

PART III: HOW TO AVOID FAILURE ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

CHAPTER 13 THE VALUE OF JAPA (DEVOTIONAL PRAYER)

I have already introduced *Japa* in the first part of the book. Here I am setting out to take back the theme in a systematic way. Chapters 13 and 14 are devoted to *Japa*. Chapter 13 deals with the *Japa* that you can practice during the daily chores, Chapter 14 is devoted to a meditative practice called "*Prayer of the heart*."

First of all let us clarify that *Japa* means *Devotional Prayer*. The *Devotional Prayer* can also be called "*Internal Oration*." A mystic utilizes *Japa* to declare their intention of worship and complete surrender to the Divine. *Japa* is not a plea to God with the purpose of obtaining something necessary to the material existence or peace, happiness...

There is no doubt that *Devotional Prayer*, especially if it becomes *continuous* and is sustained by the practice of the "*Presence of the Divine*" is a complete-in-itself path. I don't enter in intellectual discourses to state dogmatically that *Kriya* is a quicker path. I am interested only in one thing: while following the path of *Kriya Yoga*, it is very wise to accept the help of *Japa*. The decision of adding *Japa* to an already well consolidated practice of *Kriya* is the best action we *kriyabans* can do. I had been the witness of the failure of different *kriyaban* friends who did not care of the state of their mind during the day, while I saw the eyes shining of joy and sincere surrender to the Divine, of those *kriyabans* who added – during their busy day, when they could remain alone even for few minutes – the practice of the *Devotional Prayer*.

St. Teresa of Avila affirmed categorically: "You can do nothing without *Prayer* and you can do miracles with it." According to her, *Prayer* is all in all in the mystical path.¹ There is no other exercise upon which she insists so much in all of her writings and to which she grants such importance. In her opinion, the soul that doesn't create the habit of *Prayer*

¹ Saint Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, (March 28, 1515 – October 4, 1582) was a prominent Spanish mystic, Roman Catholic saint, Carmelite nun, and writer of the Counter Reformation, and theologian of contemplative life through Contemplative Prayer. She was a reformer of the Carmelite Order. The teaching of St. Teresa flows from her own experience and not from books.

won't reach the mystical goal. I firmly believe in this statement.

My conviction is challenged by some *kriyabans*. They say that the *Kriya* techniques are both necessary and sufficient to bring about the awakening of *Kundalini* and therefore we don't need any other practice. They add: "Neither *Guruji*, nor Lahiri Mahasaya taught it – *kriyabans* do not need it." They seem even annoyed by the thought that the practice of *Japa* could pollute the purity of their spiritual path.

This is not true: I have good reasons to believe that those who went to Lahiri Mahasaya were not only familiar with the practice of *Japa*, but undertook the path of *Kriya Yoga* not to start something totally new but to deepen and intensify the practice of the *Continuous Prayer*, in which they had already poured their soul. Very probably to some of them, receiving the procedure of *Thokar* was the definitive practical instruction to crown their efforts to achieve the lofty state of the *Prayer of the heart*.

Japa annihilates the "background noise" of the mind and opens the heart
Japa, especially if practiced a couple of hours before starting the *Kriya* routine, creates a very favorable state to an enraptured contemplation of the spiritual reality. In fact it annihilates the "background noise" that remains in our mind when, after the activities of the day, we get ready to practice *Kriya*. Often, while sitting in the meditative position, we realize how difficult it is to maintain stability in the *Mental Silence* state. This is due to the scars that remain in us because of a chaotic way of living. Well, like a balm, *Japa* dissolves any scar. After calming your thoughts, *Japa* calms down the superficial emotions and warms your heart with deep feelings. With *Japa* you don't run the risk to find yourself in a dimension made of aridity, void and boredom.

In time it creates a real transformation, thus changing any wrong attitude toward the spiritual path. You learn to accept to be what you are and stop aiming for impossible goals. You learn to do a sincere act of surrender to the Divine. The joy obtained through *Kriya* and offered to the Divine through *Prayer* has the power to fertilize the territories of humility. You stop coupling *Kriya* with any process of psychological self analysis. You will spontaneously understand that the practice of self analysis has a small role, or no role at all, in *Kriya Yoga*.

Often *kriyabans* want to build brick by brick, by the sweat of their brow, as if it was a highly complex project of adding new structure to old structure, the majestic building of their "Self realization" – their emancipation from *Maya*. They believe they can progress only by tormenting their

psychological structure to uproot the bad habits and the very roots of iniquity and egoism. *Japa* teaches you to go ahead in spite of any feeling of unsuitability for the Spiritual path. The Divine becomes something you can not understand, something beyond your mind, beyond your capacity of conceptualization. To the Divine you surrender completely while *Kriya* becomes every day more and more serene, more simple and natural.

Inspiration

Read the short autobiography of the saint Swami Ramdas: "In search of God." This book is of great inspiration: it is one of those rare books that kindle the right intuition about how to pose yourself before the possibility of starting the practice of *Japa*. If you think that *Japa* requires a great effort, you will come to realize it is a delight that you would not change with anything else. Such book is worth a thousand times more than many essays about *Japa* deprived of any intelligence or passion.

We read: "Repeat the name of "Ram" at all times of the day and at nights when you are awake. You may be sure that you will not feel lonely or miserable as long as you are uttering that glorious name. Where this name is sounded, or meditated upon, there resides no sorrow, no anxiety no anxiety – nay, not even death. Utter Rama's name any time, amid all of life's distractions, whenever there is a momentary return of your consciousness to Self-awareness. When this happens you feel the ensuing joy and you concentrate on it as long as possible (while repeating the name of Ram.) In this way you perfect your surrender to God."

How thankful I am to the simple teaching of Swami Ramdas! I have explained in the third chapter how it was by looking at his portrait that I started to recite his *Mantra* : *Sri Ram jay Ram jay jay Ram Om*. In short time I totally calmed my breath. ²

Many saints inspire you with their teaching about *Devotional Prayer*. Let me only recommend the writings of St.Teresa of Avila. In the mist of the countless complications of the catholic faith she saw that with a simple *Prayer*, to be repeated without cease a soul can cross all the different levels of the spiritual path up to the union with God. I quote here two sentences from her work " *The internal castle*." Both explain the effect of the

² As for the breathless state or the calm-breath state, there is a cause-effect relationship between *Japa* and reaching the breathless state. We can say that the divine gift of the breathless state is prepared by all *Kriya* technique but it becomes a real experience through the practice of *Japa*.

Devotional Prayer. The first is simple to understand:

"The body becomes insensitive and the will is totally captivated by irresistible devotion. The other faculties, such as memory, reason, and imagination, are progressively captivated and occupied with God. Both intellect and will are absorbed in God. Distractions are not possible and the external bodily senses are made prisoners."

The second needs a clarification: she explains (couldn't have found better words) what happens when *Kundalini* comes up to the heart:

"The soul is wounded with love for the Divine. Body and Spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence, unconsciousness, and a feeling of *suffocation*, sometimes intermixed with such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. There are moments in which you feel like an arrow has deeply penetrated your heart. One laments with such a vivid and intense pain, but at the same time the experience is so delicious you never want it to end."

I bow to this description because it is true, deeply true. When you experience *Kundalini* rising, no other reaction is possible except a giant wave of love towards the Divine. The strength of this Love intensifies around the fourth *Chakra*, as if a mighty hand is squeezing the region of your heart. When you return to normal state of consciousness, you cannot stop your tears of devotion.

Practice

Choose a *Mantra* (Prayer) that appeals to you. Don't feel obliged to use Lahiri Mahasaya's favored *Vasudeva Mantra* ("*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*".) It is true that among different favorite prayers, you could prefer one that has (by adding, if necessary, *Om* or *Amen* at the beginning or at the end) twelve syllables. Twelve is a perfect number because you can utilize it during *Kriya Pranayama*, placing each of its syllables in a different *Chakra*. Various beautiful twelve-syllables *Mantras* can be taken out of *Bhajans* or poems. As an example, from the well-known Adi Shankara's chant you can select the beautiful 12-syllable verse: *Chi-da-nan-da-ru-pah-shi-vo-ham-shi-vo-ham* [That Form which is pure consciousness and bliss, I am that supreme Being, I am that supreme Being!

One thing should be stated objectively: YOUR *Mantra* should express or evoke exactly what YOU want to achieve and embody the attitude you

want to express. For example, the attitude of surrender is expressed by *Mantras* beginning with *Om Namó* ... other *Mantras* might express the absolute non-dual realization, and so on. Sometimes, the meaning is not as important as having in one's heart the example of a dear saint who used it. Generally speaking, a good choice is that of a *Mantra* having both a strong and a soft tone. Be sensitive to the vibration that your *Mantra* arouses in the body and heart.

Some make an unfortunate choice, through which they seem to punish themselves. The sentence they have chosen to repeat could have negative tones and emphasize unequivocally their limits and unworthiness. When this happens it is clear that after a short time, their practice of *Japa* falls apart – they find themselves repeating that *Mantra* once or twice during the day, like a sigh of dejection.

In literature you will see how very beautiful *Mantras* have been built. Here you have the *Krishna Mantra: Om Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopi-jana Vallabhaya Swaha*. Here you have the *Durga (Divine Mother) Mantra: Om Hrim Dhum Durgaye Namaha....*

Some *Hesychasts* use only "*Kyrie Eleison*". *Eleison* can be translated as: "be your embrace upon me, turn yourself to me." You can appreciate how the sound *Eleison* seems to melt with the sound of the *Om*. What is important to understand is that the chosen Prayer should be able to stimulate your devotion, to unify all your being around the practice.

If you study a little bit the concept of *Bija Mantra*, you can forge for yourself a wonderful *Mantra*. To a pre existent *Mantra*, after the initial *Om*, your teacher can add some "*Bija*" (seed) *Mantras* like: Aim, Dúm, Gam, Glamu, Glom, Haum, Hoom, Hreem, Hrom, Kleem, Kreem, Shreem, Stroom, Vang, ...

These sounds were chosen by ancient *yogis*, who felt their beauty and liked their vibration. They were not given by a divinity, they are a human discovery. These seed *Mantras* have no meaning but can enrich a *Mantra* who has a meaning. don't choose a *Mantra* only because certain literature extolls the power of this or of that *Bija Mantra*. Read your mood, feel your emotions after an intense practice of a *Mantra*,

I hope you are not so naive to believe that a *Mantra* works only if it is received from a "*Guru*." Certainly if you want to lighten your portfolio then race to a teacher and buy your personal *Mantra*. Naturally in certain occasions having a teacher is justified. When an experienced person helps

you to choose a *Mantra* and uses everything in his power of persuasion to convince you to apply it continually, this person does you the greatest of all the favors and is correct to compensate him; but that's all!

Most books insist only upon a heap of banalities. When I read that the *mala* (rosary) for *Japa* should be made of this or of that material, or that it should not be seen by others, or that the *Sumeru* bead [an extra bead as the extension to the row, which is the point at which one round of counting around the *mala* begins and ends] should never be passed [if you do the *mala* twice, you should turn it and make the last bead become the first bead of the second round] ... I infer that the person who is writing has no familiarity with the virtue of common sense. The same I feel when I read that *Japa* works only when we use a particular formula utilized in the liturgical tradition.

A good recipe: 108 with your voice

When you have found your *Mantra*, resolve to complete daily at least one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) of it aloud. Pronounce its syllables with serene attitude. Learn to resonate it in your mouth, chest and head areas. When you have completed the 108 repetitions, close your mouth and let *Japa* go ahead mentally, effortlessly, in the background of your awareness. When it is possible, take back the vocal practice of *Japa* in the next hours.³

While you practice, feel the protective shell of tangible peace surrounding you. I am not recommending to do an exercise of visualization but only to become aware of a subtle substance in which you are immersed. The same substance is also perceived by those who come in contact with you.

When you are forced to interrupt *Japa* because you participate to social activities, you will stay centered on a feeling of unchangeable calmness. The images arising from the words some people are addressing to you, developing in vast scenarios, cross your consciousness fading in short time from the mental screen. You will always be able to reply keenly with non hurting sincerity.

Intensive practice

I tried to pass on this experience to other persons. I am reminded of a

³ A teacher was adamant about the fact that a *Mantra* should be pronounced only mentally. I tried to follow his counsel and it didn't work. After various months I was fed up with my useless attempt: I dared to chant it vocally on my *Mala*. Before completing my 108 repetitions, a spring of happiness and mirth gushed from my heart.

friend who practiced Kriya without getting any result. I talked to him and suggested Japa but I was not able to explain myself clearly. One day he showed me how he had interpreted my explications and I was witness to a lifeless practice, a tired plea for God's mercy. I had the impression that he took *Japa* as an emotive outpouring. His chosen *Mantra* was nothing more than a sigh of self-pity. It was not surprising when, after some time, he entirely abandoned the practice. All changed later when he took part in a group pilgrimage. Someone began to recite the so-called rosary (a set number of repetitions of the same prayer), and all the pilgrims joined in. Even if tired and almost gasping for breath, my friend did not withdraw himself from this pious activity. While walking and praying softly, murmuring under his breath, he began to taste a state of unknown calmness. He looked with different eyes at the show of continuously changing landscape and had the impression of living in a heavenly situation. He went on repeating the *Prayer* unremittingly for the entire walk (which surpassed the 20 miles), completely forgetting he was tired and sleepy. When the group paused to rest, he luckily was left alone undisturbed. He slipped into an introspective state and was pervaded by something vibrating in his own heart which he definitely identified with Spiritual Reality. His ecstatic state became solid as a rock, becoming almost unbearable, overwhelming him. It is interesting to tell how my friend summarized the correct way of practicing *Japa*. He said that the secret was to not only reach the state of "exhaustion" but also to go beyond it. After some days he chose to repeat the same *Mantra* I had chosen and, thanks to it, he reached the breathless state.

Well, perhaps it is not necessary to go beyond the frontier of exhaustion. Usually one has very good effects by completing daily one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) aloud then letting the repetition of one's *Mantra* go ahead mentally and automatically. However the "law of exhaustion" is a valuable resource for breaking some possible internal resistance and experience thus the breathless state for the first time.

Doubt as the main obstacle

In the practice of *Devotional Prayer* it can happen to cross some critical moments. Often a delusion arises in the form of a scruple: "By repeating my *Mantra* mechanically all day long like a parrot, aren't I doing the most mind-numbing activity in the world? Don't the faculties of my mind get lazy, becoming dull tools?" Thus we think that this practice is "poor" and is better to cooperate with the spiritual evolution using more powerful and effective methods.

I counsel to reinforce your will, take a resolved decision not to abdicate

anymore the formidable help that only such practice can give. You are going to crumble the wall of impossibility that life has put in front of you. Whatever is the abyss of mental confusion and spiritual aridity in which you could be, start again the practice of *Prayer* and repeat it with superhuman calmness and determination. This simple act signals your return as alive being on the spiritual path.

Consider Lahiri Mahasaya's motto "*Banat, Banat, ban jay!*" (doing and doing, one day it is done!) At first this sentence will give you the idea of one who, without ever losing heart, goes all out to reach his/her goal. Your only care is to remove the obstacles created by the mind. Practice *Japa*, then the spiritual dimension would manifest naturally, almost without further effort on your part.

Practice this way every day and you will always merged in bliss.

In books we seek God, in Prayer we find him. Prayer is the key which opens God's heart. (*Padre Pio of Pietrelcina*)

CHAPTER 14 THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

To introduce the reader to this practice – which is perfected only with a tireless discipline – I will utilize the literature of the spiritual movement of *Hesychasm*, its explanations and its metaphors. The *Hesychast* movement utilizes the formula : "*Kyrie Iesou Christe, Yie tou Theou, Eleison me ton amartalon*" Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy of me, sinner.

If you have no time to read the *Philokalia* read at least the already quoted book: *The Way of a Pilgrim*." ⁴ Of great inspiration is also the literature upon the "Desert Fathers." To learn the procedure of the *Prayer of the heart*, you must first learn to unite breath and *Prayer*, then to reach "the place of the heart" and, finally to synchronize the syllables of your *Prayer* with the pulse of your heart. ⁵ We have already learned to unite breath and *Prayer*; we shall give all attention to the other two points.

[I] Reaching the place of the heart

Let us consider a person whose daily appointment with the *Devotional Prayer* (where the restlessness of the mind is nearly dissolved completely) is a consolidated habit. Finding "the place of the heart" means to learn to pray no more with the "mind in the head" but with "the mind in the heart."

The procedure is the following:

During a long inhalation visualize the *Prayer* that descends (inside our body and spine) from the nose into the heart. There it remains. And also during exhalation we visualize the *Prayer* remaining in the heart. Between

⁴ The *Philokalia* is a collection of texts on Prayer and asceticism written from the 4th to the 15th Centuries [first published in Greek in 1782]. In my opinion, it is a tedious text showing the attitude of the mind, obsessed by sin and temptations, to complicate and obscure the simplest things. However, it is irrefutable that it contains also several pearls of wisdom. As for *The way of the Pilgrim* you will be amazed in discovering that it contains a description of the throat sound produced by the breath and even a hint to *Kechari Mudra* – of course not with its proper name.

⁵ Strange as it may seem, for many the first exposure to the *Prayer of the Heart* came from *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger: "... if you keep saying that prayer over and over again, you only have to just do it with your lips at first - then eventually what happens, the prayer becomes self-active. Something happens after a while. I don't know what but something happens, the words get synchronized with the person's heart-beats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing."

inhalation and exhalation we tilt the chin onto the upper part of the breast (we avoid making a brusque movement, but feel the tension of the neck muscles) hold the breath comfortably and feel a warm sensation in the heart. Then we return to starting position of your head and exhale.

This pause is useful to locate the "place of the heart." Gradually the value of this pause becomes more and more evident. During it, with your head bowed, the eyes are directed toward the abdomen with concentrated focus on the navel. Try to enter it as if the navel were a "door" through which you come up to the "place of the heart."⁶

Very interesting is the instruction of this unknown author that many call Pseudo-Symeon:

Then sit down in a quiet cell, in corner by yourself, and do what I tell you. Close the door, and withdraw your intellect from everything worthless and transient. Rest your beard on your chest, and focus your physical gaze, together with the whole of your intellect, upon the center of your belly or your navel. Restrain the drawing-in of breath through your nostrils, so as not to breathe easily, and search inside yourself with your intellect so as to find the place of the heart, where all the powers of the soul reside. To start with you will find there darkness and an impenetrable density. Later, when you persist and practice this task day and night, you will find, as though miraculously, an unceasing joy. For as soon as the intellect attains the place of the heart, at once it sees things of which it previously knew nothing. It sees the open space within the heart and it beholds itself entirely luminous and full of discrimination.

[III] Prayer of the heart proper

Many think that the *Prayer of the Heart* is a *Prayer* uttered with sincere devotion while reflecting upon the meaning of the uttered words. Actually, it is much more than that. Let us try to come near it without being discouraged for the first failures.

You are in the meditation position, your chin is slightly down, the gaze is turned toward the location of your heart. With great calmness perceive the pulse of your heart. It is not easy but if you persist you will succeed. Then make each pulsation coincide with a word or with a syllable of the *Prayer*. With this new criterion, constantly applied, you reach the stadium in which

⁶ Focusing on the navel in order to light the fire of devotion in your heart is what is recommended by saints. In the last phases of the spiritual path, the navel center (precisely all the region which in the Internal Alchemy, Taoism, is known as *Dantian*) becomes more and more important. In some *Kriya Yoga* book you find expressions like: "The *Samadhi* state is born in the navel."'

the breath first and the pulsing of the heart then, tend to slow down and disappear. When you come near to this state, you will understand what it means "*praying with the heart and not with the mind.*"

After this practice, when you relax and are still unwrapped by the sweetness of *Prayer*; often your imagination dwells upon something beautiful. If you remain calm, that Beauty grows and grows. Then comes the realization that you are not in the condition of resisting an all-consuming emotion, the full impact with that Reality, realizing that behind it, there is the Divine. From the corners of the eyes tears of inexpressible delight slowly go down. An unlimited, all consuming internal desire to cry exert a pressure upon your heart. When you enjoy this, you have the drastic realization that "what you have lived till now had been *nothing.*"

Unheard of Light is born from this ineffably,
And thence, beyond all telling, the heart's illumination.
Last comes – a step that has no limit
Though compassed in a single line –
Perfection that is endless...

(*Monk Theophanis, the Hesychast ascetic of the 8th century*)

When the *Prayer of the heart* is practiced constantly, this state extends to the totality of your existence: the *Prayer* becomes continuous. In every possible moment of silence you are aware of the *Prayer* that sweetly and comfortably goes ahead as a music in the background of your consciousness. When silence is not possible and you are in full activity you preserve a presence in your heart: something which is like an ardent brazier located in the region of the breast.

In the book *The Way of a Pilgrim* there is the description of how one day the pilgrim finds eventually the *Prayer* at his lips and in his mind every waking hour, as spontaneous and effortless as breath itself. In this wonderful condition he comes to experience the effulgence of the divine light, the innermost "secret of the heart".

Like a person enjoying the beauty of a chilly winter near the fireside, contemplating either the sad or the joyous spectacle of life, such is a devotee having found the infinity of the skies residing in their heart! The *Continuous Prayer* is truly a marvelous gem whose glitter warms up life. Its magic spreads into each facet of life, like walking out of a dark room into fresh air and sunlight. (*The Way of a Pilgrim*)

Reflections about the heart-brain

Very few people know that the heart works as a brain independent from the principal mind-brain. The practice of the *Prayer of the heart* is important because it can establish a dialogue between the two brains.

It is inspiring to study all the available material about the concept of heart-brain. This might be decisive in understanding the difficulties of a person who works hard with the *Kriya* techniques but has negligible results. This situation could be born by an existing split between their mind-brain and the heart-brain.

Continuously rearranging their *Kriya* routine and counseling new techniques is of no use; probably what they need is to change their attitude toward the Spiritual Path, toward life and the social relationships. Each person needs to relax their mind-brain and start listening to their heart-brain.

It would be highly recommendable to study also the gut-brain. Actually, we learn to listen to our heart-brain only when all the parts of the inferior circuits governing our gut function in perfect harmony. Our gut often dominates our mind-brain taking "visceral" decisions – however I do not want to expand further this fact, at least for now.

Let us return to our consideration of the heart-brain. There are those who (like Dr. J. Andrew Armour and Dr. Jeffrey Ardell) affirm that the heart has an intrinsic nervous system containing an elaborate network of neurons, neurotransmitters which enables it to process information, produce feelings and then transmit information, including emotional information, from one cell to another. There are those who object that the heart does not contain brain cells but only neurons that comprise its own intrinsic system for regulating the cardiac function. In other words it is not a scientific fact that the heart acts as though it had a mind of its own giving birth to desires, new plans of action and cognitive processes...

It is a fact that by working hard with the *Prayer of the heart*, and with all the *Kriya* techniques having something to do with the heart *Chakra*, we have the impression of utilizing a new tool of knowledge. We perfectly know we are utilizing the brain but we have no doubt that our heart plays a

role in this process. We recognize that our heart-brain gives us access to a completely new perception of reality.

