

PART IV: HOW TO AVOID FAILURE ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

CHAPTER 13

THE VALUE OF JAPA AND THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

Devotional Prayer [Japa, Internal Oration] especially if it becomes *continuous* and is sustained by the practice of the "*Presence of the Divine*" is a complete-in-itself path. *Japa* is not a plea to God with the purpose of obtaining something necessary to the material existence or peace, happiness... A mystic utilizes *Japa* to declare their intention of worship and complete surrender to the Divine.

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*.

I have already introduced *Japa* in the first part of the book [chapter 3]. Here I am setting out to take back that theme in a systematic way. The first part of this chapter deals with the *Japa* that you can practice during the daily chores, the second part of it is devoted to a meditative practice called "*Prayer of the heart*." The third part is biographical and tells some personal experiences with *Japa*.

There are many reason for practicing *Japa*. Since the first moments of my practice of *Pranayama* I had one fixed idea: to practice my *Kriya* routine inside a particular mental state that could be reached through the practice of *Japa*. The idea to renounce to the pleasures of uncontrolled thought during the day was a sacrifice that would generate a new mind. If my idea was correct, *Japa* could help me looking at *Pranayama* not as a mere breathing exercise aiming at the modification of the state of some energetic currents in my body but as a continuous merging, a co-habitation with a continuous state of bliss.

Readings

In chapter 3 I tell about my finding the book by Swami Ramdas "In search of God." This book inspired my decision to practice *Japa* utilizing his *Mantra*. This is true, but it is also true that I had already read the works of

Teresa of Avila and also the book (whose author remains anonymous) "The way of a pilgrim."

Teresa of Avila

In the search of inspiring literature about *Omkar*, I found the writings of John of the Cross and of Teresa of Avila. The first gives a splendid description of his meeting with the "silent music", the "sounding solitude", the second drew my attention about the importance of "Internal Oratio" (Devotional Prayer.) I treasured the words of Teresa of Avila. ¹

"Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you, all things are passing, God is unchanging. Patience gains all; nothing is lacking to those who have God: God alone is sufficient."

According to her, *Prayer* is all in all in the mystical path. She wrote: "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."

"You can do nothing without *Prayer* and you can do miracles with it." 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* won't reach the mystical goal. Strange as it may seem, I firmly believe in this statement.

Her words could sometimes appear obscure to people. We *kriyabans* can easily understand them:

"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

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. 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.

with such a vivid and intense pain, but at the same time the experience is so delicious you never want it to end."

She is explaining what happens when *Kundalini* comes up to the heart. 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.

Before adding other remarks about Japa. Let me remind an important point discussed in chapter 3.

I explained how, after practicing *Japa* during the day, I encountered the breathless state. I choose to repeat Swami Ramdass' Mantra and I practiced it aloud for about 108 repetitions in a low voice (not mentally!) At evening I retired in my room to practice my *Kriya* session and almost at the end of my routine, while mentally moving up and down along the spine, I distinctly perceived that the life of my cells were sustained by fresh energy which didn't originated from the inhaled air. Then I explain how I entered a perfect physical and mental immobility and, at a certain moment, I was completely without breath. The surprise that one of the simplest techniques in the world, such as *Japa*, had produced such a valuable result was very great!

In chapter 3 I state three important conditions to be followed in order to obtain the breathless state:

[1] the *Japa* is to be practiced aloud (not mentally) for at least one Mala (108 times)

[2] it should be practiced not immediately before the *Kriya* session but at least a couple of hours before it.

[3] from the moment the 108 repetitions aloud are done, *Japa* should go ahead mentally, effortlessly, without caring if the mind is concentrated or not.

Then I give my idea about the working mechanism of *Japa*. The peculiarity of *Japa* is to annihilate the "background noise" of the mind. This "noise" becomes perceptible only when you sit for meditation. There are some thoughts which you can visualize, identify and, in case, block, but a diffuse, persistent hard-to-rid-of background noise nullifies all your effort at concentration. There is also a remark about how the breathless state

becomes almost instantaneous when you evoke mentally your *Ishta Devata* – your favorite form of conceiving the Divine essence.

This is what we have already explained. Now let us start the first part of this chapter

FIRST PART: OTHER REMARKS ABOUT JAPA

How to find your Mantra

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.

Furthermore, experience and common sense contradict the belief that a *Mantra* works only if it is given by 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!

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-dan-da-ru-pah-shi-vo-ham-shi-vo-ham* [That Form which is pure consciousness and bliss, 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.

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

If you study 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, Streem, 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*.

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.

How to practice your Mantra

Even though the oriental traditions recommend to do *Japa* mentally, I am confident that it should be done aloud – at least for an initial set of a hundred repetitions. 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.²

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.

Observe, while doing *Japa*, an irresistible impulse to put everything in order. The *Mantra* works in a similar way to clean your mental stuff and to put your "psychological furniture" in order. The practice is like a pneumatic hammer tearing asunder the concrete of the mind's conditionings, allowing you to cross, unharmed, its swamps and reach the dimension of pure awareness.

A very strong way of practicing

I tried to pass on this experience to other persons. I am reminded of a 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 heart which he definitely identified with the Spiritual dimension. 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

² 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.

"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.

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.

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

Dogmatic kriyabans and Japa

My conviction was 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

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 *Japa*.

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*. There must be a reason why Continuous Prayer ("Inner Prayer", "Heart Prayer", *Dhikr*) was and is the basic technique used by a lot of mystics.

Encouragement to the reader

After the practice of *Kriya* techniques, make room for a long phase of internalization where the senses can become dead to the external reality and become totally open to the internal reality.

Perfect physical and mental immobility should never be lost. If you have decided to practice the *Higher Kriyas* (with physical movement) then start your routine with 24 *Kriya* breaths. Practice a short session of the *Higher Kriya* that you prefer and then take back the practice of the *Kriya* breathing until you enter a very peaceful state of mind. Only in the dimension of peace something good can come to make you again alive along your Spiritual Path. If you have the experience of the breathless state, do not forget this experience ever; do all you can to have the same experience every day of your life.

Decide to "touch" this celestial dimension every day by being faithful to your practice of *Japa*. The magic of your bright, dazzling *Mantra* will spread in each facet of your life. It is like walking out of a dark stuffy room into sunlight and fresh air. The breathless state is very near to the innocent and pure skies of your childhood.

If a delusion arouses from your subconscious – for example the fallacy that *Japa* might be a mind-numbing activity, that by repeating a *Mantra* mechanically all day long like a parrot, you are doing a mind-numbing activity.... if you think that your mind is getting lazy and that it is better to cooperate with the spiritual evolution using more powerful and effective methods... then turn your *Mantra* into a pneumatic hammer and tear asunder the concrete of the self created prison. Summon your moral strength and turn your doubts into a calm euphoria. Reinforce your will. 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, Practice *Japa*, repeat your *Mantra* with superhuman calmness and determination!

SECOND PART: THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

[I] Japa in the spine

Repeat your *Mantra* aloud. Pronounce its syllables with serene attitude. Learn to resonate it in your mouth, chest and head areas.

