण यच्च रामेति कथ्यते ॥
 रामेति मन्त्रराजोऽयं भवव्याधिनिषूदकः ।
 रामचन्द्रेति रामेति रामेति समुदाहृतः ॥
 द्व्यक्षरो मन्त्रराजोऽयं सर्वकार्यकरो भुवि ।
 देवा अपि प्रगायन्ति रामनाम गुणाकरम् ॥
 तस्मात् त्वमपि देवेशि रामनाम सदा वद् ।
 रामनाम जपेद् यो वै मुच्यते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ॥

Lord Shiva says in the *Padma Purana*: 'O Shive, the beautiful-mouthed one and the dweller in my mind, I too chant the name Rama, Rama and rejoice in the bliss of Rama. The glory of the one Rama-naam equals to other thousand names.'

'राम रामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे ।
 सहस्रनाम तत्तुल्यं राम-नाम वरानने ॥'

'Krishna' Naam Japa

Though it is not possible for a person to describe the glory of the Supreme, the Infinite, by his finite tongue, God-intoxicated outpouring devotees have it for the purpose of their worship. Describing the glory of Lord Krishna's name it is said that 'the tongue pronouncing Krishna, Krishna (कृष्ण कृष्ण), is able to remove all the sins of creatures of the world. If someone is capable of establishing devotion in Mukunda, the truth-consciousness and blissful Lord, Lakshmi, the ruler

of the liberation, herself comes to such a Jiva to render her services.' (Mukundamala)

'One Who is the Lord of more than crores of universe or Consciousness, is verily the effulgent Krishna, myself being a little fragment of That. That Krishna is my means (Sadhan) and end (Sadhya) and my life.' (ibid.)

'The fruit that is gained by reciting the thousands names of God, the name of Krishna is instrumental to do the same even by pronouncing only once.' 'By merely pronouncing the name of Krishna, one attains the fruit of having bathed in all the pilgrim centres.'

‘सहस्रनाम्नां पुण्यानां त्रिवृत्य तु यत्फलम्।
 एक वृत्य तु कृष्णस्य नामैकम् तत्प्रयच्छति ॥’
 ‘सर्वतीर्थं कृतं तेन नामोच्चारणमात्रतः ॥’

Bhakta Prahlad says: 'One who chants the name 'Krishna, Krishna', in the age of Kali, attains the fruit of having done ten thousand sacrifices and crores of pilgrimages.'

‘कृष्ण कृष्णेति कृष्णेति कलौ वक्ष्यति प्रयहाम्।
 नित्यं यज्ञयुतं पुण्यं तीर्थकोटिसमुद्भवम् ॥’
 (Skanda Pr., Dwarakama, 38.45)

Chanting the Mantras: 'Hari', 'Vishnu', 'Keshava', 'Narayana'

Name chanting helps one to get over the miseries of worldly cycle of birth and death and pit-falls leading to the several abysmal degradations.

Thus Japa has the merit of securing not only Moksha but all the favourable things required in life. All the scriptures of Hindus are full of description of the value of *Naam-japa*. The importance of chanting Hari is indeed great.

‘सुकृतुच्चारयेत् यस्तु नारायणमतन्द्रितः।
शुद्धांतःकरणो भूत्वा निर्वाणमधिगच्छति।।’

(*Padmapurana*)

जिह्वाग्रे वर्तते यस्य हरिरित्यक्षरद्वयम्।

विष्णुलोकमवाप्नोति पुनरावृत्ति दुर्लभम्।।

‘One who has the name ‘Hari’ on his tongue, he attains the abode of Lord Vishnu.’

(*Brihannaradiya Pr.*)

तदेव पुण्यं परमं पवित्रं गोविंदगेहे गमनाय पात्रम्।

तदेव लोके सुकृतैकसत्रं यदुच्यते केशवनाम मात्रम्।।

‘One who merely pronounces the name of Lord Keshava, that is the greatest virtue. That is the vehicle to carry one to the abode of the Lord i.e., the Golokadham.’

(*Padmapurana*)

म्रियमाणो हरेर्नामो ग्रिणान् पुत्रोपचारितम्।

अजामिलोऽप्यगद् धाम किमुत् श्रद्धया ग्रिणान्।।

‘What to talk of the one who chants the name of Lord with devoted heart as he undoubtedly attains Mukti. Ajamila, the sinner, pronounced Narayana, the name of his son, but was liberated in the end.’

(*Bhagavata Mahapurana*)

‘हरे केशव गोविन्द वासुदेव जगन्मय।

इतीरयन्ति ये नित्यं न हि तान् बाधते कलिः।।’

'The age of Kali does not afflict the one who constantly chant and sing the names 'Hare Keshava, Govinda, Vasudeva, Jaganmaya.'

(*Brihannaradiya Pr.*)

'अच्युतानन्द गोविन्द नामोच्चारणभेषजात्।

नश्यन्ति सकला रोगाः सत्यं सत्यं वदाम्यहम् ॥'

'It is true that all the diseases get obliterated by pronouncing the medicine of names like Achyuta, Ananta, Govinda.'

Lord Himself says in the *Mahabharata*: 'I am indebted to Draupadi (Krishna), daughter of Drupada, for she called me, the far off dweller of Dwarka, by the name of 'Govinda' in the assembly of Kauravas when she was being denuded. I can't help that go out of my heart.'

ऋणमेतत् प्रवृद्धं मे हृदयन्नप्सर्पति।

यद् गोविन्देति चुक्रोश कृष्ण मां दुर्वासिनाम् ॥

Lord says: 'O Arjuna, I speak the truth that those who dance near me having sung my name, they have really bought me.'

गीत्वा च मां नामानि नर्तयेन् मां सन्निधौ।

इदं ब्रवीमि ते सत्यं क्रीतोऽहं तेन चार्जुन ॥

गीत्वा च मां नामानि रुदन्ति मां सन्निधौ।

तेषाहं परिक्रीतो नन्यक्रीतो जनार्दनः ॥

'Those who recalling my names sing and weep near me, I am enslaved by them, not by others.'

(*Adi Pr.*)

It is therefore advised that any mantra of the name of God as Om, Shiva, Rama, Krishna,

Vishnu, Hari, Narayana, Vasudeva or any one from the *Vishnu-sahasra-nama* (Thousand names of the Lord) can be chanted. Hinduism is a vast ocean and there is multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses. Whichever name the devout chooses for Japa there is no problem, but see that the Truth One, there is only One God, the Supreme Reality. Worship through the chanting of the glory of God, without interruption, is the most desirable and favourable.

When Jiva worships in all manner, the Lord who is not visible to the physical and naked eye, who is without a body of Prakrita elements and not comprehended by logical inferences, secures protection and all his fear is removed. When there is an interruption in the *Dhyana*, fear arises. Adversities befall a person who is not prone to the love of Divine, reveals Tulasidas:

कह हनुमंत विपति तब होई।

जब तक सुमिरन भजन न होई।।

At any moment of time when Jiva does not contemplate on the name of God, that is the cause of danger. 'A moment spent without thinking of God is a moment wasted. Such a moment becomes a moment of sorrow, as if some thief has robbed off all belongings,' says Acharya Narasimha, the author and translator of his scholastic work '*Thousand Names of Lord Vishnu*'. The mind should therefore be immersed in the thoughts of the Supreme Truth possessed of all auspicious benevolence.

Thus Mantrayoga practiced in a systematic way reveals a new universe. Silence is created by understanding and adopting the practice of chanting powerful mantras. When a powerful

mantra like Gayatri mantra is chanted, the higher centres in us open up. Once the awakening has dawned and the ignorance has been dispelled by the practice of chanting as outlined in the preceding pages, the consciousness is finally awakened.

There is no denying the fact that the mantra chanting facilitates the raising of our inner energies. In fact, mantra gives a mystic dimension to connect the inner universe with outer universe, say the microcosm to the macrocosm. Our spiritual masters advise us to keep in mind that mantra which is like a ladder has to be climbed with love and trust. With the transformative power of mantras they not only purify us but elevate to higher state of awareness. Down the ages the purpose of chanting has been to eulogize God and to invoke His Grace so that we, the human beings and the earth may be uplifted. Chanting mantra is, thus, making an offering to the world as a whole.

MANTRAS OF SHIVA

The Mantras of Shiva can be chanted by anybody after purifying him by sitting on an accurate posture like Sukhasana, Padmasana, or Siddhasana and then doing Pranayama. In Tantra, *Asana Shuddhi*, *Bhuta Shuddhi*, and *Chitta Shuddhi* are necessary for perfection in Sadhana. For these purificatory practices the process should be preferably adapted as laid down in the chapter on Bhuta Shuddhi and Chakra Healing. For the chanting of the Mantras of Shiva, it is better to use rosary of the Rudraksha beads.