Sure enough, our Ego is still active and working although we are inspired to follow integrally our "internal teacher." It often blocks our actions. But through the constant practice of the *Prayer of the heart* plus *Kriya*, the heart brain assumes definitively the dominant role. We shall be surprised in discovering how, in this favorable situation, the ambient in which we live reacts with unusual approval and affection. A great revolution starts in our life. Our heart-brain has put in action some new centers in the head-brain. We become fully aware of the filter exerted by our conditioning in blurring our perception of reality. The blooming of the best qualities in our personality (deep gratification, thankfulness feelings, unconditional love... unrelated from circumstances) is the direct outcome of our entrusting the direction of our life to our heart-brain.

Some of the more fascinating evidence supporting the notion of a heart brain are the numerous documented stories (in the book, *Change of heart* by Claire Sylvia) heart transplant patients who have taken on the habits, expressions, tastes and memories of the dead donor. A woman knew the name, address and family of the dead donor – information that had been withheld from her. In a most dramatic case, a teenage girl received the heart of a woman who had been murdered. Shortly thereafter, in dreams and in quiet moments, the woman was able to reconstruct details from the crime scene so as to enable the police to gather enough evidence to convict the killer. These stories take this phenomena out of the realm of coincidence.

The reason of many failures in the Kriya path

Have you ever tried to help a person who suffers of painful mental disturbances such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks...? This person could be a dear friend of yours. Let us suppose that he/she accepts to practice some form of meditation or breath control under your guide. You believe in *Kriya* and very probably you guide your friend to embrace *Kriya*. You were told that *Kriya* breath magnetizes the spine, dissolving the energetic micro vortexes which are created by our unresolved desires; you have heard that *Kriya* burns the so-called "bad seeds" of *Karma* before they manifest in our lives. Perhaps you see *Kriya* as a means of integrating the subconscious with the conscious mind. You think enthusiastically that *Kriya* will surely help your friend...

This is perfectly logic, rational but ... perhaps it does not work. After some time you are confused to see that your friend is no more cooperative and shows to nourish a whole collection of illusions! Perhaps, while feeling

exhausted you meet the spectrum of ingratitude receiving from him/her the accusation of having given an unprofessional psychological help.⁷ There come moments of deep sadness. You have the sensation that your friend had squeezed from you all the energy, inexorably up to the point that, as Carlos Castaneda writes, nothing remains. You have nurtured the hope of helping a friend and the friend had turned into a person who seems to hate every thing of you and of your "miraculous" path of *Kriya*.

Many times the reason of this failure is that you have not cared to help your friend in creating a harmonious connection between his/her friend's mind-brain and his/her heart-brain! When there is a split between the two brains the *Kriya* method doesn't work. Don't believe in those persons who say that *Kriya* works like mathematics and the cause of apparent failures should be attributed to negligence, lack of will... The cause of many failures may lie in a split between mind-brain and heart-brain. The *Prayer of the heart* is a wonderful method to cure that split.

Some personal experiences with Prayer

It's a pity that the *Kriya* schools do not give officially the teaching of *Japa*. Perhaps the pride and arrogance of some *kriyaban* had contributed to spread the idea that *Japa* is a practice too simple, fit for simpletons – those that understand nothing about *Prana*, spine, *Chakras*. I have appreciated that the organization founded by PY leak out that great disciples of PY practiced *Japa*.

You will never be able to find anything like *Japa* to create calmness in your mind and ameliorate your *Kriya*. *Japa* acts on the subconscious mind. You cannot practice *Kriya* by the sheer strength of your will alone, you have to live a spiritual life. And what is a spiritual life? It is an existence in which the mind relaxes its overwhelming control upon the blissful awareness of your inner Self. *Prayer* is a formidable tool to obtain this. Frenetic common way of thinking ends. I have already recounted of my first experience with *Japa* (see chapter 3) here I try to relate the essence of what came later, up to the present day.

[I] One day I went in the open country not to practice my *Kriya* routine but just to practice *Japa*. It was a near perfect day where I could enjoy the blue

⁷ I think that the pernicious mechanism of counsel, refusal, ingratitude might have exacerbated organizations also. I wonder if those *Kriya* organizations that have gradually turned away from a positive attitude toward all people and shifted toward a plethora of prohibitions and of an absurd bureaucracy, were forced to react in this way by the recriminations of ungrateful and mentally disturbed people.

sky in which a small cluster of clouds floated in the golden light. The session was longer than I had planned. I was sustained by a calm euphoria. I decided to mentally repeat the *Prayer* in the spine. I mentally chanted half *Prayer* during the inhalation, and half during the exhalation. I decided to meditate on the meaning of the chosen *Prayer* – willingly affirming with each breath my surrender to the Divine. I felt an urge to make a special effort to go ahead slowly, with intensity.

I followed while slowly moving my chin up and down, the movement of the *Prayer* in the spine and remarked this: the passion that was warming my heart was intensified when I came down with the *Prayer* and reached the *Chakra* of the heart. It came spontaneous to touch my breast with the chin. I remained there immobile with eyes closed for some instants perceiving the annihilation of my mind. It was impossible to think a single thought: the state of *Mental Silence*, appeared stronger than ever. My eyes were full of tears. Bliss, pure bliss.

I returned many times in that place and tried to live the experience again. I increased the length of my practice. Summer came and I remember long sunsets, with evenings that seemed to have no end. That moment of my life was really a magic one. I have an endless nostalgia for it. Living those long sessions sitting in the open countryside, in total freedom and in a state of mystical "intoxication" was an unforgettable event. The devotion that I experienced at that time was not the classical feeling that we define *Bhakti*. It was the sense of being crushed, destroyed by something that in my diaries I called "Unbearable Beauty". At that time, lost in my innocent exaltation, I compared this state with the meditative experience that St Teresa of Avila called "Infused Recollection"

A glorious delirium, a celestial folly, a state of unspeakable delights. It is an inebriation of love in which the soul doesn't know what to do, whether to speak or to keep silent, whether to cry or to laugh. The soul is conscious of a deep satisfaction. The soul feels invaded by something that has the taste of eternal life and feels as if coming into contact with an *Endless Goodness*. Hence comes the feeling that there is nothing on the earth worthy of your desire or attention. (*S. Therese*)

One evening, a sound of tolling bells came from a distant village – it was like a cascade of light! It was so unexpected! A part of me went on repeating: "There has never been granted so much joy to a human being!"

[II] What I had learned about the micro movement (see chapter 9)

influenced my practice of *Prayer*. When, after a proper time of *Continuous Prayer*, my breath existed no more I could "touch" internally the essence of each *Chakra*. I had only to visualize the syllables of my *Prayer* moving sweetly like the flow of an aeriform substance inside a *Chakra*.⁸

One day, after experiencing the *Prayer* like a micro movement in *Kutastha*, I experienced the same in frontal part of each *Chakra* coming down, then in the internal part of each *Chakra* while going up. The muscles of my face relaxed to the point that my mouth opened and I remained there with the mouth open, the chin slightly up, sweetly locked in that position.

Many times I practiced in that way. The memory of the period in which I was absorbed in this practice comes back to mind surrounded by a dreamy aura. Sometimes, only in jest, I ask myself if it actually existed. For more than two years I deviated from the common way of living. This was the deepest experience of my life. I practiced all day long, every day, if possible, out in the open.

Often an invincible drowsiness overpowered all my best efforts. On the inner screen of my awareness a lot of images were displayed like dreamlike visions. No help came from changing the position of the legs, practicing *Maha Mudra* several times, or interrupting the practice for a short pause. After some rest, I found out, however, that it did not solve my problem – sleepiness came back as soon as I resumed the practice. There was no way (coffee, a lot of rest...) to find some relief from it; there was nothing to do but to accept the situation and become accustomed to practice while never coming out of a drowsy state.

The situation improved by practicing at the seaside, amid people that did not disturb me but that I felt walking in the nearby. When I perceive they were looking at me, I pretended I was reading a book that I always had opened upon my knees. The beatitude was awful.

One day I was on a cliff not far from the beach. I had taken shelter from the sun, under a tree. At dusk I leaned my back against a rock and practiced keeping my eyes open. The sky was an indestructible crystal of infinite transparency and the waves were continually changing their color. Behind the black lenses of my sunglasses my eyes were full of tears. I cannot describe what I felt except in poetic form.

There is an Indian song (in the final part of the movie *Mahabharata*) whose lyrics are taken from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* - "I have met this

⁸ In my experience there was always the tendency to produce a counterclockwise internal movement.

Great Spirit, as radiant as the sun, transcending any material conception of obscurity. Only the one who knows Him can transcend the limits of birth and death. There is no other way to reach liberation but meeting this Great Spirit." When I listen to the beautiful voice of the Indian singer repeating "There is no other way", my heart knows that nothing has the power to keep me away from this state and this terrifically beautiful practice, which I will enjoy for the rest of my life.

[III] Experiences [I] and [II] can be framed in the theory of *Kriya* expressed in Chapter 8. On the contrary, there is an experience that lies outside it, this is what I call the "*Kriya* of the cells."

Apart from The Mother (Mère), it is difficult to find inspiring literature about other mystics who "think" their *Prayer* in their body. A small collection of written material about this practice has been published almost exclusively by specialized publishers in the esoteric field. These books can be found by rummaging among occult and magic texts. Kerning, Kolb, Lasario, Weinfurter, Peryt Shou and Spiesberger are just a few of the authors. Even though these mystics were born within Christianity and felt on the average in sync with its doctrines, they have been confined to a corner as if they were exponents of esoteric thought, or magicians whose aspirations were to develop secret powers. Any reader who has the patience to research this material, skimming through pages and pages of trivial theories and practices whose only goal is to confuse and mislead, will nonetheless find paragraphs of inimitable charm.

Often these *Prayers* are very short, reduced sometimes to a single vowel or syllable. The main technique is to choose a vowel and begin repeating and vibrating it in one's feet and gradually bringing it up to different parts of the body. The same process is repeated with another vowel and so on. The essence of this teaching is that any sound vibration, if repeated with an unfaltering concentration in the body, can reach its cells – "the whole body will be re-activated with new life and be reborn". [*Der brennende Busch: Der entschleierte Weg der Mystik*. Karl Weinfurter]

Here you will find an exhaustive illustration.

In my Italian alphabet we have 5 vowels. I utilize them in the following order: U- O - A - E- I.

[Italian pronunciation: U as in blue ; O as in fox; A as in father, E as in end, I as in India.]

Each vowel is chanted loud about half mala or a full mala:
U-U-U-U-U-U-U-U in all the body from feet to head,
then O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O..... A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A E-E-E-E-E-E-E-
E-E-E ... I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I....

After this, if we want, we can repeated everything but focusing on the Chakras as follows:

U-U-U-U-U-U-U-U (always 108 times) in first Chakra
A higher note of U-U-U-U-U-U-U-U in second Chakra; and O-O-O-O-
O-O-O-O..... in third Chakra; A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A in heart
Chakra; E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E ... in fifth Chakra; I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I.... in
Ajna Chakra .

Each time you practice this procedure in the morning you will be surprised how celestial you feel during the day!

[IV] I close the exposition of my main experiments with *Devotional Prayer* with what I call the "*Cross-Shaped Prayer*"

Following the suggestion of a text of *Sufi* inspiration, it came very natural to pray "cutting" so to say the heart *Chakra* both horizontally and vertically. Here also I utilized the Prayer *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*.

It was not difficult to perceive a horizontal movement of energy that from a point at the left (about 6 centimeters) of the heart *Chakra* moved toward a symmetrical point on the right, touching the *Chakra* from the back. During this movement, I mentally chanted *Om* in the first point, *Na* in *Anahata*, *Mo* in the point at the right; then *Bha* again in the point at the right, *Ga* in *Anahata*, *Ba* in the point at the left. Then I perceived a vertical movement of energy that from a point under *Anahata* (about 4 centimeters) came up to a symmetrical point over *Anahata*, touching *Anahata* from the back. During this movement, I mentally chanted *Tee* in the point under *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Su* in the point over *Anahata*. Then I completed the *Prayer* chanting *De* again in the point over *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Ya* in the point under *Anahata*. These four energetic movements that draw a cross, cutting in two different directions the heart *Chakra*, made up one cycle.

The breath was almost imperceptible but by bringing ahead the procedure it came spontaneous to utilize the breath. Inhalation and exhalation last about 3 seconds each. 108 cycles without hurry do not require more than

30 minutes.

To utilize the breath means that you inhale and mentally chant *Om* in the first point, *Na* in *Anahata*, *Mo* in the point at the right. Now you exhale while mentally chanting *Bha* in the point at the right, *Ga* in *Anahata*, *Ba* in the point at the left. Then you inhale mentally chanting *Tee* in the point under *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Su* in the point over *Anahata*. At last you exhale while mentally chanting *De* in the point over *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Ya* in the point under *Anahata*.

You will be struck by the efficacy of this procedure. It embodies the most direct way to "straighten up" our personality and consequently our spiritual path, that is to channel toward the right direction whatever effort we are doing in the spiritual field. Its effectiveness resides in the fact that it touches, trying to dissolve them, the dualities that prevent your tuning with the cardiac plexus. The dualities which I refer to are: *Ida* and *Pingala* (they flow sideways the backbone); *Prana* and *Apana* (they have their seat above and under *Anahata*.)

I think that this way of praying could be a decisive, heaven-sent aid for a person who experiences a split between the sphere of the mind and that of the heart – as we have discussed in this present chapter.

Note

This way of praying can be utilized while walking. Encouraged by the definitively established principle that *Prayer* is the central part of the spiritual path, (this of course came from the teaching of S.Teresa of Avila) I decided to take part in a pilgrimage, praying unceasingly in the way I have just explained. The program was to walk a full night in order to reach a beautiful sanctuary the following morning. While I walked, I had the sweet intuition that my mates' lives were wrapped up in love. I moved around as if my heart bore a brazier within. The center of what I call "me" was not in the brain, but in my heart. And in my heart I perceived a sort of tension of tenderness. The vision increased in power. My mates could not by instinct avoid loving or taking care of somebody – their own children for example. Each one of them had the power for great and incredible actions. As a consequence, no one had the certitude of being protected by painful experiences. Their life, being merged in love, was also merged in pain and tragedy. This duality is involved in earthly existence, interwoven with our being. The sentiment of this inescapable reality was experienced as a painful grip tearing my chest apart.

While I was merged in these thoughts, the sun rose over our path and the sanctuary appeared over a hill, something thawed in my depths and

there came such an intensity of love that the same experience turned into a "blissful" pain.

During the day I had the feeling that I was living no more here in this earthly plane but in the region beyond life. What I saw around me, seemed receiving the touch of an unworldly Beauty. I had the realization that the world beyond exists, is present, is marvelous and I, although living, was already part of it.

CHAPTER 15
IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS

[Introduction] *What happens to us, curious kriyabans*

[I] *Hesychasm – strictly tied to the theme: Prayer of the heart*

[II] *Inspiration from the Sufi*

[III] *Hint to the Radhasoami movement*

[IV] *Internal Alchemy (Nei Dan)*

[Introduction] What happens to us, curious kriyabans

Generally speaking, when we start the *Kriya* path, we are naïve. We would like to find a book that explains *Kriya* techniques in detail, with beautiful pictures and clear diagrams helpful and supportive of our efforts. We purchase what we find on the market. Often, skimming through those books, we are likely to be disappointed. We won't find what we look for: there is no practical information. The first reaction is to throw the book in the wastebasket.

Unfortunately most books on *Kriya* contain tedious rhetoric and innumerable repetitions, all drenched in useless references to abstruse philosophical theories such that apart from one or two interesting lines, the rest of the book can be discarded.

I don't dissuade anyone from reading a book: students must gain first-hand experience. For example, like thousand of persons, I also read avidly the commentaries, attributed to Lahiri Mahasaya, of some sacred writings. Lahiri Mahasaya's great disciple P. Bhattacharya, printed these interpretations. These books were little known for a long time, as they were written in Bengali. Recently they were translated into English. I studied these books with enthusiasm, hoping to find some key useful to my understanding of *Kriya*. I was disappointed. Their value, from an exegetic point of view, is almost null. It seems almost impossible to me that they really come from Lahiri Mahasaya: I am not able to find the same practical wisdom and tremendous realization expressed in his diaries and letters. I find rather a mind with an almost maniacal tendency to interpret each thing in the light of *Kriya*, as if centuries ago, the authors of those spiritual works knew exactly one by one all the *Kriya* techniques.

I think that Lahiri Mahasaya explained orally the meaning of some Indian sacred books. Perhaps, reading the verses of those texts, Lahiri Mahasaya

was transported from the force of his insight, forgot completely the starting point and, entranced, talked extensively and freely about the subtleties of *Kriya Yoga*. Very probably what he said on that occasion could have been taken as a specific comment to that text. Furthermore, it is possible that, in order to publish those hard-to-understand notes, the editor had them completed with parts of his own comprehension.

What is profitable to do

What I would suggest is to study *Kriya* in the light of other mystical traditions. I will bring here precise examples. Many words coming from these great mystical traditions can inspire us, fostering an unexpected deepening of our understanding of our spiritual discipline. *Kriya Yoga* is our life and these words can be precious.

The fact is that many spiritual paths contain some part of *Kriya*, often explained in a masterly way. The material they offer is too important to be neglected.

We *kriyabans* want to know Lahiri Mahasaya's *Original Kriya* but we cannot start our search without assess the sources toward which we are directed. We risk to to be swindled.

Let us try to reason: Lahiri received something from someone but all the rest was discovered by him, practiced by him. Probably what he discovered is not complicated. After all it does not deal with acquiring magic powers through complicated rituals but to overcome the obstacle of *Ida* and *Pingala* and enter the *Sushumna*, dissolve the various degrees of illusion condensed in the *Chakras* and enter *Kutastha*.

Perhaps Lahiri learned from the religious expressions that were near him: classic Yoga, Tantrism (*Kundalini*, *Maha Mudra*, *Yoni Mudra*, *Pranayama*...) but he found also the *Thokar* of the *Sufi* and perhaps *Internal Alchemy* also.

He simplified everything, tried to understand the core of each spiritual practice.... But what did he exactly teach, what suggestions did he give? It is not possible to know and it is not correct to live in the fixation that it is possible to reconstruct it. If we have this fixation we can lose the objectivity of the spiritual search, forget the meaning of spiritual path

If we want to have a fixation, let's fix upon to find the nucleus of all the great, authentic spiritual paths. *Kriya Yoga* is this nucleus. If it is not given to know what Lahiri taught verbatim, let us discover what is found in the

nucleus of the great mystical paths. Lahiri is surely very close to that.

[I] HESYCHASM – strictly tied to the theme: Prayer of the heart

Hesychasm (from Greek: ἠσυχασμός *hesychasmos*, meaning "stillness, rest, quiet, silence, tranquillity") is a Christian orthodox movement considering inner peace a basic necessity for pursuing the spiritual path. Mount Athos is the place where some monks developed a very effective method for achieving this inner peace. They utilize the "*Jesus Prayer*": (*Kyrie Iesou Christe, Yie tou Theou, Eleison me ton amartalon* – "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner") repeating it unceasingly during the day, guiding it into the space of the heart and reciting it in synchrony with the heart beats during their meditative sessions.

Hesychasts plan to realize Christ's injunction in the Gospel of Matthew which says: "Go into your closet to pray." They take very seriously the daily act of withdrawing inwardly: only when you have stilled your body, mind and heart, you can be fully open to the presence of the Divine. The body should be held immovable for a long time. Prayer helps to reject any useless thought. All this is perfect for a *kriyaban*.

Some say that the *Hesychast* procedures can be followed only by utilizing the "*Jesus Prayer*", not other Prayers or mysterious *Mantras*, whose meaning is hidden. This is not true! There is no infinite distance separating the *Jesus Prayer* from the Hindu *Japa*.⁹

A *kriyaban* can utilize the same methods, crossing the same well-defined, universal stages of internalization. One's chosen *Prayer*, even if not christian, pronounced with sincerity let good qualities like surrender, total trust in God, grow safely, leading to the complete loss of subjective self identity.

An easy way to come closer to the *Hesychast* teachings is to read *The way of the Pilgrim*. This is a novel written by "Anonymous" in the mid-nineteenth century and translated into English in 1930. I have already quoted this book: in the meeting between Orthodoxy and the West which has occurred over the past century, this book has exercised a great appeal.

⁹ We have heard statements like this one: "Behind some names like *Krishna*, *Rama*, or *Shiva* there are demons lying in wait. Once they are invoked by the use of the *Mantra*, the door is open for the devil to begin his theatrical productions, using sounds, images, dreams, and the imagination in general in order to drag the practitioner deeper into deception."

As for the story contained in that book, no one knows for certain if it is a true story about a particular pilgrim or a spiritual fiction created to propagate the mystical aspect of the Orthodox Christian faith. Some, on the basis of other witnesses, identify the author as the Russian Orthodox monk Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov. Whatever the historical truth, this pilgrim is the ideal representative of a vast category of people who spent their life visiting sanctuaries, churches, monasteries, the Athos Mountain, the Holy Land seeking God through the *Continuous Prayer*.

The story is about a pilgrim returning from the Holy Sepulcher who stopped at Mount Athos. One is immediately struck by the opening words: "By the grace of God, I am a Christian, by my actions, a great sinner, and by calling, a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth roaming from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack with some dried bread in it, and in my breast pocket a Bible. And that is all". Then we learn how the pilgrim at the start of his path was resolute about covering an infinite distance across the steppes, if he had to, in order to find a spiritual guide that would reveal to him the secret of *Continuous Prayer*. The novel is therefore a tale of the pilgrim's lifelong search for the teaching on how "to pray continually" – the way Saint Paul had recommended.

One day, the pilgrim's ardor was awarded when a spiritual teacher accepted him as a disciple, clarifying every detail of the practice. It is interesting to read how the Pilgrim was instructed to repeat the Jesus Prayer 3,000 times a day, then 6,000, then 12,000. By following this counsel, one day the pilgrim discovered that the *Prayer* had reached the mysterious secret zone in the heart. It happened spontaneously that the syllables of the *Prayer* were pronounced in synchronous with the pulse. From then on, whatever happened, it could not separate the pilgrim from God.

The central teaching of Hesychasm

The spiritual practice starts by murmuring the Prayer just audibly enough that you can hear yourself. Then you skip to mental repetition. Then you can make a few prostrations (bows from the waist, while the rest is immobile.) Twelve prostrations will suffice in the beginning. *Hesychasts* explain that the prostrations warm up the body and strengthen fervor in *Prayer*.

You sit comfortably and try to lengthen the rhythm of your breath. You breathe through the nostrils in a way that the breath produces a noise in the throat. ¹⁰ When the breath reaches a stable and regular rhythm, combine the *Prayer* with the ingoing and outgoing breath. Go ahead with

¹⁰ This is what *Hesychasm* teaches and everyone acknowledges this is pure *Yoga*.

this for a minimum of 15 minutes; after a couple of weeks practice for 30 minutes. Very useful is to count the number of repetitions on rosary beads. Then move on to pure mental repetition.

