Kriya Yoga: 
Synthesis of a Personal Experience

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PART I: MY SEARCH OF THE ORIGINAL KRIYA
The first part contains the story of the different phases of my spiritual search: self teaching of Yoga; Kriya Yoga received from an organization; Kriya Yoga received from traveling gurus; final decision of putting in a book all what I knew about Kriya Yoga techniques and go ahead alone.

Chapter 1   Yoga self-taught
My spiritual search began soon enough. I considered Yoga a discipline capable of producing an internal change in my personality. I began with an exercise, to be done in Savasana, where the thinking process was disciplined to create a state of "mental void". I decided also to reinforce my discipline through the art of Pranayama. After three months of practice, I experienced what Yoga books call "Kundalini awakening." This experience was preceded by a couple of days of fear and anguish.

Chapter 2   Kriya Yoga from organizations
As an enthusiast of Pranayama, I decided to devote my life to perfect it. I came to know of the existence of Kriya Yoga: a four-phased Pranayama path taught in our age by the great Lahiri Mahasaya. I would have done anything to learn it immediately but this clashed with the rules of the organization spreading it – it was necessary to follow a correspondence course. Meekly, I accepted to put aside my already consolidated practice of classic Pranayama and abide only by the written teachings of the correspondence course. This was a unique opportunity to familiarize myself with two important preliminary procedures (Hong Sau and Om technique) which later I discovered were central in the teachings of the Radhasoami movement.

A year and a half later, I received the First Kriya set of techniques. I was blissfully happy but unable to conceive a working routine – the one I followed was neither functional nor rational.

Chapter 3   The inestimable value of Japa
When I learned the so-called Higher Kriyas, the routine problem became more and more critical. Later, when one of the organization representatives refused to clarify my doubts, I reluctantly decided to address my search toward other sources. I had no concrete results but, thanks to some good readings, the practice of Japa entered my life and, with it, the experience of the breathless state.

Chapter 4   Following some teachers outside the organization
Possessed by an eager desire to learn the so-called "original Kriya", I made the great mistake of neglecting my routine based upon the union between Japa and Kriya. I followed three different teachers. Among many not very important details, I learned something valuable:
1. The importance of listening to the internal sounds during Kriya Pranayama
2. The frenulum-stretching technique (Talabya Kriya) leading to mastery of Kechari Mudra
3. The concept of Incremental Routine
Chapter 5 A hard decision
After the break with my third teacher, I avoided seeking others. I toyed with the vague idea of putting all I knew about Kriya in a book. I was hampered by the deep conditioning received from my first Kriya organization: the promise of keeping all technical Kriya details secret. The mental clarity and stamina produced by the incremental routines helped me to erase all conditioning. I began the work of writing the book and posted it on the Web.

PART II: DEFINITION OF THE KRIYA YOGA TECHNIQUES
The second part is devoted to share what I know about the theory and practice of Kriya Yoga.

Chapter 6 The basic techniques of Kriya Yoga
The essence of First Kriya is given through eight techniques -- Talabya Kriya, Om Japa (in the Chakras), Kriya Pranayama (aka Pranayama), Navi Kriya, Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama with short breath, mental Pranayama and Yoni Mudra.

Chapter 7 Techniques of the Higher Kriyas
After a theoretical digression, a good system of Higher Kriyas are here described.

Chapter 8 Introduction to some interested variations of the techniques described up to now
Some variations of the Kriya techniques are described.

PART III: KRIYA YOGA IN PRACTICE
The third part dwells with the practical aspects of teaching Kriya Yoga. The main theme is how to assist students to coordinate and harness their efforts.

Chapter 9 Building a solid basis for the practice of Kriya Yoga
After considering how to introduce the First Kriya in a gradual way, practical examples are given to utilize the formidable instrument of the Incremental Routines.

Chapter 10 Prayer [Japa]: the basic instrument of all the mystical paths
We dwell upon the Contemplative Prayer. Inspiration is drawn from Hesychasm, St. Teresa of Avila, Sufi and others....

Chapter 11 How to achieve the breathless state
The breathless state is a decisive result: the true Initiation. Combining the Contemplative Prayer with Kriya is the royal way to achieve that state.

Chapter 12 Perfecting the technique of Kriya Pranayama
After achieving the breathless state, Kriya Pranayama can be perfected. It can become the best tool to merge into the Omkar Reality. The last step is to utilize it to go down into the "mind of the cells" and touch the Collective Unconscious dimension.

Appendix 1: About premature Kundalini awakening
There are pages in the Web warning against the dangers of "premature awakening of
Kundalini." The real problem is facing the fear of substantial changes in life. There are practices to be recommended that dissolve any acute states of inner tension.

**Appendix 2: Cleaning the Kriya path from all esoteric-magic manias**
We dwell here upon the theme of the wrong attitudes towards the Kriya path. Many forget that Kriya is not a trip in the realm of our mind but a spiritual path.

**Appendix 3: Importance of studying the Radhasoami movement**
The literary material produced by this movement is very inspiring for all those who seek to be in tune with the Omkar Realty. Some schools of Kriya had their origin here.

**Appendix 4: Hidden treasures in P.Y.'s Kriya Yoga**
Something precise and useful is brought to light for the students who, being faithful to P.Y.'s teachings, are trying to find in this book a key to clarify some of their doubts.
PART I: MY SEARCH OF THE ORIGINAL KRIYA

CHAPTER 1
YOGA SELF-TAUGHT

My spiritual search began at age 15 after I bought an introductory book on classical Yoga. I don't remember the title of that first book, but books of B.K.S. Iyengar followed and then finally the autobiography of an Indian saint, where I found the term Kriya Yoga. My interest in Yoga had been fueled by a certain expectation of the effectiveness of the oriental forms of meditation that had slowly coalesced during my childhood and early adolescence. But first things first...

In primary school, unlike my peers I borrowed esoteric books from my parents' friends and I loved those books. I remember that the first one I read from end to end was on occultism. Knowing the book was considered unsuitable for my age, I was proud to be able to read and understand it. I turned a deaf ear to any persuasive advice to dedicate myself to more formative readings. I continued these readings until I was about 11. I wasted a lot of time on worthless books and stacks of specialized esoteric magazines with tantalizing titles and idle fancies designed essentially to impress, and which were impossible to distinguish in advance between fact and fiction. I also came into contact with the main themes of occidental esotericism with short digressions into phenomena like hypnosis and spiritualism. In the end, I felt I had traveled through an indistinct chaos and thought that perhaps the most precious secrets were hidden in other books which I had not been fortunate enough to find.

During this period, when I was perhaps 10 or 11, I saw the word "Yoga" for the first time in a postal catalog of esoteric books among my father's correspondence. I was entranced and inexplicably spellbound by the person pictured on the cover sitting in the "lotus position." However, I couldn't persuade my father to buy the book for me.

When I was 15 and in high school, the esoteric flame was rekindled for a while in a particular way: a friend told me he had a detailed textbook containing different Pranayama techniques, and added: "These exercise are used to obtain inner transformation...."

I was deeply intrigued by his words: what internal transformation was he talking about? Surely my friend didn't mean the attainment of a particular state of relaxation or concentration, or how to integrate the oriental vision of existence with our lifestyle. He must be referring to some intense experience that left a lasting psychological mark. Pranayama was something I had to learn as soon as possible. But my friend would not lend me the book.

A few days later at the train station newsstand, I spotted a simple Hatha Yoga manual and bought it forthwith and read it in its entirety. Although I
thought I was searching for physical and mental control, my spiritual search had in fact begun.

Unfortunately, this book was more of a philosophical introduction and did not stir up anything spiritual. It was neither impressive nor thought provoking (Jiva, Prakriti, Purush...). The author’s goal seemed to be solely to give the reader the impression of serious authority. Even concepts like Reincarnation, Karma, Dharma, and Maya, the understanding of which in the future would become so important in my life, remained unfathomable, hidden in a tangle of Sanskrit terms. Pranayama was only hinted at by explaining how to do a complete breath – dilating the abdomen, diaphragm, and upper chest during inhalation and contracting the same in reverse order for a calm exhalation. That was clearly an introduction, nothing else.

I was sure that the ancient art of Pranayama was not intended simply to train the chest muscles, strengthen the diaphragm or create peculiar conditions of blood oxygenation, but was also meant to act on the energy present in our psycho-physical system. It was common knowledge that the inharmonious state of that energy could be related to conflicts and disharmonies within. I was frustrated about the lack of in-depth information about Pranayama. The author concluded by saying that Pranayama should be learned from an experienced teacher but instead of adding a precise indication (the title of a book, the name of a school...), he remained vague about exactly how to find him, maintaining that we find the Teacher when we are ready to learn.

The second Hatha Yoga book I acquired was not a mediocre one. It explained the name of each posture (Asana), gave a brief note on the best mental attitude for practicing it, and explained how each exercise stimulated certain physiological functions (important endocrine glands, etc.). It was taken for granted that these positions were not to be seen as simple "stretching work-outs"; but were a means of providing a global stimulus to all the physical organs to increase their vitality. The satisfaction I felt at the end of a session spoke to their effectiveness.

I began doing yoga postures (Asanas) in a corner of our school gymnasium during physical education classes. I wasn't very good in sports anyway despite being well-conditioned by long walks. Moreover, being able to do something significant without having to move very far and without the inherent risks of school sports attracted me.

After the preliminary group warm-up exercises, when the teacher gave me permission to work out on my own, I devoted myself to mastering Yoga positions or moving the abdominal muscles with the Nauli technique. To my amazement one day the teacher (whom I had assumed had an opinion of me close to zero) came over and inquired as to the secret of succeeding in moving the abdominal muscles in such curious way.

There was an entire chapter devoted to the "Corpse Pose" (Savasana), the last one to be practiced in the daily Asana routine. The instruction was very clearly given and the author did not lose his focus in useless philosophical embellishments. He explained that the purpose of the exercise was to quiet the
mental faculties in order to recharge the whole psycho physical system with fresh energy. I was attracted by the grandiose promise that by stopping all mental functions – without falling into a state of sleep – and remaining for some time in a state of pure awareness, one could obtain within one hour the equivalent of five hours sleep. I regret not having the book anymore, but I will describe the exercise based upon what I remember:

"Lie in the supine position with arms extended alongside the body and with eyes covered to keep the light out. After staying still for two or three minutes, mentally repeat – ‘I am relaxed, I am calm, I am not thinking of anything.’ Then, to enter the state of mental void visualize your thoughts including those with abstract qualities and push them away one by one as if an internal hand were moving them gently from the center of a mental screen toward its outer edge. All thoughts, without exception, must be put aside; even the thought itself of practicing a technique. You should never become annoyed by continuous new thoughts but picture them as objects and shift them aside; in this way, new chains of thought are prevented from coming out. After pushing a thought away, return your awareness to the small spot between the eyebrows (Kutastha) which resembles a pond of peace, and relax therein. The ability to continuously push away thoughts that knock at the door of your attention will become almost automatic.

When, on some occasions – such as practicing immediately after a strong emotional incident – the mechanism does not seem to work, convert your concentration into a small needle which constantly touches the area between the eyebrows – just touching, without worrying about shifting thoughts aside. You will notice that at a certain point there is no more effort, and any remaining restless emotion subsides. The thought seeds manifesting as indefinite images quivering at the edge of awareness cannot disturb your mental rest. Whichever of the two methods you choose, the exercise works perfectly and after 40 minutes you get up well-rested and recharged with new fresh energy."

In my experience, in spite of the 40 minutes promised by the book, the final state of relaxation lasted no more than 15 minutes and the exercise itself never more than 25-30 minutes altogether. The technique inevitably ended in a peculiar way; the state of deep calmness was interrupted by the thought that the exercise had not yet begun; my reaction was always a wince and a faster heartbeat. After a few seconds however, confidence that the exercise had been perfectly executed appeared. Thanks to this technique, which became a daily habit, I realized once and for all the difference between "mind" and "awareness".

When the mental process is eased off into perfect silence, pure awareness without content arises. Like a luminous point duplicating itself an unlimited amount of times, it remains unchanged for some minutes. You know you exist and that your existence is indestructible – this happens without thinking. You have the indisputable experience that thoughts are in essence ephemeral, and instead of revealing the final truth they cloud it. The Cartesian deduction: "I think, therefore I am" is indefensible. It would be more correct to affirm: "Only in the silence of no thought lies the proof and the intimate certainty of existing."
Besides the dimension of esoteric oriental meditative practices, I also had a passion for poetry and literature as well as a habit of daily seeking the contemplation of beauty in Nature. This interest began when I was 9. I borrowed a book of poetry from the school library and copied different short poems with naturalistic themes into a notebook. By reading them frequently, I soon knew them all by heart. By recalling them while contemplating the hilly surroundings beyond the outskirts of my village, I could intensify my emotions.

As my high school years were drawing to a close, I developed a passion for classical music and Beethoven became my idol. Despite the tragedy of his deafness at his creative peak, he reacted in a most honorable manner and carried on creating works he had already composed in his heart. The Heiligenstadt Testament, where he reveals his critical condition and states his decision with calm and total resolution, made him almost a hero and a saint in my eyes.

He wrote to a friend: "God is nearer to me than to others. I approach Him without fear, I have always known him. Neither am I anxious about my music, which no adverse fate can overtake, and which will free him who understands it from the misery which afflicts others." How could I remain indifferent? He was drawing incomparable music out of the depths of his being, and offering it to humanity. The triumph of this frail human creature over a nonsensical fate had a tremendous impact on me. The daily rite of retiring to my room to listen to that music consolidated my consecration to the Ideal – merging with Absolute Beauty.

Each day for the first three months after high school graduation, when I experienced a strong romantic crush whose fulfillment seemed impossible, I listened to Beethoven's Missa Solemnis. The more my emotionalism prompted me to act rashly, which proved to be destructive to my love affair, the more my desperate heart found refuge in the mass’ pure beauty. During a walk in the country, sitting on a hill contemplating a far landscape bathed in the warmth of the summer evening, his music rang out again in my memory. What my heart craved was before me, perfect and untarnished neither by fears nor by a sense of guilt. That was my first religious experience.

I chose to study math at university. While attending the first classes, I understood that a happy chapter of my life was concluded and there would be no time for distractions like enjoying classic literature. All my attention was focused on finding an effective method of study and a way to avoid wasting my energies. This meant focusing in a disciplined way both during study time and during my idle moments. For this purpose, I decided to utilize the dynamic of the yogic "mental void" technique.

One bad habit I had to conquer was a tendency to daydream and jump from one memory to another to extract moments of pleasure. I had formed the unshakeable conviction that when thought becomes an uncontrollable vice – for many it is an utter addiction – it constitutes not only a waste of energy but is the main cause of almost all failures in our life. The frenzied whirl of the thought process, accompanied by alternating moods and strong emotions, creates at times
unreasonable fears that hinder the decisive action that life requires. On other occasions it fosters an optimistic imagination that unfortunately pushes the person toward inappropriate actions.

I was convinced that disciplined thought was the most valuable trait I could develop, and would open the doors to fruitful achievements. My decision filled me with euphoric enthusiasm. However, after breathing the limpid, sparkling, celestial state of thought restraint for a few hours I encountered a significant mental resistance. In the mirror of my introspection, I saw how other habits were wasting my mental energy. One of these, wrapped and unexpectedly dignified by the concept of socialization, was that of falling daily into nerve-wracking discussions with friends. It was time to renounce it. I abruptly avoided their company. Certainly mine was not an impossible sacrifice-- theirs was not my world.

One day during a short afternoon walk, I saw them from afar sitting lazily and chatting in the usual bar. My heart gave a lurch. They were my friends and I loved each of them, yet seeing them together that day they appeared to me like chickens cooped up in a narrow space. Mercilessly I assumed they were completely governed by the instincts of eating, partying, sex, and generally overindulging. Whatever tragedy happened to their friend didn't concern them, they would have kept on sipping the daily pleasure of dawdling until misfortune hit them personally. I found it very sad and distressing. The incident put me in a gloomy mood, but a sentence from Beethoven's Heiligenstadt testament came spontaneously to mind and evoked the bliss I had enjoyed during my high school years:

O Providence - grant me at least but one day of pure joy - it has been so long since real joy echoed in my heart - O when - O when, O Divine One - shall I find it again in the temple of nature and of men? - Never? No - O that would be too hard.

At that moment I again resolved to concentrate on my studies, and passing my exams became my sole focus. I perceived that period of my life as a descent into an unfathomable night but I knew that in order to shape my future the way I desired, tough sacrifices were necessary. To see the dawn of a "day of pure joy", I would have to endure momentarily a dark emptiness: I would savor it without lament and without being tempted to turn on a light for momentary solace.

I Will Die So I Can Live!

An event illuminated my life: a friend introduced me to Gustav Mahler's Symphony No.2 "Resurrection" and invited me to a live concert of this work. I read the information leaflet. Each part of the symphony had a precise meaning which Mahler himself had explained in a letter to the conductor, Bruno Walter. It was Mahler's intention to treat death as the inevitable end to all human enterprise.

The music itself conveyed a sense of desolation which was sweet, as if
death meant drifting off into a peaceful sleep. The words of the contralto communicated a childlike innocent vision in a sorrowful voice of endless dignity:

\[
\begin{align*}
O \text{ Röschenn roth!} & \quad \text{O red rose!} \\
\text{Der Mensch liegt in größter Noth!} & \quad \text{Man lies in direst need!} \\
\text{Der Mensch liegt in größter Pein!} & \quad \text{Man lies in deepest pain!} \\
\text{Je lieber möcht ich im Himmel sein.} & \quad \text{Oh, how I would rather be in heaven.}
\end{align*}
\]

While listening, I fancied I was in the countryside during a light rain. But it was spring and a ray of sun pierced the clouds. Amid the vegetation there was a beautiful red rose. That simple vision brought solace to my heart's inner ache and warmed me to a high pitch of enthusiasm with the thought that Beauty would be with me forever, in all the places of my solitary wanderings.

Then the choir sang some verses from Klopstock's hymn:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n} & \quad \text{Rise again, yes, rise again,} \\
\text{Wirst du, Mein Staub,} & \quad \text{Will you, my dust,} \\
\text{Nach kurzer Ruh'!} & \quad \text{After a brief rest!} \\
\text{Unsterblich Leben! Unsterblich Leben} & \quad \text{Immortal life! Immortal life} \\
\text{wird der dich rief dir geben!} & \quad \text{Will He who called you, give you.}
\end{align*}
\]

Next Mahler's own verses were chanted. These ended with:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen,} & \quad \text{With wings I have gained,} \\
\text{In heißem Liebesstreben,} & \quad \text{in love's fierce striving,} \\
\text{Werd'ich entschweben} & \quad \text{I shall soar aloft} \\
\text{Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'gedrungen!} & \quad \text{To the light no eye has pierced!} \\
\text{Sterben werd'ich, um zu leben!} & \quad \text{I will die so I can live!} \\
\text{Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n} & \quad \text{Rise again, yes, rise again,} \\
\text{wirst du, mein Herz, in einem Nu!} & \quad \text{Will you, my heart, in an instant!} \\
\text{Was du geschlagen} & \quad \text{What you have earned yourself,} \\
\text{zu Gott wird es dich tragen!} & \quad \text{Shall lead you to God!}
\end{align*}
\]

In the following days, I tried to penetrate the meaning by reading everything I could on the symphony and listening to it entranced in the quietude of my own room. After many integral and enthusiastic listening sessions, the words: "Sterben werde ich, um zu leben!" ("I will die so I can live!") resounded all day long in my mind like a thread around which my thoughts crystallized. Would I ever, before old age, be able to die to myself – namely to die to my egoism? Was it possible to cross the foggy curtain of thoughts, superficial emotions, sensations and instinct, and emerge into that pure Dimension for which I had yearned many years and which I felt was my highest good?

There was no doubt I was willing to perfect my self-imposed discipline to the extreme, but by no means did I want to spend the rest of my life staring at the wall of my silenced mind and waiting for something to happen. "I will seize Fate by the throat", said Beethoven: so I too was prepared to act in a strong and
decisive way.

What I missed was the art of Pranayama – that Pranayama which I had dreamed so much about but had never actually practiced. A few weeks before, I had purchased B.K.S. Iyengar's *The Illustrated Light on Yoga*, and his description of Pranayama had awakened in me an unshakeable desire to practice it intensively. In the last part of the book there was a prudent warning:

"Pneumatic tools can cut through the hardest rock. In Pranayama, the yogi uses his lungs as pneumatic tools. If they are not used properly, they destroy both the tool and the person using it. Faulty practice puts undue stress on the lungs and diaphragm. The respiratory system suffers and the nervous system is adversely affected. The very foundation of a healthy body and a sound mind is shaken by a faulty practice of Pranayama."

This sentence ignited my immoderate will to experience all its power, to the point of "dying" in it, figuratively speaking. What would have frightened others emboldened me. If it provoked an authentic psychological earthquake, I was on the right track. Yes some prudence was necessary; an intensive practice had to be reached gradually and each session had to be carried out with extreme care.

The Pranayama referred to was Nadi Sodhana and Ujjayi (breathing exercises) with Bandha (muscle contraction) and Kumbhaka (breath retention). Day after day, I could perceive Pranayama's potential acting on my psyche. I was certain my old school friend had told the truth – "these exercises can change a person inside". It had to be true!

Pranayama appeared to me the most perfect of all arts, with no intrinsic limits. To devote myself to it would cost nothing. I would not be obliged to spend money on the purchase of a musical instrument, canvas and colors, or whatever. The instrument was always with me and within me. I couldn't understand how I had wasted so much time not taking on this commitment seriously.

To abide by it was The Decision of My Life. I practiced morning and evening in an "absolute" way, with ferocious concentration, as if there were no tomorrow. I would start with stretching exercises -- and some simple Asanas when I had more time. 1

I practiced in the half-lotus position, sitting on the edge of a pillow with my back straight. I focused with zeal on applying the instructions flawlessly but with a creative spirit. I concentrated keenly on the alternate feelings of coolness and warmth produced by the air on the fingers and on the palm of the right hand used to open and close the nostrils. The pressure, the smooth flowing of the breath... every detail was pleasant. Becoming aware of each peculiarity of the exercise helped me maintain vigilant attention without becoming stressed.

During the day, I found my perception of things had changed. My eyes searched for the most intense colors, fascinated by them as if they were close to revealing

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1 A detailed description of this routine (Nadi Sodhana; Ujjayi; Bandha and final concentration in Kutastha) is given at the end of this chapter.
an unknown reality lying beyond the material. Sometimes in the first sunny days after winter, when the skies were crystalline and as blue as they had ever been, I would sit in the open air and contemplate my surroundings. In a bushy ditch covered with ivy the sun shed its light upon flowers that a few weeks before were blooming during the cold and now, heedless of the mildest days, still lingered in their spell-binding glory. I was deeply inspired. I would close my eyes and rely on an inner radiance accompanied by a sensation of pressure on my heart.

At that time, my internal life was still split between two interests which I perceived as two dimensions having nothing in common. On one side were esoteric matters which had guided my search toward Yoga discipline, which I conceived to be an efficacious tool for purifying and controlling the mind. On the other side was the aspiration toward the ideal world of Beauty which I tried to evoke through the study of literary works, and listening to classical music. I never imagined that the first dimension could lead me to the second! It was reasonable to hope that Pranayama could give me a permanent base of mental clarity, helping me to not spoil the fragile miracle of an encounter with Beauty with a jumble of thoughts, but I could never have imagined that Pranayama had the power of multiplying the experience of the Sublime or even make it spring up from nothing! I often repeated inside myself and sometimes quoted to my friends this verse from the Bhagavad Gita:

"(The yogi) knows the joy eternal beyond the pale of the senses which his reason cannot grasp. He abides in this reality and moves not thence. He has found the treasure above all others. There is nothing higher than this. He that has achieved it shall not be moved by the greatest sorrow. This is the real meaning of Yoga - a deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow".

While repeating it, I was actually savoring that Joy.

On a quiet afternoon walk among trees just before sunset, I quickly glanced now and then at text from one of the Upanishads [ancient Sanskrit sacred texts] that I had with me. One particular sentence awakened an instantaneous realization: "Thou art That"!

I closed the book and repeated the words as if in a trance. My rational mind was able to grasp but not fully accept the incommensurable implication of the statement. It meant that it was I that was the unbelievably delicate green light filtering through the leaves, bearing witness to the spring that brought new life. Back home, I did not even try to put down on paper the numerous "moments of grace" I experienced from this realization, nor could I have. My only wish was to delve further and further into this new inner source of understanding and enlightenment.
Kundalini Experience

After having bought the works of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Gopi Krishna and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (a big volume with comments by I.K. Taimni), I finally decided to buy the autobiography of an Indian saint, whom I will indicate by P.Y. It was a book I had seen some years before but had not bought because it didn't contain practical instructions. My hope now was that I would be able to find useful information such as the addresses of some good Yoga schools. This autobiography enthralled me and created a strong aspiration toward the mystical path. In certain moments I found myself almost burning from an internal fever. This provided fertile ground for the coming of an event which was radically different from any I had experienced before. It was a kind of "intimate" experience. Nonetheless, since I have listened to similar descriptions from Yoga practitioners, I have decided to share it.

One night while reading P.Y.'s autobiography, I felt a shiver similar to an electric current spread itself throughout my whole body. A "shiver" was insignificant in itself, but it frightened me. My reaction was rather strange since I had always believed I was immune from fear of all things related to transcendence. The thought flashed through my mind that a deeper event was going to happen soon; that it was going to be strong, very strong and I would not be able to stop it in any way. It was as if my memory had some inexplicable familiarity with it and my instinct knew its inescapable power. I made up my mind to let things happen unimpeded and go ahead with the reading. Minutes passed and I was not able to continue reading; my restlessness turned into anxiety. Then it again became fear, an intense fear of something unknown which was threatening my existence. I had certainly never experienced a similar state. In past moments of danger, I would remain paralyzed, unable to think. Now my thoughts were stirring frantically, picturing the worst results: loss of psychological balance, encounter with an evil entity, perhaps even death.

I felt the urgency to do something, even though I did not know what. I set myself into position for meditation and waited. The anguish increased. A part of me, maybe the totality of that entity I call "myself", seemed at the point of melting away. The worst thoughts hung over me without a clear reason.

Fortunately, I had just finished reading Gopi Krishna's *Kundalini: Path to Higher Consciousness* in which the author described the splendid awakening

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2 The reader will understand why I am not mentioning the full name of P.Y. – it is not difficult however to figure out his identity. There are many schools of Yoga spreading his teachings according to a ‘specific legitimacy’. One of these, through its representatives, made me realize that not only won't they tolerate the smallest of the Copyright violations, but they won't even appreciate their beloved Teacher's name being mixed into discussions about kriya on the Internet. The reason is that in the past some people used His name to mislead a high number of practitioners who were trying to receive His original teachings. Moreover, my desire is to inform the reader that in the following pages I will only summarily linger upon my understanding of His legacy, without any pretension of giving an objective account of it. An interested reader should not renounce the privilege of turning to the original texts!
experience he had following an intense practice of concentration on the seventh Chakra. However—because his body was probably unprepared—he later met serious physical and, as a reflex, psychic problems as well. According to his description, inside his body the energy was forced into constant motion from the base of the backbone toward the brain. So strong was the energy that he was bedridden and could not accomplish normal bodily functions. He literally felt as if he was being burned by an inner fire which he could not put out.

Weeks later, he intuitively discovered the way to control the phenomenon—the upward flow of energy through the spine became a persistent experience of internal realization. I was afraid I too had come to the threshold of that same experience but, since I did not live in India, I was afraid that people around me might not understand. The experience would have been terrible! No one could help insure that my experience would be channeled toward a positive conclusion like it was for Gopi Krishna.

The spiritual world appeared to me to be a sorrowful and horrible nightmare, able to annihilate and destroy whoever would imprudently approach it. Ordinary life, on the contrary, seemed the dearest and healthiest reality. I was afraid I might not be able to get back to that condition again. I was convinced I had opened a door I was not supposed to open, so I decided to stop the experience and put off the fatal moment.

I stood up and left the room, out to the open air. It was night and there was nobody to whom I could communicate my panic! At the center of the yard I was burdened, choked, almost crushed by a feeling of desperation, envying all those people who had never practiced Yoga. I suddenly felt guilty and ashamed of the harsh words I had used against a friend who had been involved in part of my search. Like so many others, he had shunned any practice, ignored lofty readings, and decided instead to enjoy life. Equipped with a juvenile boldness, I had addressed him with a tone far from affectionate, which now started to thunder inside my head. I was sorry I had thrown unjustified cruelty at him without really knowing what was in his mind and soul. I would have liked to tell him how sorry I was to have brutally violated his right to live the way he thought was best. Perhaps he had preferred to protect his mental health rather than become unstable or insane through practices he was unsure of.

Because of my great passion for classical music, I hoped that listening to it might yield the positive effect of protecting me from anguish and help me get back my usual mood. It was Beethoven's Concert for Violin and Orchestra, which I listened to in my room with headphones, that soothed my soul and after half an hour eased my sleep. But the following morning I awoke with the same fear. Strange as it may seem, the two pivotal facts that today stir my most intense emotions—that Divine Intelligence is the very basis of everything that exists, and that man can practice a definite discipline in order to attune to it—conveyed to me a feeling of horror!

Sunlight poured into the room through the gaps in the shutters. I had a whole day before me. I went out to try and amuse myself by being with other people. I met some friends and spent the afternoon cracking jokes and behaving.
like the people I had always considered lazy and dull. In this way, I succeeded in hiding my anguish. The first day went by; my mind was totally worn out. After two days, the fear had diminished and I finally felt safe. Something felt changed anyway; I hadn’t thought about Yoga, I only thought around it.

One week later I began, calmly and detachedly, to ponder the meaning of what had happened. I understood the nature of my reaction to that episode: I had cowardly run away from the experience I had pursued for such a long time! In the depth of my soul my dignity urged me to continue with my search exactly from the point where I had quit. I was ready to accept all that was to happen and let things follow their course, even if this process implied the loss of my wholesomeness. I began the practice of Pranayama again, as intensely as before. A few days went by without detecting any form of fear. Then, I experienced something very beautiful.

It was night. I was lying in a relaxed "corpse pose", when I had a pleasant sensation, as if an electric wind was blowing in the external part of my body, propagating itself quickly and with a wavy motion from my feet up to my head. My body was so tired I could not move – even if my mind had ordered it to. I felt the familiar sensation but had no fear. My composure was serene. Then the electric wind was replaced by another feeling, comparable to an enormous power pouring into the backbone and quickly climbing up to the brain. The experience was accompanied by an indescribable, and so far unknown, sense of bliss. The perception of an intense brightness accompanied everything. My memory of that moment is condensed into a single expression, "a clear and euphoric certainty of existing, like an unlimited ocean of awareness and bliss". The strangest thing was that in the very instant I had it, I found it familiar.

In *God Exists: I Have Met Him*, A. Frossard tries to give an idea of his spiritual experience. To that end, he creates the concept of an "inverse avalanche". An avalanche collapses, runs downhill, first slowly then faster and violently at the same time. Frossard suggests we should imagine an "upside-down avalanche" which begins strengthening at the foot of the mountain and climbs up pushed by an increasing power; then suddenly it leaps up toward the sky. I do not know how long this experience lasted. It definitely peaked out at only a few seconds. When it ended, I turned on my side and fell into a calm, uninterrupted sleep. The following day when I awoke I had forgotten it. It only came up some hours later, during a walk. Leaning against the trunk of a tree, I remained immobile for a couple minutes, enthralled by the reverberation of the memory. I was flooded with great joy. It was as if I had woken up after a tormented dream; heavy limitations had been weighing my heart down for a long time and now they had dissolved. An elated condition stretching out far past the limits of my awareness – a sort of memory hiding in the recesses of my subconscious – began to be revealed, as if a new area of my brain had been stirred to a full awakening. I found myself contemplating a dreamlike reality, still objectively indisputable; it had arisen in me with the naturalness of a primordial instinct although it had nothing to do with the world surrounding me in which I lived.
Appendix to chapter 1: description of my first Pranayama routine

Here are the practical instructions about the two types of Pranayama that I practiced at the very beginning of my search.

I. Nadi Sodhana Pranayama. It is important to clean the nostrils before beginning the exercise so the breath can flow smoothly. This can be done with water or inhaling eucalyptus essence and blowing the nose. If one of the nostrils is permanently obstructed, that is a problem that needs to be solved medically. If the obstruction is due to a severe cold, no Pranayama exercise should be practiced.

1. The mouth must be closed.
2. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and inhale through the left nostril slowly, uniformly, and deeply for 6-10 seconds.
3. Pause for a mental count of 3 after each inhalation.
4. Close the left nostril with the right little finger and ring finger of the same hand.
5. Exhale through the right nostril with the same uniform and deep rhythm.
6. Change nostrils.
7. Keep the left nostril closed, inhale through the right nostril.
8. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and exhale through the left nostril slowly, uniformly, and deeply for 6-10 seconds.

This corresponds to one cycle. Begin with 6 cycles gradually working up to 12 cycles. Use a mental count to make sure the time is the same for both the inhalation and the exhalation. Do not overdo the breathing to the point of discomfort. The nostrils can be closed with the fingers in different ways depending on the preference of the practitioner.

II. Ujjayi Pranayama. The technique consists of breathing in and out deeply through both nostrils while producing a sound/noise in the throat. During the exhalation, the noise is not as loud as during the inhalation. After a few days’ practice, the respiratory action is lengthened without effort. This exercise is normally practiced 12 times. Mentally count to ensure that the inhalation and the exhalation have the same duration. Concentration on the comfort and the induced calmness is important: this allows the concentration to become deeper.

III. Concentration exercise. Remain perfectly immobile and relaxed for at least 5 minutes. The breath is natural and calm, the attention intensely focused on the point between the eyebrows.

After an initial period of practice, the Bandhas are added during Nadi Sodhana Pranayama. Let us define the Bandhas: In Jalandhara Bandha, the neck and the throat are slightly contracted, and the chin tilts down toward the breast. In Uddiyana Bandha (a simplified form useful for this exercise) the abdominal muscles are slightly contracted; the perception of energy inside the abdominal region and in the spinal column is intensified. During Mula Bandha, the perineum muscles – between the anus and the genital organs – are contracted in an attempt to lift the abdominal muscles in a vertical way, while pressing back the inferior part of the abdomen. During Nadi Sodhana Pranayama, after having inhaled (either through the left or through the right nostril) the yogi closes both nostrils; during the ensuing short pause the three Bandhas are applied simultaneously. Practicing with intensity and strength of
concentration, you'll feel a sensation of energetic current sliding up along the spinal column – an almost ecstatic internal shiver.

Later, if it is comfortable, one can vary the time ratio of inhalation, retention (Kumbhaka), and exhalation. The exhalation should last twice the time necessary for the inhalation and the pause after the inhalation should be four times as long. This scheme will be denoted as 1:4:2. During the long pause, the three Bandhas are applied simultaneously. Time can be measured through mental chanting of Om. Inhale for a slowly count of 3 Om. Hold the breath for a count of 12 Om. Exhale for a count of 6 Om.

Remarks on Nadi Sodhana Pranayama

Some books quote scientific research endorsing the benefit of this technique. They explain that Nadi Sodhana Pranayama should be practiced first because it balances Ida and Pingala currents. Ida (feminine in nature, tied to introversion and to the state of rest) flows vertically along the left side of the spinal column, while Pingala (masculine in nature, tied to extroversion and to the state of physical activity) flows parallel to Ida on the right side. Sushumna flows in the middle and represents the experience halfway between the two: the ideal state to be achieved right before beginning the practice of meditation. An imbalance between Ida and Pingala is responsible for a lack of introversion-extroversion harmony in many people. Over-functioning of the Ida channel results in introversion, while predominance of the Pingala leads to a state of extroversion.

There are times when we feel more externalized; others when we are more internalized. In a healthy person, this alternation is characterized by a balance between a life of positive relationships and a serene contact with one's own depths. Excessively introverted persons tend to lose contact with external reality. The consequence is that the ups and downs of life seem to gang up against them in order to undermine their peaceful composure. Excessive extroverts betray frailty in dealing with their unconscious feelings and might face unexpected distressing moments. The author concluded that the exercise fosters an equilibrium between Ida and Pingala and in due time, between a tendency to introversion and a tendency to extroversion.

There are four types of brain waves. During deep sleep, delta waves are predominant (1-4 oscillations per second), and in a doze, the theta waves (4-8 oscillations per sec.) dominate. The brain waves that interest us are the alpha waves (8-13 oscillations per sec.). They are mostly present when the person has closed eyes, is mentally relaxed but still awake and able to experience. When the eyes are opened, or the person is distracted in some other way, the alpha waves are weakened, and there is an increase of the faster beta waves (13-40 oscillations per sec.).

The amount of alpha waves shows to what degree the brain is in a state of relaxed awareness. EEG measurements prove that alpha waves increase during meditation and the amount of alpha waves in each brain half balance out. The more we practice Nadi Sodhana, the more the alpha waves tend to become equal. Nadi Sodhana creates that perfect balance which is the best condition to enter the meditation state.
UNDEARTING THE PRACTICE OF PRANAYAMA WAS LIKE PLANTING THE SEED OF A MIGHTY TREE IN THE FEVERISH SEASON OF MY YOUTH AND CONTEMPLATING ITS SAFE GROWTH AT OTHER TIMES OF MY LIFE. PRANAYAMA BECAME MY SAFE REFUGE WHEN THE TRIALS OF LIFE CONSPIRED TO WEAR AWAY THE BASIC JOY WHICH WAS MY INHERENT NATURE. BY SHARPENING AESTHETIC ENJOYMENT, IT FILLED MY DAYS WITH THE FRUITION OF IDEAL BEAUTY, REINFORCING MY DETERMINATION TO SEEK ONLY INSIDE IT THE TRACES OF THE INEFFABLE "PRIMEVAL CAUSE" OF ALL THINGS.

I HAD NO DOUBTS THAT THE REALITY TOWARDS WHICH I WAS DIRECTING MY LIFE WAS THE "SELF" AS CONCEIVED BY C.G. JUNG. I BELIEVED THAT PRANAYAMA WOULD INITIATE A CLEANSING OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS PART OF MY PSYCHE, GUIDING ME ALONG THE "INDIVIDUATION PROCESS" DESCRIBED BY JUNG. IN MY DREAMER'S HEART, I FANCIED I WOULD FACE THE ARCHETYPES OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS.... I KNEW THAT NO MAN SHOULD UNDERTAKE SUCH A PERILOUS VENTURE WITHOUT THE GUARD OF A TRAINED PSYCHOLOGIST BUT I HAD NO FEAR AS I RELIED UPON MY OWN ENTHUSIASM, VIGILANCE, AND INDOMITABLE WILL TO PERFECT MY PRANAYAMA. ANOTHER THING HAD BECOME ADAMANTLY CLEAR: I WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE A PROFESSION THAT WOULD NOT OCCUPY MY ENTIRE DAY NOR ALL MY ENERGY. I HAD TO LIVE A LIFE THAT DID NOT BETRAY MY INNER SELF!

THE KUNDALINI EXPERIENCE HAPPENED SEVERAL TIMES BUT NEVER BECAME CONSTANT. IT TOOK PLACE ESPECIALLY WHEN I DEVOTED MYSELF TO STUDY LATE AT NIGHT AND THEN LAY EXHAUSTED ON MY BED. WHENEVER IT APPEARED MY HEART BUBBLED WITH INFINITE GRATITUDE TO SOMETHING HIGHER, BEYOND MY CAPABILITIES OF UNDERSTANDING AND VISUALIZING.

I BELIEVED PRANAYAMA COULD HELP ANYONE TO LIVE IN A BETTER WAY. IN MY BEGINNER'S ZEAL, I COULD NOT REFRAIN FROM TRYING TO CONVINCE OTHER PEOPLE OF ITS BENEFITS. SINCE MY FRIENDS DID NOT SHARE MY ENTHUSIASM AND WERE POLITE WHILE LISTENING, I INSISTED ON EMphasIZING SOME ASPECTS OF THEIR BEHAVIOR WHICH I DECIDED NEEDED IMPROVEMENT. IN MY OPINION THEY WERE EXCESSIVE IN THEIR DESIRE TO ALWAYS APPEAR CHEERFUL AND WILLING TO HELP OUT. MY POINT WAS THAT THE GREAT AMOUNT OF ENERGY THEY SQUANDERED IN THIS DEBILITATING PRACTICE WAS COUNTERBALANCED BY PERIODS IN WHICH THEY GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF "IMPLODING". THEY WOULD INDIVIDUALLY DISAPPEAR FOR SOME TIME AND, STRANGE INDEED, THEY COULD NO LONGER PUT UP WITH ANYONE.

IN SHORT, I WAS TELLING THEM THAT THEIR SOCIAL LIFE WAS A FARCE, WHILE THEY HAD LABELED ME ANTI-SOCIAL. I DECLARED THAT PRANAYAMA WOULD HARNESs THEIR ENERGIES TOWARDS A MORE BALANCED PSYCHE. THIS GENERATED A VIOLENT REACTION. THEY REPLIed THAT MY WORDS WERE DEPRIVED OF A GENUINE SENSE OF RESPECT AND LOVE AND THAT I WAS UNABLE TO SHOW SYMPATHY TOWARD OTHERS. THE ESSENCE OF WHAT I HAD FOUND IN PRANAYAMA, WHICH I WENT ON ENTOLLING UNFLINCHINGLY, APPEARED TO THEM AS THE Pinnacle OF EGOSM, LEADING TO INSULATION AND UNHEALTHY DETACHMENT FROM REALITY.

GUILT-RIDDEN, I SAW I HAD PROVOKED ONLY BITTERNESS. FURTHERMORE, I HAD BEEN TERRIBLY CRUEL, HAVING, FOR PURPOSES OF MY DISCUSSION, TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF MY FRIEND'S Past CONFIDENTIAL ADMISSIONS.

ONLY ONE FRIEND, A "HIPPIE", UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY WHAT I WAS SAYING AND
showed me some empathy; to him, the only real problem was my excessive enthusiasm about the automatic benefits of Pranayama. He had no doubts that my success in this practice depended wholly on me. In his opinion, Pranayama was not an art bringing its own reward, but an "amplifier" of what you have inside, enhancing what you have already achieved. Pranayama, he said, could not create anything new. At this point I agreed that Pranayama could also be regarded as an internal cleaning process but I argued it was also an action of "climbing" toward a lofty state of consciousness whereby you achieved something radically new. At that moment I felt disoriented; I wasn't able to see that the two visions could coexist – I was young and I categorized everything as black or white.

The immediate problem was to find other texts, nay, all the existing texts about Pranayama. In his autobiography P.Y. hints at Kriya Yoga, a type of Pranayama, which was first taught by Lahiri Mahasaya and had to be mastered through four levels. Lahiri Mahasaya himself was depicted as the embodiment of Yoga-- surely there must have been something unique in his "way"! I loved Pranayama, and the idea of improving it through different steps sounded wonderful. If the breathing exercises I had already practiced had given me such incomparable results, it was obvious that the Kriya four-stage system would make them greater and greater! My imagination ran wild and my fervor grew.

I went on reading books by P.Y. I was amazed by his personality, with unequaled will and an unexpected practical spirit. He did not excite me when he spoke on a purely devotional tone, but did whenever he assumed a more technical one, making it possible for me to fantasize about the glory of Kriya. What I could surmise was that Kriya Yoga consisted of slow and deep breathing with the awareness focused on the spine, making the inner energy rotate around the Chakras. P.Y. highlighted the evolutionary value of Pranayama. He explained that if we compare the human spinal column to a ferromagnetic substance constituted of elementary magnets that turn toward the same direction when they are overlapped by a magnetic field, as taught by physics, then the action of Pranayama is akin to this process of magnetization. By uniformly redirecting all the "subtle" parts of our spinal cord's physical and astral essence, the Kriya Pranayama burns off the so-called "bad seeds" of Karma.

Now my question was whether or not I had to go to India to look for a teacher to guide me. Since I planned to get through my university studies as quickly as possible, I rejected the idea of a journey to India for the near future. One day while again reading a text of P.Y., I realized that he had written a whole

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3 We allude to Karma whenever we stick to the common belief that a person inherits a baggage of latent tendencies from his previous lives and that, sooner or later, these tendencies will come out in actual life. Of course Kriya is a practice which one can experimentally use without necessarily having to accept any creeds. However, since the concept of Karma lies at the basis of Indian thought, it is worthwhile to understand and speak freely of it. According to this belief, Pranayama burns out the effects of the "bad seeds" just before they manifest in our lives. It is further explained that those people who are instinctively attracted by methods of spiritual development such as Kriya, have already practiced something similar in a "precedent incarnation". This is because such an action is never in vain and in actual life they get back to it exactly where, in a remote past, they had quit it.
set of lessons on Kriya, and that these could be received by correspondence. With great joy, I quickly applied for the course.

The written material traveled by ship and the delay times were enormous. When after four months I received the first lesson, I came to know that the correspondence course had to be continued for at least one year before applying for the Kriya lessons.

Meanwhile I decided to improve the exercises I already practiced, using all the books I could find – regardless of what language in which they were written. At least now I knew what to search for– no more the classic exercises (Kapalabhati, Bhastrika...) but a kind of Pranayama in which the energy had to be visualized rotating, in some way, around the Chakras. If this is – as stated by P.Y. – a universal process, I had a good chance of tracing it through other sources and traditions.

Something dormant in the corner of my memory awakened. I vaguely remembered having seen some drawings in a book about occultism which sketched out the different circuits of energy throughout the human body. The idea came to me to seek the essential information in esoteric books rather than in the classic books on Yoga.

I started going to a used books store which was very well stocked, probably because it had once been the Theosophical Society's reference bookstore. I turned down those texts which dealt only with philosophical topics, while, in ecstasy and not concerned by time, I kept on skimming through those which illustrated practical exercises with clarity. Before purchasing a book I made sure it hinted at the possibility of channeling the energy along certain internal passages, thus creating the prerequisite for awakening the Kundalini. While reading the index of a text which was in three volumes, introducing the esoteric thought of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, I was attracted by the entry, "Breathing exercise for the awakening of Kundalini." It was a variation of Nadi Sodhana. Some notes warned not to exaggerate the exercise because of the risk of a premature Kundalini awakening, which was to be avoided by all means. This was definitely not P.Y.'s Kriya because, according to several clues, Kriya was not to be done with alternate-nostril breathing.

So I went on haunting the bookstore. The owner was very nice and I almost felt obliged, considering the cheap price and the perfect conditions of those second-hand books, to buy at least one book per each visit. Often a lot of space was dedicated to theories alien to concrete life, which tried to describe what cannot be seen or be experienced – such as the astral worlds and the subtle coverings of energy wrapping our body.

One day, after browsing through a tiresome selection of books, I went to the storekeeper with a book with which he must have realized I was not satisfied. While deciding the price, he thought of something that might interest me. He led me to the back of the store and invited me to rummage through a cardboard box filled with a messy heap of papers. Among a quantity of miscellaneous material (complete series of the theosophical magazine issues, scattered notes from old...)

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4 I can still consider myself as fortunate. I lived in North East Italy not far from the border with the former Yugoslavia. Those people who lived beyond the Iron Curtain could not receive such material.
course on hypnosis etc.), I came upon a booklet written in German by a certain K. Spiesberger which contained various esoteric techniques, among them *Kundalini-breathing*. I did not have much familiarity with the German language, but I immediately realized the extraordinary importance of that technique. I would doubtlessly be able to decipher all of it at home with the help of a dictionary.  

The description of this technique still amazes me. During a deep breath, the air was to be imagined flowing inside the spinal column. While inhaling, the air was rising; when exhaling, the air was flowing down. There was also the description of two particular sounds created by air originating in the throat.

In another book written in English there was an exhaustive description of the *Magic breath* – which consisted of visualizing the energy flowing *around* the backbone, not *inside* it. Through the inhalation, the energy had to go up behind the spinal column, to the center of the head; exhaling, it had to go down along the front part of the body. I completely forgot about the other material. The smirk of satisfaction I wore before the storekeeper holding the two books, as if I had found a treasure of unfathomable value, definitely caused an increase in their price. Walking home, I could not help skimming through the pages. I was curious about some rough drawings illustrating techniques which were based on the movement of energy.

I read that the *Magic breath* was one of the most valuable secrets of all times, and if practiced constantly, accompanied by the strength of visualization, it would open the spiritual eye. I convinced myself that this technique had to be Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* and incorporated it into my daily routine, replacing the practice of *Ujjayi Pranayama*.

### I Meet Other Kriyabans

A letter from the organization sending me P.Y.'s lessons informed me about other people living not far from my area, who were also practicing *Kriya Yoga*. They had formed a group in order to practice that discipline together. I was enthusiastic and quivered with cheerful anticipation to meet them. That night I could hardly fall asleep.

"Too bright were our heavens, too far away, too frail their ethereal stuff", wrote *Sri Aurobindo*. I would never have thought that those words could be applied to my meeting those people! With a sort of sour irony, I would dare say that that phase of my life characterized by extreme enthusiasm for *Pranayama* had been too happy for it to last much longer. I now experienced firsthand the problems, limitations and distortions caused by the human mind when it has lost the habit of rational thinking. Many times in the future I would have to experience how life is made of short moments of inspiration and serenity,

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5 I cannot help smiling when some half-hearted people insist that they are fond of *Kriya*, yet they will not study some crucial texts in English because they are afraid to misinterpret them. I am convinced that their interests are superficial and rather emotive. Such was my enthusiasm that I would have studied Sanskrit or Chinese or any other language, if that had given me the chance to understand an essential text on *Pranayama*!
alternating with times when all seems lost and the distortions of the ego reign supreme. Approaching the man in charge of that group with total sincerity, I could not have imagined what kind of a hard shock I was about to receive.

He welcomed me with visible enthusiasm, sincerely eager to meet a person with whom he could share the fire of his passion. Since the very first moment of our meeting, standing on his doorstep, I told him how fascinated I was by the practice of Kriya. He asked me right away when I had been initiated in this practice, taking for granted that I had received the teaching from the same organization he was a member of. When he figured out that I had picked out a breathing technique in a book and fooled myself it was Kriya Pranayama, he was horrified, showing a bitter smile of disappointment. He thought I considered Kriya Yoga child's play and had no idea how serious it was. Visibly confused I babbled something about currents, sound of the breath, but he didn't want to hear any more and ushered me to his study. He emphasized that Kriya cannot be learned through books. He began the tale – which, later on, I had the opportunity to hear plenty of times – of the Tibetan yogi Milarepa who, getting no positive results from the painstaking practice of his fraudulently-learned techniques, received the very same instructions kneeling at the feet of and with the benediction of his Guru – so that this time the results came out easily.

We all know how the human mind is more conditioned by an anecdote than by a logical reference! An anecdote, even if it is totally fanciful with fictional purpose, is endowed with a sort of internal "brightness" that conditions a person's common sense. Stimulating emotions and feelings, it is able to cloud people's judgment in order for them to easily accept conclusions that are absurd. This story left me speechless; I just did not know what to reply.