1. Shiva (शिव)

Shiva (शिव) is the most important and convenient mantra of two letters. It is very easy and simple. There is no need of ritual in the chanting of this mantra. This is highly enlightened mantra and has already been chanted by millions of people, and it is still being used by innumerable devotees of Shiva.

The process of chanting should be followed as usual. It should be mental chanting. Breathing should start while inhaling by the left nostril and with the mental recitation of 'Shi', and while exhaling the breath by the right nostril say 'va' mentally. This should be practiced for 25 to 30 minutes.

2. Panchakshari Mantra

ॐ नमः शिवाय - 'Om Namah Shivaya'

This is very popular mantra of Lord Shiva. It is of five letters and devoted to Shiva and its practiced by millions of devotees of Shiva. This mantra is ever pure and enlightened and can be chanted by anybody of any creed or sex. The chanting should be by a rosary of Rudraksha bead. If chanted whole-heartedly it fulfills all desires.

3. Mahamrityunjaya Mantra

'ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम्।
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात्।।'

*Om Tryambakam yajamahe sugandhim
pushtivardhanam,
Urvarukamiva bandhanan mrityormukshiya
ma'mritat.*

Meaning: 'I bow to the three-eyed one, who is fragrant and who promotes nourishment. May he liberate me from death in order to enable me to reach immortality in the same manner as a cucumber is separated from the creeper.'

This mantra is chanted for the well-being of a person and even subduing death. This mantra is addressed to the Vedic God Rudra (Shiva) who is the conqueror of death. An Yajna is also performed. In case of an ailing person, some rituals are performed to worship Shiva and the mantra is chanted even by the bed-side of the patient. It also protects one from accidents and violent death. It keeps off diseases. Chanted in proper way bestows worldly wealth and even Moksha.

'AUM' & So'ham Mantras

Of all the various methods for the concentrating the mind, chanting of *Pranava* and *Ajapa-japa* and contemplation on its meaning is the best. The mind can't sit idle even for a single minute, and, therefore, in order to keep it well occupied and to keep other antagonistic thoughts from entering it, chanting of *Om* should be practiced. Chanting fills the mind with sacred and divine thoughts and brings about one-pointedness.

When there is Spanda or movement, the perceiving subject, when heard, is called sound. One may hear it or not that is another thing. Similarly there is a sound which cannot be heard by any material instrument but it is experienced by a Yogi. There was no sound in the beginning as there was no movement for the fact that the natural Principle, the Prakriti, was in a state of equilibrium. On the disturbance of this equilibrium there was a movement in the whole mass of Prakriti, then the first vibration that took place at the commencement of the creation, was the Pranava Dhvani of Om Sound. The first equally distributed motion throughout the mass is Om, which is the great seed-mantra (Mahabeeja), for it is the source of all others and all compounded sounds. Just as

Om is the general sound, the other Bija-mantras are the particular sounds which are the letters of the alphabet.

OM, The Great Mantra

Om (AUM) is the *Mahamantra* or the great word of wisdom encapsulating all the power of the universe therein. It is considered the most powerful mantra of all. It corresponds to the Egyptian 'Amen' and it is, in fact, the name of the Divine Logos. 'Om is the spark of life within the self, that part of the divine imprisoned within the physical dimension,' holds Ted Andrews.

Pranava or Omkara has been recognized at the highest place in the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas and the epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* - प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु.

The *Mandukya Upanishad* declares that, 'The word AUM is all this, that was in the past, all that would be in the future. That which is beyond all these is also AUM. All this is Brahman.'

The *Mundaka Upanishad* (2-2-6) says - The worship of the Supreme, Whom the Om represents, chanting which, leaving aside all attachments is the bridge for conveying the devout across the Samsara to the eternity of the divine existence -

ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं स्वस्ति वः परया तमसः परस्तात्।

The *Mandukya Upanishad* says: 'Om is Ishvara. The universe is its meaning. Present, past,

and future are all one. That beyond the triple time is also Om.'

'ओमित्येतदक्षरं इदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं
भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोँकार एव।
यदन्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योँकार एव।।'

'Sound Brahman and the Supreme Brahman are both my immutable body'. (*Bh. Gita*)

Om is the most comprehensive, universal sacred sound - symbol (Logos) and signifier (Vachaka) of the Supreme Infinite Divine Reality - *Tasya vachakah pranavah* (तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः). This divine reality is of the nature of *Ananta-Sat-Chit-Ananda* (अनन्त-सत्-चित्-आनन्द). The whole of ancient Indian literature from Vedas to Upanishads, the Smritis and later Sanskrit literature refer to the Supreme divine reality Brahman as the eternal emphyrean source in which the entire universe is rooted. The universe continuously manifests from the reality like the waves in the ocean while the reality remains unchanging.

The efficacy of the mantra *Om* is the sublimation and quintessential formula, variously elaborated in the Shrutis is the single most potent Vedic chant, credited with unparalleled spiritual significance. Lord Yama says to Nachiketa in the *Kathopanishad* (1-2-15):

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद् वदन्ति।
यदिच्छन्त ऋषयो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्तेपदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीमि
ओमित्येतत्।।

(The exalted destination described in all the Vedas, the cherished goal of all austerities and penance, proclaimed by the sages, to obtain which the pious observe Brahmacharya, that Supreme abode I shall describe you briefly, as 'AUM'.)

'The Mantra *Om* is composed of three letters A, U, M, - of which the first two vowels coalesce into O, over the Om is written the sign Chandrabindu or Nada and Bindu, sown as a crescent with a dot or point over it. Nada and Bindu are two of many aspects of That which in India is called the mother, or great Power (Mahashakti).' (*Garland of Letters*) Nada, is the Mantra name for the first going forth of power which gathers itself together in massive strength as Bindu to create the universe, and which Bindu as so creating, differentiates into a Trinity of Energies which are symbolized by A, U, M. In 'AUM', 'A' represents the waking state (of gross body - *sthula sharira*), *Vishwa*; 'U' represents the dream state - the *svapna* (of subtle body - *sukshma sharira*), *Taijasa*; and 'M' the deep sleep - *sushupti* (causal body - *Karana sharira*), *Prajna*. The inevitable pause of silence between two successive chants of AUM stands for *Turiya* (transcendental state) which is marked by a condition of absolute bliss and is a gateway to Brahman to the successful seeker.

AUM constitutes a prop of inestimable value as an aid to meditation. When performing Bhramari Pranayama in Yoga, the humming sound produced in exhaling through nostrils cools down the entire Nadi system of the body. In Udgitha Pranayama,

when pronouncing AUM, 'A' rises, 'U' falls and 'M' subsides which is followed with linking *Turiya* with silence (Brahman).

Swami Muktananda writes that 'By the mystic repetition of the Om, one attunes oneself to the Cosmic Mind and is lifted up spiritually. Om is totality of sound and existence. By connecting oneself mentally to the cosmic reservoir through *Upasana*, one's mind becomes a conduit for the flow of inspiration from the Cosmic Mind. Hence it is considered the holiest mantra for *Japa* and is, therefore added at the beginning of all other mantras used for *Japa*.'

Chanting of Om, *Japa* or silent repetition of Om, singing of Om, meditation on Om, purifies the mind, removes the tossing of the mind, destroys the veil of ignorance and helps the aspirant to merge in Brahman or Supreme Self.

Shabda Pranava or Om is the greatest of all Mantras. It bestows liberation directly. All Mantras begin with Om. Every hymn begins with Om. The oblations that are offered to the various gods are preceded by the chanting of Om.

Om as Atman, the indweller, is silent witness to all our experiences in the various states of consciousness - *Jagrata*, *Svapna*, *Sushupti* and *Turiya*. However the Atman remains unaffected by any state. The spiritual entity within the person which endows the body with personality and consciousness, making it able to acquire all the experiences of life in all the states, is known the *Jiva* or *Jivatman*. 'This *Jivatman* is the Lord and ruler of the body and controls and guides it from

within, even as Paramatman controls the universe, which is like a body to Him, from within it.'