We have already described how "to find the place of the heart" (Chapter 14.) *Hesychasts* explain that the region between the eyebrows is not fit for all the phases of meditation. If the energy of your thought comes down to the level of the throat – as it normally happens while reciting the *Prayer* – it acquires an evocative power recharged with emotional values. As a consequence there is the tendency to become lost in mental associations. If you move the center of your awareness towards the heart center, the attention reaches complete cohesion. It is sustained by a higher intensity and nothing extraneous can disturb it.

Interesting is to see how at this point *Hesychasts* introduce a procedure very similar to our *Navi Kriya*. The instruction is to sit (comfortably and without strain) with your head bowed and your eyes directed toward the abdomen. You pray with concentrated focus on the *navel*. You try to enter it, as if the navel were only a "door". They explain that you will find a joyless and dull obscurity but with persistence, a limitless happiness will be reached. You will see the open space within the heart and contemplate the "*Uncreated Light*". Your heart will be filled with the most loving bliss! After achieving this state you will have a drastic realization that "what you have lived till now had been *nothing*."

Now you are ready to utter the *Prayer* in the space of the heart and put the attention on the meaning of its words. This guides one into the final abduction of the mind into God's dimension.

When this is done, you will feel a warm sensation originating from the heart region. This sensation, first mild, may turn into a sensation of solidification of the heart which is felt like a point surrounded by an endless pressure.¹¹ In this way you live, always having God in your remembrance. Life is different: soul and body live in harmony and this is the base of the spiritual life. This harmony is not lost during sleep.

I sleep, but my heart waketh
(*Song of Solomon 5:2*)

¹¹ St Theresa also explains the same concept: "From this pressure comes a strange experience of pain. We perceive the Divine, the endless Light and we burn of love. We realize the moment has not yet come to become one with that endless Light and Bliss: hence tears of intense longing.

All this is wisely and masterfully explained in the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. As you understand, the main reason for the work's attraction is the presentation of a pilgrim's life as the model pattern of life for those who truly wish to lead a spiritual life.

Surely, we *kriyabans* are "pilgrims", worn-out and exasperated, moving from a pseudo guru to another – each one woefully ignorant, slave of their own fixed idea: that we westerners are pushovers enjoying to be fooled.

Thanks to the inspiration coming from *The Way of a Pilgrim* we decide to test the practice of *Japa*, to murmur mentally our chosen *Prayer* for a couple of hours a day. Instead of just hanging around doing nothing of fantasizing about how to guess the original techniques of *Kriya Yoga*, we taste the divine honey of the *Contemplative Prayer*. This leads us to a sincere act of opening our heart to God. We shall gradually discover that the goal that the Russian Pilgrim had set for himself – achieving the state of *Continuous Prayer*, a real heaven on this heart, a state of unparalleled Beauty – is not a myth, it is feasible in our life.

[III] Inspiration from the SUFI

Soul stirring ardent feelings and sincerity are to be found in *Sufi* literature: the celebration of the Creator of the universe shines with a strength and amplitude beyond comparison. *Sufis* tell us of their love for earthly Beauty, letting you guess how they are carried away by their ardent form of Prayer, from the contemplation of that Beauty to the direct experience of the Divine.

Consider how great is the inspiration that we receive from images as this one:

I died as a mineral and became a plant; I died as plant and rose to animal; I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blest; but even from angelhood I must pass on: all except God doth perish. When I have sacrificed my angel-soul, I shall become what no mind e'er conceived. (*Rumi, Translated by A.J. Arberry*)

Many *Sufi* practice a private and silent *Adoration*. Their belief is that when you open your heart to *Allah* and utter words in His praise, *Allah* fills you with strength and inner peace:

When praying, the individual bows as a human person and gets up as God.
(*Al-Junayd*)

The word *Dhikr* [which is the *Thokar* procedure we learn in *Kriya*] is commonly translated as "remembrance". Essentially, the practice of *Dhikr* is a form of *Prayer* in which the Muslim expresses their remembrance of God. Through *Dhikr* the seed of remembrance is planted in the heart and nourished daily, until the tree of *Dhikr* becomes deeply rooted and bears its fruit. *Dhikr* is something of tremendous importance. *Sufis* teach that the purpose of *Dhikr* is to purify hearts and souls in order to move toward the Light of the Divine without being deflected by anything.

Interesting is to study how they begin the practice of *Dhikr* by uttering the *Mantra* aloud (*Dhikr* of the tongue) until a state of great absorption makes it impossible to go on in this way (aloud.) At this point the mental practice commences. By persevering assiduously in this way, the syllables chanted mentally are gradually effaced from our awareness and only the meaning of the *Prayer* remains. The mind becomes so calm that it is unable to think, while the deepest sentiments are awakened – the touch of Divine Recollection drives the mind crazy and the most intoxicating of joys begins to expand within.

"Heavens and earth contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me."

(*Prophet Muhammad conveying the words of God, Hadith Kudsi.*)

If you want to follow the *Sufi* path and at the same time utilize the *Kriya* techniques, you will encounter no difficulties whatsoever. Of course, you should be endowed with a strong self-teaching spirit. At the first place put those procedures in which the chanting of the "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" is accompanied by the movements of the head. Lahiri Mahasaya gave the Islamic mantra "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" to his Muslim disciples.¹²

We don't have the exact details of that procedure but it seems reasonable that the head was lifted (with or without the help of the breath) from under the navel up to the brain; after reaching the brain, it moved from the brain to the one shoulder, then to the other shoulder and then it hit the heart.

Some *Sufi* order explains that he who wants to guide his Prayer into his heart, first of all must keep the tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, his lips and teeth firmly shut, and hold his breath. Then starting with the word "*Lâ*", he makes it ascend from the navel to the brain.

¹² If you prefer to utilize a 12 syllable Mantra you can consider: Allahu la ilaha illa huwal hayyul qayyum (Allah—there is no god except He—is the Living One, the All-sustainer.) A good division into 12 parts is: 1- AL 2- LA 3-HU 4-LA 5-ILAHA 6- ILLA 7- HU 8-WAL 9-HAY 10-YUL 11-QAY 12-YUM

After "*Lâ*" is placed in the head, he puts "*ilâha*" in the right shoulder (and upper part of the chest under the right shoulder) with head bending to the right; "*illâal*" is put in the left shoulder (and upper part of the chest under the left shoulder) with head bending to the left. Then "*lâh*" is driven forcefully into the heart with the head bending down. From this position, "*Lâ*" is again brought into the head, while raising the chin.

At the end of the chosen number of repetitions, the phrase "*Muhammad rasul Allah*" is made to incline from the left to the right side, and then one says, "*My God, Thou art my goal and satisfying Thee is my aim.*"

When the number of repetitions of the technique increases in intensity, a deep intoxication is felt in the heart. One may abide by the number of repetitions given in *Kriya* schools (related with the practice of the basic form of *Thokar*) or can go beyond them in a completely different dimension. I know that the *Sufis* reach a number of repetitions that is inconceivable to a *kriyaban*.

For a good practice of *Thokar* I recommend the correct attitude which is not to prepare to experience something tremendously powerful but that to lose oneself in the beauty of the prayer, of the *Mantra* -- as the *Sufis* do. The simplest way is the best.

"When a servant of *Allah* utters the words "*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*" (There is none worthy of worship except Allah) sincerely, the doors of heaven open up for these words until they reach the Throne of *Allah*."

[III] Hint to the RADHASOAMI movement

Radhasoami is a monotheistic religion that has the *Omkar* Reality as "Single God." Well, the *Kriya* path is a process of refinement, in progressive stadiums, of the tuning with the *Omkar* vibration. *Omkar* is the final destination of *Kriya*, the unique essence that permeates every of its phases. This is what you will find in this path.... that's saying a lot.

Why should *kriyabans* give their time to study the *Radhasoami* cult? Because it has so many similarities with the *Kriya* path. It teaches procedures that are very similar to the techniques *Hong Sau*, *Om*, *Kriya Pranayama* and the technique that PY calls *Second Kriya*. Sri Yukteswar and P. Y. were part of this movement. Every *kriyaban* who feels a strong tie with PY's teachings will surely read with shivers of surprise what comes out from *Radhasoami* literature.

It is reasonable to infer that some disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya

belonged to a *Radhasoami* group and perhaps, without even being fully aware of this, added to *Kriya* some elements of theory and practice which belonged to this movement.

The *Radhasoami* path deserves our respect: there are teachings in it that complement wonderfully Lahiri's legacy. Let us say in general that the literary material produced by this movement is very inspiring for all those who are seeking to be in tune with the *Omkar* Realty.

Practical teachings

The following procedures in their entirety are called *Surat Shabda Yoga* (*Surat* means "soul," *Shabda* means "word". The "word" is the "Sound Current", the "Audible Life Stream" or the "Essence of the Absolute Supreme Being".

Meditation happens in the quiet of the early morning (before breakfast), and before sleep. Meditation begins with first relaxing the body and making it still. The position is comfortable either sitting in a chair or in a cross-legged position with spine erect, keeping spine, head and neck aligned naturally. It is important to gradually develop the ability of sitting relaxed and without any bodily tension.

The teacher gives the disciple a *Mantra*: its repetition helps the mind to come to complete rest. Repeating internally the *Mantra* in *Kutastha* helps one to raise the consciousness of the Self to higher regions. This is the key that helps transcending thought (time and space) and opens the door of the inner being. Disciples are invited to use the "5 Names of God": 1. *Jot Nirinjan* 2. *Ongkar* 3. *Rarankar* 4. *Sohang* 5. *Sat Nam*

One sits still, eyes closed, mentally repeating the *Mantra*, gazing into the middle of the darkness lying in front of him. If one perceives the inner light, the concentration is on it. Breathing is natural and free flowing. This process automatically draws the spirit-currents, normally dissipated all over the body, toward the spiritual center.

They explain that the seat of the Spirit is at the point between the two eyebrows. It is on this point that the devotee having closed his eyes must focus his attention. Concentration moves ideally from that point, horizontally out, 20-25 centimeters from the forehead. No tension is put on the eyes or forehead. The gaze is focused on the middle of the dark inner screen: gradually the darkness will fade to lighter and lighter shades, eventually opening into the infinite space.

When the inward gaze has brought to a sharp and steady focus, one finds that the darkness will fade and light will emerge. Concentrate in the middle of it and continue repeating slowly your *Mantra*. Eventually one

experiences the withdrawal of the sensory currents and a vary peculiar state sets in: like of "numbness". The Inner Light ceases flickering and develops into a bright spot in the central portion of the forehead. Gradually, this brilliance enlightens every constituent of the body from within. Every cell, every tendril is seen as sparkling with a reflection of this unique glow. The divine glow ends the darkness of ignorance. Perfect control of the flow of the thoughts and emotions ensues.

I have not found in *Radhasoami* the exercise of *Talabya Kriya* but only the following instruction. "Curl your tongue up to the roof of your mouth. Get the tip to touch the uvula make contact with *Amrita* (the divine nectar) that is constantly flowing through your body. Go further and enter the nasal passage. Usually you will experience the nectar only after much practice." It is claimed that this nectar is the "living water", the "bread of life" of which Jesus spoke.

Listen to internal sounds

This movement contemplate "teaching a spiritual path which is intentionally easier than those described in the ancient scriptures as it requires nothing more than sitting quietly and looking and listening within." They teach that there are no other means of spiritual liberation, except through the *Omkar* experience. Without actual, conscious, participation in the internally audible Life Stream, no one can ever escape the net of *Karma* and reincarnation, or ever become free and happy. They explain that no other system leads so easily to the highest regions of mystical experience.

In order to begin the upward journey, a devotee must learn to "go within." The procedure involves concentrating on the primordial vibration that activates the Universe, the so-called "Music of the Spheres." In order to hear the "divine sound", novices are asked to block their ears with the thumbs so they cannot hear any external sounds.

This technique is practiced using an arm prop. Some combine the listening to the inner sounds with the attempt to taste nectar (*Amrit*) by sticking the tongue to the roof of the mouth.

One can hear the inner sounds – the same described in *Kriya* literature. One listens to the internal sounds coming at first from the right side and ultimately from the top of the head. To some devotees this sounds like a bell. At a certain moment, it begins to fairly enchant you and to pull you up with increasing attraction and power. You will find yourself listening to it with rapt attention and deep delight, completely absorbed in it. You will never wish to leave it. This experience is deepened by perceiving the light

in *Kutastha*.

Utilizing the breath to increase the Omkar experience.

There are plenty of variations of that procedure adopted by the different *Radhasoami* groups. Here I hint to one variation which represent, in my opinion, the most effective and efficient way to merge into the *Omkar* dimension.

Inhale slowly, deeply, through your nose, and then slowly exhale, but before all the air is out you start breathing in again, and you just keep going, never quite letting all the air out. Perceive two currents in the right and in the left lobe of the brain, respectively. The inhaling current moves upward, the exhaling current moves downward. You can actually hear the sound of the in and out breath as "*so-hung*" (*soham*): "*so*" on the in-breath, "*hung*" on the out-breath. The Divine Word is the sound your breath makes. This technique, in the classic *Yoga* literature, is referred to as *Kewali Kumbhak* because if you are constantly aware of the breath and of *Soham* you achieve the breathless state. This perception, if it is repeated for a long time, will help you to perceive the astral sounds in the internal part of each ear. You will hear internal sound inside the right ear, then inside the left ear also.

Through a long practice of this breathing exercise, you will hear a ringing about an inch above the right ear. You will hear a ringing about an inch above the left ear. It may take you about five minutes to hear both tones at the same time. Each breath should give momentum to this circular movement. Perceive inside the central part of the brain a counterclockwise movement (when looked from behind.) When the energy in the two is balanced, a circular force field is formed. Follow both tonal vibrations from the ears into the center of the cranium, where they will meet and blend into a slightly different sound. At the apex of this procedure you will have the revelation of the spiritual eye. When the breath disappears, the movement goes ahead through the sheer power of concentration. The white spiritual light appears in the central part of your head. Go ahead, relentlessly absorbed in it. A deep Bell sound will lead you in the *Samadhi* state. This is the culmination of this particular practice.

Working with the Chakras

The *Radhasoami* movement believes that besides the 6 *Chakras* in the physical body, there are 6 *Chakras* in the gray matter of the brain, and 6 in the white matter. The 6 spinal *Chakras* are materialistic in nature, therefore they are not to be stimulated (you don't use specific *bija Mantras* to activate them as you do in *Kundalini Yoga*) but they are simply astrally

located. Strange as it may sound, long meditation upon the *Chakras* is not the right action to be done in order to achieve "*Mukti*" (liberation.) But by astrally locating them we acquire the ability to leave the human body at will – a practice sometimes referred to as "dying while living". The technique consists in assuming *Kechari Mudra*, focusing the internal gaze in *Kutastha*, while part of the attention locates the seat of a *Chakra* until its particular luminous vibration begins to appear. When this happens you don't dwell upon that *Chakra*; you focus on the physical location of the next each *Chakra* and so on. In other words, the pause upon a *Chakra* lasts only for the necessary time to have that subtle perception of it.

The location of the other 12 *Chakras* in the brain is gradually revealed by moving the *Prana* in a circular way inside the brain. A very slight breath can be used just at the very beginning of this procedure, then breath is forgotten and you use only the pure strength of your will.

After completing a great number of rounds, the soul has sufficient force to penetrate the 18th portal (this for *Radhasoamis* is the most elevated *Chakra* that is found in the white part of the brain). This portal opens on the true, indestructible "*Radhasoami*" – the ocean of the Spirit. This is the ultimate goal to be achieved via meditation practices.

Kabir and Guru Nanak inspired the Radhasoami movement

The writings of Kabir (1398 Benares - 1448/1494 Maghar), have deep similarities with the *Radhasoami* teaching. Kabir's concept of *Shabda*, which can be translated as "Word" (the word of the Master), can be related to the *Omkar* teaching. According to Kabir this *Shabda-Om* dispels all doubts and difficulties: is vital to keep it constantly in our consciousness as a living presence.

The literature about Kabir and Guru Nanak (1469 Nankana Sahib - 1539 Kartarpur) is very inspiring. Their teachings overlapped perfectly. Kabir, an illiterate Muslim weaver, was a great mystic, open to the vedantic and *yogic* influence, and an extraordinary singer of the Divine, conceived beyond name and form. The poems and sentences ascribed to him are expressed in a particularly effective language that remains permanently emblazoned in the reader's memory.

In the last century, Rabindranath Tagore, the great mystic poet of Calcutta, rediscovered the reliability of his teachings and the power of his poetry, and made beautiful translations of his songs into English. Kabir conceived Islam and Hinduism to be two roads converging toward a unique goal. He was convinced of the possibility of overcoming the barriers that separate

these two great religions. He did not seem to base his teaching upon the authority of the holy writings; he shunned the religious rituals. Kabir taught not to renounce to life and become a hermit, not to cultivate any extreme approach to the spiritual discipline, because it weakens the body and increases pride. God has to be recognized inside of one's own soul - like a fire fed by continuous care, burning all the resistances, dogmas and ignorance. This is beautifully stated in Kabir's: "One day my mind flew as a bird in the sky, and entered the heavens. When I arrived, I saw that there was no God, since He resided in the Saints!"

Hinduism gave Kabir the concept of reincarnation and the law of *Karma*; Islam gave him the absolute monotheism - the strength of fighting all the forms of idolatry and the caste system. I found the full meaning of the *yogic* practice in him. He says that there is a garden full of flowers in our body, the *Chakras*, and an endless beauty can be contemplated if the awareness is established in the "thousand-petal Lotus".

Who is there playing upon a flute in the middle of the sky? The flute is being played in *trikuti* (eyebrows center), the confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna. The sound emanates from the north! Cowherd girl, hear the sound of the flute and lo, they are all hypnotized by the *nada*." "It is a music without strings which plays in the body. It penetrates the inner and the outer and leads you away from illusion." (Kabir).

Beloved Guru Nanak gave the same teaching. He disapproved of ascetic practices and taught instead to remain inwardly detached whilst living as a householder. "Asceticism doesn't consist in ascetic robes, or in having a walking staff, nor in visiting burial places. Asceticism is not mere words; asceticism is to remain pure amidst impurities!" Traditionally, release from the bondage of the world was sought as the goal, therefore the householder's life was considered an impediment and an entanglement. In contrast, in Guru Nanak's teaching, the whole world became the arena of spiritual endeavor. He was bewitched by the beauty of creation and considered the panorama of nature as the loveliest place for worship of the Divine. He expressed his teachings in Punjabi, the spoken language of northern India. His disregard for Sanskrit suggested that his message was without reference to the existent Holy Scriptures. He made a deliberate attempt to completely cut off his disciples from all the ritualistic practices, orthodox modes of worship, and from the priestly class.

His teaching demanded an entirely new approach. While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, he described God as not wholly unknowable. God must be seen through "the inward eye", sought in

the "heart". He emphasized that the revelation of this is to be achieved through meditation. In his teachings there are hints as to the possibility of listening to an ineffable internal melody (*Omkar*) and to taste the nectar (*Amrit*).

"The Sound is inside us. It is invisible. Wherever I look I find it."
(Guru Nanak).

[IV] INTERNAL ALCHEMY (NEI DAN)

The *Taoist Internal Alchemy* is a spiritual discipline, the esoteric core of Taoism, the mystical tradition of ancient China. My first reference book was *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality* by Charles Luk & Lu Kuan. My attention was considerably stirred up; I photocopied many pages, cut out the most important pieces, put them in order and glued them onto four sheets of paper, highlighting the four phases of *Taoist Internal Alchemy*.

When I read the description of the basic procedure (*Microcosmic Orbit*) of this ancient discipline, I saw it was very similar to *Kriya Pranayama* – but not exactly equal! However, studying deeply the former helps us to penetrate the mysteries of the hidden laws of the latter. Various metaphors used to explain its mechanism of the *Micro Orbit* (bagpipe turned upside-down, flute with no holes...) brought back to my mind, with surprising similarity, some weird explanation about *Kriya Pranayama* which I had once received from an eminent source.

The difference between *Microcosmic Orbit* and *Kriya Pranayama* is that in the first the energy goes down in the body touching not the *Chakras* but the points on the surface of the body which are connected with the *Chakras*: Adam's apple, the central region of the sternum, the navel, the pubic region and the *Perineum*. By going ahead with the practice, the difference between the two procedures fades away, as the result produced upon the body's energy is the same.

I was surprised: perhaps *Kriya Yoga* was the *Taoist Internal Alchemy*, taught within an Indian context, with clear use of both purely Indian techniques and procedures (like *Navi Kriya*) that were Indian only in appearance? Actually, *Kriya Yoga* is a discipline which could be described through the symbols of two different cultures. Surely *Kriya Yoga* is definitely deeper and richer than *Tantric Kundalini Yoga*.

I thought that it was not a weird idea that the mythical *Babaji* was/is one of the "immortals" of the *Taoist* tradition. My enthusiastic response derived

from the intuition that the study of the *Internal Alchemy* would prove to be absolutely profitable.

[I] Small Heavenly Orbit (Lesser Celestial Circuit)

The first stage is the basis of the whole internal alchemical process, it consists in activating the *Small Heavenly Orbit*.

Let your breath free. Raise your eyebrows, become sensitive to the internal light. Try now to intuitively perceive this light in the "frontal component" of each *Chakra*. "Frontal" means that its location is on the anterior part of the body. After *Kutastha*, the awareness goes down, through the tongue, in the superior frontal part of the throat (this is the frontal component of the fifth *Chakra*.) The perception of the internal light in that point happens for few second. Then the awareness goes down in the central region of the sternum... you perceive internal light... then in the navel... then in the pubic region and finally in the perineum. Then the concentration moves upwards behind the vertebral column and the same perception of light happens in the second *Chakra*; then in the third one... and so up to the *Medulla*, the occipital region, the *Fontanelle*, ending again in the *Kutastha* where you stop for a longer time. Do this only mentally for weeks, then utilize the deep breathing (just as we do in *Kriya Pranayama*.)

Awareness and energy (Qi) are then raised during inhalation along the *Governor* channel at the back of the spine and let flow down along the *Functional* channel during exhalation. The purpose of this action is "to bring Three to Two, Two to One". What does it mean this last riddle?

"Three" are the three energies: **Jing**=sexual energy, **Qi**= love energy and **Shen**=spiritual energy .

The sexual energy is not only what this name implies but also the agent that makes us rejoice in the sensory perceptions, and that which gives us the strength and the determination to fight the battle of life and to achieve all the things we need (unfortunately, another reason we fight is to achieve superfluous things but this is another problem...).

Love Energy is a deep feeling toward another person, living creatures, life in general and also the joy felt beholding a work of art. It is the fuel of fair-minded actions born out of inner, noble instincts and ethical laws.

The Spiritual Energy vibrates during the highest peaks of aesthetic contemplation, where the vast prophetic visions may manifest.

It has been explained that these three energies derive from one unique reality, their division originated at our birth and reinforced by education and social living. Now, the *Small Heavenly Orbit* [our *Kriya Pranayama* works exactly in the same way] redress this primeval harmony. Breath after breath, the sexual thoughts (which seem to be reinforced) will turn into love thoughts. The energy of love acquires strength, the determination not to succumb to any obstacle; it is then raised into the head where it mixes with the energy of the Spirit. In this way any split in our personality disappears: our many-sided life begins to flow naturally, unimpeded toward Spirit. We understand that the *Small Heavenly Orbit* [and therefore our *Kriya Pranayama* as well] bring about a *permanent healing action upon our personality*.