There was only one way, according to him, to learn Kriya: be initiated by a "Minister" authorized by P.Y.'s organization! He told me that no other person was allowed to teach the technique. He, and all the other devotees of his group, had received the technique, swearing a strict and solemn promise of secrecy.

"Secrecy!" How odd this word sounded, what a strange appeal, what a mysterious fascination it exerted upon my being! Until then, I had always believed it did not matter at all how a certain teaching was received, or what book had been read or studied in order to learn it. I thought that the only important thing was to practice it correctly, accompanied by the desire to go deeper and deeper into it. The idea began to enter my mind that it was in fact okay to protect precious lore from indiscreet eyes.

Staring into my eyes, with an enormous emotional impact, he went on to say that a practice learned from any other source was "worth nothing, it will not be effective in matters of spiritual purpose", and a possible effect, only apparently encouraging, might be "a dangerous illusion in which the ego remains trapped for a long time".

Inflamed by an absolute faith, he launched himself into a wide discourse on the value of the "Guru" (spiritual Teacher), a puzzling concept to me because it was attributed to a person that he had not known directly. Having been initiated into Kriya through the legitimated channels of P.Y.'s organization, P.Y. was, to him, real and present in his life, and "his" Guru. The same thing was true for the
other people belonging to that group. Their Guru was a special aid sent by God Himself, therefore such an event was "the greatest luck a human being can ever have." The logical consequence – underlined with overflowing emphasis – was that, abandoning such form of aid or looking for a different spiritual path amounted to "a hateful rejection of the Divine hand, stretched out in benediction."

He asked me to demonstrate for him my book-learned Kriya technique. He expected, I suppose, to verify a well-rooted prejudice that the technique, received through illegitimate channels, could not – because of a particular spiritual law – be anything but corrupted. He smiled when he saw me breathing through the nose. Then he asked me to explain if there was something upon which I was focusing my attention during my breathing. According to the books I had read, the energy could be visualized both flowing inside the spine and around the spine. Since P.Y. wrote that a kriyaban "mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers", I chose the second of the two possibilities and this was the version I explained. Having also read in another book that during Kriya Pranayama the practitioner was supposed to chant "Om" mentally into each Chakra, I added this detail as well. I did not realize that P.Y. had decided to simplify the instructions taught in the west, using the other variation with no mental chanting of Om.

While telling him these details, I saw an inner satisfaction spreading over his face. Clearly he didn't identify my practice with the technique of Kriya Pranayama he had learned. The "secret" he was bound to had not been broken by the author of my esoteric book! Pretending to feel sorry for my consequent disappointment, he informed me in an official tone that my technique had "nothing to do with Kriya Pranayama"!

A really bizarre situation was taking place: I was describing for him a technique very similar to Kriya Pranayama taught by Lahiri Mahasaya while this gentlemen was one hundred per cent sure that I was talking nonsense! However, since my position was totally incompatible with his basic tenets, he recommended that I send a written account to the headquarters of P.Y.'s organization, describing the details of my vicissitudes, hoping that they would accept me as a disciple and, in due time, grant me the sacred Initiation to Kriya Yoga.

I was somewhat stunned by the tone in which our dialog was progressing. In order to re-establish the initial agreeability of our meeting, I tried to reassure him about the positive effects I had gained from my practice. My statement actually had the effect of worsening the whole matter, giving him the chance to scold me a second time, which was not totally unfair but undoubtedly out of place. He made it clear I should never look for any tangible effects in the practice of Kriya much less should I display them, because in this way I would "lose them." That clever guy had talked himself straight into an obvious contradiction without even realizing it; he was saying that the results were too important to risk losing them by telling others, while a few seconds before he had stressed that they were of no value whatsoever.

Realizing he had given too much of his time to me, a strange
metamorphosis took place in his demeanor. It was as if all of a sudden he had been invested with a sacred role: he promised he would pray for me! On that day, I had lost the "fight." I told him I would follow his advice. As a matter of fact, from that moment I abandoned Pranayama entirely and restricted my practice to simply centering my attention between the eyebrows (Kutastha) – just as he had suggested to me.

Acting The Part of a Devotee

The group practicing Kriya met twice a week to practice the techniques together. The room devoted to meditation was bare but pleasant. Each member paid part of the rental, so that continuance would not depend on the owner's whims and could be dedicated to an exclusively spiritual use. I began attending these meetings and I remember it nostalgically – listening to Indian songs translated and harmonized for westerners and, above all, meditating together was a true joy! Everything seemed heavenly to me, even though little time was given to the practice of meditation – no more than 20 minutes, often barely 15 minutes. A particularly inspiring session of collective practice took place on Christmas Eve, enriched by devotional songs and lasting many hours. At the end of each meditation we were required to depart in silence, thus I began to know my new friends more closely only during the monthly "social" lunch.

It was a beautiful chance to spend some hours talking and enjoying each other's company. Since many of us did not have their family's approval, much less support, in the practice of Yoga, the only occasion we had to spend time among people with the same ideas and interests was an experience of great serenity and relaxation. Unfortunately, the pleasantry of our meetings was rather spoiled because the directors of P.Y.'s organization had requested us not to talk about other spiritual paths or deal with specific details of Kriya. Authorized people only could cover such a role; no one in our group could.

During our gatherings, since our conversations were strictly kept on well-defined tracks, we were not able to find a topic which would be interesting and at the same time respected the given rules. It was not the right place for gossip, unsuitable for a spiritual group discussion. So only one topic was left: the beauty of our spiritual path and our great fortune in having discovered it! No wonder that, after some meetings of mutual "exaltation", an almost frightening boredom started to reign. As a last resort, some risked telling some jokes. They were not mean or insulting jokes, but a light and innocent use of humor. Unfortunately this also had to live up to the devotional attitude kept by many of the members and eventually succumbed to their cold attitude, unable to show a single inch of true joviality. I cannot say that people were depressed, rather they seemed divinely happy, but when you tried to be agreeable you got a look and a hint of a smile that left you frozen for the rest of the day. As a matter of course, the group underwent a great recycling process; many members who had joined with enthusiasm quit after a few months and then, oddly and without deep reasons, scraped the whole experience off their consciousness.
My open temperament allowed me to become close to one person and establish a bond which later became true friendship. However, it was not so easy to find what could be called a free spiritual seeker. Many made a display of emotionally-charged devotion, others, perhaps envisaging the prospect of expanding our group, seemed to have the sole aim of raising enough funds to provide our rented room with impressive signs of its sacred consecration; others seemed only social misfits.

Some of them could not believe that I had no doubts or uncertainties about the Kriya path and reacted to my enthusiasm with annoyance. They considered my euphoria the typical attitude of an immature beginner. Even though doing my best to convince myself that I was among individuals with the same passions, I had to acknowledge that the reality of it was altogether different!

With a barely concealed impatience, I tried on different occasions to receive some elucidation on the technique of Kriya by discussing what had been my book-learned practice of it. I hoped that someone, making some oblique remark about it, would help me discover the exact Kriya Pranayama technique. No "courting" could extract from them even a crumb of information. Each one repeated that he was "not authorized to give out any explanations", and this rule was strictly respected.

An old kriyaban told me: "When you receive Kriya, you will be disappointed." Even today I still don't know what he meant. While I was continuously receiving unasked-for lessons of devotion, humility, and loyalty, my interest for Kriya became a real craving, a burning fever. I could not understand why I had to wait such a long time, and my great anticipation turned into a fruitless anguish at times. A kriyaban, making fun of me with unconcealed cruelty, told me: "They won't give you the Kriya at all; a devotee should not desire a technique with such intensity. God is to be mostly found through devotion and surrender." I tried to behave like a good disciple but deep down I awaited it with unimagined eagerness.

Preliminary Techniques to Kriya

By studying the correspondence course, I learned different ways of creating healthy habits in order not to disturb but rather foster the blossoming of my spiritual experiences. I tried my utmost to embrace the school's peculiar Hindu-Christian religious premise. It was easy for me to admire and cherish the figure of Krishna, imagining Him as the quintessence of every beauty; later I became acquainted with the figure of the Divine Mother, who was not the Madonna, but a sweetening of the idea of the goddess Kali. My affection for P.Y.'s writings was genuine. Sometimes I considered a particular thought of P.Y.'s writings so appealing and perfect that I would write it down on a sheet of paper and keep it on my desk.

I then received the two techniques Hong-Sau and Om. The first one (called Hong-Sau because of the employed Mantra (which translates as "I am He") slows down the breath and the whole psychophysical system; the second one concerns itself with listening to internal (astral) sounds melting into the Om
sound. I didn't receive these instructions at the same time but with an interval of two months between. This gave me the splendid opportunity to concentrate on the first technique for many weeks; only then would the combination of the two techniques come, the first in the morning and a total immersion in the second at night. Thus, I could experiment with the meaning and beauty of each.

Our group received the visit of an elderly lady who had personally corresponded with P.Y. Thanks to her earnestness, sincerity, and long-time loyal discipleship she had been authorized to help us with meditation. Her temperament was very sweet and more inclined to understanding rather than to censorship. She demonstrated the so-called "Recharging Exercises" (I had already learned them from the written lessons). These exercises were similar to isometric stretches and were practiced while standing; peculiar to them, however, was that the Prana was directed to all the parts of the body through concentration.

Then she reviewed the Hong-Sau technique. She went on to clarify that the Hong-Sau technique was not easy at all, in spite of its apparent simplicity; but encouraging us with a smile, she concluded: "The technique contains all you need to come into contact with the Divine Essence". 6

Then she dwelt on the Om technique. 7 She explained that P.Y. had tried to explain the teaching of the Trinity in a new way. Om is the "Amen" of the Bible – the "Holy Ghost", the "witness", a sound; a proof of the vibration of energy sustaining the universe. The Om technique, discovered by the mystics long ago, makes it possible to detect this vibration. Thanks to this technique it is also possible to be guided toward the experience of the "Son" – the Divine awareness that is present inside the above-mentioned energetic vibration. At the end of one's spiritual journey, one can reach the highest reality, the "Father" – the Divine awareness beyond every existing thing in the universe.

In that happy period of my life I tried tracking down in spiritual literature any movement or eminent figure who had a link with "Om." There is no doubt that Saint John of the Cross heard the typical rushing water sound of the Om vibration. He gave a splendid description of his meeting with the "resounding rivers", the "silent music", the "sounding solitude". Teresa of Avila in her book "The Interior Castle" wrote: "It roars like many big rivers with waterfalls, there are flutes, and a host of little birds seem to be whistling, not in the ears, but in the upper part of the head, where the soul is said to have its special seat." "Seek the Sound that never ceases, seek the sun that never sets", wrote the great mystic Rumi. "The universe was manifested out of the Divine Sound; from It came into being the Light." (Shams-i Tabrizi).

6 Later on, this technique was destined to give me excellent results by ideally establishing a connection between each breath and a different Chakra – but I write about this in Appendix 4 to the third part of the book.

7 This technique does not belong to those included in the original Kriya Yoga, wherein the internal sound perception happens without closing the ears. It is not an invention by P.Y. It had been plainly described in the books of classical Yoga, called Nada Yoga – "the Yoga of the sound." It is a good preparation for Kriya since instead of putting the accent on "doing", it teaches the attitude of "perceiving."
The lady's explanation was characterized by such a sacred flavor that it stayed with me for several months, helping me to overcome the beginning phase of the practice, when it seems unlikely that the sounds will manifest. The results obtained through the intensive practice of the Om technique were very concrete. I remember now the time spent in that slightly illuminated room where I led a cloistered existence. The rainy days and early-onset evenings of Winter helped my seclusion and strengthened my determination to turn on, through meditation, an internal sun. Some weeks of zealous practice passed without any result, but one day I became aware of a clear inner sound. It happened after ten minutes of calm effort, just when I returned to my state of full awareness after having been lost in some sweet reverie. This sound was going on during my mental roaming but only now was I realizing its nature. It was like the humming of a mosquito. By listening intently to it, it became the feeble sound of a musical instrument playing far away. When my breath almost disappeared, it seemed like the tolling of a bell echoing at dusk from the deep green of woody hills. One day I believed I was listening to the internal Om sound. I cannot define it but I couldn’t imagine anything being able to make a person feel so blissful. For the first time in my life the concept of "devotion" had a meaning.

Devotion and daily contact with Om were my Heaven on earth for many weeks. Unfortunately, I learned the hard way that you should never detach yourself voluntarily from that state of grace. There was a time in my life when I wanted to relax and enjoy life, and I decided to interrupt this contact, as if it were a drawback to being fully sociable. I didn't realize that this seemingly innocuous and instinctive "betrayal" would make me unable to tune with the Omkar reality for a very long time. Incredibly, in a few days I felt hopelessly cut off from that sweet reality. I was like one who has landed in another continent and has to live in surroundings that mean nothing to him. I struggled to retrieve the lost deep emotions. This went on for months until my soul was again reminded of the motivations that had led me to the spiritual path and I saw clearly that my stupid decision had been a monumental mistake.

Recollections of the Kriya Initiation Ceremony

Eventually, the moment came to file the application form to receive the Kriya instructions by mail. About four months passed as every day I hoped to receive the coveted material. Finally, an envelope arrived. I opened it with heightened expectation, but was deeply disappointed because it contained nothing but more introductory material. From reading the index page I understood it was the first of a weekly series of lectures, whereas the actual technique would be sent within five weeks. So for another month I would have to study just the usual nursery rhymes I already knew by heart.

In the meantime, a Minister of P.Y.'s organization visited our country and I took
part in the initiation ceremony. After waiting for months, it was high time "to make an eternal pact with the Guru and to be taught the Kriya techniques in the only legitimate way, and receive his benediction."

There were about 100 of us who were to be initiated. A beautiful room had been rented for the ceremony at a very high price and embellished for the occasion with lots of flowers, such as I have never seen even at the most extravagant weddings! The introduction to the ceremony was magnificent. About 30 people wearing somber uniforms entered the room, and lined up with a solemn attitude and joined their hands in prayer. It was explained to me that these people belonged to the local group whose leader was a fashion designer and had choreographed that triumphant entrance. The two teachers who had just arrived from abroad walked meekly and bewildered behind them. Then the ceremony began. I accepted without objections their demand that I swear everlasting devotion not only to the Guru P.Y. but also to a six-master chain of whom Lahiri Mahasaya was an intermediary link. P.Y. was the so-called Guru-preceptor, namely the one who would partially bear the burden of our Karma.

It would have been strange if no one had had doubts about this. I remember a lady wondering if P.Y. – definitely unable to give any confirmation, now being a long-time resident in the astral world – had really accepted her as a "disciple" and, consequently, to be laden with her Karma. In order to avoid that with such thoughts she weakened the enjoyment of the enticing ceremony, I reassured her that she was accepted without fail.

They assured us that Christ was also part of this chain because He had appeared to Babaji (Lahiri Mahasaya's Guru) asking Him to send emissaries to the West to spread Kriya. This story caused me no perplexity at all. Perhaps I had no time to think about it. To consider the whole mission of Kriya diffusion as originating from Christ Himself was a pleasant idea. On the other hand, I was too anxious to hear the explanation of the technique which was soon to take place to listen to anything else.

The Kriya technique embodied God's most effective blessing toward His privileged creatures, humans, which exclusively possessed an inner body with seven Chakras. The mystic seven-step ladder of the Chakras was the real highway to salvation, the fastest and safest. My mind was in great expectation for something I had so strongly desired and for which I had seriously been preparing for months. It was not what might be called a 'sacrament' that I was submitting to in order to safeguard a family tradition; it was the crowning of a definitive choice! My heart was immensely happy at the thought of the inner joy that I would gain through the practice of Kriya.

Finally, after being taught the Kriya Pranayama, I realized I already knew it! It was the same Kundalini-breathing technique which I had found a long time ago in my esoteric readings and which prescribes that the energetic current flows all the way inside the spinal column. I have already explained that I had not taken that procedure into serious consideration, owing to the fact that in P.Y.'s writings, which were where I had my first glimpses of the mechanism of Kriya Pranayama, it was written that the energy had to be rotated "around the Chakras,
along an elliptical circuit."

I was not disappointed as someone had prophesied; rather, the technique appeared perfect to me. The explanation of the techniques Maha Mudra and Jyoti Mudra (they never used the more common term Yoni) concluded the technical instructions. Each technique's detail was explained in such a way that it would not allow for the smallest variation and, in addition, a specific routine was warmly recommended. If the least amount of doubt on the correctness of a certain detail had arisen during the practice, nobody was encouraged – even vaguely – to conduct an experiment and come to a conclusion by himself. The only "correct" action was to contact the headquarters of our Kriya organization, tell them the problem, and receive further guidelines. This, in effect, was what I always did. I learned to interact only with them. I would instinctively look for their advice as if it were given by perfect beings that could never be wrong. I believed they were "channels" through which the blessings of the Guru flowed. Besides, I was quite confident that – even if they would not admit it out of humility – they had already reached the highest level of spiritual realization.

Problems with my Routine

I am unable to express the emotion and feeling of sacredness which characterized my practice of Kriya Pranayama. During the day or before sitting down to practice it, I often repeated to myself the sentence (quoted in AOY) by Lalla Yogiswari:

"What acid of sorrow have I not drunk? Countless my rounds of birth and death. Lo! naught but nectar in my cup quaffed by the art of breath."

This intensified my enthusiasm, strengthening my determination to unceasingly perfect my Kriya path. Yet looking back, having always kept alive that ardent belief, I must objectively admit that the results were not different from those obtained through the practice of the simpler technique of Ujjayi Pranayama. 8 I had some problems which I will now discuss. (I have no doubt that these problems could have been easily resolved if I had used common sense.)

The first exercise to be practiced was the Hong--Sau technique – this had to last 10 to 15 minutes. The breathing was supposed to become more relaxed and create a good state of concentration. Then, after putting the forearms on a support, we were to listen to the internal Sounds, requiring about the same amount of time. Then there would follow another interruption because of the

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8 After much experimenting which happened in the following years and considering also the reports of some sincere friends who tried out different forms of Kriya Pranayama, I am sure that if I had practiced Kriya in the way P.Y. taught during the thirties I would have obtained better results. That technique was/is indeed a masterpiece, far more beautiful than what certain schools now offer as "original Kriya." If I had received it instead of the simplified version, I could have touched the sky with one finger. Sometimes I bitterly ask myself: "Why did P.Y. yield to the temptation of simplifying it"?
Maha Mudra. Eventually, setting back in a still and stiff position to restore the feeling of sacredness, the Kriya Pranayama began with rigorous respect to all the instructions. After Jyoti Mudra, the Kriya routine would be concluded with a full ten-minute concentration on the Kutastha, to absorb the results of the whole endeavor.

In my experience the two preliminary techniques did not receive the attention they deserved, and the time devoted to the final concentration was too short. During the Hong-Sau technique, the thought that I should interrupt it to start the Om technique brought about a disturbing feeling, hampering my whole surrender to its beauty. The same happened with the procedure of the second technique, interrupting it in order to practice Maha Mudra.

The technique of listening to Om was a complete "universe" in itself and led to the mystic experience, which is why its interruption was something worse than a simple disturbance. It was illogical, as if, recognizing a friend with joyous surprise among a crowd one begins talking with him, then suddenly goes away hoping to meet, quite by chance, that same friend again and get back to where the conversation had previously ended.

The sound of Om was the mystic experience itself, the Goal I sought. Why should I interrupt that sublime attunement to regain it through another technique? Perhaps because Kriya Pranayama was a higher procedure? Higher? What on earth does that mean?

I forced myself into such absurdity for an extremely long period. I hoped for future clarification of such an unclear situation. At that time, the idea of using my brain and radically change the routine seemed to me an act of stupid arrogance. Such was the power of that insanity which in our group was called "loyalty"! I must acknowledge that unfortunately I had become like one of those animals that, fed by man, tend to forget how to be self-sufficient.

When I tried to discuss this problem with other kriyabans, I noticed an enormous and unreasonable resistance. There were those who were not satisfied with their practice but planned to try it again in the future, while others were not able to even understand what I was saying.

Talking with a lady who was a longtime friend of our family, she pretended to listen attentively, but in the end bluntly declared she already had a Guru and did not need another. Her remark cut me deeply since my intention was only to have a rational talk which could be inspiring for us both. Apart from this, what sort of friendship can exist between two people when one is so curt?

To encounter such episodes one after the other confirmed my idea that, not being encouraged to trust the validity of self-observation, many friends went on mechanically performing what had often become an empty ritual simply to appease their conscience.

With the exception of one person (who harbored really strange ideas about the spiritual path which made me entertain the thought that he might be mentally unstable), these new kriyaban friends seemed to censor my questioning of techniques, claiming that devotion was much more important. Often they
referred to concepts I could hardly link to the practice of Yoga, i.e. the paramount importance was loyalty toward P.Y. and his organization.

While their effort in practicing the meditation techniques in a deep way was not remarkable, they tried with 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. They impregnated it with the natural heart's affection for their Guru – even if they had known him only from photos – thus obtaining the resolution of a lifelong commitment. Looking back at those times, I wonder what their opinion was about my impatient attitude in contrast to their passiveness. In my reasoning, I could not conceive of the idea of leaning passively under the protection of a saint who solved all our problems. This concept, together with others I had experienced in that school, was a cause of real conflict. My approach to the spiritual path was so different from theirs that there was no hope of reaching a point of contact or common ground.

My remembrance of a 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 badly when I could not see him for months at a time, but 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 P.Y.. His dream was always to form a friendship with that divine being, whom he felt was the epitome of perfection. I tried to convince him that to deify this inspiring figure could constitute the death of his spiritual adventure. But my companion seemed irretrievably spellbound by the idea of "transmission of power". He explained that in all great mystical traditions the subtle vibrational strength of the great Teachers of the past is still present in their descendants – not because of consanguinity, but through the transmission of their "power" as a non-stop chain. He was convinced that spiritual progress cannot take place except through receiving this "power". It was normal that he felt the highest respect for that human channel who was officially invested with the mission of transmitting their particular "benediction". It was therefore reasonable that he had tried to achieve a place of importance in her heart.

The problem was that this attainment had perhaps become more important than meditation. 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. Nevertheless, the Kriya techniques were for him like a religious ritual which had to be performed scrupulously just to give proof of loyalty.

Unfortunately, this axiom was the framework upon which he had been interweaving his thought. He had given his full approval to the idea that on this planet there were both special people, "Self realized", and irreparably common
ones. 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 with better engagement. To this he was sweetly resigned. 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 he had over forty years ago (this idea eased and sustained the first years of his path) was gradually erased from his mind by the tendency of the organization to emphasize through a constant barrage of anecdotes the greatness of certain persons who were "impudently" saintly, perfect, majestic. How wretched it had been for my friend to believe that his supreme good depended on a loving glance from the person he thought divine! He had made the unfortunate mistake of believing that the eternal spiritual Source in the center of his being would wither when he was far from the one person toward whom he had directed the warm aspirations of his heart.
P.Y. wrote that *Second Kriya Yoga* enables the *yogi* to leave his body consciously at will. To be instructed in such a wondrous technique was now my primary goal. I was sure that even a desultory practice of such a procedure would have a strong effect on my spiritual evolution. After receiving the last lesson of the correspondence course, I finally applied to receive this further instruction.

I was very happy to study the longed-for lessons of *Second Kriya*. Despite my serious and conscientious practice, no promised results such as perceiving the color of each *Chakra* on the screen of *Kutastha*, took place. I forged ahead, utilizing all the endurance and stamina I had built up with the *Om technique*, and some "strong" experiences began to occur in the spine. They appeared hours later or when lying down immediately after the practice. This brought such intensity of devotion that I was surprised to discover it inside myself.

Unfortunately, the written lessons contained some ambiguous parts. Just to give an example, P.Y. wrote that in order to awaken *Kundalini* it was important to practice regularly *Kechari Mudra*, but the instruction on how to perform it were nowhere to be found.

I contacted the elderly lady who was officially invested as a "Meditation Counselor" in order to discuss with her the technical details contained in the *Second Kriya* lessons. She could not help me. Just like everyone else, she had learned all the *Higher Kriyas* only in written form because, unfortunately, after P.Y.'s *Mahasamadhi* no direct initiations were ever given. Acknowledging her uncertainties about their correct execution, she admitted that she regretted not having had her *Higher Kriyas* checked by Ministers who were direct disciples of P.Y., despite having had plenty of opportunities to do so.

Among the *kriyabans* in the meditation group, there was a woman who had received *Kriya* initiation years ago and had once lived near our school's general offices. I asked if she had received the *Second Kriya*. She didn't seem to understand the question. So, with astonishment, I reminded her that Lahiri Mahasaya's disciple, Swami Pranabananda, had accompanied the moment of his death with the practice of the *Second Kriya*. She became visibly nervous, saying that the quotation clearly referred to the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*: one breath, then a second one. This had to be, in her opinion, the "*Second Kriya*!" I looked at her with a meek but piercing look; I felt my legs give way. I had the impression that the idea of a further technique to be added to the too many already received and practiced daily upset her. It was as if she felt she had made so great an effort to form the habit of daily practice of the *First Kriya* that she could not muster up even more dedication. I believe that, up to this day, she has remained fixed in her conviction.

I had still not recovered from this shock when an aristocratic-looking lady disclosed to me she had received initiation in the so-called *Higher Kriyas* years before. Full of enthusiasm, my eyes opened wide. She said she had felt so unworthy that she had put them aside and, after some time, she had forgotten them entirely. "Forgotten!" I couldn't believe my ears. This last abomination was
inconceivable to me. Her self-satisfied ignorance, passed off as humility and who
knows what kind of overabundant devotion, crossed the bounds of decency. When I expressed my objection that her behavior seemed an exhibition of indifference toward the higher teachings taught by her Guru, she looked at me in bewilderment as if my impertinence had violated an implicit law: do not impudently enter the intimate arena of her Sadhana. She replied that what she had was enough, and then briskly cut off any further discussion.

Difficulties with the Printed Material Related to the Higher Kriyas

After one year I received the lessons on the Third and the Fourth Kriya. I was enthusiastic after reading that these techniques lead to the experience of Astral Samadhi. There were also instructions about the routine to be followed, but they were a bit hazy. I had the impression that practicing these new techniques at the end of my daily routine was the right thing to do. Unfortunately that didn't work. A fundamental lesson in Kriya is never end a routine with techniques requiring movement!

Such techniques, in order to express the fullness of their potential, had to be internalized either by following specific instructions or simply one's intuition. They had to, however, be well established in order to be expressed freely without being paralyzed by the conditioning of absolute obedience, loyalty etc. "Internalized" means that the main action of a procedure is repeated again and again by use of pure concentration and Mantra. This way Prana tends to subside in the body and the subtle meaning of the procedure is deciphered, its essence tangibly appreciated.

I would understand all this in the future, however at that time I didn't dare do anything that surpassed the scant written instructions I had received. I didn't even attempt to clarify my doubts by questioning elder kriyabans, but I did write to the management of my Kriya school to schedule an appointment with one of its representative Ministers who would soon come to our country. I hoped to clarify everything on that occasion and I looked forward with great anticipation to that date.

When the Minister arrived, my Meditation Counselor introduced me to him. He said he would clarify my doubts as soon as possible. In the following days I became dismayed when I realized that the Minister kept postponing our meeting without valid reasons. Since I had decided not to give up, at last we met. Unfortunately I found this meeting to be truly disturbing.

I was convinced that hypocrisy, bureaucracy, formality, and deception were totally alien to one who devoted his life to practicing and teaching Kriya, yet the sensation I had meeting him was akin to meeting a business man who had more important affairs in mind and who was very irritable. He was emphatic that we not talk about Kechari Mudra, and with regard to the head movements of the Third and Fourth Kriya techniques, he advised me brusquely to restrict my practice to the First Kriya. He declared I was overexcited and that this was not a good sign for a kriyaban. I replied I would surely take his advice into
consideration; nevertheless, I wanted to see how to move my head correctly in order to practice those techniques in the future.

Annoyed – taking my remark as insolence – he recommended that I send my questions to the school's head and stood up as he said this, as if leaving. In vain I replied that the movements of the head (required for Third and Fourth Kriya techniques) could not be shown in a letter. I was speaking to a "wall" and the refusal was absolute.

I had always trusted and respected P.Y.'s organization and had studied the reference literature as if preparing for a university exam. After my interview with that ill-disposed figure, I was in an atrocious mental and emotional state. I wondered what role a school played that was not doing its very best to clarify each given teaching. For what purpose were our ministers traveling around the world, if not to directly show students how to practice what they have learned through the correspondence course? Why should I feel guilty and unsuitable for the Kriya path, only because I had dared to ask (firmly but politely) for a practical demonstration? I was not able to drop the whole matter and was quite agitated. Those who saw me immediately after the meeting said I was unrecognizable. Among them, a lady with a honeyed voice suggested that I had gotten an important earful from Gurudeva – in her opinion, up to that time, I had had too self-assured an attitude.

After some time, the feeling of having witnessed the senseless whims of a man in power yielded to a different consideration. Very probably that Minister had given me the same discipline he received during his postulant years. A woman who had known him at that time depicted him as a very curious kriyaban who usually put many technical questions to elder Ministers. Knowing the rules of monastic discipline, I was sure that his queries weren't always answered promptly.

This made me more calm and cheerful. However, there are often childish thoughts that emerge when we are in an uncertain situation. I was afraid that this man, communicating back to the headquarters of P.Y.'s organization, might speak unfavorably of me, saying something that might have reduced the probability of my obtaining that coveted information in the future. I feared I could no longer rely on my spiritual relationship with that Kriya organization, which for so many years had represented my horizon.

Strange as it might seem, a part of me was relishing the whole situation. I knew for certain that this destructive experience would somehow be turned into something positive, crucial for my path. I was too much in love with the Kriya path to be daunted by any difficulty.

The lady Meditation Counselor, who was not present on that occasion but had met the Minister in another town, blamed me for having turned the interview with him into a troublesome event. I wrote her a bitter letter, insulting her indirectly. She replied very firmly, implying that my letter ended our friendship.

Later she toned down her attitude and invited me to her house to talk about the event. First of all I expressed to her my irrevocable determination to explore all possible sources in order to clarify my questions. I mentioned my idea
of leaving for India, and she mumbled something about India not necessarily being any guarantee of authenticity. She told me that recently some kriyabans had found (in a well-known Ashram strictly tied to P.Y.’s life story) a Swami who gave them "pseudo Kriya" techniques that were, in her opinion, dangerous. She said that there was nothing unusual about it; there were many unauthorized teachers introducing themselves as loyal disciples of P.Y. With a vivid imagination, she compared them to spiders using the honey of the Guru's love to attract devotees who then became their prey. She spoke about a disciple of P.Y. who had formerly been one of the directors of the organization but then had branched out on his own, opening another Kriya school. This man was a "traitor" in her opinion.

This woman had enough material to go on with her stories indefinitely, but it was then that a very forceful sentence slipped out of my mouth which surprised me and froze her: "Should I receive Kriya teaching from the worst criminal in the world, I would still be able to turn it into gold. If it were polluted, I would have the intuition to reconstruct it to its original integrity." She replied with a sigh that I was moving dangerously close to losing the grace of my Guru-disciple relationship.

In order to make me understand the value of receiving the instructions from a true Guru, she told me what happened when one kriyaban decided to leave the Ashram of his Guru, P.Y., and seek another teacher. The Guru, aware of this, got in the disciple's way to stop him when he heard an inner voice – "the voice of God", she specified – ordering him not to interfere with the disciple's freedom. P.Y. obeyed and in a flash of intuition foresaw all the disciple's future incarnations, those in which he would be lost, in which he would keep on seeking – amid innumerable sufferings, jumping from one error to another – the path he was then relinquishing. Then, in the end, the disciple would return to the same path. The lady said that P.Y. had been quite specific as to the number of reincarnations that whole discouraging trip would take – about thirty! The moral of this story was clear, something from which one could not escape: I had to avoid looking elsewhere or I would lose myself in a labyrinth of enormous sufferings and who knows when I would be able to get back on the correct path.

I shifted my attention to her photograph of P.Y., taken on the day of his death. It was nicely framed, and some flowers and packets of incense were before it. In those moments of silence I had the sensation that tears were going to form in his blissful eyes (it was not a bizarre feeling; other people told me they had had the same experience.) I related my impression to her, in response to which she became very serious and, with her eyes pointed far off toward an indefinite spot, soberly uttered: "You have to consider it a warning: the Guru is not content with you"! There was not the least doubt that she was not joking at all.

In that moment, I realized how much P.Y. was a "presence" in her life, although she had never met him! I let my gaze rest on the bouquet of May lilies which we had purchased at the train station immediately after my arrival in town graciously arranged in a small vase before the photo of P.Y. She had then explained that she never skimped on fresh flowers for her "Guru." I realized how
full of sweet comfort must be her life! I knew that if I wanted to feel devotion which such intensity I had a lot of work to do, namely develop stable internal tranquility, bow to my favorite form of the Divine, and repeat this action of surrender with total sincerity every day of my life.

Although she admired the earnestness with which I was making progress – unlike so many other tepid and half-hearted people who would go to her only to be reignited with the motivation they could not find in themselves – she was dismayed that her devotion toward the Guru was totally alien to me. She could not relieve my immense thirst for knowledge of the art of Kriya. Looking into her beautiful eyes, I had the clear impression that she was permanently expecting me to act in a somewhat "disloyal" way either toward the Guru or toward the organization.

The Minister of my organization was at least right about one point: I was not calm at all. My search for technical explanations had made me as tense as a coiled spring. Although remaining faithful to my Kriya organization, I didn't accept vetoes and therefore I didn't take her advice. I was determined to know Kriya inside out and no one could stop me with any argument.

My search took a particular route. I knew three names of direct disciples of P.Y. who had had a clash with the school's board of directors and set out on their own. I hoped to find clues in some book which could help me to clear my doubts. I purchased all their published material, taped lectures and all. I was expecting that in order to show how proficient they had become with Kriya, they would publish information deeper than the material provided by the main organization. I hoped they would give the reader (who was neglecting the original source to listen to their voice of dissent) a more accurate didactic material.

The first disciple seemed to be an expert in idle chatter and was reluctant to give practical instructions. The second one was undoubtedly more professional, pedagogically gifted, but out of all of his literature and tapes only one of his sentences shed a faint light upon one of the Higher Kriyas. The literature of the third disciple – surprising and valuable since, having suffered the tragedy of mental illness which he recounted exhaustively– I found (save for an illuminating sentence upon the role of Kechari Mudra) only banality. The secrets, if they had any, were well guarded!

Months later the Meditation Counselor found out that I had read the "forbidden" books. Not only that, I had made a present of one of them to a couple of friends! A friend of mine showed me a letter in which the Counselor had called me "a man who stabs his Guru's back, handing out daggers to other people as well, so they can do the same"! She concluded by writing that "intelligence is a double-edged weapon: it can be used to eliminate the swelling of ignorance and also to cut off abruptly the lifeblood that sustains the spiritual path."

Her reaction was so exaggerated that I wasn't hurt at all. Her actions were obviously driven by waves of unabashed emotion, decades of steadfast conditioning, irrevocably affecting her common sense. I felt a sort of tenderness toward her and I smiled, picturing the moment in which she had
written that letter – seeing her own expectations regarding my behavior coming true. I am sure that her countenance was at last tranquil and serene as if tasting a delicious, intimate satisfaction.

Overcoming certain reluctance, I began reading some books written by Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples rather than those of P.Y. My hesitation in dropping the literature linked with P.Y. was due to the fact that, in my opinion, it was clearer than most.

These few books (at that time books like *Puran Purush* by Yogacharya Dr. Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee had not yet been published) disappointed me. They were nothing but bland meaningless words endlessly repeated, together with continuous changes in topic, which I considered unbearable. The practical notes, presented as essential, were only scattered bits copied from classical books on *Yoga*. The lack of care in their presentation made me suppose that the author had not bothered checking the original texts he had quoted but had most likely taken those quotations from other books which were also quoting from other reference books, continuing a chain wherein each author would add a little something just to mark his personal contribution.

I decided to again study all the material furnished by my organization and try to delve deeper into it. I would meet some *kriyaban* friends on Sundays, and together read crucial passages from the correspondence course and discuss them during a walk. Our main interest was how to perfect the practice of *Kriya*, but our efforts were futile – like trying to draw blood from a stone.

I decided to live each aspect of my life according to P.Y.'s teachings. The correspondence course contained esoteric teachings that could not be considered an integral part of *Kriya Yoga* but were very useful for students to enhance their intuition of the subtle laws governing human lives.

At that time I was especially interested in mastering two skills in particular: how to recognize friends from previous lives and how to project energy for pranic healing. The teachings were clearly given with all the necessary cautionary remarks, but my approach was devoid of caution and discrimination. I acted as if I were supported from "above", imagining that the benedictions and the strength of the *Guru* were with me. I paid attention to only some aspects of the teachings, choosing those particular patterns of behavior that appealed to my emotions.

Then my illusory dream began to disintegrate, slowly but inexorably. Failure came, and I felt desolate and ashamed. At first I could not accept it. I refused to believe I had acted wrongly. I believed that mine was only an apparent failure, but as time went by evidence compiled that I had neither cured nor helped any person in any way. This was the greatest blow to me because I had made a fool of myself and, furthermore I had disturbed the peace and privacy of suffering people.

As for "previous lives", I acknowledge that in this unprovable territory everything is possible; however at that time it seemed so self-evident and sensible to me that instead of using my meditation-born intuition (which the written instruction aimed at developing) I simply took figments of my
imagination to create various mind films, convincing myself I had lived them in a far distant past. In fact these day-dreams were actually wish fulfillments and easy-to-read indicators of my likings and preferences.

Slipping into a state wherein I doubted even the metaphysical basis upon which the edifice of *Kriya Yoga* is built, I was unable to think a single coherent thought for some months.

*Inspiration from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*

Such was my situation when I started reading *Mother, or the Divine Materialism*, a book about The Mother (Mère) written by her beloved disciple, Satprem. Two years before I had been introduced to the thoughts of Sri Aurobindo. His *Aphorisms* and his epic poem *Savitri* had deeply impressed me. After Sri Aurobindo's death, in 1951, The Mother continued his research and gave substance to his belief that the Divine – the basic intelligent and evolutionary force behind everything in existence– could perfectly manifest on this planet! "The world is not an unfortunate accident: it is a miracle moving toward its full expression", she declared. "In matter, the Divine becomes perfect…” she wrote. From 1958 until her death in 1973, The Mother recounted her extraordinary exploration to Satprem. Their talks are written out in *Mother's Agenda*. This huge document — 6000 pages in 13 volumes — is the account of twenty-two years of Mother's discoveries.

In analyzing Mother's comments on Sri Aurobindo's aphorisms, I was prepared to read the usual elementary explanations of Indian philosophy. But Mother's thought had nothing to do with philosophy. It was new, something never heard, dissolving any myth. I felt an explosion of joy reading her comment to aphorism No. 70: "Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more charitable and pitying to others." Annotating it, she wrote:

"The need to be virtuous is the great obstacle to true self-giving. This is the origin of Falsehood and even more the very source of hypocrisy -- the refusal to accept to take upon oneself one's own share of the burden of difficulties. Do not try to appear virtuous. See how much you are united, one with everything, that is anti-divine. Take your share of the burden, accept yourselves to be impure and false and in that way you will be able to take up the Shadow and offer it. And in so far as you are capable of taking it and offering it, then things will change. Do not try to be among the pure. Accept to be with those who are in darkness and give it all with total love."

By saying on another occasion, "Morality is the great obstacle on the spiritual path", she stressed the value of not trying to appear pure in other people's eyes, but instead behaving according to the truth of one's being. She believed one should acknowledge one's dark side; it exists in the depths of our being and in a few has developed into a way of living shunned by society. According to her teaching, people become true individuals only when in constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge, they are perfectly and compactly
integrated with their divine center. The Mother did not behave like a traditional Guru, although she did try to extract the hidden potential from all disciples looking for inspiration.

I was very impressed with how she dealt with the theme of Japa. She recounted how during the screening of a film she heard the Sanskrit Mantra: OM NAMO BHAGAVATEH. She wondered what would happen if she repeated that Mantra during her daily meditation. She did, and the result was extraordinary. She reported that: "It (the Mantra) coagulates something: all the cellular life becomes one solid, compact mass, in a tremendous concentration – with a single vibration. Instead of all the usual vibrations of the body, there is now only one single vibration. It becomes as hard as a diamond, a single massive concentration, as if all the cells of the body had ... I became stiff from it. I was so stiff that I was one single mass." [This quotation is drawn from Mother's Agenda.]

And yet in that period Japa did not truly become part of my practice. I experimented with Mother's "Om Namo Bhagavate" but it did not work for me. I tried to live in a more conscious way, continuously attentive to any inward and outward perceptions. I tried to carry out the well-known instruction to resolutely maintain an impartial attitude toward both pleasant and unpleasant events, being like a detached "witness". (This discipline is recommended in almost all books dealing with oriental meditative practices.) After three days of that, I felt myself under unbearable stress as if it all was a pretense, an illusion. I ceased to practice Japa or the discipline of being a detached "witness" and dropped the whole matter.

Meanwhile, my mind was obsessed with the craving to adopt more advanced tools of "evolution". Months went by, with useless attempts to ameliorate my Kriya routine. One year later, resuming the reading of The Divine Materialism, I was astonished that The Mother was able to express, in a euphorically vivid way, my own innermost convictions which I had been unable to clarify even to myself.

She reasoned like a westerner and treated the themes of India's spirituality with a western languaging which was both lyrical and rational, and at the highest degree of excellence. In her writings there was a revolution, a reversal of values. Contemplation of Beauty in nature and in some forms of art like music was not to be considered a fleeting emotion feeding a lazy longing for an indefinable spiritual experience, but instead to be lived with an indomitable striving toward a divinization of life. Spellbound, I contemplated the shimmering splendor of a full manifestation of the Divine in the atoms of inert matter. There was a fragrance in this never-before-met idea which excited and moved me. There were moments in which my head felt hot as if I were feverish.

I gradually began to examine my way of practicing Kriya Yoga and realized the complexity of my self-deception. Entering a Kriya-founded organization had resulted in being ensnared and bewildered by many fairy tales and speculative ideas wholly unsupported by facts.

My approach and attitude towards the spiritual path was improper. I was
convinced that finding Kriya was a stroke of luck, a gift from the Divine, due to a certain merit on my part of which I was unaware. My personal commitment itself had been unimpressive. I also realized that the desire to abide by the values instilled in me by my culture had been gradually twisted. It was as if a large portion of my brain withdrew, while another portion, which did its utmost to believe what was convenient to believe, tried to usurp its function. People began to look at me as a man who chose a simple life style marked by lofty principles, not seeing how my judgment was impaired and practically non-existent.

While my first efforts in exploring my book-learned Pranayama were accompanied by constant intellectual striving for perfection (I could rely only on my intuition; while practicing, I anticipated its inevitable progression and was quietly excited during each moment of it), afterward, having received Kriya, the idea of practicing "the fastest technique in the field of spiritual evolution" made the intensity of my effort lose its edge. My Kriya Pranayama, practiced with enthusiasm for some months, became a tranquil good habit.

Apart from other foolish thoughts, I had swallowed the childish idea that each Kriya breath could produce "the equivalent of a solar year of spiritual evolution" and that through a million of these breaths I would infallibly reach Cosmic Consciousness. I tried to perform the greatest possible number of Pranayama in order to quickly complete that million. I didn't realize that I had slipped into a mindless habit, and therefore felt no shame nor remorse.

My iron-willed discipline was softened by the hypnotic promise of the "Guru's Blessings". "Aren't you glad to have found a true Guru?" For years I heard this refrain from my Kriya organization, "Aren't you enthusiastic that He has been chosen for you by God Himself?" "Oh yes we are happy" we replied with tears of joy. This idea, more than any other factor, had lethal effects on me; it was the cradle in which my ego was fed and strengthened.

To remind myself that I had entered the Kriya organization only to perfect my already good practice of Pranayama pained me. It was imperative to recreate the spirit of my original search.

Three Important Decisions

What I am about to describe was the most rewarding period of my life. I look upon it as the dawn of understanding, and I hope to never forget the lesson it contains.

After reading Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, I found the courage to again be a self-taught person. During the first season of my interest in esoteric matters and oriental practice of meditation, I had found easy-to-follow instructions in an unassuming book. The instructions were simple but I put all my passion in them, especially the wish to pursue, through Yoga, my concept of Beauty. Day after day, when other distractions and doubts came, when the initial enthusiasm diminished, I tenaciously carried on with my ideals and my discipline. The result was the Kundalini experience. Now, about 12 years later, I found myself back at the beginning. I was ready to carry on persistently, despite criticisms and doubts, three basic resolutions:
1. The Kriya routine I practiced had to be reconsidered and restructured, applying Patanjali's principles.
2. At the end of each Kriya session, I had to call to mind my own most moving and loving conception of God, get back to some essential feeling of God.
3. I had the moral duty to practice Kriya via the state of Mental Silence achieved by using Japa during my daily life.

What resulted from this decision and still remains in my heart as a peak experience was: the Breathless state. These resolutions are elucidated below.

1. **Kriya Routine abiding by Patanjali's principles**

Patanjali was a pioneer in the art of rationally handling the mystical path, aiming at individualizing a universal, physiological direction of inner events that explained why a certain phenomenon, inherent to the spiritual path, should be preceded and necessarily followed by other ones. His extreme synthesis may be criticized or, because of its temporal distance, may be hard to understand; however, his work is of extraordinary importance. Many authors of Kriya Yoga say that the theory expressed by Patanjali is the same as Kriya Yoga; that Patanjali and Lahiri Mahasaya substantially dealt with the same practice. I believe that this is partly true. Patanjali is far from clarifying all the aspects of Kriya and there is a remarkable difference between the final steps of his Yoga (especially Dharana and Dhyana) and the related phases of Kriya Yoga.

There are different ways of translating the Sanskrit terms summarizing Patanjali's eight steps of Yoga: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi.

- **Yama**: self-control (non-violence, avoid lies, avoid stealing, avoid being lustful and seek non-attachment);
- **Niyama**: religious observances (cleanliness, contentment, discipline, study of the Self and surrender to the Supreme God).
- As for **Asana** (position of the body), Patanjali explains it must be stable and comfortable. There is no hint of preliminary exercises of concentration, much less of meditation. The first interesting concept of Patanjali is **Pranayama**, defined as regulation of the Prana by repetition of particular breathing patterns. Through Pranayama a state of calmness and poise is to be created which becomes the foundation for the subsequent step, Pratyahara, in which the awareness is disconnected from external reality. All our five senses have thus been turned inward. You are led to understand that the techniques which require movement should be completed before this phase; the breath and the heart should have the time necessary to slow down.

After Pratyahara comes Dharana. Patanjali explains that after the breath's disappearance, a yogi should look for a physical or abstract object onto which he might turn his concentration and practice a sort of contemplative meditation in such a way as to lose himself in it. Dharana is concentration (focusing the mind.) Further, Dhyana is the persistence of that focusing – either in meditation or contemplation – as a steady uninterrupted flow of awareness which fully
explores all aspects of the chosen object. Samadhi is the further step of perfect spiritual absorption (deep contemplation in which the object of meditation becomes inseparable from the meditator himself).

As for my Kriya practice, my basic understanding in those days was that the so-called Higher Kriyas (each requiring movement) had to be practiced during the Pranayama phase. A long phase of internalization of consciousness and energy in perfect immobility should follow. In my opinion, Dharana, the act of focusing attention, implied concentration on the Chakras. You begin to concentrate on each Chakra and forget yourself; in this way Dharana spontaneously becomes Dhyana, the borders between the two being indistinguishable in practice. Samadhi is the sudden burning with joy that you can sometimes experience.

From that moment onwards, I began to end my routine with a procedure that I call "mental Pranayama." I pause my awareness on each Chakra about 10 seconds – as a bee drawn to the nectar in flowers hovers over each in great delight – slightly "touching" their nucleus along an counterclockwise (as viewed from above) path. The concentration on the third eye – that "inward eye" which Wordsworth appropriately defines as "the bliss of solitude" – happens spontaneously.

2. Ending each routine by surrendering to one's Ishta Devata

Ishta Devata is a term denoting a worshiper's favorite deity. In order to worship God, practitioners need to choose the form of God which inspires them the most. Obviously that form largely depends upon the religious tradition in which they are born. The practical motions of worship (offering prayers, flowers or incense, etc.) are of no importance; what is essential is internally building a relationship with one's Ishta Devata.

Unfortunately it is not always immediately obvious how one's inner Ishta Devata is perceived.

To recognize mine I had to first dispel, through reasoning, what I had absorbed in my early religious training, namely that if you want to walk along the spiritual path you must relate to the traditional divine figures and intermediaries through which the elusive Primeval Cause of all existence is approached and worshiped.

I realized that to me the contemplation of Beauty in Nature gave, in certain favorable conditions, a glimpse of the Reality beyond this earthly one. Beauty in Nature was therefore my Ishta Devata, a symbol of my otherwise inexpressible conception of Divinity.

Alles Vergängliche. Ist nur ein Gleichnis
(tr. Every fleeting, transient thing is but an appearance, a symbol)
(From the concluding stanzas of Goethe's Faust)

Perhaps in the beginning I didn't realize the spiritual basis of my proclivity towards nature; to me it was a way to evaporate the events of the day in an enthusiastic outpouring of poetic emotions. What my heart really craved was
revealed when it emerged from the unknown reality lying beyond the material.

Later I empirically discovered that the practice of *Pranayama* intensified that experience; it was only for this reason that I began seeking *Kriya Yoga*. That discovery was not at all trivial. My first experience with *Pranayama with Bandhas* gave me a blissful sensation of pressure on my heart *Chakra*—after decades I recognize this as the main effect of *Thokar*.

Unfortunately, in my *Kriya* group it was not acceptable to openly express my particular way of conceiving the Divine. Due to my stupid desire to conform to the prevailing preferences of the group, I tried to visualize and cherish the figures of *Sri Krishna* and the Divine Mother instead of silently going my way with unremitting ardor. This decision did not generate a genuine *Bhakti* (devotion), but my own *Ishta Devata* was always a source of unlimited richness for me.

It was now imperative for me to return to my initial form of devotion by persistently completing each *Kriya* routine with a high level of concentration upon my *Ishta Devata*.

3. Practice *Kriya* in the state of Mental Silence achieved through Japa

I will now describe how after an intense practice of *Japa* throughout the day, concentration upon my *Ishta Devata* was experienced in the breathless state.

In those days I read the autobiography of Swami Ramdas. He moved far and wide all over India unceasingly repeating the *Mantra: Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om*. Discovering the simplicity of his life and the greatness of his experience was very inspiring; his photo and the childlike simplicity of his smile kindled my devotion and inspired me to "adopt" his *Mantra*.