Now repeat your *Mantra* mentally in the spine. Chant mentally half *Mantra* during the inhalation, and half during the exhalation. Or chant all your *Mantra* during the inhalation and all again during exhalation. Realize that you willingly affirming with each breath your surrender to the Divine. Feel the meaning of the chosen *Mantra*. Make a special effort to go ahead with intensity.

After 12 breaths, follow the syllables of the *Mantra* slowly moving your chin up and down. Increase your aspiration. The movement of the *Prayer* in the spine warms your passion. When you exhale and the *Prayer* reaches the *Chakra* of the heart, your chin touches your breast. Remain immobile there with eyes closed for some instants perceiving the emptying of the content of your mind. It is impossible to think a single thought: the state of *Mental Silence*, appears very strong. A subtle bliss pervades your soul.

[II] "Cross-Shaped Prayer"

Practice some breaths in the following way. When you inhale, feel a movement of energy that goes from the left part of the body toward the right part. During exhalation feel a movement of energy from the right part of the body toward the left part. To this breath, another breath follows creating a cross. It is not long from *Muladhara* to sixth *Chakra* like in *Kriya Pranayama*. The energy, perceived in the dorsal region, moves upwards during inhalation and downwards during exhalation.

Go ahead alternating the two ways of breathing. Feel how naturally the concentration on the heart *Chakra* intensifies. You need only 6 couples of breaths to make this breathing automatic and effortless.

Since this practice is very important let me give you an example. Let us utilize the Mantra: *Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*.

Perceive a horizontal movement of energy that from a point at the left (about 6 centimeters) of the heart *Chakra* moves toward a symmetrical point on the right. You touch the heart *Chakra* from the back. During this movement, mentally chant *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.

A very light inhalation accompanies the canting of *Om Na Mo*. A very light exhalation accompanies the mental chanting of *Bha Ga Ba*.

Then perceive a vertical movement of energy that from a point under *Anahata* (about 4 centimeters) comes up to a symmetrical point over *Anahata*, touching *Anahata* from the back. During this movement, mentally chant *Tee* in the point under *Anahata*, *Va* in *Anahata*, *Su* in the point over *Anahata*.

A very light inhalation accompanies the canting of *Te Va Su*. A very light exhalation accompanies the mental chanting of *De Va Ya*. [*Yaaa.. long*]
These four energetic movements that draw a cross, cutting in two different directions the heart *Chakra*, make one cycle. It comes natural to make inhalation and exhalation last about 3 seconds each. You will be struck by the efficacy of this procedure. 108 cycles without hurry do not require more than 30 minutes. At the end you won't desire to do more. Actually stop here for different times.

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.

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*)

[IV] Prayer of the heart proper

After many days of practicing the "Cross-Shaped Prayer" you are ready to practice the *Prayer of the Heart proper*. You need at least 20 minutes free.

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 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.*"

Wait before increasing the length of your practice.

When the *Prayer of the heart* is practiced seriously, 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. Sometimes silence is not possible but you can preserve silence in your heart. You will feel an ardent brazier located in the region of the breast. Or simply 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.³ In this way you live, always having God in your remembrance. This harmony is not lost during sleep.

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

The soul is conscious of a deep satisfaction. Something that has the taste of eternal life invades your being. The soul feels to be in contact with an *Endless Goodness*. The intensity of this state grows and grows. You realize that you are not in the condition of resisting this all-consuming emotion: you realize 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 exerts a pressure upon your heart. When you enjoy

³ 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.

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)

THIRD PART: SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH PRAYER

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

Actually, you will never be able to find anything like *Japa* to ameliorate your *Kriya*. *Japa* acts on the subconscious mind. You cannot practice *Kriya* by the sheer strength of your will alone, you have to relax. Here you will find a few examples of what "relax" means.

[I] Only Japa

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

Non only that: very important became the process of spontaneous tendency to prolonging the exhalation. I remained with the chin almost touching the chest. 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!"

[III] Incremental routine Micro *Tribhangamurari* (see chapter 9) utilizing the *Prayer* given by *Lahiri Mahasaya*: *Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*,

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 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.

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 this period 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.

[III] Twelve repetitions of Lahiri's Mantra in each center of the Small Heavenly Orbit

Sometimes a simple experiment can reveal a fantastic opportunity for introspection. When I was learning the utilization of the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari*, I decided to repeat that *Mantra* not three but twelve times in each *Chakra*. I decided also to test the theory given in some books of Internal Alchemy according to which there exist 4 more Chakras in the frontal line on the surface of the body.

To make it simple, I practiced 12 micro in these centers: *Kutastha* – Adam's apple – central part of the breast bone – navel – pubic region – perineum – Chakra 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in the spine, then *Medulla*.

The experience went ahead in a particularly deep way. I felt I had the power to "touch" internally the essence of each center. I had only to visualize the syllables of my *Mantra* moving sweetly like the flow of a liquid substance inside each center.

While nearing *Medulla*, the muscles of my lower jaw gradually 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 for a very long time. An approximate calculation from my part, revealed that I remained in that position for about half an hour. I know that the experience was surely pleasant but I do not remember anything. Something very subtle, indefinite, happened inside Medulla. What happen in the Medulla while going up, what happened in me... I don' know.

[IV] Japa 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." 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.

CHAPTER 14
THE KRIYA OF THE CELLS

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." ⁴

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: the concept of Collective Unconscious

The *Collective Unconscious* represents a part of our *Unconscious* common to mankind as a whole. Jung ⁵ introduced terminology which permits us to probe

⁴ You can also utilize *Japa*, thinking its syllables in the body.

⁵ 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

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 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 peaces 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

for his writings remains, especially among those who study topics of a spiritual and esoteric nature.

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.⁶

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.

⁶ In the esoteric literature we find the concept of *Siddhis* (powers). We are very perplexed 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 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 N.1

DEFINITION OF INCREMENTAL ROUTINE

An unvarying schedule which consists of a daily practice of the same set of *Kriya* techniques, changing neither their order of practice nor the number of their repetitions, seems the best way of starting on the *Kriya* path. For the first three months, there is no valid substitute for that. But, if after a couple of years of patient application of the same routine, you would discover that your efforts had been totally ineffective and the initial enthusiasm got lost, you have the opportunity to be reborn to the spiritual path by utilizing your time in a different way.

I know full well that if you address to a dogmatic *kriyaban* you would receive the standard reprimand: "You depend too much on results. Even if you deem that *Kriya* does not work, be loyal to it and go ahead undeterred as you have done up to now." Perhaps he will tell you the story of that loyal *kriyaban* who had his first spiritual experience a day before dying!

I never had doubts that one should continue the practice of *Kriya* through seemingly unproductive phases. Yet a lot of *kriyabans* drop everything because they reach a standstill where further progress appears impossible. The idea of practicing *Kriya* daily during their entire life because of a promise made at the moment of initiation can become a nightmare, a cage from which one wants to escape.