While through *Kundalini Yoga* one is just trying to climb up to the crown of their head to experience there divine ecstasy, in the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* one utilizes that state to reach the body, nurture and transform it. It is well-known that *Kriya Yoga* is substantially a path of "ascent". This means that it is incomplete and has to be balanced by a movement downward, until one settles in a still point of balance and harmony. Many religious paths teach to maintain, rather to cultivate as a virtue, the division between matter and spirit, and sexuality is repressed as unholy. This point is the main cause of nerve-wracking conflicts in spiritually minded people.

¹³

No tradition respects the whole mystery of human nature as deeply as the *Taoist Internal Alchemy*. One who wants to follow the spiritual path should listen to the practical wisdom that this path embodies. Thus could avoid a wide range of problems. Only commonsense, love for natural laws and meditation-born intuition promotes the true self-inquiry which leads to Self Realization. One should consider the teaching received by the tradition,

¹³ Some *kriyabans* develop sexual thoughts and become sexually aroused during the initial deep breaths of their *Kriya Pranayama*. We will never get tired of repeating: this is perfectly normal! Those who assume *Kechari Mudra*, either proper or a simplified form of it, and concentrate, during exhalation, on the flow of *Prana* in the body (it is very beneficial to visualize it passing through the tip of the tongue into the throat and into the body, each part of the body, as a beatific, healing rain restoring life in each cell) will immediately experience how sexual thoughts disappear and become pure love. This great energy of love will gradually turn into pure aspiration for the spiritual goal.

feel heavy conditioning, see all their limits and dangers and take the courage to rectify them.

[III] Guiding the energy to the lower Dantian

We know that the *Dantian* (here is indicated as the "*Lower Dantian*") has the dimensions of a ball whose diameter is about two-and-a-half inches long. In order to localize its position, one has to concentrate on the belly button, to come about one and a half inches behind and below to the same extent.

After a normal deep inhalation (which increases the energetic sensation in the brain) a long exhalation guides the energy in the *Dantian*. This action is repeated many many times – visualization helps to compress this energy to the size of a pearl in the center of *Dantian*. Internal heat increases.

This description of the second phase of the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* completes our understanding of the *First Kriya level* because it shows the necessity of practicing *Navi Kriya*. Here we understand that through the simple *Navi Kriya* [the same happens through the advanced technique of *Navi Kundalini*] the energy stored in the head (as a result of the *Kriya Pranayama*), should be conveyed into the *Dantian*.

We *kriyabans* say that after the mixing of *Prana* and *Apana* through *Kriya Pranayama*, the *Samana* current enters into play. *Internal Alchemy* has much more inspiring expressions like: "Coming back to the center"; "The union of heaven and earth"; "The birth of the golden flower"; "The creation of the dazzling gem"; "The creation of the elixir of immortality."

What we need to understand is that becoming stable in this unfathomable deep region of *Dantian* means to be born to the spiritual life. [This is the same event described in the teachings of *Hesychasm*.]

[III] Pushing the energy up to Middle Dantian

What we do in our *Second Kriya Level* (deep work in each *Chakra*, moving *Kundalini* up and down through the *Chakras*...) is done inside the *First Internal Alchemy phase*. The *Third Internal Alchemy phase* is conceived to reach the "*Middle Dantian*" which is the heart region.

How is this procedure done? It is difficult to understand which procedures are prescribed by *Internal Alchemy* because in the relating literature, some hints about this topic are abnormally embellished with a lot of evocative terms, metaphors which make almost impossible to have a clear idea of what they mean in practice.

What I have understood is this: you simply focus on the vibration produced in the *Lower Dantian*. That vibration ascends spontaneously into the heart region and illuminates the "Space of the heart." [The space of the heart is the *Middle Dantian*.] The contemplation of the Light shining there brings the manifestation of the "true serenity." This reveals one's *fundamental nature*. The spiritual experience happens without mental pollution. The devotion knows no limits.

Some schools (near to the Tibetan teachings) add a small detail about the way to breathe. Precisely the inspiration that was normal at the beginning of the process becomes typical of the *Reversed Breath* (we have described in the second part of the book.) In practice you inhale deeply drawing inward the abdomen contracting and holding the anal region. The breath becomes more and more subtle. The energy that is found in the abdomen condenses more and more and is invited to come up in the region of the heart.

In our *Kriya Yoga* we learn to reach this state through *Thokar*.

[III completion] We do not stop at the Middle Dantian but push the energy up to the Higher Dantian

The *thrusting channel* runs like a tube from the *Perineum* to the *Fontanelle* through the center of the body in front of the spine. We increase the *Prana* inside it. This is not a new phase of our work but the completion of the third phase. The purpose is to prepare the momentum necessary to set in motion the *Macrocosmic Orbit*.

In our *Kriya Yoga* we reach the same result through the practice of *Navi Kundalini* (which happens as completion of *Thokar*.) After cutting the heart's knot we try to pass through the channel that PY called "*Tunnel of Eternity*" – entering the white star of the spiritual eye reaching the radiance of *Sahasrara*.

[IV] Greater Celestial Circuit

The *Fourth Stage* is a great event which happens when the time is ripe through the full mastery of the *Third Stage*.

When the energy increased in the *thrusting channel* reaches the *Upper Dantian* (*Kutastha*: the region between the eyebrows) a spontaneous phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body, (the *Macrocosmic Orbit*) which has vast implications, happens. [I will try to describe them in the next Chapter dealing with the so called *Kriya of the cells*.]

The three energies (sexual, love and spiritual) are mixed harmoniously, they have created the *elixir of immortality*. It trickles down into the body and feeds every cell. This happens in a state called "*prenatal breathing*" which is a movement of internal energy that gives perceptions similar to those obtained through the *Microcosmic Orbit* but is now experienced in the breathless state (*Kevala Kumbhaka*). This refined experience makes the spiritual path complete: the Divine is infused into our body. The spiritual path does not end with a flight out of the body toward the rarefied dimensions of the Spirit. The *Macrocosmic Orbit* discloses undreamed of scenarios. It appears as an experience of perfect Beauty.

From a certain moment onwards, descending movement turns into an indefinite pressure on all the cells of the body. This event widens – in an unexpected way – the boundaries of the awareness. Experiencing this means to have entered at the full the last part of the spiritual path.

We have all the reasons to believe that this is the same experience called in *Kriya Yoga: Pranayama with Internal breathing*. (vedi capitolo 16.) This is a peculiar phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body. The breath is absent, the body is loaded with *static Prana*. The obstruction at the base of the spine is perfectly removed. One perceives the circulation of the energy as an "internal breath." A person enters spontaneously a state of well being and perceives a great infusion of energy coming down as a golden liquid outside and inside the body, in all its cells.

We say that the breath is totally internalized.

CHAPTER 16
THE KRIYA OF THE CELLS

- [I] *How to direct our efforts toward this supreme achievement*
- [II] *First effects immediately after the practice*
- [III] *What happens after the initial euphoria*
- [IV] *Ascending and Descending phase of each spiritual path*
- [V] *Has our destiny in store for us a similar suffering?*
- [VI] *The alternative*

Let us consider the experience that Lahiri Mahasaya refers in his diaries when, a couple of years after his initiation in the Himalayas, wrote: "Following an excellent *Pranayama*, the breath is wholly internally oriented. After a long period, today the purpose of my descent (on earth) has been fulfilled!" What does it mean "wholly internally oriented"? The breath has been transformed into an internal reality: it has become a mental substance.

PY describes the same event foretelling what a skillful *kriyaban* will experience "...the current will then automatically move by itself and the joy experienced will be indescribable." He is referring to a higher form of *Pranayama* where the energy moves by itself, without our action of guiding it through our *Kriya* breathing.

Let us try to conceive what is this *Kriya Pranayama with Internal Breath*, or this *Kriya of the cells* as I call it.

I think that the *Taoist Internal Alchemy* (see Chapter 15) could come in our aid. We have considered the three main energies in the human body: Jing (sexual energy), Qi (love energy) e Shen (spiritual energy.) We have seen how, through the Microcosmic orbit, sexual energy is transformed in pure love and this in spiritual aspiration. This Alchemy happens gradually in the three *Dantian* – in the abdomen, in the heart region and in the upper *Dantian* (*Kutastha*: the region between the eyebrows.) Then a spontaneous phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body happens. As we have seen this circulation is called Macrocosmic orbit. This envisages a great infusion of energy coming down as a golden liquid outside and inside the body, in all its cells. Years of *Kriya Pranayama* prepare this great event. If you have experienced the state of calm *Prana* in your body after *Kriya* practice, you are in the right mental and physical state to try this new way of perfecting *Kriya Pranayama*. What you have sown is ready to flower.

[I] How to direct our efforts toward this supreme achievement

1 Lengthen the exhalation and let a new kind of energy appear in the abdominal region

What you have learned about the role of the navel during *Kriya Pranayama* should be intensified more than usual. During inhalation expand the abdomen by pushing out the navel; during exhalation concentrate intensely on the navel as it moves toward the spine. Focus your attention on the increase of energy in the abdominal region. This detail is intensified at maximum. Perceive a peculiar ecstatic sensation originating from the abdominal region.

Now make exhalation last a lot more than inhalation. Go ahead breathing, increasing the length of the exhalation: you will have the impression that it can be *lengthened indefinitely*. At a certain point you will find yourself becoming crazy with joy – sometimes with the chin slightly lowered, directed toward the navel as if it were a magnet. The pleasurable sensation will become orgasmic. The body will remind you the necessity of inhaling, interrupting the progressive increase of this joy. At this point, few breaths separates you from the, coveted state where all effort ceases. Very useful, but not indispensable, to cross this veil, is to make use of a fragmented exhalation.

Optional

Consider dividing your exhalation into about 20-30 fragments or even more. This is in itself pleasurable, especially when each fragment tends to become microscopic. When you succeed, make this process more and more subtle. The exhalation becomes endless while a particular radiation of joy raises from the abdomen to the chest and to the head! The diaphragm with micro upward pushes helps to raise this energy. Go ahead until the fragments of breath seem to have practically dissolved! When you feel the need, inhale feeling energy rising from *Muladhara* in the spine. Repeat the process again and again, you will never exhaust the beauty of this procedure.

2 Fill with a higher form of Prana the cells of your body

During inhalation visualize a powerful vibration departing from the sexual zone, absorbing the energy there and guiding it into the head. Increase the intensity of the sound in the throat. Before starting the exhalation strengthen the intention of finding (or opening) an internal way to reach the cells of your body. During exhalation create a strong pressure of the awareness on the whole body. No one iota of vitality in the air should leave your nose; all the vitality should be directed into the body. Perceive that the

descending flow of energy permeates all the parts of the body, muscles, internal organs, skin, cells as if countless hypodermic needle injected energy and light in the cells of your body. The *Sheee* sound of exhalation helps to infuse energy in the cells of your body. Be inspired by thinking that the *Sheee* sound be like "the cry that breaks the hardest rock" – thus Sri Aurobindo was referring to the power of *Bija Mantra*, the "sacred sound of the *Rishi*" – revealing:

...the treasure of heaven
hidden in the secret cavern
like the young of a bird,
within the infinite rock
(*Rig-Veda, I.130.3*)

If you are not able of producing perfectly the *Sheee* sound described by Lahiri Mahasaya, try all your best to create it in your mind, in other words try to mentally "produce" it.

3 Pass through the barrier of breath

Forget the breath and try to make the whole process go ahead through your will power. Visualize that the *Prana* comes up with *Haaa...* and goes down with *Sheee...* The mental repetition of these two syllables helps the circulation of the *Prana* even without breath. With the breath practically nonexistent energy streams out of the *Muladhara* rapidly going to the head and then slowly spreading through the body. The ascent is a very short act. So short that is almost not noticeable. You have the impression that only exhalation exists.

This sublime experience is like breathing in all atoms. The great barrier has been crossed: the breath as a physical fact does not exist, there is no air coming out your nose. There is an inner source of fresh energy making you lighter and filling you with strength. The sensation is reminiscent of a brisk walk in the wind. This can not merely be called a joyous state: it is a feeling of infinite safety surrounded by a crystalline state of immobility.

Open your eyes and consider not only your body but every thing before and around you as your body. You will perceive a continuous sound of *Om*. This state is very different from what we call a cyclic phenomenon. This process seem to involve a different energy from the one we move in *Kriya Pranayama*. It does not flow from one point to another. It is timeless, it transcends time. It is a *static Prana*. It has no current flow direction. It's an energy field without a flow; it just is there.

Remarks

A great source of inspiration is meditating outdoors with eyes open and with the adamant will of becoming one with a mountain, a lake, or a tree in front of us. Open your eyes and consider everything surrounding you as your body. During *Sheee*, visualize the light that enters not only the cells of your body but, at the same time, the atoms of everything. You will perceive a continuous sound of *Om*. This is the confirmation that you are heading in the right direction. You can avoid the practice of *Kechari Mudra*: sometimes it might give the paradoxical impression of hindering your efforts. *Kechari* isolates you from the surrounding environment, while here we should feel one with it.

[III] First effects immediately after the practice

This practice has an immediate effect upon our mood. To say it shortly, even a rainy day of November will seem to evoke the mood of the clearest days of Spring. The simple fact of adding awareness to the exhalation phase of your *Kriya* breath, visualizing it going toward each cell of the body has surprising effects. The beauty of living, like wine from a full cup, seems to overflow from every atom and fills the heart. You perceive it as if you had vainly hoped for years that the Divine would be part of your daily life, without ever seeing any result.... then suddenly you discover that the Divine has always been there.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
and the undying suns here burn.

(*Sri Aurobindo, "A God's labor"*)

The sense of beauty and satisfaction is great, as if an impressionist painter had finally succeeded in actualizing their visionary conception conveying the idea that the painted inert substance of matter is composed of multicolored particles of light, like innumerable suns radiating in a brilliant transparency.

This *Pranayama* is a basically healthy process. It seems to destroy any mental prison created by you. Your psychological problems, especially those connected with intricate and thwarted plans for the future, appear as an illusion out of which you have emerged definitively. The life which up until that point had been full of asperities, now seems to stretch out evenly toward the future where you do not perceive insuperable obstacles.

[III] What happens after the initial euphoria

In the following days unexpected consequences could be observed. The image of an anthill that's been disturbed comes to mind: countless ants move at a frenetic pace. In a similar way, our environment appears more agitated, at times aggressive toward us. We feel as if "not having a skin anymore." For instance, after a long absence some acquaintances return with demanding challenges that require radical changes of attitude on our part. We are in trouble facing intricate, unsolved issues that in the past we cleverly succeeded in avoiding.

If we go ahead undeterred with our practice of *Kriya*, we shall be stunned by a very peculiar event. We are under the impression that we are perceiving – not only through our awareness but, in a strange way, also through our body – what is passing in another person's consciousness. We are not talking about telepathy. We experience a mood which is not our own, which has no reason to exist and we vainly search for reasons in order to justify it. When, after a couple of days, it vanishes, only then we realize that all was a kind of subtle deception: the strange mood came from another person's consciousness; indeed we made new acquaintances and talked with them being sincerely touched by their narration.

If this is true, we must deduce that our practice of *Pranayama with internal breath* has an effect on the surrounding world! It seems impossible, a dream. Even after many similar episodes, you cannot know whether this is simply an impression or a real fact. Why by guiding breath and awareness into the cells of our body, do we obtain such important results having so tangible effects upon the material, emotive and psychological planes?

Can we accept the fact that our spiritual practices have an influence on the surrounding reality by making things happen that would not otherwise happen (or that would have happened anyway, but in a different way.) Such event has all the appearance of a figment of our imagination. The principle of causality implies that the world ignores what happens inside our consciousness. It is well known how good our mind is when it comes to clutching at straws; but when a similar episode is observed with due detachment and, as the days and the months go by, it repeats with mathematical precision, then the evidence of this phenomenon cannot be denied. I know that what I am writing evokes the most bold of *New Age* manias. It is only after listening to similar effects by other researchers and on account of my commitment to total sincerity, that I have made up my mind to write about this particular experience.

[IV] Ascending and Descending phase of each spiritual path

In my opinion, each authentic spiritual path has an "ascending" and a "descending" phase. The "ascending" phase is what is commonly intended with "mystic path." The "descending" phase usually happens automatically and it is the phase where the mystic acts for the good of other persons. Usually we never take time to describe and understand the descent phase.

It is not easy to realize factually that a single person's spiritual realization has an effect not only upon those who are in tune with that person, but also upon those who are simply physically in the nearby? The spiritual efforts of an individual influence those who are around. Moving toward Spirit means acting in inconceivable ways to reason. We have the intention of living peacefully, always attuned to divine joy. Often we affirm to love mankind as "our greatest Self" and we have learned to send "good vibrations" and "pious intentions" to humanity. But these are just words.

By studying the biographies of mystics, we often find examples of how they accepted to take upon themselves the suffering of other persons. They did not refuse to receive, to make it disappear through *Prayer*, part of the obscurity in which humanity lives. I remember how St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) had many times all the pains of death by being metaphysically united to some wounded soldiers who were dying on the field of battle, far away from home.

Lahiri Mahasaya himself suffered. Think of the famous episode when he "drowned" in the body of people who were shipwrecked in a far away sea. He had not endeavored to attract that experience to him. But he fully accepted it and we don't know, but we can guess, what supreme solace he was able to bring to those poor souls.

[V] Has our destiny in store for us a similar suffering?

Lahiri Mahasaya and other saints are a mirror for all *kriyabans*. What happened in their body may one day happen in our body. Surely we are far away from Lahiri Mahasaya sublime state of consciousness: we have not the spiritual realization, devotion and surrender of the saints, but we can patiently turn our heart toward this new dimension of the spiritual path. If we constantly and inexorably exclude any difficult achievement from our dreams and goals, our spiritual venture risks falling apart.

What we can do now is to perfect endlessly our *Kriya Pranayama* knowing that it will lead us on a higher plan of spiritual realization. In particular, each effort to come near to the practice of *Pranayama with Internal Breath*

will guide our awareness to touch the *Collective Unconscious*. Through this practice we do not move toward a spiritual dimension wholly cut off from the physical plane but toward the deeper and most real dimension of the Divine inside the matter, inside the consciousness of all mankind. The cells of the body are like doors that lead exactly to that dimension. All this will become part of our lives not as an object of theoretical speculation but as a practical discovery.

Lahiri Mahasaya said: "The whole universe is in the body; the whole universe is the final Self." It is now time to realize what he meant by such statement!

[VI] The alternative

Sri Aurobindo wrote:

Seeking heaven's rest or the spirit's wordless peace,
Or in bodies motionless like statues, fixed
In tranced cessations of their sleepless thought
Sat sleeping souls, and this too was a dream.

(*Sri Aurobindo, Savitri; Book X - Canto IV*)

What does it mean: "... and this too was a dream" ? We cannot live with a mind always focused upon enjoying elated emotions or spiritual pleasures, with a heart fictitiously open to universal love but in reality hard and resistant like a stone. In this situation our meditative state instead of a reality of enlightenment risks to resemble a chronic state of drowsiness. Those who want to live only in an heavenly dimension without any disturbance, want to live in illusion – a golden illusion, but in any case *illusion*.

By virtue of a universal law, the very last phase of our spiritual path may contemplate a hard experience: that we share part of other's suffering. This event might imply a momentary loss of our spiritual realization. Indeed this is a difficult test, that only true love can justify; such test must be overcome. But let us don't be desperate.

There is a sentence attributed to the mythical *Babaji* (quoting Bhagavad Gita): "*Even a little bit of the practice of this (inward) religion will save you from dire fears and colossal sufferings.*" In my opinion "dire fears and colossal sufferings" originates from the contact with the quagmires of *Collective Unconscious*. Well, the achievement of *Pranayama with internal breath* will surely mitigate that suffering.

Shall we be able to cross with untamed serenity the various layers of obscurity that are in us and in the mind of our brothers? The alternative is to wait that life itself exert upon us a sharp tug downward and force us to focus the attention on the body.

Some spiritually minded people have forgotten the world and are lost in their dream. How can you explain their negative moods and depression? Some times they know the blackest desperation. St. John of the Cross named that state: "The dark night of the soul." He explained that those souls feel as if God had suddenly abandoned them; they doubt the validity of their own spiritual path. Although their conscience is totally turned to God, they keep on believing they are sinners, without any possibility of salvation. In a lengthy and profound absence of light and hope, even if they have the drive to go ahead with outward expressions of faith, they reach the stage where they doubt the existence of God. Therefore they feel irremediably impure, lost for eternity.

It is also true (but less frequent) that there were souls who had not forgotten the world, rather they had no other goal than to diminish the suffering of their fellow creatures, and yet they have known the "Dark night of the soul."

Well, I believe that such sufferings could be mitigated or even skipped by learning to guide their awareness into the cells of their body. Our body is our greatest protection. When it seems impossible to go back to that deep inspiration which time ago guided our steps toward the spiritual path, when the innocence seems lost and we see only a dark wall blocking definitively any effort of ours to consecrate our life to the Divine, that is the moment to go down with the method we feel more congenial, towards the cells of our body to meet the dimension, known to few, that the Mother evoked describing the: "abysses of truth and the oceans of smile that are behind the august picks of truth." ¹⁴

¹⁴ You can also utilize *Japa*, thinking its syllables in the body.

By perfecting our *Pranayama with internal breath* we come near a incomparable experience of perfect Beauty: the Divine immanent in matter. I believe that Sri Aurobindo was relating to this possibility when he wrote:

Now the wasteland, now the silence;
A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.
(*Sri Aurobindo, from: "Journey's End"*)

Final note: Some remarks about the concept of Collective Unconscious

The *Collective Unconscious* represents a part of our *Unconscious* common to mankind as a whole. Jung¹⁵ introduced terminology which permits us to probe an aspect of the mystical path which would otherwise risk being totally extraneous, not only to our capability of expression but also to our comprehension. Jung discovered that the human psyche is made up of layers or strata, parts of it *shared* by all humanity and called the *Collective Unconscious*.

To Freud the *Unconscious* was similar to a depot full of old "removed" things that we cannot recall to consciousness - refused by a nearly automatic act of the will. Jung discovered a deeper level of it: the *Collective Unconscious* which links all human beings by the deepest layers of their psyche. The contents of the *Collective Unconscious* have never been part of our immediate conscious perception, and when an infinitesimal part of it bursts forth into our psyche, we are momentarily dismayed.

However the influence that the *Collective Unconscious* has upon our life, is, in some occasions, vital! When we feel helpless as we deal with difficult problems, this deeper layer of our unconscious mind put us in touch with the totality of human experience, a vast store of objective wisdom and perfect solutions. This can save us!