Swami Ramdas was born in 1884 in Hosdrug, Kerala, India, and named Vittal Rao. He lived a normal life until age thirty-six and experienced the usual ups and downs of a householder's life. Often he inquired about the true meaning of life and felt the desire to pursue the spiritual path in order to feel genuine "Peace." At the right moment his father initiated him into the *Ram Mantra*, assuring him that by repeating it unceasingly he would, in due time, achieve the divine happiness he desired. It was then that Ramdas renounced the secular life and went forth in quest of God as a mendicant *Sadhu*. The first years of his newly found life are described in his autobiography. The *Mantra "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram"* was ever on his lips. Besides the practice of *Japa*, he adopted the discipline of looking upon all other people as forms of *Ram* (God), and of accepting every happening as coming from the will of God. In a short time the *Mantra* disappeared from his lips and entered his heart. He beheld a small circular light in the spot between his eyebrows, which yielded him thrills of delight. Then the dazzling light permeated and absorbed him. Lost in this inexpressible bliss he would sit for hours. The world appeared to him as a dim shadow. A stage was soon reached when this dwelling in the spirit became a permanent and unvarying experience. Ramdas attained *Mahasamadhi* in 1963.

The teaching of Swami Ramdas regarding how to practice *Japa* is extremely simple. You utter Rama's name (*Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram*) any time, amid all of life's distractions, whenever there is a momentary return of
your consciousness to Self-awareness. When this happens you feel the ensuing joy and you concentrate on it as long as possible, while repeating your Prayer. In this way you perfect your surrender to God. This is to be practiced when facing every event, every day, and in every circumstance. At Night, when free from worldly duties, you devote yourself to intense practice of Japa. Swami Ramdas stuck to that practice and was actually rolling in a sea of indescribable happiness.

"Repeat the one name 'Ram' at all times of the day and at nights when you are awake. You may be sure that you will not feel lonely or miserable as long as you are uttering that glorious name. Where this name is sounded, or meditated upon, there resides no sorrow, no anxiety – nay, not even death." (Ramdas)

Helped by a mala (rosary beads), I started to practice reciting Japa aloud 108 times during a walk (the number of beads in a mala), and mentally during the remainder of the walk.

Even though the oriental traditions recommend doing Japa mentally, I know for certain that it should be done aloud – at least for about a hundred times. The sound of that Mantra, which I had already heard in a spiritual audio recording, was very pleasant. I loved to prolong its vibration, make it vibrate in my chest and invest it with my heart's aspiration. My attitude was not that of a supplicating and sobbing devotee, but that of a man who rejoices, being one step away from his goal.

Since I observed while doing it an irresistible impulse to put everything in order, I thought that the Mantra could work in a similar way by cleaning out my mental stuff and putting my "psychological furniture" in order. Even though sometimes I felt a bit dazed, I maintained the determination never to discard this practice.

I practiced Japa every morning and Kriya every noon in the open countryside. One day during my Kriya session while relaxing with the mental Pranayama (placing my awareness in each Chakra for 10-20 seconds each), I distinctly perceived a fresh energy sustaining my body from inside. I realized my cells were breathing pure energy which didn't originate from the inhaled air. The more I relaxed, the more I simultaneously became aware both of the Chakras and of the body as a whole. The breath, which in the meantime had become very short, eventually reached immobility, like a pendulum gently reaching the equilibrium point. My mind settled down. This condition lasted a few minutes without any feeling of uneasiness; there was neither the least quiver of surprise nor the thought, "Finally I have it!" The event was enjoyable beyond words: in a blue-painted profundity, I was mercilessly crushed by the beauty of nature and, at the same time, situated above the whole world. All was incredibly beautiful, beyond imagination! I was not breathing and I did not feel the need to.

In the following days the same event happened again – always during mental Pranayama. Before starting my routine, I looked at the surrounding panorama and wondered if I would again experience that state. I did! I was astonished; it seemed impossible that Japa, one of the simplest techniques in the
world, could produce *infallibly* such a valuable result! Compared to the breathless state (which was "solidity" itself), my past experiences during Kriya practice seemed vanishing, elusive, like luminous reflections on water. Where my best intentions had failed, Japa had produced the miracle! There was a perfect association between the practice of Japa and the attainment of the breathless state. Every day I experienced it for myself.

This reliable result created a moral strength in me that turned into a calm euphoria permeating my entire day. While talking to others I remained effortlessly centered on the feeling of unchangeable calmness, without being involved in the images arising from the words. This new way of living was like walking out of a dark stuffy room into sunlight and fresh air. The magic of this bright dazzling Prayer which spread into each facet of my life confirmed in me the belief that Japa was the only tool capable of extracting "something perfect and sublime" from my life.

I plunged with enthusiasm into Japa literature and studied the subject of Mantra and Prayer in different mystical paths. The simplest explanation was that Japa annihilates the mental background noise. We can put it in this way: when we try to concentrate, many disturbing thoughts can be visualized, isolated and blocked, but a diffuse persistent background noise nullifies all our efforts. If we practice Japa for at least one hour and not immediately before starting our meditation routine, that noise will disappear and the results will be fantastic.

Many books introducing the practice of Japa (Prayer) do not explain this precious concept but insist only upon a heap of banalities. When I read in oriental books 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 knew that these are ridiculous idiocies. Swami Ramdas' simple autobiography is worth a thousand times more than those useless essays deprived of any intelligence or passion.

Likewise when I read western books that insist on the fact that the power of the Japa (Prayer) lies not in your effort but in the "Divine Grace" that comes only when you use a particular formula canonized by a traditional pattern of worship, I knew that this is another falsehood.

The books rarely hint at the main obstacle: often a delusion arises in us in the form of a scruple: "By repeating my Mantra mechanically all day long like a parrot, aren't I doing the most mind-numbing activity in the word? Don't the faculties of my mind get lazy, becoming dull tools?" On the contrary! You discover that through Japa the mind rests and becomes more acute.

I am reminded of a friend who practiced Kriya without getting any result. I talked to him and suggested Japa but nothing changed. I observed him carefully while he was practicing and was witness to a lifeless practice, a tired plea for God's mercy. I had the impression that he took this activity as cerebral act. His thoughts were on the repetition; its vibration was not connected in any
way to his body. His chosen Mantra was an expression in his mother tongue and nothing more than a sigh of self-pity. It was not surprising when, after some time, he entirely abandoned the practice. He did not realize he was about to become the greatest supporter of Japa, which turning point came 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 paradisiac situation. He went on repeating the Prayer unremittingly for the entire walk (which surpassed the 22 miles), completely forgetting he was tired and sleepy. When the group paused to rest, he luckily was left alone undisturbed. He slipped into an introspective state and was pervaded by something vibrating in his own heart which he definitely identified with Spiritual Reality. His ecstatic state took over his reality, becoming almost unbearable, overwhelming him. This experience taught him the correct way of practicing Japa. He said that the secret was to not only reach but also go beyond the state of "exhaustion." After some experiments he chose a beautiful Indian Mantra to repeat and, thanks to it, he reached the breathless state. I will always remember his conclusion: the power of Japa lies in going beyond the frontier of "EXHAUSTION".

Normally 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) of a Mantra aloud then letting it go ahead automatically in the background of their mind. However the "law of exhaustion" is a valuable resource for breaking some internal resistance and experience the breathless state for the first time.

For a little less than one year I lived that bright experience every day. The teachings of The Mother helped me realize why I failed so miserably in applying P.Y.'s esoteric teachings regarding pranic healing and so on.

The basic mistake was that I had let a teaching extraneous to Kriya become my first interest, reinforced by my egotistic motivations, to be fulfilled impatiently at any means. The teaching of The Mother was to first create the state of Mental Silence wiping out all the ego-born ideas, plans and distractions. Through Mental Silence the Divine would descend into my life, cross all the layers of my being: thoughts, emotions, sensations.... By surrendering to God's will, I would find harmony and overall balance affecting all aspects of my life. Only then could a lofty ideal, perhaps present since time unmemorable, become perceptible and touch my heart. Only then could I take action and pursue it with the wisdom that Sri Aurobindo expressed in his Aphorism 311:

"Work as if the ideal had to be fulfilled swiftly and in thy lifetime; persevere as if thou knewest it not to be unless purchased by a thousand years yet of labour. That which thou darest not expect till the fifth millennium, may bloom out with tomorrow's dawning and that which thou hopest and lustest after now, may have been fixed for thee in thy hundredth advent."
This attitude is not that of a student of occult science testing one among many esoteric teachings received from their confraternity, but that of a mystic who surrenders to the Divine Law that coexists with surrender to his unique longing and aspiration that presided over – and determined – his birth on the earth plane. In this condition there is no failure.

After many wonderful experiences and clear states of introspection, that year quietly came to an end. The following two years were not equally shining because I relaxed my effort with Japa, subconsciously considering the breathless state as acquired and established once and for all. Then something happened that created total chaos within me.

During a trip to Vienna (Austria), I found a book written by an Indian Swami, claiming he was teaching the original Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya and P.Y.’s was mentioned as a slightly modified version of it. Again devoured by the obsession of finding the original Kriya, tormented by my suspicion that P.Y. had taught a simplified form of Kriya in order to meet the constraints of his westerner disciples, I studied his book hoping to unearth the original Kriya Pranayama.

In the meantime my daily application of Japa decreased. Often I formulated the thought, "I must never lose the enjoyment of the breathless state, even for a single minute. It is the most real thing I have ever experienced!" But born of my doubts, a frenzied search for the original Kriya began again and that search made me go crazy. I had opened a door that couldn't be closed easily, and I lost the simplicity of Japa coupled with the before-described Kriya routine.

My joy became reading and rereading that book, underlining heavily some sentences. I was excited to read that Pranayama should be considered inaccurate and wrong if, settling down after fair number of breaths, the practitioner had not heard the internal sound of Om without closing his ears. That sentence wouldn't let me sleep. It left dangerous doubts that an unimaginably deep and rich technique of spiritual realization had been taken away from me and all westerners only because P.Y. had found it difficult to teach to his first American disciples. Was this true, was it false? The issue is controversial, but as far as my life was concerned the world of the "traveling Gurus" with all their hysterical claims and innumerable contradictions took the place of what I had patiently built. I lived several years in this feverish situation before the heavenly condition brought to my life by the breathless state would return to me again.
CHAPTER 4

FOLLOWING SOME TEACHERS OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

The book written by the Indian Kriya teacher S.H., like innumerable others I later read, was only bait to create interest in the Kriya school founded by the author and never included practical explanations. The statements it contained were worthy of consideration; they were surely from a very deep practice of Pranayama. I had no idea when and where I would have the opportunity to meet this teacher, but I foretasted the possibility of deepening my Kriya Pranayama and, perhaps, clarifying my other doubts concerning Kechari Mudra and the Higher Kriyas.

Recalling a phrase which had escaped the lips of the lady meditation counselor about a variation of Kriya Pranayama taught to some disciples by P.Y., I convinced myself that the key technical addition was to mentally chant Om in the Chakras while directing all attention possible to the internal sounds.

Any effort toward listening to the internal sounds is very well rewarded. The beauty of that period when I had practiced the "Om technique" (received from my school) had not been surpassed by any other event. It’s hard to convey how incredibly comforting and liberating that experience was.

Now, by applying the above described conjecture, I could listen again to the astral sounds and retrieve that Beauty. So I kept on listening and listening inwardly not only to the sound of the breath but to any other internal sound feebly manifesting during Kriya Pranayama. I can't remember how many Kriya breaths I practiced each day, surely never more than 48-60. After a few days the ancient well known sweetness again entered my life and I gratefully welcomed it with open heart.

The strange part was I hadn’t even met the teacher yet, I had only read his book. It was the intensity of my practice that was extreme! I had a clear perception that a state of inconceivable sweetness was mine, that I could taste it every day, during the practice and in every moment when I rested, free from work. To preserve that Omkar perception with the utmost care became the sole focus of my concentration.

First Teacher outside the Organization

Before undergoing surgery in the United States, the author of the book was stopping over in Europe. I worked very hard to meet him and receive his Kriya initiation on that occasion. That moment came at last! His introductory conference was for me of great emotional impact. He had a majestic and noble bearing. He was "handsomely" wrapped in his ocher clothes; his old age, and long hair and beard marked the features of the typical sage. I caught glimpses of him while he spoke, hidden by the front rows; I felt he was talking about Lahiri Mahasaya's legacy from direct experience.

The theoretical concepts he introduced were absolutely new to me and created a beautiful consistent framework for a Kriya praxis based on a unique progressive process of tuning into the Omkar reality. Like a thread passing
through all the pearls of a necklace, Omkar was coursing through all the different phases of Kriya. Furthermore, the Omkar reality had to be perceived not only in the aspects of sound and light but also as a "swinging sensation" (another time he spoke about a feeling of pressure). His stupendous, appealing words were for me a revelation, but at certain moments my focus on technical detail made me unable to give due attention to what he was saying. My obsession was: "What kind of throat sound is to be produced in this original Kriya; to which center does the energy rise in the spine?"

To make clear the proper movement of Omkar, he touched some of the students (their head and chest) making his hand vibrate, trying to transmit this quivering to their body. He was leading the auditorium into a wondrous dimension, giving himself completely to us so that we could feel the core essence of the Omkar experience.

The initiation into the First Kriya thrilled and disappointed me at the same time. The forward bendings that preceded the Maha Mudra were really precious and so was the final meditation (improperly called Paravastha) but the Kriya Pranayama seemed to have disappeared and been reduced to a process of raising the Chakras in Ajna or Sahasrara through a way of breathing which was less long and less intense than then the one used up to now during Kriya Pranayama. Having what he wrote years ago in his book fresh in my mind, it was a plain fact to me that this teacher too, over the course of the years, had simplified the original technique.

Among the people who consistently attended his seminars, there was no mystery about the many technical details of Kriya Yoga that he kept on changing, year after year. One of his intimate disciples confirmed to me that in the past the Swami had taught Kriya Pranayama proper enriched by chanting Om in each Chakra. For this reason I decided to never exclude my good old Kriya Pranayama with long breath from my practice. To it I would now add what he was teaching.

It was winter and I had a three week vacation. I spent every morning wrapped in the warmth of my home, practicing as much as possible, applying the fundamental concepts he emphasized so much. I made a particular effort to remain aware of the breath (a calm short breath, almost imperceptible and on the verge of disappearing) for about three hours, linking each breath with a different Chakra. He had explained that to make a remarkable spiritual progress, you should engage yourselves in becoming aware of at least 1728 breaths a day.

I experienced a total contentment and ease, as if my Kriya path had come to its fulfillment. By day, everything seemed surrounded by a "padded coating", reducing all dissonances. Everything was as if transfigured; it was like living in a perfect reality and all worries took flight, gone from my sight.

I also spent some days in a beautiful location equipped for winter sport, where I could wander aimlessly around the snow-white countryside. While I was lazily roaming about, the sun set early, painting the landscape with breathtaking colors; the small village, sunk in the snow, started to radiate in a few seconds of glory all the colors of the spectrum of light. My memory will always hold it as
the splendid symbol of my contact with the *Omkar* experience.

The winter vacation ended and I returned to my job. During my spare time I would think about what a precious jewel the *Kriya* technique was, visualizing the possibility of a future deepening after a similar commitment to the *Higher Kriyas* also.

One day while still at work, I was in a room from which I could see the distant mountains through a window pane, and contemplate the pure celestial sky above them. I was in ecstasy! That distant sky was the mirror of my future years, wholly dedicated to *Kriya Yoga*. For the first time the prospect of retiring and living on a minimal income, maintaining this state for the rest of my days, started to take real shape.

This teacher also taught a simplified form of *Second Kriya*, which I learned months later. As for receiving other advanced techniques, he expressed himself adamantly: the request of being initiated in them implied a lack of engagement in the basic techniques. Being aware that the original *Kriya* spirit had been lost in other schools, he focused only on passing on its nucleus. He had tried all Lahiri Mahasaya's techniques, concluding that some of them were not essential while others were rather too delicate and difficult to be learned. Attempts made by inexperienced students to effectively use these techniques often resulted in a useless distraction for the students and a waste of time for him as a teacher.

What he said made definite sense, but contributed to his isolation. He did not take into consideration the insatiable curiosity of the majority of *kriyabans* who accepted no interference in their quest. His unfortunate decision to leave out some of Lahiri Mahasaya's techniques (not only parts of the *Higher Kriyas*, but also basic techniques such as *Kechari Mudra* and *Navi Kriya*) triggered an automatic reflex which pushed away the people most indispensable to him. Consumed by a thirst for the complete teachings, they began to search for other teachers. Disappointed by their defection, he stubbornly focused even more pointedly on the essence of the teaching and the further simplification of the *First Kriya* techniques. Those who tried to get this absurdity across to him and thereby prevent it found themselves facing a stone wall.

He had all the tools necessary to attract the western world. The book he had written had been a smart strategic move which made him popular in the West, saving for himself a place of crucial importance in the domain of *Kriya*. Moreover, his Indian-sage figure impressed people. Hundreds of scholars were ready to back his mission and treat him as a "divinity", and were willing to show the same respect to possible collaborators and successors.

Yet the soil he plowed and was cultivating started to become sterile. I saw the scope of his isolation when one day during a *Kriya* review lesson, he told his public that real *Kriya Pranayama* could only take place in a state of calm breath and that the one marked by a long deep breath (which many knew was characteristic of Lahiri Mahasaya's legacy) was good, in his opinion, only for "kindergarten children"! He closed his nostrils with his fingers and kept that position for some time. In this way that he implied that he had mastered the
breathless state and that the public was neither able to understand, nor practice, *Kriya*.

I thought about how many disappointments he must have had to convince him to make such a peculiar demonstration. Perhaps he had only met people who were not able to adopt the discipline of a regular meditation practice and therefore did not gain any benefit. Unfortunately, many perceived his behavior as a nasty comment that the audience was unable to understand the deep meaning of what he was describing. The students staring at him were at a complete loss; he must have seemed bizarre and peculiar to them. The result was that the beginners sensed only that there was too large a distance to be bridged between them and the Master. Those who already had a good mastering of *Kriya* had the final confirmation that what he had taught up to that moment was a simple introduction to *Kriya* and did not provide the key to obtaining the experiential pinnacle.

It is true that a lot of people were content with his *Kriya*, but they would never organize a seminar for their teacher. Frankly speaking, the faithfulness of the many was not enough to avoid the worst. His commendable effort, all the marvelous subtleties by which he had enriched our *Kriya* and made this practice far more beautiful, was not enough to prevent a shipwreck of his mission – at least here in Europe.  

Using the same fliers and changing only the Master's name and photo, many of the people who formerly organized his seminars invited another teacher from India because they knew he was well-disposed to explain *Kriya* in its complete form. This invitation was perhaps made more out of desperation than of conviction because those who had already met him in India knew his own spiritual realization was almost non-existent. Because of visa problems, it took two years before he finally landed in Europe, and when he arrived practically all the before-described teacher's disciples were ready to welcome this new guru as their God-sent messenger.

This new teacher did in fact give us the very craved for *Kechari Mudra*, the *Navi Kriya* and others. But let me first describe the most disappointing meeting of my life.

*Second Teacher outside the Organization*

While waiting for the new teacher from India to obtain a visa granting permission to enter Europe, I came in contact with a *Kriya* school totally separate from the others. The *Kriya Yoga* they taught was called *Babaji's Kriya Yoga* and was based upon the teachings of an Indian personage who claimed he was a direct disciple of *Babaji*. In this school the main technique was called *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama* – a breathing technique. Other teachings were grouped under four main headings: *Kriya Hatha Yoga*, *Kriya Dhyana Yoga*, *Kriya Mantra Yoga* and *Kriya Bhakti Yoga*. These rotated around the central teaching of *Pranayama*, extending its sphere of action to all the aspects of human life. The

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9 Something remains indeed, but very scanty compared to what he could have realized if only he had been more conciliatory.
idea of having found a source from which I could learn everything about Kriya excited me tremendously.

I came in contact with this school through a strange book whose illustrations gave the impression of a fairytale. I felt confident I could learn something here, although in this book there was no mention of techniques like Talabya Kriya, Kechari Mudra, Navi Kriya, Omkar Pranayama, Thokar....

The school offered three levels of Kriya, easy to obtain in about three years if you showed enough commitment, so I enrolled. The first level 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, was considered dangerous and thus banned. Kriya Kundalini Pranayama seemed to be a beautiful technique. The most annoying thing was that once you had completed 16 Kriya 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.

Before receiving instruction from this school, I had mixed what I had learned from P.Y.'s organization with S.H.'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. Changing the technique of meditation every day (there were seven different techniques, one for each different day of the week), 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 than Dhyana Kriya. Unfortunately, we had to repeat the course two or three times in order to receive the complete set of Chakra Mantras. The odd thing was that the teacher seemed to be lost in New Age philosophy and didn't realize how badly his teachings were organized. He gave his wife the role of pontificating about many topics (macrobiotics, how to see auras, how to make Ayurveda diagnoses and other amenities), and made a fool of himself by explaining the technique of "dispersing the clouds" – fixing attention on a cloud in the sky with the purpose of dissolving it! Since I had placed much hope on the upcoming third level, I endured it all.

The third level was an atrocious delusion, beyond my worse expectations. There were no 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 P.Y.'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 techniques. For many of us who had yearlong experience with the preliminary-to-*Kriya* techniques offered by P.Y.'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 the teacher's opinion about Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*. At first he was reticent and did not seem glad about our interest, then he took courage and shared his views. He believed that Lahiri Mahasaya had not practiced with total commitment all the teachings he received from Babaji, therefore he ... died. Astounded, we realized that since Lahiri Mahasaya had not obtained immortality (as, in this teacher's opinion, should happen to those who give their all to applying *Kriya* integrally), our teacher was dismissive of him. But let me end talking about all this and get back to other considerations.

*Intermezzo: New-Age-Polluted Kriya Yoga*

The mindset I developed in following this school led me to meet people and groups in which *Kriya Yoga* was polluted with *New-Age* themes. I am reminded of those days whenever I listen to the tape recordings of devotional chants which I bought 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 much the same nature of food; I really had the impression of eating that music.

Coming across different groups of people who practiced *Kriya*, I had the feeling of meeting a family more vast and varied than my first *Kriya* group who strictly followed P.Y.'s teachings.

Basking in my state of elation, I didn't 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, which had here deteriorated to the cultivation of a few innocent and sometimes funny faddiness. I learned to relate to each person – for example, to those who would host me whenever a seminar was held in a distant city – the way an explorer deals with unknown animals, waiting for any eccentric revelation. At times I would react to their oddness sarcastically; it was something I just could not help, it came out so spontaneously.

Later on I had occasion to meet and approach more intimately those who organized the *Kriya Yoga* initiation seminars for our traveling *Gurus*. They gave the impression of being honest researchers and always guaranteed that no nonsense would ever slip out of their mouths. I learned to listen to them respectfully and silently whenever they corrected some of my fancy interpretations of *Kriya Yoga*. I was surprised when one of them, without being exhibitionistic, quoted by heart a few lines from a work by P.Y. – the same prophetic lines which had once been the source of so many uncertainties for me. He read and re-read through those texts several times trying to decode them; he really strained in studying those texts.

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. Never did they try to force something on me, passionately sharing everything they had learned, no matter if it cost them a great deal of time, effort and money.
At that epoch of my life, besides the three main teachers described in this chapter, I received a couple of initiations by other "minor" teachers that had once been the right-hand man 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 improvisation and, in one case, of mental instability. This was strongly in contrast with the character we expected in those who called themselves "spiritual guides". They knew little about Kriya Yoga and they taught it in a superficial way, but they claimed they were authorized to initiate, and this blinded us. Just for this reason we treated them with a deferential and tolerant attitude, forgiving them when they abused our trust and confidence. "Authorized"! How magic and hypnotic was this word for us who had listened to it reverently so many times in P.Y.'s school. It is strange and dolorous to think that it was the deep-rooted dogmatic concept that a technique could be received only from authorized persons that perpetrated the worst of our illusions.

I accepted the farce of the initiations as an inevitable drawback to success in acquiring the information I was 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 how satisfied I was and make up my mind to abandon all the previous practices for the one I had just received. I ignored any awareness that the new initiation had only added something insignificant to what I already knew or that it was confining me to a "cage" from which I would sooner or later feel an unbearable suffocation and from which I would eventually have to 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.

Some friends returning from India expressed their excitement over such an extraordinary land. But at the end of their tales, disappointment in all the things they had not been able to learn emerged. Often they would meet a boaster who assured them he knew original Kriya Yoga and could initiate them all as long as they kept it a total secret without establishing any contact with other teachers. In this way the boaster could ensure the disciples would not recognize that it was not Kriya Yoga they were being taught. I realized this only when, overcoming their hesitation, I convinced them to confidentially give me a rough description of that technique. Usually it was either P.Y.'s Kriya or nothing more than the mere repetition of a Mantra! What made me feel sad was not so much the great advantage gained by those braggarts (the Gurudakshina [donation] they received meant a real fortune at my friends' expense) but that my friends missed the opportunity of learning Kriya from other sources in other places.

Something different happened to a friend who met B.L., a descendant of Lahiri Mahasaya. This was one of the master's great-grandsons, a man with a great academic background and with a deep knowledge of Kriya, but my friend was not able to learn anything from him. I was taken aback when he told me that in Benares, and probably throughout rest of India, Kriya Yoga was not practiced any longer. I kept enough control not to interrupt or challenge him, but then by posing apparently incidental questions, I tried to understand what had happened. My friend had, as he usually did, began the
discussion with trivialities like asking some information on Indian habits and about an Ashram's address where he planned to go. Then almost at the end of the interview – he must have suddenly remembered he was in Lahiri Mahasaya's house – he asked if any of the disciples of Lahiri were still practicing Kriya, and received a sarcastically sour, negative response of, more or less, "Definitely not; it is not practiced any longer. I dare say it is not practiced throughout the whole Indian peninsula. Rather, you surely must be the only one still practicing it!"

At the end of his narration, my friend was looking at me questioningly. I am still not sure whether he was hoping to convince me or whether he was just absorbed in bitter frustration. I did not pry. In my opinion, he did not realize how foolish his discussion had been with that noble person. A certain blow came for him one month later. He heard that a man from his same town had recently been initiated into Kriya Yoga from the very personage he had met in Benares! He was so irritated he planned to go back to India to raise a protest to that noble man. Unfortunately, he did not have that chance -- a serious disease killed him. In spite of our huge character differences, I will always be grateful for all the things he shared with me concerning his spiritual path.

Another friend remained for some days at an Ashram in the hope he might receive initiation into Kriya Yoga. The leader of the Ashram was away, and my friend received the initiation from one of his disciples. At the conclusion he acquired a large volume summarizing the techniques, and at the end of his trip, visibly content, he showed me the book. The techniques did not differ much from those I already knew, but there were many more details. There was nothing in that book, however, that could remove all my questions; not a single hint about how to obtain Kechari Mudra, nothing on Thokar either. On the contrary, I can remember a very complicated technique based on the visualization of the Chakras as they are described in Tantric texts. Each technique was preceded by a theoretic introduction with quotations from ancient books and an illustration which eliminated any possible doubt. In the last part of the book a precise gradual routine was given. Of course, there was a note guaranteeing that all the mentioned techniques constituted Kriya Yoga as taught by Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya's mythical Guru.

The material was very interesting, and I would have liked to yield to the illusion that my quest had finally ended since those notes contained what I was searching for. I simply had to convince myself that Babaji had made a synthesis of the innumerable spiritual practices of Tantrism to create His Kriya Yoga. It was impudent to think that Thokar could be considered no more than a variation of the Jalandhara Bandha! If the instructions for Kechari Mudra were not there, never mind, it probably just meant that … Kechari was not really so important! With a bit of good will and application, I could have closed the circle. Chance made me listen to the recording of a conference with the author Swami S.S. He discussed how he had found those techniques in some tantric texts which he had translated; he then made an accurate selection from them to form a coherent system of Kriya. How was it possible, then, to have a note saying that those teachings came directly from Babaji? Simple – as is the case with the majority of Indian masters, he had his disciples write the book; they had the brilliant idea of making it more interesting by hinting that the techniques were derived from the mythical Babaji. The teacher, exhibiting another classic Indian habit, never checked the material and was taken aback later on when he became aware of those "supplementary notes". He then tried to defend his disciples' work stating that after all " Babaji's Kriya had Tantric origins."
By now I was feeling quite distant from my initial Kriya organization, but I still respected it. I took part in a review class of Kriya when two female Ministers of that organization again visited our country. During an interval between two conferences, something wonderful and sweet happened. What I had hoped for so ardently in the past and yet had negated in such a brutal way, materialized easily. I had a private talk with one Minister wherein all my doubts were clarified. She was intelligent, kind and talked from direct experience. Regarding Kechari Mudra, she said that it comes with time, especially by persisting in touching the uvula with the tip of the tongue. I also inquired about one of P.Y.'s remarks, namely "The Chakras can be awakened by psycho-physical blows given at their different locations." The Minister clarified its meaning by explaining it referred to the use of a Mantra coupled with breath. No other hypothetical technique other than that which was fully described in the written material was being hinted at. She explained that if a syllable is mentally chanted in a Chakra's location with real intensity, while inhaling or exhaling, it creates a "psycho-physical blow".

This clarification inspired my practice. Returning home, I had the impression of again living the best time of my life. I discovered a way of perfecting the final part of my Kriya routine: mental Pranayama. While projecting in each Chakra the mental chant of the Mantra, I realized I had the power to touch the core of each one with an almost physical intensity. A great sweetness sprang from this procedure; my body seemed to become stiff as a statue and the breathless state made my mind transparent as crystal. I was willing to put an end to my search and prolong this state for the rest of my life but the teacher we had invited from India arrived.

Third Teacher outside the Organization

When the moment came to meet him, I was not in the best of moods. Certain clues had warned me I would have to reckon with a radically new approach. I was afraid this could upset the simple and adequately profitable routine into which I had settled. The magical realm of Omkar, into which my first teacher (S.H.) had immersed me in a passionate way, could be neither left aside nor forgotten. I did not even dream of putting other principles in place as the foundation for my spiritual path, and so I approached my new teacher with the idea of rejecting him if, somehow, he appeared to dissuade me from such a reality.

I met this Kriya teacher in a Yoga center. The essence of his introductory speech was that Kriya was not intended to inflate the mind and the ego toward a hypothetical superior mind, but was a journey beyond the mind, into uncontaminated territory. I realized that Sri Krishnamurti's concept was the source from which my third teacher drew his ideas about the damages caused by the vices of the human mind.

I indulgently observed some inadequacies in his behavior which shocked other students. He was hot-tempered. He exploded with rage whenever he sensed that underneath legitimate questions there was a veiled opposition or an intention to challenge his authority, but I focused all my attention on learning his form of Kriya and ignoring his obvious faults. He clearly communicated to us that the reason for his tour to the West was to reestablish the original teachings, and this
was enough to overcome my initial wariness.

In the following initiation seminar the technical explanation was reasonably clear, even if in some parts were unusually synthetic. For instance, his instructions on Pranayama – formally correct – could be understood only by those who had already been practicing Kriya Yoga for a long time.

After three months of serious practice I achieved Kechari Mudra and realized that my exhaustive search for the original Kriya had come to an end. I followed this teacher for six years. Hereafter I summarize the reasons for my enthusiasm and why I later broke off with him.

Returning home after the seminar of initiation, unexpected internal changes created a very positive period for me, even if it could not be defined as calm. Kechari Mudra brought me a feeling of "dizziness" that lasted some days; my mental faculties seemed to be fogged up, but when all that ceased, my Kriya flew high.

Inspired by this new condition, comparing it to that of the mystics, I realized how difficult it is to live, carrying out daily worldly duties, without being paralyzed by such bliss! Some days I was so happy that when I went out for a walk, if I met someone and stopped to listen to him, no matter what he said, a sudden joy would expand in my chest to the point that I could barely hold back my tears. Looking at the distant mountains or at other details of the landscape, I would try to direct my feeling toward them in order to turn my paralyzing joy into aesthetic rapture; only this could keep back the joy clutching my being, only this could hide it.

I believe it is legitimate to ask why do Kriya organizations not teach such a simple technique as Talabya Kriya, preferring to perpetuate endless political arguments and speculations that continue up to the present day?

I began a systematic study of the works of Sri Krishnamurti, putting my heart and my soul into it. The odd thing was that Krishnaji's thoughts contained the crucial and conclusive boost that would assist me, after many years of controversial but loyal discipleship, to break my dependence on my third teacher. 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 Krishnaji 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 by this author but I was literally overcome by the beauty of The Only Revolution. I walked in the country looking at everything with my senses fully awake but without a single thought in my mind. How difficult it was! But it was not impossible. How right Krishnaji was when he said: "life begins where thought ends." I needed to recreate silence around me, to return to simplicity, to find the time to contemplate Beauty again. Walking
around with this attitude became pure and constant Bliss! Beauty was always around me but I hadn't noticed because I was lost in my mental constructs based on New Age fantasies, or on pseudo spiritual literature which was actually trash. I was not able to see that Beauty for I was lost – as Krishnaji would say – in the "Beauty of my own making." The more I read Krishnaji, the more I felt I had recently crossed through hell. I realized that my obsession for finding the techniques of the "Original Kriya" hadn't emanated from a heightened form of drive toward the Divine One but was actually motivated by a desire no different from the desire for material things. Actually, it was with this poor attitude that I was unknowingly conducting my hectic search. It was a distraction, preventing me from enjoying what I already had, and had impoverished me, draining me of the flow of genuine aspiration toward the Divine.

The effort to create mental silence brought me back to the very beginning of my spiritual path when I had decided to conquer the tendency to daydream and jump from one memory to another during idle moments. At that time I knew perfectly well that unbridled thought was an addiction, a vice giving moments of pleasure but being the primary cause of much misery. It was in order to discipline myself that I studied the art of Pranayama and discovered Kriya Yoga in the first place.

During this period I also read Puran Purush by Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee, based on Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries. During the summer I carried this book with me in the countryside; many times, after reading a part of it, I would gratefully raise my eyes to the distant mountain tops and think, "At long last…!" I looked at the photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya on the front cover. Who knows what state of bliss he was in while being photographed! I saw some horizontal lines on his forehead, his eyebrows raised like in the Shambhavi Mudra, where awareness is set upon the head; a slight tension of his chin seemed to reveal he was practicing Kechari Mudra. During those days his figure, with that blissful smile, was a radiant sun in my heart; he was a symbol of the perfection for which I yearned.

While trying to explore the meaning of Navi Kriya I discovered the importance of studying Taoist Internal Alchemy. 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. The similarity to Kriya Yoga was impressive.

When I had enough confidence to relate my discovery to my third teacher he was annoyed, claiming that Navi Kriya was pure Yoga and was also quoted by Patanjali. Patanjali (Sutra III/29) simply states: "nābhicakre kāyavyūhajñānamḥ" which is translated: "by concentration on the navel, the seeker obtains knowledge about the different organs of the body and their location". In my own small way, I saw that this Sutra had nothing to do with Navi Kriya's aim which is to awaken the Samana current, creating balance between Prana and Apana currents.
It was in that period that I became familiar with the concept of Incremental Routine which I immediately considered heaven-sent. This was undoubtedly the most important instruction I received from this third and last teacher.

An unvarying schedule which consists of a daily practice of the same set of techniques, changing neither their order of practice nor the number of their repetitions, is typical of a kriyaban who practices for many years. In contrast to this scheme, an Incremental Routine consists of using only one technique, whose number of repetitions is gradually increased. This increase happens once a week for a certain number of weeks (usually 36) after a minimal use of the basic techniques like Maha Mudra and Kriya Pranayama. (The accurate details of how different incremental routines are structured are to be found in the third part of the book – Chapter 9.)

This scheme of practice is very rewarding because it leads to mastery of the technique whose number of repetitions is increased. This procedure can be applied to each Kriya technique but especially to the Higher Kriyas. It also has a positive effect on one's personality, releasing it from many inner obstacles as well as rescuing a kriyaban from boredom and loss of enthusiasm. Unfortunately many "meditation counselors" have never been exposed to this. How many times, in fact, when we complained about a period of absolute aridity, did they come up with the necessity of loyalty! How many times were we told outlandish stories about that loyal kriyaban who had his first intense spiritual experience only on his death bed! "A loyal disciple doesn't lament working for years or for an entire life without getting any result!" is the reproach.

There is no doubt that one should continue to practice through seemingly unproductive phases. Instinctively many succeed in rekindling their enthusiasm, but only partly and for a short time, by reading spiritual books, listening to taped spiritual talks, etc.

Practical experience teaches that one reaches a standstill where further progress appears impossible. The idea of practicing a routine daily for one's entire life because of a promise made at the moment of initiation becomes a nightmare. This is the danger point where interest and passion for Kriya is very close to waning completely. Few know how to get out of this unexpected situation.

Incremental routines are the definitive answer. Through this scheme of practice, the essential core of each technique, deprived of any embellishment, appears as something fixed, definite, inevitable – something that could not but be that way. If a certain variation of a Kriya technique is redundant or ineffective, it will fall away by itself. What remains is the simplest logical translation of Lahiri Mahasaya's words into practice.
An Unavoidable Break

In order to explain the definitive crack in our relationship, it is necessary to refer again to the haste and shallowness with which my third Master explained the Kriya techniques.

The introductory lecture to Kriya (which was usually held the evening before initiation) and a big part of the seminar of initiation was devoted to pure philosophical talk which didn't touch the basis of Kriya Yoga but was a summing up of Krishnamurti's strong points, mainly the theme of no-mind, which he improperly called Swadhyaya. There was no part of it that could be criticized, all he said was correct, but many students, being uncomfortable sitting on the floor, with aching back and knees, waited only for the explanation of the techniques, enduring this long talk as a giant bummer.

The traditional offerings (he also required a coconut, which was very difficult to find, forcing the students to desperately look in store after store) lay in disarray before a scruffy altar. Since he usually arrived very late, those who came from other cities pictured all their plans for the return journey falling through and were very anxious.

Despite it being late, people being tired, and some already leaving to catch their train, he loved to linger on Patanjali's Yama and Niyama, taking all the necessary time to ask the audience to take a solemn vow that, from now on, the male students would look at women (except their wife) as mothers and, correspondingly, women would look at men (except their husband) as fathers. The public listened to his vain words with a sigh of ill-concealed nuisance. Everyone gave an assent with a nod, just to stop his ravings. Only then did he switch to a hurried explanation of the basic techniques. One day I decided to time him; the explanation of the fundamental technique of Pranayama was offered in no more than two minutes! He demonstrated Kriya Pranayama by means of an excessively loud vibratory sound. He knew this sound was not correct, but he continued using it so that the last rows of students could hear it, sparing himself the annoyance of getting up and walking among them as Kriya teachers usually do. In any case, he did not bother to say the sound had to be smooth rather than vibrating. I know that many of the students believed this was the "secret" he had brought from India and tried to reproduce the same noise. He carried on that way for years, in spite of his close collaborators' polite

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10 I respect of course Yama-Niyama (the what-is-correct and the what-is-not-correct) but, in my opinion, requiring people who are anxious for learning Kriya Yoga techniques to take an oath to obey them is only a farce and a waste of time. My teacher's request in particular was impossible, an oath that no one would ever respect. Why not put confidence in the transforming power of Kriya? Why think that without oaths, a kriyaban's life would be licentious? The necessity of adopting specific ways of behavior is something that appears spontaneously after having tasted the honey of the spiritual experience. Perhaps in the beginning the best thing is not to cry shame because of a problematic student's behavior. To put it simply, it has been seen that people living a morally questionable life who were successful in Kriya spontaneously came to the so-called virtuous life, while a lot of conformists failed.
complaints.

By this time I accepted everything and I would never have dreamed of complaining. Nevertheless one day I had a visit from the couple who organized the master's tours in Germany. I had become acquainted with those kind friends during the seminars of my first teacher (S.H.) While talking together, they emphasized the necessity of making a particular proposal to our teacher: to organize, at the end of his *Kriya* initiation seminars, a guided group practice which served as a review both for the new initiates and for those who were already practicing. I occupied myself with having this proposal reach the teacher through a friend who went to India. I gave him a letter to deliver to the teacher with my regards and a warm embrace. I forgot the whole matter.

Master's reaction was inexplicable. He interpreted my letter as an oblique criticism. As a response, he crossed me off his list of those who organized his European tours. His decision was transmitted to the Italian coordinator, who did not even inform me. Some months went by. My experience with that teacher probably would have ended that way, had I not gone to welcome him back to Europe. We exchanged hugs as if nothing had happened. He apparently interpreted my presence as a move of repentance. Some hours later when he was resting, his collaborator, with a slight indecipherable hint of embarrassment, explained to me what had happened behind the scenes. I was appalled and disoriented. My first impulse was to abandon everything and sever any connection with him, but in order not to disturb the peace of all the persons who were my friends and who had followed me in this adventure, I decided to pretend nothing had happened, keep on collaborating with him and drop the theme of my letter.

If I had gone I would have disturbed next day's initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*. That was a beautiful moment in which Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* revealed (to those who had the sensibility to perceive it) all its hidden beauty. My role was to serve as translator. I knew well how to perform such a function, reporting every last detail, while the man who would have replaced me was filled with old knowledge and out of habit would have neglected to translate 80% of the talk.

During that initiation, Master demonstrated *Thokar* in a way visibly different from the previous year. When one of the listeners asked him about the reason for the changes, he replied he had not changed anything and argued that in the past seminars a problem of translation might have occurred. His lie was obvious. The questioning *kriyaban* remembered well the head movements he had previously been shown.

Confronted with other minor changes from one year to the next, I had the impression I was cooperating with an archaeologist who was deliberately altering certain findings to justify them to the public within the theoretical framework to which he was accustomed.

Months later during another tour, when we were alone and he was searching for something in a room, I found the courage to drop a hint about a technical issue which had set one *Kriya* school against another. He suddenly turned toward me with hate in his eyes, shouting that my practice was not his business. This, according to what I'm able to remember, was the sole technical
"discourse" I had with him in the entire course of my six years with him.

From that moment onward all was changed. I deliberately began to control myself and made the resolution to always agree with him. I acted so well that one day he asked me to teach Kriya to those who were interested and who couldn't meet him on his tours. I rejoiced at the opportunity because I dreamed I could finally explain Kriya in a complete and comprehensive way. I wanted none of my students to ever feel the pain of seeing a legitimate question go unconsidered.

A year passed by, and I sensed I was doing virtually useless work. I gave Kriya initiation following a mandatory fixed protocol. After introducing the theme of no-mind, I switched to the explanation of the basic techniques. I took leave of those students, counseling a minimal routine but well knowing that most would practice at maximum for ten days, and then leave everything and pursue other esoteric interests. Usually one or two among the most tenacious students made up questions and called me just to carry on the pretense of continuing, from a distance, a relationship with a real person.

When Master came to our country I invited all the new initiates to the seminar where my teacher would be present. Unfortunately, many didn't "survive" such a meeting. Accustomed by me to be able to put forth any questions and to always receive some precise answer, they tried to do the same with the teacher. Many entered a deep crisis after observing his almost total lack of human understanding while simultaneously being kicked around by him.

Too many things were not going in the right direction. I felt that this man, whose every small whim I tried to satisfy as if carrying out a sacred deed, did not love Kriya. Instead, he used it only to create a more beautiful life for himself in the West compared to the wretched one in India he had often described to me.

Another year went by. On a request from friends abroad, I went on behalf of my teacher to teach Kriya Yoga to their group. There I met a very serious student who was already familiar with my teacher's behavior and was taking part in the initiation seminar only as a refresher. He asked me a lot of pertinent questions and I gave him accurate answers. At that point he asked: "From whom have you learned all these details?" He well knew that my teacher was a total disaster from a didactic point of view. He perceived that I had learned many details from other sources. How could I give Kriya initiation using knowledge that did not originate from my teacher? He understood my predicament and was surprised that since I was authorized to teach Kriya, I had never had the chance to talk freely with my teacher about Kriya details! It was logical and fitting for me to settle the matter as soon as possible.

Knowing the irascible disposition of my teacher, I hesitated a long time but there was no way out. Through a friend, I sent him a fax mentioning the matter at hand and prayed him to adjust his schedule so we could discuss it after his arrival during his next tour. He was in Australia, but within one week at the latest I would have received an answer. My subconscious was ready for a disaster, anticipating an event I intuitively knew would come. The most probable situation was that he would become very angry and fly into a rage. If the whole situation slipped out of my hands and, as a result of our break, he stopped
coming to our group, those who loved him would suffer. Few people, in fact, would be able to comprehend the reason for my action. I would be the one who had disturbed a comfortable though imperfect situation. My friends liked him; his annual visit was a powerful stimulus to their effort and motivated them to practice Kriya intensely.

A harsh reply came a few days later. In a disdainful way, he did not address it directly to me but pretended to answer the 'persona' that had materially sent my letter via fax. He wrote that my excessive attachment to the techniques would never let me out of the fences of my mind – I was like St. Thomas, too desirous to touch with my hand and verify the goodness of his teachings. He added that if he satisfied my request, it would only be to gratify my ego.

Reading the term "gratification," I knew he had understood nothing. We should have talked to each other long before it came to this! I wondered why he had never allowed me to express my concerns. I didn't want to contest him, I didn't want to destroy him; the necessity that brought me to write him was to establish once and for all what I was supposed to communicate and what not to communicate to the kriyabans during initiation. Why had he always evaded me?

I decided to behave candidly, as if I had not perceived his tone. I wanted to see what he was capable of. I neither apologized nor answered in a resentful tone. I wrote that since I taught Kriya on his behalf, a mutual discussion about certain Kriya details was necessary. I added that at such an event the other three people in Europe authorized by him to impart Kriya initiation could also be present. I thus made him understand that he would not have wasted his time and breath for only me. I never received an answer, neither then nor ever. A few weeks later I saw on his Internet site that the name of my town had been taken off the list for his visit to Italy. My second letter had brought about a definitive split. The nightmare was over!

I took a one-day vacation and went for a long walk; I roamed a lot, tensely, imagining a hypothetical discussion with him. All of a sudden, I found myself crying with joy. It was too beautiful – I was free. I had been with him too many years, and now all that had really ended!
The break in our relationship bewildered my kriyaban friends who were naturally affectionate toward him. In time they understood the deep-seated reasons for my decision and showed their solidarity. Like a domino effect, other coordinators in Europe who barely tolerated his bad manners took advantage of that episode to break contact with him. They were fed up with the dullness of his philosophical discourses followed by scanty technical explanations which didn't quench their desire for a good understanding of Kriya. When it came to teaching simple and banal things that even kindergarten children could understand, he flaunted a great profusion of words, and concepts were repeated ad nauseam. When anyone in public politely but determinedly asked for a precise explanation of some difficult practical detail, he came out of his hypnotic state and, visibly vexed, tried to humiliate and silence the unfortunate listener.

The following months were lived in a peaceful and relaxed mood, nothing to compare with the restlessness of my previously described years. Having dismissed that mean individual from my life, an enervating situation ended. I no longer had to go here and there to organize Kriya seminars for him; I had been relieved of the constraint of wearing a mask of hypocrisy while responding to those who called me to get information about him.

The question that I would ask myself in the years to come was why I had followed him for so long. Surely I had not sacrificed my dignity for the sake of receiving Kriya information! Actually, all of his techniques had been revealed to me by a friend who was disciple of one of his father's disciples. The reason for my behavior was concern for the diffusion of Kriya here in Europe. I appreciated the fact that he traveled extensively throughout USA and Europe to spread his Kriya without charging a penny for his Initiations (save for a free donation and a fair share of the expense for renting the seminar room). I covered all the necessary expenses to permanently fit out a room in my house where Kriya Initiations seminars could be held during my teacher's visits. My willingness to cooperate with him was always constant in order that he could carry out his task.

When I saw that he continued to teach in his rushed, superficial manner, taking advantage of us as if we were complete idiots, my subconscious began to rebel. I vividly remember a dream in which I was swimming in manure. I must admit that behind my mask of fake delight hid a dry agony. There had been moments in which, thinking of my meek beginning in the practice of Yoga, my heart felt an indefinite nostalgia for the peace of that initial period, a peace which was waiting for nothing more than consistency and honesty on my part to rise again and blossom unimpeded. On more than one occasion I had the impulse to abandon everything and sever any connection with him, but I didn't want to disturb the peace of all the people who were my friends and who had followed me in this adventure. Only when I received his rude and improper answer to my legitimate request for clarification and realized that my internal truth was at stake, I said to myself – Now or never!
After the break with this teacher there were reasons to celebrate but the sense of all the time wasted, of all the silly things which had been carried out thoughtlessly, was weighing me down.

I had not even a faint idea of the destiny of the recently formed Kriya groups, up until then regularly visited by that Kriya teacher.

Some months later the wheel of good fortune seemed to be turning again; there was the possibility of inviting a new Kriya Acharya to Europe. Since he was well qualified in his role, I was on the verge of cooperating in this project and bearing part of its cost. A dear friend went to India to meet him for a private interview.

The strength of a dream

It was winter. One day I went skiing in the nearby mountains with a couple of friends. All went magnificently. During a break in the afternoon, I managed to find time alone. I found myself looking at the mountains that marked the boundaries of the distant horizon in all directions. In less than half an hour the sun would paint them pink – with an intense hue on their eastern side and tinged with blue on the western side. I imagined India to be right behind them, the Himalayas being their continuation. My thought went to all the Kriya enthusiasts who found, as I did, insurmountable obstacles to the understanding of that beloved discipline. All those obstacles seemed to me an absurdity that wore the clothes of a nightmare – I felt an infinite rebellion.

I visualized a book on Kriya explaining every technique in great detail. How often had I wondered what would have happened if Lahiri Mahasaya or one of his disciples had written it! My imagination led me to fantasize about its cover, to skim its few pages – sober, yet rich in content. If this book existed, we would have a reliable manual of Kriya that restrained the many small or large variations made up by various teachers. Perhaps some annotator would try to force its meaning into his own theories. Nay, I was positive that some pseudo-guru would say that the techniques described in it were for beginners only, while there were much more complicated techniques that could only be passed on by an authorized teacher to chosen disciples. Some would swallow the bait, contact the author, and pay good money to be introduced to rubbish that he had assembled either through fancy or borrowed from some esoteric book...

This happens; it’s part of our human nature. However, sincere researchers would surely be able to recognize the strength and self-sufficient intrinsic evidence of the original text.

It is a shame that no one had written that book! For the first time I dared to let my thoughts stray toward what could happen if I wrote it. It would be hard, yet possible, to summarize the totality of my knowledge of Kriya into a book – welding together techniques and theories through a clean, rational vision. The intention was definitely not to celebrate myself or lay the foundations for yet another new school of Kriya. If I were to describe my experiences, it would only be for the purpose of clarifying theoretic and technical explanations. There
would be no more rhetorical claims of legitimacy and riddle-like sentences to confuse readers or have them guess at technical details or create further doubts in them! How beautiful it was to dream of a book which would prove its validity by reproducing Lahiri Mahasaya's thought in the simplest and most logical way, in a complete, harmonious set of techniques!