Definition

An *Incremental Routine* consists in utilizing mainly one single technique, whose number of repetitions is gradually increased up to reach a large number of repetitions whose amount has been handed down from *Kriya* tradition. Each step of this demanding practice is lived only once in a week.

Let us consider what happens in athletics. I know that *Kriya* is not a sport, but in the beginning stages of *Kriya*, while applying its different psycho-physical techniques, it has many points in common with the essence of athletics. Both shun the employment of brute force, and both require goals and the diligent channeling of one's strength to achieve them. Both also require analyzing and evaluating one's performance to learn from the experience.

Now, what happens in athletics gives us a good example of how to progress. Athletes who wish to achieve excellent performance must somehow increase the intensity and the quality of their practice. Only through intensive training sessions where athletes push their physical and mental endurance beyond their normal levels, will they succeed in accomplishing otherwise unachievable levels of performance. This is a "law" no one escapes. It is clear that each session should be followed by some days of rest in order to have a full recovery.

Let us consider two examples

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE OF NAVI KRIYA

On Saturdays – or on any free day – after a short practice of *Maha Mudra* and of *Kriya Pranayama*, practice the double number of your usual practice of *Navi Kriya*. It is wise to choose the most beautiful variation of *Navi Kriya*, the one whose process begins with 36 descents to the *Dantian*. This variation (you find the description of it in chapter 7) will be utilized for our first example of *Incremental Routine*.

You start practicing $36 \times 2 = 72$ descents. The next steps will be: 36×3 , 36×4, 36×19 , 36×20 . There is no need to go beyond 36×20 repetitions. You will do these fundamental steps once per week. What would you do during the other days of each week? The answer will astonish you: "Do nothing or have a very short practice of *Kriya*."

The increase of this delicate technique should be gradual. If you try to outsmart the process and perform too many repetitions all at once, nothing will come of it because the inner channels close up. Our inner obstacles cannot be removed in one day; our inner force is not strong enough to dissolve them. This internal power is initially weak and must be enhanced week after week. Furthermore, this process should be incorporated within a regular active life.

If you always practice in your room, arrange to have a tranquil walk in the evening. Everything will proceed harmoniously and the benediction of blissful silence will unfailingly visit you. The following day, grant yourself a day of rest from all *Kriya* practices and grant yourself the balm of a long tranquil *Japa*.

It is up to you to make your practice days as pleasant as possible. It is advisable to break these long sessions into two parts – to be completed before going to bed. You can conclude each part by lying on your back (*Savasana*: the corpse pose) on a mat for a couple of minutes. You may complete the first part unhurriedly in the morning, carefully respecting every detail. In the afternoon, after a light meal and a little nap, it is fine to go out, find a pleasant place to sit, and then reserve some time to

contemplate nature. Then you can complete the remaining prearranged number of repetitions, absorbed in your practice and perfectly at ease. You will see how the effects increase as daylight approaches twilight.

Effects of this practice

A good effect of this practice is a striking increase in mental clarity, probably due to the strong action on the third *Chakra* which governs the thinking process. A more calibrated, precise and clear logical process rises from a more efficient synergy between thoughts and emotions. Intuition flows unimpeded when important decisions are to be made.

Unfortunately, traits of hardness might appear sometimes in your temperament. You will find yourself uttering statements that others find offensive and cutting but that for you, in that moment, are the expression of sincerity. Although sustained by a luminous internal intuition, you might hurt friends through your words and only hours later, being alone and detached, notice how those words were inappropriate.

To understand the reason for this problem, let us look into the meaning of "crossing" the knot of the navel. (*Navi Kriya* is done primarily for this reason and secondarily to unite *Prana* and *Apana* and attract them into the spine.) It is explained that the cutting of the umbilical cord at birth splits a unique reality into two parts: the spiritual and the material. The spiritual, which manifests as joy and calmness, establishes itself in the higher *Chakras* and in the head; the material establishes itself in the lower *Chakras*. This split between "matter" and "spirit" inside each human being is a permanent source of excruciating conflicts. The healing of this fracture happens through this *Incremental Routine*. Although the healing is harmonious, visible manifestations can be interpreted negatively by others.

The personality of a *kriyaban* is destined to be ideally collected around a central point and all inner conflicts healed. The effects are observed clearly in one's practical life. One feels an inward order settling; each action seems as if it were surrounded by a halo of calmness and headed straight for the goal. It reminds me of Ahab in "Moby Dick" by Herman Melville:

Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, ... The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. ... Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (*Herman Melville*)

When you practice more than 36x4 *Navi Kriyas*, the movements of the head become less marked. The head movements tend to be hardly noticeable. In other words, the forward, backward, and sideways movement of the chin is reduced to a couple of millimeters! This happens spontaneous because the practice is internalized.

At the same time what happens to your breath is remarkable! This practice will transform the quality of it. At the very moment the order to exhale has been imparted by the mind, it feels as if the lungs cannot move. Some instants later comes the awareness of something subtle descending into the body. A new kind of exhalation is enjoyed, like an internal all-pervading pressure. It brings about a peculiar feeling of well-being, harmony, and freedom. One has the impression one could remain like that forever. Logic implies that breath is coming out of the nose, yet you would swear it doesn't. This may be considered the first experience of *Pranayama with internal breath* (also called *Kriya of the cells*) that we discussed in chapter 14.

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE OF KRIYA PRANAYAMA

Let us first reply to an obvious question: "Why should one practice the Incremental Routine of *Navi Kriya* before that of *Kriya Pranayama*?" The reason is that *Navi Kriya* creates that solidity that permits to face such a challenging procedure such as the *Incremental Routine of Kriya Pranayama*.

36x1, 36 x 2, 36 x 3, up to 36 x 20 *Kriya Pranayama* breaths is the best plan. 24x1, 24 x 2, 24 x 3,.....24 x 24 is a lighter plan, however very good also.

In Chapter 6 we have shown different aspects of *Kriya Pranayama*, let them all be present. Start with the simplest details and after some time, introduce the others. When the practice is broken into two or three parts – for example between morning and afternoon – you always restart reconsidering the simplest aspects.

Move forward prudently. Respect the rhythm of the breath suited to your constitution. If you feel that your breath is too short, don't worry about it! However, during each stage of the process it is important to keep a slender thread of breath up to the completion of the prescribed number. In other words, the process should never become purely mental. If you like it, make use of the 12 letter *Mantra "Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya"* (*Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba* coming up and *Te Va Su De Va Ya* coming down.) This helps you to keep the breath not too much short.

Note 1

During this very delicate period, you can practice *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* both during your week and especially the same day of the Incremental Routine. You can take advantage of this useful technique although it is not part of *Kriya Yoga*. As I have already pointed out, *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* is far more

important than expert *kriyabans* are willing to admit. Its practice should always be coupled with the basic techniques of *Kriya Yoga*. Thanks to it, a beginner receives a dramatic transformation – many important patterns of energy imbalance disappear. Without this balancing action it is not easy to achieve a *watchful but peaceful alertness*, which is the basis itself of the *Kriya* meditative state. It is a common experience that after a long practice of *Nadi Sodhana* without adding any other technique you enter a natural meditative state.