A typical outcome of contacting the *Collective Unconscious* is to witness a countless series of "*Meaningful Coincidences*." They happen in so many ways

¹⁵ I believe that Jung's discoveries are precious for the understanding of the mystical path – perhaps more than many other concepts formulated during the 20th century. Even though his statements never lacked the necessary prudence, the scientific community never forgave him for dealing with matters that were not considered a part of Psychiatry – such as Alchemy (deemed an absurdity), the realm of myths (considered the result of a senseless imagination) and, more than any other thing, the great value he attributed to the religious dimension; which he considered something universal and fundamentally sane, instead of a pathology. Presently the enthusiasm for his writings remains, especially among those who study topics of a spiritual and esoteric nature.

that we cannot even adumbrate. Jung put a basis for the rational study of this subject in his book *Synchronicity: An a-causal Connecting Principle*.

To explain with simple terms what this is all about, we say that in addition to causality – that which acts in a linear direction of progression of time and puts in connection two phenomena that happen in the same space at different times – we hypothesize the existence of a principle (a causal) that puts in connection two phenomena that happen at the same time but in different spaces. The key point to emphasize is that they have a meaning that ties them together and it is this fact that arouses deep emotion in the observer.

Now, if two events happen simultaneously but in different spaces, it is clear that causality (cause-effect chain: one has caused the other or vice versa) is impossible. There would be nothing strange in these events of themselves, save one fact: the observer considers them as a *meaningful coincidence* – like a miracle, something that the universe wants to communicate to him. The observer is intimately touched by what is perceived as a manifestation of the mysterious dimension of life.

An example will help us to better understand this concept. A youth moves a plant in a vase, which falls, breaks into pieces and the young man looks at the wounded plant. He thinks with intensity about the moment when his girlfriend gave the vase to him as a present. There is emotion and pain in him, the event is feared as an omen. At the same time his girlfriend (this will obviously come to be known subsequently) is writing him a letter to leave him and therefore to break their relationship.

Here the characteristics of the *Jungian Synchronicity* are observed. The two events happen simultaneously and are connected, concerning the meaning (a vase breaks and a relationship is broken), but one is not the cause of the other. When, later, our youth discovers the contemporaneity of the two events, he is stunned. This is not telepathy or clairvoyance; in telepathy a cause could be hypothesized, for example the existence of cerebral waves transmitted from one person to another. In this case, no cause exists whatsoever. Jung explains that we are not able to realize what happens: we are too limited, we cannot see that in this situation there is only one event in a multi dimensional reality.

The two events are actually only one event, merely seen from two different points of view.¹⁶

¹⁶ In the esoteric literature we find the concept of *Siddhis* (powers). We are very perplex about it. Those who write books on *Yoga* are not able to resist the temptation of copying some lines from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It's typical to find the ridiculous warning of the danger coming from the abuse of the *Siddhis*. Quoting Patanjali (IV:1), they recount that *Siddhis* are the spiritual powers (psychic abilities) that may occur through rigorous austerities; they explain that they vary from relatively simple forms of clairvoyance, telepathy, to being able to levitate, to be present at various places at once, to become as small as an atom, to materialize objects and more. They

When this happens, it is as if the world would talk to you. If it happens, and you notice it has happened, I only hope that you don't lose your wits and come to believe you are endowed with extraordinary powers. It doesn't deal with telepathy, clairvoyance.... it is something very deep. You are opening your eyes on the wonders of the subtle laws of this universe.

recommend to their readers not to ever indulge in these powers since "they are a great hindrance to spiritual progress". *Indulge* - what a beautiful word! If you did see someone practicing *Pranayama* and '*indulging*' in a little bilocation for fun, could you tell?! Perhaps they don't think enough about what they are writing because they let themselves be seduced by the dreams of possessing those powers. Perhaps they already visualize all the fuss which will come with it: interviews, taking part in talk shows etc. However, here, I repeat with emphasis, we are discussing quite another phenomenon!

FINAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

NOTES FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF PY

This appendix is devoted to those students who are serious about going ahead on the *Kriya* path utilizing only the techniques that can be obtained by the organizations that spread PY's teachings. Apart from the technique of *Kechari Mudra*, often quoted in PY's writings and surely practiced by him, they don't feel the necessity of mixing PY's techniques with other spiritual procedures. They feel they are PY's disciples and believe that by adopting other teachings is equivalent to betray him.

PY's techniques are not described here in detail but only commented freely according to my personal experience. We assume the reader of this appendix knows them. The symbols K1, K2, K3 e K4 refer to the four *Kriyas* in the way PY taught them. Therefore, when you read "K2", remember that we are referring to the particular technique of the *Second Kriya* as it was given by PY and not to the *Second Kriya* given by other lineages!

When I followed PY's teachings, our meditation counselor explained that the worst evil was disloyalty toward *Guru* and his organization. With the term "disloyalty" she meant even just reading what other persons who abandoned the organization had written about *Kriya Yoga*. Well, once my book appeared on the Web, I had an intense email exchange with various researchers faithful to PY.

Receiving emails from them was a pleasant surprise. After having said in a clear way that they did not approve my decision to write in such explicit way the *Kriya* techniques as some disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, were spreading, they asked me how could I be sure that PY had simplified or modified some details of the procedures of *Kriya Yoga*.

I personally met some among these students and we discussed in person. I was sure they were honest researchers and that no nonsense would ever slip out of their mouths. I learned to listen to them respectfully and silently whenever they corrected some of my fancy interpretations of *Kriya Yoga*. Many, without being exhibitionist, were able to quote by heart many passages from the works of PY. They studied all *Kriya* material written or dictated by PY and often remembered verbatim key quotations from that material. They had read and re-read through those texts several times

trying to decode them. This is the behavior of a serious student.

They always struck me with their extraordinary commitment to the regular practice of *Kriya*. Although unsatisfied with their understanding of the subtle mechanism underlying the *Kriya* procedures and tormented by many doubts, they never dismissed the practice. It was clear they were following the *Kriya* path not for esoteric curiosities, not to find an alternative cure to anxiety, depression, but for one reason only: follow and realize the spiritual path so fascinatingly delineated in PY's autobiography.

Trying to perceive what was stirring at their heart and mind, I felt that their worry consisted of the idea they had lost something important, for example techniques not contained in the correspondence course that PY could have shared with some intimate disciples.

The greatest part of the discussion concerned the *Higher Kriyas*. This is perfectly explainable. I remember that, at least in our organization, there were not live initiations. Every student wanted at least to see how such techniques were performed. Each technique included some physical movements: if you study them only from a written text, you are never sure about your correct performance.

Each disciple of PY would have greatly appreciated a seminar on the *Higher Kriyas* where not only the technical details were demonstrated but also a theoretical scheme had been given, providing devotees with resources to conceive – and subsequently improve – their routine. To many *kriyabans* the crisis with their *Kriya* organization began when their request to have a seminar on the *Higher Kriyas* received an incomprehensible, anachronistic "NO". The meetings organized to review the basic teachings (Hong So, Om technique and *Kriya* proper) were always a source of inspiration. The disappointment of not getting this opportunity also in the field of the Higher *Kriyas* was unbearably bitter. ¹⁷

Now, the purpose of this chapter is to refer in synthesis the main points of our conversations.

¹⁷ We know that recently a couple of the organizations based upon PY's legacy proved they had understood that it doesn't pay to behave in such a way and are giving regular initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*.

Preamble about the Radhasoami teachings

In Chapter 15 I have already stated my basic belief that PY put in his *Kriya* teaching some *Radhasoami* widely taught techniques. I think it is useful (perhaps enlightening) try to list here the basic beliefs of this spiritual movement.

Radhasoami affirms that *Om* is the Word referred to in the Bible: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) The Sound vibration can be listened through a procedure of internal listening. God is within us but physical eyes cannot see Him, nor can these physical ears hear His Voice. Nevertheless we can hear the "divine pressure" that hums all around us. By entering into the silence and closing our ears we can catch this celestial melody and therefore realize the presence of God within ourselves. *Radhasoami* explains that from age to age, the great Masters come to revive this knowledge, after materialism has obscured it.

Radhasoami claims that the limitation of all religions has been their inability to make God real to their devotees. God must become real to the individual, not a mental concept but a living reality. To practically all men, God is simply an abstract idea, a mental concept. How can one worship and love a mental concept? When most people say they love God, it simply means that they have a certain emotion induced by different factors.

On the contrary, when the disciple hears the enchanting music of the internal sounds, then the real process has begun. Later the disciple perceives the Divine Light. Both experiences are precious to intensify the devotion toward God.

Radhasoami emphasizes the need of weekly gathering for spiritual fellowship and for listening to spiritual talks. Often such discourses revolve round the necessity of coupling meditation with a life of high moral values. (Vegetarian diet, no intoxicants or recreational drugs...) at the same time carrying out their responsibilities to family, friends and society. During such meetings, one has experience of meditation under the direct guidance of an authorized teacher.

A fundamental difference between *Radhasoami* and PY's teaching is the need of a **living** spiritual Master. *Radhasoami* extols the role of the *Guru*. In *Radhasoami* teaching this relationship is elaborated in great detail and it is clear that the *Guru* cannot be dead (or, as they prefer to say, not having relinquished his body through *Mahasamadhi*). *Radhasoami* is ironic about those people who imagine themselves followers of some dead Master. Can a woman marry a dead man and live with him? Can a dead

doctor give medicine? One person may revere the memory of a dead master or read his writings. One may feel in his heart love and veneration for him. But he can never be a real Initiate of that Master.

Radhasoami does not initiate everyone who asks for it. One has to be spiritually "ready" for initiation. After one has been chosen for initiation, he is taken into a closed room, where the initiator explains the fundamental theoretical points we are dealing with. Beside this, at the time of initiation, he is given a first-hand inner experience of the Divine Light which appears in the point between the eyebrows. The initiator activates the Divine Vibration in that center. When the devotee establishes contact with this Light, the Light takes it back to the eternal abode of the Divine. As for the meditation techniques, they can be learned later from other authorized persons from the initiator and in any case the disciple takes a vow of secrecy.

Well, the news that I have picked up on the Radhasoami movement end here. I invite whoever feels to be a disciple of PY, to study every material produced by such movement when it is considered source of inspiration. Now I summarize, in the form of short notes, what has emerged from the conversations with the kriyabans I met.

1. Considerations about the Hong So concentration technique

Often this technique is introduced as a procedure to develop concentration, actually this does not happen. The first consideration is that the *Hong So* technique does not give you as by magic the ability of concentration if you do not already possess it! The *Hong So Mantra* is not a "magical formula" that, when repeated many times, calms invariably the breathing process.¹⁸ In order to see the power of this technique you must be endowed with the ability to maintain a high level of concentration during all the practice: only then the breath calms down.

- As you know, the procedure starts with two breathing exercises. Well, we are convinced that they put into motion the essential mechanism of *Kriya Pranayama* – mixing and balancing *Prana* and *Apana*. Therefore these simple initial exercises often grant you some very beautiful and intense spiritual experiences.
- While you watch your breath, never establish a rhythm in the mental chanting of *Hong So*. If by mentally chanting this *Mantra* you follow a rhythm, this rhythm will never settle down! If you relax your keen

¹⁸ This techniques is also taught with *Sau* during inhalation and *Hong* during exhalation. You discover that the effect is same.

awareness of the breath and remain there as if hypnotized by the pleasing sound of the two syllables *Hong* and *So*, you shall be disappointed. Your mind will not be prone to being internalized and will not guide you to the state of calm breath. Don't permit that the implacable rhythm of the litany: "*Hong So, Hong So, Hong So, Hong So...*" marches onward like the clackerty clack of the wheels of a train.

If your body "could" physiologically stay off-breath for some instants or for long moments, the rhythm should not cause the breathing process continue implacably. If you don't let the pauses exist, then you will never realize you are in the condition of living the emancipating experience of the breathless state. Be always very attentive to each pause. Respect it, have care of it, merge with it. Enjoy the beauty of this pause, no matter if it lasts just an instant! Students who abide by this principle will soon verify, in a very impressive way, how this small detail is sufficient to ease the breath off.

- The pause after inhalation is different from the pause after exhalation. In normal, not controlled, breathing there is the tendency to exhale immediately after inhalation. Inhaling, the rib cage expands and gets into an elastic tension. If there is no control, this elastic force, even if it is minimal, is released immediately after inhalation. If you want to practice the *Hong So* technique in the best of the ways, you should control the natural reflex to exhale as soon as the inhalation is completed. This is possible only in one way: after inhalation wait calmly and without any forcing the stimulus to exhale. Accept that the rib cage remains expanded and therefore in slight tension for some instants. When, after this pause, the stimulus to exhale appears, you exhale. This slight tension, in this particular phase of the practice, is to be respected. Putting this detail into practice as well, a "virtuous circle" between this growing calmness and the reduced necessity of oxygen might start. This leads to an extraordinarily result even for those who deem they are only clumsy beginners. There is nothing more to say about this beautiful technique.

- After the practice of *Kriya proper* you can practice the *Hong So* technique "in the spine." The principles governing the *Hong So* procedure can be applied after *Kriya Pranayama*, while you move your awareness up and down along the spine. Actually, it is possible to visualize your breath going up and down with *Hoooong* and *Soooo*. You can go ahead in this way for some minutes, then, when the breath is so short that the procedure is on the verge of evaporating into nothing, try to feel this short breath happening in each *Chakra*.

One short, almost invisible, breath happens in *Muladhara* and it is blended with the soothing chant of *Hong So* – what you obtain is a peaceful

vibration in a silent mind. Then you can place your concentration on the second *Chakra*: another breath happens there, then another breath happens in the third *Chakra* ... and so on... up and down along the spine... until there is no more breath, only *Hong So* like a micro movement, in each *Chakra*.

2. Considerations about the Om meditation technique

Contrarily to what some students think, this technique works. It works only if you practice it as it is taught: in the recommended position, with arm rest, closing one's ears as it is written, no ear plugs while mental chanting of *Om* infinite times, with total commitment to internal listening without ever discouraging. Often your hands become paralyzed and you won't sense them anymore, that is the moment to keep on undeterred. Usually you do not notice the exact instant when you start listening to the internal sounds but at a certain point you notice you are already listening to them since some minutes. The internal sounds don't appear when the mind is active thinking, but only when it is perfectly void, even void of the I consciousness, void of the thought you are doing a certain practice. When you reach a total void (to some this state seems having entered the sleep state), when the repetition of the *Mantra* has created a transformation, at that moment you are surprised by the internal sounds and sweetly you become conscious of them.

- Great experiences ensue from this meditation technique. By adding the practice of the *Kriya* proper, often we are no more able to devote to this technique the necessary time it requires. Its good effects become less frequent and disappear entirely. This happens especially when we are badly inspired and operate the unhappy choice of practicing *Kriya Pranayama* during the very last part of the routine. This choice that to many devotees seems rational, is not rational at all. This unhappy event instead of cooperating with the process of calming the *Prana* in the body, produces exactly the contrary effect and when this happens, the whole magic of the meditation state is lost.

- One must understand that after the *Om technique* no other procedure (except its natural prosecution, K2) should follow. Actually, one feels the striking contradiction in the action of interrupting the listening of the internal sounds in order to practice any other procedure. Therefore, if I decide that in the routine there must be the *Kriya proper*, then either I practice the *Kriya proper* before the *Om technique* or I drop the *Om technique* entirely.

3. Considerations about the technique "Kriya proper" with Maha Mudra and Jyoti Mudra. There are two versions of *Kriya proper*, one given in 1930 and one more recent. In my opinion a serious kriyaban should know and test both.

- The fundamental theme of our conversations always started from: 'Which is better, mouth or nose *Pranayama*'? Some knew that a few direct disciples of PY practiced with mouth closed. As for *Kechari Mudra* I was glad to see that a good number of *kriyabans* had achieved it – some having applied the classic exercise of *Talabya Kriya* from my book, others by following the tips found in a *Yoga* web site.¹⁹ One of them had a strange opinion: he stated that *Pranayama* with *Kechari* was too "weak", being deprived of the strong sensations in the spine that you feel with mouth *Pranayama*. It was clear that this friend had tormented himself for a long time before taking his decision to give up *Kechari Mudra*.

- The hypothesis that only mouth-*Pranayama* causes the energy to flow through the *Sushumna* channel – implying that the lateral currents of *Ida* and *Pingala* have no role – is baseless. During the first *Kriya* breaths (unless you have mastered the *Samadhi* state) *Ida* and *Pingala* do have a role.

The cold sensation during inhalation and the warm sensation during exhalation are the effect of these two lateral currents. *Sushumna* current manifest later when our breathing rate and pattern change, when breath becomes increasingly subtle and internal. Either you have the mouth half shut or not, this internalization is sign that part of the *Prana* has begun to flow in *Sushumna*.

At that time the real *Om* sound is perceived without closing the ears. When this happens your heart is filled with inexpressible joy. In this situation you don't ask if your *Kriya* is ok or not. You know that your practice is perfect.

- Mouth *Pranayama* has the remarkable power of granting a clear cold and warm sensations in the spine, therefore it is reasonable to start *Kriya Pranayama* in this way. These sensations attract the totality of your awareness to the spine. One can start with the half shut mouth and then, after a certain number of breaths, close it. A state of tension should always avoided. During the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* in great numbers, one should always close the mouth and increase the awareness of the *Chakras*

¹⁹ PY in his writings and in his talks gave the definition of *Kechari Mudra* without introducing any practical exercises to be performed over a certain period of time in order to achieve it.

and enjoy the sweetness emanating from them.

- Don't think that if the mouth is closed the sound of the breath disappears: it is destined to become clean like that of a flute. This sound is experienced after years of committed practice. It has been explained that the flute-like sound appears only when the spine is "clean" like an empty tube.
- Some *kriyabans* reminded me that PY explains how, once stable in the position of meditation, a *kriyaban* can gently sway the spine of few centimeters to the left and to the right: in this way he/she succeeds in perceiving the astral spine as separated from the body. PY also explains to move the consciousness along the spine while mentally chanting *Om* in the location of each *Chakra*. These two teachings are very simple but the result can leave you astonished! You wonder how came that they are not imparted during the *Kriya proper* initiation class.
- We know that for a beginner the practice of the *Kriya Pranayama* is reduced to 14-24 breaths. Actually, *Kriya Pranayama*, as taught by PY, is of great efficacy and power. Such power is perfectly absorbed by acting with prudence. It is fine to start the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* with a certain number of natural breaths, that is without any effort to produce the sound in the throat and without any visualization concerning the movement of energy in the spine. During this preparatory phase, all your being resides in *Kutastha* and nothing exists outside that "cave" of peace. In other words, before putting into practice the precise instructions received during initiation, it is fine that there is a certain number of deep but natural breaths. These introductory breaths are not counted, they serve only for entering the practice softly.

4. Considerations about the technique called "Second Kriya"

In this procedure, we intensify our concentration upon each *Chakra* until their essence is revealed. For example, it is possible to perceive the colors of the *Tattwas* (the five elements) linked with each *Chakra*. There are some writings by PY in which it is explained in a very clear way the physical changes that happen in our body (particular pattern of breath flow within our nostrils, different flavors we perceive in our mouth, etc) according to the predominance of a particular *Tattwa* in our consciousness. Each *kriyaban* stumbles upon these writings while studying the correspondence course.

- A direct disciple of PY affirms he was initiated by PY into *Second Kriya* in a way different from the usual. The concentration upon each *Chakra*

happens in a more light, internal way. You come up with your awareness from the *Muladhara* to the point between the eyebrows, then to *Sahasrara* and then coming down to *Medulla*, *Vishuddha*, *Anahata* ... all the way chanting *Om* in the center of each *Chakra*, while touching it with intense mental pressure. This is one cycle: 12 cycles are required. I have good reasons to believe this disciple.

- Generally speaking, the *Second Kriya* is an ideal container of all the human efforts to energetically "pierce" each *Chakra* both ascending and descending. The *Chakras* are certainly precious internal organs but they are not something to spend a life of meditation upon them. No, you must concentrate upon them as much it is needed to go "beyond them." In the last analysis they are energetic knots that keep us tied up to the material reality and also to deceptive astral realities. We have only one duty, to loosen such knots and move beyond.

- It is difficult to find the necessary time to practice this technique after *Kriya Proper*. However, even if you find the necessary time, you could remain without any result. Often you don't succeed neither in distinguishing the astral sounds of the *Chakras*, nor in perceiving the color of each one of them on the screen of *Kutastha*. You wonder if perhaps it is better to forget *Kriya proper* entirely and practice this K2 after the *Om meditation technique*. The reason is that K2 happens in the best of the ways when the breath is very subtle, whereas it is deeply hampered after the experience of a forced breath, which usually happens during a beginner's practice of *Kriya Proper*.

- The experience of many is that by renouncing, during a specific session of meditation, to *Kriya Proper*, some "strong" experiences may begin to occur in the spine. (They can also appear hours later or when lying down immediately after the practice.) Each "experience" produces such intensity of devotion that you will be surprised to discover it in your life. The students who have experienced first hand the value of the *Om technique of meditation*, should not delay to give all of their attention to the K2 technique. A good plan is to practice it every day, once a day, for one whole year after a deep immersion in the *Omkar* vibration. When we are attuned to this vibration a sense of vastness pervades our conscience. Since this vibration it assumes a slightly different tone in each *Chakra*, we have the impression we are flying across different regions of an inner heaven.

- The fact that this technique is noticeably different from the *Second Kriya* as handed down by the tradition creates often problems for some students. The hypothesis that PY had received this technique by Swami

Kebalananda (his Sanskrit Teacher) seems plausible. Be that as it may, there are students who, only for this reason, felt deceived by this choice and dropped it without testing fully its potentialities. Discussing with my friends, we agreed that when the idea that their *Guru* has deceived them by not giving the "true" *Second Kriya* creeps in a student's mind, a terrible conflict (I would say a true catastrophe from the emotive point of view) happens in their soul. The most meaningful consideration is, in my opinion, the following: this conflict could be mitigated by understanding that the traditional *Second Kriya* is imparted "inside" the K3 technique. What do I mean is explained in the next point.

5. Considerations about the technique called "Third Kriya"

Let me first give a definition: I will call "K3 first part" the K3 received from the teachings of PY but without the movements of the head and without holding the breath. Repeated again and again, the K3 "first part", leads a *kriyaban* to master the procedure of moving along the spinal tunnel. Through this procedure, the ability one has achieved after years of *Kriya proper* is stoutly utilized in bringing *Prana* in the first *Chakra*, then guiding it slowly and intensely into the second *Chakra*... and so on, *Chakra* after *Chakra*, up to the point between the eyebrows. All this happens through K3 when you employ subtle breath and a strong concentration.

- Generally speaking, *Second Kriya* consists in "piercing" each *Chakra*. To "pierce" a *Chakra* means to center around it all the possible energy we can receive from our body, then intensify the energetic sensation while remain there for a a short time (10-20 sec.), then move to the next *Chakra* to repeat again the same action.
- After the practice of K1, the most natural action is to practice K3. Well, let us practice just the first part (remember to utilize the 12 syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*) starting with 12 repetitions. Add one repetition a day until you reach 200 repetitions.²⁰ While following this progressive plan, you will be guided intuitively. For example you will learn to utilize the vibration of each syllable to deepen the mental pressure upon each *Chakra*. The flow of the breath will become more subtle without losing in intensity.