A book devoted to Kriya, unpretentious but clear, similar for certain aspects to T. Bernard's *Hatha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience* would be a real blessing for scholars and researchers. 11

Such a book as I imagined would not be a threat to any honest Kriya Acharya's activity. Good teachers will always be needed in any field where a skill is to be transmitted. But how could one highlight this to them, without being at odds with the deeply-rooted conditioning of their "cerebral chemistry"? Of course, some teachers of Kriya – those who live from donations for rituals of initiation and who exert power over people thanks to the pledge of secrecy – would consider my book a real threat. Maybe what was virtually eternal for them (living like a lord, surrounded by people who have to meet all their needs with the hope of getting the crumbs of their "secrets") might change, and they would be fearful of that. They would try to destroy its credibility by means of pitiless censorship. I anticipated their scornful comments, uttered while skimming its pages, "It contains only stories that have nothing to do with Babaji's and Lahiri Mahasaya's teachings. It spreads a false teaching!" Other people might not like the book, either because they are taken aback by the barrenness of descriptions of techniques deprived of frills, which doesn't match their expectations, or because their refined sensibility does not manage to catch the "vibration" which characterizes the authenticity of the author's experience.

Only those who love Kriya more than their whims would feel an enormous relief in finding it in an esoteric library. I was already sensing their happiness. Thanks to them, the book would continue to circulate, and who knows how many times it would echo back to the teacher who had decreed its unforgivable flaws. At times he would have to pretend not to notice that a student was browsing through its pages during his seminars, thus missing a part of the conference…

By staring into the blue of the sky above the gilded mountain brims, I saw that bizarre situation as poignantly real. Each part of my dream had developed in the space of a few seconds, and invaded my consciousness as a swollen torrent, as if every part of it had already been rehearsed and cherished innumerable times.

But how could I find the courage to violate the vow of secrecy, coarsely challenging the sacredness of the *Guru*-disciple relationship as the only way to be instructed in Kriya? For sure, an innumerable amount of times I had thought: "Such a rule is the cause of disastrous effects, of excruciating conflicts and

11 This extraordinary handbook, better than all the others, clarifies the teachings contained in the three fundamental texts of Tantrism: *Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita and Shiva Samhita*. Despite having been published many years ago and several texts of *Hatha Yoga* appearing recently, that book is still one of the best. Old, 'dusty' techniques once again became relevant, feasible, comprehensible in front of the eyes of our intuition.
sufferings; they say it is sacred, but it cannot be – it is a human product, the outcome of deliberate petty calculations." I had no doubts that secrecy regarding Kriya procedures was blind dogma, insensitive to the suffering of many researchers. I recalled what happened many, many times when some friends of mine who didn't understand English asked to receive initiation into the Higher Kriyas (such instruction was given only in written form to those who had completed the study of the complete set of lessons which existed only in English, German and Spanish); the answer was always an inflexible no. I had always perceived this as a cruel form of discrimination.

I remembered a couple of cases in which the rigid injunction had been broken by common sense. People who were otherwise faithful to the organization had, under exceptional conditions, broken that rule. For example, one kriyaban explained the dynamics of Kriya Pranayama to his mother who was an invalid but willing and able to practice it. In another case that made me uneasy, a Catholic priest sincerely desired to learn Kriya but could not receive it from the right channels because of an issue of conscience regarding the act of signing the application form of the lessons; he found a kriyaban who explained the technique to him and shared with him his lessons (an action he was strictly forbidden to do).

However, it was clear that writing a book was another thing entirely. This very idea created a painful grip in my breast along with a general sense of uneasiness and unreality. I understood that in order to be at peace with myself, I had to first analyze in depth the concept of Guru.

Certainly the Guru cannot be considered identical to God. Lahiri Mahasaya refused to be worshiped as a God. This is a point that some of his followers seem to have forgotten. Actually he said: "I am not the Guru, I don't maintain a barrier between the true Guru (the Divine) and the disciple". He added he wanted to be considered as "a mirror." In other words, each kriyaban should see 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 produce. When kriyabans realize that their Guru is the personification of what resides potentially inside themselves, of what one day they will become, then that mirror must be "thrown away." 12

Some years previous I was perplexed when representatives of P.Y.'s organization suggested that Guru and God were one and the same reality. A chief of the most important Italian branch of my school had once instructed me: "Have you not realized that P.Y. is the Divine Mother Herself?" Only now I was able to see how extraneous this teaching was to my understanding.

From the idea that Guru and God are the same reality comes the idea that the organization is the materialization of God's will. Now if there were no

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12 Whether one likes it or not, that is exactly what He wrote: thrown away. People who have been raised with the usual dogmas about the Guru-disciple relationship are prevented from fully understanding the impact of these words, otherwise they would face a strong conflict within themselves. To face the truth, it takes courage and an intelligent, discriminating approach to abandon one's own illusions, especially those that are nice and gratifying. Besides courage, it takes also a good brain capable of overcoming the tendency to be easily swayed.
request for secrecy, the Guru-God would belong to everyone, would inevitably become more "human", and therefore a Kriya organization would become just an institution devoted to publishing the works of its founder. Only through the dogma of secrecy could they hope to claim that a kriyaban cannot approach God except through their Guru and their organization. The myth of secrecy allows the myth of the irreplaceable role of the organization to be kept alive.

Other justifications for this myth appear fragile. They claim that secrecy helps "to maintain the purity of the teachings." Now that I knew that some minor but important alterations in the practice of Kriya were supported by these organizations, it would be better to affirm, "to maintain the purity of the modifications!" I might be wrong, but I feel that the unique benefit of secrecy to an individual is to have one's pleasure of possessing something exclusive reach a fever pitch. 

I am aware that one may truly feel that the spiritual vibrations received through formal Initiation bring his practice to a "higher octave." I won't dare to contradict him. But if one day he dismisses the practice, rejecting all the Kriya as an obsession he has overcome, no one will deprive me of the pleasure of asking where all those spiritual vibrations have gone and ... what "octave" is he now attuned to?

Again my thoughts had turned to a minor point. The weird thing was that the word Guru was attributed to a person whom the disciples had not known directly. Students were required to swear their everlasting devotion not only to one person but also to a chain of Masters (no one directly accessible to kriyabans) even if only one of them had to be regarded as the Guru-preceptor. "It is the Guru-preceptor that introduces you to God. There is no other way to achieve Self-realization." Once the students were initiated into a spiritual discipline by the "legitimate channels" (authorized disciples), the departed Guru was said to be real and present in their life. They were taught that their Guru would somehow burn a part of their Karma and protect them evermore; he was a special aid chosen by God Himself even before they began to seek the spiritual path. Looking for a different spiritual teaching amounted to "a hateful rejection of the Divine’s hand, stretched out to offer benediction."

My thoughts began to revolve again around the diffusion of Kriya. It was very difficult to put all the crucial points into a logical order. I tried to think sequentially but either mental and physical fatigue was impairing my reasoning ability or conditioning carved into my brain acted as an entity which had a life of its own. Each time I tried to organize my vision into a well-integrated and coherent whole, for one reason or another it appeared to me as a monstrosity.

One evening, while I practiced Kriya Pranayama with my awareness totally centered in Sahasrara and the tongue in Kechari Mudra, I had the inner vision of

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13 It is strange to remark that only in the world of initiatic magic is a method deprived of its value if it is learned in non-conventional ways. The threat of possible calamities that would happen to whoever infringes the dogma of secrecy clashes with everything we read in the biographies of the saints; it instead perfectly suits those of the esoteric-magic dimension of certain societies – rather, secrecy is essential to their preservation.
three beautiful mountains. The central mountain, the highest, was black; its form reminded me of the point of an arrow made of obsidian. My heart exulted, I was madly enamored of that image. I found myself crying for joy. I remained as calm as possible as I felt a particular strength and pressure which increased its tightening of the whole region of my chest with its grip of beatitude. The image was strong, tremendously vivid in my inner vision. There could be nothing more beautiful; it made me mad with love. I had the impression of having cast a glance toward the misty sources from which my current trend of life originated. It was as if an inner thread linked all my past actions to that image, receiving meaning and significance from it.

That mountain was the symbol of the universal spiritual path. It spoke to my intuition: "A Guru might be very important to your spiritual development, but your personal effort when you remain alone is far more important. In any Guru-disciple relationship there comes a moment when you remain alone and awaken to the realization that your path is a solitary flight between you and your indwelling Self. The Guru-disciple relationship is an illusion – useful and comfortable – appearing real until you are not overcome by what surpasses your mind."

That glaring intuition faded away after a couple of days. One evening after a long walk, subdued by a sudden tiredness I dragged myself back home. Worn out by thoughts, the problem of the Guru-disciple relationship emerged, obscurely, more as a wound than as a theory unfolding its myths. In my room I set the record player on "repeat", playing Beethoven's second movement of the Emperor Concerto... Did anyone, after having haunted all the possible ceremonies of Initiation given by the "legitimate" channels, and being stuffed with all the possible Guru's blessings, ever practice Kriya with the same dignity and courage with which Beethoven challenged his fate?

I turned down the lights and watched the sun set behind the trees on the top of a hill. The shape of a cypress covered a part of that great, blood-red circle. That was the eternal beauty! That was the model by which I would be inspired. I closed my eyes to have a dispassionate, unemotional assessment of the situation. A strange image captured my attention: that of Vivekananda's "investiture" by his Guru Ramakrishna. I read that one day toward the end of his life Ramakrishna entered Samadhi while his disciple Vivekananda was near him. Vivekananda started to feel a strong current before fainting. Having returned to consciousness, his Guru cried and whispered: "O my Naren (Vivekananda), everything I had I gave to you, today. I have become a poor fakir, I do not have anything; with these powers you will do the world an immense good." Later, Ramakrishna explained that the powers he passed onto him could not be used for his own spiritual fulfillment – one had to get to that by himself; on the contrary, they would help him in his mission as a spiritual teacher.

I think my subconscious came up with such a flash as a warning not to yield to the temptation to throw away something valid and precious. Now, if we say that Ramakrishna was Vivekananda's Guru, we are saying something true and unquestionable.

It came to me spontaneously to reread the memorable impressive discourse by
Dostoevsky about the role of elders in Russian monasteries in his *The Brothers Karamazov*:

"What was such an elder? An elder was one who took your soul, your will, into his soul and his will. When you choose an elder, you renounce your own will and yield it to him in complete submission, complete self-abnegation. This novitiate, this terrible school of abnegation, is undertaken voluntarily, in the hope of self-conquest, of self-mastery, in order, after a life of obedience, to attain perfect freedom, that is, from self; to escape the lot of those who have lived their whole life without finding their true selves in themselves." (Translated by Constance Garnett)

Eventually the awareness dawned on me that Vivekananda's story and Dostoevsky's extract depicted situations which were intrinsically different from mine. The organization had made me believe I had a Guru – whereas in fact, I was light years away from having one. While the great examples of Guru-disciple relationship were based on a real physical meeting between two persons, my relationship was purely ideal. There was no other Guru by which I could mirror myself but the mystic fire burning in my heart.

Should I accept the idea of a marked separation of spiritual researchers into two classes? On one side, there are those who have a Guru and follow him humbly; on the other side, those without a Guru, who can follow only their own intuition and reasoning. How many times have I heard the acid remark that those who have no Guru have their Ego as their Guru! Yet, there is not such a sharp division, because not a single researcher exists who is really alone.

Visualize a net: each individual is a junction from which a lot of threads fan out, like the network of our brain's neurons. When an individual takes an action – a significant one of course, like starting on a mystic path and making good progress on it – his action touches the surrounding threads of the net. Serious practitioners are never isolated; they will be helped by others' positive response and, vice-versa, they will be slowed down by their indolence and apathy. In my opinion those who follow the spiritual path carry other people's evolution ahead with them. This net connecting every one of us is the Collective Unconscious. 14 My musings arrived just to that point and there they stopped – for months.

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14 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 Collective Unconscious is "inherited with our cerebral structure" and consists of "the human systems of reacting" to the most intense events that can happen in one's lifetime: the birth of a child, marriage, death of a loved one, serious illness, family crisis, true love, natural disasters, war...
A fruitful shock

The kriyaban friend who had gone to India to meet the teacher we were planning to invite to Europe, returned home and called me. He had had a private interview with him and had good news. Some hours later, we were sitting in my room. I was all ears. He was enthusiastic. They had talked about the deplorable situation of the diffusion of Kriya in the West; the teacher was sorry for that and manifested his willingness to help us. At the end of that meeting, my friend had his Kriya Pranayama checked by that expert.

Much to my surprise this friend asked me to practice Kriya Pranayama in front of him, and then remarked that there was a fault in my practice. I asked him what it was and his reply literally froze me: he could not tell me, since he had promised the teacher he would not reveal anything. He clarified that in relation to our group, he had indeed asked for his teacher's permission to correct eventual mistakes in our practice but the answer had been negative and the teacher swore him to secrecy. Was this teacher – who had manifested the intention to help us – concerned that we would not find any need to invite him to Europe, or visit him, after our mistake had been corrected? Was he really so petty and unkind? I did not put pressure on my friend to disclose other details about his talk with the teacher. I could not and would not enter the privacy of his experience, but how could he just let me and our group go on with an incorrect practice?

The shattering part was to see a friend with whom I had shared everything along my spiritual path, accompanying me in my ventures with all my previous teachers and suffering the same woes, satisfied only with having noticed my mistake. It was as if this justified his trip to India, the cost, and the time he spent on this venture. I didn't start quarreling, but I reacted very badly. I got up and left, leaving the friend alone.

Some days later, contacted by the teacher's secretary, I was further disgusted by how she handled the financial side of the tour. I declined the offer. Actually I was not in the mood to undertake the enormous work of organizing. As for the idea of visiting him, nothing could be farther from my mind. I was certain that he would have required of me the customary oath of secrecy. Once returned to my friends, what would I have had to tell them? "Dear friends, I can tell nothing, you too must go to India." We had reached an absurd situation: if the friends in my group wanted one more crumb of information regarding the Kriya practice, they would have to be put on a plane and packed off to India. Otherwise, they would die without this information.

If the events would take place in this way, each year an innumerable series of charter flights would transport all those interested in Kriya – no matter if old or ill – to a remote Indian village, like a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Fatima! The farce was not even worthy of being considered.

With my thinking faculties almost paralyzed by this sudden turn of events, I cleaned up the compilation of my notes about different Kriya techniques jotted down during different seminars, and passed them on to friends who had already

15 Considering the episode later, I realized what this incorrect detail was: I had not made an abdominal breath in a particularly visible way. I am sure of this fact because it was the only thing my friend was able to see – we did not talk about inner details of the practice.
received initiation but not to all levels of *Kriya*. I purchased a computer and, like a voluntary prisoner, I reduced my social life to an absolute minimum in order to give my all to writing the book.

It was not easy to extract the essential core of *Kriya Yoga* from the huge piles of notes collected during years with different teachers. There was the feeling of working on a difficult puzzle, without a preview of what was to be obtained in the end. I didn't know if, in the final completed picture, four, six or more levels of *Kriya* would result. In fact, I was not entirely sure how to define the levels of *Kriya Yoga*. I wondered if there could be envisaged a one-to-one correspondence between levels and knots (the internal knots or *Grantis* mentioned in Yoga tradition) to be unfastened. Level 1 could be defined as the process of unfastening the knot of the tongue, level 2 could be defined as the process of unfastening another knot, for example that of the heart and so on ... In other words I dwelt upon the idea that each level was meant to unfasten one and only one knot.

After overcoming the uncertainties and difficulties of choosing a definite scheme, I decided to describe the *Kriya* system as made of *First Kriya* with eight techniques, followed by the *Higher Kriyas* – called *Omkar Kriyas* or Kriyas of *Sthir* (static) *Prana* – in six steps.

I wrote all I knew about the *Kriya* techniques. Some variations remain in my shorthand notebooks, ready to be added to the book if and when I receive new information corroborating them and showing their intrinsic value in light of Lahiri Mahasaya's legacy.

I occasionally consulted a few Forums for devotees of *Kriya Yoga*. My desire was to see if other *kriyabans* had similar problems. Many were seeking information about *Kechari Mudra*. If I had had their email addresses, I would have immediately sent them the instructions.

I was struck by the pedantic and conceited tone of some forum users that abused genuine and honest curiosity. With facetious tenderness betraying their low form of concern, they labeled the seekers' desire to deepen their *Kriya* practice as a "dangerous mania." They had the audacity to hush the humble student by counseling him to improve the depth of what he had already received. They spoke in the same tone used by my old "Ministers". Although I was myself feeling aeons distant from that world, objectively speaking that period of my life was not so far away. Perhaps it was because those old fogeys did not generate any feeling of deference in me that I felt so great a temporal distance. Actually they were my yesterday's world. I wondered how they dared to enter (uninvited) a person's life and personal space, about whom they knew nothing, treating them as incompetent and superficial beginners! Was it so difficult to simply answer truthfully: "I don't have that information"?

I remember a discussion with one who claimed he had access to the original *Kriya*. Unfortunately, that person was very secretive and exclusive. He said there were a number of true *Kriya* teachers around but was unwilling to share any names or addresses. I found this stupid. In a rush of anger, I imagined that the petty idea of possessing secret knowledge and not conveying it to others
was the only thing keeping the pieces of his scattered mind together, camouflaging (with a semblance of spiritual advancement) the nothingness that he was from a human point of view. Why should Kriya belong to him? Kriya is a collection of introspective tools taken from different traditions. It is absurd to claim they belong to one person (especially such a nasty one).

The time I employed in writing the book had been much longer than expected. Friends said I would never finish it. I had not felt any urgency, I enjoyed that quiet moment of my life, experiencing the calmness and contentedness that comes to those who devote all their efforts to a single purpose. At long last, the book was ready and was posted on the Web.

After a couple of months there was a reaction from my former third teacher. During a seminar he explained my actions as those of one who wants to make a business of Kriya. He defined me an "intellectual prostitute." My reaction was amusement and satisfaction. But that night I could not sleep. Only then did I begin to realize that my longtime intention had been accomplished and that finally there was a Kriya book readily accessible to everyone.

Was entstanden ist, das muß
vergehen!
Was vergangen, auferstehen!
Hör auf zu beben!
Bereite dich zu leben!

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)
PART II: DEFINITION OF THE KRIYA YOGA TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER 6
THE BASIC TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA

Disclaimer of Responsibility

The techniques described herein are exposed for study purposes only and should serve as a comparison with the works of other researchers. The author hopes this work will inspire intelligent feedback. Any remarks, criticism, corrections, and/or additions are welcome. Before you begin posing all kinds of questions to yourself, read through Part II and Part III of this book so you have a thorough understanding of the matter. You'll find that as you go through it many questions will be answered.

I wish to make clear that this book is not a Kriya Yoga manual! I may write one and face the problem of dividing it into different lessons and giving all the necessary instructions for each level. However, certain delicate techniques e.g. Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama, Thokar, and Yoni Mudra cannot be learned from a manual and require the help of an expert to check their execution. Each person is different so it is not possible to predict what effects an intensive practice might have on a particular individual.

The author disclaims any responsibility in case of negative results, especially if the techniques are practiced without first having their execution checked by an expert. Those who intend to carry on this practice should do so with a due sense of sacredness and awareness of the wealth it can bring to their life. Although you should have the right and the duty to control your own destiny, securing expert counsel or guidance is indispensable.

When you go to an expert, please advise them of physical problems, such as high blood pressure, lung problems, or signs of hyperventilation .... If you have a particular physical problem or handicap, an expert can lead you through a very mild form of Kriya Pranayama and the corresponding Mudras – and if necessary, may recommend that you practice them only mentally.
Localization of the Chakras

The Chakras are subtle astral (ethereal) organs inside the spinal cord; ideal steps on a mystic ladder guiding one safely to the deepest ecstatic experience. Many falsely believe they can apply what they find in Yoga books to Kriya. Unfortunately, such books are usually filled with useless, misguided representations. While wasting time in visualizing it all, a kriyaban runs the risk of losing the real meaning of the Kriya techniques or part of their richness.

Kriya is a natural process leading to beneficial results and it should not be distorted by the power of "creative" visualization, especially if it goes against our body physiology. When certain particular conditions are established – mental silence, relaxation, an intense desire of the soul – the Spiritual Reality manifests in a captivating way and absorbs all one's attention. Then, subtle movements of energy in the body – or a particular centering of the energy in some parts of the body – reveal the essence of the Chakras.

Those who practice Kriya Yoga (kriyabans) begin with the basic technique of Kriya Pranayama and visualize the spine as a hollow tube extending from the base of the spine to the brain. With further practice, they try to locate/feel the seven Chakras.

![Figure 1. The perception of the Chakras](image)

First Five Chakras

The first Chakra, Muladhara, is at the base of the spinal column just above the coccygeal (tailbone) region. The second Chakra, Swadhisthana, is in the sacral region, above and behind the genitals or 2-5cm below the navel/bellybutton i.e. halfway between Muladhara and Manipura. The third Chakra, Manipura, is in the lumbar region, at the same level as the navel/bellybutton. The fourth Chakra, Anahata, is in the dorsal region; its location can be felt by bringing the shoulder blades closer and concentrating on the tense muscles in the area between them or
just below them. The fifth Chakra, Vishuddha, is at the cervical/collarbone/thyroid level where the neck joins the shoulders. Its location can be detected by swaying the head from side to side, keeping the upper chest immobile, and concentrating on the point where you perceive a "cracking" sound.

The physical localization of the Chakras is improved through visualization. The simplest visualization that fosters the dynamics of Kriya Pranayama is having the awareness travel up the spine and perceiving the Chakras as tiny "twinkling lights" illuminating a "hollow tube," which is visualized in place of the spinal cord. When the awareness is brought down, the Chakras are internally perceived as organs distributing energy (coming from infinity above) into the body. Luminous rays depart from their locations, enlivening/energizing that part of the body which is in front of them. To take the trouble to abide by such elementary visualization, avoiding those suggested by New Age or tantric books is the best guarantee of having a beneficial practice.

Chakras are not a physical reality; their true location is in the astral dimension, which is only visible to clairvoyants or when Kriya Pranayama takes, so to say, the "inward route" to the inner sounds emanating from each Chakra. If the mind is sufficiently calm e.g. during a long, deep session of Kriya Pranayama, you will be able to listen to those astral sounds and locate each Chakra astrally.

There are different levels of development of this ability: Kechari Mudra brings about a great internalization process which fosters the experience especially when the "wind" of the breath subsides.

Astrally locating Chakras is connected to the ability of traveling within the spinal tunnel, which in turn is the basis for realizing that the five Chakras are five different states of consciousness.

In Kriya tradition, the Chakras are related to the five Tattwas: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Offering each Tattwa individually to the light of the "spiritual eye" gathering and intensifying in the region between the eyebrows is the highest action ever conceived to dispel the last shell of illusion. However, I would discourage kriyabans from being maniacally precise about the location of the Chakras: the practice of the different levels of Kriya Yoga will refine their perception.

Ajna (Medulla Oblongata, Bhrumadhya, Kutastha)

The sixth Chakra, Ajna, according to tradition, is in the central part of the head. Some identify it with the hypophysis (pituitary) gland, others with the pineal gland, and others with the third ventricle of the brain. It is preferable to abide by the following two-step procedure.

1. First detect the seat of the Medulla oblongata (on top of the spinal cord). Raise your chin tensing the muscles of the neck at the base of the occipital bone; concentrate on the small hollow under the back of the head and then ideally move inside a couple of centimeters; while contracting the neck muscles, swing your head sideways (a few centimeters left and right); relax the muscles of the neck and concentrate on the Medulla oblongata for one minute: you will
notice that any restlessness disappears. Tradition recommends visualizing the Medulla oblongata as shaped like the back of a small turtle.

2. Remaining centered in the Medulla oblongata, converge your inner gaze on Bhrumadhya, the point between the eyebrows, and observe the internal light in that region. Your perception may be vague but if you continue looking internally and remain satisfied with whatever luminous perception comes, the light will intensify. Straight back and about 8 centimeters from where the light appears is the sixth Chakra, Ajna. Meditating with your awareness focused on it will prepare you for the experience of Kutastha (aka third eye or spiritual eye): a luminous point in the middle of an infinite spherical radiance. In this region, one day, you will experience the radiance of a million suns having the coolness of a million moons.

Ajna Chakra is the royal entrance to the Divine Consciousness, which is immanent in our physical universe. You will experience the entire universe as your own body. This experience is also called Kutastha Chaitanya, Christ consciousness, or Krishna consciousness.

Sahasrara (Bindu, Fontanelle)

According to tradition, the seventh Chakra, Sahasrara, is at the top of the head. It is visualized as a horizontal disk about 12 centimeters in diameter, lying immediately beneath the upper part of the cranium. In phase 3 of Kriya Pranayama, when we raise our awareness from the sixth to the seventh Chakra, this visualization is enough to get ecstatic absorption.

Bindu is located in the occipital region, where the hairline twists in a kind of vortex (where Hindus with shaved heads wear a lock of hair). During the first part of Kriya Pranayama, the consciousness touches Bindu briefly at the end of each inhalation. In the higher phases of Kriya Pranayama, when our awareness finds tranquility in Bindu, we become aware of the bregma (anterior fontanelle during infancy) located on the top of the skull at the junction of the coronal and sagittal sutures, where the frontal bone and parietal bones meet. It is recommended not to override the previous stage of localization of the sixth Chakra (Ajna). Do not practice concentration on the bregma on your own initiative except when explicitly required to by your teacher.

There is always room for improvement in Kriya Yoga. The most reliable Kriya schools are careful about using methods whose effects are difficult to sustain and therefore teach a gradual approach to concentration on Sahasrara. They counsel placing the awareness in Bindu and from there becoming aware of bregma.
Position for Meditation

One should sit facing east. According to Patanjali, the yogi's posture (Asana) must be steady and pleasant.

**Half-lotus:** Most kriyabans are relaxed in this sitting position, which has been used since time immemorial for meditation, because it’s comfortable and easily managed. The key is to maintain an erect spine by sitting on the edge of a thick cushion so the buttocks are slightly raised. Sit cross-legged with the knees resting on the floor. Bring the left foot toward the body so its sole is resting against the inside of the right thigh. Draw the heel of the left foot in toward the groin as much as possible. The right leg is bent at the knee and the right foot is comfortably placed over the left thigh or calf or both. Let the right knee drop as far as possible toward the floor. The shoulders are in a natural position. The head, neck, chest, and spine are in a straight line as if they were linked. When the legs get tired, reverse them to prolong the position.

The best hand position is with fingers interlocked as in the well-known photo of Lahiri Mahasaya. This balances the energy from the right hand to the left and vice versa. The hand position for meditation and spinal breathing is the same because you move from spinal breathing to meditation without interruption. Usually you don't even realize it.

For certain health or physical conditions, it may be beneficial to practice the half lotus on an armless chair provided it is large enough. In this way, one leg at a time can be lowered and the knee joint relaxed!

**Siddhasana:** (Perfect Pose) is of medium difficulty: the sole of the left foot is placed against the right thigh while the heel presses on the perineum. The right heel is against the pubic bone. This leg position combined with Kechari Mudra closes the pranic circuit and makes Kriya Pranayama easy and beneficial. It is said the position helps one to become aware of the movement of Prana.

**Padmasana:** (lotus position) a difficult, uncomfortable position; 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. It is explained that when this Asana is combined with Kechari and Shambhavi Mudra, it results in an energetic condition that produces the experience of the internal light coming from each Chakra. It helps keep the body from bending or falling over as it tends to do when deep Pratyahara is practiced. Padmasana is uncomfortable for a beginner because the knees and the ankles become extremely painful. I would not advise anyone to perform this difficult posture; some yogis have had to have knee cartilage removed after years of forcing themselves into the Padmasana.
Eight Basic Techniques of Kriya Yoga

The following techniques are usually given during the first initiation into Kriya Yoga: Talabya Kriya, Om Japa (in the Chakras), Kriya Pranayama (often denoted simply by Pranayama) in three parts, Navi Kriya, Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama with short breath, mental Pranayama and Yoni Mudra.  

We will draw up a theoretical outline of the fours phases of Kriya Yoga for students who appreciate having a complete picture. (For a more in-depth discussion, see chapter 7.)

Phase 1: Jihuah (Jiwha) Granthi Bheda – unfastening the knot of the tongue
Phase 2: Hridaya Granthi Bheda – Piercing the heart knot
Phase 3: Muladhara Granthi Bheda – Piercing the knot at the base of the spine
Phase 4: Raising awareness and energy up the Sushumna to Kutastha and stabilize it there.

Talabya Kriya, Kriya Pranayama and Kechari Mudra embody the first phase of Kriya. Focusing upon the internal sounds (especially the sound of a bell) without cease, during and after Kriya Pranayama, heralds the starting of the second phase of Kriya. The third phase of Kriya is extremely delicate: Kriya Pranayama slowly and safely wears out the Muladhara knot while Navi Kriya and Maha Mudra complete this action. The event that embodies the fourth phase of Kriya is the upward rising of Kundalini finding stability in Kutastha. Kriya Pranayama with short breath, mental Pranayama, and Yoni Mudra are the tools to awaken Kundalini energy and patiently guide it through the Chakras up to Kutastha.

(The second, third and fourth phases are helped by the practice of the so called Higher Kriyas which will be described in the next chapter.)

1. Talabya Kriya
Start with the tongue in a relaxed position with the tip lightly touching the back of the upper teeth. Press the body of the tongue against the upper palate to create a suction cup effect. Many practice Talabya Kriya incorrectly by instinctively turning their tongue backwards (or keeping it vertical) but this cancels the whole effect. It is important to have the tongue tip touching the back of the upper teeth before pressing its body against the upper palate.

While pressing the tongue against the upper palate (roof of the mouth), drop/lower the bottom jaw until you clearly feel the stretch in the lingual frenulum (the small fold of tissue under the tongue that attaches it to the base of

1 To check if refinements have been added to the description of the techniques, visit www.kriyayogainfo.net at least once a year.
the mouth) (Figure 2). Release the tongue with a clicking sound then stick it out of the mouth and point it toward the chin. At the beginning, do not exceed 10 repetitions a day to avoid straining the frenulum. Eventually, you want to do 50 repetitions in about 2 minutes (110-120 seconds).

After some months of practicing Talabya Kriya regularly, it should be possible to insert the tongue into the nasal pharynx cavity (Kechari Mudra). Kechari Mudra (Figure 3) is described in detail in the next chapter.

Even after mastering Kechari Mudra, Talabya Kriya should continue to be practiced because it creates a perceivable relaxing effect on the thinking process. It is not known why stretching the frenulum reduces thought production, however, anyone practicing the technique can readily verify this.

Figure 2. Talabya Kriya: pressing the body of the tongue against the upper palate to create a suction cup effect

Note
In Hatha Yoga books there are different suggestions for lengthening the Fraenulum. One which is well known one is wrapping a piece of cloth around the tongue and, with the help of the hands, gently pulling (relaxing and repeating different times) the cloth both horizontally and also up, toward the tip of the nose. Lahiri Mahasaya was absolutely against cutting the Fraenulum to obtain faster and easier results.

2. Om Japa in the Chakras
Starting with the first Chakra Muladhara, chant the Mantra "Om" while concentrating on it; then do the same with the second Chakra and so on up to the fifth Chakra (Vishuddha) and then with Bindu. During the ascent, do your best to intuitively touch the inner core of each Chakra. The descent begins by chanting "Om" in the Medulla, then in the cervical Chakra and so on, all the way down to the first Chakra. During this descent of awareness, try to perceive the subtle radiation of each Chakra.

One ascent (Chakras 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Bindu) and one descent (Medulla, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) represent one cycle that lasts about 30 seconds. Do 6 to 12 cycles. The Om Mantra may be chanted aloud during the first three cycles.
The correct pronunciation for "Om" is like the "ong" in "song" but drawn out. It must not be pronounced like the "om" in Tom e.g. "ahm." In this technique, "Om" is a pure prolonged vowel sound pronounced like the alphabet letter "o." The "m" is silent and the "o" sound is lengthened. At the end, the mouth is not completely closed – thus creating the nasal sound "ng". When pronouncing Indian Mantras, like Om nama bhagavate … or Om namah Shivaya …, the consonant "m" in "Om" is heard. OM should be chanted as low as possible. Some say the correct note is B (Si) before Middle C (Do).

In the remaining cycles breathe through the nose and chant Om mentally. Do not pay any attention to the breath other than to breathe naturally. This exercise, performed with concentration, generates the best form of breathing during the next fundamental technique of Kriya Pranayama.

A cycle of 30 seconds allows about 2.5 seconds for each OM but this is to make the action dynamic and avoid boredom for kriyabans who tend to skip chanting OM in each Chakra. Naturally, a longer cycle e.g. 60 seconds and a longer OM e.g. 5 seconds is better providing one’s concentration is deep /focused enough.

3. Kriya Pranayama (Spinal Breathing)

Kriya Pranayama is the most important technique. It acts directly on the energy (Prana) present in the body. Kriya Acharyas use different didactic strategies to introduce it. Although I explain its key details, it is not easy to show how they are integrated into a harmonious whole.

First Part of Kriya Pranayama: Mixing Prana and Apana

Kechari Mudra is applied. For those who can’t do it, turn the tongue tip back to touch the middle of the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft. Keep mouth and eyes closed. The eyes are relaxed and focused on the region between the eyebrows BUT the awareness is in the Medulla oblongata.

One Kriya breath entails:

1. A deep inhalation through the nose that produces an unvoiced sound (like Ujjayi Pranayama) in the throat, which acts like a hydraulic pump to raise the energy (Prana) from the base of the spinal column up to the Medulla oblongata and then up to Bindu (occipital region).

2. A short pause of 2-3 seconds where the movement of the air is suspended. This helps suspend the activity of the mind as well: a state of stability appears.

3. An unhurried exhalation of the same length as the inhalation that accompanies the movement of the energy back to the base of the spinal column. During the last part of the exhalation, there is a clear perception of the navel moving in toward the spine. By refining this experience and the awareness of the navel moving inward, one feels the action of the diaphragm muscles and becomes conscious of increasing heat in the navel. This heat seems to rise from the lower
part of the abdomen.

4. Another 2-3-second pause. This pause is intimately lived as a moment of comfortable peace. The dynamic mind becomes static and is appeased.

Reference literature says perfect Kriya Pranayama is 80 breaths per hour – about 45 seconds per breath. Kriyabans can only reach this rhythm during long sessions. Whereas an advanced kriyaban would complete 12 breaths in around 9 minutes, beginners should set a rhythm of 18-20 seconds per Kriya breath (including the pauses) and complete 12 breaths in a natural and unhurried way in about 4-5 minutes.

Remarks
The path taken by the energy gradually reveals itself during practice. No difficult visualization is required. You are centered in the Medulla oblongata and your inner gaze is toward Bhramadhya, between the eyebrows. The awareness rises from the Muladhara along the spinal column toward the second Chakra, the third, the fourth, the fifth Chakra, the Medulla oblongata and, if possible, up to Bindu. During the pause, the radiance of Kutastha appears as a blurred light or glow permeating the frontal part of the brain and that of Sahasrara as a slight sensation of crepuscular light permeating the upper part of the head. In this initial phase of Kriya Pranayama, the energy cannot reach either the region between the eyebrows nor Sahasrara; this will happen in higher stages.

Breathing during Kriya Pranayama is not free breathing but restricted breathing that creates a clearly heard sound in the throat. This sound while inhaling is like a quiet schhh /ʃ/. The sound is similar to the amplified background noise of a loudspeaker; there is only a slight hiss during exhalation.

There are many poor Internet video clips of Ujjayi Pranayama with yogis who make a horrible sound because they are using /vibrating their vocal chords: this is not correct in Kriya Pranayama. Fortunately, there are also good explanations of Ujjayi Pranayama that I signal in my web site (Kriya Yoga video downloads page).

To make certain the sound is correct, concentrate only on increasing the friction of the air flowing through your throat. A muffled sound will originate. Increase its frequency. If the surroundings are perfectly still, a person could hear it within a 4-5 meter radius – by no means outside it. However, do not expect sound perfection yet. When Kechari Mudra is eventually done correctly, the exhaling sound will be flute-like: Sheee Sheee /ʃiː/. The meaning and the implications of this sound are discussed in the next chapter.

The inhaling air is felt cool whereas the exhaling air is felt moderately warm; as a consequence the energy is felt cool when rising and slightly warm when descending.
During inhalation, the abdomen expands and during exhalation the abdomen is
drawn in. The breathing is mainly abdominal; during inhalation, the upper part of
the lungs is filled two thirds full. Do NOT raise the rib cage or the shoulders.

As for the value of the pauses, the more you became aware of these states of
stability, the deeper your practice becomes.

During the first breaths of Kriya Pranayama, do not chant Om or another
Mantra in any Chakra. Do not disturb the employment of a great mental
intensity during the inhalation to obtain the raising of the energy.

Second Part of Kriya Pranayama: Om Japa in each Chakra
During the first part, the awareness was in Medulla oblongata. In the second
part, the awareness expands into the entire occipital region up to Bindu. The
fixed purpose is to succeed in listening to the internal sounds (variations of
Omkar sound) without plugging our ears.

During inhalation, Om is mentally chanted (or more accurately "mentally
placed") in each of the first five Chakras and at the point between the eyebrows.
During exhalation, Om is mentally chanted in the Medulla, in each Chakra as
you return to Muladhara.

While coming down, each Chakra is gently "touched" mentally from the
back. The energy is thus visualized flowing down along the back of the spinal
column. What is essential is a continuous will to listen internally. Focus all your
attention on subtle sounds that come from within rather than the audible ones
from outside. Awareness of inner sounds must happen, sooner or later. Your
listening skills will improve and you will become more sensitive. Each chanting
of the syllable Om should be accompanied by an unswerving will to track down
the echo of that vibration you are internally producing. Repeat the procedure at
least 24 times.

The internal sounds reveal the activity of the Chakras. They capture a kriyaban's
awareness and lead it to greater depths without any danger of it getting lost. They
are not physical sounds; they have nothing to do with the typical Kriya
Pranayama sound produced by the air that passes down the back of the throat
into the trachea and vice versa. These sounds appear in different forms:
bumblebee, flute, harp, drum, hum like an electrical transformer, bell....

The event of perceiving them is not produced by the intensity of a unique
moment of deep concentration but by the accumulation of effort manifested
during daily sessions of Kriya (effort is the meticulous attention to any internal
sound, no matter how faint). Those who are not able to hear any internal sounds
should not conclude something is wrong. Maybe they have made an enormous
effort whose fruits will be enjoyed during the next practice. A sign one is heading
in the right direction is a sense of mild pressure, like a sensation of liquid peace
above or around the head often accompanied by a certain humming. It serves no
purpose wondering if this is the real Om because it is probably just a signal that
the real experience is approaching. Patience and constancy are of prime importance. One day, one will awaken to the realization that one is actually hearing a sound of "running water".

*Om* is similar to the sound of running water or to waves breaking over cliffs. The only task of a *kriyaban* is to be absorbed in the comforting sound of *Omkar*. Lahiri Mahasaya described it as a sound "produced by a lot of people continually striking the disk of a bell and as continuous as oil flowing out of a container".

**Third Part of Kriya Pranayama: move the awareness into the upper part of the head**

_Phase 3_ can be approached only when you have reached a daily number of 48 *Kriya* breaths or possibly when *Kechari Mudra* is achieved. Always begin your practice with the first part of *Kriya Pranayama* for at least 12 breaths, and then skip to the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* until you have completed 48 *Kriya* breaths. (The second part of *Kriya Pranayama* is the exercise described after the first part of *Kriya Pranayama* in which *Om* is chanted mentally in each *Chakra* while moving the current up and down in the spine.)

*Shambhavi Mudra* is usually defined as the act of concentrating on *Bhrumadhya*, the space between the eyebrows, bringing the two eyebrows toward the center with a slight wrinkling of the forehead.

A higher form of *Shambhavi Mudra* involves closed or half-closed eyelids, the eyes looking upward as much as possible as if looking at the ceiling but without any head movement. The light tension perceived in the muscles of the eyeballs gradually disappears and the position can be maintained rather easily. A bystander would observe the white of the sclera under the iris because very often the inferior eyelids relax. (Lahiri Mahasaya in his well-known portrait is showing this *Mudra.* ) Throughout this form of *Shambhavi Mudra*, all one's being is at the top of the head. Continue practicing the instructions for the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* (chanting of *Om* in the prescribed places) save the center of awareness which is now in the upper part of the head. Continue until you have completed the prearranged number of repetitions (60, 72, and so on).

This practice is a real jewel and represents the quintessence of beauty; while experiencing it, time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task e.g. 108 or 144 repetitions – turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest. You will notice the breath is rather slow. You will enjoy the beautiful feeling of fresh air that seems to come up through the spine and pierce each *Chakra*, and of the warm exhaled air permeating each zone of the body from top to bottom. You will actually perceive this and it is not a figment of your imagination! Your attitude is apparently passive, in actual fact sensitive, and therefore active in an intelligent way.

The sound of the breath is smooth and unbroken like the continuous pouring of
oil from a bottle. The practice reaches its maximum power and seems to have a life of its own. You will eventually have the impression of crossing a mental state, which is like falling asleep, then suddenly returning to full awareness and realizing you are basking in a spiritual light. It's like a plane emerging from clouds into a clear transparent sky.

4. Navi Kriya
Using the same method described in Om Japa and without attempting to control the breath, one's awareness slowly moves up along the spinal column. The Mantra Om is placed in the first five Chakras, in the Bindu, and in the point between the eyebrows. The chin is then tilted down toward the throat cavity. The hands are joined with the fingers interlocked, palms face downward, and the pads of both thumbs are touching. Om is chanted 75 times (a rough estimate is fine) in the navel (umbilicus) either aloud or mentally. The thumbs lightly press the navel for each Om.

While doing this technique, a calm energy is perceived gathering in the lower-middle part of the abdomen (the Prana current there is called Samana). The chin is then raised without straining but the muscles at the back of the neck are contracted. The concentration shifts first to the Bindu and then to the third Chakra (moving downward in a straight line, outside the body). The hands are kept behind the back and joined by interlocking the fingers and the palms face upward with the pads of both thumbs touching. Om is chanted -- aloud or mentally -- approximately 25 times in the third Chakra. For every Om, the thumbs apply a light pressure to the lumbar vertebrae. By no means should the breath be synchronized with the chanting of Om. The chin's normal position is then resumed and Om is mentally chanted in reverse order from the point between the eyebrows to Muladhara. This is one Navi Kriya (it lasts between 140-160 seconds). A kriyaban does 4 repetitions of Navi Kriya.

5. Maha Mudra
One starts by bending the left leg under the body so the left heel is as near as possible to the perineum (between the scrotum and anus for males and between the anus and cervical opening for females) with the right leg fully extended in front. Ideally, but not necessarily, you want the left heel exerting pressure on the perineum. This pressure is the best means of stimulating one's awareness of the Muladhara Chakra in the coccygeal region at the root of the spine. Through a deep inhalation, the energy is brought up the cerebrospinal tube to the center of the head (Ajna Chakra). This is a very simple and easily acquired sensation so there is no need to complicate it.

Holding the breath, stretch forward (in a relaxed way) and interlock hands so you can grasp your big toe. In this outstretched position, the chin is pressed naturally against the chest. Continue holding the breath and mentally chant Om in the region between the eyebrows 6-12 times. While holding the breath, return to the starting position and with a long exhalation, visualize sending the warm energy down to the base of the spinal column. Repeat the entire procedure with the leg positions reversed; right heel near the perineum and the left leg...
outstretched. Repeat the procedure a 3rd time with both legs outstretched to complete one cycle of Maha Mudra. Repeat this three-movement cycle (requiring about 60-80 seconds) two more times for a total of 9 movements.

Some schools suggest drawing the knee (or both knees, before the third movement) against the body so the thigh is as close to the chest as possible during inhalation. The interlocked fingers are placed around the knee to exert pressure on it. This helps to keep the back straight and make the inner sound of the Anahata Chakra audible.

Maha Mudra must be comfortable and it must not hurt! Initially, most kriyabans will not be able to do the forward stretch without risking back or knee injury. To avoid pain or injury, keep the outstretched leg bent at the knee until the position feels comfortable. While holding the breath in the outstretched position, contract the anal and the abdominal muscles and draw the abdominal muscles in slightly so the navel moves inward toward the lumbar center.

As we have seen, the big toe is grasped while one is in the outstretched position. Some schools insist on this detail and explain that by repeating this action on each leg, the balance between the two channels Ida and Pingala is improved.

A variation is to squeeze the toenail of the big toe with the thumb of the right hand; the index and middle fingers are behind it and the left hand cups the sole of the foot. When the procedure is repeated with both legs outstretched, both toes are grasped with the interlocked hands. (A variation is that the thumbs of each hand press the respective toenails and the index and middle fingers hold the toe from behind).

Maha Mudra incorporates all the three Bandhas. When applied simultaneously with the body bent forward and without excessive contraction, it helps one to be aware of both ends of Sushumna and produces the feeling of an energetic current moving up the spine. In due course, one will be able to perceive the whole Sushumna Nadi as a radiant channel.

6. Kriya Pranayama with Short Breath

Pranayama with short breath is based upon letting the breath move freely, observing it, being conscious of each movement – pauses included – and coordinating it with the movement of energy from the Muladhara (first Chakra) to every Chakra and vice versa. This fact invites the energy to move freely upwards through Sushumna and downwards into each part of the body. This action completes that of Maha Mudra and prepares you for Yoni Mudra.

After having drawn three deep breaths, each of them ending with a fast and complete an exhalation like a sigh, your breath will be very calm. If you place your finger under both nostrils, the ingoing or outgoing breath will barely touch your finger. This is the indication that the breath is internalized as it should be in Kriya Yoga. Practice the following exercise and repeat the test at the end. You

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2 The definition of Bandhas is given in Chapter 1
will feel a striking difference.

Focus your attention on the **Muladhara Chakra**. When it feels natural to inhale, inhale only what is necessary, as quickly as per instinct (about one second), then pause an instant in the second **Chakra**. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale, and pause in **Muladhara**. When it feels natural to inhale, inhale, and pause in the third **Chakra**. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale, and pause in **Muladhara**.

Continue like that, repeating the procedure between **Muladhara** and the fourth **Chakra**, **Muladhara** and the fifth **Chakra** (then **Muladhara Bindu**, **Muladhara Medulla**, **Muladhara** fifth, **Muladhara** fourth, **Muladhara** third and **Muladhara second Chakra**.) One cycle comprises 10 short breaths. Repeat the cycle until you perceive your breath is very calm – almost imperceptible.

### 7. Mental Pranayama

Forget about your breath. Move your awareness up and down the spine pausing in each spinal center. Start with the first, move to the second, third, and so on. After ascending to the **Bindu**, begin the descent, pausing in **Medulla**, fifth **Chakra**, fourth **Chakra**, and so on. **Om** may be mentally chanted in each **Chakra**. Sometimes, it is more convenient to simply center your attention for 10-20 seconds on each **Chakra**.

The **Chakras** are like knots that can be untied if "touched" by one's concentration; the secret lies in maintaining the awareness in each of them until a sensation of sweetness is felt – as if the **Chakra** were "melting". Besides a melting sensation, one may also perceive the subtle radiation of each **Chakra** in the body. This is a matter of pure awareness; a natural feeling leading to the realization that the **Chakras** are sustaining each part of the body's vitality. Sometimes, a light is perceived in the upper part of the head and a **kriyaban** is able to keep the awareness there a long time without feeling any fatigue.

The process of rising and descending through the **Chakras** is carried on as long as it is comfortable. (One complete round lasts about 2-4 minutes.) This is the most pleasing part of the routine. **Kriyabans** do not feel they are practicing a technique but enjoying a few moments of soothing relaxation. This is the moment when a deep mental silence settles in the consciousness and in the body. Tranquility, "**Sthir Tattwa**" (calm, static **Prana**) is experienced in the seventh **Chakra**. Lahiri Mahasaya called this state **Paravastha** or **Kriyar Paravastha** - "the state that comes after the action of **Kriya**". If, through sheer willpower, such a state were brought to awareness as often as possible amid one's daily activities, the results would be extraordinary.

**Om Japa vs mental Pranayama**

There is a subtle difference between **Om Japa** and **mental Pranayama**. **Om Japa** before **Kriya Pranayama** is designed to stimulate each **Chakra**. One pauses only a short time in each one to vibrate the **Om Mantra**.

During **mental Pranayama**, one is more passive, more willing to perceive than to stimulate and the pauses are much longer. When the awareness stays for at least
half minute upon each Chakra, and the kriyaban is relaxed there comes the perception of a pleasurable sweet sensation and the breath slows down noticeably. Some inner sounds as well as hues of light pouring forth from their locations deepen the contact with the Omkar dimension. One should intentionally wait until some pleasing effect is produced and then move to the next Chakra.

Some Yoga schools advise visualizing the Chakra's specific color (red, orange, yellow... like the sequence of the rainbow colors). They may be also visualized as lotuses, each one of which has a particular number of petals with a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet on each petal. A kriyaban does not need any of this in order to perceive the reality of the Chakras. In time, a kriyaban gains the ability to single out the different rates of vibration of each Chakra, which is crucial in reaching the final goal of Kriya.

8. Yoni Mudra
At night, before going to bed, begin your practice by calming the whole psychophysical system with a short Kriya routine (how to organize a short Kriya routine is explained in the next paragraph).

To practice Yoni Mudra, raise the energy with a deep inhalation into the central part of the head. If you are able to do Kechari Mudra, press the tongue firmly on the highest point inside the nasal pharynx – otherwise leave the tongue in its normal relaxed position. Close every "opening" in the head – the ears with the thumbs, the eyelids with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers, the lips with the ring and the little fingers – so all the energy "lights up" the region between the eyebrows.

Throughout the practice, both elbows are parallel to the floor and pointing out to the side. Do not let them drop, prop them up somehow, if necessary. During this special light-witnessing act, the index fingers must not put any pressure on the eyes – this would be harmful and serve no purpose! If a kriyaban is distracted by the pressure of the index fingers on the eyelids, he draws the eyelids down with the index fingers and applies pressure on the corners of the eyes – on the upper cheekbones.

By holding the breath and mentally repeating Om several times, observe the light of the "spiritual eye" that is gathering and intensifying. The light condenses into a golden ring. Hold the breath as long as is comfortable and until the necessity to breathe out distracts your attention. Exhale and bring the awareness down along the spine. Yoni Mudra is usually performed only once.

Inhaling deeply and holding the breath usually causes discomfort after a few seconds. To reduce the discomfort and make it possible to deepen the practice, practice the following:

At the end of a moderate inhalation (not a typical Kriya Pranayama one but a shorter one), a kriyaban fully plugs all the head openings except the nostrils, exhales a very small quantity of air, then immediately closes the nostrils. The thoracic muscles are to be relaxed as if one intended to begin a new
inhaling: this will give the sensation that the breath has become quiet in the area between the throat and the point between the eyebrows. In this situation, concentration on the point between the eyebrows and the repetition of Om several times can be enjoyed to its fullest.

Traditional instruction advises increasing Om repetitions by one per day up to a maximum of 200. Of course, forcing is always to be avoided.

First suggestions about the routine

The ideal time for practicing the main Kriya routine
Enjoy the main routine either before breakfast or before lunch at noon or late afternoon before dinner, or at night at least 2-3 hours after eating.

The complete routine, which we have already implicitly given by numbering the techniques from 1 to 8, does not work for everyone. Many utilize Maha Mudra and Navi Kriya as preliminary techniques and avoid techniques requiring movement after Kriya Pranayama. In this way, they find that Kriya Pranayama with short breath is not necessary. Their routine is very simple and extremely enjoyable: Talabya Kriya ➔ Maha Mudra ➔ Navi Kriya ➔ Kriya Pranayama ➔ Mental Pranayama. A good choice is to lengthen the practice of mental Pranayama to occupy 1/3 of the whole time.