Lord Himself says to Narada in the Shanti Parvan of the *Mahabharata* to concentrate one's mind and chant *Omkara*, then prostrate to Lord Vishnu and chant the Twelve-lettered Mantra:

'ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥'
 'ओंकारामग्रतः कृत्वा मां नमस्कृत्य नारद।
 एकाग्रतः प्रयतो भूत्वा इमं मंत्रमुदीरयेत् ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥'

'*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*.'
 '*Omkaramagratah kritva mam namaskritya narada,*
Ekagratah prayato bhutva imam
mantramudirayet,
Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya.'

Even Lord Krishna says (Bh.Gita, IX.17) that 'Of this world I am the father, mother, ordainer, (and the) grandfather; I am the knowable, the sanctifier, the syllable Om as also *Rik*, *Sama* and *Yajus*.'

The Lord further avers that 'He who departs by leaving the body while uttering the single syllable viz., Om, which is Brahman, and thinking of Me, he attains the supreme goal.'

'ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन्।
 यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥'
 (Bh. Gita, VIII.13)

The Yogic aspect of the Pranava mantra is presented in the *Bhagavata Purana* (11.14.34-35) also. The Yogi should do Pranayama with vital air (*Pranavayu*) while feeling the sound (*Nada*) in heart. By practicing it thrice, morning, noon and in the evening, and installing Svara there for ten times, the Yogi can have control over breath in a month's time.

We find several ways of pronouncing and intoning AUM – each with its own unique effect. See, for example, by pronouncing 'O' for a longer time, the energy of the auric field is increased. Similarly the prolonged sound of 'M' produces internal effect, awakening the divine within us. By its constant practice the Yogi rises to higher plane transcending the physical body, and establishes contact with the divine. It is instrumental in self-realization.

According to Ted Andrews, 'The Om is also a call to attention. It arranges the particles of our subtle bodies into alignment. Every particle of energy within us responds to the sound of Om. When our energies are in alignment, we are in the best possible position to benefit from our meditations and prayers. This is why it is also used as a prelude to meditations and prayer.' (p. 108)

Om is the representative of radical vital potential of the universe and of the Trinity of Energies by which it actualizes and materializes itself as the five forms of matter, namely, ethereal (*Akasha*), aerial (*Vayu*), fiery (*Agni*), liquid (*Ap*) and solid (*Prithivi*). Thus it can be understood that the Japa of AUM is no less helpful for controlling the mind – a basic sine qua non for spiritual

evolution. Sitting in any posture of meditation, the Sadhaka should therefore practice the Japa of Om through the breath by inhaling from the left nostril, Chandra Nadi with mental chanting of A....U and slowing exhaling with ...M. This practice for at least for half an hour done regularly brings miraculous effects. The Sadhaka should later identify with breath and do constant Japa of AUM making it a habit. It brings a great change and the life would very soon experience the state of bliss.

The Pranava or Om brings a whole ocean of calmness for the one who practices its chanting in proper way. It is a power packed Mantra which vibrates with positive energy and infuses new life in our body, mind and soul. Acharyas, therefore, advise to chant this Mantra so that, by the echo of this Primordial sound, we may be transported to the world of delirious joy where peace and harmony reside.

Bija Mantra

The Bija Mantra is a seed letter. It is very powerful Mantra. Every Devata has his/her own Bija Akshara. The greatest of all Bija Aksharas is Om or Pranava for it is the symbol of Paramatman. Om contains within itself all other Bija Aksharas. Om is general sound or the common seed from which all particular sounds or secondary seeds proceed. The letters of the alphabet are only emanations from which is root of all sounds and letters.

SO'HAM MANTRA/AJAPA JAPA

Ajapa Sadhana is said to be as old as Upanishads. Valmiki was initiated by Narada in the chanting of opposite name. That is, infact, *Ajapa*. Even today this practice is going on in the Nirguna tenets like Radhaswami, Kabir. Mahatma Gandhi also talks in one of his books that *Mantra-Japa* should be done by heart. When one chants a Mantra by mouth, it is Japa, but when the chanting is done by heart, it is *Ajapa Japa*.

Japa means repeating or remembering a Mantra. This could be any mantra given by a Guru, or any other mantra that is enlightened or the mantra of breath, 'So'ham'. When some one does Japa, the mantra is consciously repeated internally. With the deepening of the practice in the person, the conscious chanting of the mantra is replaced by unconscious chanting, or *Ajapa Japa*.

Ajapa-japa is actually the natural way of chanting that goes on continuously without any effort. It is God-gifted chanting. In the process of breathing when we inhale it produces the sound of 'so' and when we exhale there is sound of 'ham', thus it makes the mantra *Soham*. It is *Ajapa Gayatri* and the Jiva continuously goes on repeting it.

This is also called *Hamsa mantra* and this Japa goes on without any effort. In a time period of day and night we normally breathe 21,600 times. When this Japa is done consciously, the ego and vices inside an individual Jiva get eradicated and the states of meditation and Samadhi get facilitated. As this mantra is being continuously

chanted automatically inside all of us, this is the highest mantra, the *Mantra Maheshvara*. According to *Guru Gita*, the sound of *Ham* is the seed of entire consciousness which pervades us. This mantra occurs in the *Vijnana Bhairava*.

Ajapa Japa can lead one to direct trance (Samadhi). Here one has not to practice for Samadhi unlike other Yogic ways as by the retention of breath (Kumbhaka), but by Ajapa one's breath becomes natural automatically.

Lord Krishna dwells on the Ajapa Sadhana in the *Bhagavad Gita* and says that some Sadhakas unite Prana with Apana, others unite Apana with Prana, and still others unite Prana with Prana. Prana is the inhalation that goes inside to the navel region and Apana is the exhalation that comes out from the navel. 'So' represents Prana and 'ham' Apana. Thus some practitioners who unite Prana with Apana, obviously unite 'so' with 'ham' which becomes 'So'ham'. Those who unite Apana with Prana, i.e., 'ham' with 'so', thus make it 'Hamsa'.

‘अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।
प्राणापानगति रुध्वा प्राणायाम परायणः ॥’

In the Ajapa Japa, the use of Mantra is done through breath, and, thus, the awareness remains all the time. It is Chetana, consciousness that matters in all Yogic and Tantric practices, and even in all spiritual practices. It is our own existence, the real nature inherent in our Being.

It has been studied in the *Svara Vijnana* that when the breath is flowing from both of

nostrils, it means the Prana is in Sushumna Nadi, the meridian channel of energy. That time should be utilized for the purpose of Sadhana, contemplation. One should have total detachment from the world and divert one's mind to God.

While doing Ajapa Japa one should be careful about three things: 1. Deep breathing, 2. calm and cool state, 3. Full awareness. No breath should escape our attention, and it should not be only natural breathing but each and every breath must be observed in its inhaling and exhaling.

Sitting any one of comfortable Asanas, like Padmasana, Sukhasana or Sahajasana, one should practice the Ajapa Japa. Relax the body and start breathing deeply. Chant the Mantra 'so' mentally with inhalation, and 'ham' with exhalation. Try to unite both words, and keep on observing them. There is virtually no restraint. After some time stop Ajapa and enter into Shunya. Take your awareness from between the eyebrows and concentrate it at the Ajna Chakra. You can meditate at your Heart Chakra as well. Let no thought be allowed to enter into. After a few minutes start Ajapa again.

Gayatri, The Mahamantra

WE should be grateful to the Great Almighty God for all the bounties that He has bestowed upon us. The prayers of the Gods and Goddesses enshrined in the Vedas are acknowledged the most sacred incantations. The hymns of the Vedas are called Mantras. Sages and savants of the Vedas have sung great songs of *Gayatri Mantra*. 'Of metres, I am Gayatri' - गायत्री छन्दसाम् , says Krishna (*Gita*, 10.35). Raman Maharshi says: 'Mantra-vidya is an integral part of Yogavidya. Mantra-vidya is very deep and intricate. The power produced by chanting of mantras results in astonishing benefits. Gayatri is a such a mantra which confers both material and spiritual benefits on the Sadhaka.'

The Gayatri Mantra consists of four lines, each of eight syllables. It occurs at six places in the Vedas, as in the *Rigveda* (3.62.10), *Yajurveda* (3.35, 22.9, 30.2, 36.3), and the *Samaveda* (1462). It is a Vedic meditation required for the proper performance of Karma and attainment of Jnana. It is an invocation to Brahman for spiritual enlightenment and the unfoldment of wisdom and also for the ultimate realization of oneness with the all-pervading Reality. This mantra is a universal prayer.

The Mantra reads as:

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः। तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य
धीमहि। धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॐ।

Om bhur bhuvah svah. Tat saviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dheemahi. Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat Om.