Note 2

Don't be upset if on some occasions this routine becomes an extraordinary journey in your memory. It happens indeed that by focusing your attention on the *Chakras* you obtain a particular effect: the inner screen of your awareness begins to display a lot of images. This is a physiological fact and we have reasons to suspect that those who affirm they are exempt from such phenomenon, it is because they do not have enough lucidity to notice it. The *Chakras* are like jewel boxes containing the memory of our whole life and they give rise to the full splendor of lost reminiscences. The essence of past events (the beauty contained in them and never fully appreciated) is lived again in the quiet pleasure of contemplation while, sometimes, your heart is pervaded by a restrained cry. It is a revelation: the light of the Spirit seems to twinkle in what seemed to be trite moments of your life.

OTHER INCREMENTAL ROUTINES

We can conceive different *Incremental Routines*. Each technique practiced in intensive way, will arouse specific effects – perceived in particular the day following the practice. Some effects can rouse concern. [A *kriyaban* should have familiarity with the laws of the human psyche.]

If you want to practice an *Incremental routine* of whatever technique and you have not an expert by you to help you in planning the number of repetitions, remember this criterion:

the first step should take 15-20 minutes, then, week by week, go ahead increasing the number of repetitions until you practice for about six hours.

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. Avoid long concentration on the *Sahasrara*

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, it 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*.⁷ 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

⁷ 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.

APPENDIX N.3

SPIRITUAL PATHS WORTH STUDYING

[Radhasoami – Hesychasm - Sufi - Internal Alchemy (Nei Dan)]

Usually, 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 are 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, all the rest is 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 I would suggest is to study *Kriya* in the light of other mystical traditions. I will bring here precise examples. They can inspire us, fostering an unexpected deepening of our understanding of our spiritual discipline.

We do not know what did Lahiri Mahasaya exactly teach, what

suggestions he gave to his disciples. It is not correct to live in the fixation that it is possible to reconstruct them. Let us be inspired by what is found in the nucleus of the great mystical paths.

[I] RADHASOAMI

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.

A *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.

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.

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. The instruction is to repeat there your *Mantra*.

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

Radhasoami teaches a spiritual path that 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.

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.

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. *Radhasoami* teaches that is the most elevated *Chakra*; its seat is in the white part of the brain. This portal opens on the true, indestructible ocean of the Spirit. This is the ultimate goal to be achieved via meditation practices.

Kabir and Guru Nanak inspired the Radhasoami movement

Kabir

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).

Guru Nanak

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).

In conclusion, *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.

[III] HESYCHASM

As we have said, an easy way to come closer to the *Hesyachast* teaching 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.

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 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. ⁸ When the breath reaches a stable and regular rhythm, combine the *Prayer* with the ingoing and outgoing breath. Go ahead with 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.

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

Then sit down in a quite 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.

⁸ This is what *Hesychasm* teaches and everyone acknowledges this is pure *Yoga*.

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 the *Hesychasm* 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". Esicasmo 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*."

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] 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 these lines by Rumi:

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 blessed; 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. *Sufi* 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.⁹

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.

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*.

⁹ 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

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*."

[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.

¹⁰

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

¹⁰ 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.

meditation-born intuition promotes the true self-inquiry which leads to Self Realization. One should consider the teaching received by the tradition, 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/FIRST PART] Pushing the energy up to Middle Dantian

The *Third Internal Alchemy* phase is conceived to reach the "*Middle Dantian*" which is the heart region.

It is difficult to understand which procedures are prescribed in this phase 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*. 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.

[III/SECOND PART] Pushing the energy up to 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 *Tibetan Yoga* we reach the same result through the practice of *Tummo*.

[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.

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*. 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.

Final remark to Appendix 3

There are many important spiritual figures that were not part of a religious movement. A study of their works (conferences, talks included) is a valuable activity. Let me add here two words about J. Krishnamurti.

It was my last *Kriya* teacher that counseled me to start studying Krishnamurti. The strange thing is that thanks to this study I found the crucial and conclusive boost that would assist me, after many years of controversial but loyal discipleship, to break my dependence on him.

Krishnamurti said what was then difficult to fully agree with: What is the need of a *Guru*? [...] You have to walk by yourself, you have to take the journey alone, and on that journey you have to be your own teacher and pupil. While I was reading these lines I felt undoubtedly that they expressed a deep truth, but my logic suggested peremptorily, "This is a sophism; even Krishnamurti acted as a *Guru* and acts upon me now just through his writings." I could not actualize his wise warning; fear and conditioning held me back. How many mistakes would I still have to make, how many slaps would I still have to take before I could affirm my freedom from *gurus*!

I studied many books of this author but nobody has the beauty of *The only revolution*. It is not easy to understand immediately its meaning. It is necessary to read only one chapter at a time and read it again in the following months.

Only repeated exposure to sunlight can lead to tanning; it is similarly necessary to expose our mind many times to this teaching before realizing its meaning. Bring with you this small book during your walks until you understand why this teaching is so important for our life!

The only revolution is a perfect synthesis of poetry and wisdom. "Life begins where thought ends," writes *Krishnamurti*. Do you want to realize this teaching? Take the whole necessary time. The practice of your *Kriya* will inexplicably turn out to be deepened.

APPENDIX N.4 FICTIONAL KRIYA

At that epoch of my life, I received a couple of initiations by other "minor" teachers that had once been the right-hand man of one or another illustrious *Guru* but then became independent because the *Guru* disowned them. We agreed our teachers were mostly mediocre, sometimes impolite and unethical. Some trifling episodes confirmed our first impressions of mental instability. They knew little about *Kriya Yoga* and they taught it in a superficial way, but we believed they taught the "*Original Kriya*" and this blinded us. Just for this reason we treated them with a deferential and tolerant attitude, forgiving them when they betrayed our trust.

We accepted the farce of the initiations as an inevitable drawback to success in acquiring the information we were searching for with so much passion. Generally speaking after attending many different rituals, the explanations were always quick and shallow; a destructive criticism was often raised against information coming from other sources.

I would finish every initiation thinking I had found the keys of *Original Kriya*. Often a vague sense of well-being perceived while practicing a certain technique for the first time was the proof of the excellence of the technique itself. I did not realize that, in this way, I had made my ego the compass needle of my spiritual journey. I could not realize that my past achievements – listening to the *Om* vibration, breathless state... – were no more with me, were forgotten. It was like I had been hypnotized.

I ignored any awareness that the new initiation had only added something insignificant to what I already knew and I was confining myself to a "cage" from which I would sooner or later break loose.

To many among us those initiations were a true vice. We stocked up on techniques like food for a famine. Just to give an example, at almost all initiation seminars a solemn pledge of secrecy was the password to be accepted. Every one took this pledge but as soon as the meeting was over, some shared the coveted news with other students by cell-phone who, in turn, would take part in other initiations and reciprocate the favor.