About a short routine at night ending with Yoni Mudra
If the main routine is practiced at night, you can simply add Yoni Mudra at the end. Otherwise, during the main routine avoid Yoni Mudra, while at night create special conditions for enjoying its full power. At night, you can start your practice with Maha Mudra, then Pranayama with short breath, then Yoni Mudra. Then remain concentrated as long as possible at the point between the eyebrows trying to perceive the light in Kutastha. Yoni Mudra generates such a concentration of energy at the point between the eyebrows that the quality of the ensuing sleep changes for the better. In other words, after crossing the subconscious layers, your awareness may succeed in reaching the so-called "super conscious" state.

Note
There are some schools that state that Yoni Mudra can be practiced anytime. They concede however that Yoni Mudra is best done in the deep calmness of the night, when a deep silence is all around and one is totally and perfectly relaxed.

About Kriya Pranayama in three parts
In the beginning, only the first and the second part of Kriya Pranayama are practiced: usually 12-24 times each. Occasionally e.g. during a longer meditation once in a week, you can add more repetitions; in that case, it is fine to experience the third part of Kriya Pranayama also.
Warning
Do not practice only the third part of Kriya Pranayama: a routine totally based on a strong concentration on the Sahasrara is not appropriate for beginning or medium level students. Developing a strong magnet in Sahasrara through the third part of Kriya Pranayama is the most powerful way of stimulating the Kundalini awakening. This implies bringing up a lot of information from the subconscious mind to the surface. (See also the discussion in Chapter 9.) You can experience an entire range of negative moods, from marked alienation from reality to panic attacks.

Final note about mental Pranayama
You must never forget to give the highest importance to the soothing phase of mental Pranayama. A Kriya routine that does not end with mental Pranayama is like an orchestra tuning their instruments and then leaving the stage! It is this phase that brings everything together; the ripples in the mind's lake are stilled, the awareness becomes transparent, and the Last Reality is revealed. It is a diffuse calmness; the mind is at rest and silent and gains the energy necessary to be more acutely alert. It is like a spiral which gradually and systematically takes care of all the levels of one's being: it is a healing process.

The value of Mental Pranayama becomes apparent when important decisions have to be taken. One has the impression that nothing can get in the way and that even the greatest difficulties will dissipate. Inside the perfect transparency of an inner order, all problems are solved. One is born to Kriya through the engaging practice of mental Pranayama: it projects us into sheer heaven and its beauty overflows our lives.

".... it's hard to stay angry when there's so much beauty in the world. Sometimes I feel I'm seeing it all at once and I'm overwhelmed. My heart feels it's about to burst...until I remember to relax and stop trying to hold on to it. And then the beauty flows through me like rain. And I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my stupid little life. (slightly modified from the movie American Beauty; 1999)"
CHAPTER 7

TECHNIQUES OF THE HIGHER KRIYAS

This Chapter is devoted to those students who have shown a passionate commitment to the practice of Kriya. The right moment to study this Chapter is 6-12 months after practicing Kriya Yoga daily, when there is a genuine longing to deepen the meditation experience.

We warn the reader that the following techniques are not taught in the same order by other schools. The order of exposition adopted here reflects the order of their utilization in a complete routine.

Theoretical vision

Let make some preliminary remarks concerning Lahiri Mahasaya's theoretical vision of any authentic spiritual path. It essentially explains that a spiritual path essentially foresees four footsteps. Four internal knots are to be unfastened – the knots are: tongue, heart, coccyx, coccyx-kutastha.

The knot of the tongue is connected with medulla and with the fifth Chakra; the knot of the heart is connected to the fourth Chakra; the knot of the coccyx is connected with Chakra Muladhara and, finally, the last knot is linked both with the first Chakra and with the opening of the so-called third eye between the eyebrows.

Let us attempt to put ourselves in the place of those who are about to familiarize with the procedures called Higher Kriyas. Surely students should not be obsessed by the frenzy of gaining at once tangible results, but at least understand if they are proceeding in the right direction. Familiarizing with this simple and effective theoretical vision is therefore necessary.

Without this, they risk to perceive Kriya Yoga as a too chaotic set of techniques among which they are not able to differentiate those whom they should concentrate upon, practicing them regularly for months at the exclusion of all others. Without this attitude, students relinquish Kriya practice after some unhappy attempts to conceive a satisfying routine. Furthermore, a good theory helps a student to avoid wrong attitudes and unfortunate choices that could hinder the process of conquering the doubts and fears, settling in the solid territory of meditation born intuition.

Four knots

The tongue knot consists in the physiological fact that our tongue is normally unable to touch the uvula and, consequently, enter the nasal pharynx. Because of this, we are not kept connected with the great reservoir of energy existing in the Sahasrara region. Unfastening such knot (Jihuah – or Jihva – Granthi Ved) means the freedom to access this inexhaustible internal source through Kechari Mudra.
The obtainment of such Mudra and its use in the techniques of Kriya implies that a subtle process of transformation is going to happen in our psycho physical system. We assist to a quieting of all useless, unwanted thoughts, intruding main mental process and to a rekindling of the vital force in the body. A subtle substance (Amrit) begins to trickle down through the tongue into the spine and and then in the whole body.

The afore quoted good results are partially accomplished by turning back the tongue tip so it touches the middle of the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft. This position is easy and can be obtained right away.

As for the practice of Talabya Kriya, actually it should not be considered a simple lingual frenulum stretching process. Talabya Kriya too closes an important circuit. When the tongue sticks to the palate and the mouth is opened, in that instant the energetic split between our body and the reserve of static Prana located in the upper part of our head is momentarily healed.

When Kechari Mudra proper is gotten, all becomes easier in our spiritual path. It becomes easier to perceive the exact location of Medulla oblongata, to listen to astral sounds and merge with the Omkar aspect of the Divine.

This knot should not be confused with the obstacle that is located in the center between the eyebrows – this obstacle is linked with the fourth knot.

The heart knot obstructs the downward journey of static Prana from Sahasrara toward Muladhara. Unfastening this knot (Hridaya Granti Ved) means bringing the spiritual realization into the daily life. The mind is restored to health and the superficial emotions calm down. If, after having carried out your duties conscientiously, you avoid distractions and useless chatters, a conscious absorption in the spiritual reality spontaneously manifests, without any effort on your part. The mind rests in stillness and the heart is full of inexpressible joy.

It has been explained that the consciousness tunes with the element "air" (the fourth of five Tattwas.) For a kriyaban, the theory of the Tattwas [the five subtle elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether (space)] is not a theme of useless speculation. Everything that exists in the universe is a combination of these five forms of energy. Tattwas are a concrete series of states of consciousness, whose intimate essence is experienced in the last part of the devotee's journey toward the Absolute Consciousness.

Tuning with the air Tattwa, allows a person enter a sublime state. This Tattwa checks the cardiac plexus which controls the automatic phenomenon of breath. A kriyaban working upon unfastening the heart knot soon notices how the breathing process tends to calm down.

The knot of the coccyx prevents a kriyaban from entering Sushumna and moving toward Kutastha. This fact keeps the screen of illusion real. Unfastening such knot (Muladhara Granti Ved) means opening the door to inexhaustible spiritual realization. The consciousness of the division between sexual energy, love energy and spiritual energy is overcome forever. That division is the cause of countless conflicts. The birth to the spiritual life means their end.
This knot begins to be unloosened by the practice of the Navi Kriya. Prana and Apana unite in the region of the navel by the action of the Samana current. They are guided in the channel of Sushumna through the action of Maha Mudra.

The last phase of Kriya path happens when the awareness starts to climb the Sushumna channel and moves toward Kutastha. Prana is now perfectly tranquil in all the body; the more resistant forces that prevent the vision of the Spiritual Light of Kutastha are going to be dissolved. Perpetual stay of Kundalini in the Ajna Chakra is gradually achieved.

Before reaching this highly advanced state, two important realizations should happen at level of the third and of the fourth Chakra.

Let us first consider the reality that in the Internal Alchemy (Taoism) is known as Dantian. This center is not just a theoretical hypothesis but a tangible reality. It is located about two and one-half inches below the belly button and about one and one-half inches inside: it can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter. This is the place where a kriyaban recognizes the "note" which embodies our will to live in the physical body. (In Kriya Yoga books you don't find expression like: "Coming back to the center", "Cultivation of the spiritual embryo" or "The birth of the golden flower." You find expressions like: "The process of Self realization begins in the navel center" but this describes the same event.)

The realization created in the Dantian ascends then into the heart region. A kriyaban attains a devotion that doesn't know any human limitation. During the ecstatic rapture the body may appear as a corpse while the soul burns of a perfect joy. When these two initial steps become solid, through a further effort a kriyaban's awareness merges with spiritual Light (in Kutastha) and reaches the thresholds of Cosmic Conscience.

**List of Kriya Yoga techniques and their relationship with the work upon the four knots**
(The underlined techniques are described in the previous Chapter)

**[I] Tongue Knot**
Talabya Kriya
Om Japa in the Chakras
Kriya Pranayama

[1.1] Kechari Mudra as a technique complete in itself
[1.2] Kechari Mudra coupled with Kriya Pranayama

**[II] Heart Knot**

[II.1] Basic form of Thokar
[II.2] Advanced form of Thokar

**[III] Muladhara Knot**
[III.1] Complete form of Thokar
Navi Kriya
Maha Mudra

[IV] Muladhara-Kustastha Knot
Kriya Pranayama with short breath
Mental Pranayama
[IV.1] Omkar Kriya – Omkar Pranayama
[IV.2] Omkar Kriya – Internalization of the practice of Thokar
[IV.3] Omkar Kriya – Gayatri Kriya
Yoni Mudra

[V] Alternative procedures cooperating with the second and third part
[V.1] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)
[V.2] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)
[V.3] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Thokar)

[VI] Alternative procedures cooperating with the fourth part
[VI.1] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)
[VI.2] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)

[I] Tongue Knot

Those who want to succeed in this practice must have their Talabya Kriya checked. Many do not do it correctly not having understood how to make their tongue adhere to the upper palate before opening the mouth and stretching the frenulum. Sometimes, even when they are shown in person, they are still not able to do it correctly. Here I can only emphasize that the main mistake is concentrating too much on where to place the tip of the tongue. In a correct Talabya Kriya, the tip of the tongue has no role! The suction effect is obtained with the whole body of the tongue!

After several months of regular practice of Talabya Kriya, a kriyaban may will to attempt Kechari Mudra. The test is whether the tip of the tongue can touch the uvula. If so, then for a few minutes a day, use the fingers to push the base of the tongue inward until the tip goes beyond the uvula and touches the pharynx behind it. One day, the tip of the tongue will enter a centimeter or so into the nasal pharynx but slip out when the fingers are removed. After some more days, on removing the fingers, the tip of the tongue will remain "trapped" in that position. This happens because the soft palate (the part from which the uvula hangs) is soft, movable and acts like an elastic band and creates a hook. This prevents the tongue from slipping out and returning to its usual flat position. This is the turning point.
Notice how *Talabya Kriya* and *Kechari Mudra* are completely different! (Compare Figure 3 with Figure 2 in Chapter 6). Open your mouth in front of a mirror during the first part of *Talabya Kriya* to see the hollow parts on each side of the fraenum, which appear isolated from the body of the tongue; during *Kechari Mudra*, it is the uvula that comes forward and only the root of the tongue is visible.

Henceforth, by striving each day to practice at least 6-12 *Kriya Pranayama* with the tongue in this position – despite some discomfort such as an increase in salivation, swallowing, and occasional interruptions to reestablish the position – its practice becomes easy and comfortable. The sense of irritation and the increase in salivation are soon left behind. After about three weeks of practicing in this way, you should be able to reach the same position without using the fingers. The tongue will be able to insert itself into the nasal-pharynx cavity. There will still be enough space left in the cavity to inhale and exhale through the nose.

The only problem might be that during the first three weeks of *Kechari Mudra*, you experience "dizziness" and fogged up mental faculties. Be prepared for this eventuality and consider abstaining from driving and any work involving a significant proportion of risk during this time.

[I.1] *Kechari Mudra as a technique complete in itself*

There are two main stages of *Kechari Mudra*. After several months of tireless practice of the afore described stage 1, one achieves stage 2, where the tongue reaches the junction of the nasal passage inside the hole in the palate. The soft tissue above the holes in the internal part of the nostrils is alluded to in *Kriya* literature as the "uvula above the uvula". The tip of the tongue reaches this small area and remains "stuck" there comfortably.
According to Kriya literature, the tongue can be pushed even further up. Any good anatomy book will reveal that the tongue cannot extend any further when it fills up the nasal pharynx. That assertion should therefore be understood as a hint to what a normal person thinks is happening. Actually, by extending the tongue to its limit, it is possible to experience a great attraction toward the region between the eyebrows along with the sensation of having reached, with the tip of the tongue, a higher position.

The same literature also affirms that through Kechari, one is able to perceive "Amrita", "Nectar", the elixir of life – a sweet tasting fluid trickling down from the brain onto the tongue and then into the body. To have this experience, the tip of the tongue should touch three points in sequence: the uvula, a small asperity on the roof of the nasal pharynx under the pituitary gland, and the soft tissue above the nasal septum. The tip of the tongue should rotate on each of these spots for at least 20-30 seconds; then, in the manner of sipping a liquid or testing a food, an essence will be savored on the tongue's surface. The exercise should be repeated several times during the day.³

Kechari Mudra causes the life force to be withdrawn from the thought process. Bypassing the mind's energy system, changing both the path and the direction of Prana flow, Kechari connects our awareness with the Spiritual dimension whose seat is in the upper part of the brain. The internal chatter ceases; silence and transparency begin to characterize one's consciousness. The mind works in a more restrained way and enjoys an essential rest; each thought becomes more concrete and precise. When, during the daily activities, Kechari Mudra is practiced, moments of pure calmness and mental silence fill one’s entire being! Sometimes, mental silence turns into an explosion of inner joy.

[1.2] Kechari Mudra coupled with Kriya Pranayama

Kechari Mudra enables a kriyaban to take a giant step toward perfecting Kriya Pranayama. During Kriya Pranayama with Kechari Mudra, the exhalation arising in the nasal pharynx has a fine flute-like sound like a faint whistle. Some schools call it the Shakti Mantra. It has been likened to the "flute of Krishna". Blowing gently on the edge of a sheet of paper approximates the sound. Lahiri Mahasaya described it as "similar to blowing air through a keyhole". He described it as "a razor which cuts off everything related to the mind". It has the power to cut out any external distracting factors including thoughts, and comes at the maximal point of relaxation. When distraction and anxiety arises, the sound vanishes.

Practicing Kriya Pranayama in this way and enjoying its aftereffects is an enchanting and astonishing experience and one of the best moments in a

³ I'm unable to comment on the importance of sipping the nectar since I haven't had the experience nor, I admit, have I even tried to have it. I'm sharing this information for the sake of accuracy and completeness. It may fascinate a kriyaban but after an initial period of intense excitement, it is forgotten.
kriyaban’s life. Cultivating the perfection of this sound, concentrating firmly on it, means creating the best basis to arouse the Om sound in a way stronger than what can be achieved through the practice of the second part of Kriya Pranayama. Literature on Kriya Yoga explains that when this event happens, the Omkar experience acquires the dynamism of Kundalini; the soul travels through the spinal cord and burns in the joy of Samadhi.

Modesty is always welcome but when this result is achieved, the positive euphoria is so overwhelming that it cannot be contained (like finding Aladdin’s magic lamp.) In Kriya literature, it is said that those who realize a perfect Pranayama, can achieve everything through it. Well, if we dream of a faultless Kriya Pranayama, then what we have described matches the ideal of perfection.

Personal reflection
However great the effect of Kechari Mudra, I firmly believe it is important but not indispensable. P.Y.’s decision to allow initiation into the Higher Kriyas to those unable to practice Kechari Mudra has my total approval. When the tongue tip is turned back and up toward the roof of the mouth, you perceive just the same a striking effect of internalization that gives you the chance of fully enjoying the Higher Kriyas.

I believe Lahiri Mahasaya also granted Higher Initiation to those who could not achieve Kechari Mudra. My belief is based on his attitude and his partaking of human suffering. I cannot conceive that the achievement of Kechari was intended to create a sharp division among people. On one hand, we have the very proud kriyabans, deceived into believing they are more evolved than others and on the other hand, there are those who are hopelessly depressed for failing in something that depends not on effort but only on physical constitution.

[II] Heart Knot

[II.1] Basic form of Thokar
(Thokar with one rotation – this procedure is called Second Kriya by many schools; Third Kriya by P.Y.’s disciples)

Through Thokar, the energy and the intense awareness that has settled in Ajna Chakra, is directed into the Anahata Chakra. This event causes the "death" of the mind: a particular state of ecstatic "absorption" begins to manifest. A kriyaban perceives a feeling of devotion (Bhakti) emanating from the heart Chakra. Thokar is practiced after Kriya Pranayama and after Navi Kriya, if possible with the tongue in Kechari Mudra.
Practical instructions
The syllables of the Vasudeva Mantra ("Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya") are mentally placed in each Chakra location.

With the chin resting on your chest, inhale while simultaneously raising the awareness along the spinal column, touching each Chakra with the syllable of the Mantra (Om is placed in the first Chakra, Na in the second, Mo in the third, Bha in the fourth, Ga in the fifth and Ba in Bindu.)

Raise the chin as if following the inner movement. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed on the navel area to create a mental pressure on the first three Chakras. The breath produces only a slight, weak sound in the throat or it comes out soundless.

When the chin is up and horizontal, the inhalation ends, and the awareness is in the Bindu.

Hold your breath. The head begins its rotation by moving to the left shoulder (left ear moves slightly toward the left shoulder, the face does not turn left or right and the movement is free of all bouncing); Te is thought in the Medulla. The head tilts back a little and in a sweeping arc reaches the right shoulder, (the right ear coming near the right shoulder), the syllable Va is thought in the cervical Chakra. The rotation proceeds, the head bends forward just a little and moves left until the left ear is near the left shoulder (the face is not turned to the left).

From this position, the chin is tilted down diagonally as if to strike the center of the chest, while simultaneously Su is intensely vibrated in the heart Chakra. Through this last movement, a kind of hitting is felt in the heart Chakra. A short pause follows: just what is needed to be enraptured in the radiation of energy emanating from that Chakra. The contraction at the base of the spinal column is eased off; via a very subtle exhalation the remaining syllables of the Mantra are "placed" in the first three Chakras -- De into the third one, Va into the second one, and Ya into the first one. While doing this, the head is usually kept down. The duration of this process is about 24 seconds. Repeat the procedure 12 times.

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4 I am sure the reader knows the correct pronunciation of the Mantra; phonetic symbols are not included. Notice that in the Bindu, we don't mentally verbalize Va but Ba: this convention has established itself over the years.
At the end of this practice, retrieve psychological and physical immobility by practicing at least 12 Kriya Pranayama. Then practice Pranayama with short breath followed by mental Pranayama.

For several weeks, a kriyaban is guided to perform this technique 12 times a day, then to gradually increase the number of repetitions of one a day up to 200 repetitions. After reaching 200 repetitions, or after six months of 36 repetitions per day, a kriyaban can start the practice of the higher level of Thokar.

Remarks
Do not allow the weight of the head to be the sole force pushing the chin toward the chest: letting your head simply drop would definitely be harmful. A mindful physical effort is needed to lower the chin.

When you practice over 50 repetitions, the movements of the head should be only hinted at: the chin does not come close to the chest and the striking of the fourth Chakra is mainly achieved by the sheer power of mental concentration. If you have any difficulty whatsoever, stop before reaching 200 repetitions.

The presence of physical problems (the cervical vertebrae are indeed vulnerable) may require practicing on alternate days. It is better to add more cycles over time rather than face the prospect of experiencing continuous head and neck pain throughout the entire day!

**Thokar and the breathless state**

Completing the required numbers for the base form of Thokar is a deed of great importance. As for the possibility of obtaining through it the breathless state it can be compared only to the intensive practice of Japa.

Let us clarify that the breathless state does not simply mean that the breath becomes gradually quieter or that after a long hyperventilation, the breath is held like free / breath-hold divers do.

*Breathless state* means that the breath is entirely non-existent. This wonderful event happens in the life of a kriyaban as a very common fact. It can happen during the practice of any Kriya technique (in particular during the practice of mental Pranayama. It can also happen during the day, far from the moment of meditation, for example when contemplating something so beautiful that one’s own aesthetic sense vibrates.

It must be emphasized that in order to reach the breathless state, one needs on the average two to three years of regular Kriya practice. One needs not only the overall effect of the First Kriya techniques but also the action of the Omkar Kriya and of Thokar. It is important for its direct effect on the heart ganglia in the spine which directly control the breathing automatic reflex.

Before considering the advanced form of Thokar we counsel to read the third part of the book and start the practice of Japa and seek in any way to achieve the breathless state.
[II.2] **Advanced form of Thokar**
(Thokar with many rotations holding one's breath – this procedure is commonly called Third Kriya or Uccha Kriya, meaning higher Kriya. P.Y.’s disciples call it Fourth Kriya.)

This technique is a remarkable acceleration of the **basic form of Thokar**. The action of Thokar is repeated over and over while extending the length of the state in which the breath is held (Kumbhaka.) In Kriya literature, the explanation is that the heart knot is **struck** by the Thokar basic procedure and then **cut** by the advanced form of Thokar.

**Practical instructions**
The advanced form of **Thokar** is practiced after **Kriya Pranayama** and after **Navi Kriya**, if possible with the tongue in **Kechari Mudra**.

After inhaling (with *Om, Na, Mo*...) and raising the **Prana** to the upper part of the lungs, partially relax the muscles of the thoracic cage as if you were going to begin a new inhalation. (The act of sealing the lungs (trachea) as when diving, should be avoided.) In this relaxed mood, repeat numerous cycles of the head movements unhurriedly. Consequently the mental chanting of **Te** in **Medulla**, **Va** in the cervical and **Su** in the heart **Chakra** is done several times (**Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su ...**) while holding the breath. Stop the procedure and exhale when feeling discomfort!

Then slowly exhale and place the syllables **De, Va, Ya** in **Chakras** three, two, one respectively. While doing this, keep your head down. This practice is done rigorously once a day. To give an idea of the speed of the movements, the entire process from inhalation to exhalation with 12 repetitions of the rotation of the head (each rotation concluding with the movement of the chin toward the chest) lasts around 70-80 seconds.

At the end of the procedure restore the physical and mental immobility by practicing at least 12 **Kriya Pranayama**. Then practice **Kriya Pranayama** with short breath followed by mental **Pranayama**. Then pause with the awareness centered in the light of **Kutastha**.

According to tradition, a **kriyaban** is guided to perform this technique with 12 rotations, then to gradually increase the number of repetitions of one a day up to 200 repetitions. This **Kriya** is considered mastered when one reaches 200 rotations without interrupting the **Kumbhaka** state.

**Remarks 1**
Avoid at all costs any attempts to thwart physiological processes: trying to accomplish a high number of rotations, doing them quickly, and being obsessed with holding the breath amounts to violence against one's body. Start with 12 rotations and increase by one a day. Fill the upper part of the thorax to its utmost possible extent with **Prana** – like a container filled to the brim with water. Simplify the dynamic and the physical intensity of the movements. Move the chin toward the chest before completing the head rotation. Namely, after rotating your head from left to right, let your chin "fall" toward the chest from the right
side, then lift it to left side and continue with the rotations. By increasing the rotations, the movements of the head should be only hinted at and the chin should not come close to the chest.

Remarks 2
The Mantra *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya* contains another Mantra: *Te Va Su* (Tat tvam asī = Thou are That.) The outer is a dualistic Mantra (Namo=I bow to God which is different from me); the inner Mantra is non dualistic. During the practice of the advanced form of *Thokar* you go on repeating: "Thou are That, thou are That...." Reflect on this!

*How to perfect the advanced form of Thokar*

Let us first gain proficiency with a particular way of practicing the advanced form of *Thokar*. When you feel you have neared your limit holding your breath, while keeping the chest expanded and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm perfectly immobile, release a minimal (almost imperceptible) sip of air whenever the chin is lowered toward the chest and let an imperceptible sip of air enter whenever the chin is brought up. Do not do any specific act of inhaling or exhaling: relax and allow the phenomenon we have described happen of its own accord. The sensation will always be that of not breathing at all. Thanks to the effect of this practice upon the ganglion that regulate the cardiac frequency, this frequency diminishes and the practice happens in the best conditions bestowing great satisfactions.

At this point we are still far from the ideal practice of this form of *Thokar*. What we have described is only a preliminary exercise. You think it's invalid (because you cheat) but if you repeat it a sufficient number of times (usually it's a matter of a couple of months), you will discover that it has the power of making you taste the state of *Antar Kevala Kumbhaka* (absence of breath, when the diaphragm is tensed and the air is inside the lungs) during the dynamic procedure of *Thokar*.

5 Inhale deeply, filling the lungs completely. Expand your rib cage and keep it expanded after completing the inhalation. Try to remain in the same psycho physical condition you instinctively adopt when you are going to take another "sip" of air. Focus your attention on the air and *Prana* filling the upper part of your rib cage: lungs, breath, and *Prana* are immobile as if frozen in the upper part of the lungs. Now, the decisive procedure is move your awareness like an ant, climbing the innermost channel of the spine millimeter by millimeter from *Muladhara* upwards. Practice this holding your breath and mentally chanting *Om, Om, Om...* rapidly (about two chants of *Om* per second). This action should

5 The breathless state with empty lungs and a relaxed rib cage during mental Pranayama is called *Bahir Kevala Kumbhaka* – as we have explained, this state is to be achieved through the basic form of *Thokar*.
be very intense: put in it the distilled experience of years of Kriya. Persist with it .... Om-Om-Om-Om-Om-Om ...

Starting from the base of the spine, after no more than 15-20 seconds, you'll have reached the heart Chakra. What you will perceive is a greater freedom from the breath. While remaining in this state, practice the advanced form of Thokar. You will discover how beautiful and comforting is the experience of rotating your head while the breath is actually vanished! The breath seems frozen, dissolved in some inexplicable way in the body. Retrieve this experience in the days to come.

One day, the spiritual Light in the form of a "Bindu" (a dot) appears both in the heart Chakra and in Kutastha. The mind is flooded with devotion. The feeling of intoxication experienced in the heart center is fantastic. Such profusion of internal joy often seems to overcome kriyabans, challenging their endurance limit.

"My worship is of a very strange kind. Holy water is not required. No special utensils are necessary. Even flowers are redundant. In this worship, all gods have disappeared, and emptiness has merged with euphoria." (Lahiri Mahasaya)

Remarks
The state of Antar Kevala Kumbhaka is also essential to bring the practice of Yoni Mudra to perfection. It is also useful to perfect Kriya Pranayama setting it upon the ideal timing of 22+22 (we are going to discuss this in Chapter 12.)

Furthermore, we have been explained that the procedure of Antar Kevala Kumbhaka is utilized during Mahasamadhi. What happens at that moment was described to us with this words:

"Have a deep inhalation, then a pause, and then come up along the spine while inwardly chanting OM, guiding your soul toward the Divine Eternal Brahma with the intention of never reentering the body."

[III] Muladhara Knot

[III.1] Complete form of Thokar
(Thokar with many rotations holding the breath, whose action is directed not only to the fourth Chakra but also to the third, second and first. This procedure is commonly called Fourth Kriya or "Purna Kriya" which means "Complete Kriya." Many Kriya schools do not teach this technique preferring either to erase it completely or substitute it with the sweeter, more docile and manageable practice of Thokar Tribhangamurari which we are going to introduce later.)
In the *Advanced form of Thokar*, we have applied a very strong psychophysical pressure on the heart *Chakra*, now we extend this pressure on each *Chakra* below using the same procedure.

Description of the procedure
Begin by practicing the *Advanced form of Thokar*, thus acting upon the heart *Chakra* but only 12 times. Completed this, exhale (with *De Va Ya*) and concentrate upon the third *Chakra* and repeat the previous procedure. This means that each time you lower your chin to vibrate the syllable *Su*, you mentally direct the stroke toward the third *Chakra*. The muscles near that *Chakra* can be slightly contracted, just to help the process. At the end of 12 repetitions of *Te Va Su*, exhale (with *De Va Ya*) and focus on the irradiation that departs from the third *Chakra*. Pause perceiving a particular state which is characteristic of that *Chakra*. In time, you will perceive a particular color in the point between the eyebrows and also listen to a particular sound.

Repeat the procedure in the second and in the first *Chakra*. Don't skip the pauses to perceive the irradiation that departs from the second and from the first *Chakra*.

Remain longer in *Muladhara*. Feel how the energy rises like waves of a tide growing higher and higher, reaching a *Chakra*, then again falling down and moving from the base of the spine to a higher center.

This procedure must be completed by *Navi Kriya* and *Maha Mudra*. You will receive a great benefit by repeating the procedure (*Advanced form of Thokar*) for the second, then the third and finally for the heart *Chakra* (and only then practice *Navi Kriya* and *Maha Mudra*.)

Important remark
This procedure requires great care because it affects the person's behavior during daily life. You could excessively react to trivial impediments and irrational behavior. In short, some sharp personality traits of yours might surface with a force that in some cases could be "destructive." Obviously, they do not appear out of nothing, they are not caused by the technique – they express what you had held within you for a long time. (We will reconsider this delicate point at the end of the following Chapter.)

### [IV] Muladhara-Kustastha Knot

*Omkar Kriya* techniques have one feature in common: a *Mantra* made of one or more syllables is mentally placed inside a *Chakra* and repeated there many times until a threefold effect emerges:

1. The perception of a micro internal movement (whose characteristic is oscillatory or circular) inside the *Chakra*.
2. The experience of listening to internal sounds.
3. The perception of spiritual light.
The *Omkar Kriya* techniques are an evolution of the procedures of *Kriya Pranayama* and *Thokar*. "Evolution" means that while you are practicing them you have all the effects of *Pranayama* and of *Thokar* but you are barely breathing, and you maintain immobility.

It is reasonable that these practices have to be done after the practice of *Thokar*. However there are schools that put the practice of *Omkar Kriyas* before that of *Thokar*.

What does Kriya meditation mean?

"What do you meditate about?" Often we hear this question. People find it difficult to understand which is the object of *Kriya* meditation.

Some think that "meditation" consists of the elaboration of lofty thoughts supported by fervid imagination. No, all the thoughts are destined to calm down. A sweet comfort, internal joy, inexplicable elation ensues from this. This is the starting point of meditation.

Sooner or later, a *kriyaban* listens to a distant sound of a long-sustaining bell. At its very first manifestation, it gives total contentment and ease, as if the spiritual path had come to its fulfillment. It is of paramount importance to deepen that experience! A *kriyaban* must become totally absorbed in it. There is nothing in the universe as concrete and real as this vibration – expression of *Om* cosmic vibration. Its beauty is inexplicable. Even those who have never experienced devotion, it digs a stream of genuine devotion of which they themselves marvel. Light, soft as falling petals, knocks gently on the doors of your intuition and proves itself to be the Reality underlying all the Beauty experienced in life. Now there is no doubt that all the experiences of love lived in life are but splendid crystals blooming around its gilded thread.

Through the awakening of wisdom, real understanding is attained and a process of healing old wounds begins. The deepest layers of the psyche will be harmoniously affected. Old memories, conflicts and impossibilities are revived, appeased, and realized in the azure limitless immobility spreading from the center of your heart. A first ever *Bhakti* (devotion) will arise spontaneously from your heart, cross the wall of the psychological dimension and make life and spiritual experience indistinguishable. The daily experiences of life will appear as transfigured, similar to a light dusting of snow that reduces all asperities.

This divine sound will surround us in misfortune, guiding our steps when events seem to conspire to make us forget the spiritual path.

Let us introduce now three procedures that surely and safely lead to the meditation state: *Omkar Pranayama*, *Internalization of the practice of Thokar* and the so called *Gayatri Kriya*. (It goes without saying that the ideal practice of these procedures is with *Kechari Mudra*. )
First part: with fragmented breath
The hands with fingers intertwined rest on the abdomen. Inhalation and exhalation are fragmented into 6 + 6 parts. Starting with your chin on the chest, inhale moving your awareness upwards along the spinal column while simultaneously raising the chin slowly as if to accompany and push the energy up. The syllables of the Vasudeva Mantra ("Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya") are mentally placed in each Chakra location, while making a short pause in each. During the first "sip" of inhalation, the concentration is on the Muladhara, where the syllable Om is ideally "put"; during the second "sip", the concentration is on the second Chakra, where the syllable Na is ideally put … and so on, until Ba is put in the Bindu, the inhalation is completed and the chin is horizontal.

The exhaling breath too is divided into six punctuated parts or pulses. While lowering the chin at a slow pace, the awareness comes down along the spinal column. The syllable Te is placed in the Medulla, Va in the fifth Chakra… and so on … Su… De… Va, until Ya is mentally chanted in the Muladhara.

As soon as it is comfortable, add a pause of 2-3 seconds both at the end of inhalation and of exhalation. During the pause after inhalation, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn along the crown of the head. ["Counterclockwise" in this book is always intended as if viewing from top]. During the pause after exhalation, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn around the Muladhara Chakra. The rotation above happens inside the brain, under the cranial bone, starting from the occipital region, over Bindu, and coming back to it; the head accompanies this inner movement with an almost imperceptible rotating movement (tilting back slightly, then to the right, the front, the left, and finally to the back). The rotation of the awareness around Muladhara does not require physical movement.

During inhalation, the muscles at the base of the spinal column can be slightly contracted. This contraction is maintained not only to the end of the inhalation but also throughout the ensuing pause; then it is released and the exhalation begins. (This detail should be introduced gradually so it does not disturb the general harmony.)

The timing of one First Omkar Kriya breath depends on the individual: usually it is approximately 20-30 seconds.

Remark
You have probably read that in a deep Pranayama, the energy crosses the Chakras just like the thread of a necklace passes through the pearls. Do not force the visualization of a similar hypothetical event because this does not happen. Actually, the "thread" of energy envelops each "pearl". The counter clockwise rotation of awareness around the crown shrinks while coming down, just like a vortex, winding around the Medulla. When exhalation begins and you mentally chant Teeee, you can use the starting instants of exhalation to intensify the psychic pressure around the Medulla. This internal action is extended in a natural
way to the other Chakras. The path of descent is a "helix" that surrounds and create pressure around each Chakra. Go slowly and do not be in a hurry and let the process proceed at its own pace.

Second part: beyond breath
The breath flows soundless and, from a certain moment onwards, takes the "inward route". The practice produces a wonderful state of calmness and at a certain point, the breath is "sucked in" and dissolved. From that moment onwards, all the physical details are only hinted and may even disappear. The speed of each repetition of Omkar Pranayama slows down. Moving from one Chakra to the next, a kriyaban begins to notice the change of the light vibration in the region between the eyebrows. Each Chakra is felt clearly as a concentration of calm energy, while your awareness is effortlessly stable in the point between the eyebrows: this is the moment when the Omkar reality is revealed. Without this revelation, the practice of Omkar Kriya is deprived of its own essence. Being absorbed in listening of astral sound creates inner bliss, contact with our true nature, putting aside – at least momentarily – our Egoic consciousness.

Optional utilization of the syllables of the Mantra during the second phase

In the final part of Omkar Pranayama, when the breathing process goes along normally at its own rhythm, it is possible to deepen the concentration in each Chakra by utilizing the related syllable, repeated many times.

In Muladhara repeat Om, Om, Om, Om, Om... min 36 times. (Do not use Mala to count – remain immobile.) The speed you chant the syllables is about two each second. Visualize that Chakra as a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately one inch. Visualize these syllables moving on the surface of the disk in counterclockwise direction, near the circumference. After the first round, another comes, inside the previous and so on ... until you ideally reach the center of the disk.

Then focus on the second Chakra where you will do exactly the same action, utilizing the second syllable of the Mantra, namely: Na, Na, Na, Na, Na... about 36 times.

Then focus on the third, repeating Mo, Mo, Mo, Mo,... about 36 times. Then focus on the fourth, repeating Bha, Bha, Bha, Bha ... then on the fifth (Ga, Ga, Ga, Ga, Ga ...), then on Bindu (Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba ...). When you rotate the awareness many times on the crown you will repeat Tee, Tee, Tee, Tee, Tee ... The "absorption state" is very strong indeed.

Then you will focus on the fifth Chakra utilizing Va, Va, Va ....

Going up this way from Muladhara to Bindu and coming down always repeating the same procedure is one round: the time required is approximately 4-6 minutes. Repeat 3-4 times and then be lost in the meditative state.
[IV.2] Omkar Kriya – Internalization of the practice of Thokar

After having completed a congruous number of rotations of Thokar (it can be the basic form of Thokar or the advanced form of it) do not interrupt this procedure but make it subtle. First of all breathe freely. Then visualize the fourth Chakra Anahata as a horizontal disk. On its surface try to perceive an inner movement sensation as if the head movements (that you are prosecuting with more lightness and softness) were projected on its surface. (see Figure 5)

![Figure 5. Perception in the heart Chakra](image)

While the head is moving left, perceived in the heart Chakra an inner light movement to the left: think the syllable Te. When the head moves right, perceive a movement rightward: think the syllable Va. When the head reaches the chest, perceive that this inner movement reaches the center of the ideal coin: the center of the Anahata Chakra. Think the syllable Su. Repeat some more times.

In comparison with the movements of Thokar, the dynamic of the head movements is greatly diminished. Then stop any movement (the breath is always free.) Your attention is captured by a warm radiation of energy that emanates from the fourth Chakra. In time, it is destined to become more and more marked.

Repeat the practice in the third Chakra: this is not difficult, especially if you are familiar with the complete form of Thokar. While part of your awareness remains in the head, transfer the repetitions of Te, Va, Su in the third Chakra. Think "Te" when you move to the left of its center, "Va" when you move to the right, "Su" when there is a soft tap in its center. Repeat three times.

Repeat the practice in the second, then in the first, in the second, third and fourth Chakra.

You realize how easy is to have this perception in the fifth Chakra too, although we have never practiced Thokar specifically directed toward that Chakra. The movements of the head are extremely subtle now, practically imperceptible to an observer placed a couple of meters away.

You can have this perception in the head also, not inside Ajna but around it. In a very relaxed mood, start rotating the head making a short radius movement! Considering the fontanelle like a point, the rotation of the head now draws a circle of no more than one inch of diameter. The movement of the head may be accompanied by a light oscillatory movement of the torso. Think Te in
the left lobe of the brain, \( Va \) in the right lobe and \( Su \) in the frontal part of the head. While you think \( Su \), you can have a small (almost invisible from the physical point of view) jolt – you are lightly tapping on the door of Kutastha. Repeat some more times.

It is clear how you complete the first round of the technique: the perception is recreated in the fifth, the fourth, the third, the second, the first Chakra. You can of course repeat the whole round a couple of times.

Make more subtle movements until you reach the perfect immobility. Direct mental pressure toward the nucleus of each Chakra. At the end, the center of your awareness naturally establishes itself in the comforting light of the sixth Chakra. In this immobility there is one treasure to enjoy.

Alternative
The mental repetition of \( Te, Va, Su \) coupled with a sensation of internal movement can end in the heart Chakra. You can stay there a longer period of time. A burning aspiration towards the Divine will be born from this. Among the debris of past illusions, such experience will open the doors of your spiritual realization.

After the Omkar sound ceases to exist, the Effulgent Form appears. Nothing exists except the Sun of the Soul. I, Shama Churn, am that Sun.
(Lahiri Mahasaya)

[IV.3] Gayatri Kriya
(Some Kriya teachers call this technique Fourth Kriya, others consider it a variation of Yoni Mudra)

This technique has the same effect as Yoni Mudra but you can practice it for longer times, thus its effects are more strong. Since it raises the awareness into Kutastha, it has a power of internalization which is perceived easily, without a shadow of a doubt. It The structure of this technique is well known in India and is considered the subtlest way of using the Gayatri Mantra. Some booklets contain minor variations and additional rituals. The Gayatri Mantra is considered to be a supreme vehicle for gaining spiritual enlightenment. Its purest form is Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargho Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodayat. (Oh, great Spiritual Light who has created the Universe, we meditate upon Your glory. You are the embodiment of Knowledge. You are the remover of all Ignorance. May You enlighten our Intellect and awaken our Intuition.)

This Mantra is prefaced with either a short or a long invocation. The short invocation is: \( Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha \). The terms \( Bhur, Bhuvah, Swaha \) are invocations to honor the three planes of existence (physical, astral, and causal respectively) and to address their presiding deities. The long invocation is: \( Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om \)

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Tapah, Om Satyam. This invocation is more complete since it recognizes that there are more planes of existence: the seven Lokas. Mahah is the mental world, the plane of spiritual balance; Janah is the world of pure knowledge; Tapah is the world of intuition; Satyam is the world of Absolute, Ultimate Truth. We can be satisfied with the explanation that these sounds are used to activate the Chakras and connect them to the seven spiritual realms of existence. In our procedure, we use only the opening long invocation in its complete form and not all the parts of the Gayatri Mantra. The Kriya tradition we are following here links Manipura with Om Mahah and Anahata with Om Swaha. The reason is that the world of thinking, evoked by Om Mahah, is more appropriate to the nature of the third Chakra, while the causal world of pure ideas, evoked by Om Swaha, is related to Anahata Chakra.

Practical instruction
Practice this technique at the end of your Kriya routine.

Practice the following actions for each Chakra (in the order: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Medulla):
1. Contract the muscles near the physical location of the Chakra. The contraction can be repeated two-three times.)
2. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in Kriya Pranayama) visualize the Chakra coming up into the point between the eyebrows, where you perceive it as a full moon. You don't come up "touching" the other Chakras. Now they don't exist. Your awareness is fully inside a Chakra and nothing exists but the Chakra itself and Kutastha.
3. Hold the breath and focus on the "inner space" between the eyebrows. This comes out easily with Kechari Mudra. On the screen between the eyebrows, a particular color experience happens – this color is different for each Chakra.
4. Mentally chant at least three times the specific Mantra for the Chakra.
5. Finally, through a long exhalation, ideally lower the Chakra from the point between the eyebrows to its proper location in the spine.

The Mantras to be used are:

Om Bhur for Muladhara
Om Bhuvah for Swadhisthana
Om Mahah for Manipura
Om Swaha for Anahata
Om Janah for Vishuddha
Om Tapah for Medulla
Om Satyam will be chanted in Kutastha

6 "Ke-chari" is literally translated as "the state of those who fly in the sky, in the ether". A particular "space" is created in the region between the tip of the tongue and the point between the eyebrows and is perceived as a "vacuum", although it is not a physical void. By merging into this empty space, it is easier for a kriyaban to perceive the rhythms of each Chakra and distinguish them one from another.
Let us see how to contract the muscles near the physical location of the Chakra

First Chakra Muladhara: practice Mula Bandha until the abdomen and spine vibrate. Relax.

Many find the following technical detail very useful: before lifting a Chakra, let the inhalation ideally start from its "frontal" component (perineum), come towards its location in the spine and then come up to the point between the eyebrows. (This can be usefully applied to the next Chakras: the pubic area is the "frontal" part of Swadhisthana Chakra; Manipura is linked with the navel; the central region of the sternum is the "frontal" part of Anahata; Vishuddha is linked with the upper front part of the throat.)

Second Chakra Swadhisthana: practice Vairoli Mudra (contract and relax both the urethral sphincter and the muscles of the back near the sacral center.)

Third Chakra Manipura: quickly contract and relax the navel, the abdominal muscles and the lumbar area of the spine.

Fourth Chakra Anahata: bring the shoulder blades together and concentrate on the spine near the heart. Relax.

Fifth Chakra Vishuddha: move your head quickly from side to side (without turning your face) a couple of times, perceiving a grinding sound in the cervical vertebrae. This is only to localize the cervical center. Now contract the muscles of the back of the neck near the cervical vertebrae and relax.

Medulla Oblongata: raise the chin, tense the muscles near the Medulla (under the occipital region), clench the teeth, and see the light at the point between the eyebrows. Relax.

Add a particularly intense concentration at the point between the eyebrows. Hold your breath; raise your eyebrows, become aware of the light. Repeat Om Satyam.

Now complete the "round" by lifting Chakras 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, always using the contraction, the chanting of the Mantra, being aware of any particular light experience in Kutastha. If possible repeat the procedure 6 to 12 rounds.

Remarks
Those who persevere (refusing the scruple that this procedure doesn't come out with any effects) and give this technique a fair trial will experience a definite transformation of their state of consciousness. In whatever way you look at it, the contribution of this technique in removing the last internal obstacles blocking
our efforts to enter Sushumna is exceptional.

If the practice seems difficult, you must improve your preparation. Every day deepen your mental Pranayama. Move your concentration up and down the spine, intensifying the mental pressure around each Chakra. After listening to the internal sounds, you will come to perceive more and more Light in the Kutastha and in the higher part of the brain and remain merged in it for a long time.

During the practice of the above described procedure, Prana always remains in the region of the middle part of your head where the sixth Chakra Ajna has its seat. Now, if you notice that the barycenter (center of mass) of your awareness (therefore of your Prana) is coming down and is gravitating toward the areas controlled by the fifth or the fourth Chakra, use the previously described exercise to achieve the Antar Kevala Kumbhaka state. Make use of it as much as necessary.

Deepening of the practice

The light that you perceive in the heart Chakra has its proper origin and seat in Kutastha and contains the peculiar vibration and light frequency of each Chakra. The procedure we have described gives the power to familiarize with these frequencies up to the realization that all the universe exists in Kutastha.

In time it will be possible for you to mentally repeat "Om Bhur" 36 times holding your breath. This gives you the power to tune with earth-Tattwa experiencing the peculiar "vibration" of the Muladhara Chakra.

At the same time, by repeating the Mantra "Om Bhuvah" 36 times it will be possible to tune with water-Tattwa having its seat in the second Chakra.... then it comes the turn of the fire-Tattwa...

Familiarity with the breathless state gives you the ability to stop at each Chakra (like a bee on a flower), bathing for a precise time in the Tattwa linked with that Chakra. The ideal time is what is required to do 36 repetitions of the related Mantra. Stay with the number 36 to resist the tendency of losing yourself in a state of bliss arising from each Chakra. The Tattwa related to a Chakra tends to entrap one’s attention resulting in an indefinite pause on a Chakra with nothing being accomplished. The 36 repetitions of the Mantra will help you to have full experience of each Tattwa but, at the same time, go beyond it. The meaning of the Gayatri Kriya is exactly this: tuning in with each Tattwa, one after the other, up and down along the spine until, as Kriya literature affirms, "The last shell of illusion is broken!"
[V] Alternative procedures cooperating with the second and third part

[V.1] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)
[V.2] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)
[V.3] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Thokar)

(It is a set of three techniques, commonly called Second, Third and Fourth Kriya by those school that do not teach the basic form of Thokar)

*Kriya* tradition requires that this technique be taught in three separate sessions: between the first and the second and between the second and the third usually one year should elapse. It is therefore unthinkable to practice the last stage (*Thokar Tribhangamurari* proper) as an experiment and immediately expect to appreciate its potentiality. On the contrary, persisting stubbornly with such an attitude is an almost certain guarantee of permanently failing to understand and taste the richness and beauty of the *Tribhangamurari* based procedures. [This discussion is resumed at the end of Chapter 9.]

In the three techniques of the *Tribhangamurari Macro* there is no formal instruction about the use of the breath. Each technique is supposed to be practiced with a very calm breath which may disappear in certain moments of internalization to which the technique naturally leads.

[V.1] *Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)*

Practice the following technique with your tongue in *Kechari Mudra*, after the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* and of *Navi Kriya*. At the end of this practice, remain with the awareness centered in the light of *Kutastha*.

![Figure 6. Internal movement Tribhangamurari](image)
Forget completely your breath, let it follow its natural rhythm. Very slowly raise Prana and awareness through the spinal channel, from Muladhara to Bindu – half a minute is required. Do not pause in any of the Chakras. Now let Prana and awareness come slowly downwards along the Tribhangamurari path and reach Muladhara. Another half minute is required.

The Tribhangamurari path begins in Bindu, bends to the left, descends into the seat of Medulla, crosses it, and continues toward the right side of the body. Once a particular point in the back (5-6 centimeters above the right nipple) is reached, it reverses direction cutting the heart knot. After reaching a point in the back that is 5-6 centimeters under the left nipple, it changes its direction again and points toward the seat of the last knot in the coccyx region. (See figure 6)

One round of Amantrak (Amantrak means "without the use of a Mantra") lasts one minute. If you realize it is shorter, let us say 45/50 seconds, it does not mean the procedure was too fast executed. However, resolve to reach the exact timing.

For two weeks, repeat this technique 25 times, once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times once a day; then for another two weeks 75 times .... and so on up to 200 times each day for two weeks. Only then can you begin the regular practice of the second technique: Samantrak.

Remarks
Tribhangamurari is the best symbol of Kriya Yoga because apart from showing the cutting of the three knots, it is also one symbol of Sri Krishna. The shape of Krishna, as depicted in the iconography, is a form in which you can easily indviduate three curves (head, spine, bent leg.) A sentence attributed to Lahiri Mahasaya: "To make this body Tribhangamurari (Krishna-like), three knots have to be crossed."

Through this procedure, Kundalini is invited to rise through Sushumna. In the beginning, only a minimum of Prana is able to enter the Sushumna and move upward – this is due to mental restlessness. But sooner or later, the Kundalini energy will reach the head. The technique fosters this moment because during each round you cross three main knots (Grantis): tongue/Medulla oblongata, heart, and coccyx. This happens by coming down from head to Muladhara following the three-curved path Tribhangamurari (Tri-bhanga-murari = three-bend-form.)

[V.2] Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)

Practice the following technique with your tongue in Kechari Mudra, after the practice of Kriya Pranayama and of Navi Kriya. At the end of this practice, remain with the awareness centered in the light of Kutastha.
Completely forget about your breath and allow it to follow its natural rhythm. Very slowly, raise Prana and awareness through the spinal channel, from Muladhara to Bindu – this requires half a minute. The perception of the current is intensified by mentally chanting the syllables of the Vasudeva Mantra. Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga, are vibrated into the first five Chakras and Ba in Bindu.

Now let Prana and awareness come slowly downwards along the Tribhangamurari path and reach Muladhara. Half a minute is required. The perception of the Tribhangamurari current is intensified by mentally chanting the remaining syllables of the Vasudeva Mantra. Teeee is chanted in Medulla but you are able to perceive how the reverberation of this vibration touches the point between the eyebrows – thus you also will feel Teeee in Kutastha.

The syllables Va, Su, De, Va are put in the four new centers outside the spine; Ya is vibrated in Muladhara. These four new centers are four "vortexes" inside the main flow of the current – they are not a new set of Chakras. Each syllable when vibrated is like a mental Thokar (hit): since the technique is performed slowly, there is plenty of time to make these tappings very effective.