Meaning:

'Om , we meditate (*dheemahi*) on the spiritual effulgence (*bhargas*) of that adorable Divine Reality (*varenyam devasya*), the Source or Projector (*Savitri*) of the three phenomenal world planes - the Gross or Physical (*bhuh*), the Subtle or Psychological (*bhuvah*), and the potential or Causal (*suvah*), both macrocosmically (externally) and microcosmically (internally). May that Supreme Divine Being (*Tat*) stimulate (*prachodayat*) our (*nah*) intelligence (*dhiyah*), so that we may realize the Supreme Truth.'

However, there is another popular interpretation of Gayatri mantra:

'May we meditate, solemnly, devoutly, and earnestly, meditate upon the most glorious effulgence in the heart of the sun: may this adorable guardian light illumine and guide us ever!'

The Gayatri mantra is the greatest prayer mantra which incorporates all the ideas of the Om - symbolism. It is a prayer for the enlightenment of Intelligence (*Dhi*). It is also known as the Savitri mantra.

The origin of the text of Gayatri mantra has been elaborated in the *Manusmriti*:

"Brahma milked out, as it were, from the three Vedas - *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Samaveda*, respectively the letter 'A', the letter 'U' and the letter 'M' and formed by their coalition three monosyllables, together with three mysterious words - 'Bhur', 'Bhuvah' and 'Svah', i.e., Earth, Sky and Heaven respectively."

HOW TO CHANT

The glory of the Gayatri mantra has been sung by Vedic sages, savants and scholars. It is a universal prayer, chanting it leads to wisdom and illuminated deeds. This mantra should be recited early in the morning and after sunset. It is also important to remember that the chanting of the Gayatri mantra should be done with some water in the palm and the direction of sitting should face the east in the morning and west in the evening.

Pranayama

The method of Pranayama as recommended for this purpose is as below:

(a) First press the right nostril by the thumb and inhale through it. While inhaling recite the following mantra, if possible thrice, and contemplate on the four armed Lord Vishnu like the petals of blue lotus at the navel region (Manipura cakra) . This is called Puraka.

(b) Then press the left nostril by the middle finger and the next one before the little finger and retain the air. While in retention (Kumbhaka), recite the following mantra, possibly thrice or according to your capacity at least once and contemplate on the four-armed Brahmaji sitting on a lotus in your heart i.e., the Anahata cakra.

(c) Thereafter remove your thumb slowly exhaling the air from the right nostril and recite the following mantra again, possibly thrice or at least once. This time the white complexioned and three-eyed Lord Shiva is to be contemplated at the throat region. This is called Recaka.

All this taken together is called one Pranayama. The mantra is as below :

ॐ भूः ॐ भुवः ॐ स्वः ॐ महः ॐ जनः ॐ तपः ॐ
सत्यम् ।

ॐ तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि । धियो यो नः
प्रचोदयात् ॥

ॐ आपो ज्योतिः रसोऽमृतं ब्रह्म भूर्भुवः स्वरोम् ॥

Om is water, light, the earth that yields tasty food, the air that sustains life, the all pervading ether and the mind, intellect and the 'I' sense marked by the terms *bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *svah*.

The Chanting Method

It need not say that the Japa of Gayatri mantra should be done with mental faith and ideation. One should be clean, calm, restrained and in a prayer-ful attitude while sitting on a clean place at Kushasana with water in the left hand palm and chanting the mantra with rosary bead in the right hand.

The Sadhaka should sit at some clean place and in some posture of meditation. The Pranava mantra AUM should be first of all pronounced thrice. Remember that in the first time while pronouncing AUM, have the feeling that the Divine Consciousness is surrounding from all around. In the second time, feel that the light (*Jyoti*) of the Divine Consciousness is getting instilled in all the cells of the body. In the third sound, have the feeling that light- calmness and bliss, *Jyoti*, *Shanti* and *Ananda* is exuding from the cells of body of the Sadhaka and spreading around the environment. While doing the chanting of the Gayatri mantra it is important to concentrate at the effulgent light in between the eyebrows (*bhrumadhya*), i.e., Ajnachakra.

Pt Shriram Sharma Acharya on Gayatri

'There is no secrecy or mystery in my Upasana. I have performed the Gayatri Upasana in the normal way as described in the book '*Gayatri Mahavijnana*'. So long as I was sitting in Upasana, I imagined and felt that the divine light of Mother Gayatri which is the supreme power of effulgence

was entering into every cell of mine and just like the iron gets hot and red in a powerful fire, my impure existence was purified to the level of my deity of worship itself, that every part of my body became effulgent due to the assimilation of the divine brightness of Mother Gayatri in every cell and atom of the body; and that lust of the organs got burnt in the fire and turned to ashes and flaws like laziness etc., were destroyed. The disorders and diseases were also burnt by fire. Only the body is mine, but intense *Brahmavarchas* (Sublime divine predominance) is waving within...'

The Power of Gayatri

The Gayatri chant is the most potent of all the chants, the quintessence of all the Vedas. Among all the chants the Gayatri mantra is most supreme. The etymological meaning of the word 'Gayatri' is '*gayantam trayate it gayatri*' गायन्तां त्रायते इति गायत्री. This means that which saves one from dangers, i.e., Gayatri protects its votary from all dangers, also confers all benefits. The Gayatri mantra should be viewed as a universal prayer as it is the powerful and meaningful link between man enmeshed in mundane and the Supreme Being, of whom man and the entire universe are the emanations or creations.

गीता गङ्गा च गायत्री गोविन्देति हृदि स्थिते ।
चतुर्गकार संयुक्ते पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

'One who bears these four names - Gita, Ganga, Gayatri, and Govinda, beginning with 'Ga', will never take birth, i.e., he will attain Moksha.'

The Science of Breathing

Indian Rishis devised several techniques and spiritual practices for the well being of the humankind. *Svara-Vijnana* or *Svarayoga* is the science of nasal breath. The Shastra that deals with this occult knowledge is called *Svarodya Shastra* (Science of breathing). It is a rare knowledge. Even more rare is an able teacher of this Shastra. *Svarayoga* that is based on the breathing system is one of the best techniques of healing the body, mind and soul. *Svarayoga* allows one to get in tune with the lunar and planetary cycles and to change left or right hemisphere dominance at will. To know this science of breathing (*Svara-vijnana*), one has to learn about the inhaling (*shvasa*) and exhaling (*prashvasa*).

We generally know that breathing oxygen is what makes us alive. But we don't know that the life of a creature on this earth, whichever it may, is based on the chemistry of breath. Nose has two openings which are called nostrils – right nostril and left nostril. Right nostril is related to heating. It is called *Surya Nadi (Pingala)*. Left nostril is related to cooling and it is termed *Chandra Nadi (Ida)* in *Yogashastra*. (It has been discussed in this book in a preceding chapter on *Prana*.) We breathe through one nostril at a time for about one hour and then change to other. Breathing from each nostril has a

short break before it starts flowing from the both nostrils. This state is not observable. It is said that it is the most opportune moment to get acquainted with the divinity. A poet highlights this state in the following verse:

ना मन्दिर में ना मस्जिद में ना काबा कैलाश में,
ज्ञानी हो तो तुरतहि पावै दो सांसों के बीच में।

(God neither resides in a temple, nor in a mosque, nor does in Kaba or at Mt. Kailasha. The true seeker recognizes God in between his two breaths.)

Each nostril, when it operates independently, influences the body chemistry in a different way. When both nostrils operate simultaneously, the body chemistry also changes so as to make meditation. It is the most poised state of the body when the breath flows through the meridian channel called Sushumna Nadi. It gives poise, peace and concentration, confidence in meditation. Yogis try to get to this state by the practice of Pranayama (breath-regulation). Normally we breathe by one nostril in one time. A person keeping good health breathes in a regulated way. One should try that the left nostril flows in the day and the right one in the night.

BREATH, PRANA AND SVARA

Breathing is most essential for life. It is composed of five elements of nature: earth, water,

fire, air and ether. These five elements are not merely present in breathing but the whole world is composed of them. The nature is called *Panchabhautika*. It is a miracle of the nature that every element has a duration of one hour and possesses colour, shape, taste and purpose. We breathe and absorb oxygen from the air. One hundred parts air inhaled has about 20.96% oxygen, 79% nitrogen and 0.04% carbon dioxide. The body requires about 4.94% oxygen for cleansing the blood, and the rest of oxygen is mixed with carbon dioxide and exhaled with it.