The mindset I developed in following these teachers led me to meet one particular school where *Kriya Yoga* was dramatically deprived from the classic *Higher Kriyas* and filled with fragments of "Classic Yoga." For

some of my friends who followed me in this trip, it turned to be the scene of bitter disappointments and marked the definitive abandonment of the spiritual pursuit.

Therefore let me describe the most disappointing meeting of my life. I came in contact with a *Kriya* school very far from Lahiri Mahasaya's teachings. I just want to drop a quick note on this school (I don't want to even mention its name) where I touched the lowest point of my spiritual path.

The *Kriya Yoga* they taught was based upon the teachings of an Indian personage who claimed he was a direct disciple of *Babaji*. The school offered three levels of *Kriya*, easy to obtain in about three years if you showed enough commitment. The idea of having found a source from which I could learn everything about *Kriya* excited me tremendously.

The introductory book to this school was very strange: its illustrations gave the impression of a fairytale. In this book there was no mention of techniques like *Talabya Kriya*, *Kechari Mudra*, *Navi Kriya*, *Omkar Pranayama*, *Thokar*... The main technique was called *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama*. It was coupled with many other teachings grouped under four main headings: *Hatha Yoga*, *Dhyana Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*.

The first instructions I received didn't disappoint me, but did leave me a bit perplexed. The teacher was obsessed with the precept of not holding one's breath, therefore the technique of *Yoni Mudra*, which is fundamental for Lahiri Mahasaya, was considered dangerous and thus banned. Their *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama* was indeed beautiful. The most annoying thing was that once you had completed the prescribed number of breaths, the process you had put into motion had to suddenly be relinquished and switched to *Dhyana Kriya*, a meditation which had nothing to do with spine, *Chakras* etc.

There is a principle that is always valid in any form of *Kriya Pranayama*: what you have done, or tried to do, utilizing your breath, you must bring it ahead by utilizing a subtler breath and finally only through mental effort. Another point is this: if during *Kriya Pranayama*, you create a particular throat sound, you must train yourself to make it become mental substance, pure astral vibration without physical component. Thus your effort will have a tremendous effect. This activity requires time, at least 10-20 minutes after the main exercise requiring the utilization of deep breath. It is clear then how stupid is to avoid this marvel and practice an exercise trying to realize quite another thing with our imagination.

Before receiving instruction from this school, I had mixed what I had learned from PY's organization with *Swami Hariharananda's* teaching and had created a very pleasant routine whose final part (concentration on the *Chakras*) was pure delight. Seriously practicing this new routine, there grew within me a marked longing for what I had relinquished. [I had the heavy sensation of gaining nothing substantial.]

The central core of the *Second Level* was initiation into Indian *Mantras*. This subject was more appealing to me. The day of initiation into a *Mantra* was preceded by a day of silence; entranced we listened a splendid lesson upon the utility of practicing *Japa*. There were other teachings that left me perplexed. Since I had placed much hope on the upcoming third level, I endured it all.

The third final level was an atrocious delusion. There were no proper *Higher Kriyas* but instead classic *Yoga* techniques, suitable for a preparatory course to *Kriya*. The six *Samadhi* techniques, given at the conclusion of that enervating and boring course, were: a variation of the *Hong Sau* technique, three fairly common techniques of visualization, the classic instruction of continuous awareness during the day and, at the end, a variation of the same *Om* meditation technique I had received from my first *Kriya* organization. The variations of the *Hong Sau* technique, as well as of the *Om* technique, seemed devised by a lazy mind whose only purpose in modifying them was to avoid the accusation of having copied from PY's organization, with no concern as to whether the resulting techniques were devoid of their power. For example, in the first technique, the "*Hong Sau*" *Mantra* was replaced by "*Om Babaji*" forgetting that *Hong Sau* is a universal *Mantra* whose syllables were specifically chosen for their power of calming the breath, with which they have a vibratory connection. The three techniques of visualization were of a genre one could find in any book on concentration and meditation. For many of us who had yearlong experience with the preliminary-to-*Kriya* techniques offered by PY's organization, being re-taught those techniques, disguised and passed off as *Samadhi* techniques, was actually like a cold shower.

Some of us dared to ask to the teacher his opinion about Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*. At first he was reticent and did not seem glad about our interest, then he shared his views. He believed that Lahiri Mahasaya had not practiced with total commitment the teachings he received from Babaji, therefore he ... died. Astounded, we realized that since Lahiri Mahasaya had not obtained immortality (as should happen to those who give their all to applying *Kriya* integrally), he was dismissive of him.

APPENDIX N.5

RIGHT AND WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SPIRITUAL PATH

The problem of considering the wrong attitudes towards the Spiritual path is more serious than what is commonly perceived. Do we really think that the *kriyabans* who stick faithfully to a schedule of regular practice are free from insane and totally irrational expectations that contradict the very basis of the mystical path? Human fragility while approaching the spiritual path is really substantial. Many enter the *Kriya* path with a wrong attitude. When I was part of PY's organization – and also afterwards – I saw different attitudes towards *Kriya*, some were blatantly improper.

The right attitude is not that of a student of occult science, inspired by sheer curiosity to test hasty some esoteric teachings. The devotee who surrenders to the divine Law, who understands that his birth on the earth plane was determined by the same law he is pursuing, has the right attitude and will not fail in his search.

A "*clean* mystical path" is a path directed one pointedly towards the total surrender to God and not a path polluted by the fantasies and deformations of the human mind. One's spiritual path of *Kriya* should be "clean" otherwise failure with colossal loss of time will happen.

Technically speaking, a *kriyaban* is required to have a certain control over the mind and an adequate power of concentration. A minimum ability of visualization is also necessary. The breath is utilized to calm the *Prana*, to give a stimulus to each *Chakra*. Other "strange" paranormal powers are not required. Working with these tools, a *kriyaban* enters (after calming the breath) the ecstatic state where one is totally absorbed in the Divine essence. Intense joy is the first effect which produces love for the Divine. This love is deep, passionate, overwhelming, hitting the limit of the ability to endure its intensity. This is *Kriya*. No other quality, effort, knowledge is necessary.

Unfortunately, the mind, so acute in science and technology, often starts to play an incongruous role. When the mind wanders in the realm of esotericism or New Age dimension, this fact gives all deformations green light.

A cleaning process

I personally experienced this degeneration. I know how acute is the temptation to let our mind explore useless and deviating pseudo spiritual processes.

I began to free myself from all esoteric-magic conditioning when I was invited by a local cultural institution to give lessons on the present tendency of creating a self-made religion.

In order to prepare those lessons I had to go through the whole history of western esoteric movements. It was necessary to reflect where the boundary line between the genuine mystical quest and the cultivation of magic ambitions lay.

This was an unclouded period of my life: I was very gratified to have time and opportunity to read the best available essays and textbooks – I mean books written by academics who didn't belong (or were so smart as to hide their membership or affiliation) to any particular mystical school and manifested a detached attitude toward the whole matter. I appreciated those texts that were capable of presenting the essence of those mystic movements that flourished freely around the great religions.