We have now described one round of Samantrak, which lasts one minute. If you realize it is shorter, let us say 45/50 seconds, again, it does not mean the procedure has been done too quickly. However, make a resolution to reach the exact timing.

For two weeks repeat this technique 25 times, once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times, once a day; then for another two weeks 75 times .... and so on up to 200 times each day for two weeks. Only then can you begin the regular practice of the third technique: Thokar-Tribhangamurari.
Macro movement Tribhangamurari (Thokar)

Practice the following technique with your tongue in Kechari Mudra after the practice of Kriya Pranayama and of Navi Kriya. At the end of this practice, resume for some rounds (6-12) the practice of Omkar Pranayama and then remain with the awareness centered in the light of Kutastha.

Forget the breath. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed on the navel area so as to push the abdominal region upward, thus creating a physical pressure on the first three Chakras. Starting with the chin on the chest, move the energy and awareness very slowly along the spinal column from Muladhara to Bindu. Your chin comes slowly up following the inner movement. "Touch" internally each Chakra with the syllables of the Mantra (Om is placed in the first Chakra, Na in the second ...). When energy and awareness are at Bindu, the chin is parallel to the ground.

Now the descent of the energy begins. The movement of the head follows millimeter by millimeter its downward energetic flow along the Tribhangamurari path, from Bindu to Muladhara, crossing the three knots and touching the four new centers outside the spine. All this happens in a fluid way and within 30 seconds or less. The following description of the movements of the head may seem complicated at first but with a minimum of patience, the right movement of the head will be learned: you need only to understand that it is conceived as a logical and effective way of intensifying a particular snakelike downward flow of the energy. Let us now begin to describe the movements of the head.
Without turning the face, bend your head sideways a couple of centimeters to the left. Raise the chin as much as possible (contract the neck's back muscles) and return to the middle. Realize how this simple movement accompanies perfectly the descent of energy from Bindu to the Medulla along the first curve of the Tribhangamurari path. Remain only an instant in this position, with the chin raised and vibrate the syllable Teee in the Medulla. Furthermore, as you learned in Samantrak, perceive also the reverberation of this vibration at the point between the eyebrows.

Then, from this position, slowly turn the face to the right and as far as possible. Only the face moves, not the torso. During this SLOW movement (do not be influenced by the dynamics of the technique of Thokar), the inner flow of energy moves from the Medulla to the eighth center.

Here the first of five psycho-physical blows happens: the chin touches the right shoulder for an instant and the syllable Va is vibrated in the eighth center. The shoulder also makes a small upward motion to make contact with the chin easier. But be careful: if you feel you're forcing it, STOP! Those who are not able to have this contact with the right shoulder, should content themselves with coming as close to the shoulder as possible and stimulate the eighth center with sheer mental strength.

Then the face turns very slowly to the left, accompanying, millimeter by millimeter, the internal flow of energy from the eighth to the ninth center, and crossing the fourth Chakra. If possible, place the chin over the left shoulder. The second blow takes place when the syllable Su is vibrated in the ninth center and chin for an instant touches the left shoulder, which makes a small motion upward to make contact with the chin easier.

Two more blows happen when the syllables De and Va are put in the tenth and eleventh centers. The procedure is the following: The chin slowly moves toward the middle of the chest while grazing the left collarbone. During this movement, two light blows are given to the left collarbone in intermediate positions. (I think Figure 8 can help you understand what I mean for "intermediate positions"). The blows are given of course in the moment in which the syllables of the Mantra are vibrated. Finally, a last blow is given on the chest (central position) when the syllable Ya is vibrated in Muladhara.

The essence of this particular form of "Thokar" consists not only in the five strokes but mainly in a constant intensification of the mental pressure along the whole circuit. Considering the action of squeezing an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last bit out gives you a good idea of what happens during this procedure. When the movements of the head are slow and enriched by a great strength of concentration and will, there is no limit to the increase of the internal energetic flow along the Tribhangamurari path.

As in the previous technique, if you take 45/50 seconds to do one round, it's OK. However, your goal is to reach the ideal speed of 60 seconds.

Repeat the procedure 36 times. After completing the programmed number of rounds, calm the system with a minimal practice of Samantrak, then relax by practicing a simple mental Pranayama.
The supervision of an expert helps to avoid any problems – I am referring to stress and pain in the cervical vertebrae and in the muscles of the neck. Abrupt movements should be avoided; instead use a deep intensity of mental concentration. For the first couple of weeks do not practice every day but every two or three days.

As soon as possible, begin the incremental routine of this procedure by practicing: 36x2, 36x3,….. 36x35, 36x36. Be careful to allow always one week to elapse between a stage and the next.

To those who have the time and good will to complete it, I recommend this routine as a very important feat. A minimum of 8-10 months is required to complete it. Then you can start the practice of the Tribhangamurari Micro.

[VI] Alternative procedures cooperating with the fourth part

[VI.1] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)
[VI.2] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)

(Commonly called Fifth, Sixth Kriya by those school that teach Tribhangamurari Thokar)

[VI.1] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Amantrak)

Practice the following technique with your tongue in Kechari Mudra, after the practice of Kriya Pranayama and Navi Kriya and after a minimum of 12 rounds of Thokar-Tribhangamurari.

The definitive stability of Kundalini in Ajna Chakra is achieved through the Tribhangamurari Micro. This technique implies the experience of the movement Tribhangamurari in small dimensions inside each Chakra, Bindu, Medulla, in the four centers outside the spine located along the Tribhangamurari flow and again in Muladhara.

Through a short inhalation, raise the Prana in the Muladhara Chakra into the point between the eyebrows. When the presence of the energy is clearly felt in the point between your eyebrows, stop the breath and look "down" at the Muladhara Chakra. Visualize it as a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately one inch. Now, perceive on that disk the Tribhangamurari movement in reduced dimensions.
Refer to Figure 9; start from point B (back part of the Chakra) and go straight to F (frontal part of the Chakra); then return from F to B along the snakelike path. It does not matter whether the time it takes is short or long. Exert a moderate but continuous pressure on the disk as if you had a pen and were drawing a clear continuous mark. Sooner or later you will perceive something. A tendency may come to make a very faint movement of the spinal column (forward, left, right, left, back to starting position). This movement should be almost invisible to an observer. Repeat two more times. Your breath is held effortlessly; the Prana remains totally in Ajna Chakra. After three perceptions of the complete movement (a complete movement is a straight movement from B to F, followed by the snakelike movement from F to B) you can relax and let Prana come down. A subtle exhalation happens but you may not be aware of it. Move to the second Chakra and repeat the same procedure.

Repeat the same procedure for Chakras 3, 4, 5, then for Bindu, then for Medulla, then for the four centers outside the spine, and finally for Muladhara. This is round 1: practice 12 rounds. At the end of 12 rounds, remain with the awareness centered in the light of Kutastha. Be faithful to this practice for at least six months before starting to familiarize yourself with the following procedure.

[VI.2] Micro movement Tribhangamurari (Samantrak)

The technique is the same but the mental pressure is increased through the repetitions of the syllables of the Vasudeva Mantra. There won't be any further stage with movements of the head as we have done with Thokar Tribhangamurari. In this last stage remain immobile with no movement at all of the spinal column or of the head. Here all the power of pressure has to be obtained with the sheer repetition of the syllables of the Mantra.

Practice Kechari Mudra. Through a short inhalation, raise the Prana contained in the Muladhara Chakra into the point between the eyebrows. When the presence of the energy is clearly felt in the point between the eyebrows, forget the breath and look "down" at the Muladhara Chakra and mentally utter the syllables "Om-Na-Mo-Bha-Ga-Ba-Te-Va-Su-De-Va-Ya". Do this Japa without hurry.
The micro-movement _Tribhangamurari_ will be perceived as in the previous first part but now the mental repetition of the syllables will add a greater "pressure" to it. The syllables are like mini "thrusts" or "pulsations". The duration of a round is determined by the speed of the chanting of the _Mantra_. For many people, the chanting of the _Mantra_ and consequently, the micro-movement lasts about 10-12 seconds. Nevertheless, remember that Lahiri Mahasaya's recommendation was "Don't be in a hurry!" Observe the difference between going slowly and with speed. If you go slowly, you will perceive a tremendous power.

Repeat the _Vasudeva Mantra_ three times. _Prana_ remains totally in the head. After three perceptions of the micro-movement, repeat the same procedure in _Chakras_ 2, 3, 4, 5, then in _Bindu_, then in _Medulla_, then in the four centers outside the spine, and finally in _Muladhara_. This is one round: practice 12 rounds. At the end of this practice, remain with the awareness centered in the light of _Kutastha_.

Remarks
This procedure implies the experience of a peculiar sensation of movement within the perfect stillness of each _Chakra_. This experience is the surest way toward the annihilation of the Ego.

This internal movement embodies the deeper aspect of the _Omkar_ reality. Perceiving it means to annihilate any form of duality present in the _Chakras_ and therefore, in your awareness. This technique leads you out of time and space. Only few _Kriya_ schools have disclosed the nature of this micro-movement and revealed its importance. Unfortunately, many people seek frantically impossible surrogates for it!
CHAPTER 8
INTRODUCTION TO SOME INTERESTING VARIATIONS OF THE TECHNIQUES DESCRIBED UP TO NOW

Here we shall discuss the most interesting and powerful variations of *Kriya Yoga*. The following exposition is essentially devote to the autodidact who wants to empower a certain technique beyond the usual limits to whom generally those who practice *Kriya* are used. This is possible by experimenting with different variations until you intuitively understand the core, the gist of a procedure.

The variations that I am going to discuss have different origin. Some have a good connection to Lahiri Mahasaya's original legacy. Others have the perfume of the *Radhasoami Sant Mat*, others the power of *Kundalini Yoga*; some betray the influx of the *Internal Alchemy – Nei dan*, the central practice of Taoism.

*Global outline*

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FIRST PART: VARIATION OF THE FIRST KRIYA TECHNIQUES

1. Talabya Kriya
The technique of Talabya Kriya can be enriched by massaging both the muscles of the tongue and the frenulum with one's own fingers.

2. Om Japa in the Chakras
[2.1] Some schools teach to chant (loudly or mentally) Vam or Bam or Hrom at the place of Om. Especially Hrom (a sustained Hrooooooom) turns out very effective in flooding with euphoria those who practice.

[2.2] You can accompany the chant (only if it is done mentally) with one or more breaths. Focus your awareness on the Muladhara Chakra and breath deeply visualizing the air coming in and out from that point. Repeat for each Chakra; after reaching Bindu, go back to Muladhara. Repeat the circuit 6-12 times.

At first it will not be a single point of which you become aware, but more like an area. In time, the sensations will become more localized.

3. Kriya Pranayama
[3.1] Long exhalation and Kumbhaka
Many kriyabans find the following instruction very comforting (this detail can be applied to any Kriya Pranayama variation). The ratio 2:3 for inhalation and exhalation is considered as more natural than 1:1. (For instance: inhalation lasts 12 seconds, exhalation lasts 18 seconds.) In time you can add Kumbhaka after inhalation. Starting with 4 seconds you can hold your breath for a time equal to inhalation. (For instance: 12 seconds inhale, 12 seconds hold, 18 seconds exhale.)

[3.2] Kriya Pranayama with Aswini Mudra
It is a wise choice to practice Aswini Mudra during Kriya Pranayama. Aswini Mudra means contracting repeatedly the muscles at the base of the spine with the rhythm of about two contractions per second. While learning the technique, a yogi contracts the buttock muscles, perineum or even the entire pelvic region also; with time, the contraction involves only the sphincter muscles.

During inhalation and exhalation of the first 12 Kriya breaths, Aswini Mudra should be strong; subsequently, it should decrease in intensity and become like a slight internal contraction of the inferior part of the spine (it is clear that the spine cannot be contracted: this is just a sensation.)

The continuous practice of Aswini Mudra during Kriya Pranayama creates the condition for Kundalini awakening. It gently pushes the Apana current upward to the navel region where it meets Prana. Kundalini awakens when Prana and Apana unite and there is perfect immobility of the body.

If this procedure appears annoying and disturbing, it is essential to be unshakeable and go ahead with it. At a certain point, by going on impassively,
one has the certainty that something positive is happening. One perceives a pleasurable shiver in the spine. The day after this practice, a diffuse joy during all the day is perceived. Even the most simple Kriya routine fills one with joy.

[3.3] Kriya Pranayama with Mula Bandha
This practice is not beautiful as the previous one, the only purpose for which I describe it here is completeness. Mula Bandha means contracting the perineum muscles, while a mental pressure is exerted on the lower part of the spine (we have only one long contraction and not a series of contraction and release as we have in in Aswini Mudra.) We practice this Mula Bandha during the pause after inhalation. The goal is to create the perception of Kutastha.

During the last instants of inhalation of a Kriya breath, visualize the current reaching Bindu, then "rotating" left, coming down a little bit and entering the Medulla. It is in this moment that Mula Bandha is practiced intensely, the breath is held and the eyebrows are raised. The sensation is that the energy is pushed from Medulla into Kutastha. A sensation of internal light spreads from Kutastha to the upper part of the brain.

Then exhalation begins, the tension of Mula Bandha is released and the energy goes down to Muladhara. Kechari Mudra cooperates with the process: during Mula Bandha, the tongue (inside the nasal pharynx) is pushed upward and forward.

[3.4] Kriya Pranayama with tight helix
What I am going to describe, comes out very easily to those who have practiced Kriya Pranayama with Aswini Mudra.

In this variation we forget the existence of the Chakras and concentrate upon the spine chord only. The spinal path of the energy is perceived as an helix. In a nutshell, starting from the base of the spine, the energy comes up rotating counterclockwise along the spinal channel. Then the energy comes down along the same path, hence rotating clockwise. Kriyabans experience a strong sensation of physical immobility and perceive their spine as a steel bar.

[3.5] A subtle form of Thokar inside Kriya Pranayama
What we are going to describe concerns only the exhalation of Kriya Pranayama.

During exhalation, realize it is not difficult to give a particular "jerk" at each Chakra location. Each kriyaban has such power and you can increase it obtaining a more striking effect than what is obtained by the procedure of Omkar Pranayama.

It is impossible to tell if, when you give the jerk, there is a short pause of the breath or, quite the reverse, there is a short emission of breath. What you feel is an intensity of awareness and energy stimulating one Chakra at a time. The final jerk in Muladhara at the end of exhalation creates an intense outburst of joy.
While progressing in this practice, one can experience a really internalized exhalation. This happens when you give a jerk to medulla and the physical breath disappears entirely. Internalized exhalation is not accompanied by the exit of the air through the nose. This is one of the mysterious facts of Kriya, difficult to understand with the sheer logic.

[3.6] Kriya Pranayama with a particular circuit inside and outside the spine

Inhale. Visualize the breath like a threadlike current coming up inside the spine, piercing each Chakra from Muladhara to Medulla, reaching, at the end of the inhalation, the point between the eyebrows. Pause there for a couple of seconds.

The path linked with exhalation is longer than the one linked with inhalation. In detail: during exhalation the current moves up vertically inside the space between the frontal part of the brain and the frontal bone; then bends backwards moving over the brain (and under the cranial bones), then bends downwards, pierces Bindu and reaches Medulla. Then the current comes down along the back of the spinal column: while descending externally to the spine, it touches each Chakra lightly from the back. When it reaches Muladhara, exhalation is completed.

In time you will add to the practice the mental chant of Om in each one of the centers involved (Chakra 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, medulla while coming up and then Bindu, medulla, Chakra 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 while coming down.)

4. Navi Kriya

[4.1] Navi Kriya using breath and Kumbhaka also

First part. Inhale through the nose. Hold the breath and intensify the concentration on the navel through the three Bandhas (Mula Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha). In this position, with the chin tilted down, mentally chant Om 12 times in the navel exerting a continuous mental pressure upon it. Then exhale unleashing the Bandhas and raise the chin with a slight tension.

Second part. With the chin raised, inhale through the nose. While holding the breath, focus the concentration on the third Chakra Manipura. Mentally chant Om 18 times in Manipura exerting a form of mental pressure upon that center. Then exhale keeping the chin in the normal horizontal position. Part one & part two are one Navi Kriya. As usual, a kriyaban repeats Navi Kriya four times.

[4.2] Navi Kriya coming down through four directions

The following variation of Navi Kriya is the one many kriyabans like the best. As it happens in the basic form of Navi Kriya, a kriyaban's awareness goes slowly up along the spinal column placing the syllable Om in the six Chakras. Then the chin is brought down toward the throat cavity.

Now, a short inhalation (two seconds maximum, without concentrating on the Chakras) is followed by a very long exhalation, during which, the energy is
felt descending from the frontal part of the brain, along a path outside the body to the navel, reaching through it the Dantian region. [Let us remind that the Dantian can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter. Its center is located about two and one-half inches below the belly button and about one and one-half inches inside.]

During this long exhalation, Om is chanted mentally, rapidly, 10-15 times, accompanying the descent of energy throughout the path. After a short pause in the Dantian, the head resumes its normal position.

Now each detail is repeated but the descent of the energy happens through a different path. A short inhalation draws the energy into the head again. The head bends but not in the front: it bends toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. A long exhalation (with the same chanting of Om, Om, Om...) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the brain's left side and moves along a path outside the body at its left side (as if shoulder or arm would not exist). The energy comes down to the waist, cross it and moves toward the Dantian.

The head moves back into its normal position. After a short inhalation, the head bends backwards. A long expiration (with the same chanting of Om, Om, Om...) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the occipital region and moves (outside the body) down to the waist where it bends, pierces the third Chakra Manipura and moves toward the inside of the abdominal region (Dantian). The procedure is repeated likewise on the right side.

This last exhalation concludes a mini cycle of four exhalations accompanied by four descents of energy towards the waist and, crossing it, towards the region of low abdomen. This mini cycle is repeated 9 times. In conclusion we have had 4x9 = 36 descents of energy. After these exhalations, the procedure ends with a mental chanting of Om in each Chakra from Ajna Chakra to Muladhara.

What we have described lasts 8-10 minutes and is equivalent to 4 repetitions of the basic form of Navi Kriya.

Remarks
As the practitioner proceeds with the rotations and the effects of the technique become more and more perceptible, the movements of the head become less marked – the process internalizes. One phenomenon is remarkable: 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 are going to introduce in Chapter 12.
[4.3] Chanting Om alternatively between Kutastha and navel

All details of the basic explanation of Navi Kriya given in Chapter 6 up to the forward bending of the head remain unchanged.

In this variation (really very sweet and comfortable) the Om Mantra is mentally chanted in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel (Om in the point between the eyebrows, Om in the navel, Om in the point between the eyebrows, Om in the navel… and so on).

The most useful way of doing it is to synchronize the breath with the Om chanting. Visualize a tiny silver cord that comes out from the point between the eyebrows bends slightly and goes down to the navel. When it comes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale (only what is necessary), visualize the movement of air rising, through the visualized duct, from the navel to the point between the eyebrows, pause an instant there just chant Om mentally. When it comes natural to exhale, exhale, visualizing the movement of air going down into the navel, pause and chant Om mentally in the navel. By repeating this, you will markedly feel that your breath begins to subside and disappear. When this happens, go on mentally chanting the Om Mantra in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel and moving the focus of your awareness between these two points, without ceasing being aware of the "silver cord". Carry on.

When Om is chanted about 75 times, bend your head backwards and repeat a similar procedure by chanting Om in alternation between the Bindu and the third Chakra. Visualize another tiny silver cord that connects (outside your body) the Bindu to the third Chakra. Let your breath – if there is still a trace of breath – flow freely through that cord. When Om is chanted about 25 times, resume the chin's normal position and chant mentally Om in the point between the eyebrows, Medulla, Chakras 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. This is one Navi Kriya. The optimum is to have 4 cycles of Navi Kriya.

5. Maha Mudra

[5.1] Forward bendings

Before the practice of Maha Mudra proper, sit in the half-lotus position or on the heels. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in Kriya Pranayama) visualize the first Chakra rising into the point between the eyebrows; hold the breath, bend the body forward. The head is placed in the region between the knees (see figure 10). Use your hands freely.

The head comes near the right knee, the face is turned toward the left knee so that it is possible to perceive a pressure on the right side of the head; a sensation of space is perceived inside the left side of the brain. Then repeat the same exercise with the other side of the body, reversing the perceptions. Then the head is placed in the region between the knees again, the face turned downward. A pressure is felt on the forehead. A sensation of space is perceived inside the occipital region.

The breath is retained during the entire sequence. After these movements,
resume the starting position with the spine erect. Through a long exhalation the energy comes down from Ajna Chakra to Muladhara.

Then concentrate on the second Chakra and repeat the procedure (ideally raise that Chakra, bend the body forward, and so on). You can have five bows, one for each Chakra, but since you can also ideally raise Ajna Chakra into Fontanelle, you can have six bows.

In some schools, this technique is called Guru Pranayama because during the first bend you can mentally bow to your Guru; during the second bend you can mentally bow to your Param-Guru ... and so on Chakra after Chakra with all your lineage of Gurus.

Figure 10. Forward bending starting from sitting on the heels or starting from the half-lotus pose

By repeating this "Chakra awakening procedure" on various days, when you focus on a Chakra, you will perceive a feeling of movement, a swinging sensation, in it – this is a very important experience.

[5.2] Maha Mudra after the bendings
Now practice Maha Mudra. When the right leg is extended, the right hand grabs the toes of the right foot while the left hand grabs the inner side of the right foot (the arch of the foot); the face is turned left while the breath is retained. A sensation like an inner pressure is felt on the right side of the head. It contrasts with the free space sensation in the left side of the brain. Practicing the opposite position, the sensations are reversed. When both legs are extended, the pressure must be felt on the front part of the head. A sensation of space is perceived inside the occipital region. As usual, this exercise is repeated three times. While stretching forward holding your breath in the position envisaged for Maha Mudra, chant Om as you come up in each Chakra, and try to perceive the afore hinted oscillation in each one.

[5.3] Maha Mudra with a movement of awareness during Kumbhaka
Practice the first part of basic Maha Mudra, inhaling, holding breath and bending forward grabbing the big toe with the index fingers. As you reach for the foot, raise the eyes to gaze at the eyebrow center. Place Om in the point between the eyebrows, Om where the tongue touches the palate and Om in Muladhara. Repeat three times in sequence. Return to the upright position. Exhale down the
spinal channel, pushing the navel towards the lumbar center Manipura. Repeat again this particular way of mentally chanting Om in the symmetrical position and with both legs outstretched.

Now practice Maha Mudra in the following way: before stretching forward, practice one full Kriya Pranayama (inhalation and exhalation) and hold the breath out. Bend forward reaching for the foot. With breath out, apply the three Bandhas (Mula Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha) and raise the eyes to gaze at the eyebrow center. Place Om there, Om in the navel and Om in Muladhara. Repeat three times. Return to the upright position, releasing the Bandhas and inhale raising the energy from Muladhara. Exhale down the spinal channel, squeezing the navel towards the lumbar center Manipura. Repeat again in the symmetrical position and with both legs outstretched.

6. Kriya Pranayama with short breath

[6.1] Pranayama with short breath centered in Ajna

Let us reconsider the technique of Kriya Pranayama with short breath. This wonderful technique is important for two reasons: it fosters listening to the internal sounds and Om sound and helps achieve the breathless state. Now, we are going to learn how this procedure can be practiced by making Ajna Chakra the pivot of the situation.

Focus your attention on Ajna Chakra in the center of your head. When it becomes natural to inhale, inhale quickly (about one second) from Muladhara to Ajna Chakra. Inhale only what is necessary. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale from Ajna Chakra to the second Chakra. Then inhale from the second Chakra to Ajna Chakra. Exhale to the third Chakra. Continue in this way ...

(Third – Ajna – fourth; Fourth – Ajna – fifth; Fifth – Ajna – fourth; Fourth – Ajna – third; Third – Ajna – second; Second – Ajna – first. Continue repeating this cycle of 9 short breaths.

After a few cycles of this beautiful procedure, it will become natural to practice it experiencing a short pause in Ajna and in each Chakra. (Inhalation from Muladhara to Ajna Chakra, pause in Ajna Chakra; exhalation from Ajna Chakra to the second Chakra, pause in the second Chakra and so on.) During these pauses, you can mentally chant Om one, two or three times, visualizing that you are touching that Chakra. Strive to perceive the astral sounds in the internal part of the right ear.

To close the practice, increase your concentration in Ajna.

Perceive a virtual line connecting the temples. Move your head sideways slightly and slowly (of some millimeters) having a pleasant sensation of the Omkar vibration moving from one half of the brain to the other. Diminish the movement until it is no more perceptible. Perceive another virtual line from the Kutastha back to the occipital region. Perceive the Omkar vibration in the occipital region and guide it slowly towards Kutastha. Pause there. Do the reverse process. (To give you an idea of the speed of this internal movement let
us say that the movement from occipital region to *Kutastha*, short pause and back takes about 12-20 seconds).

Repeat different times. Again swing your head sideways and then back and forth, in this way it is possible to discern the two lines’ intersecting point. This intersection is the best place to concentrate in order to have the full experience of Omkar’s internal movement and to perfect your focus on *Ajna*.

### 7. Mental Pranayama

You have already learned those variations of *mental Pranayama* who have a real value: they are the well known *Omkar Kriya* procedures. Something will be added soon (*Omkar Kriya* in the crown and in the sensible points inside the head.)

### 8. Yoni Mudra

[8.1] *Yoni Mudra raising each Chakra into fontanelle*

Cover the openings of your head as taught in *Yoni Mudra*. Inhale deeply with total awareness in fontanelle. Exhale from fontanelle to *Muladhara*; inhale raising ideally this *Chakra* to fontanelle with the purpose of merging it in the light and purify it. Hold the breath for about 10 sec. Exhale and lower the *Muladhara Chakra* into its seat.

Then place your awareness on the second *Chakra*; inhale raising it ideally up to fontanelle to merge it in light. Hold the breath longer. Do the same thing with all the other *Chakras* up to *Ajna*.

Place the heels of your palms over your eyes and calmly observe the darkness in the region between the eyebrows. It is not difficult to perceive a white light. Go ahead for 2-3 min. Then lower your hands and sit quietly for some minutes before coming up.
VARIATIONS OF THE HIGHER KRIYAS

List of the techniques we are going to discuss

1. Variation of the basic form of Thokar
2. Variation of the advanced form of Thokar
3. Adding Tadan Kriya to the complete form of Thokar
4. Omkar Kriya in the crown
5. Omkar Kriya in the sensible points inside the head
6. Alternative to the repetition of Te Va Su in Omkar Kriya

1. Variation of the basic form of Thokar (see procedure II.1)
(Five movements of the head substitute the rotation. There is no final stroke.)

This procedure can be useful to those who have problems with the traditional form of Thokar and prefer a more delicate approach.

Inhalation happens as in the basic form of Thokar. The chin moves up... Om, Na, Mo... Then the breath is held. The chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity: a certain internal pressure is felt on frontal part of the heart Chakra. The head resumes its normal position and then bends slightly toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. The same experience happens: a certain internal pressure is felt on the left part of the heart Chakra. The head resumes its normal position and tilts backwards: the same experience happens and pressure is felt on the back of the heart Chakra. The head resumes its normal position and bends slightly toward the right shoulder, without turning the face: the pressure is felt on the right part of the heart Chakra. The head resumes its normal position, then the chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity... pressure is felt on the frontal part of the heart Chakra. The head resumes its normal position. During these five bends, holding the breath, no Mantra is needed. Then the exhalation leads the awareness through the Chakras to Muladhara. Te is placed in the Medulla, Va in the fifth Chakra... and so on ... Su... De... Va, until Ya is mentally chanted in the Muladhara.

The time involved depends on the individual; usually it is approximately 20-25 seconds, but it can be longer. The procedure is repeated at least 12 times. It should be noted that the different pressures on the heart Chakra are more similar to a supply of energy flowing down in a tranquil way from a region above the head than the typical tapping of the Thokar.

It is obvious how this form can evolve. After inhalation, the whole set of the head movements can be repeated different times before exhaling – always holding your breath. The movements become more fluid: after bending forward, the head does not resume its normal position and, immediately afterward, it bends to the left, then backwards...
2. Variation of the advanced form of Thokar (see procedure II.2)  
(Different rotations followed by just one stroke)

In the previous Chapter we have seen that the practice of Thokar can happen with a lot of rotations of the head, repeating therefore various times the stroke on the heart, holding the breath during these rotations. We have seen how this technique is delicate, asking for the ability to hold the breath for a long time. We now introduce a variation of Thokar in which there are different rotations of the head, deprived of whatever stroke. During these rotations, great energy is stored in the head. Only after the last rotation, the final Thokar happens.

This procedure begins like the advanced form of Thokar. Take the awareness in the upper Chakras through a deep inhalation. There is the inhalation with Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga, Ba then the breath is held and the head is moved continuously counterclockwise in circular movement. The syllable Te is put in Medulla and Va in the cervical Chakra. You don't go down in the heart. The rotations of the head are deprived of any stroke.

The procedure goes ahead for many dozens of rotations: Te, Va, Te, Va, Te, Va,… while the perception of these two centers grows in intensity. Great energy is accumulated in the head. Then only after many rotations the final Thokar is given: the head lowers on the breast and the syllable Su is made to intensely vibrate in the heart Chakra. This is a powerful blow on heart ("powerful" from the psychic and pranic point of view.)

A kriyaban remains in this position for some minutes having the perception of a great devotion and beatitude.

Remarks

If the final stroke is given with great physical strength, the delicate structure of the cervical vertebrae, the muscles around them, the ligaments ... will receive a sure damage.

3. Adding Tadan Kriya to the complete form of Thokar  
(see procedure II.3)

Practice a short sequence of Tadan Kriya immediately after the practice of the complete form of Thokar:

Tadan Kriya:

Inhale deeply, feeling that the breath fills from top down the lungs while the Prana (contrarily to what happens in Kriya Pranayama) goes down toward Muladhara. At the end of inhalation, your awareness is focused on Muladhara. Hold your breath. Lift the body just a few millimeters with the help of the hands and then let the buttocks touch the floor with a mild jolt. Exhale freely, perceiving an ecstatic feeling – this happens especially when the jolt is experienced not as a physical movement but as an intense mental stimulus upon Muladhara.
The action of lifting the body and then dropping it producing a mild jolt is called *Maha Veda Mudra*, "Position of the great perforation" – obviously it is the knot of the *Muladhara* to be pierced.

4. *Omkar Kriya in the crown*  
(Expanding procedure of *Omkar Kriya* [IV.2])

In the previous Chapter we have seen how after having completed the practice of *Thokar*, the same procedure can be "internalized." We have called *Omkar Kriya* the perception of an internal movement in each *Chakra* – up and down. Such feeling is accompanied by the mental repetition of *Te, Va, Su*. We will now discover how the internal movement sensation can be induced in the crown.

The ellipse of the crown, seen from above, may be ideally divided into 12 parts.

Figure 11. Crown seen from above

Thanks to a short inhalation, the *Muladhara Chakra* is ideally raised into the crown of the head, over the occipital region, on the right (into part "1" of figure 11). Now hold the breath and keep the *Prana* in that point. Repeat mentally *Te, Va, Su* three times in that region perceiving for three times the internal movement we have described in *Omkar Kriya*. Exhale calmly.

In the same way raise the second *Chakra* into the adjacent part "2" of the crown. Repeat there *Te, Va, Su...* three times and deepen the experience. Repeat the same procedure for the other *Chakras* (3, 4, 5, *Bindu, Medulla*, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1) activating thus all the parts of the crown. After two or three complete rounds a sudden bliss manifests and one is no longer able to mentally chant anything. The procedure ends in ecstatic absorption.

5. *Omkar Kriya in the sensible points inside the head*  
(Expanding procedure of *Omkar Kriya* [IV.2])

Let us again make use of this "internalized *Thokar*" process in order to stimulate
important centers in the brain, helping thus the "pilgrimage" of our awareness towards Sahasrara.

![Diagram of brain centers](image)

Figure 12. Locating some particular centers inside the head

Inhale raising the **Muladhara Chakra** into **Medulla**. The breath is held in order to obtain a better focus of **Prana** in that spot. The internal movement sensation is perceived now inside Medulla. Oscillate slowly your head left – right – return to center, keeping the focus of concentration in Medulla oblongata. Think (mentally chant) Te when you move to the left, Va when you move to the right, Su when you return to the center. Repeat three times, always holding your breath. A calm exhalation follows.

Now raise the second **Chakra** into the posterior part of the **cerebellum**. Hold your breath. Repeat three times the afore described procedure with Te, Va, Su, focusing all your attention into the posterior part of the cerebellum. Exhale and come down to the third **Chakra** location.

Inhale raising the third **Chakra** to the **Pons Varolii** (to perceive it, come from the cerebellum toward the center of the head, over Medulla – a few centimeters forward). Hold your breath. Repeat the procedure with Te, Va, Su three times, focusing all your attention on the Pons Varolii. Exhale and come down in the fourth **Chakra**.

Inhale, raising the fourth **Chakra** over the pons Varolii in the point marked with "4" in Figure 12. To perceive it, slightly swing your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from the point between the eyebrows backwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the fontanelle. This center is the point of intersection of the two lines. When you have it, repeat three times at that point the procedure with Te, Va, Su. Exhale and come down in the fifth **Chakra**.

Inhale, raise it into the point marked with "5" in figure 12. To perceive it, swing slightly your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from **Bindu** forwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the
fontanelle. This center is the point of intersection of the two lines. Repeat three times in that point the procedure with Te, Va, Su. Exhale and come down in Medulla.

Inhale, raise it into Bindu. Repeat three times in Bindu the procedure with Te, Va, Su. Exhale and come down to the point between the eyebrows. Inhale, ideally raise the region between the eyebrows into fontanelle, which is the seventh Chakra trigger point. Repeat there the procedure with Te, Va, Su three times.


Remarks 1
Not only the points "4" and "5" but also the other centers of the head can be perceived better by the help of some light oscillatory movements. When you chant Te, Va, Su you can oscillate the head to the left, right and to return to the center with a small bump when you think Su. This is of great help.

Note 2
The procedure creates a very strong effect. It can be described as the ability to see in a merciless way the ego's subtle tricks that drive human actions. The reason for many wrong decisions appears with a definitive clarity, free of all covering veils. The ego is a very complicated mental structure: it is not possible to destroy it, but it can be made transparent. There is a price to pay: there might appear (hours after the practice) inexplicable waves of fear, the sensation of not knowing where you are and where you are directed to. This is a natural reaction coming from some subtle layers of the brain one has touched.

6. Making use of the Mantra Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su in Omkar Kriya
(Instead of the Mantra Te Va Su)

The Omkar Kriya technique described in the previous Chapter (see [IV.2]) has a remarkable power of stimulating the Chakras leading you to the state of meditation. Some love the evocative meaning of the central part of the Mantra Om Namo Bhagabate Vasudevaya. They read it as: Bhagaba Tevasu which means: "Bhagavan Tat Tvam Asi!" (You are that Bhagavan!)

Let us see how to utilize this six-syllable Mantra.

Let us consider any Chakra (except Ajna) visualizing it as usual – a horizontal disk.

Bend slowly the head forward: feel a certain internal pressure on the frontal part of the Chakra. Mentally chant Bha in that place.
Raise your head and, without turning the face, bend it slightly toward the left shoulder. Feel an internal pressure on the left part of the Chakra. Mentally chant Ga in that place.

Raise your head and tilt it backwards. Feel an internal pressure on the back of the Chakra. Mentally chant Ba in that place.

Raise your head and, without turning the face, bend it slightly toward the right shoulder. Feel an internal pressure on the right part of the Chakra. Mentally chant Te in that place.

Raise your head and bend it slowly forward: feel an internal pressure on the frontal part of the Chakra. Mentally chant Va in that place.

Raise your head and bring your attention in the central part of the Chakra. Mentally vibrate Su there.

Moving this way from Muladharā up, when you reach the Ajna Chakra, the movement of the energy involves the whole median zone of the head. The movements of the head remain identical (bending in the front – to the left – behind – to the right – in the front – coming up); the syllables of the Mantra are placed: Bha in the frontal part of the head (Kutastha); Ga in the left lobe of the brain; Ba in the occipital region (feeling Bindu); Te in the right lobe of the brain; Va in the frontal part of the head (Kutastha). Then when you raise your head, visualize the current reaching the center of the head and put Su in the seat of Ajna Chakra.

Going up and coming down, always repeating the same procedure (three repetitions of the Mantra each Chakra) constitutes one round: the required time is approximately 6 minutes. By mastering this procedure you will create a counterclockwise movement of energy inside each Chakra starting from the periphery and ending in its center. The effect is pure gold!

After a couple of rounds you merge deeply in the Omkar dimension; immobility settles and you won't be able to move your head anymore.

Appendix: how to handle the apparently negative effects emerging from the practice of the complete form of Thokar

In the previous Chapter we have introduced the "Complete form of Thokar" – a Thokar whose action is extended to the lower Chakras. We have emphasized how problematic may be its action upon our psyche. It is not surprise that some kriyabans reach the conclusion that this procedure generates effects which are essentially negative. This procedure must be completed by the procedures of Navi Kriya, Maha Mudra. They raise awareness and Prana along the spine.

What is suggested here goes in the same direction, increases tremendously the odds of success. It has been taken from Kundalini Yoga. We know that Kundalini Yoga is not Kriya Yoga but its the effects are heaven-sent.
Perform inhalation and exhalation rapidly; exhalation should be done by contracting the abdominal muscles forcibly and quickly, resulting in a backward push. Exhalation and inhalation alternate with equal lengths and occur about two times per second. The navel acts as a pump and it's almost like using the abdomen as bellows. Exhalation is active, inhalation passive. A sudden contraction of the abdominal muscles raises the diaphragm and a volume of air is expelled from the lungs. The sound slightly resembles blowing one's empty nose. As soon as the air is forced out, the abdominal muscles relax, this allows the same volume of air to rush in; inhalation comes automatically. During each expulsion, Prana is sent to the navel and Om is mentally chanted in the navel. After 15-20 of these short exhalations, there is a pause and the breath resumes its normal rhythm. Then another 15-20 of these short breaths are repeated for about 100 mental chants of Om.

Inverted breath
(A particular Pranayama where the breath follows a "reversed" path – reversed in respect to what happens in Kriya Pranayama)

Inhale slowly and deeply. Prana present in the inhaled air is drawn down at the level of Manipura. As you finish your inhalation, swallow and push down gently with your diaphragm in order to firmly compress the energy brought down from above. Simultaneously, practice Mula Bandha raising energy into the third Chakra. Practice also Uddiyana Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha. Go ahead holding your breath and repeating Om, Om, Om... at least 12 times. During this Kumbhaka the air energy is completely locked in, compressed from above and below. Hold your breath for as long as it is comfortable. Feel energy and warmth brimming over into the surrounding abdominal region. Then relax the Bandhas and exhale gently feeling breath and Prana rolling upward through the spine.

Once your first exhalation is complete, again tighten the lower abdomen muscles, inhale a second time, swallow and push down with the diaphragm, thus again compressing the air energy at the area below the navel. Hold your breath and concentrate on this area, feeling the energy building there. Then, again, when it becomes uncomfortable to hold the breath any longer (go ahead repeating Om, Om, Om...), exhale, releasing the air up the spinal channel once again.

This practice blends together Prana and Apana drawing them into Sushumna. The key point is to hold the breath for longer periods.

In order to increase further the power of the procedure, we can fragment each exhalation in short bursts. The lips touch in the central part and the air comes out through the corners of your mouth. By using (with less force) the Kapalabhati principle, the sound of exhalation becomes: s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s ... (The different "s" are perfectly audible). There is a warm sensation in the lips: transfer it to the base of the spine. A warm sensation comes up (slowly but in a perceptible
degree) through the spine. Repeat all the procedure many times and you will see how this warm sensation comes up with more strength to the heart Chakra and upwards.

[3] **Bhashrika Pranayama**
(To create a giant concentration of energy on the heart Chakra)

*Bhashrika Pranayama* is one of the most important *Pranayamas* of the classic Yoga (*Tantric Hatha Yoga* to be more precise.) It consists in forced rapid deep breathing, done with the diaphragm only. It is used here in a targeted way to increase the energy activated with the previous practice in the heart region. Breath through the nose, about one complete breath per second, being aware of what is happening in the spine. You can begin with six repetitions. By focusing behind the heart Chakra, feel the energy oscillating approximately 3 centimeters below and above it. It is like cleaning vigorously the area behind this Chakra. You will feel warm in the region of the fourth Chakra. Then inhale deeply, hold your breath and feel the warm sensation increasing. Exhale intensifying that sensation. You can now repeat Thokar upon the heart Chakra followed by *Bhashrika Pranayama* in order to increase this warm sensation until you reach a paroxysm of joy.

(Consider also an incremental routine of this process– what this means is explained in Chapter 9.)

After all these practices enter a total immobility and enjoy a sweet mental *Pranayama*. Peace, internal joy, calmness of breath, listening of internal sounds, perceiving spiritual light... this is what you will experience. Your practice of *Kriya* will become a love story with Beauty itself. Be sure, be confident: after a certain period of time, a remarkable experience of *Kundalini* awakening will happen. It will overcome you when you rest in the supine position. Without experiencing any start of surprise, you will find yourself ferried from a sweet dream to an authentic heaven; you will return to daily life with tears in your eyes.
PART III: KRIYA YOGA IN PRACTICE

CHAPTER 9
BUILDING A SOLID BASIS FOR THE PRACTICE OF KRIYA YOGA

In this chapter we are going to discuss a very good teaching method to guide the first steps of those who want to learn Kriya Yoga. Its main point is to introduce the concept of Incremental Routine, a method of utilizing the different techniques that is not even hinted at in traditional Kriya literature. The other chapters of this third part of the book contain key ideas about what is really effective in making the Kriya plant flourish at its best.

In my opinion a teacher should always test a student's predisposition for Kriya Yoga. To this purpose, a very good routine is the practice of Nadi Sodhana Pranayama followed by Ujjayi Pranayama (see Appendix to Chapter 1, where a good elementary Pranayama routine is discussed in detail.) Those who undertake constant practice of a similar routine will start to perceive the flow of energy that moves up and down the spine. It goes without saying that students who do not succeed in practicing such an elementary routine regularly for at least 3 to 6 weeks should not even ask to be introduced to Kriya Pranayama proper.

By the way, Nadi Sodhana Pranayama is far more important than expert kriyabans are willing to admit. Actually – this is my firm opinion – the practice of Nadi Sadhana 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. As for Ujjayi, this is the very foundation of Kriya Pranayama. Those who practice it and pay due attention to the natural throat sound of the breath will discover that the core phenomenon of Kriya Pranayama happens spontaneously.

For many students, the combined practice of Nadi Sodhana and Ujjayi becomes such a joyous discovery of well-being and joy that they may develop an "addiction" to it. Even if they won't "upgrade" to Kriya, a minimal practice of these two techniques will always be part of their life.

About introducing the First Kriya set of techniques

I would avoid the particular frenzy that accompanies a traditional Kriya initiation where all the practical instructions are transmitted hastily in one single lesson! This is what usually happens with mass initiations. Within a few days, almost all details are forgotten and one goes through a crisis. The teacher is no longer there.
and the other fellow *kriyabans* dismiss their fraternal duties by stating they are not authorized to give counsels.

Instead of this insane and stupid situation, teaching one to one is the only reasonable alternative. Then, things may go differently! The few people who have had this privilege remember the words of their teacher, with the same voice inflection, for all of their lives.

In certain circumstances (one might visit his teacher and not be able to remain there for more than one day), it might be necessary to demonstrate all the techniques in one single lesson, but generally speaking one should be introduced to the *Kriya* techniques a bit at a time so that one can experience them without any tension.

In the first lesson I would not teach *Navi Kriya*, whose "time" will come later, nor *Yoni Mudra* either since that could be a source of disturbance. I would restrict the teaching to *Kriya Pranayama* (first and second part only). After a couple of weeks, the second lesson should be devoted to emphasizing the details of *Kriya Pranayama* that really matter. Only then should the other techniques of *First Kriya* be introduced and checked, and thus the teaching of *First Kriya* be completed.

**Some points to be emphasized**

1. *Experience of the beauty of Talabya Kriya and Om Japa (in the Chakras)*

Some organizations, in their didactic effort to bring *Kriya Yoga* to the people, picked out some easy techniques as a preparation.

P. Y. choose to give *Hong Sau* and *Om* techniques for six months. The first technique calms the breath and the psycho-physical system. The second technique addresses listening to the internal (astral) sounds, and the *Om* sound. Both are wonderful techniques, but in Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*, the preliminary techniques are *Talabya Kriya* and the chanting of *Om* in the *Chakras*. A *kriyaban* should never overlook them. They usher a *kriyaban* into a state that is considered a real "benediction." A meditation session could be composed of only these two techniques followed by a few minutes of enjoying the induced calmness. Even in this short time one will taste a very deep calmness.

Oddly enough, *Talabya Kriya* doesn't require concentrating on anything, it is purely physical. Just as an attempt to justify this, we can say that merely pressing the tongue against the upper palate and maintaining the suction effect on the palate for 10-15 seconds, can, in and of itself, generate sensitivity in the *Ajna Chakra* area in a very short time. The detail of extending the tongue plays an important part too. When the tongue is fully extended, it pulls on some cranial bones and leads to decompression of the whole area.

2. *Experience the beauty of Pranayama with short breath not only during a Kriya routine but also during additional free moments during the day*

A famous *Kriya* teacher said that if you want to make remarkable spiritual
progress, you should engage yourselves in being aware of at least 1728 breaths a day. Experiencing this is surely possible for everyone – at least once in a week – by practicing the technique of Pranayama with short breath for about three hours. This is a great feat that will surely produce the Omkar experience.

3. Never skip the practice of mental Pranayama at the end of a routine

Mental Pranayama has a divine beauty. Without mental Pranayama, Kriya Yoga risks becoming a self-imposed torture, a nightmare. I bet that without it one unfailingly gives up Kriya Yoga, unless one is sustained by the excitement and expectations created in him by a heavy process of indoctrination.

4. Experience the importance of Maha Mudra

It is very wise that a kriyaban practices Maha Mudra before Kriya Pranayama. It is good to feel the difference between Kriya Pranayama with and without Maha Mudra.

The most serious schools of Kriya recommend that for every 12 Kriya Pranayama, one should perform one Maha Mudra – three remains the minimum number. (To make it clear, those who practice 60 Kriya Pranayamas should perform Maha Mudra five times, while those who practice 12 or 24 Pranayamas should perform it three times.) Unfortunately, having listened to different kriyabans, I dare say it would be a miracle if kriyabans regularly practiced even the three required repetitions. Others believe they are practicing Kriya correctly without ever practicing one single Maha Mudra! There is no doubt that if you regularly skip this technique and lead a sedentary life, the spinal column will lose its elasticity. One's physical condition deteriorates over the years and it becomes almost impossible to maintain the correct meditation position for more than a few minutes – that is why Maha Mudra is so important for kriyabans.

There are reports of yogis having achieved fantastic experiences using only this technique. According to their accounts, the perception of Sushumna has increased tremendously. There are kriyabans who have set aside all the other Kriya techniques and practiced 144 Maha Mudra in two sessions daily. They consider Maha Mudra the most useful among all Kriya Yoga techniques.

5. Avoid any obsession about technical details

Some students call their teacher every other day with tortuous and bizarre questions. They believe that something valuable can spring only from an impeccable execution of the "magic recipe" of Kriya. They pour into their Kriya path a remarkable commitment, but get nothing in return. They do not understand how important it is to enjoy the practice as it comes out naturally and to work on refinements – using their intuition and reasoning upon their direct experience – only afterward. It is as if their expectations are a shield that prevents the genuine beauty of Kriya from entering their life. However, they will soon get tired of asking questions and will eventually abandon everything.
6. Understand that the joy coming from meditation is more important than self analysis

Some kriyabans exacerbate the previous obsession for technical details by not trusting the sheer employment of a technique, even it is done correctly, unless it is coupled with toilsome psychological work.

They want to build brick by brick, by the sweat of their brow, as if it were a highly complex project of adding new structure to old structure, the majestic building of their redemption. They think that only by tormenting their psychological structure is it possible to uproot any deeply ingrained bad habit and the very roots of iniquity and egoism. Often they impose upon themselves useless privations and attempt unnatural renunciations. They do not understand what the spiritual dimension of life is. Their idea is that the Divine resides outside our human dimension and therefore we can progress only if we start a strenuous fight against our instincts. Religious conditioning can be very strong, fatal in certain cases.

Some entertain the thought of retiring from active life in order to live a life of self-denial. The few who have the opportunity to achieve this (not necessarily entering a convent but for example quitting their job and living by a modest lifetime annuity) are doomed to discover that this sudden leap into this ardently longed-for condition does not fulfill their desire for perennial peace coupled with ardent mystical inspiration. 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 impose on yourself perfect chastity. There are famous books on Yoga demanding impossible things. How precious would be a book that teaches how to use one's own intelligence and to think with one's own head!

Avoid any compulsive process of self analysis. Do not try to discover exact grounds on which to justify continuous fluctuations between feelings of well-being and joy during Kriya and periods where there will be nothing pleasurable or exciting. The best attitude is to let Kriya enter your life and bring all the possible benedictions without tormenting yourself because you feel unworthy. Blessed are those who have the courage to go ahead unswervingly, in spite of their failures, worthlessness and unsuitability!

Behave like a dedicated maid who does her daily duties with patience and circumspection. She prepares the daily meal, taking care of all the details from the tedious task of peeling potatoes to the final art of putting on the finishing touches. The awareness of having completed her job well is her gratification.

In time there is a greater reward for those who practice Kriya
conscientiously even if they see no apparent result. Something tremendously vast will manifest and crush down any dichotomy of worthy/unworthy, pure/impure. It is not only a matter of astral sounds and light, cosmic expansion, or basking in endless joy – your very perception of Reality will change. Some will rediscover an almost forgotten potentiality of aesthetic enjoyment (as if they had eyes and heart for the first time); others will be deeply moved by the significance of their family, by the value of lifelong friendship and will be surprised by the intensity of the responses of love from their heart.

At the onset of their *Kriya* path, some students are far from abiding by not only Patanjali’s moral rules but also common-sense guided health rules. Often there is a clear split between the new interest in meditation and other well-rooted social habits.

It’s a good rule for a teacher to pretend not to notice problematic delusive student behavior. Undoubtedly after months of practice, some changes in a *kriyaban*’s temperament and habits will appear, but they will be unstable. A teacher values the constancy of the practice of meditation and avoids censorial attitudes. Often, to help a *kriyaban* get free from a harmful habit, you need only to give him a glance and a smile. The point is that beginners are not able to realize they are slaves to bad habits. Let us take for example the problem of smoking. How many have a clear vision of the real situation? Paradoxically, it is easier to quit smoking because of a new ecological vogue than as a result of a lucid vision of one’s addiction to nicotine.

**EXPERIENCE THE PEERLESS EFFECTS OF THE INCREMENTAL ROUTINES**

*Kriyabans* customarily practice the same standard techniques day in and day out changing neither the sequence nor the number of repetitions. In fact, an unvarying routine that always takes the same amount of time is what is recommended by many organizations. There is no doubt that a fixed routine is the best practice for beginners; however, practicing it for one’s entire life is something else!