Normally a person breathes about 22000 times a day i.e., 13 to 15 times in a minute. Life is based on breathing. Those who breathe faster have shorter life. A dog breathes 60 times and lives for 16 years, a serpent breathes 2 to 3 times and lives for 500 years, an elephant breathes 15 to 20 times and lives for 90 years, a horse breathes 35 times and survives 30 years, a man/woman breathes 13-14 times and has a life of 100-120 years, a tortoise breathes 3-4 times and has a life of 400 years. The faster is the breath the shorter is life. Breathing becomes faster when the body is engaged in physical work. It is doubled during copulation. It flows faster during exercises or when performing postures.

The child starts breathing with its first cry on birth, and the life begins thenceforth. That becomes the right moment for making horoscope in Astrology.

Our sages knew all the secrets of breathing and they equated breath with life. As for them, it was the same as energy. In fact, in India, the

word 'prana' is used to denote all these. The breath is a valuable source of energy. Yoga way of breathing acts as a strong stimulus for the natural energy flow in the body. Proper breathing can help immensely to make more alive and energetic. It is important for each one of us to pay more attention to our natural rhythms of breathing. All the great Yoga teachers have, therefore, given stress on the importance of conscious breathing. Ancient Acharyas discovered the powers of controlled and conscious breathing techniques. We can see it practically that by going for proper breathing, 'one will discover soon hidden spiritual treasures in this seemingly simple life-function,' says Sw. Kriyananda. Each time we inhale the body receives not merely oxygen but some of cosmic energy to which that charges and activates the organs of the body. With exhalation, the toxic wastes of the body are thrown.

Though our Yoga teachers talk of breathing in the chest, Chinese spiritualist Lao-tso says that breathing is done from the navel region which is the center of *Pranavayu*. He even earmarks a point below the navel what he calls *tadem*. In Pranayama we have to get maximum from breathing. To make our body fill with the Prana is what is practiced in the Yoga related to Pranayama. Prana is thus the cosmic energy that regulates life. Five types of Pranas have been described in an earlier chapter of this book. *Prana* is vital force constantly flowing from the heart. *Apana* is responsible for downward movements – active between anus and genital region, produces semen, and throws out waste (residue) through urine and stool. *Samana* does

fire like vibrations of solidification and it is active as distributor of juices to the body. *Vyana* causes vibrations of spaciousness. It travels in eyes, ears and in private regions. It makes the blood circulate through the body. As the name implies *Udana* is responsible for upward movement. It is active in the throat region, and takes energy to the subtle body to harmonize all functions.

It is in proper breathing that the Chakras in the body get activated after the practice of inhalation by *Chandra Nadi*, the left nostril or the *Ida*, exhalation by the *Surya Nadi*, the right nostril or the *Pingala*, and Kumbhaka (the retention of the Prana). In the very first aphorism of his treatise on the Yoga, Maharshi Patanjali instructs the Yogis to suspend the modification of the thinking principle – *Yogah-chitta-vritti-nirodhah* (योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः). It can be possible by controlling the Prana or breath that very closely linked to the states of the mind. We are constantly under the imprisonment of body, mind and intellect, and behave under their impact. They attach us to world. What we need in Svarayoga is to develop the knack of detachment from the world and get established in our natural self or Spirit. We are Atman, pure and immaculate, we should not be sabotaged by intellect. Saints and sages have given much stress on the utility of breath. It is breath that can awaken one's inner potential by its proper utilization.

‘क्या है भरोसा देह का विनस जाय छिन माहिं।

स्वास स्वास सुमिरन करे और जतन कछु नाहिं।।’

(One can't rely on the life of a person that can perish any moment. There is no alternative but to chant the name of Lord through inhalation of the breath.)

MIND AND BREATH

That which gets differentiated through the diverse objects is mind. Mind and breath are interrelated. When breath moves mind moves. It flows in the same speed of the breath. If the flow of breath slows down the mind too slows down. If the breath becomes steady after the practice of Pranayama, mind too becomes steady.

चले वाते चले चित्तं निश्चले निश्चलं भवेत्।

योगी स्थाणुत्वमाप्नोति ततो वायुं निरोधयेत्।।

(Hathayoga Pra., 2.2)

A wavering mind can be made steady only by taking refuge of the Supreme. Prana or breath is the medium that can help this process. The mind is no other than the Vasanas (unmanifest desires). It has been written in an earlier chapter on 'Mind' that it is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful - *Chanchalam hi manah krishnah pramadhi balavaddridham* (चंचलं हि मनः कृष्णः प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम्). (Bh. Gita, 6.34) On the helplessness state of mind, Krishna suggests Arjuna that it can be brought under control by repeated practice of meditation. 'One can obtain occult powers and perfections (Siddhis) by overcoming the distractions of mind'- (एक एव मनो देवो ज्ञेयः सर्वार्थ सिद्धिदः।) (*Eka eva mano devo jneyah sarvartha*

siddhidah), says Sage Vasishtha to Lord Rama (*Yogavashista*). No achievement of Sadhana can be imagined unless and until the activities of the mind are not suspended by the regulation of Prana - 'प्राण स्पन्दजये यत्नः कर्तव्यो धीमतोच्चकः' (*Prana spandajaye yatnah kartavyo dheematochchakah*. (ibid.)

Anahata Nada is awakened by the practice of proper breathing. Regular practice in the morning and evening will cause distinct sounds to be heard. As soon as the practice increases, varied sounds become audible to the practiser. By hearing these sounds attentively one gets concentration of mind, and hence, *Sahaja Samadhi*. By and by, these sounds become subtle and they become less and less intense.

SVARA SADHANA

Prana or the life force has the major role in this Sadhana. As it has been described in detail in the chapter on Prana, it is what we inhale through the nostrils. Prana, that goes out and comes in takes 4 seconds. We breathe 13 to 15 times in one minute. With calmness of mind, the number of breaths decreases, and the person inhales the breath 10 *angulas* and exhales 12 *angulas*. During illness this length increases and the person loses a lot of energy. It is said that while eating the breath goes down by 18 *angulas*, at walking time it goes to 20 *angulas*, while running it is 24 *angulas*, during sexual intercourse it goes to 60 *angulas*.

Let us note the following points in case of the flow of breaths:

1. Peace and calmness prevails if exhaled breath is reduced to 10 *angulas*.
2. A person can write or compose musical verses if it is reduced to 9 *angulas*.
3. If exhaled breath is lessened to 8 *angulas*, a person can control his speech and be an orator.
4. If it is 7, eyesight improves and one can develop intuition power.
5. One's body happens to be very light if breath is reduced to 6 *angulas*.
6. If exhaled breath is reduced to 5 *angulas*, one may find that all activities have got accelerated.
7. If it is reduced to 4 *angulas*, one can acquire perfections (Siddhis).
8. If the exhaled breath goes to 3 *angulas*, one may be able to recognize hidden treasure.
9. If it comes to 2 *angulas*, one can transform one's physical shape like Hanumanji.
10. If the exhaled breath comes to 1 *angula*, a person is likely to become invisible like gods and angels.

One can attain these stages of breathing only after long practice. It happens when a person is calm and cool and maintains regular Sadhana. When the mind is steady and the state of *Sthitaprajna* as said in Gita is obtained, the mind turns inward and its focus shifts to the Higher, and the welfare of all. It is also the state of equilibrium

(*Samatva*). People in general find it hard to obtain and they are advised to seek the help of some able preceptor for guidance.

TECHNIQUES OF CHANGING THE SVARA

It is important to know the technique of changing the Svara (breath) from one nostril to other to avoid the bad effects.

1. Inhale from the running nostril and exhale from the other with some force. Repeat the process again and again.
2. Take a pillow to press the running side or lie on the opposite side of the running nostril.
3. Take a cotton tab and plug the running nostril to stop the flow.
4. Take a brisk walk in a park where the air is fresh. This will change the Svara.
5. Change in Svara also takes place if you run or do exercises.
6. There is even an easier way to change the running Svara. Stand on right foot for some time, left Svara will begin to run and *vice versa*.
7. Saints carry a wooden 'T' shaped arm rest stick called Yoga Danda. They normally place it under the armpit when delivering discourses in sitting pose. (This author seen this pose with Swami Adagadananda of Mirjapur, UP.) To change the Svara, take it and place below

the armpit of the arm of the side of the running nostril. It will change.

HOLISTIC HEALTH BY SVARA

1. Curing physical problem: As soon as you discover that there is some physical problem like fever, body pain or some wound, or you notice some symptom of disease, stop breathing (Svara) from the nostril from which it is running at that time, and this stoppage should remain until the problem heals up or the normalcy is restored. This will help in recovery of the health and one will not have to suffer for many days.