Sometimes I didn't feel enjoyment but sorrow and a sense of discouragement in front of dazzling falsehoods and deceptive reasoning. The real field of study was the human psyche and its suggestibility and vulnerability when it deals with approaching the spiritual path.

Since the first lesson, I tried to communicate what is being expressed clearly with the word "mystic." I repeated that even if in some context the word mystic evokes a relationship with the mystery, with the concept of initiation (from the Greek μυστικός [mustikos], an initiate) into secret religious rituals (also this from the Greek μύω, to conceal), a *mystic* is one who tries sincerely (adopting any form of mental and or bodily discipline) to surrender themselves to *something* which is the quintessence of supreme comfort, something existing beyond the territories of the mind – unattainable by the acrobatics of a never satisfied mind.

The problem was that this "*something* beyond mind" was unintelligible and had no appeal for most part of my listeners.

I talked privately with some students and they revealed to cultivate the most striking illusions. I was aghast at discovering that most of them came to my lessons in order to receive support and fuel for those illusions. Despite all my explanations they had not understood what a mystical path really is, and above all, what amount of joy could come by working to clean their spiritual understanding.

One day, after talking with some of them, feeling lost and gasping in order to "find my Self again", I felt the need to walk in the open air. The feeling of alienation seemed to stretch out as far as the horizon and touch the rim of the sky. I had a thought, luminous and warm: even if the people I mix with, are not attracted by the teachings of the great saints of the past, and nurture instead the instinct of devastating any sacred and liberating teaching, I would stand fast anyway in my path, not because I have faith in obtaining one day the coveted good effects from it, but because *Kriya* has already given me something incomparable. I don't need a recharge of motivation: it is the radiance of my memory that saves me each time, every day.

EXAMPLES

[1] New Age Kriya

Coming across this group of people, was like meeting a family a little bit more vast and varied than my first *Kriya* group who strictly followed PY's teachings. I am reminded of those days whenever I listen to the tape recordings of devotional chants which I obtained at that time. Usually I fell in love with an Indian *Bhajan* and sang it within me all through the day. For me it had the same nature of food; I really had the impression of eating that music.

This group had a sincere heart's affection for their *Guru*. Looking back at those times, I wonder what their opinion was about my impatient attitude in contrast to their passiveness. Basking in my state of elation, sometimes I was not able to understand much about their actual day-to-day life. The only odd trait I noticed was a clumsy attempt to abide by the rules of an oriental lifestyle. They particularly loved a way of behaving characterized by innocent frenzies.

While their effort in practicing the *Kriya* techniques was not remarkable, they tried by external means (readings, devotional chanting, convocations...) to extract from the depths of their psyche any trace of religious attitude, any scrap of spiritual aspiration.

Among them, there were those who added to *Kriya* practice some "cathartic" [causing purification] processes. They wanted to produce a cleaning effect on their psyche by unearthing any kind of unconsciously

repressed material. They explained – and this idea is not absurd – that such processes favored the removal of the internal blocks. Hence, the evolutionary process of *Kriya* became more quick.

I was struck by their tendency of spending lots of money on training workshops focused on strange therapeutic methods like aromatherapy, crystal therapy, color therapy...

When I dared to call into question the validity of the whole thing, they, feeling annoyed, rebuked that there was no reason to be perplexed about their practices, without having tried them. They would comment: "It is our *Karma* that is giving us the best of all the opportunities to grow in all the planes". "We are expected to answer in a positive way. We don't have to stay jammed against this beneficial current otherwise we could have ... to die and be born again just to live those experiences!"

They would add that "Our *Kriya* technique will receive a great benefit because *Kriya* is practiced with the energy present in the body and it is recharged by the flow of the *Universal Energy*. *Kriya* is also practiced in the astral world; finding a guide in that dimension is important..."

In other words they gave me the idea that the benefit of all their search, of all their expensive activities was that their spiritual path became more and more easy, like a stroll.

Research on alternative medicines, group therapies directed by eccentric individuals devoid of academic formation, were expensive distractions to be added to *Kriya*. These harmless distractions aroused great enthusiasm, seemed to intensify their experience of *Kriya*. Apparently they seemed to be very effective for some time, afterwards they were forsaken.

Living a multidimensional cleaning process: there existed no other reality to be sought.

Once I attended a group therapy session. We were in a room, filled with multicolored posters and cushions, decorations, crystals and other objects. The persons felt perfectly satisfied by the beautiful atmosphere.

The session was guided by a cunning fellow who assumed the role of the psychotherapist. With a pendulum in his hand, he was able to diagnose everything, from the slightest indispositions to the most serious illnesses, as well as to suggest remedies. His methods to clean away their internal conflicts gave great importance to revealing one's childhood traumas in group discussions. Sitting on the ground in a circle, they formed work

groups and, overcoming inner resistances, shared, sometimes with acute suffering, experiences we had never told anyone before.

I learned to relate to each person the way an explorer deals with unknown animals, waiting for any eccentric revelation. Sometimes I could not abstain from reacting to their oddness sarcastically; it was something I just could not help, it came out so spontaneously.

During advanced seminars, they would be guided to find, through hypnotic regression, their past lives in order to revive, and therefore understand, their deeper traumas. From a legal point of view, this alternative psychotherapy had to be camouflaged as a cultural or religious activity.

After many years, some friends are still there, to obtain a deeper cleaning of their subconscious mind – so they assure. What I sense is that the effort with *Kriya* is totally forgotten and reduced to a nothing.

What I would like to say to them is that theirs is a colossal loss of time but I have not the guts to affirm that. Too much insistence on the cleaning process is like preparing one's house for a distinguished guest; endlessly polishing and decorating it, delighted by entranced awareness of the different comforts our house allows – meanwhile, after having repeatedly rung the bell, the guest is standing neglected on the doormat...

What I want to underline is that my relationship with those researchers was based on real affection and it never came to disagreement, bitterness or formality. They were always generous toward me and respectful of my personality. While passionately sharing everything they had learned, no matter if it cost them much money, they never tried to force something on me.

[2] Expansion of the previous experience

Kriya has nothing to do with paranormal studies or unfruitful attempts to develop the latent powers of the mind. *Kriya* is not a series of secrets (of growing effectiveness as soon as one moves towards the *Higher Kriyas*) to be exploited in the most cunning possible way.

I was stricken by the weakness of the human mind, by its discouraging slowness in dissolving glaring deceptions. Many esoteric movements, widely recognized as demanding and elitist, which would have once allured me, turned out to be an obscenity brought forth by a monster.

In the New Age group described before I had long discussions with a friend who had an entirely childish idea of *Kriya*. Mixing *Kriya* with esoterica was normal for him. Following the flickering of his moods, it became evident the reason of his failures.

He was always in the search of a technique of spiritual evolution that, in his opinion, had to be superior to *Kriya*. He was sure that this technique was once taught only to the most advanced people, people who are no longer present on this planet.