In the first part of the book I have introduced the concept of *Incremental Routine*. I strongly recommend that a student focus on fundamental *Kriya* techniques like *Navi Kriya*, *Kriya Pranayama*, and the *basic form of Thokar* and practice them intensively following the format of the *Incremental Routine*. This is one of the most worthwhile activities a *kriyaban* can engage in, an effort that will play a decisive role in building the foundation for a lifelong enjoyment of *Kriya*. When the earnestness of the student is unquestionable, it is wise to encourage them to begin at least one *Incremental Routine*. This counsel should be given without lingering or investigating too much.

I have witnessed unbelievable results in those who follow this counsel, results that are inconceivable to those who follow a traditional practice.

Gopi Krishna wrote how hopeless is the attempt to obtain a full realization of the potentialities contained in the human body and mind by going on only in the
traditional way (a few minutes of concentration following the format of the commonly-counseled unvarying routine.)

"... the whole kingdom is the product of the activity of Prana and the atoms of matter both combined. [...] Nothing would be more ridiculous to suppose that this combination of Prana and matter which resulted in such marvelous organizations of living creatures be so flimsy and unstable as to yield readily to the human will. The impression prevailing in the minds of some people that a few minutes’ exercise of concentration can work miracles in changing one’s existing level of consciousness [...] is, therefore, as correct as it would be suppose that repeated light hammer-blows dealt to a metal can lead to the release of atomic energy. An overhauling of the entire human body is necessary to effect a radical transformation of consciousness [...] This is the reason why real success in Yoga is so very rare." (Gopi Krishna Kundalini: The Secret of Yoga).

What happens in athletics gives us a good example of how to progress. Athletes who wish to achieve world class performance must somehow increase the intensity and the quality of their practice. Only through short intensive interval training sessions where they 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.

Now, do not be offended by the comparison between Kriya and sports. 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.

We understand, of course, that this process is an authentic challenge and beginning it is an act of courage, a mature act of trust in Kriya and in oneself, a decision that should only be inspired by one's intuition.

Kriya techniques arouse specific effects (especially perceived the next day following the practice) which may appear as disturbing: moods, fancies, memories and suddenly-arising desires. Actually this is a clue that a cleansing process is happening in one's subconscious mind. Kriyabans should be familiar with the basic laws of the human psyche. Coupling an Incremental Routine, to be practiced once a week, with the daily practice of a simple Kriya routine has within itself an equilibrating mechanism that will help them to get through alternating moods that will surely appear during the way.

There are situations such as the anguished feeling of being overwhelmed by a sudden storm of increasingly dark pessimism, in which kriyabans should sense if it is necessary to stop their practice for a few weeks. After the pause, the "warrior" in them will return to the battlefield ready to bring this wonderful work to fruition.
I. Incremental Routine of Navi Kriya

Here is an example of the very words we can use to introduce a student to an easy but very important Incremental Routine:

"On Saturdays – or on any free day – after a short practice of Talabya Kriya, Maha Mudra and Kriya Pranayama, practice 8 sets of Navi Kriya, thus doubling the number of the usual 4 scheduled repetitions. As usual, complete your routine with mental Pranayama. The following day, you can take a break from all Kriya practices and you can give your mind the balm of a long, tranquil Japa. For the next few days, resume the original standard routine.

On the following Saturday, practice 3 times the normal number of Navi Kriya, i.e. 12 sets. Of course, this is always to be done within the framework of Talabya, Maha Mudra... finish with mental Pranayama. If possible take a long walk in the evening to calm the deep regions of your psyche. The following day rest by doing just Japa and go for a walk... After one week, or two if you wish, practice 16 sets of Navi Kriya... and so on .... 20, 24...up to 80 sets, which is 20 times the original recommended number.

The increase of this delicate Kriya 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.

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.

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."

It is possible to choose any variation of Navi Kriya, but the best is surely variation [4.2] explained in chapter 8 ("Coming down through four directions"). It rivets the attention in a way the basic form cannot. Its smooth shifting of energy along the circumference of the head has an unparalleled effect. As for this variation, since one set consists of 36 descents of energy, preceded and followed by chanting Om in the Chakras, the process begins with 36 x 2 descents. The next steps are: 36 x 3, 36 x 4,..., 36 x 19, 36 x 20. It has been experimentally proven that there is no need to go beyond 36 x 20 repetitions.
As for this variation, it happens that after the first half hour the head movements are hardly noticeable. In other words, the forward, backward, and sideways movement of the chin is reduced to a couple of millimeters!

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. That rupture between matter and spirit inside each human is a permanent source of excruciating conflicts in the lives of many spiritual searchers. Through this Incremental Routine and through conscious effort towards harmony between the two dimensions of Spirit and matter in our daily lives, the healing of this rupture takes place. Although the healing is harmonious, visible manifestations can be interpreted negatively by others, often due to a kriyaban's newly acquired confidence and conviction that may appear to be stubbornness or dogmatism. The personality of a kriyaban is destined to be ideally collected around a central point and all inner conflicts healed. The effects are perceived inwardly and 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!"

II. Incremental Routine of Kriya Pranayama

After some months (when the previous Incremental Routine of Navi Kriya is completed or at least half completed), the kriyaban can begin a parallel process using the technique of Kriya Pranayama and increasing it gradually. 36 x 2, 36 x 3, up to 36 x 20 Kriya Pranayamas is a very good plan; 24 x 2, 24 x 3,......24 x 24 is lighter but also good. Practice in sequence the three phases of Kriya Pranayama, abiding by what is said in Chapter 6. When the practice is broken into two or three parts – for example between morning and afternoon – you always start from phase 1, then introduce phase 2 and then phase 3.
I have learned to respect all Kriya schools, but I will tell you now that when I tried to increase the number of Kriya Pranayama that I was taught to perform in my first school, after 60 repetitions of Kriya Pranayama I developed so much nervousness that I couldn't remain sitting. Now, with my new Kriya Pranayama (closed mouth, partly with Kechari and partly without, and mentally chanting Om in each Chakra) I neared 1000 Kriya breaths, always dwelling in the most complete tranquility.

However, I counsel here to move forward prudently, not giving too much attention to the right length for each breath. During this process (Incremental Routine) it is absolutely necessary to follow nature, respecting the rhythm of the breath suited to one's own constitution. If you feel that your breath is too short, don't worry about it! You will have plenty of time in the future to lengthen it. Furthermore, when more than a 100 breaths are practiced, it is wise to make use of the 12 letter Mantra "Om Namo Bhagabate Vasudevaya" (Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba coming up and Te Va Su De Va Ya coming down), which does not mean to apply all the subtle details of Omkar Pranayama but simply to utilize that beautiful Mantra. 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.

In these optimal conditions, be ready to become absorbed in a most sweet experience. Don't be upset if on some occasions this routine becomes an extraordinary journey in your memory. It happens indeed that by focusing our attention on the Chakras we obtain a particular effect: the inner screen of our awareness begins to display a lot of images. This is a physiological fact and we have reasons to suspect that for 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 one's 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, our 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 our life.

III. Incremental Routine of the Basic form of Thokar
(Procedure [II.1] explained in Chapter 7)

This third Incremental Routine has a value beyond words. Its Incremental scheme is different from the two previous Incremental Routines. We have already hinted at it in Chapter 7. Starting from 12, a kriyaban adds six repetitions per week. The fixed maximum of repetitions is 200.

Let us clarify what I mean, adding six repetitions per week. During the first week practice 12 repetitions each day. Then consider the practice of 18 repetitions each day – But, if there are problems, practice this technique every other day. The third week you can practice 24 repetitions on alternate days. It is not necessary to practice every day; rather it is wise to work three days a week on the average. When you reach a consistent number of repetitions (more that 60) the effects are very strong. Therefore be very careful. Do not practice more than 200 repetitions.
I hope the reason is clear why we have said that this last Incremental scheme is different from the plan utilized for the Incremental Routine of Navi Kriya and of Kriya Pranayama, in which you practice only once in a week.

As for the necessity of having achieved Kechari Mudra before practicing Thokar, there are many who have practiced Thokar with enthusiasm and with admirable commitment who have benefited from its remarkable effects but who have not realized this Mudra. Kriya literature affirms Kechari Mudra is crucial for initiation into the Higher Kriyas. Acharyas of original Kriya indeed demand to see the actual execution of Kechari Mudra – they want the student's mouth opened in front of them and to see the tongue disappear into the nasal pharynx.

Now, there is no doubt that Kechari Mudra helps to perceive the vibrational state, rhythm, and astral location of each Chakra, but to those who are depressed because they are not able to achieve Kechari Mudra, let us remind you (without any fear of being contradicted) that many mystics who experienced the Divine never heard of Kechari Mudra.

Many Kriya Acharyas claim that: "Until one is established in Kechari Mudra, one cannot achieve the state of Eternal Tranquility." This statement is false.

As for a possible Incremental Routine of the Advanced form of Thokar, it is unrealistic to give any indication. Those who have achieved the breathless state, and are able to effortlessly hold the breath during this practice, are not keen to follow any other cautionary warning about the number of rotations to be practiced. Anyone who succeeds in that form of Thokar usually doesn't have the patience to gradually increase the number of the rotations. During this Incremental Routine important experiences occur. An endless Beauty, creating a previously unknown devotion, intensifies around the fourth Chakra, as if a mighty hand were squeezing the chest region. One feels like they are being immobilized by an immense strength. It is because of the intensity of this experience, which sometimes seems difficult to endure, that the effect of Thokar has been described as "intoxicating".

The dazzling point that is perceived in the center of the heart Chakra and that turns out to be the star inside the third eye gives a kriyaban a deeper experience. There comes the feeling of being divided into a thousand parts – each one of them on the verge of exploding from bliss. It is only now, having in one's heart the reverberation of such a state, that one learns to meditate without mental pollution, and without imaginings.

I wonder how those devotees who never had a taste of such bliss are able to find the strength to continue practicing Kriya for years. You can only thank those uncertain illusions about Kriya, those improbable promises that books and gurus make to those interested in Yoga and meditation to attract them to the Kriya path, which keep one tied to this practice until the real experience happens.
Global Results Achieved through the Completion of the Afore-Described Incremental Routines

After completing these three Incremental Routines, one has the feeling that entire eons have passed and one has achieved something concrete and permanent. After this once-in-a-lifetime experience, a person seems "older" in wisdom and temperament, as if several decades had passed. They have learned how to keep emotions at bay (I mean superficial emotions) in such a way that only deep sentiments then guide their decisions.

Among other things, we cannot conceive that a kriyaban who doesn't develop this faculty can nevertheless "survive" on the Kriya path. You cannot imagine how delicate an operation it is remaining faithful to the Kriya path that can suddenly go bad! We are governed by emotions and instincts that include our religious conditioning, our weak points, our fears, our doubts, and our pessimism. It is important to have the ability to go our way even when our closest friends are trying to convince us to follow theirs.

I have tried to retrace this theme in some oriental books but I have found so much rhetoric, too many words without practical meaning. They distinguish between positive (affection, happiness, contentment...) and negative (envy, aggressiveness, illusion ...) emotions, but at the end of boring discussions you still have not grasped the essential fact: untamed emotions can create disaster in our life. This fact is serious, and tremendously important. In my opinion, kriyabans who are not able to complete at least one Incremental Routine of a basic Kriya technique are always on the verge of losing everything they have realized.

We all know that frantic and hysterical emotions often rise unexpectedly from one's inner self, then disappear after a while. They actually express a reality devoid of authentic depth but their propulsive action inevitably results in hurried acts accompanied by a sort of cerebral fever, nourished by a narrow, visceral pleasure. When passion inflames one's whole being, it is not possible to be guided by common sense; the consequence is that our deeper and most earnest choices sometimes withdraw to an irrevocable halt.

Just as during the summer hail stones are molded, condensed and enlarged in the air before falling down to the earth and cause disasters, fatal decisions take shape in advance in one's imagination. During daily, frequent daydreams, the perspective of renouncing something positive which requires a great commitment throws a false light upon our immediate future, so that what in the past would appear as an act of cowardice, now seems to glitter at the horizon of our life, like a dull, flat, somber sky that suddenly lights up, serene, in luminous azure blue. When we listen to such alluring emotions, we pave the way for our doom. A wrong decision may become our crucifixion, our covenant with unhappiness, with a state of inner misery that will last a lifetime.

And lo, some put aside Kriya Yoga forever while others interrupt a course of studies and throw away a profession they had been dreaming for years for which they had fought and suffered. They do the same with a beloved, with friends, with their family itself. Nothing can stop them: the wise words of people
near them have no power to stop them. An indomitable internal strength wants to produce sheer calamity in their life. Sometimes we have the idea that a person wants only one thing: to affirm with stubbornness his "right to pain and suffering." [The sentence in quotation marks is an expression of the Mother – main disciple and companion of Sri Aurobindo.]

The decision to yield to emotions does not differ from that of an asteroid falling through the atmosphere on its way to fire and destruction.

To this very common tragedy, "emotional maturity" is opposed: this is a healthy relationship with reality, the quintessence of what we visualize when we use the terms "wisdom, mental health, centrality ..." This is exactly what one can obtain through the practice of the Incremental Routines.

Another important effect of the Incremental Routines is that one develops the quality of a self-teacher.

At the very beginning of the Kriya path, it is okay to put a certain amount of trust in a school or in a teacher, but subsequently, one has to trust his own experience and intuition. Most kriyabans begin their path as gullible persons, ready to be cheated. The Incremental Routines change their life: they replace the infantilism of hanging on "authorized" teachers' every word with an objective estimate of the effects of each technique and of each routine. Unsure and full of doubts, kriyabans become able to be acutely creative and ameliorate day by day the execution of the techniques, "reading" with objectivity the obtained results. Having shaped a sound vision of Kriya, they do not feel the necessity of practicing under the supervision of Kriya experts. In the days following a long session of practice, one has a deeper understanding of the technique through perceiving its essence intuitively. One receives important clues: certain details of a technique appear as wearisome and prove useless; other aspects reveal all their power and are greatly appreciated.

Some remarks about the Tribhangamurari movement related Incremental Routines

In Chapter 7 we have described the micro movement Tribhangamurari techniques. That movement is perceived first by simply moving one's awareness along a prescribed path, then through the help of a Mantra and also with the help of movements of the head.

As for the purpose of those techniques, the main idea was that they induce the natural movement of Kundalini energy and guide it to cross, during its return flow toward its seat in Muladhara, the three main knots (Granti): tongue/Medulla, heart and coccyx. It is obvious that this theoretical explanation would require more space and other key clarification. The given description has raised many doubts in the readers. Their legitimate objections are worth quoting.

A very pertinent one was: "These techniques come from Satya Charan Lahiri (grandson of Lahiri Mahasaya) but we have no proof they come from Lahiri Mahasaya. We know that Satya Charan practiced seriously after retiring.
Now, who guided him, as his father Tincouri Lahiri was no more there. Could he have misinterpreted the diaries and diagrams describing the Thokar technique?"

Other readers asked why many schools don't teach anything related to the Tribhangamurari movement but consecrate the last stages either to Thokar or to Gayatri Kriya (the process of raising the Chakras into Kutastha.)

As many have observed, some drawings which appeared in Kriya Yoga books, inspired by Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries, show something similar to the Tribhangamurari movement but not identical.

Other questions show the genuine desire to understand where in one's daily routine to place the Tribhangamurari techniques and, above all, if the Thokar-Tribhangamurari can replace the different stages of Thokar.

In my opinion Thokar-Tribhangamurari doesn't substitute for the classic form of Thokar; Tribhangamurari techniques are an enrichment, you can test their power only by practicing them. The problem is that their effect cannot be received if the counseled numbers for each one of them are ignored.

They require an immense amount of dedication during a long part our life – I mean years not months.

The Tribhangamurari techniques have the power to create a permanent transformation in your attitude towards Kriya by making you acquainted with a mostly unknown ecstatic state while fully living the experience of life – let us define it as a sort of trance with open eyes. Once again, I must stress that they should be experienced first inside a rigid scheme of Incremental Routines.

Some students try to relish right away the power of Thokar-Tribhangamurari by a desultory, system-less experimentation, far from abiding by the above-mentioned rules. What could be the real impact of the Thokar-Tribhangamurari technique remains unknown and not even vaguely foreshadowed.

Now, if you consider the enormous amount of time that these Incremental Routines require, you understand that no one is able to tackle with them without having an extreme trust in another person, in one who gives you that instruction, who looks into your eyes and with a serene smile challenges you to experience the mystery of Unworldly Beauty they contain.

The only thing I can do, the only thing worth doing, is to relate what is stored in my memory – the experiences that happened and the spiritual advice received. What happened in my life was a miracle. When I received these techniques, I was completely free from work. I could complete all the Incremental Routines as they were proposed to me, even those that appeared as "impossible." Of course, receiving a boost, a strong encouragement, from a person who had already practiced them was indispensable. If I had read those techniques in a book, I would have surely failed in respecting the numbers; the effect would have been far from being the same.
One of the most difficult periods of my life began when I received the *Amantrak* technique. I felt down and had strange emotional and mental mood changes. It was like experiencing a slow recovery from a nervous breakdown that robbed me of my energy and joy of living. Actually I felt an absolute lack of enthusiasm; it was as if there existed no activity that could produce any satisfaction. I felt extraneous to activities that I would otherwise have found very enticing. Some days I remained in my room doing nothing, as in a state of convalescence.

In some ways I was prepared for this event. My teacher had explained that by perceiving this new flow of energy along the *Tribhangamurari* path, one would foster a decrease in the hectic condition caused by superficial emotions. The impression of having no feeling, of being dull, insensible, was only an illusion due to this meaningful internal transformation.

When the amount of practice spent perceiving the *Tribhangamurari* flow became greater than one hour, I felt like I was going to explode. I felt how difficult it was to bear all that power. My dreams were very lucid; I woke up in the morning as if I had lived a deeply intriguing and captivating adventure. Oddly, when I approached the 200 repetitions, any trouble disappeared. That period was marked by an uncurbed enthusiasm about my new practice.

After having completed the prescribed numbers of *Amantrak*, without waiting for the official initiation, I immediately started the practice of *Samantrak*. All of us in the small group knew what would have been the technique of *Samantrak* by simply reflecting on its name (*Sa-mantrak* = with the *Mantra*.) It had to be a 12 syllable *Mantra*: obviously "*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.*"

I had my first *Samantrak* session in springtime on a near perfect day, when the pure air, fresh but pleasant, invited me to practice outdoors, where I enjoyed a blue sky with a small cluster of clouds floating in the golden light. I was really happy, and it seemed I had entered a new dimension. There were only few repetitions of the technique, but they changed my mood. *Samantrak* was like turning on various lights along the three-curved path. It was as if so much sun and clear skies finally entered my practice. The *Mantra's* syllables, which I put with care like seeds in each center, would warm me up the way the sun warmed up the land around me.

The only problem was that the use of the *Mantra* would induce me to go speedily. It was only when I decided to make a special effort to go ahead slowly, that the *Tribhangamurari* path began to be "lit."

Despite the fact that pauses in each *Chakra* were short, I had the impression of reaping the reward of my practice of the *Gayatri Kriya*. The colors of the *Chakras*, namely the colors of the relative *Tattwas*, were perceived, first timidly and then always with great clarity.

Though having not yet completed the last sessions of *Samantrak*, my soul was already projected upon the next step, eagerly anticipating its effects. The words of my teacher at the time resounded in my mind: "The practice of *Thokar* (meaning the *Thokar-Tribhangamurari* technique) will produce a state of intoxication: you will be drunk with joy all day long!"
At long last, I received the yearned-for technique. That moment of my life was really a magic one. I would be lying if I did not say that I have an endless nostalgia for it. Since I practiced this routine in summer and in the open air, I associate it with long sunsets, with evenings that seemed to have no end.

Through this procedure, the Tribhangamurari flow is intensified by specific movements of the head. In Chapter 7 I have described how a continuous slow movement of the chin ends with a jerk directed on a specific center, then, after a micro pause, the movement restarts and there is another jerk directed on the next center and so on – five jerks. The problem is that many kriyabans focus all the attention on giving the strokes and don't understand the value of creating mental pressure along each millimeter of the path. The desire to get a strong effect too soon should be curbed. The Thokar-Tribhangamurari can be ideally mastered in four steps. Let us here consider the movement sensation up the spine and down along the three-curved path:

1. First of all it is necessary to feel that the movements of the head accompany perfectly, millimeter after millimeter, the flow of the internal current. For some time, we make a point of forgetting any attempt at intensification. Before considering a further step, we do our best to obtain an uninterrupted perception of the current.

2. Only now we can try to intensify the perception of the internal flow by creating a mental pressure along each part of it. We utilize the movements of our head to "touch with pressure" each millimeter of the path, up and down. The chin is to be moved slowly as we are striving to win a strong resistance. In Chapter 7 we have suggested the idea: "like squeezing with a pencil an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last little bit out."

3. Now we focus on what is happening when, stopping for a fraction of a second, we vibrate the related syllable in a center. We develop a resolve to become aware of each of the 12 centers. While points 1 and 2 benefit from our effort with Amantrak, point 3 benefits from our effort with Samantrak.

4. Only at this point we give all possible emphasis to the five strokes and we perceive also what is radiating out of each center after the stroke.

If I could add a fifth further point, it would be to give extreme attention to what happens while chanting Teee in the Medulla. In that moment we must try to reach (to become intensely aware of) the Kutastha.

Let me now give an idea of what the standard Incremental Routine of Thokar-Tribhangamurari implies.

While Amantrak and Samantrak are practiced every day, the Incremental sessions of Thokar-Tribhangamurari are practiced once a week (the other days one can, however, practice up to 36 repetitions.) A kriyaban must have had all the time necessary to metabolize the subconscious material that the strong action exerted upon Muladhara brings to the surface.
A kriyaban perceives first a tranquil flow of energy rising along the spine during 20-30 seconds (this is in itself a strong experience), then while coming down, the head follows the inner flow along the three-curved path, cutting the three main knots during 20-30 seconds. The movements are perfectly rational and have only one purpose: to increase the strength of the process. In five places linked with Va Su De Va Ya we have the strokes. By moving the head left, then right, then left, a kriyaban creates an Ida-Pingala balance. At this point there is the stroke upon the Muladhara followed by the ascent through the spine. By repeating this process again and again, there is real hope that one succeeds in entering the Sushumna channel, stopping the breath and enjoying a blissful ecstatic state!

One begins with 36 rounds; a week later one practices 36x2, then 36x3 ... and finally 36x36 repetitions. This means 1296 rounds! Can you imagine the powerful effects of this action? 1296 means that you begin in the morning and end in the night, doing again and again the same action. There is no doubt that you'll succeed in opening the door of Sushumna! Of course you have prepared this experience by practicing 36x35, and before that 36x34.... And don't forget that you have practiced Amantrak for months and Samantrak for another cycle of months!

Living those long sessions sitting in the open countryside, in total freedom and in a state of mystical "intoxication" was an unforgettable event. For weeks I had the tendency to practice too quickly, risking never tasting the essence of the procedure. In time I appreciated going slowly and feeling that the process of Thokar happened along the whole path. This created a particular mental intensity of perception.

When in the late afternoon the practice neared the end, I was keen to diminish the strength of the movements of my head and to enjoy the pure vibration of each syllable. Towards the end of those blessed days, I often violated the instruction to chant the syllables only mentally. I slowly uttered each syllable in a whisper, enjoying a micropause after each of these utterings. This was enough to perceive the sweet irradiation springing out from each center. This perception amplified my experience of joy. In this Incremental Routine I found not only peace but love, bliss, intoxication... everything.

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 my mind went on repeating: "A human being has never been granted so much joy!"

To each dubious kriyaban I would like to say: "Be assured that if you practice the correct number of Amantrak and Samantrak, then the experience of Thokar-Tribhangamurari will never disappoint you and will become your favorite technique!"

About two months after beginning this last practice, I took part in a group pilgrimage and walked a full night in order to reach a beautiful sanctuary the following morning. I moved around as if my heart bore a brazier within. I perceived that the center of my personality was not in the brain, but in my heart. Walking on, I would murmur the 12 syllables of the Mantra, ideally putting each
one of them in the related center. I was perfectly aware that mine was not a commonly established way of practicing, but I could not avoid it.

I started to perceive something in my heart, a sort of tension of tenderness. I experienced the strong power that procedure has of changing the way you look at life. I realized that my mates' lives were wrapped up in love. I understood that the reality of love was the most intense force of life, corrupted only by the pollution of mind. I felt that human beings could not by instinct avoid loving or taking care of somebody – their own children for example. I had no doubts that they were able to give their own life for their children. There was in each one of them the power for great and incredible actions. As a consequence, they could not avoid painful experiences.

I felt as though our lives were soaked in love as well as pain and tragedy. This duality was involved in earthly existence, interwoven with our being. The sentiment of this inescapable reality was experienced as a painful grip tearing my chest apart. As 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.

Now I was ready to focus all my efforts on the Micro Tribhanga murari movement. It was impossible however to drop the Macro Tribhanga murari movement entirely. I began experiencing the Macro Movement as a form of Japa before each Kriya routine. With the encouragement of another kriyaban – who practiced in this way for months – I began practicing it with open eyes. For reasons that escape my understanding, the psychological effect of this practice was remarkable. From the very beginning I had realized that an important detail was to move not only my head but my gaze also, smoothly, without jerks. Since this detail is very important, let me dwell upon it.

I started with open eyes and chin on the chest. The eyes looked at the floor. I murmured in a whisper the syllables of the Mantra and simultaneously raised my chin and gaze. My attention moved centimeter after centimeter, looking at anything that was before me. Then, without turning the face, my head moved toward the left shoulder, then returned to the center while at the same time I raised the chin up as much as possible. During this movement, my eyes turned up high. When, from that chin-up position, my face slowly turned to the right, my eyes followed the movement and ended by looking attentively at the area on my right, as far back as possible. Then my face slowly turned to the left. The eyes followed the movement, shifting horizontally without losing any detail of what was in front of me and ended by looking attentively at the area to my left, as far as possible. During the last four strokes given from the left, the intensity of my gaze diminished and the eyelids closed. In the final instant I felt like falling asleep. In this way I repeat the procedure again and again.

The first effect I noticed from the first day of practice was the intensity of oneiric activity. Some dreams remained very vivid in my imagination during the morning hours. I considered this a privileged way of creating a dialog with the unconscious sphere.

I perfected the ability to meditate anywhere and not be disturbed by
anything. While in the beginning I was inclined to be maniacal in preparing the proper meditation environment and became nervous and worried about the slightest thing, now I loved to meditate in unusual places and impossible situations – e.g. traveling by train or watching a movie. I saw that, strangely enough, such occasions could establish, by contrast, a particular state of awareness yielding unhoped-for results.

My practice of *Macro Tribhangamurari movement* with open eyes continues to the present day and I don't want to contemplate the eventuality of dropping it.

*Some remarks about Micro Tribhangamurari routine*

When I received this instruction I was told that, analogously to the *Yoni Mudra* which is practiced every night at the moment a *kriyaban* prepares to withdraw his awareness from the body and from the physical world and gets ready for sleep – which is a "small death" – the *Micro movement Tribhangamurari Incremental Routine* is like a peaceful return to the origin – a preparation to "die forever" – meaning to become forever free in Spirit. It was explained to me that this last *Incremental Routine*, besides being the best preparation for the conscious exit out of the body at death (*Mahasamadhi*), burned forever the necessity of reincarnating. ¹

A *kriyaban* should make every effort to create the opportunity to grant himself the joy and the privilege of completing the recommended number of repetitions without every yielding to the temptation of hurried practices.

In *Micro-movement Incremental Routine* we have 36 sessions of practice. What's new is that the major part of this session requires more than one day.

On the first day you perceive 36 Micro-movements in each of the 12 centers (you start from what we have already envisaged in chapter 7.) The second session requires that you perceive 36x2 Micro movements in each center. [You experience one single long round: 72 Micro movements in the first *Chakra* without interruption, then 72 in the second *Chakra*, and so on....] After some days, you face the third session with 36x3 Micro movements in each center. Then other days pass by. Then you have your 36x4 session which will fill up your whole day.

The next steps: 36x5, 36x6, 36x7, 36x8, will not only fill up a whole day but also part of the next day. Therefore you must divide your effort into two

¹ As for what happens during the process of *Mahasamadhi*, we have heard many stories about possible "Kriya ways" of leaving the physical shell; obviously we cannot vouch for their authenticity. Some assert that the typical practice is *Thokar*, others hint at procedures happening entirely in *Kutastha*. We can reasonably assume that it is not always possible to perform the physical movement of *Thokar*. To focus one's awareness in the spine or at the point between the eyebrows may be the only thing possible. The most interesting thing I've heard is that some *kriyabans*, during the last weeks or months before leaving the body, practice only one technique: perceiving the *Micro-movement Tribhangamurari nel Kutastha*. At the moment of death, they merge with the Infinite through the same procedure.
parts. What was heretofore never allowed now happens: you can sleep a whole night between the two parts which are considered one session. What is important is that you start more or less immediately on the morning of the next day. Therefore, you are not allowed to go to work and it is also recommended that you keep silent, avoiding any opportunity for conversation. (However, the use of common sense should always prevail; if addressed, a polite reply is always imperative.)

You can now understand that the following sessions require more days; the last session requires about 12 days! Let me describe what happens during the last session: you perceive 36x36 micro movements in each center! This means: 1296 micro movements in Muladhara, 1296 in Swadhistan, and so on, ending after some days in Muladhara with 1296 movements.

It is clear that you can complete this routine only when you are free from work. Let me emphasize that one should never skip over a stage. Don't think, "On my next summer holidays I'm going to find a dozen days to practice 36x36." No! It does not work in this way. Before perceiving the Micro movement 36x36 times in each center you must have perceived it 36x35 times. And before this, you should have perceived it 36x34 times, and so on....

Completing this Incremental Routine is really a giant achievement. Many splendid experiences will happen and the last internal obstacles will be cleared one after another.

The period in which I was absorbed in this process is enveloped in my memory by a dreamy aura. I even still find it hard to remember it; sometimes, only in jest, I ask myself if it actually existed. For more than two years I deviated from the common way of living. I practiced all day long, every day, out in the open if possible.

I used to carry along a seat made of a plastic and a wool layer, something to drink, and a thirty-six-bead rosary. I would sit down, breathe deeply and proceed with the Mantra and the consequent Micro movement. At the end of each cycle, I would move an object, a little stone, from one side of my body to the other to keep track of the approximate number of 36 cycles.

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. Many times I wondered what benefit, if any, could be received from what seemed to be a voyage into the unconscious world of dreams.

After interrupting the practice to get 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.

I went on increasing the length of my sessions. From a certain moment onwards, especially by assuming Kechari Mudra, the drowsiness changed into an extraordinary condition of relaxation. More than once I found my back slightly bent forward; I learned not to straighten it with a sudden movement, because that
would interrupt the condition of absorption and quiet.

After many hours of practice, at the end of my day, occasionally, I was caught by such euphoria that I felt the irresistible instinct to swing the body. It was like dancing from a sitting stance, accompanying the dance with a subtle form of internally hitting the center where I was focusing my concentration. Whenever I pronounced the seventh syllable, my trunk swung left, thinking of the following one it swung right... and then left again. When I thought the last syllable my trunk quivered a little, giving such a profusion of bliss!

I learned to practice without being disturbed by anything; in this way, the technique landed in my life as a new instinct arousing spontaneously when I sat down and straightened my spine. From that moment onwards, the heart Chakra became a reality manifesting very easily as a warm, pulsing sensation; the other Chakras became easy detectable by inducing, through a moderate use of attention, a swinging sensation in them. This event deepened my way of practicing the Kriya techniques, erasing forever the necessity of any visualization.  

One day I was on a cliff not far from a beach where a small number of people used to go for a walk. I took shelter under a tree from the sun, and at dusk I went to the beach, leaned my back against a rock and stayed there, pretending to stare at a distant object. I practiced keeping my eyes open. The sky was an indestructible crystal of infinite transparency and the ocean waves were continually changing their color, having in themselves an almost unbearable charm. I was trying to hide my tears behind the black lenses of my sunglasses. 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.

\footnote{Even a little practice of this exercise is a miracle of sweetness. In the last part of your Kriya routine, you can perceive three micro-movements in each of the 12 centers starting from Muladhara and returning to Muladhara. By repeating this for three rounds, you plunge into a state without parallel. After this routine, you can lay down in corpse pose (Savasana) obtaining a particular state of physical and mental immobility where the Kundalini energy will rise into the heart Chakra.}
Chapter 10

Prayer [Japa]: The Basic Instrument of All the Mystical Paths

My purpose is to cope with a vital problem. How many people are there who have started and then give up the practice of the Higher Kriyas? Unfortunately, many receive Thokar without complete explanation and drop its practice after some initial attempts, yielding either insignificant or no results. Other Kriya students enact the part of the humble devotee and affirm that for them the First Kriya techniques are enough, that there is no need for any other technique. If you tell them they have renounced a great treasure, they will turn a deaf ear to any objection. Now, for those who are willing to consider the matter according to a new perspective, I want to bring the Higher Kriyas close to the noble art of the practice of the Prayer of the heart.

Actually, in my opinion, Thokar (in each stage and variation) in order to be fully realized should be lived in the dimension of the Contemplative Prayer. Indeed, if my convictions have any validity, outside that dimension, the whole set of the Higher Kriyas risks to become only a toy with which to experiment, to be exalted through it and then let all be disintegrated by endless doubts and incomprehension of what we are doing.

Am saying that the Kriya path is incomplete without considering the path of Contemplative Prayer? Certainly I am, of this I have no doubts! I am firmly convinced that those who went to Lahiri Mahasaya already practiced Prayer (Japa), probably for substantial part of their life. To them Kriya Yoga didn't represent something totally new but was a God sent improvement of what they already were doing, in which they had already poured their soul. For them the lofty procedure of Thokar worked and actually gave results because they were already very near to the achievement of the Prayer of the heart.

If a person has no factual knowledge with these themes, one will think that I am about to diminish the value of the Thokar technique. Well, Thokar can induce a particular state in the heart, a state that can be deepened only by a mind transformed by Contemplative Prayer. After Thokar there are stages that lead to something that I have no words to define. For this reason I will refer to the great mystical traditions, especially Hesychasm and the works of Teresa of Avila.

Practicing the Contemplative Prayer in order to create the best ambient for Thokar and utilizing Thokar to give a boost to the intensity of a Contemplative Prayer creates the condition where "the Prayer reaches the Heart". There are no words adequate to express what this implies. Divine Light is experienced in the heart Chakra. Yoni Mudra intensifies the experience of Light and through it makes the last knot (Granti) in the point between the eyebrows explode: with this event all Kriya procedures end in full, final Emancipation.

In the following paragraphs you will find good material for refining your practice, fully realizing what Thokar has prepared you. Kriya yoga is our life and every word that comes from great mystical traditions enriches and inspires us. Our lifelong effort is greatly benefited from such a study. You will obtain
undreamed of results like for example the endless delight of the breathless state.

What I am suggesting (the practice of the Contemplative Prayer coupled with Kriya techniques, perfecting Thokar at the maximum level) is a journey that can take a lifetime to flourish in the full Self-realization state – and perhaps continues beyond the life of the body. Throughout one’s life, it can be mediated by different teachers, each one adequate for the appropriate stage of practice and development.

Therefore, I am setting out to take back the discourse of Japa introduced in the first part of this book and expand it. I will talk about Hesychast traditions summarizing their key teachings and squeeze the essence of the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. You will also find hints to Sufi and Tibetan traditions. Clearly, the second part of the book could not contain this material.

Contemplative Prayer

What is Contemplative Prayer? It is the repetition of a formula which has a devotional meaning of offering, of surrender to God. In Christianity over the centuries, a great deal of incomprehension and misunderstanding has arisen with respect to the practice of Contemplative Prayer that it risked an almost total eclipse. For many devotees Prayer was – with rare exceptions – a plea to God with the sole purpose of obtaining personal favors or blessings for a suffering humanity.

Now, let us consider only the so called Prayer of Worship or Adoration. (An example of such a Prayer is Lahiri Mahasaya's "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya". Another could be Om Namo Shivaya or Sri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram Om.....) Each person chooses his favorite formula and repeats it many, many times entering a deep state of meditation and contemplation. The Prayer is said with meaning and intent, with all the faculties of the soul. It involves the entire human being: the energy of the body, the breath and the pulse manifest the quality of a sovereign calmness. This is Contemplative Prayer.

Well, I am affirming that one can understand the whole edifice of Kriya and hence put the basis to bring it to perfection only by enthusiastically adopting it as a daily habit.

The consolidated habit of Contemplative Prayer characterizes a successful internal transformation of the devotee from a curious and acute researcher, pleased with one's discoveries, to a humble mystic who knows he knows nothing. The "internal dialogue" that hindered every effort of concentration is now under control.

The Prayer of the Heart is the goal of the evolution of the Continuous Prayer. It is not a simple concept such as Prayer uttered with devotion and feeling. It is a deeper experience achieved at the end of a life of surrender to God. Only by working hard to achieve this state, helped by the God Sent gift of Thokar, can one reach the summit of Kriya Yoga. You are not geared to obtain any kind of astral experience, but you will come into communion with God and
participate in It's grace, discover Who is yours already, listen to Who never ceases to talk, posses Who even now posses you.

You would not seek me unless you had already found me.

(Pascal)

What you will find in this chapter has one purpose only: to stimulate your curiosity (perhaps something dormant in you coming from who knows whence...) to create a momentum which will assist you to begin the practice of Contemplative Prayer. Although your initial efforts may be far from an ideal of perfection, you will enter the most extraordinary period of your life.

I invite each kriyaban to deepen the themes that are dealt with here. You will find simple books that explain with amazing simplicity everything essential about the practice of Prayer. I am referring for example to biographies of saints, quoting the counsels give by them.

The literature is vast, but there is no purpose in reading everything. The beauty that is born from these texts makes you feel the goal as the nearest of the near, more appealing than anything else in the world. Being aflame for it, you practice beyond the point of exhaustion and achieve your goal.

If initially, as is perfectly understandable, the following paragraphs seem empty rhetoric, the depth and purpose of the treated matter will become apparent as your reading progresses.

The teaching of Hesychasm

Hesychasm (from Greek: ἡσυχασμός hesychasmos, meaning "stillness, rest, quiet, silence, tranquillity") is a Christian orthodox movement considering inner peace a necessity for everyone. On Mount Athos the monks worked out a whole system of contemplation based upon a simple Prayer (Kyrie Iesou Christe, Yie tou Theou, Eleison me ton amartalon – "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner") which is called the "Jesus Prayer" practiced in complete silence.

Their main teaching is how to reach the lofty state of the Prayer of the Heart. Perfection of the Prayer of the Heart leads to the highest mystical achievement: the perception of the "Uncreated Light".

Hesychasts interpret Christ's injunction in the Gospel of Matthew which says: "go into your closet to pray", to mean that their first duty is to withdraw inward. Only when we you have stilled your hearts and bodies you can be fully open to the presence of the Divine. The body should be held immovable for a long time. The starting point is the rejection of any distracting thought. After ignoring the physical senses, you begin to experience internal stillness. The discipline is tough: you watch your thoughts and courageously fight them. Much of Hesychast literature is engaged with the psychological analysis of tempting thoughts. A great emphasis is placed on humility: disaster will befall if one proceeds with pride, arrogance or conceit.
The book *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a Russian novel written by "Anonymous" in the mid-nineteenth century and translated into English in 1930, is a masterpiece. In the meeting between Orthodoxy and the West which has occurred over the past seventy years, probably no single book has exercised a wider appeal than *The Way of a Pilgrim*.

It is a simple, edifying book, of universal spiritual appeal. It is imminently practical in its advice to not dither in starting the *Jesus Prayer*. The main reason for the work's attraction is the presentation of a wandering hermit's life as the model existence for those who truly wish to lead a spiritual life. Thanks to the inspiration coming from it many feel to be a born again Christian and are able to say the prayer faithfully for several hours daily. 3

The story is about a pilgrim returning from the Holy Sepulcher who stopped at Mount Athos and told of his lifelong search for the teaching on how "to pray continually" – the way Saint Paul had recommended – to a monk. 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''.

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 pilgrim completes not only a pilgrimage of physical order, but above all spiritual, that is countersigned by some precise, universal stages.

These stages mark the passage from the scheduled appointment with *Contemplative Prayer* said with tongue and lips while fighting the restlessness of the wandering mind, to the intense, lofty experience of the *Prayer of the Heart*, to the fullness of *Continuous Prayer* going on effortlessly day and night.

The book narrates how the pilgrim 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*. One day, his ardor was awarded; he found a spiritual teacher who accepted him as a disciple and gradually clarified to him every detail of the practice that was so strongly

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

About the *Philokalia* (which is often used by Hesychasts), it is a collection of texts on prayer and asceticism written from the 4th to the 15th Centuries [first published in Greek in 1782]. In my opinion, it is a tedious text showing the attitude of the mind, obsessed by sin and temptations, to complicates the simplest things. However, it is irrefutable that here and there, some pearls of wisdom are disseminated.
attracting him. The Pilgrim was instructed to repeat the Jesus Prayer 3,000 times a day, then 6,000, then 12,000.

By following this counsel, 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". In order to give an idea of what, from now onwards, his life has become, the pilgrim quotes the Gospel passage of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field – identifying himself with them as completely dependent on God: whatever happens, it cannot separate him from God. Like a person enjoying the beauty of a chilly winter near the fireside, one who practices Continuous Prayer contemplates either the sad or the joyous spectacle of life having found the infinity of the skies residing in their heart! Prayer is 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.

Since the action of Continuous Prayer goes on automatically in the mind, always present like a background sound, the "inner dialog", which prevents meditation, is under control: one can live permanently in the dimension of Mental Silence.

Hesychasts counsel to care for this state at all stages of one's life at every moment. The first commandment is to preserve in yourself a prayerful spirit – that is, to have God in your remembrance and exert yourself in every way to commit yourself to Him. When this intention is sincerely etched in your mind and heart, then they counsel to "arouse in your heart a feeling of heat." They explain that when you have succeeded in attaining this condition, you must develop all your duties in such a way as not to destroy it. You must live this condition and heed it continuously: as soon as it changes, realize that something in your consciousness is creating disharmony. Therefore you must analyze yourself, find the cause of disharmony and rectify it.

They also add: "During active life learn to constantly fix your own attention on the region of the throat – the words of Prayer gush out incessantly from there. During immobile meditation feel the words of Prayer in the heart."

They explain that in this way soul and body live in harmony and this is the base of the spiritual life. This harmony is not lost during sleep.

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

No wonder that those who experience this state try to live, as much as possible, in solitude. If this is not possible, they try to avoid useless conversations. There are moments during the day, when the breath stops and the awareness is filled only by God's presence.

...The first step is that of purest prayer,
From this there comes warmth of heart,
And then a strange, a holy energy,
Then tears wrung from the heart, God-given.
Then peace from thoughts of every kind.
From this arises purging of the intellect,
And next the vision of heavenly mysteries.
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)

Hesychasm: the esoteric procedures

Many readers of The Way of a Pilgrim wonder how to undertake the practice of Contemplative Prayer. Let us here attempt to summarize the esoteric teachings of the Hesychast method.

A kriyaban discovers that those instructions have amazing similarities with the Kriya procedures. The study of them provides a particular lens to better understand our Kriya discipline. The words of those who had practical experience of the Prayer of the heart, are very important for us, and it would be foolish to superficially glance over it.

Basic teaching: how to start the practice of Contemplative Prayer

They counsel to murmur the Prayer just audibly enough that you can hear yourself. When you are "satiated" of this oral Prayer, begin to repeat it mentally. When assailed by distraction or laziness, then return to repeating it aloud. It is very important not to disturb the peace of the practice and to maintain a tranquil rhythm.

You can make a few prostrations (bows from the waist, while the rest is immobile.) Twelve prostrations will suffice in the beginning. That number can be constantly increased. The prostrations warm up the body and strengthen fervor in Prayer.

Then sit comfortably and try to lengthen the rhythm of your breath. Breathe in and breathe out producing and perceiving a sweet noise and sensation in the throat. [Strange as it might seem, I have found this instruction in Hesychasm literature. I am not creating this instruction using my Kriya knowledge.] As the breath reaches a stable and regular rhythm, combine the Prayer with the ingoing and outgoing breath. Establish a link between the rhythm of the breathing process and the mental repetition of the Prayer.

As a general rule you should repeat your Prayer for a minimum of 15 minutes. You should then gradually increase to a period of 30 minutes. You will need to measure your time: one way is to use a Rosary. Then move on to pure mental repetition.

Repeat the words in the center of your mind, behind your forehead. Repeat quietly, unhurriedly, thoughtfully avoiding any imagination. Using imagination may create new mental distractions and hinder clear perception and awareness of the process. Little by little your attention will settle on the meaning of the words you are using. Your heart will be touched and the Prayer will
introduce you into its sanctuary. Strive therefore to confine your thought to the Prayer and you will surely reach the stage when the mind remains exclusively in the words. This will guide you into the final abduction of the mind into God's dimension.

**Advanced teaching: how to move toward the achievement of the Prayer of the Heart**

During the previous basic stage, it is very likely that the center of your being is located within the region between the eyebrows. This place corresponds to an abstract thought of pure intellectuality and 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. In the advanced stage 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.

Hesychasts explain that finding "the place of the heart" means to establish one's internal life in a lasting Present, where you don't pray anymore with the "mind in the head" but with "the mind in the heart." Achieving this state is a very great experience! Hesychasts explain that one has a drastic realization that "what we have lived till now has been nothing."

Let us describe how to move the awareness towards the heart center.

With all your attention focused upon the cardiac center, inhale through the nose, thinking all the words of the Prayer. Guide air and Prayer to the place of the heart. Exhale feeling that the Prayer comes up with the breath and goes out through the nose. (If your Prayer is long, recite half during inhalation and half during exhalation.)

After some repetitions, introduce a pause after inhalation. During this pause tilt the chin onto the upper part of the breast, feeling the tension of the neck muscles, hold the breath for how much you are able to do so (comfortably without strain/force), locking your awareness in the heart center and repeating your Prayer there several times. Then exhale, repeating it again while breath and Prayer rise to the nose.

The most advanced development of this teaching is the following: during the pause you can synchronize the Prayer with the beating of the heart. Visualize your heart and turn your eyes to it, as if you are looking at it. Listen attentively with the mind to its pulsations, one after the other. When you are used to this, proceed (always looking internally at the heart) to make each pulsation coincide with a word or with a syllable of the Prayer. This can happen also during inhalation and exhalation. This is the most ancient tradition of the practice of the Prayer of the Heart.

If you persevere in bringing ahead this practice, you will discover new aspects of
Patience and commitment should be unshakeable during the practice. If this stage seems difficult to you, remember what St. Simeon the New Theologian said: "Sit in your cell, and the Prayer will teach you everything."

Meditation after the previous practice
Forget the breath. Sit (comfortably and without strain) with your head bowed and your eyes directed toward the abdomen. [We can observe that even if a person sits with straight spine, he acquires this position spontaneously when he comes close to the state of Samadhi.] Empty your mind of every image. Be tenacious in praying with concentrated focus on the navel but try to enter it, as if the navel were only a "door". Initially, 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 and subtle bliss!

Sometimes you will feel a warm sensation originating from the heart region. This sensation, first mild, may turn into a sensation of solidification of the heart which is felt like a point surrounded by an endless pressure. 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 the pain.

Sectarian religious objections based on patent nonsense
Let us reply with dignity to folly uttered by those people who have never really practiced this path. We have heard from people who call themselves Christians that the Hindu technique of Mantra (Japa) cannot be practiced and experienced inside the dimension of the Hesychasm; in other words, it can never be defined Prayer of the Heart. They say that there is an infinite distance separating the Christian Prayer of the Heart from the Hindu Japa. We are stunned by reading such statement as: "Behind some names like Krishna, Rama, or Shiva there are demons lying in wait. Once they are invoked by the use of the Mantra, the door is open for the devil to begin his theatrical productions, using sounds, images, dreams, and the imagination in general in order to drag the practitioner deeper into deception."

If those critics would practice something similar to the Prayer of the Heart, this very fact would bring them joy, not harsh terrible judgment. Why talk about ecumenism if you show such contempt towards Hinduism and Yoga? When a person is seriously committed to the habit of Prayer, there is no time, no interest, nor any will to be concerned about what pertains to other religious traditions.

Further nonsense is that using this method without guidance is to court spiritual disaster, ruining our lungs. They assure that many who have tried to

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4 An Hesychast author gives this explanation: "To pray with the heart, we suffer because we become one with other's pain." He adds: "We must come out from our own self and begin to love the other, must suffer for him, so that we can pray for him. Pain becomes a grace that passes through the body which becomes dead to the world and is crucified."
learn the procedure of the *Prayer of the Heart* by themselves, have ruined their lungs and achieved nothing. This seems to me an exaggeration and fundamentally a lie. They go ahead explaining that the various phases of the procedure (gaze turned to the navel, attention to the breath and to the pulsation of the heart upon which to synchronize the *Prayer*) push one into a world of dreams, illusions, and at times, "in a constant state of lust."

We cannot accept the claim that those who explore the way of *Contemplative Prayer*, without the context of a religious community, are prey to total illusion and instead of being in a relationship with God, they grow a subtle form of self-satisfaction – a spiritual narcissism. This accusation is akin to the ordinary accusation that *Yoga* is a process of self-deifying, while the correct attitude should be the will to reunite with God, remaining a distinct person. The ignorance of such affirmations are truly astounding! They don't recognize the fact (which many mystics have often expressed in poetic form) of a completely different attitude – the idea of total, irrevocable union with God. What they are claiming only reveals their limited knowledge of oriental meditation and ignorance of Christian literature, where numerous Christian Saints have expressed their spiritual vision in a way which is identical to that of Saints and *Hindu Rishis*.

The key accusation is that the insistence on properly performed techniques of meditation as a prerequisite for experiencing well defined mystical states, is in contrast to the teaching of Grace. Unfortunately this accusation is reinforced by innocent fantasies about the workings of our brain and nervous system written and published by some *yogis* who claim that the benefit accrued by repeating the *Mantra* is due to certain frequencies produced by its pronunciation, which cause spiritual vibrations that activate spiritual centers within man. As we know there are plenty of theories about the use of particular sound waves to foster the meditative state .... The truth is that the fervor of a *yogi's* heart, showing a total, true and sincere surrender to the Divine, cannot be brought onto the table of a scientific laboratory.

Therefore, let us forget those theories and stress one firm point: a *yogi* sincerely believes that a spiritual path can receive a benefit by learning and applying some procedures. A *yogi's* factual experience sanctions that a transformations happen along the path: surrender, total trust in God happens and then comes the Grace of God. Who has the authority of denying this? Why do certain people feel the need to stigmatize this? Are we not able to see that the Hesychast writings in their complexity exemplify the validity, the wisdom, the effectiveness of all this?