2. Tiredness: If you feel tired due to walk or physical work, lie on the bed to your right side, and start breathing from the left nostril deeply, this will relax the body and the fatigue will go very soon.

3. For stomach problem/Indigestion: Before taking meal or breakfast see that the inhalation and exhalation is running from the right nostril. This is Surya Nadi that will help digest the food. Remember for ever that it should be in flow. Then after eating, lie on the left side so that the flow goes on from the right nostril. First lie for a few a minutes on the right side, then turn to left side. A little walk is also required after dinner. There is a saying - 'After lunch rest a while, After dinner walk a mile.'

3. Combing hair: Comb your hair after taking meal and washing hands daily. Please remember that the teeth of the comb should touch the skin of the head. This will help overcoming all the problems related to head, like, headache, or problems of Vata. Whitening of hair will also stop.

4. Walking outside: When going out in hot sun cover your ears by handkerchief, carpet or towel so that any problem caused by sun may not affect the body.

5. Curing by Padmasana: All the diseases of the body disappear if one sits in Padmasana for half an hour with tongue's front part pressed in the root of teeth.

6. Meditation: Meditating over *Jyoti* (light) like full moon in the forehead increases one's age and helps in curing leprosy. All diseases get cured if one meditates over yellowish white *Jyoti*.

7. Curing thirst: If feeling thirsty, concentrate that some thing sour is kept on your tongue. Concentrate on cold thing if feeling hot, and hot thing if feeling cold.

8. For fulfillment of desires: When leaving your bed in the morning see that from which nostril breath is running, if you put your hand of that side on your mouth, all of your desires will be fulfilled.

9. Tackling ghosts' problems: All the problems relating to ghosts etc. get solved if you bind the root of red *Apamarga* in your hand.

10. For smooth delivery: Root out the root of tamarind and bind it to the hair of a pregnant women in such a manner that the smell of it goes to the nostrils of the lady. This will help in her smooth delivery. Then it should be immediately cut off from there after the delivery otherwise the lady may have some dangerous problem.

11. Overcoming bodyache: One who breathes from the left nostril in the day time and from the right nostril in the night time, he does not feel any bodyache. Even idleness disappears by doing so and this helps in increasing the awareness day by day. If practice to do so is done for about 10 or 15 days with the help of cotton, the breath becomes automatically instrumental to run.

12. Eliminating body temperature: By smelling leaves of small lemon (kagaji) in the morning and the afternoon, even temperatures like typhoid get lost.

13. For permanent youthfulness: The scripture of *Shiva Svarodaya* expounds that one should make an effort to change one's breathing from one nostril to another from time to time. One who does this stopping of the breath frequently, attains good health and diseasefree life.

14. Breathing recommended for night & day: One should remember that while going on bed in the night sleep in the left side breathing from the right nostril. This is done because the

night is generally cool and breathing from the solar channel keeps the body hot.

15. For coolness & relaxation: One should remember that while sleeping in day, see that the left nostril is running. Lie on the bed in right side. This will help keep the body cool as the day is supposed to be hot. It will relax the body removing tiredness.

16. Starting Yoga practice: One should first lie in the right side and try to start breath from the left nostril i.e., lunar channel. My Yoga Guru called it Vishnu Mudra as Lord Vishnu is ever lying in cosmic sleep in this particular mudra. By remaining in this Mudra for a few minutes the left svara starts and the person gets his body favourable for Postures and Pranayamas.

17. Left Svava for all peaceful purposes: All the peace-loving works, like studying, meditating, chanting of mantras, or all other sacred works should be done in this state of lunar channel running.

18. Using Solar Channel for all physical works: All the works that are done physically, like those of eating, fighting, urinating, having sexual intercourse, etc.

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Glossary

Ajna Chakra: Psychic centre situated at medulla ooblongata at the top of the spinal cord.

Ajya: Clarified butter used in sacrifices, *ghee*.

Akasha: Ether or space. The fifth of the great material elements (pancha-mahabhutas), the subtlest and most ethereal of them all, supposed to fill and pervade universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of sound.

Amrita: Nectar, a sweet taste of immortality a Yogi relishes.

Amsha: A fraction, portion or part thereof.

Anahata: Mystic sound heard by Yogis.

Anahata Chakra: The Heart centre of Prana situated in the region of the cardiac plexus.

Anga: A limb, a member; a division or department or science or an auxiliary science.

Ananda: Bliss, joy, pleasing. Sachchidananda is the name/attribute given to Brahman. Shakti is Anandamayi.

Anandamaya: That which consists of bliss; also used sometime so as to mean God the Blissful.

Anandamaya Kosha: The blissful body beyond the Vijnanamaya Kosha.

Anima: The power of becoming extremely minute, the power of becoming as small as an atom; one of the supra-normal psychic powers derivable from the practice of Yoga.

Annamaya Kosha: The physical or gross material body visible to our eyes. It is the fifth and the last wrapper of soul; the outermost corporeal case enshrining the soul. *Anna* is food and food is existence.

Antahkarana: Internal instrument: mind, intellect, ego and the subconscious mind.

Antaratman: Inner self.

Antaryamin: Indweller, inner witness.

Anugraha: A function of Shiva whereby He, through His grace, reveals Himself by the 'descent of Shakti' or grace (Shakti-pata).

Anushthana: Doing, performance, and undertaking a religious rite/homa/patha/recitation.

Apavarga: Final beatitude, the final deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the matter: the supreme bliss of soul deliverance otherwise known as Moksha.

Apana: A kind of Prana moving downward from the navel to the perineum in the lower abdominal region, evacuating toxic elements and reproduction. Breathing out, Apana is followed by Prana, one of the five vital breaths in the body. Apana is the eliminating energy stored in the lower Chakras and when raised and united with the Prana by breath retention and contraction of body, psychic heat is generated which raises Kundalini through the Chakras.

Aparigraha: Non-possessiveness, one of the Yamas.

Artha: Wealth, being one the four chief aims of life known as *Purushartha*.

Asamprajnata: Highest super-conscious state where the mind is completely annihilated and Reality experienced.

Ashtanga: Eight limbs.

Asuras: The demons who are conceived to be in perpetual hostility with gods.

Asanas: A bodily pose or posture designed to stimulate glands, organs or body awareness and quiet the mind for meditation. Asanas often apply pressure on the acupressure points, reflexing to the brain and body for certain effects.

Apta: Realized.

Ashrama: A hermitage, monastery; A stage of life eg., Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

Atma-jnana: Knowledge of the Self.

Atma-svarupa: The essential nature of the Self.

Atman: The Self, the embodied soul, the living spirit within the body; the basic principle of thought and life; Also called Brahman.

Aura: The Aura is the electromagnetic field, the psychic field, surrounding all beings, human or otherwise. Its size can be from few inches to many feet in all directions. It is associated with the health of the physical body and the richness of Prana.

Avadhuta: A naked sage.

Avarana: Veil of ignorance.

Avidya: Nescience; spiritual ignorance and illusion.

Bandhas: Body locks or muscular contractions applied for the retention and release of Prana.

Bhava: Feeling, mental attitude.

Bhogi: Enjoyer.

Bhuma: The Great Infinite.

Bhuta-siddhi: A psychic power by which mastery is gained over the elements.

Brahma-jnana: Direct knowledge of Brahman.

Brahman: The Supreme Self, the Highest Being, as known to Hindu philosophy.

Buddhi: The intellect, the intelligent principle of consciousness.

Chakras: Centers of energy in the human system. Centers of exchange between the psychic and physical energy in the body, like transformers changing subtle Prana into physical energy flowing through a system of Nadis. Chakras are energy vortexes perceived as spinning wheel situated along the spine.

Dama: Control of senses.

Deha: Body; *Sharira*.

Dharana: Concentration, the sixth limb of the Ashtanga or Rajayoga. The stilling of the rational, reasoning, dualistic egotistical mind to allow mind to focus awareness on inner reality beyond intellectual conclusion, outer reality beyond physical, earthly objects.

Dhyana: Meditation, the seventh limb of Ashtanga or Rajayoga.

Divya-drishti: Divine perception.

Dvesha: Repulsion, hatred, dislike.

Gandhari: The subtle channel that goes to the left eye.

Guna: Quality born of nature.

Guru: A spiritual teacher; a preceptor.