[Many years ago, when I studied the written teachings provided by the school about K3 and K4, I found they had a minor fault. The *Mantra* was presented in

²⁰ Instead of adding one repetition a day, you can adopt a simpler plan: practice 25 repetitions a day for two weeks. Then practice 50 repetitions a day for another two weeks. Then practice 75 repetitions a day for another two weeks ...then 100... ...125... and so on until you practice 200 repetitions a day for two weeks.

an unusual way: *Om naw maw bhaw*.... The *Mantra* was written with 12 separated syllables, as if it was not one *Mantra* but twelve different *Mantras*. It was not immediate to recognize "*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*." Some of the *kriyabans* I met had the same experience: many asked me the origin and the meaning of each syllable, as if each one was a strange *Bija Mantra*. I have so many times wondered if it was indeed a great trouble for the compiler of the didactic material to include at least once the *Mantra* "*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*." One would instantly understand that it had been broken into 12 syllables and knew the pronunciation, having familiarity with the Indian *Bhajans*. I consider so many times how great is the gift of a clear and complete explanation. I would have preferred no explanation at all about ... the meaning of the Genesis, or about how to behave him with a disturbed wife and have one more line of explanation regarding such a beautiful and important technique as the K3.]

- If you to not exceed the 12 repetitions you will never experience the power contained in this technique! Increase, increase without fear and end your routine by forgetting the breath and by practicing the best form of *Mental Pranayama*. Completing this *Incremental Routine* is a challenging, but not particularly difficult, undertaking – time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest.
- After this great effort of yours you are ready to draw the best from K3 second part ("K3 second part" is of course the complete technique as you have received it originally, with the movements of the head, holding the breath, with the prescribed strokes.) You can put in this exercise all the ability obtained with the previous incremental process. At this point it is counseled to have an incremental routine of this complete technique, from 12 to 200 repetitions of this complete technique that is usually called *Thokar*.
- If you decide to practice this, while increasing the number of repetitions (I mean the repetitions of breaths each one containing what is the K3 complete teaching) up to 200, you must be very very cautious. Do the movements in a very delicate way avoiding to stress the cervical vertebrae!
²¹ If you go ahead in a prudent way, you will be able to direct a tremendous amount of energy into the three higher *Chakras*. This is the basis to reach high levels of perfection with the last procedure: K4. It is good you complete the incremental routine of K3 before starting K4. ²²

²¹ From the technical point of view we discussed also the fact that the movements of the head are not a "rotation of the head" they are a "triangular" movement.

²² Unfortunately, when *kriyabans* receive K3 and K4, they are not able to resist the

6. Considerations about the technique called "Fourth Kriya"

What can we say about the final technique of K4? In chapter 9 I have already written all the information I have received. Once completed this work, or brought ahead up to a certain number, it is wise to resume the K3. Never forget K3! The deepening of K3 knows no limit. Remember that K3 gives different results than K4. You will always discover something new in it.

Ideal routine

With a couple of *kriyabans* I have discussed about the "ideal routine." Obviously such routine doesn't exist, however a good agreement was about the following scheme:

[1] Preparation: Recharging exercises and *Maha Mudra*. If possible balance the *Ida* and *Pingala* currents with *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama*.

[2] *Mouth-Pranayama* (no more than 24-36) followed by *nose-Pranayama* with *Kechari Mudra*. Mental chanting of *Om* in each *Chakra* is optional.

[3] Practice of K3 and K4 (do not overdo, 10-15 minutes are enough.) Create an intoxication feeling in the fourth *Chakra*.

[4] Restore the calmness in the body by practicing only the first part of K3, going on very slowly and sweetly

[5] *Jyoti Mudra*

[6] At this point of the routine, one should not simply remain immovable waiting for the time go by ... like one who is awaiting that the shot of medicine given into a muscle by an injection spreads pacifically and is possible to stand up and walk without compromising the action of such treatment. The best action is to move your awareness up and down along the spine pausing in each *Chakra*. This will easily lead you to enjoying the perfect breathless state. Then you will fully realize the truth contained in the words of a great disciple of PY said: "I have learned to live by inner joy."

temptation of trying K4 on the spot – "if it leads to *Samadhi*, why not try it now"? After about 15 - 20 rotations, *Kumbhaka* becomes stressful. Instead of giving up, they repeat the same attempt a couple of times, while discomfort increases and a feeling of nausea or dizziness goes on launching its alarm signals. Eventually they stop, defeated. The gain is zero, less than zero! Not only they have not obtained the slightest trace of *Samadhi*, but they have lost the initial tranquil state.

APPENDIX N.2

CAN THE PRACTICE OF KRIYA PRODUCE NEGATIVE MOODS?

While browsing through the Web pages you will find some warning against the dangers of *Yoga*, especially the danger of a "premature awakening of *Kundalini*". The list of the problems that it would cause is limitless. There are also a few web sites that warn against any form of meditation, hinting at the possibility of a break with reality with unusual or extreme strengthening of emotions, in particular agitation and anxiety, long-term disorientation where one has become unable to focus long enough to work.

We read also that: "... an aspirant can develop occult, psychic powers. These powers can be used for constructive or destructive purposes, but quite often they are misused. For example the ability to read someone else's mind can create problems and is likely to be ... resented by those who it is used on." This is comic! When we find such amenities we wonder who on earth has written such nonsense and with what purpose. Unfortunately there is a tendency in the Web to duplicate pages from site to site without changing a comma. Make an impossible story up, for example that one *yogi* died of spontaneous combustion during the practice of *Pranayama*, post it on a spiritually orientated web site and verify that, after a couple of months, this story appears on many web sites.

We read that *Yogis*, sooner or later, are inclined to ... fall into sorcery and black magic because they evoke, unaware, negative entities. An author claimed that: "When you repeat that Mantra *Om, Om...* you are actually invoking a demon spirit to come and possess your mind." He added his testimony: "During a meditation session, I began to levitate. Ever since that second I haven't slept as a human, I lost my sleep! Whenever I closed my eyes, I saw the flames of Hell, I didn't dare to close my eyes, I couldn't! I became a psychiatric case, and 26 times I've been hospitalized." Of course there is no need to comment on.

My personal experience, limited to *Kriya Yoga*, of listening to similar complaints, had not been without conflict. I had a hard time meeting people who claimed that *Kriya* was responsible of all their psychological (perhaps they meant psychiatric) problems and of some physical troubles too. Hence, I would have to believe that by breathing fresh air, focusing the mind on the spine and on particular centers in the head, they had developed all kinds of mental and physical ailments. From a benediction as it seemed at the very beginning, *Kriya* turned out to be a curse, a misfortune. The same practices that I had experimented so many times, with so much love,

drawing the purest delight, had been for them a doom. My reaction was: "How, with what attitude, with what expectation, had you approached *Kriya*? You say that *Kriya* made you crazy ... well, if the germs of madness are inside me, they will come into bloom both if I practice *Kriya* and if I do not practice it. Yet, considering the glorious moments experienced, I will walk the *Kriya* path without an ounce of fear, had I to burn in it."

What can we reply when such charges come from persons who say nothing about the different drugs they have taken for years! A person impressed me by telling that after practicing some simple meditation techniques (something very mild like awareness of the breath or concentration on the *Chakras*) he had lost his mental equilibrium and had experienced the most intense attacks of anguish and terror. This person made a big fuss about it, posting on *Yoga* forums. I could not abstain from a strong suspicion. For what reason did he go to India each year, for a long series of years, without ever showing interest for *Yoga* or for the Indian spirituality? Perhaps he went there to get different types of drugs at a low price? Later through common friends I came to know that he took not only opiates but also acids, any kind of amphetamines and (emulous of Carlos Castaneda) didn't disdain the use of psychotropic plants. It was obvious that by complaining before me, he tried to exorcize the rather frightening thought that he had seriously damaged his brain and, perhaps, of being in a condition of permanent, fatal psychic disorder. He removed the very idea that his past unwary choices could be put in causal relation with his present mental situation.

Often I think how shocking would be having a magic mirror in which people could see their past actions and realize how inconsiderate and cruel they had been toward their body! I understand that in some cases a preexisting mental disturbance can push a person to be after drugs as a remedy. Well, in such case I don't believe that the use of the techniques of *Yoga* can aggravate the condition of their alienation.

Many have heard about the story of Gopi Krishna

Worthwhile reading is *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* by Gopi Krishna – currently available under the title *Living With Kundalini*.

A routine which is totally based on a strong concentration on the *Sahasrara* is not appropriate for those students who have not crossed the spiritual eye. To obtain this, years are necessary not months. Building a strong magnet in *Sahasrara* is the most powerful way to stimulate the rising of *Kundalini*. You might experience moments of panic or in which you feel unrelated with the reality. If you are a beginner, forget the

techniques in which you concentrate on *Fontanelle* or over it. We are deeply thankful to the site AYP which explains clearly the reasons of this.

Through intense concentration on *Sahasrara* only, Gopi Krishna got into trouble. His life was both blessed by ecstatic bliss and tormented by physical and mental discomfort. In 1967 he wrote his excellent testimony. His book gives a clear and concise autobiographic account of the phenomenon of the awakening of *Kundalini*.

He experienced this "awakening" in 1937 although he had not a spiritual teacher and was not initiated into any spiritual lineage. He practiced concentration for a number of years. His main technique consisted in visualizing "an imaginary Lotus in full bloom, radiating light" at the crown of the head. As he sat meditating – exactly as he had for the three hours before dawn each day for seventeen years – he became aware of a powerful, pleasurable sensation at the base of his spine. He continued to meditate; the sensation began to spread and extend upwards. It continued to expand until he heard, quite without warning, a roar like that of a waterfall and felt a stream of liquid light enter his brain.

Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord. Entirely unprepared for such a development, I was completely taken by surprise; but regaining self-control instantaneously, I remained sitting in the same posture, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light. (Gopi Krishna *Living With Kundalini*).

This experience changed radically the scheme of his life. He experienced a continuous "luminous glow" around his head and began having a variety of psychological and physiological problems. At times he thought he was going mad. He adopted a very strict diet and for years refused to do any other concentration exercise.

The keen desire to sit and meditate, which had always been present during the preceding days, disappeared suddenly and was replaced by a feeling of horror of the supernatural. I wanted to fly from even the thought of it. At the same time I felt a sudden distaste for work and conversation, with the inevitable result that being left with nothing to keep myself engaged, time hung heavily on me, adding to the already distraught condition of my mind. [...] Each morning heralded for me a new kind of terror, a fresh complication in the already disordered system, a deeper fit of melancholy or more irritable condition of the mind which I had to restrain, to prevent

it from completely overwhelming me, by keeping myself alert, usually after a completely sleepless night; and after withstanding patiently the tortures of the day, I had to prepare myself for even worse torment of the night.

Let us consider now how he emerged from this negative experience into a wonderful state of awakening that blessed him to the end of his life. He discovered that the esoteric teachings contained a number of practices that might help him to bring the energy back into balance. His main cure reminds a lot the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*.

.... a fearful idea struck me. Could it be that I had aroused *Kundalini* through *pingala* or the solar nerve which regulates the flow of heat in the body and is located on the right side of *Sushumna*? If so, I was doomed, I thought desperately and as if by divine dispensation the idea flashed across my brain to make a last-minute attempt to rouse *Ida*, or the lunar nerve on the left side, to activity, thus neutralizing the dreadful burning effect of the devouring fire within. With my mind reeling and senses deadened with pain, but with all the will-power left at my command, I brought my attention to bear on the left side of the seat of *Kundalini*, and tried to force an imaginary cold current upward through the middle of the spinal cord. In that extraordinarily extended, agonized, and exhausted state of consciousness, I distinctly felt the location of the nerve and strained hard mentally to divert its flow into the central channel. Then, as if waiting for the destined moment, a miracle happened. There was a sound like a nerve thread snapping and instantaneously a silvery streak passed zigzag through the spinal cord, exactly like the sinuous movement of a white serpent in rapid flight, pouring an effulgent, cascading shower of brilliant vital energy into my brain, filling my head with a blissful lustre in place of the flame that had been tormenting me for the last three hours. Completely taken by surprise at this sudden transformation of the fiery current, darting across the entire network of my nerves only a moment before, and overjoyed at the cessation of pain, I remained absolutely quiet and motionless for some time, tasting the bliss of relief with a mind flooded with emotion, unable to believe I was really free of the horror. Tortured and exhausted almost to the point of collapse by the agony I had suffered during the terrible interval. I immediately fell asleep, bathed in light and for the first time after weeks of anguish felt the sweet embrace of restful sleep.

Very interesting is the modality through which Gopi Krishna started a process of recovery. Convinced he had aroused *Kundalini* through *Pingala*, he made a last desperate attempt to bring in activity *Ida*, thus neutralizing the internal fire that was devouring him. There is an action he did, which, patiently repeated, helped him out of his predicament. He mentally created

a cold current coming up within the central channel of the spine. This was enough to save him!

From then onwards, Gopi Krishna believed that this experience originated a healing process. He wrote about the mystical experience and the evolution of consciousness from a scientific point of view. He theorized that there existed a biological mechanism in the human body, known from ancient times in India as *Kundalini*, which was responsible for creativity, genius, psychic ability, religious and mystical experience. In his opinion, *Kundalini* was the true cause of evolution. He understood that only a balanced method could put in motion a healthy process of *Kundalini* awakening.

Another interesting testimony about *Kundalini awakening* is that of B. S. Goel's (1935- 1998) described in his: *Psycho-Analysis and Meditation*. He was a very rare individual. His experience of *Kundalini* awakening happened when he was 28 and was quite dramatic. *Kundalini* got awakened on its own. During this long process, his friends thought he was "losing his mind". He went up and down India looking for someone who could explain what was happening to him. He found many people that had theories. However they did not know. His uniqueness lies in his experience of classical psychoanalysis along with meditation, which he advocated. When he was 35, his *Guru* appeared in his dream, and told him that Psycho-analysis and Marxism, both of which he had embraced, were false ways to happiness. He told him the only path to inner peace and joy was through God. In 1982, he opened an ashram in the Himalayas to help and guide other aspirants who had *Kundalini* experiences.

What is interesting for us is that Dr. Goel talks about the different degrees of suffering he went through as his ego was destroyed and rebuild. He was the first, apart late Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who studied the role of *Bindu* point, in the occipital region. He explained that "when the consciousness marches toward *Bindu* (which he calls *Brahma-randhra*) the ego-formations will get exposed before the consciousness in free-associations, in free writings, in dreams, and above all, in meditation itself.

In the last part of his book, while discussing "signals toward the final goal", among a lot of signals he had the courage to quote one in particular whom is not usually treated in book but in those book who want of mimic all the gurudom matter. He quotes "the great desire for being pierced and penetrated." About "pierced", he exemplifies it with the "desire of putting a nail at the mid-point between the two eyebrows. About "penetrated", he clarifies that the desire of penetration at *Bindu* may, out of ego-ignorance

"turn into the desire of passive anal-penetration." He clarifies that an ordinary sexual act cannot satisfy the person who need really penetrated at the *Bindu* to get final spiritual bliss. He adds that: "as long as he does not reach that stage, he may often indulge in compulsive homo-sexuality. It is very probable that many saints of all ages might have remained great homosexuals if they had stopped their spiritual effort in their pre-sainthood period."

Let us try to conceive a wise and safe behavior to be promptly adopted when, after our practice of Kriya, we face disagreeable or negative or worrying moods

Kriya is a spiritual path, nothing else, but its procedures can touch the subconscious sphere. Even if one practices in the best of the ways, he/she could experience negative moods like depression, unmotivated fear, anxiety etc. Close to glorious experiences, a *kriyaban* could feel overwhelmed by an unknown power and experience a panic attack. What is then the best behavior in order to retrieve the lost tranquility?

1. What to avoid

First of all avoid long concentration on the *Sahasrara* (both on the crown or *Fontanelle*.) Apart from *Anahata* and *Kutastha*, don't utilize techniques that work on a single *Chakra*. If you want to unlock an energetic, psychic knot, remember that a knot (*Granti*) is not as we usually visualize it, namely like an ordinary rope-knot. It has a kind of mutual dependence with all the other knots, they are subtly inter-twined, one inside the other. If you concentrate for long time upon one single knot, you risk to lose your mental peace. Don't be like a surgeon who wants to remove a gallstone embedded in a organ, without taking all the care not to destroy the organ and kill the patient. After an understandable momentarily drop of your practice of *Kriya* during depressive moods, when you resume your *Kriya*, give the same concentration to all the *Chakras* and always end by concentrating either on the heart *Chakra* or on the point between the eyebrows. If the result of your practice is a state of greyish mind, if you have the impression that your soul is scratched, this is a sign that you practice is not well balanced.

2. Nadi Sodhana followed by Sitali

You surely know the basic technique of *Nadi Sodhana*.²³ Practice it every day, even different times a day. This technique is always all right but, for the problems we are dealing with, add *Sitali Pranayama*. (Creating a

²³ It is explained in the first chapter of this book.

cooling sensation coming up through the spine was exactly what Gopi Krishna did to get out of his awful situation.)

To practice *Sitali*, sit with erected spine and concentrate all your mental strength in the point between the eyebrows. Use all your imagination to raise a fresh current up the spine. This can be done by inhaling through the mouth while keeping the tongue in a particular position. Curl comfortably your tongue and protrude it slightly past the lips to form a tube. Inhale deeply and smoothly through the tongue and mouth – a cooling sensation is felt over the tongue and into the throat. Exhale through the nose, ideally directing the breath to all the parts of your body. Repeat at least 12 times.

3. Practice intensely Mula Bandha for 108 repetitions

Forget the breath, try to attune to calmness in the point between the eyebrows. Practice slowly, but intensely, 108 *Mula Bandha*. Contract the muscles at the base of the spine, maintain the contraction for a couple of seconds and relax. Repeat... Don't be in a hurry: each hold and relax should last at least four seconds. You can have more than one session in order to complete 108 repetitions. The benefit of this practice is almost immediate.

GLOSSARY

This glossary has been added for those who already know the meaning of the most common terms used in Kriya but do not wish to retain uncertainties about the way they are utilized in this book.

Alchemy [taoist internal -- Nei Dan] The Taoist Internal Alchemy is the mystical tradition of ancient China. It reminds us of the techniques of First Kriya with such precision that we have all the reasons to assume that it consists of the same process.

Apana Apana is one of the five forms of energy in the body. Associated with the lower abdominal region, it is responsible for all the bodily functions (elimination for example) that take place there. Kriya Pranayama, in its initial phase, is essentially the movement of Prana (the particular form of energy present in the upper part of the trunk – lungs and heart) into Apana and the movement of Apana into Prana. When we inhale, the energy from outside the body is brought within and meets Apana in the lower abdomen; during exhalation, the Apana moves from its seat up and mingles with Prana. The continuous repetition of this event generates an increase of heat in the navel region: this calms the breath and kindles the light of the Spiritual Eye.

Asana Physical postures fit for meditation. According to Patanjali, the yogi's posture must be steady and pleasant. The most part of the kriyabans are comfortable with the so-called *Half-lotus* [see]: this, indeed, avoids some physical problems. For the average kriyaban, *Siddhasana* [see] is considered superior to any other Asana. If we take finally into account those kriyabans who are expert of Hatha-Yoga, who have become very flexible, the perfect position is undoubtedly *Padmasana* [see].

Aswini (Ashwini) Mudra "Ashwa" means "horse"; "Aswini Mudra" means "Mudra of the female horse" because the anal contraction resembles the movement a horse makes with its sphincter immediately after evacuation of the bowels. There may be slightly different definitions of it and, sometimes, it is confused with Mula Bandha [see]. The basic definition is to repeatedly contract the muscles at the base of the spine (sphincter) with the rhythm of about two contractions per second. This Mudra is a direct way of getting in touch with the locked and stagnant energy at the base of the spine and to pump it up.

Bandha [See Jalandhara Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Mula Bandha] Bandhas are like valves, locks concerning the energetic system of the body. They prevent the Prana from being dissipated and redirect it inside the spine. No practice of Pranayama is considered complete and correct without the Bandhas.

In the very beginning of the Kriya path, a yogi has only an approximate understanding of the Bandhas, later one will come to a complete command and will be able to use them, with slight adaptations, in most of the Kriya techniques. The three Bandhas, applied simultaneously, create an almost ecstatic inner shiver, a feeling of energy current moving up the spine. Sushumna Awakening is thus favored.

Bindu A spiritual center located in the occipital region where the hairline twists into a kind of vortex. (This is the Sikha point where the Hindus leave a lock of hair after having shaved their head.) It is not considered a Chakra in itself. However it is an important spiritual center because it works as a door leading the awareness to Sahasrara – the seventh Chakra located at the top of the head. Until the energy, scattered in the body, reaches the Bindu, a sort of shroud prevents the yogi from contemplating the Spiritual Eye. Bringing all one's force there, in that tiny place, is not an easy task because the deeper roots of the Ego are to be found right there; they must be faced and eradicated.

Breathless state It is experienced after years of Kriya practice. It has nothing to do with holding the breath forcefully. It does not simply mean that the breath becomes more and more quiet. It is the state where the breath is entirely non-existent, with the subsequent dissolution of the mind. Many kriyabans are not able to conceive such a state. There is a halo of mystery that surrounds its description; people think it is impossible and that any affirmation about its occurrence is false. Nevertheless, it is possible, even if it is experienced only after years of Kriya practice. When it manifests, a kriyaban does not feel the need to take in any breath at all or one takes in a very short breath but doesn't feel the need to exhale for a very long time. (Longer than the time which medical science considers possible.) The breath becomes so calm that the practitioner has the factual perception that one is not breathing at all; one feels a fresh energy in the body, sustaining its life from inside, without the necessity of oxygen. According to the Kriya theory, this state is the result of having entered with the awareness (therefore with Prana) the Sushumna channel inside the spine. See also the entry: Kumbhaka

Bhrumadhya The space between the eyebrows, linked with Ajna Chakra and with the vision of the third eye (Kutastha).

Chakra The word Chakra comes from the Sanskrit cakra meaning "wheel" or "circle". The Chakras are the "wheels" of our spiritual life; they are described in the tantric texts as emanations from the Spirit, whose essence gradually has expanded in more and more gross levels of manifestation, reaching eventually the dimension of the base Chakra, the Muladhara, embodying the physical world. The descended energy-consciousness lies coiled and sleeping at the base of the spine and is called Kundalini – she who is coiled. We human beings consider only the physical world as real: it is only when our Kundalini awakens that we regain the full memory of the reality of the subtle dimension of the Universe.

No author has ever "proven" the existence of the Chakras – as no man has ever proven the existence of the soul. It is difficult to describe them: we cannot bring them onto a table in a laboratory. In any Yoga book we find descriptions which rest on a translation of two Indian texts, the Sat-Cakra-Nirupana, and the Padaka-Pancaka, by Sir John Woodroffe, alias Arthur Avalon, in a book entitled The Serpent Power. The matter depicted there seems to be unnaturally complicated, almost impossible to be utilized.

These concepts had been further polluted by theosophy and similar esoteric literature. The controversial C. W. Leadbeater book "The Chakras," is in large part the result of the mental elaboration of his own experiences.