He had studied some of the so-called "masterpieces" of esoteric literature. I accepted to read the one he enthusiastically lent to me. I entered an almost hypnotic state and didn't immediately realize that each chain of ideas therein contained had no basis at all, but was only offspring of the unbridled imagination of the author. Through an intoxication profusion of words, the author dared to develop free from the relationship with reality and from the rules of logic. Actually, the whole thing was only a mental pastime. Reading a fantasy novel was surely more profitable.

One day he met a self-named expert in occult matters who purported to know the secrets of an almost extinct esoteric path and, in particular, a spiritual technique far more advanced than those known today, which was practiced centuries or millennia ago, by a few very evolved beings. This "expert" guided him sweetly but with the surety of a mature professional, towards a situation in which his economic base, essential to his living, was at risk of being swept away, completely reduced to shambles.

He easily bewitched him. "Now that humanity is different from before, such teachings are not revealed to just anyone" he started off, then after a pause and with a sigh, finally concluded: "Today's students would not know how to appreciate them and, in their hands, they could be dangerous."

The expert created the impression of being a dreamer, but was not so naïve as it seemed; he used an enchanting terminology similar to that of the Kabbalah and talked effortlessly about original Christianity also, whose texts (canonical and apocryphal) he was able to interpret in a non-conventional way.

My friend tried to captivate the teacher in order to present himself as a true adept. Confiding that he was willing to accept whatever toll and deprivation, consenting to whatever behest, provided that this extraordinary secret will be revealed to him, he actually fell into the trap. After having

expressed some reservations, our smart teacher at long last capitulated, murmuring: "Only for you, only because I feel I am *guided* to make an exception". My friend, a poor victim quivering with emotion, lived the best moment of his life, convinced that the meeting with the expert had been decided in the higher spheres. The requested donation to be given during Initiation – united to the promise of keeping absolute secrecy – was conspicuous, since in that way he would confirm the great value attributed to that event. The teacher said that the donation would be transferred to a monk who was helping an orphanage. (It is a real classic! ... there is always an orphanage in these stories.)

While my friend, completely satisfied, was preparing to receive such an incomparable *gift* (he received the explanation that it was a *gift* and that nothing could adequately compensate the benedictions that such an initiation would bring to his life) the scoundrel distractedly decided what kind of trash-stuff he was going to demonstrate with glaring solemnity. My friend received with indescribable emotion, the new technique and spent two days in sheer fervor.

Later, imprisoned in his chimera, he witnessed the rekindling of his passion and the comedy repeated. He heard about other incomparable valuable "revelations". This illusion is, in effect, indomitable. After having received his "drug", he continued his inexorable run toward the abyss. I cannot predict if, one day, he will realize that the techniques for which he paid a fortune had been taken from some books and altered, so he would not to guess their origin.

Some time ago, I came to know that he poses as the spiritual guide of a small group of persons. I can't imagine what he is teaching to them since he never talked with me about this activity. What I never understood of him was that now and then he assists to the liturgical practices of a Catholic church since, in his opinion, this may work as a ... bland form of exorcism!

[3] Mental disorder

Let us consider the case of a person who has a serious mental disorder, is aware of it and seeks in *Kriya* a remedy. His/her disorder may be insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks... [The case of Psychosis is not even taken into account here.] The person is honest and has a great will to work. The point is that often they pretend a nonexistent spiritual interest

Well, in my opinion, embarking on the *Kriya* path with the hope of getting free from depression or other common forms of neuroses leads nowhere. False publicity has guided many to believe that it is possible to work out

their psychological problems, and perhaps physical problems too, with a regular practice of *Kriya*. But on the spiritual path there cannot be guaranteed results, everything depends on the the sincere involvement that one puts in it.

If you have a sick mind and after having experimented with alternative remedies, you follow the counsel of a too much enthusiastic friend and try the *Kriya* path too, you won't obtain anything, except for a headache. Not only that: if, through this process something good in your psycho-physical system happens, you will not recognize it and get only anguish. In this situation there is no love for *Kriya*. There is fear in your heart that you will be disappointed and you will.

The faith in the "remedy" of *Kriya* often disappears for reasons of a chilling banality, like meeting a *kriyaban* who seems dependent on smoking. "How is such a thing possible! *Kriya* has no value!" ... and the person stop practicing.

Now, *Kriya* works when there is love for the Divine and great appreciation for the *Kriya* techniques. You cannot look at *Kriya* with suspicion: "Does it really work"? No human can ever touch the *supreme Good* of *Kriya* unless you place it, with unshakeable trust, above all the other achievements of the world. You cannot clumsily try to deny to yourself your doubts, your skepticism. *Kriya* can work even if you are not a "religious" person, but it should be the object of your enthusiasm and aspiration.

We must be wise and sincere with this person and explain that *Kriya* is a spiritual path and it is possible to follow it even if you are plenty of problems but one thing is required: you must be able to find during a 24-hour day to find at least 20 minutes in which the mind is calm and serene like the mind of a healthy human being.

If you have a mental disorder and there is no serenity in your life, accept to go ahead with your search of a scientist (doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist ...) who can help you. Then all will be possible for you.

[4] Situations without remedy: impossibility to have a rational talk.

[4a]: Salvation comes from Baraka

The belief that the power (*Baraka*) of the great Teachers of the past, is still present in their descendants, as a non-stop chain is common enough. A *kriyaban* whom I had only a phone contact was convinced that the spiritual progress cannot happen except through receiving this "power". In his life

he tried to receive multiple *Kriya* Initiations from those who claimed to have a valid lineage although their teachings didn't add nothing to what he already knew. He was spellbound by the idea of "transmission of power." He believed that the power received through initiation had in itself the power of redemption.

He gave not so much importance to the practice of the *Kriya* techniques – he said they were just to purify oneself before receiving the real "initiation" which for him meant "power."

While seeking the transmission of power, he gave small attention to the practice of *Kriya*. He believed that the power received through initiation had in itself the power of redemption. He said that "line of descent" was the most important thing to care while approaching a spiritual teacher. He went on receiving *Kriya* from those who claimed to have a valid lineage although their teachings didn't add nothing to what he already knew.

He talked very much about the importance of following the moral rules [Patanjali's *Yama* and *Niyama*.] The phases of *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara* which were for me my alpha and omega were for him nothing without *Yama* and *Niyama*. He behaved toward me in a very cordial way but, when he talked about the absolute place to be given to the ethic rules listed by Patanjali, he was able to make me feel a worm.

However, I saw that his way of following the moral rules were a farce, with no level of deepness and understanding of human nature.

He criticized my obsession to perfect the practice of *Kriya*. He explained that the very desire to master a meditation technique meant cultivating desire and this was against Buddhist principles.

At this point there is nothing to reply. When there is no brain, there is no remedy for this situation.

[4b] Illusion: we are already enlightened

If you want to do nothing, if you want to avoid discipline and live of illusions, the mind is very good in nurture these illusions. There is a vast group of people who once practiced *Kriya*, or some form of *Yoga*, constantly who, with a mechanism similar to self hypnosis, had convinced themselves that they are already free from *Maya*, in other words they are "enlightened" people, like Ramana Maharshi, just to give an example.