Hamsa: Through the operation Maya and Kanchukas, Shakti assumed the gross contracted form of Prakriti Tattva, which in association with Purusha Tattva is Hamsa. Ham is male or Shiva, Sah is female or Shakti. The world is formed of this Hamsa pair - Purusha-Prakriti Tattva - *Pumprakrityatmako hamsah tadatmakam idam jagat*. See the

example: 'In Thy Anahata Lotus I salute the Wondrous Pair Who are *Ham* and *Sah*, swimming in the mind of the Great who ever delight in the honey of the blooming lotus of knowledge.' (*Anandalahari*,39). This Hamsha reversed is the So'ham of Vedanta.

Hasti-jihva: The subtle channel that goes to the left foot.

Havan: Sacred oblations.

Hiranyagarbha: Cosmic intelligence; the Supreme Lord of the universe; Cosmic mind.

Ida: According to the anatomy of Yoga, a blood vessel on the left side of the region of the nose. This is also said to be subtle channel of energy called *Ida Nadi*. The Nadi flowing from the left nostril is related to it, also called *Chandra Nadi* representing coolness.

Ishata: The weightiness of rulership, one of the supra-normal powers attained by Yoga Sadhana.

Ishitva: Masterfulness, another supra-normal Yogic power.

Japa: Repetition of the Lord's name or Mantra.

Jiva: Individual Soul.

Jivanmukta: One who is liberated in this life.

Jnana: Wisdom. Knowledge of the Self.

Kala: Kala is the power which urges on and matures things. It is transcendental time.

Kalpa: The code of rituals; one of the six Vedangas: that which prescribes the ritual and gives rules for the performance of various sacrificial rites.

Kama: Desire, objects of desire, being one of the four principal aims of life.

Kamakala: Parabindu or Ishvara Tattva assumes in creation a threefold aspect as the three Bindus, - Bindu (Karya), Nada, Bija. These three points constitute symbolically a Triangle which is known as the Kamakala. Kama is not used here in the gross sense of desire or sexual desire, but of Divine creative will towards the life of form.

Kanchuka: The term Kanchuka means sheath or envelope. The Panchakanchukas are : Kaala, Niyati, Raga, Vidya and Kalaa. Maya is the sixth Kanchuka regarded as the root of the above five. These Tattvas are also called Sankocha

(contraction) as the creation is the contracted form of infinite Shakti. Kanchukas are powers of limitations by which the Atma in its form of finite experiencer, is deprived the specific attributes. Consciousness reaching forth to the world of enjoyment becomes subject to the Kanchukas and thus becomes impure and finite.

Karma: Ritualistic works; also the impressed innate tendencies due to the work done in former state of re-incarnation.

Karmakanda: That section of the scriptures of the Hindus which deals with ritualistic works.

Kriya: Action. A series of one or more exercises or postures in combination with locks, chanting, visualization, projection etc., in specific sequences to produce specific effects.

Kuhu: The subtle channel that goes to the genital organ and the testes and also to the anus.

Kukkuta: Cock. A Kukkuta Asana in Yoga.

Kundalini: The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual. An incredibly powerful storehouse of psychic energy, sometimes symbolized as a coiled, sleeping serpent at the base of the spine. Once awakened it uncoils and ascends through spinal cord to the Sahasrara at the top of the head, and triggers a transcendent spiritual state experiencing enlightenment.

Laghima: The power of becoming extremely light, a supra-normal perfection (siddhi) got from the practice of Yoga.

Laya: Merging, dissolution.

Linga-sharira: The subtle body.

Mahat: The great principle of the intellect, the first to have been evolved out of the undifferentiated primordial matter.

Mahima: The power of becoming extremely great, one of the supra-normal perfections (siddhis) got from the practice of Yoga.

Manas: The mind, the internal organ or faculty of attention.

Manomayakosha: That sheath of the soul which consists of *Manas* or mind.

Mantra: Sacred syllable or word, or set of words through the repetition and reflection of which one attains

perfection. (Sivananda) A Mantra is a syllable, word or phrase which elevates consciousness through its meaning, the sound itself, rhythm, tone, reflexology or the tongue on the palate. Mantra is the thought (*man*) which saves (*tra, trayate*). Mantra saves from the evil, which man, subject to Maya, commits, and then from the thorough purification of the mind (*Chittashuddhi*). Mantra is therefore a pure thought form, a pure *Vritti*, or modification of the *Antahkarana* which is Devata.

Mantra Chaitanya: Mere utterance of a Mantra is nothing but a movement of two lips. When it is awakened (*Prabuddha*), it is Mantra Chaitanya, and then the Sadhaka can make the Mantra work.

Mantra Japa: There is no difference between Mantra and Devata, both are the same. By Japa the presence of the latter is invoked. Japa or repetition of Mantra is compared to the action of a person arousing from sleep.

Maya: The illusive power of God.

Meditation: See **Dhyana** above.

Moha: Infatuation.

Moksha: Final beatitude, the final deliverance of the individual soul from the bondage of Samsara.

Mudras: A gesture or position, usually of the hands, that locks and guides entire reflexes to the brain. By curling, crossing, stretching and touching the hands, we can talk to the body and mind.

Mumukshu: One who aspires after Moksha.

Nada: Mystic sound.

Nirvana: Liberation; emancipation.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi: Super-conscious state where there is no mind.

Niyama: The second step in Ashtangayoga.

Ojas: Spiritual energy.

Om: The sacred monosyllable which symbolizes Brahman.

Pancha-Mahapreta: The five Shivas are known in the Tantras as the five great corpses or *Pancha-Mahapreta*. Shiva is constantly shown in a corpse-like form that symbolizes that Consciousness in Itself is actionless and inert. All action is by Shakti. Hence Goddess in pictures is shown standing on inert corpse-like body of Shiva.

Parama-Dhama: Supreme abode.

Paramahansa: The highest class of Sannyasins.

Paramashiva: The Supreme Paramashiva abides in Satyaloka beyond mind and matter. It is the Sahasrara Chakra, the thousand petalled lotus.

Pingala: The subtle channel to the right of the nose, or the Surya Nadi, being one of the three important Nadis in Yoga.

Prakriti: Mother Nature; causal matter. Undifferentiated primordial matter wherein the three qualities of goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*) inhere.

Prakriti Tattva: It is that state of Shakti which is evolved by the action of Maya and the five Kanchukas developed from Her.

Pranava: The mystical sacred syllable *Om*.

Pratyahara: The process of withdrawing the senses from outside objects, the fifth in the channel of Ashtangayoga of Patanjali.

Prana: Life-breath; vital energy; also the principal vital air, being that which is associated with the process of breathing in. Prana is the basic life force of consciousness in the air we breathe.

Pranamayakosha: That sheath of the soul which consists of the physical vitality of its embodiment.

Pranayama: Breath-regulation; the fourth in the channel of Ashtangayoga. Breathing to channel and direct the flow of Prana and alter consciousness.

Prapti: The power of reaching things anywhere and from anywhere, a supra-normal perfection (*siddhi*) got from the practice of Yoga.

Puraka: The process of filling in the lungs with air to the full; a breath exercise in Yoga practice.

Purusha: The Supreme Being.

Purusha Tattva: Purusha Tattva is the Atma enveloped by Kanchukas.

Raga: Raga is commonly translated desire. Raga is interest in objects, seen as other than the self, which ripens into desire (*Ichchha*).

Rajas: The quality of passion; one of the three well-known qualities of primordial matter.

Rajayoga: A system of Yoga propounded by Maharshi Patanjali, i.e., Ashtangayoga.

Rasasvada: Tasting the bliss of lower Samadhi.

Rupa: Form or colour; that which is capable of being apprehended by the eye.

Rechaka: The process of expelling the air from within the lungs in Yoga.

Sachchidananda: Existence absolute (*Sat*), Knowledge absolute (*Chid*), Bliss absolute (*Ananda*).

Sadhaka: Spiritual aspirant.

Sadhana: Spiritual practice.

Sadhu: Pious man, *Sannyasin*.

Shabda-Brahman: The Parabindu is the Shabda-Brahman, for on its differentiation arises the unmanifest sound, the hidden word from which all manifested speech and the objects are derived. This is the state of Supreme Shabda. Shabda-Brahman appearing in the bodies is the Kundalini Shakti (*Kundalini Shabdabrahmamayi*).

Sadashiva: From Shambhu emanated the Sadashiva who does five forms of work, namely creation, preservation, destruction, favour (*Anugraha*) and disfavour (*Nigraha*). (Ether, air, fire, water, earth are presided over by Sadashiva, Isha, Rudra, Vishnu, Brahma whose abodes are Tapoloka, Jnanaloka, Svaraloka. Bhuvahloka, Bhuloka, and their centres in the body are in the Ajna Chakra, Vishuddhi, Anahata, Manipura, Svadhishthana and Muladhara Chakras respectively.)