Through the practice of Kriya, we can have an experience of the Chakras. Located over the anus at the very base of the spinal column, in the lower part of the coccyx, we encounter the root Chakra - named **Muladhara** in Sanskrit, a center which distributes energy to the legs, to the lowest part of the pelvis, irradiating especially the Gonads (testes in men, ovaries in women). Muladhara symbolizes the objective consciousness, the awareness of the physical universe. It is related to instinct, security, to our ability to ground ourselves in the physical world, to the desire for material goods and also the building of a good self-image. If this Chakra is in a harmonious state, we are centered and have a strong will to live.

The second, or sacral Chakra - **Swadhisthan** - is placed inside the spine between the last lumbar vertebrae and the beginning of the sacrum. It is said that its energetic projection is the area of the sexual organs - in part it intersects the region of Muladhara's influence. Since it is related to base emotion, sexuality vitality, creativity, and to the deepest part of the subconscious realms, a deep stimulus of it produces deep involving dreams; its action may be perceived as a feeling of living a fable, whose nature is sweet and alluring.

The **Manipura** - navel center or solar plexus - is placed in the spine at the level of the navel, near the end of the dorsal vertebrae and the beginning of the lumbar vertebrae. It is said to influence the pancreas and the adrenal glands on top of the kidneys. This connection gives fuel to the idea that this Chakra has the same role played by those glands: higher emotion and energy - just like the role played by adrenalin. It is said that it fosters a sense of personal power, secure feeling of "I Am.". Grounded and comfortable with our place in the universe, we are able to affirm with determination the purpose of our life.

The **Anahata** - heart center, located in the spine at the height of the middle part of the dorsal vertebrae - is said to influence the thymus, which is part of the immune system. There is a universal agreement that it is related to higher emotion, compassion, love and intuitiveness. When a person concentrates on it, feelings of profound tenderness and compassion will start to develop. A healthy and fully open heart Chakra means to be able to see the inner beauty in others – in spite of their apparent faults. One is able to love everyone, even the strangers we meet on the street. There is a progression from the instinctual "gut emotions" of the lower Chakras to the higher emotions and feelings of the heart Chakra. What is of great interest for us, is that opening this center means to see life in a more neutral manner and see what others cannot see. It ends the predisposition to

being influenced by other people, by churches and by organizations in general.

Vishuddha - throat center, exactly amid the last cervical vertebrae and the first dorsal vertebrae - is said to influence thyroid and parathyroid. Since it controls the activity of the vocal cords as well, it is said that it has something to do with the capacity to express our ideas in the world. It seems to be related with the capacity for communication and with taking personal responsibility for our actions. The person with a healthy throat Chakra no longer thinks to blame others for his or her problems and can carry on with life with full responsibility. Many authors state it awakens artistic inspiration, the ability to develop superior aesthetic perception.

Ajna - the third eye Chakra, located in the central part of the brain - influences the pituitary gland [hypophysis] and the small brain. The hypophysis has a vital role in organism, in the sense that together with the hypothalamus it acts as a command system of all other endocrine glands. In Sanskrit, "Ajna" translates to "command," which means it has the command or control of our lives: through controlled action, it brings to reality the fruit of our desires. Consequently, it is said that Ajna Chakra has a vital role in the spiritual awakening of a person. It is the seat of the intuition.

The supreme Chakra is the **Sahasrara** - crown Chakra - right above the top of the head. It is said that it influences, or is bound with, the pineal gland. It allows detachment from illusion and is related to one's overall expansion of awareness and degree of attunement with the Divine Reality. It is a superior reality and we can experience it only in the state of breathlessness. It is possible to "tune" into it by utilizing the **Bindu** as a doorway.

Teachings pertaining to the "**Frontal Chakras**" are to be found by some kriyabans coming from Sri Yuktswar's disciple lineage. The perineum is the first one, the genitals region is the second one, the navel is the third, the central part of the sternum region is the fourth, the Adam's apple is the fifth and the point between the eyebrows may be considered as the sixth. The core of the Kriya teaching regarding them, is that when these points are touched with concentration, the energy around the correspondent Chakra in the spine is revived.

Dharana According to Patanjali, Dharana is the concentration on a physical or abstract object. In Kriya, Dharana consist in directing the focus of our attention toward the revelation of Spirit: Omkar's inner sound, light, and movement sensation. This happens just after having calmed the breath.

Dhyana According to Patanjali, Dhyana ensues from contemplating the essential nature of the chosen object as a steady, uninterrupted flow of consciousness. In Kriya, the awareness, dwelling upon the Omkar reality, is soon lost in Samadhi.

Flute sound (during Kriya Pranayama) During the exhalation of Kriya Pranayama, a slight hiss is produced in the throat; when a kriyaban succeeds in assuming the position of Kechari Mudra, then the quality of that sound increases. It has been likened to the "flute of Krishna". Lahiri Mahasaya describes it: "as if someone blew through a keyhole". This highly enjoyable sound cuts to pieces any distraction, increases mental calmness and transparency and helps to prolong effortlessly the practice of Kriya Pranayama. One day the flute sound turns into the Om sound. In other words, it gives rise to the Om sound, whose vibration will be so strong as to overwhelm the flute sound. During this event, a strong movement of energy climbs up the spine.

Granthi [see knot]

Guru The importance of finding a Guru (teacher) who supervises the spiritual training of the disciple is one of the tenets of many spiritual paths. A Guru is a teacher, a guide and much more. The scriptures declare that the Guru is God and God is the Guru. We are accustomed to explaining the term "Guru" on a metaphorical interplay between darkness and light, in which the Guru is seen as the dispeller of darkness: "Gu" stands for darkness and "Ru" for one who removes it. Some scholars dismiss that etymology; according to them "Gu" stands for "beyond the qualities" and "Ru" for "devoid of form". In order to gain all the benefits from the contact with the Guru, a disciple has to be humble, sincere, pure in body and mind and ready to surrender to his Guru's will and instructions. Usually, during initiation (Diksha) Gurus bestow the esoteric knowledge upon their disciples, through which they will progress along the path to Self realization. The internal phenomenon of Shaktipat happens: the dormant spiritual realization within the disciple is awakened.

Kriya organizations don't insist upon the concept of Shaktipat but accept all the rest, rather they are founded upon the afore summarized tenets. On the contrary, Lahiri Mahasaya's ideas seem to go in a significantly different direction. Once he said: "I am not the Guru, I don't maintain a barrier between the true Guru (the Divine) and the disciple". He added that he wanted to be considered a "mirror". In other words, each kriyaban should look at him not as an unreachable ideal, but as the personification of all the wisdom and spiritual realization which, in due time, the Kriya practice will be able to produce.

Now the question is: do the Kriya techniques work outside the Guru-disciple relationship? There is of course no scientifically proven answer. In this matter we can use either faith or reason. Many kriyabans are confident they are able to transform the no-matter-how-received instruction into "gold". They think: "Beyond either reasonable or improbable expectations of finding a Kriya expert at my disposal, let me roll my sleeves up and move on!"

Half-lotus This asana has been used for meditation since time immemorial because it provides a comfortable, very easily obtained, sitting position. The left leg is bent at the knee, brought toward the body and the sole of the left foot is made to rest against the inside of the right thigh. The heel of the left foot should

is drawn in as far as possible. The right leg is bent at the knee and the right foot is placed over the fold of the left leg where the thigh meets to hip. The right knee is dropped as far as possible toward the floor. The hands rest on the knees. The secret is to maintain an erect spine: this can be obtained only by sitting on a cushion, thick enough, with the buttocks toward the front half of the cushion. In this way the buttocks are slightly raised, while the knees are resting on the floor. When the legs grow tired, the position is prolonged by reversing the legs. In certain delicate situations, it may be providential to do it on a chair, provided it has no arms and is large enough. In this way, one leg at a time can be lowered and the knee articulation relaxed! Some Yoga teachers explain that the pressure of a tennis ball (or of a folded towel) on the perineum can give the benefits of the Siddhasana position.

Hesychasm The word Hesychasm derives from the Greek word "hesychia" meaning inner quietness, tranquility and stillness. Outside this condition, meditation is not possible. It is a discipline integrating the continual repetition of the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"). It was already used by the early Church Fathers in the 4th and 5th centuries) with the practice of asceticism.

There were hermits dwelling in the desert, seeking inner peace and spiritual insight, while practicing contemplation and self-discipline: they had no doubts about the fact that knowledge of God could be obtained only by purity of soul and prayer and not by study or mental amusements in the field of philosophy. Later, their method of asceticism came to the fore as a concrete set of psychophysical techniques: this is properly the core of Hesychasm. It was Simeon, "the new theologian" (1025-1092), who developed the quietist theory which such detail that he may be called the father of this movement. The practice, which involved specific body postures and deliberate breathing patterns, was intended to perceive the Uncreated Light of God. The monks of Athos might have kept on contemplating peacefully this Uncreated Light (they considered it to be the highest goal of earthy life) had not their methods been denounced as superstitious and absurd. The objection was mainly based on a vigorous denial of the possibility that this Uncreated Light was God's essence. In approximately the year 1337, Hesychasm attracted the attention of a learned member of the Orthodox Church, Barlaam of Seminara, a Calabrian monk who held the office of abbot in a Monastery of Constantinople and who visited Mount Athos. There he encountered the hesychasts and heard the descriptions of their practices. Barlaam, trained in Western Scholastic theology, was scandalized and began to combat it both orally and in his writings. He called the hesychasts "omphalopsychoi" - people having their souls in their navels (owing to the long time they spent concentrating on the navel region). Barlaam propounded a more intellectual approach to the knowledge of God than the one taught by the hesychasts: he asserted that the spiritual knowledge could be only a work of inquiry, brought ahead by one's mind and translated in discrimination between truth and untruth. He held that no part of God, whatsoever, could be viewed by humans. The practice of the hesychasts was defended by St. Gregory Palamas.

He was well educated in Greek philosophy and defended Hesychasm in the 1340 at three different synods in Constantinople, and he also wrote a number of works in its defense. He used a distinction, already articulated in the 4th Century in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, between the energies or operations of God and the essence of God: while the essence of God can never be known by his creatures, His energies or operations can be known both in this life and in the next; they convey to the Hesychast the truest spiritual knowledge of God.

In Palamite theology, it is the uncreated energy of God which illuminates the Hesychast who has been vouchsafed an experience of the Uncreated Light. In 1341 the dispute was settled: Barlaam was condemned and returned to Calabria, afterwards becoming bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Later, Hesychast doctrine was established as the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. Up to this day, the Roman Catholic Church has never fully accepted Hesychasm: the essence of God can be known, but only in the next life; there can be no distinction between the energies and the essence of God.

Today Mount Athos is the well-known center of the practice of Hesychasm.

Ida [see Nadi]

Jalandhara Bandha In Jalandhara Bandha the neck and the throat are slightly contracted, while the chin is pressed against the breast.

Japa [See prayer]

Kechari Mudra This Mudra is carried in one of the two following ways:
1. By placing the tongue in contact with the uvula at the back of the soft palate.
2. By slipping the tongue into the nasal pharynx touching, if possible, the nasal septum.

According to Lahiri Mahasaya a kriyaban should achieve it not by cutting the tongue Frenulum but by means of Talabya Kriya [see]. Kechari is literally translated as "the state of those who fly in the sky", in the "inner space". Kechari is compared to an electrical bypass of the mind's energetic system. It changes the path of Prana flow causing the life force to be withdrawn from the thinking process. Instead of allowing the thoughts to jump like frogs here and there, it causes the mind to be quiet and allows focusing it on the goal of meditation. We do not realize the quantity of energy we squander away when we get lost in our thoughts, in our plans. Kechari turns this pernicious way of exhausting all of our vitality into its opposite. The mind begins to lose its despotic role: the "inner activity" happens no more by the thinking process but by the effortless development of the intuition. Coupled with Kriya it is a substantial aid in clarify one's complicated psychological structures. A more elusive claim is the experience of the elixir of life, "Amrita," the "Nectar." This is a fluid with sweet taste perceived by the kriyaban when the tip of his tongue touches either the uvula or the bone protrusion in the roof of the palate under the hypophysis. The Yoga tradition explains that there is a Nadi going through the center of the

tongue; energy radiates through its tip and when it touches that bone protrusion, this radiation reaches and stimulates the Ajna Chakra in the center of the brain.

Kevala Kumbhaka [see Breathless state]

Knot The traditional definition of the Granthis identifies three knots: the Brahma Granthi at the Muladhara Chakra; the Vishnu Granthi at the heart Chakra and the Shiva or Rudra Granthi at the point between the eyebrows. Those are the places where Ida, Pingala and Sushumna Nadi meet.

Brahma Granthi is related to our physical body: it preserves the ignorance of our infinite nature and is the first obstacle in the spiritual search, since it obstructs the Kundalini's path as she begins to move toward the higher centers. The world of names and forms creates restlessness and prevents the mind from becoming one pointed. Ambitions and desires trap the mind. Until one unties this knot, one cannot meditate effectively.

Vishnu Granthi is related to the astral body and to the world of emotions. Lord Vishnu is the lord of preservation. This knot creates the desire to preserve ancient knowledge, traditions, institutions... It produces "compassion", a keen desire to help suffering humanity. Discriminating knowledge combined with Yoga effort can unfasten the Knot of Vishnu and obtain deliverance from the traditional bonds, deeply rooted in our genetic code.

Rudra Granthi is related to the causal body and to the world of ideas, visions, and intuitions. After piercing the Rudra knot, the time bound consciousness dissolves – the yogi establishes himself in the supreme Atman whose seat is Sahasrara Chakra. Perfect emancipation is achieved.

Lahiri Mahasaya underlines the importance of overcoming two other obstacles: tongue and navel which are unfastened by Kechari Mudra and by Navi Kriya, respectively. The knot of the tongue, cuts us off from the reservoir of energy in the Sahasrara region. The knot of the navel originates from the trauma of cutting the umbilical cord.

Kriya Yoga If we want to understand the essence of Kriya Yoga it is necessary to put aside some definitions found on the web. "Kriya Yoga is the science of controlling life energy [Prana]." "Kriya Yoga is a technique that activates the astral cerebrospinal centers." "Kriya Yoga hastens the practitioner's spiritual development and helps to bring about a profound state of tranquility and God-communion." "Kriya Yoga brings about the stilling of sensory input."

I don't want to contest them, but I think that Kriya is broader than what is implied. There are definitions which say nothing: they make a misleading synthesis of its methods and list its effects in the same way one would describe Hatha Yoga or Raja Yoga practice. Patanjali refers once to Kriya Yoga: "Kriya consists of body discipline, mental control, and meditating on Iswara." [Yoga sutras II:1] This is definitely correct, but by following the further evolution of his thought, we are led astray. Although he states that by constantly remembering the inner sound of Om we can achieve the removal of all the obstacles that block our spiritual evolution, he does not develop this method. He is far from describing

the same spiritual discipline taught by Lahiri Mahasaya.

Kriya Yoga is a "mystic path" utilizing the best tools used by the mystics of all religions. It consists of control of breath [Pranayama], prayer [Japa] and pure effort of attuning with the Omkar Reality. The soothing process of calming the breath, followed by the Thokar procedure, guides the bodily energy into the heart Chakra, holding thus, as in a grip of calmness, the unceasing reflex originating the breath. When a perfect stillness is established, when all the inner and outer movements cease, the kriyaban perceives a radiation of fresh energy sustaining each cell from inside; then the breathless state settles in. When the physical breath is totally transcended and a circulation of energy happens in the body – the breath is said to have become "Internal" – a feeling of infinite safety, solidity and reliance originates. It is like having crossed a barrier and moved into a measureless space: Kriya yoga is a miracle of beauty.

Kumbhaka Kumbhaka means holding the breath. It is such an important phase in Pranayama that some Yoga teachers doubt whether a modified way of breathing which does not include any Kumbhaka can be called Pranayama at all. It is observed that when we are about to do something which requires our total attention, our breath is automatically held. We are not deliberately doing Pranayama, but our breath is suspended of its own accord; this demonstrates how natural this fact is. In Pranayama the inhalation is called Puraka, which literally means "the act of filling"; the exhalation is called Rechaka, meaning "the act of emptying". Retention of breath is called Kumbhaka, meaning "holding". Kumbha is a pot: just as a water pot holds water when it is filled with it, so in Kumbhaka the breath and the Prana is held in the body. In the classic Yoga literature there are described four types of Kumbhaka.

I. We breathe out deeply and hold the breath for a few seconds. This is known as "Bahir Kumbhaka" (External Kumbhaka).

II. The second, " Antar Kumbhaka" (Internal Kumbhaka), is holding the breath after a deep inhalation. Usually this kind of Kumbhaka is accompanied by the use of the Bandhas.

III. The third type is that practiced by alternate breathing – breathing in deeply through the left nostril, then holding the breath and then exhaling through the right... It is considered the easiest form of Kumbhaka.

IV. The fourth type is the most important of all, the peak of Pranayama. It is called Kevala Kumbhaka or automatic suspension of breath: it is the breathless state where there is no inhalation or exhalation, and not even the slightest desire to breathe.

In the Kriya praxis, the underlying principle of I. is present in all those procedures involving a series of very long and calm exhalations which seem to end in a sweet nothing.

Internal Kumbhaka II. happens in different Kriya techniques; particularly in Yoni Mudra, Maha Mudra and Thokar.

Maha Mudra, with its balancing action on the right and on the left side of the spine, contains also – in a broader sense - the principles of III.: alternating

breathing.

A turning point in Kriya is the achievement of IV. Kevala Kumbhaka.

In Kriya we distinguish between "Bahir" (external) and "Antar" (internal) Kevala Kumbhaka. "Bahir (external) Kevala Kumbhaka" (the development and climax of I.) appears during mental Pranayama after having relaxed and thus emptied the rib cage.

"Antar (internal) Kevala Kumbhaka" (the development and climax of II.) appears during the highest refining of Yoni Mudra, Maha Mudra and the Advanced form of Thokar after having completed a long inhalation, with the rib cage moderately full of air-Prana.

Kundalini The concept of Kundalini and, particularly, of its awakening, provides a framework which is convenient for expressing what is happening along the spiritual path. Most of the spiritual traditions have some awareness of Kundalini; not all are equally open in exposing the practical details of the process. Kundalini is Sanskrit for "coiled": it is conceived as a particular energy coiled like a serpent in the root Chakra (Muladhara). The representation of being coiled like a spring conveys the idea of untapped potential energy. It sleeps in our body and underneath the layers of our consciousness, waiting to be aroused either by spiritual discipline or by other means - like particular experiences of life. It is depicted as rising from the Muladhara up through the Sushumna, activating each Chakra; when it arrives at the crown Chakra (Sahasrara), it bestows infinite bliss, mystical illumination etc. It is only through repeatedly raising of the Kundalini, that the yogi succeeds in obtaining Self realization. Its rising is not a mild sense of energy flowing inside the spine. Its movement is like having a "volcano erupting" inside, a "rocket missile" shot through the spine! Its nature is beneficial; there is an evident resistance in trusting the reports of Kundalini awakening accompanied by troubles such as patently disturbed breathing patterns, distortion of thought processes, unusual or extreme strengthening of emotions... We are rather inclined to think that a dormant malady, brought to open manifestation by thoughtless practice of violent exercises or drugs is the cause of those phenomena. Insomnia, hypersensitivity to environment may indeed follow the authentic experience. In a "true awakening," the force of Kundalini eclipses the ego altogether and the individual feels disoriented for some time. All is absorbed in a short time, without problems. Alas, the search for a repetition of the episode may lead to disorderly and careless practice of strange techniques, without ever establishing a minimal foundation of mental silence. Each book warns against the risk of a premature awakening of Kundalini and asserts that the body must be prepared for the event. Almost any yogi thinks he or she is capable of sustaining this premature awakening and the warning excites them more than ever: the problem is that many do not have (or have lost) a genuine spiritual approach and nourish a fairly egotistical condition.

In the theoretical framework of Kriya Yoga we consider Kundalini to be the same energy that exists throughout the body and not specifically residing in the Muladhara Chakra. We seldom use the term "Kundalini awakening" and try to avoid what could give the impression that such an experience has an alien nature: Kundalini is our own energy; it is the purest layer of our consciousness.

Kutastha Kutastha, the "third eye" or "spiritual eye" is the organ of inner vision (the unified astral counterpart of the two physical eyes), the place in our body where the spiritual Light manifests. By concentrating between the eyebrows, a formless darkness is first perceived, then a small crepuscular light, then other lights; eventually there is the experience of a golden ring surrounding a dark stain with a blazing tiny white point inside.

There is a connection between Kutastha and Muladhara: what we are observing in the space between the eyebrows is nothing but the opening of the spinal door, which is located at the root Chakra. Some Kriya teachers affirm that the condition for entering the last and the highest Kriya stage is that the vision of the spiritual eye has become constant; others identify it with the condition in which the energy is perfectly calm at the base of the spine. Therefore both affirmations are one and the same.

Maha Mudra Maha Mudra is a particular stretching position of the body. The importance of this technique becomes clear as soon as we observe how it incorporates the three main Bandhas of Hatha Yoga. There are indeed a thousand and one reasons to practice Maha Mudra with firmness. There is a ratio between the number of its repetitions and the number of the breaths: it is recommended that for each 12 Kriya Pranayama, one should perform one Maha Mudra.

Mahasamadhi [see Second Kriya]

Mantra [See prayer]

Mental Pranayama In mental Pranayama a kriyaban controls the energy in his body by forgetting the breathing process and focusing only upon Prana in the Chakras and in the body. His awareness dwells on both the inner and the external component of each Chakra until he feels a radiation of fresh energy vitalizing each part of the body and sustaining it from inside. This action is marked by the end of all the physical movements, by a perfect physical and mental stillness. At times, the breath becomes so calm that the practitioner has the absolute perception they are not breathing at all.

Mula Bandha In Mula Bandha the perineal muscles – between the anus and the genital organs – are slightly contracted while a mental pressure is exerted on the lower part of the spine. (Differently from Aswini Mudra, one does not simply tighten the sphincter muscles; in Mula Bandha the perineum seems to fold upward as the pelvic diaphragm is drawn upward through the motion of the pubic bone.) By contracting this muscle group, the current of Apana which

normally gravitates downward is pulled upwards, gradually uniting with Prana at the navel. Mula Bandha has thus the effect of causing Prana to flow into Sushumna channel, rather than along Ida and Pingala.

Nada Yoga Nada Yoga is the path of union with the Divine through listening to inner sounds. Surat-Shabda-Yoga is another name for Nada Yoga. Nada Yoga is an experiential meditation. It has its basis in the fact that one who follows the mystical path infallibly meets this manifestation of Spirit – whatever may be their preparation and their convictions. It is a highly enjoyable form of meditation; anyone can be involved in this even without having fully understood it.

You may use a particular position of the body – a squatting position with the elbows resting on the knees, just to give an example – or plug both the ears. Remaining quietly seated, you simply focus all your attention on subtle sounds that come from within, rather than the audible sounds from outside. It is recommended to repeat mentally, unremittingly, your favorite Mantra. Awareness of inner sound must happen, sooner or later; your listening skills will improve and you will become more sensitive. There are different levels of development in the experience of inner sounds: you will hear a bumblebee, the drum, the lute, the flute, the harp, the clapping of thunder or a hum like an electrical transformer. Some of these sounds are actually just the sounds of your body, especially the blood pumping. Other sounds are actually the "sounds behind the audible sound". It is into this deeper realm that, while over time gently easing the mind into relaxed concentration, your awareness is drawn. After some weeks of dedicated practice you will tune in with a sound deeper than all the above-quoted astral sounds. This is the cosmic sound of Om. The sound is perceived in different variations; Lahiri Mahasaya describes it as "produced by a lot of people who keep on striking the disk of a bell". It is continuous "as the oil that flows out of a container".