Consider a person lying on an air mattress floating over of pond of manure. The miasma of the fetid substance sustaining the mattress sends out a revolting smell. But the person look the sky and dreams to be immersed in a pure dimension of air and light. It suffice to hold one's nose to ignore the stink.

When they say: 'we are already free from *Maya*', they are neither naïve nor dishonest. They know that potentially we are Divine, but they also know that when they openly affirm that, in that precise moment they are lying. They know that illusion is prevalent.

In their philosophical perspective, we who practice *Pranayama* have been duped and lie in a state of illusion. We love work hard and struggle. They say: the human suffering is an illusion.

They say, but don't fully believe, that it is of no use to discipline oneself by control of breath and therefore control of mind, that it is sufficient to believe, be mental acrobatics, to be already free in order to be actually free.

Sometimes I felt myself inclined to discuss with them, to the point of exhaustion, completely forgetting the time. I saw how their mind was able to destroy, impoverish everything that I treasured. I was trying to tune with their reasoning but their wrong attitude and way of thinking succeeded in bringing me to a state of alienation. I remember one who tried to show me the state of *Samadhi*. Staring at me with eyes wide open he took the likeness of a mad.

[4c] Illusion: only in a monastery my practice of Kriya will become good.

These people desire to live a life of self-denial, usually retiring from active life for example entering a convent or living alone in a retired place quitting their job and living by a modest lifetime annuity.

They are doomed to discover that this sudden leap into this so ardently longed-for condition does not fulfill their desire for perennial peace coupled with ardent mystical inspiration. Imposing upon yourself useless privations and attempt unnatural renunciations is not a good idea.

The initial feeling of total freedom from worldly engagements breeds good results in meditation but not so deep as imagined. They suffer from an inexplicable drastic diminishing of the sharpness of their concentration. They are fully aware of how insane this is, yet they cannot justify why their free time, instead of being devoted to a deep practice of *Kriya* or to *Japa* or whatever spiritual activity they choose, is depleted in too many useless occupations.

Do not try living like a saint. Some rational and intelligent *kriyabans* believe impossible things. For example, they lament how difficult is to be free from sexuality. They state authentic nonsenses and live excruciating conflicts getting to the refusal of love. Don't try to amputate your individuality and desires; don't try to cut you from everything interesting and thrilling in life. Learn to use your intelligence and to think with your head!

Lahiri Mahasaya admitted in his diary that at times his sexual desire was really strong. One day a disciple put him a direct question: "How can one be definitively free from sexuality?" He replied in a way that let struck dumb the disciple: "I will be free from sexuality only when my body will lie on the funeral pyre." God bless his sincerity! (I knew a *kriyaban* who was so bound to his illusions that he took the aforementioned episode as a sign that ... Lahiri Mahasaya was not spiritually realized!)

RELAX – PRACTICE - ENJOY

There are persons who wait that everything is perfect before practicing *Kriya*. This will never happen. Start your *Pranayama* now. When you think: I must prepare myself before starting..., you are already fallen in the trap of the mind. You are already lost. You will never feel that you are ready. I am sorry for you.

There are persons who practice conscientiously the *Kriya* techniques but are convinced that they have to carry on a formidable work on the psychological plane in order to "grow" on the spiritual plane. They brood over one single worry: "What can I do in the domain of my mind, of my habits, in order to ameliorate myself?" They do not relax. They are involved in self analysis. I say: Enjoy *Kriya*. Accept what you are.

Don't think that the Divine resides outside our human state and that an individual can come closer to the Divine only by gaining some merit. Don't think that by working very hard through self discipline and hard renunciations it is possible to destroy in your consciousness the roots of iniquity and egoism.

The employment of the *Kriya Pranayama* technique does not need to be coupled with a toilsome effort of tormenting your psychological structure. Don't want to build brick by brick, fatiguing at the extreme, just as if it

were a complex construction, your. Redemption. Many are entangled with this illusion. I say: stop with this.

Relax and enjoy. Enjoy *Pranayama* without fear to die, to become mad. Often this fear comes. Many try to go ahead along the spiritual path without enjoying, without swimming in the sea of mirth. No, one last time I say: enjoy!

And finally, there are persons who live in the simplicity of Lahiri's promise "Banat, banat, ban jay!" [By doing and doing, one day done!]

The go ahead and see that the *Kriya* path is very simple. This means that they have found the right path. The right path is clean, unpolluted by thinking. Instead of thinking, they live in a state of continue joy.

Memory of a loving person and faithful friend

I became acquainted with an elderly *kriyaban*, worthy of maximum respect and admiration, who had begun the *Kriya* path many years before. We met each other in the last years of his life. He was totally alone and I felt very bad when I could not see him for months at a time; for various reasons this was inevitable. We always met for short and fleeting afternoons, walking and speaking quietly. I was witness to an inexorable process that brought him to the point of living solely for the memory of the warm rays of a glance and simple nod once received from the woman who was head of the *Kriya* organization and the spiritual successor of PY. His dream was to form a friendship with that divine being, whom he felt was the epitome of perfection. He firmly believed that his supreme Good depended on a loving benignity from that person he thought divine! I tried to convince him that to deify this inspiring figure could constitute the end of his spiritual adventure.

I write these lines, with a pang in my heart because I have never met a person kind and altruistic like him.

He was discouraged because he saw God in that person, but didn't have the courage to see God in himself. He was discouraged, and I went ahead telling him: you don't see the Divine in you because you don't want to see Him! My words were of no use at all.

The problem was that this fixed mindset had already corrupted the innocence of his spiritual disposition. He expressed something that years before he would not have even dared to think: the presumed spiritual evolution of the individual through *Kriya* was undeniable, but so slow as to be practically negligible. The *Kriya* technique was for him like a religious

ritual which had to be performed scrupulously just to give proof of loyalty. He had given his full approval to the idea that on this planet there were on the one end special people, Self realized, forever free from *Maya* whereas, on the other end, there were irreparably common ones who had to wait many incarnations in order to receive a spark of enlightenment. Unfortunately, this view was the framework upon which he had been interweaving his thought.

One day he vented all of his gloom. Looking at how superficially – so he said – he had practiced the techniques of meditation, he had no doubts that in this life he had certainly missed the "target". He was already dreaming of future incarnations in which he could practice inside an ashram near a Self Realized Master. To this situation he already had his heart set on.

I felt a giant wave of inexplicable nostalgia which was ready to overwhelm me, but it remained curbed, as if suspended around us. Now that he is no longer alive, I wonder if the idea of the transforming power of *Kriya* that eased and sustained the first years of his path, was gradually erased from his mind by the human tendency to emphasize (and sustain through a constant barrage of anecdotes) the greatness of certain persons who were "impudently" saintly, perfect, majestic. My friend had made the unfortunate mistake of believing that the eternal spiritual Source in the center of his being would wither when he was condemned to live far from a divine being, similar to the one toward whom he had directed the warm aspirations of his heart.

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 be 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 psycho physical 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 worshiping 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.

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