Shaiva: A devotee of Shiva.

Shakti: Power; the feminine aspect of Divinity.

Shama: Serenity; control of mind.

Shambhu: Shambhu presides over mind and his abode is Maharloka.

Shankini: The subtle channel of the left ear.

Samadhi: The state of self-realization, the eighth in the sequence of the practice of Ashtangayoga.

Samana: The vital air supposed to be connected with the digestive system.

Samsara: The process of worldly life.

Samskara: Innate mental impressions and impulses and tendencies.

Sattva: Purity; the quality of goodness, one of the three well-known qualities of matter.

Siddhi: Psychic power.

Shiva: Lord Shiva – bestower of auspiciousness on His devotees.

Sushumna: The meridian subtle channel that goes to the head along its opening in the spine.

Svadyaya: Study of scriptures.

Tamas: Inertia; laziness; dullness; one of the three qualities of the primordial matter conceived as the fundamental substratum of the universe. Formed of it is *Tamasika*, the state of stupor.

Tanmatras: Rudimentary principles derived out of primordial matter, out of which principles the five great elements of air, water, fire, earth and ether are said to have been evolved.

Tapas: Austerity; the third Niyama of Yoga.

Tattva: Essence; principle.

Tirodhana: A function of Shiva by which He veils Himself to His worshipper.

Trishna: Sense-hankering.

Turiya: The state of super-consciousness, the fourth state transcending the waking, dreaming and deep sleep state.

Urdhvareta: A Yogi who has stored up the seminal after sublimating the same into spiritual energy (*Ojas*).

Vairagya: Dispassion. Detachment from worldly attachments.

Vasanas: Unmanifest desires; subtle desires.

Vashitva: That power of subduing all things which yields to one all that one may desire; a supra-normal perfection (siddhi) got from the practice of Yoga.

Veerya: Seminal energy.

Vedic: Pertaining to the Vedas.

Vichara: Enquiry into the nature of Brahman.

Vijnana: Consciousness.

Vijnanamayakosha: That sheath of the Atman which consists of consciousness.

Vikshepa: The tossing of mind.

Visaya: Sense objects.

Viveka: Discrimination.

Vishvodara: The subtle channel of the left hand.

Vritti: A wave in the mind-lake.

Vyana: One of the five vital airs, that which is circulated or diffused throughout the body.

Yama: Eternal vows - nonviolence, truthfulness, etc. The first limb of Ashtangayoga.

Yashasvini: The subtle channel that goes to the right foot.

Yoga: Union; union with the Supreme Being. The process of meditative mental concentration aiming at Self-realization and God-realization; the system of philosophy expounded by Patanjali and some other schools.

Yogic: That pertains to Yoga.

Yogi(n): A transcendental seer, a true seer of the soul; one who has practiced Yoga successfully.

Yoni: Source.

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Asanas, Pranayamas and Mudras



Dhyana Mudra



Vishnu Mudra



Siddhasana (Perfect Posture)



Padmasana (Lotus Posture)



Svastikasana (Auspicious Posture)



Sukhasana (Easy Pose)



Shavasana (Corpse Pose)



Relax Pose after shavasana

Sarvangasana
(Neck Balance Posture)

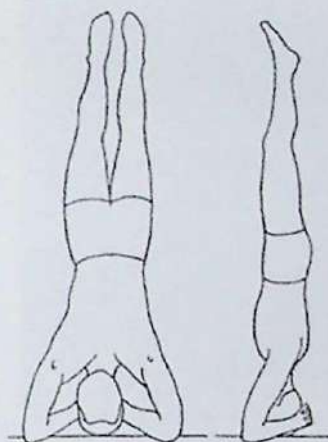
Uttanapadasana (Lifting Feet Pose)



Halasana (Plough Posture)



Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)



Shirshasana (Head stand Pose)



Pavanamuktasana (Wind Relieving Pose)



Matsyasana (Fish Posture)



Vajrasana or Virasana (Hero Pose)



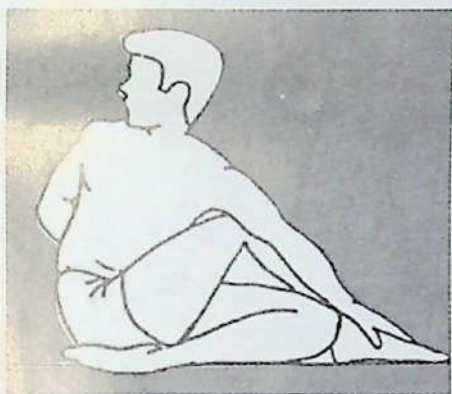
Yogamudra (Yoga Pose)



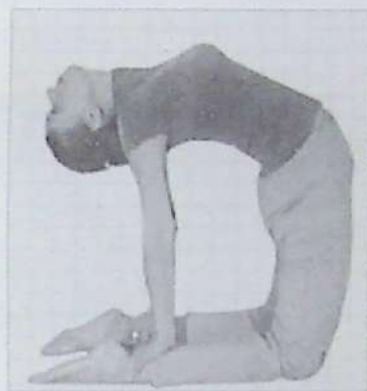
Shashakasana (Rabbit Pose)



Pashchimottasana (Forward Bend Pose)



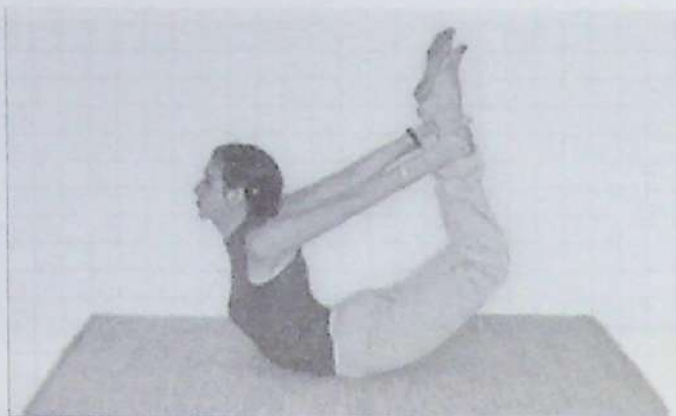
Ardhamatsyendrasana (Spinal-twist)



Ushtrasana (Camel Pose)



Bhujangasana (Cobra Posture)



Dhanurasana (Bow Posture)



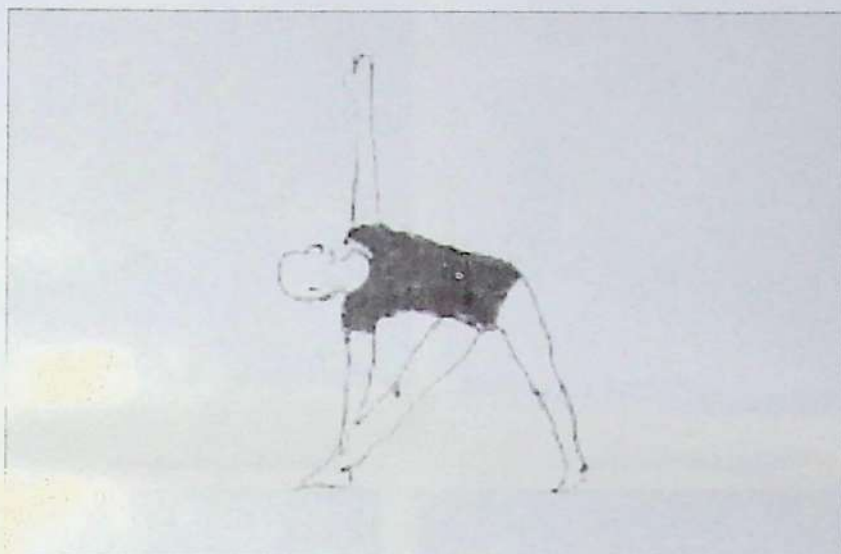
Shithilasana (Relaxing Pose)



Gomukhasana (Cow - Face Pose)



Tadasana (Mountain Pose)



Trikonasana



Setubandhasana



Kapalabhati Pranayama



Nadishodhana Pranayama



Jalandhara, Uddiyana & Mula Bandha



Jalandhara Bandha



Serpent Pose



Kapalabhati Pranayama



Nadishodhana Pranayama



Jalandhara, Uddiyana & Mula Bandha



Jalandhara Bandha



Serpent Pose



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