Nadi Subtle channels through which life energy flows throughout the body. The most important are Ida, which flows vertically along the left side of the spinal column (it is said to be of female nature), and Pingala (of masculine nature) which flows parallel to Ida on the right side; Sushumna flows in the middle and represents the experience that is beyond duality.

Nadi Sodhana Alternate nostril breathing exercise, it is not a part of Kriya Yoga proper. Yet, because its effects of appeasing and cheering up the mind (especially if it is practiced in the morning) are unmatched, some kriyabans make it a regular part of their routine.

Navi Kriya The essence of this technique is to dissolve inhalation and exhalation at the state of equilibrium in the navel, the seat of the Samana current. It is coupled in various ways with the practice of Kriya Pranayama. Some schools which do not specifically teach it provide some substitutes for it.

New Age The *New Age* sensibility is marked by the perception of something "planetary" at work. Since distinguished men of science have contributed to the *New Age* sensibility, there is no need to dwell on the affirmation, irrelevant for our understanding, according to which such a progress coincided with the entry of the solar system in the sign of Aquarius – from this belief it derived the term "Age of Aquarius" or "*New Age*". The essential thing is that people realized that the discoveries of Physics, of Alternative Medicine, the developments of the Depth Psychology, all converged toward one and the same understanding: the substantial interdependence among the universe, body, psyche and spiritual dimension of human beings. The esoteric-initiation societies, overcoming for a long time the differences of culture and religious vision, had already recognized this truth, which now, has become common heritage. During the twentieth century, human thought has made a strong step forward in a healthy direction.

There are many grounds to believe that, in the future, such an epoch will be studied with the same respect with which nowadays Humanism, Renaissance and Enlightenment ages are studied. The *New Age* thought deserves a deep respect for many reasons. If I hint at some "frenzies" I refer to the excessive use of alternative remedies for any type of real or imaginary troubles and to even more dangerous theories borrowed with a lot of superficiality from various esoteric currents, rather than to a depth progress in the understanding, in the expansion of the awareness out of the narrow fences of the small ego tied up obsessively to the maintenance of its petty conveniences.

Nirbikalpa Samadhi [see Paravastha]

Omkar Omkar is Om, the Divine Reality sustaining the universe, whose nature is vibration with specific aspects of sound, light and inner movement. The term "Omkar" or "Omkar Kriya" is also utilized to indicate any procedure fostering the Omkar experience.

Padmasana In this asana the right foot is placed on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh with the soles of the feet turned up. The name means the "posture in which the lotuses (the Chakras) are seen." It is explained that, combined with Kechari and Shambhavi Mudra, this Asana creates an energetic condition in the body, suitable to producing the experience of the internal light coming from each Chakra.

There are yogis who had to have cartilage removed from their knees after years of forcing themselves into Padmasana. In Kriya Yoga, at least for those living in the west and not used to assuming it since infancy, it is much wiser, healthier and comfortable to practice either the Half lotus or the Siddhasana posture.

Paravastha This concept is linked with that of "Sthir Tattwa (Tranquility)". Named by Lahiri Mahasaya, Paravastha designates the state that comes by holding onto the after-effect of Kriya. It is not just joy and peace but something deeper, vital for us as a healing. From our initial efforts directed at mastering the techniques, we perceive moments of deep peace and harmony with the rest of the

world, which extend during the day. Paravastha comes after years of discipline, when the breathless state is familiar: the tranquility state lasts forever, it is no longer to be sought with care. Flashes of the ending state of freedom comfort the mind while coping with life's battles.

Pingala [see Nadi]

Prana The energy inside our psychophysical system. Prana is divided into Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vijana, which have their location respectively in the chest, in the low abdomen, in the region of the belt, in the head and in the remaining part of the body - arms and legs. That the term Prana is interpreted in two ways should not create confusion – provided that one considers the context in which the word is used. In the initial phases of Kriya Pranayama we are mainly interested in Prana, Apana and Samana. When we use Shambhavi Mudra and during mental Pranayama we contact Udana. Through many techniques (like Maha Mudra) and by the experience of Kriya Pranayama with Internal Breath we experience the fresh vitalizing nature of Vijana.

Pranayama The word Pranayama is comprised of two roots: Prana is the first; Ayama (expansion) or Yama (control) is the second. Thus, the word Pranayama can be understood either as the "Expansion of Prana" or as the "Control of Prana". I would prefer the first but I think that the correct one is the second. In other words, Pranayama is the control of the energy in the whole psycho-physical system by using the breathing process with the purpose to receive a beneficial effect or to prepare the experience of meditation. The common Pranayama exercises – although they may not involve the perception of any energetic current – can create a remarkable experience of energy rising in the spine. This is not negligible since this experience causes to the skeptical practitioner the discovery of the spiritual dimension and pushes him or her to seek something deeper.

In Kriya Pranayama the breathing process is coordinated with the attention of the mind up and down along the spinal column. While the breathing is deep and slow, with the tongue either flat or turned back, the awareness accompanies the movement of the energy around the six Chakras. By deepening the process, the current flows in the deepest channel in the spine: Sushumna. When by a long practice a subtle form of energy circulates (in a clearly perceivable way) inside the body while the physical breath is totally settled down, the kriyaban has an experience of unthinkable beauty.

Prayer [Japa] Prayer is an invocation that allows a person to make a reverent plead or to offer praise to the Divine. The sequence of words used in a prayer may either be a set formula or a spontaneous expression in the praying person's own words. Whatever be the appeal to God, this act presupposes a belief in the Divine Will to interfere in our life. "Ask, and ye shall receive" (Matt. 7:7, 8; 21:22). Prayer is a subject of wide range and scope; here I will restrict it to the repetitive prayer. In India, the repetition of the Name of the Divine is known as Japa. This word Japa is derived from the root Jap - meaning: "to utter in a low

voice, repeat internally". Japa is also the repetition of any Mantra, which is a broader term than prayer. Mantra can be a name of the Divine but also a pure sound without a meaning. A certain number of sounds were chosen by ancient yogis who sensed their power and used them extensively. (Some believe that the repetition of a Mantra has the mysterious power of bringing about the manifestation of the Divinity "just as the splitting of an atom manifests the tremendous forces latent in it"). The term Mantra derives from the words "Manas" (mind) and "Tra" (protection): we protect our mind by repeating unrelentingly the same healthy vibration.

Usually a Mantra is repeated verbally for some time, then in a whisper and then mentally for some time. In most forms of Japa, the repetitions are counted using a string of beads known as a (Japa) Mala. The number of beads is generally 108 or 100. The Mala is used so that the devotee is free to enjoy the practice without being preoccupied with counting the repetitions. It may be performed whilst sitting in a meditation posture or while performing other activities, such as walking.

Radhasoami The spiritual organization *Radhasoami* (*Radha Swami*) was formally founded in 19th century India is also referred to as *Sant Mat* (Path of the Saints). It is considered a derivation of *Sikhism*. Actually, the tradition is much more ancient and it relates to the teaching of Kabir and then Guru Nanak. There were also a group of teachers that assumed prominence in the northern part of the Indian sub-continent from about the 13th century. Their teachings are distinguished theologically by inward devotion to a divine principle, and socially by an egalitarianism opposed to the qualitative distinctions of the Hindu caste hierarchy and to the religious differences between Hindu and Muslim. In the modern times the first name to signal is that of Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh ji who created the Radha Soami movement in January 1861 (the same year in which Lahiri Mahasaya is reported to have received initiation into *Kriya Yoga*). The founder Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh ji died on 1878 in Agra, India. He did not appoint a successor, resulting in a succession crisis upon his death. Several disciples eventually came to be regarded as successors, which led to splits within the group. These splits led to the propagation of *Radhasoami* teachings to a wider audience although with slightly varied interpretations.

Sahasrara The seventh Chakra extends from the crown of the head up to the Fontanelle and over it. It cannot be considered of the same nature as the other Chakras, but a superior reality, which can be experienced only in the breathless state. It is not easy therefore to concentrate upon it as we do with the other Chakras. Only after a deep practice of Kriya Pranayama, when the breath is very calm, is the attunement with it possible.

Samadhi According to Patanjali's Ashtanga (eight steps) Yoga, Samadhi is the state of deep contemplation in which the object of meditation becomes inseparable from the meditator himself: it results naturally from Dharana and Dhyana. In my opinion, Samadhi does not mean "union with God." We take so

many things for granted. Our language is strongly hampered: magniloquent words risk meaning nothing. To become one and the same thing with God is different from to awaken to the realization that we are a part of That One! Words deceive our comprehension and kindle egoist expectations. One is thrilled by words such as: absolute, eternal, infinite, supreme, everlasting, celestial, divine....

I have half a mind to suggest a sober definition of Samadhi, which may stimulate a reflection upon the meaning of the spiritual path. Let me therefore define Samadhi as independent from any accident, beatific, near death experience (NDE). The descriptions of Samadhi and of NDE follow the same pattern: actually the nature of the phenomenon which takes place in the body is almost the same. This opinion may disappoint those who smell a restrictive and limiting shade of meaning in it; however I prefer to think in this way and discover much more during the actual Samadhi experience than to thrive in rhetoric. Even if Samadhi were no more than a NDE experience, however it would have a superlative value. In both the experiences, the awareness can provide a glimpse of the Eternity beyond mind; then (this happens to the trained yogi) that lofty awareness blends, integrates with the customary life, which is totally transformed for the better. To those who wonder if it is fair to diminish the worth of the Kriya ecstatic state by reducing it to a process of contacting for some time the after life dimension, we could reply that this genuine experience is unmatched in fostering in a clean way the Kriya Yoga ideals of a balanced spiritual life.

Second Kriya It has been reported that by using the Second Kriya technique, Swami Pranabananda, an eminent disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, left his body consciously (this feat is called Mahasamadhi – the conscious exit out of the body, at death). There was no violence to the body; the feat happened only at the most proper moment - according to a Karmic point of view when the moment was right. Now the debate is: what procedure did he make use of?

a... Many claim it was the technique of Thokar. It is possible that he arrested the movement of the heart and therefore left his body. He might have done one single Thokar and stopped his heart; this means he put so much mental strength in this act as to block the energy which kept his heart throbbing.

b... Some believe that this supreme calming of the heart was achieved only by a mental action of immersion in the point between the eyebrows, entering the light of Kutastha. The reports say that those who were around him did not notice any head movement. Similarly when other great ones left their body there was no movement.

c... In my opinion, Mahasamadhi is not a "shrewd esoteric trick" to master the mechanics of a painless suicide. Surely each great master relies upon his already built ability to enter Samadhi. By creating a total peace in his being, the soul's natural desire to regain union with the Infinite Source puts in action a natural mechanism of appeasing the cardiac plexus.

Shambhavi Mudra A Mudra in which the ocular bulbs and the eyebrows are upturned as much as possible; often the inferior eyelids relax and a bystander can observe the white of the cornea under the iris. All the visual force of the ocular nerves is gathered on the top of the head. Lahiri Mahasaya in his well known portrait is showing this Mudra.

Siddhasana The Sanskrit name means "Perfect Pose". In this Asana, the sole of the left foot is placed against the right thigh so that the heel presses on the perineum. The right heel is placed against the pubic bone. This position of the legs, combined with Kechari Mudra, closes the pranic circuit and makes Kriya Pranayama easy and profitable.

Sikhism The *Sikh* religion is founded on the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine successive Gurus; it is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. It is interesting that the key distinctive feature of *Sikhism* is a non-anthropomorphic concept of God, to the extent that one can interpret God as the Universe itself.

Sushumna [see Nadi]

Talabya Kriya It is a stretching exercise of the muscles of the tongue, and particularly of the Frenulum. The purpose is to attain Kechari Mudra [see]. This practice creates a distinct calming effect on the thoughts and, for this reason, it is never put aside, even after Kechari Mudra is achieved.

Thokar A Kriya technique based on directing the Prana toward the location of one Chakra by a particular movement of the head. Studying the practices of the Sufis, we discover that Lahiri Mahasaya's Thokar is one among the many variations of the Sufi's Dhikr.

Tribhangamurari Some Kriya Acharya teaches the practice of Thokar in a very particular way. The central teaching is guiding your awareness along a three-curved path called Tribhangamurari (Tri-bhanga-murari = three-bend-form). These teachers explain that in the last part of His life, Lahiri Mahasaya drew with extreme precision the three-bends form which is perceived by deepening the after-Kriya-Pranayama meditation. This path starts from *Bindu*, goes up to the left of a very short length, then descends toward the right side of the body. Once a particular point in the back is reached, it curves and moves leftwards cutting the Vishnu knot whose seat is in the heart Chakra. After reaching a point in the left part of the back, it changes its direction again pointing toward the seat of the Brahma knot in the coccyx region.

Uddiyana Bandha Abdominal lock: it is usually practiced with breath out but in Kriya it is also utilized with breath in especially during the practice of the main Kriya Mudras: Maha Mudra, Navi Kriya and Yoni Mudra.

To practice it with breath out, utilize, at least partly, Jalandhara Bandha. Take a false inhalation (perform the same action of an inhalation without actually

pulling any air into the body.) Draw the belly up as much as possible. Hold your breath out. To practice it with breath in, contract slightly the abdominal muscles until you intensify the perception of the energy in the spinal column in the region of Manipura Chakra.

Yama – Niyama Yama is Self-control: non-violence, avoiding lies, avoiding stealing, avoiding being lustful, and non-attachment. Niyama is religious observances: cleanliness, contentment, discipline, study of the Self and surrender to the Supreme God (Brahman). While in most Kriya schools these rules are put as premises to be respected in order to receive initiation, a discriminating researcher understands that they are to be considered really as the consequences of a correct Yoga practice. A beginner cannot to much depth understand what "Study of the Self" means. Some teacher repeats, parrot fashion, the necessity of observing those rules and, after having given absurd clarifications of some of the above points (in particular which mental trick to utilize in order to ... avoid being lustful), passes on to explain the techniques. Why utter empty words? Whom is he trying to fool? The mystic path, when followed honestly, cannot compromise itself with any rhetoric. When an affirmation is made, it is that. Yama and Niyama are a good topic to study, an ideal to bear in mind, but not a vow. Only through practice is it possible to understand their real meaning and, consequently, see them flourish in one's life.

Yoga Sutra (by Patanjali) The Yoga Sutras are an extremely influential text on Yoga philosophy and practice: over fifty different English translations are the testimony of its importance. Although we are not sure of the exact time when their author Patanjali lived, we can set it between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. The Yoga Sutras are made up by a collection of 195 aphorisms dealing with the philosophical aspects of mind and awareness, thus establishing a sound theoretical basis of Raja Yoga - the Yoga of self discipline and meditation. Yoga is described as an eight stage (Ashtanga) path which are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. The first five steps build the psycho-physical foundation for having a true spiritual experience; the last three are concerned with disciplining the mind up to its dissolution in the ecstatic experience. The Sutras define also some esoteric concepts, common to all the traditions of the Indian thought, such as Karma. Although, at times, Patanjali is called "the father of Yoga", his work is actually a compendium of pre-existing oral Yoga traditions, an inhomogeneous whole of practices betraying an indistinct and contradictory theoretical background. However, the importance of Patanjali's work is beyond discussion: he clarified what others had taught; what was abstract he made practical! He was a genial thinker, not just a compiler of rules. His equilibrium between theism and atheism is very appreciable. We do not find the least suggestion of worshipping idols, deities, gurus, or sacred books - at the same time we do not find any atheistic doctrine either. We know that "Yoga," besides being a rigorous system of meditation practice, implies devotion to the Eternal Intelligence or Self. Patanjali affirms the importance of directing our heart's aspiration toward Om.

Yoni Mudra The potential of this technique includes, in all effects, the final realization of the Kriya path. Kutastha - between the eyebrows - is the place where the individual soul had its origin: the delusive Ego needs to be dissolved there. The core component of this Mudra is to bring all the energy into the point between the eyebrows and hinder its scattering by closing the head openings – the breath is quieted in the region from throat to the point between the eyebrows. If a deep relaxation state is established in the body, this practice succeeds in generating a very intense ecstatic state, which spreads throughout one's being. About its practical implementation, there are minor differences among the schools: some give a greater importance to the vision of the Light and less to the dissolution of breath and mind. Among the first, there are those who teach, while keeping more or less the same position of the fingers, to focus upon each Chakra and to perceive their different colors. One satisfactory remark, found in the traditional Yoga literature, is that this technique gets its name "Yoni", meaning "uterus", because like the baby in the uterus, the practitioner has no contact with the external world, and therefore, no externalization of consciousness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anonymous, R.M. French, trs. *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Arnold, Sir Edwin. *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad-Gita (From the Mahabharata)*. Middlesex: Echo Library, 2008.

_____. *The Light of Asia or the Great Renunciation*. Dearborn, MI: University of Michigan Library, 2009.

Aurobindo, Sri. *Collected Poems*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972.

_____. *Thoughts and Aphorisms*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1982.

_____. *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1995.

Bernard, Theos. *Hatha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience*. Edinburgh: Harmony Publishing, 2007.

Dhillon, Harish. *The First Sikh Spiritual Master: Timeless Wisdom from the Life and Techniques of Guru Nanak*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2006.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2009.

Chatterjee, Ashoke Kumar. *Purana Purusha Yogiraj Sri Shama Churn Lahiree*. Vedicbooks.net, 2000.

Easwaran, Eknath. *The Upanishads*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 2007.

Eckhart, Meister. *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense (Classics of Western Spirituality)*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981.

Feild, Reshad. *The Invisible Way: A Time to Love, A Time to Die*. Boston: Element Books, 1994.

_____. *Steps to Freedom: Discourses on the Essential Knowledge of the Heart*. Decatur, GA: Chalice Guild, 1998.

_____. *The Last Barrier: A Journey into the Essence of Sufi Teachings*. Lindisfarne Books, 2002.

Feuerstein, Georg. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*. New York: Paragon House, 1990.

Frossard, André. *God Exists: I Have Met Him*. London: Collins, 1970.

Goel B. S. *Psycho-Analysis and Meditation, Vol.II*. Haryana, India : Third Eye Foundation of India, 1989

Goleman, Daniel and Richard J. Davidson. *Consciousness: Brain, States of Awareness and Mysticism*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979.

Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.

_____. *Light on Pranayama: The Yogic Art of Breathing*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998.

Jacobi, Jolande. *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973.

Johari, Harish. *Chakras: Energy Centers of Transformation*. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1987.

John of the Cross, St. *Dark Night of the Soul*. New York: Image Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1990.

Johnson, Julian. *The Path of the Masters: The Science of Surat Shabda Yoga*. Punjab: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1972.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*. R.F.C. Hull, trs. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.

_____. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. (rev. ed.). Aniela Jaffé, ed.; R. Winston and C. Winston, trs. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

K'uan Yü, Lu (Charles Luk). *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality*. New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1999.

Kabir, *Songs of Kabîr: A 15th Century Sufi Literary Classic*. Rabindranath Tagore, trs. Boston: Wiser Books, 2002.

Krishna, Gopi. *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997.

Krishna, Gopi. *Kundalini: The Secret of Yoga*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Leser-Lasario, Benno Max. *Lehrbuch der Original-Gebärden-Atmung*.

Geinhausen: Lebens-weiser-Verlag, 1931.

Mallinson, James. *The Gheranda Samhita*. Woodstock, NY: Yoga Vidya, 2004.

_____. *The Shiva Samhita*. Woodstock, NY: Yoga Vidya, 2007.

Mann, Gurinder Singh. *Sikhism*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004.

Moody Raymond. *Life beyond Life*. London: HarperOne (2001)

Motoyama, Hiroshi. *Theories of the Chakras: Bridge to Higher Consciousness*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1982.

Muktananda, Swami. *Play of Consciousness: A Spiritual Autobiography*. Siddha Yoga Publications, 2000.

Osborne, Arthur. *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*. Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis Books, 2006.

Rama, Swami. *Path of Fire and Light Vol. I and II*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Himalayan Institute Press, 2004.

Ramdas, Swami. *In the Vision of God*. San Diego, CA: Blue Dove Press, 1995.

_____. *In Quest of God*. San Diego, CA: Blue Dove Press, 2002.

Rumi, Maulana Jalal'al-din, Coleman Barks, trs. *The Soul of Rumi: A New Collection of Ecstatic Poems*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

_____, Coleman Barks, trs. *The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

Sadhananda Giri, Swami. *Kriya Yoga: Its Mystery and Performing Art*. Howrah, West Bengal: Jujersa Yogashram, 1998.

Satprem. *Mother's Agenda*. New York: Institute for Evolutionary Research, 1979.

_____. *Sri Aurobindo, or the Adventure of Consciousness*. Mysore: Mira Aditi Centre, 2000.

_____. *Mother, or the Divine Materialism*. Mysore: Mira Aditi Centre, 2003.

Sailendra Bejoy Dasgupta, Sri. *Light of Kriya Yoga*. London: Yoga Niketan, 2008.

Satyananda Giri, Swami. *Kriya Quotes from Swami Satyananda*. London: Yoga

Niketana, 2004.

Satyananda Saraswati, Swami. *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*. Munger: Bihar School of Yoga, 2004.

_____. *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra and Bandha*. Munger: Bihar School of Yoga, 2003.

_____. *Kundalini Tantra*. Munger: Bihar School of Yoga, 2008.

Sharma, Ishwar C. (H.H. Manav Dayal). *Surat-Shabda Yoga (The Yoga of Light and Sound "Instructions for Seekers")*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books, 1991.

Sivananda Radha, Swami. *Kundalini: Yoga for the West*. Spokane, WA: Timeless Books, 2004.

_____. *Hatha Yoga: The Hidden Language, Symbols, Secrets and Metaphors*. Spokane, WA: Timeless Books, 2006.

Spiesberger, Karl. *Das Mantra-Buch*. Berlin: Verlag Richard Schikowski, 1977.

Svatmarama. *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Woodstock, NY: Yoga Vidya, 2002.

Taimni, I.K. *The Science of Yoga*. Chennai: Nesma Books, 1994.

Teresa of Avila, St. *Interior Castle*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2007.

Van Lysebeth, André. *Tantra: The Cult of the Feminine*. New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 2002.

_____. *Pranayama: The Yoga of Breathing*. Edinburgh: Harmony Publishing, 2007.

Vivekananda, Swami. *Raja-Yoga*. New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1980.

Weinfurter, Karl. *Der brennende Busch: Der entschleierte Weg der Mystik*. Bopfingen: Karl Rohm Verlag, 1994.

Willigis Jager. *Search for the meaning of life*. Liguori/Triumph: Revised edition May 30

Yogananda, Paramhansa. *Autobiography of a Yogi* (reprint of original 1946

edition). Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity Publishers, 2003.