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The teachings of St. Teresa of Ávila

In the writings of St. Teresa of Ávila it is clearly stated that perfection in the spiritual life can be reached only by expanding the limit in the practice of Contemplative Prayer (she uses the term: "Internal Oration.") According to St. Teresa Prayer is all in all in the mystical path. 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 is lost – it won't reach the mystical goal.

She described nine levels of Prayer – not nine different techniques of praying but nine stages that one experiences while continuing to repeat the chosen Prayer. Most Catholics are not informed about these levels.

This teaching completes that of the Hesychasm. Here we find a very precise analysis of the various degrees and stages of Contemplative Prayer. The stages described happen with spontaneous naturalness.

In her opinion the degrees of Prayer are:

1. Vocal Prayer
2. Discursive Meditation
3. Affective Mental Prayer
4. Acquired Recollection
5. Infused Recollection
6. Prayer of Quiet
7. Prayer of Simple Union
8. Prayer of Ecstatic Union
9. Prayer of Transforming Union

1. Vocal Prayer
St. Teresa recommends that beginners should first use vocal Prayer. You choose the formula that mostly excites fervor and devotion. In this way you can hope that attention follows what you are saying and to Whom you are addressing it. Vocal Prayer must last the time necessary to excite devotion, no more. It is the door to enter the internal castle: "We need no wings to go in search of Him, but have only to find a place where we can be alone and look upon Him present within us" (St. Teresa).

2. Discursive Meditation
St. Teresa talks about "reasoned application of the mind to a supernatural truth to have a deep conviction of it and therefore to love it and to practice it with the help of the Grace." We appreciate St. Teresa's deep understanding of the human

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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.
psyche. Actually, this doesn't seem a stage of *Prayer* but it is something that invariably happens after the preliminary phase of vocal *Prayer*, after striving against distractions. At this moment we have a poignant vision of something we can do in life to express not only in words but in deeds also the deepest meaning of our *Prayer*. St. Teresa knows that this process of reasoning mixed with strong power of implementation arrests the *Prayer* for some minutes. However, she knows that this compelling vision has to be accepted. Then, when our heart finds peace, we can resume our *Prayer*.

3. Affective Mental Prayer
Now we enter what is called a "sleep of the faculties"; it is not "trance" nor is it "union." The heart prevails, consolations and sensitive softness are begotten.

4. Acquired Recollection
In this stage you feel the presence of God. "Acquired" means achieved with your efforts. *Prayer* goes on and you are absorbed in a loving awareness. Your attitude is going to become more and more passive. The soul is, as it were, utterly fainting in a kind of trance. Breathing, and all bodily strength seems to fail, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible — the very letters seem strange, and cannot be distinguished. The ear hears, but what is heard is not understood. It is useless to try to speak, because it is not possible to conceive the words; nor, if it were possible, is there strength sufficient to utter it; for all bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases.

When a *kriyaban* experiences this stage, one would like to write down something as to fix the method by which to achieve that state again, to have it again and again in the following practices of *Prayer*. One is sure of the discovery of a secret, but when the eyes are opened and one tries to write, the magic of those moments disappears and one can't remember what exactly was done to reach that state. It is important to understand that this state happens when many conditions are respected and fall into place together — optimal condition of our body, pacification of our emotions, deep silence in our thinking process. It is for this reason that it is useless to seek a precise recipe to reproduce it.

5. Infused Recollection
This state is a logical deepening of the previous state and is the first degree of mystical contemplation. St. Teresa calls it "Infused Recollection" because it comes from Grace. She describes it as 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.
This state produces a partial transformation of our way of living but it needs to be remembered that this state embodies only the beginning of true mystical experience.

6. Prayer of Quiet & 7. Prayer of Simple Union
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 "imprisoned."

In Kriya Yoga, we describe this as the first stage of Samadhi. At this stage one listens to the internal astral sounds, the sound of Om and also witnesses the Divine Light. One is in total absorption, being drawn and merging very deeply into the experience, feeling as if approaching annihilation before such tremendous Beauty.

8. Prayer of Ecstatic Union
The description that I am going to give of this state, using the words of St. Teresa is very strange. It is not an exaggeration: she couldn't have found better words attempting to express the inexpressible.

Let us then begin to explain that 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. From this the subject awakens in tears.

The way with which God hurts the soul is inexpressible. The torment is so alive that the soul goes out of itself, although at the same time so sweet that you can not compare it with any pleasure of the earth. St. Teresa further explains that there are moments in which you can feel like an arrow has deeply penetrated your heart. One laments with such a vivid and intense pain, but at the same time the experience is so delicious one never wants it to end.

9. Prayer of Transforming Union
Also called the "Mystical Marriage", it is the highest state of Prayer that can be achieved in this life. It represents the most intimate union of the soul with God; the soul becomes Divine and is no more subject to ecstasy – the contact with God happens even when the body does not assume the appearance of a corpse.

Now the journey of the soul ends. What at one time had the character of supplication or of a sweet conversation with our personal idea of God has progressively transformed into a hard work not based upon fleeting emotions, and has now lead the soul to the ultimate crowning experience of the encounter with God.
Other sources of inspiration: Tibetan Buddhism

*Tibetan Buddhism* insists so much on the value of *Mantra* that I couldn't avoid quoting this source of inspiration. Their teaching is repeating *Om Mani Padme Hum* ("Hail the jewel in the lotus") again and again until the chaos of your thoughts quiets. We rarely come across technical remarks, practical teachings, but you can find them if you keep on seeking.

Among a great deal of empty chatter, I found an excellent teaching. Let me summarize it: by repeating the *Mantra*, the pulse of your heart becomes clearly evident and your attention turns to the easy movement of breath through your nostrils … in and out. You’re no longer lost in thought. You’re not spaced out. You’re in the state of meditation. The layers that are covering up your true being, reveal your true nature which is love and compassion.

If Tibetan Buddhists would stop here, all would be perfect. Unfortunately they try a childish demonstration that all the teachings of the Buddha are contained in the *Mantra: Om Mani Padme Hum*. You find also clear exaggerations like the story that if any animal or insect should hear this *Mantra* before dying, it would be reborn to the pure land of *Amitabha*..... Another story is that by reciting the *Mantra* with mindfulness and a proper understanding, all sufferings will dissolve and up to seven generations of that person’s descendents won’t get reborn in the lower realms....

Annoyed we read that viewing the written form of the *Mantra* has the same effect that reciting it.... or that spinning the written form of the *Mantra* around a wheel is also believed to give the same benefit as reciting the *Mantra*.... We are used to such nonsense and know for certain that the beauty, purity and value of the *Mantra* said with our voice and heart has no substitute.

The Sufi mystical path

The art of *Contemplative Prayer* is developed by the *Sufi* (Islamic mystics) in an astonishing way. Reading some pages of their literature means receiving spiritual the intoxication and joy that are the best antidote to the tendency toward melancholy which can be the worst malady of many spiritually oriented people. Soul stirring ardent feelings and sincerity are to be found there: the celebration of God and nature shines with a strength and amplitude beyond comparison.

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

(Rumi, Translated by A.J. Arberry)

*Sufis* passionately look for the possibility, in which they firmly believe, of a direct experience of God. Many practice a private and silent *Adoration*. Others
join together in an outward group expression of their love for God.

The word *Dhikr* is commonly translated as "remembrance". Essentially, the practice of *Dhikr* is a form of Prayer in which the Muslim expresses one's 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.

Most inspiring instructions are given to avoid distractions in such a way that the heart is occupied with neither "family" nor "money". One continues until the heart is continually applied to the *Dhikr*.

*Sufis* teach that the purpose of *Dhikr* is to purify hearts and souls and to be fortified by the Light of the Divine. When the heart is immersed and enraptured by the Truth, it turns to the highest ideal without being deflected by anything.

How beautiful is to think, to feel that when we open our heart to *Allah* and utters words in His praise, *Allah* fills us with strength and inner peace. How great is the inspiration that we receive from images as this one: "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*." Therefore, *Dhikr* is something of tremendous importance.

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

They teach to begin the practice by uttering the *Mantra* aloud (*Dhikr* of the tongue), then a state of great absorption makes it impossible to go on in this way. At this point the mental practice commences. By persevering assiduously in this way, putting all our concentration into the practice, 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.)

"Know that there is a physical Heart in each body. There is a spiritual Heart in each Heart. There is a Secret in each spiritual Heart. There is a Hidden in each Secret, and there is a Most Hidden in each Hidden. I am in that Most Hidden."

(The Secret of Islam 274, by Henry Bayman)

If one wants to follow the *Sufi* path and uses the *Kriya* techniques, one will encounter no difficulties whatsoever. Of course, one should be endowed with a strong self-teaching spirit. There is no doubt that *Thokar* has a great affinity with a particular *Sufi* way of practicing their "*Dhikr". I am referring to those procedures in which the chanting of the "Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh" is accompanied by the movements of the head.
It’s interesting that Lahiri Mahasaya gave the Islamic mantra "Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh" to his Muslim disciples to be practiced during Thokar. 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, imposes a circular movement to his head and then lowers it on his breast. A modern Sufi confraternity practices it in the following way: "Lâ" is placed in the head, "ilâha" (with head bending to the right) in the right upper part of the chest, "illâal" (with head bending to the left) in the left upper part of the chest and "lâh" (with head bending down) in the heart; then again "Lâ" in the head, while raising it....

As 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.

Conclusion

I hope that what you have read here has stimulate your curiosity (perhaps something dormant in you coming from who knows whence...) to create a momentum which will assist you to begin the practice of Japa. I invite you to deepen the themes that are dealt with here by your own study. The literature on this subject is vast, but there is no purpose in reading everything. If initially, as is perfectly understandable, some books will appear as full of empty rhetoric, now and then some sentence will light the sacred fire of an unbelievable enthusiasm which will give new life to your Kriya path.

The study of the biographies of saints will make you feel the goal as the nearest of the near, more appealing than anything else in the world. Being aflame for it, you will be able to practice beyond the "point of exhaustion" – in this way you will enter the most extraordinary period of your life, culminating with the achievement of the breathless state. Specific instruction about that is to be find in the next chapter.
Often I have thought over Lahiri Mahasaya's motto "Banat, Banat, ban jay!" (doing and doing, one day it is done!) At first this sentence gave me the idea of one who, without ever losing heart, goes all out to reach the peak of a high mountain. The peak to seize hold after a life long effort was for me that particular state of consciousness of which I had read, called "Self- Realization". Subsequently, I changed my perspective on the meaning of the intensive effort required to follow a spiritual path. I realized that the best way of engaging in something of permanent value consisted only in removing the obstacles created by the mind; when this had been done, the spiritual dimension would manifest naturally, without further effort on my behalf.

The necessary action to start the cleaning process consisted in creating the state of Mental Silence and holding onto it during the activities of daily living. The best and surest way to achieve and to maintain the state of Mental Silence was Japa. Now, when I decided to practice Japa every day, something of enormous importance happened then: the breathlessness state spilled an unparalleled experience of divine bliss into my being. My life was forever changed by this event.

Breathlessness does not simply mean that the breath becomes more and more quiet or that the breath is held after a long hyperventilation like divers do. In the breathless state the breath is entirely non-existent.

I experienced this during mental Pranayama at the end of my Kriya routine. After a few seconds of concentration on the Chakras, when my Kriya routine had entered the passive phase of mental Pranayama, I experienced with full awareness my breath calming down and then disappearing. A cause-effect relationship (Japa causing the breathless state) was established beyond any doubt. From that moment, Japa became an essential tool to prepare my mind for meditation.

To say the whole truth, the divine gift of the breathless state was prepared by my constant practice of the Basic Form of Thokar. However, since about Thokar we have already expressed all we know, in this Chapter we limit our discussion to examine how to conceive a good plan for practicing Japa daily. The purpose is be sure that the teaching of the Japa is understood without misinterpretation.

1. The choice of a Mantra
Choose a Mantra (Prayer) that appeals to you. Don't feel obliged to use Lahiri Mahasaya's favored Vasudeva Mantra ("Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya").

You can, just to give you an idea, choose one from your favorite set of prayers, 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. Beautiful twelve syllables Mantra can be taken out of Bhajans or poems. As an example, from the well-known Adi Shankara's chant you can select the beautiful 12-syllable verse: Chi-da-nan-da-ru-pah-shi-vo-ham-shi-vo-ham (That Form which is pure consciousness and bliss, I am that supreme Being, I am that supreme Being!)

One thing should be stated objectively: YOUR Mantra should express or evoke exactly what YOU want to achieve and embody the attitude you want to express. For example, the attitude of surrender is expressed by Mantras beginning with Om Namo ... 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. But this is effective only if you really love that saint.

Your chosen Mantra should have both a strong and a soft tone. It is important to relish it. "Strong tone" means that it is incompatible with an attitude of resigned complaint, rather it implies the happiness that you are attracting through the very repetition of its syllables.

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

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

I hope you are not so naive to believe that a Mantra works only if it is received from a "Guru." Certainly if you want to lighten your portfolio then race to a teacher and buy your personal Mantra.

Naturally in certain occasions having a teacher is justified. When an experienced person helps you to choose a Mantra and uses everything in his power of persuasion to convince you to apply it continually, this persons does you the greatest of all the favors and is correct to compensate him; but that's all! For example an expert who is familiar and has experience with Hatha Yoga and with Bija Mantras, can forge for you a wonderful Mantra. To a preexistent Mantra, after the initial Om, your teacher can add some "Bija" (seed) Mantras like: Aim, Dúm, Gam, Glamu, Glom, Haum, Hoom, Hreem, Hrom, Kleem, 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.

After having chosen your Mantra, use it for a few weeks to find out whether your mind accepts it or not. It often happens that a person chooses a Mantra, begins to utilize it with enthusiasm and then, after a few minutes, realizes to be reciting another one. This is a hint that very probably the right
Mantra has not been found. To experience this first hand is what counts, it is the
only reasonable think to do. Be sensitive and careful to the vibration that it
arouses in your body and in your heart.

Some make an unfortunate choice, through which they seem to punish
themselves. They affirm their limits and unworthiness. After a short time, their
practice falls apart; sometimes they find themselves repeating it once or twice
during the day, like a sigh of dejection. This has nothing to do with what we are
describing here.

2. How to utilize your Mantra
When you have found your Mantra, resolve to complete daily at least one Mala
(a rosary of 108 beads) of it aloud. Pronounce its syllables with serene attitude.
Learn to resonate it in your mouth, nasal passages, chest and head areas.  
When you have completed the 108 repetitions, let it go ahead automatically in the background of your mind. If possible, take back the vocal practice of Japa in the next hours. Forget the words but feel the protective shell of tangible peace surrounding you. I am not recommending to adopt a particular visualization but to increase the capacity of perceiving what is around you. For sure, it requires additional time, time free from work and from social contacts.

Commit yourself to it as if you had a strong will to knock down a wall that life has placed before you. Pick out an obstacle that defeats your attempts to achieve something important in your life and receive a strong push from the idea that your Mantra has the power of destroying it.

Day after day your whole life will become more simple. Unnecessary "necessities" will disappear, your solitary giant undertaking will make you eventually emerging in the dimension of Mental Silence.

How to plan your Kriya routine after reaching the Mental Silence

Having practiced Japa seriously (both aloud and mentally, therefore NOT ONLY MENTALLY), practice in the evening the following routine:

Preliminary part: Maha Mudra – Navi Kriya – Talabya Kriya – Om Japa (6 repetitions)
Then:
1. Kriya Pranayama or Omkar Pranayama (24-36 repetitions)
2. Basic form of Thokar (12-24 repetitions)
3. Omkar Pranayama (6-24 repetitions)
4. Mental Pranayama (1-3 repetitions) or, as a good alternative, Kriya Pranayama with short breath (utilizing, if this is useful and not distracting, the procedure of micro Thokar we have described in Omkar Kriya)

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.
This is enough to achieve the breathless state!

Let us discuss each of these points:

1. Kriya Pranayama or Omkar Pranayama (24-36 repetitions)

After practicing the premixes and having found a comfortable position, you discover that the same Mantra utilized during the day is going on by itself in your consciousness. You sit with your back upright, the eyes are closed and you feel that your body is a unique solid vibration. Body and mind reach almost automatically the immobility at pranic level. No other preliminary practice can give you the fullness and the peace of that silence obtained through the action of Japa during the day. There exists no other method of concentration which would succeed in calming that "background noise" that is the dominant soundtrack of human mind.

Begin the practice of Kriya Pranayama. The idea of taking a long breath and thinking your Prayer during the inhalation and repeating it (or completing it) during exhalation comes naturally! Discover that your routine can be lived in a very simple and natural way, utilizing the same Mantra-Prayer chanted during the day. Many kriyabans do not "dare" to adapt their personal Prayer to Kriya Pranayama. It is as if they were afraid to ruin it, to show disrespect for Lahiri Mahasaya. Yet, if with a Prayer that arouses your deepest emotions you can create a more ardent Kriya Pranayama, why do not try it? What during the day was a formula affirming your surrender to the Divine, it will now become a tool that will guide you within, towards the ecstatic stages described by mystics.

Feel the pranic current touching all the cells of the spine, up and down. Your attention is focused on one action only: merging the inner chanting of the Prayer with a slow, even-paced breath. This is now your Kriya Pranayama.

What you are experiencing is similar to the procedure of Omkar Pranayama – only it is more simple! You have not that particular attention on the throat sounds – better said: you have it but it is secondary. Bring ahead this easy experience for 24-36 breaths. Do not entertain any hurry.

At a certain point you might discover that you are not breathing. If this happens, don't abandon the mental repetition of the Prayer; intensify the power of touching through it the spinal substance, go ahead with the action of moving it up and down. If this doesn't disturb, you can then repeat your Prayer in each Chakra and make the breathless state more stable. If this happens, you won't need any other practice and your Kriya routine ends here!

2. Basic form of Thokar (12-24 repetitions)

But events don't always go so well. Sometimes it is necessary to add at least 12-24 repetitions of the basic form of Thokar. It is true that Lahiri said: "In First Kriya you can find everything" but you must accept the situation you are in. Most kriyabans need Thokar. It helps to calm, appease the heart ganglion which regulate the heart pulse. Thokar was conceived to establish a particular calmness
(tranquility) in the heart region. Actually, Lahiri Mahasaya says that: "Thokar opens the doors of the inner temple" and explains that when the cardiac plexus is struck by its strong action, the Prana related with breathing is directed inward: this results in a spontaneous state of profound and prolonged absorption.

Remark
Instead of using the Mantra Om Namo Bhagavate.... you can adapt to the procedure of Thokar the Prayer that you have repeated during the day.

3. Omkar Pranayama (6-24 repetitions)
A few rounds of the Omkar Pranayama are not optional but necessary to reestablish the total calmness in the body after the physical movements of Thokar.

4. Mental Pranayama (1-3 repetitions)
It is good to read again the explanation of Mental Pranayama given in chapter 6. This sweet procedure can be the decisive turning point where you calm down your breathing dramatically. However many kriyabans have difficulties in understanding it. You have to move your awareness up and down the spine pausing in each Chakra for 10-20 seconds. Slipping into a hurried practice leads to nothing. A particular joy springs out of the Chakra in which the awareness dwells. One should intentionally wait for this event, in each Chakra. Start with the first Chakra at the base of the spine, wait for a feeling of joy, then move to the second, wait ... then third and so on. After ascending to the Bindu, begin the descent, pausing in Medulla, fifth Chakra, fourth Chakra and so on. The instructions given in Chapter 6 explain that, if this is agreeable, Om may be mentally chanted in each Chakra. You will see how easy it is to create a counterclockwise moving sensation in each Chakra. The practice of Japa (Prayer) during the day has given you a particular faculty. You feel, nay, you are surprised to discover that you are able to create an internal energetic movement around the nucleus of a Chakra, of each Chakra. It is as if you can, in a certain way, "touch" the substance of which a Chakra is composed.

Don't even dream about holding your breath! Some yogis, and even some kriyabans, believe that the breathless state is gotten by learning to hold the breath for longer periods of time. There is nothing more wrong! We have seen (Chapter 6) that: "... one may also perceive the subtle radiation of each Chakra in the body..." Well then, keeping on touching with your Mantra the nucleus of each Chakra, you will perceive a fresh energy that sustains the body from the inside. This is the key point.

While your consciousness settles in a vast space extending behind and over the occipital region you have the perception of having calmed down the inner movements of the body, even at a molecular level.

Forget time and calm yourself even further. Suddenly you have the impression of crossing a screen, emerging in another dimension. The awareness of the Chakras has disappeared. Your heart rejoices in discovering that a Prayer does not simply consist of words: a repeated Prayer is a churning process of your
mental Prana until that Prana becomes static and you are that Prana extending beyond your body, in the universe. You are enraptured by the thrill of an unequalled Freedom. It is a fantastic state! The cells of your body are internally recharged by a mysterious source that you perceive as "cold liquid light." There is not the least quiver of surprise or the thought: "Now I have it finally!" The restless mind is dissolved. You are perfectly aware, but in a calm and detached way. You are projected out of time, you feel you are above life.

When this happens, a great event happened: this is the true initiation into Kriya Yoga. A tranquil joy, vast as the sky, confirms that this is the key experience of your life.

Kriya is based on the breath. Now, to see it magically annulled implies a great personal satisfaction and also a lesson that nothing else could give.

A deeper way of experiencing the afore described fourth point
(Kriya Pranayama with short breath utilizing micro Thokar)

Before persuading yourself that you are not ready for achieving the breathless state, meekly test the following procedure:

Focus your attention on the Muladhara Chakra. Vibrate (think with emphasis) "Te Va Su" in Muladhara. Do it once. Try to feel that "Te Va Su" creates an oscillatory movement inside Muladhara. When it becomes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale only what is necessary, pause an instant and concentrate on the second Chakra. Hold the breath gently and vibrate "Te Va Su" in the second Chakra. Exhale when you feel like exhaling, concentrate on Muladhara, vibrate "Te Va Su" there. When it becomes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale only what is necessary, pause an instant and concentrate on the third Chakra. Hold the breath gently and vibrate "Te Va Su" in the third Chakra. Exhale when you feel like exhaling, concentrate on Muladhara, vibrate "Te Va Su" there.

Go on like that, repeating the procedure between Muladhara and the fourth Chakra; Muladhara and fifth Chakra; Muladhara – Bindu; Muladhara – Medulla; Muladhara – fifth Chakra; Muladhara – fourth Chakra; Muladhara – third Chakra; Muladhara – second Chakra. As you see, one cycle is made of 10 short breaths. Repeat more than one cycle, increasing your concentration until your breath is almost nonexistent. Pause in Anahata Chakra, repeating there "Te Va Su" many, many times, until you perceive light both in Anahata Chakra and in the point between the eyebrows. This is the best condition to realize the breathless state. One day you will be able to stop the breath and any movement in the body; it will be like a miracle.

"No me pidáis que lo explique. **Tengo el fuego en las manos**
(Garcia Lorca)

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7 Kriya initiation ceremonies are just a symbol of what we are here describing.
A final encouragement

I have heard some kriyabans affirm impudently that Kriya Yoga has nothing to do with Japa (much less with the pious practice of Continuous Prayer.) Almost annoyed by finding that their path could be polluted by other practices, they pour our their ignorance on you: "Neither Guruji, nor Lahiri Mahasaya taught it. Kriyabans don't need it."

They are filled with the conviction that Kriya works in an automatic, infallible way. Still, if the sense of smugness and self satisfaction will not continue blinding their eyes, they could realize very easily that this Kriya path is incomplete when it is not coupled with the practice of Japa. Without Japa no one is able to make the Mental Silence state permanent and Kriya Yoga work as it should work. But not only Kriya Yoga, but any form of Sadhana after some temporary success, is eclipsed by the main occupation of the mind: running dry all its energies in the frantic pursuing or ever new dreamland worlds.

Take the resolute decision not to renounce anymore to the fantastic help that only Japa can give. It creates around you the protective mantle of mental Silence. In spite of whatever abyss of mental confusion and spiritual aridity you are, its sweet vibration will begin to echo into every fiber of your being, as an angel heralding the season of your resurrection.

Important remark
When you achieve the breathless state, you could fall in a very intense attraction toward some marginal aspects of the mystical path: for example something that ignited your interest during a particular phase of your life. Strange as it may seem, this fact may lead you to lose the breathless state for a long time, even years.

The strength of your elated reaction to the new great experience can produce an inflated sense of importance and worth of those secondary aspects. Devoting yourself to stupid searches, experiencing with unnatural and illogical routines, you might postpone, for better times, all actions necessary to continue to enjoy the breathless state.

You might enter a delicate phase of your life where there is no more the desire to enjoy the simplicity and austerity of the Mental Silence. The temptation to put Japa aside is tremendous. You might slip in a state of despondency and face the specter of doubt cast upon you by momentary lack of results. There comes the idea that Japa is a "poor" practice, that there are plenty of other ways to foster spiritual evolution other than parroting words and sounds. Sometimes this illusion is reinforced by the overindulgence in the thought that your mind needs rest and you should avoid all effort even that of practicing Japa. Resist this temptation!

Persevere in seeking only the breathless state and a real heaven will be yours. The realization that you have sat in meditation for minutes – maybe hours – without using your lungs and diaphragm: this is so much more valuable than any other achievement in the world.
Addendum: three important ways of adding power to your Japa

1. Japa rotating in Kutastha
This means to feel your chosen Mantra moving as if Kutastha were a spherical cage and Mantra were a micro motorcycle running inside the round cage as you see in some circus. Of course you are rotating your Mantra more slowly! About the breath, it is not necessary to say: forget the breath, because you will see that the breath disappears by itself.

You can use this practice just before meditation. Don't use it in all circumstances of life – for example when you drive a car.

2. Japa oscillating in the back of your heart Chakra

Indeed there is a piece of flesh in your body which, if it be sound, then the whole body will be sound and if it be corrupt then the whole body will be corrupt. Indeed it is the heart.

(Al-Bukhaari)

What I am going to describe will be appreciated by the greatest part of the readers. I have had conclusive proof that this is the most direct way to straighten one's path, in the case there are some problems of unbalance. The following procedure is an unparalleled method to approach the "Prayer of the heart". If you have never known this dimension of the spiritual path, try anyway and you will be struck by the beauty of the procedure.

Let us consider a 12 syllables Prayer like Om Namo Bhagabate Vasudevaya. Each of the four breathing actions that I am going to describe now lasts 2-3 seconds. Each is accompanied by a particular internal movement of energy.

1. Inhale calmly, perceiving a horizontal movement of energy that from a point at the left (about 6 centimeters) of Anahata moves toward a symmetrical point on the right, touching Anahata from the back. During this movement, mentally chant Om in the first point, Na in Anahata, Mo in the point at the right.

2. Exhale calmly, perceiving a horizontal movement of energy that from the point at the right of Anahata moves toward the starting point on the left, touching Anahata from the back. During this movement, mentally chant Bha in the point at the right, Ga in Anahata, Ba in the point at the left.

3. Inhale calmly, perceiving a vertical movement of energy that from a point over Anahata (about 4 centimeters) moves down toward a symmetrical point under Anahata, touching Anahata from the back. During this movement, mentally chant Te in the point over Anahata, Va in Anahata, Su in the point under Anahata.

4. Exhale calmly, perceiving a vertical movement of energy that from the point under Anahata comes up to the point over Anahata, touching Anahata from the back. During this movement, mentally chant De in the point under Anahata,
Va in Anahata, Ya in the point over Anahata.

The repetition of these 4 movements, namely to draw this "cross", using two complete breaths and one repetition of the 12 syllables Mantra is one cycle. They recommend 108 cycles without hurry. It is clear that this is only an example and one can choose other prayers and blend them with the breath in different ways. You can also make the choice of forgetting the breath, let it flow freely, and practicing mentally only. Still better is to start with the breath and then, gradually internalize the practice, end with a mental practice. It is important to perceive the flow of energy left-right-left, over-under-over

Very interesting it is the possibility of synchronizing the Prayer with the pulse of the heart. In order to experience this is worthwhile to slightly lower the chin of one or two centimeters then totally forget the breath. You will realize that the oscillation of energy and consciousness around Anahata tends to become smaller and smaller and collapse in the nucleus of the Chakra.

Variation
You can alternate this "cross" with an horizontal cross touching the physical heart and the central part of the chest (frontal component of Anahata). These two crosses count as two, therefore the time necessary to complete a mala is the same. At the end you perceive a greater focusing of your awareness on the nucleus of the heart Chakra.

1. and 2. remain the same
3. Inhale calmly, perceiving an horizontal movement of energy that from the seat of Anahata moves forward toward the central part of the chest, passing through the physical heart. During this movement, mentally chant Te in Anahata, Va in the physical heart, Su in a point located in the central part of the sternum (at the same height as Anahata).

4. Exhale calmly, perceiving an horizontal movement of energy that from the point located in the sternum comes back to Anahata, passing through the physical heart. During this movement, mentally chant De in the point located in the sternum, Va in the physical heart, Ya in Anahata.

Through the instrument of Thokar you have learned to stimulate the heart Chakra in a strong way. But this is only the first phase of the work, after Thokar you must continue guiding patiently the Prayer into the heart. The above described procedure is a means to "dance" with the Prayer "around the heart" until a door opens.

The procedure is effective because it affects, trying to dissolve them, all the dualities that hamper our tuning with the cardiac plexus. The dualities I am referring to are: Ida and Pingala (flowing sideways the spine and Anahata); Prana and Apana (having their seat over and under Anahata respectively). In the variation, you touch the frontal component of Anahata: the effect is the overcoming the inner/outer duality.

There is a more elaborate explanation which is related with the "spiritual centers"
of subtle energy in the chest as described by some Sufi mystic.

The common knowledge is limited to the heart Chakra, Anahata which is connected with the experience of oneness with the Divine Person. There are two subtle centers, which are structures different from Chakras. The center on the right of Anahata is connected with the individual sense of I. The experience of our personality brings to consciousness hidden desires, emotions, motivations, as well as past memories and traumas within one’s individual history. The center on the the left of Anahata is connected with the experiences of Cosmic Consciousness. This does not mean that when you focus on it you are in a Blissful state. Cosmic Consciousness is the stage that comes after crossing the Collective Unconscious. You must first experience the darkness contained in the human heart and although it pertains to the universe you will perceive it as your own – which usually clashes with one’s moral code and one’s Self-image.

Practicing the given technique means make Prayer swing between the sense of I and the origin of pure consciousness. The experience of Union can be accessed through this path only. The esoteric experiences of meditation on those centers dissolves the consciousness of pure subjectivity. Eventually, attention is reduced into the focus of the Spiritual Heart which is the core of Anahata.

As you repeat this prayer over many months you will find that it makes you so thrilled that you are not able to overstep this initial sweet stage. 8 One day you will discover that the Prayer has entered your heart and from which an incommensurable Good is born. The heart thrills in welcoming that state; you sip the celestial honey of a radiation of sweetness which annihilates every desire. Every object will appear transfigured, physical reality will reveal the indwelling presence of Spirit. The radiance brought about by Prayer becomes the gold of your first experience of the Divine. You are permeated by a taste of Eternity: S. Teresa of Avila wrote about an "Endless Goodness." You will feel infinite love blossom in your heart. In fear and joy, in loneliness and companionship, you will feel this love with you.

3. Japa in the body. Introduction to the Kriya of the cells (to be developed in Chapter 12.)

A not widely known fact is that there are mystics who "think" their Prayers in their body. This completes what we have seen till now – it embodies indeed the last phase of the process of unfastening the knot of Muladhara.

A small collection of written material about this practice has been published almost exclusively by specialized publishers in the esoteric field. These books can be found by rummaging among occult and magic texts. Kerning, Kolb, Lasario, Weinfurter, Peryt Shou and Spiesberger are just a few of the authors. Even though these mystics were born within Christianity and felt on the average in sync with its doctrines, they have been confined to a corner as if they were exponents of esoteric thought, or magicians whose aspirations were to develop secret powers. Any reader who has the patience to research this material,

8 It is for this reason that I have counseled an Incremental Routine.
skimming through pages and pages of trivial theories and practices whose only
goal is to confuse and mislead, will nonetheless find paragraphs of inimitable
charm.

Their Prayers are very short, reduced sometimes to a single vowel or
syllable. The main technique is to choose a vowel and begin repeating and
vibrating it in one's feet and gradually bringing it up to different parts of the
body. The same process is repeated with another vowel and so on. Of course, we
can use our chosen Mantra.

The essence of their teaching is that any sound vibration, if repeated with
an unflagging concentration in the body, can reach its cells – "the whole body
will be re-activated with new life and be reborn".

Among those who described this practice, I cannot avoid quoting Mère (Mirra
Alfassa), disciple and spiritual successor of Sri Aurobindo. I wrote some
introductory lines about her unique spiritual path in the first part of the book (see
Chapter 3). Her Agenda is a must read. Many experiences we find in it, bringing
us back to the practice of the Mantra 'thought' throughout the body. The Agenda
is an amazing "log" of Mirra's attempt to descend into her body to contact the
"Consciousness of the Cells", crossing various layers of consciousness (thoughts,
emotions, sensations.) It is interesting to note the invaluable help she found in
the practice of the Mantra. (Her Mantra was the splendid Prayer: "Om Namo
Bhagavateh.")

She said to Satprem (her most famous disciple): "Sri Aurobindo gave no
Mantra; he said that one should be able to do all the work without having to
resort to external means. Had he reached the point where we are now, he would
have seen that the purely psychological method is inadequate and that a Japa
is necessary, because only Japa has a direct action on the body. So I had to find the
method all alone, to find my Mantra by myself. But now that things are ready, I
have done 10 years of work in a few months."

Walking back and forth in her room, unremittingly concentrated on her
body, she repeated her Mantra for hours with endless devotion and total
"surrender". Each syllable was recharged with her laser-like will and aspiration.
The luminous vibration of the Prayer easily made its way through her body and
reach an unexplored territory: "... perfect, eternal, outside time, outside space,
outside movement ... beyond everything, in ... I don't know, in an ecstasy, a
beatitude, something ineffable." The experience she describes is like a breath of
the whole body that bypasses the lungs. That sublime state was the very
"consciousness of the body," implying that the cells had their own consciousness.
The cells, according to her, act as doors: opening on a totally new dimension of
consciousness – the only one free from the labyrinths of the mind.

However, to reach this plane, she also had to cross a negative layer which,
according to her explanation, was the base of any disease and, apparently, of any
casual incident, the origin of every feeling of desperation, deposited therein over
thousands of years.

Once experienced, she discovered that when she sat for meditation, as
soon as she began the repetition of the Mantra, there was an immediate response
in the cells of her body: they all started vibrating as "seized with an intensity of aspiration" and that vibration went on expanding. It was like merging the totality of her being in the vaster manifestation of the Divine inside matter.

In many passages of Mother's Agenda, Satprem and Mère discuss how the Mantra calms the persons in surrounding areas by creating an atmosphere of such an intensity that disharmonies cease to exist. Furthermore: "Mantra has a great action: it can prevent an accident. It simply springs forth in a flash, all of a sudden: "It has to spring up without thinking, without calling: it should issue forth from the being spontaneously, like a reflex, exactly like a reflex."

The Mantra is also the sweetest of all things: "On the days when I have no special preoccupations or difficulties (days I could call normal, when I am normal), everything I do, all the movements of this body, all, all the words I utter, all the gestures I make, are accompanied and upheld by or lined, as it were, with this mantra: OM NAMO BHAGAVATEH ... OM NAMO BHAGAVATEH ... all, all the time, all the time, all the time."

Mère was able to notice the difference between those who have a Mantra and those who don't. "With those who have no Mantra, even if they have a strong habit of meditation or concentration, something around them remains hazy and vague, whereas Japa imparts to those who practice it with a kind of precision, a kind of solidity: an armature. They become galvanized, as it were".

Now, if we try to apply such a procedure just for the pleasure of making an experiment, we shall find it 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. Not only that, in the following days we shall experience something strange. The image of an anthill that's been disturbed comes to mind: countless ants move at a frenetic pace. Similarly our environment appears to us as more agitated, at times aggressive toward us. It is as if everything (especially in the field of human relationships) is conspiring to put us in trouble.

We are surprised that after a long absence some acquaintances return with demanding challenges that require radical changes of attitude on our part. We feel the duty of facing intricate, unsolved issues that in the past we cleverly succeeded in avoiding. Being utterly sincere with ourselves is the only chance we have to cope with all the new challenges.

However, if we behave in such way, we shall be stunned by a very peculiar effect, like "not having a skin anymore." We feel 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. This will not be experienced as a telepathic phenomenon but as a type of subtle deception: we actually experience a mood which is not our own, which has no reason to exist, but we experience it as if it originated and emerged from the intimate part of ourselves. The first reaction is to vainly search for reasons in order try to justify it, to find plausible grounds for it. When, after a couple of days, it vanishes, only then we actually realize that the strange mood came from another person's consciousness.

The reader might be disappointed by the fact 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.

Let me quote a recurrent example. It happens that all of a sudden, a deep depression takes hold of our mood (let us suppose we had previously never been subject to depression), lasts several hours and then disappears; it is not a simple dissonance, a disharmony, but an agonizing pain in a moment in which there is no justification for it. Unfailingly we realize that a significant event had occurred: we had been introduced to a new acquaintance, we had shaken hands and talked with a sincere involvement.

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 a phenomenon of tuning to another person's consciousness, cannot be denied. What one is and what others are, mixes. It goes without saying that this phenomenon disappears as soon as we cease trying to "inject" a Mantra in our body.

Many times I wondered how it is possible that, by guiding breath and awareness into the cells of the body, we obtain such an important result, which has such tangible effects on the material, emotive and psychological planes. To affirm that Japa in the body leads a person to perceive reality in a different way is perfectly acceptable, but to assume that it makes things happen that would not otherwise happen (or that would have happened anyway, but in a different way) is quite another thing. This hypothesis has all the appearance of a figment of our imagination. The principle of causality implies that the world ignores what happens inside our consciousness.

How is it possible to justify the affirmation that when we bring our consciousness into the cells of our body, our action has an effect on the surrounding world? Even after many similar episodes, you cannot know whether this is simply an impression or a real fact.

Up to now, this phenomenon has not been completely described in the mystical literature. In order to try to explain it, it is necessary to make two important premises: the first one concerns the knot of the Muladhara, the second concerns the concept of the Collective Unconscious and the Principle of Synchronicity described by C.G. Jung.

First premise. Unfastening the knot of Muladhara constitutes the last phase of the spiritual path. As we have already discussed, the Complete form of Thokar is utilized for that. Now, a very attractive theory explains that the Muladhara knot exists not only in the coccyx region (blocking the opening of Sushumna) but extends to each cell of our body (skin, feet and legs in particular) as well. This secondary aspect of the Muladhara knot is linked with the psychological dimension which ties all human beings together: the vast ocean of the Collective Unconscious. Hence the cells of our body are linked with the deepest layer of our mind – vast as humanity itself.

A complete action concerning Muladhara implies guiding awareness into
your body. This is exactly what the afore hinted mystics have done through their particular form of Japa.

What we kriyabans discover is that by vibrating a Mantra in the body (and not only in the so called "spiritual centers" in the spine and brain) we succeed in getting through the last barrier of the mind (the ego separative consciousness) and the effects are totally unexpected.

**Second premise.** The *Collective Unconscious* is not a poetic concept but a real widening of the sphere of our awareness. Jung introduced terminology which permits us to probe an aspect of the mystical path which would otherwise risk being totally extraneous, not only to our capability of expression but also to our comprehension. 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. 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*. Even though his statements never lacked the necessary prudence, the scientific community never forgave him for dealing with matters that were not considered a part of Psychiatry – such as Alchemy (deemed an absurdity), the realm of myths (considered the result of a senseless imagination) and, more than any other thing, the great value he attributed to the religious dimension; which he considered something universal and fundamentally sane, instead of a pathology. Presently the enthusiasm for his writings remains, especially among those who study topics of a spiritual and esoteric nature.

The contents of the *Collective Unconscious* have never directly been in our immediate conscious perception, and when an infinitesimal part of it bursts forth into our psyche, we are momentarily dismayed.

Since we have hinted at particular facts that in their manifestation seem to ignore the principle of cause-effect, it is important to remember that Jung put a rational basis for the study of this subject in his book *Synchronicity: An Acausal 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, a certain sense that ties them together and it is this very meaning 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 the mysterious dimension of life.

An example will help us to better understand this concept. A youth moves a plant in a vase, which falls, breaks into pieces and the young man looks at the wounded plant. He thinks with intensity about the moment when his girlfriend
gave the vase to him as a present. There is emotion and pain in him, the event is feared as an omen. At the same time his girlfriend (this will obviously come to be know 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 happens 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 will be 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 in this situation we have only one event in a multi dimensional reality. The two events are actually only one event, merely seen from two different points of view.9

The last phase of the spiritual path, of every spiritual path, consists in dealing with the *Collective unconscious* and with the continuous happening of *Meaningful Coincidences*. This means to cross a swamp (the *Collective unconscious*) without the protective hull (now we feel the pain and the negative feeling of all humanity) with which nature has endowed us. But, maintaining our effort with untamed serenity, we will see the various layers of obscurity melt and we will meet "the abysses of truth and the oceans of smile that are behind the august picks of truth" (Sri Aurobindo). This means we are in touch with the Divine immanent in matter, a reality beyond every expectation, every dream. Pure love and compassion for humanity is born from that.

Lahiri Mahasaya said: "The whole universe is in the body; the whole universe is the final Self." Now we can understand what he meant by such a wonderful statement!

There is a wonderful aspect to this process: all of our psychological problems, especially those connected with negative moods tied with intricate and thwarted plans for the future, appear as a nightmare we have dissolved forever, an illusion out of which we have emerged definitively. The life which up until that point had been full of asperities, now seems to stretch out evenly toward the future. The beauty of living, like wine from a full cup, seems to overflow from every atom and fills the heart.

9 In the esoteric literature we find the concept of *Siddhis* (powers). We are very perplex about it. Those who write books on *Yoga* are not able to resist the temptation of copying some lines from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It's typical to find the ridiculous warning of the danger coming from the abuse of the *Siddhis*. Quoting Patanjali (IV:1), they recount that *Siddhis* are the spiritual powers (psychic abilities) that may occur through rigorous austerities; they explain that they vary from relatively simple forms of clairvoyance, telepathy, to being able to levitate, to be present at various places at once, to become as small as an atom, to materialize objects and more. They 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!
The difficult part of this process is that joining our consciousness with someone else's means involving ourselves with their problems. A lasting transformation in another's state of consciousness happens only when the opacity in them is purged bit by bit. This cannot be achieved by any way other than sharing part of their suffering – feat which might imply a momentary loss of our spiritual realization. Indeed it is a terribly cruel test, that only true love can justify, and implies a momentary loss of our own spiritual realization; such tests must be overcome. In the end, there is something infinitely beautiful that absorbs you in a blue-colored profundity where the pure skies are perceived as they had appeared to us during our infancy.

Now the wasteland, now the silence;
A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.

(\textit{Sri Aurobindo, from:} "\textit{Journey's End}"
Perfection of *Kriya Pranayama* happens in two different ways.

[I] By becoming stable upon the **ideal time of 22'' + 22''**, you arrive at the disappearance of the most important obstacles existing along the *Sushumna* path and, consequently, in your life.

[II] By perfecting the phase of **exhalation** you arrive at filling with *Prana* (coming down from the Cosmic fountainhead through the *Medulla*) the cells of your body expanding the kingdom of your awareness of the physical body to the vaster body which is the life that surrounded us – touching with the awareness what is called the *Collective Unconscious*.

We describe the two achievements separately.

**[I] BECOMING STABLE UPON THE IDEAL TIME OF 22'' + 22'' DURING KRIYA PRANAYAMA**

When we learn the technique *Kriya Pranayama* we are taught a minimum of internal anatomy aiming at achieving a working visualization of the spine. Our first experiences with *Kriya Pranayama* are accompanied by a wonder that increases day by day for the intrinsic beauty of the technique. Later, when we are taught to mentally chant *Om* in each *Chakra*, the technique remains just the same simple and effective. The *Chakras* are seen as steps of an ideal staircase leading to the dimension of the Spirit. We can easily visualize its first five steps. Some uncertainty remains about how to visualize the sixth and the seventh. Yet this visualized staircase is distant from actual reality.

In time we come to the realization that between the three initials steps (the first three *Chakras*) and the fourth (heart *Chakra*) there is an enormous distance. Heart *Chakra* is practically unreachable without an integral psycho-physical transformation. We don't even suspect it, but it can remain unreachable for too long. I believe that if we saw the situation as it really is we would get desperate. On the other end, for the few ones who are actually able to reach the fourth step, the fifth and the sixth are very near: the goal of the spiritual path is at hand.

Let us clearly state that, apart from beautiful soothing sensations in the spine and glimpses of light in the eyebrow center, with our *Kriya Pranayama* nothing meaningful and substantial happens, for a very long time. Our practice can be called a general preparation and we are wisely invited to wait patiently for future developments.
We are taught that the space that separates the third from the fourth Chakra, separates Apana from Prana (Apana is under the third Chakra, Prana is over the fourth.) Mixing them and guiding the new energy in Sushumna is our purpose, yet this internal alchemy is not easy to achieve. It is for this purpose that we are working upon the third Chakra with Navi Kriya and upon the fourth with the Thokar. Thokar does not consist only in guiding the energy from the head to the heart but also in dragging the energy from abdomen upward to the heart. The secret of our spiritual realization lies in merging Prana with Apana.

They will unite one day. All the rest will be a child's play. Each further step will happen in a natural way. Our personality will change drastically: it will immediately exhibit appropriate balance amongst all its functions. After a couple Kriya breaths, our Prana will be attracted, as from an irresistible magnet, inside the spine and our body would appear as dead. Our awareness, detached from ephemeral things, will rise to the most ineffable spheres of the mystical experience.

Well, besides our commitment to a peerless practice of Navi Kriya and Thokar we are going to add a very important procedure of uniting the two energies Prana and Apana. In this chapter we are going to make an important improvement in our Kriya Pranayama: during the inhalation, the air entering the lungs will accompany the upward movement of Apana only from the first to the third Chakra; then there will be no air but only a pure exertion of awareness accompanying Apana from the third to the fourth Chakra and then to all the other Chakras. Apana will then gradually merge with Prana. This new kind of inhalation will be followed by a tranquil and very enjoyable exhalation.

**Practice**

In Chapter 7 we have introduced the concepts of: Bahir Kevala Kumbhaka (breathless state after exhalation, that is with empty lungs) and Antar Kevala Kumbhaka (breathless state after inhalation, that is with full lungs.) In the state of Antar Kevala Kumbhaka, breath & Prana are located in the higher part of the lungs. Rib cage is expanded but this does not hamper a sensation of relaxation and freedom from body consciousness.

Let us now explain how the constant attempt at achieving Antar Kevala Kumbhaka (which happens during the Advanced form of Thokar), creates the ability of making our Kriya breath last 22+22 seconds.

Check your Kriya Pranayama with a chronometer. Try to get a true measure of it; have different breaths in order to measure the mean time. If the employed time is markedly less than 44" for each Kriya breath, then very patiently begin to practice Kriya Pranayama in the following way:

[1] Inhale slowly and deeply, raising the Prana from Chakra 1 to Chakra 3. This happens in about 6".
[2] Now try to have a short but intense experience of what you have learned in Chapter 7 about reaching the state of Antar Kevala Kumbhaka. Hold your breath, expand your rib cage and bring the awareness in Muladhara: begin mentally chanting Om, Om, Om... rapidly, many times (about two chants of Om per second) climbing the innermost channel of the spine like an ant, millimeter after millimeter, reaching the heart Chakra. Now perceive the freedom from the breath.

[3] If your lungs are able to receive another minimal quantity of air, utilize your physical breath, otherwise utilize only awareness and intuition to complete the path of the energy linked with Kriya inhalation. In a subtle way, awareness and energy move from Chakra 4 to Chakra 6 in about 6". It is obvious that the throat sound exists (and is very subtle) only if there is a flow of air through the nostrils.

[4] Now exhale in the most tranquil possible way. Don't care about the length of the exhalation.

Summary:
During Kriya inhalation, while the energy moves from Chakra 1 to Chakra 3 nothing in particular happens. When the energy is about moving from Chakra 3 to Chakra 4, there is a short pause of the inhalation. The rib cage is expanded and relaxed. The kriyaban's awareness is split into two: one part perceives and keeps steady the expansion of the chest, the other part draws energy (which is Apana) from Muladhara to the third Chakra. When it reaches the third Chakra, Apana merges with Prana producing an ecstatic state. The breathing process undergoes a transformation. The last part of inhalation is not made of air entering through the nose but is made of a pure movement of energy. The inhalation is thus completed in a subtle way. The process deepens by itself since the ensuing exhalation drags the mixture of Prana and Apana down, to the door of Sushumna. The key ingredient of the process (the drawing up of Apana current from Muladhara like an ant) becomes more and more natural until the pause necessary to enter the Antar Kevala Kumbhaka state disappears.

Effects

When you are first getting used to this delicate process you might feel some tension and doubt you are progressing. You might decide to abandon this practice on the pretext that it is not fit for your physiology. Contrary to what one might think, the effects – spiritual revelations through intuitive discernment and temperamental transformations – can be indeed epochal. Those who master this teaching are astonished at the effects on their psyche.

This practice can help a kriyaban to face some important and decisive challenges that life brings before them. Often kriyabans understand the necessity of run after something that seems impossible. They might nurture a passion for
something that appears as an utopia, a thing which is absurd to the common reasoning. Well, the afore described practice can provide the energetic potential necessary to achieve that ideal.

[II] PERFECTING THE PHASE OF EXHALATION, FILLING WITH PRANA THE CELLS OF THE BODY

What I'm going to discuss now is not intended to be studied and tested simultaneously with the previous point. It should be practiced months later. It is really too hard working to refine both aspects at the same time. You will tend to practice absent-mindlessly one of the two, imprinting indelibly on your mind a wrong way of conceiving its meaning and value. Therefore, don't care now about the rhythm 22" + 22". Just follow in a very relaxed way the minimal direction we are going to give, and focus all your attention upon how exhalation happens. It is clear that, in the future, the two different instructions could be practiced one after the other, but now let us not attempt to accomplish this.

**Practice**

**I. Exhaling Shee sound guides energy into the body**
During inhalation, make a loud sound and visualize a powerful vibration departing from the sexual zone, absorbing the energy there and bringing it into the head. During exhalation create a strong pressure of the awareness on the whole body. Perceive that the downward flow of energy permeate all the parts of the body, muscles, internal organs, skin, cells. Breath after breath, while maintaining a slow, deep rhythm of breathing, try to increase the intensity of the sound of the exhaling air in the throat. The Sheee sound of exhalation helps to inject energy into the cells of your body as if it divided itself in a limitless number of micro hypodermic needle injecting energy and light in each cell.

Before starting the exhalation strengthen the intention of finding (or opening) an internal way to reach the cells of your body. Not one iota of vitality in the air should leave your nose; all the vitality should be directed into the body. Let be inspired by thinking that the Shee 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)

**II. Concentration on the navel, lengthening the exhalation**
At the beginning of inhalation, expand the abdomen by pushing out the navel which pushes down the diaphragm. On the contrary, during exhalation
concentrate intensely on the navel as it moves toward the spine. Sure, we have already learned doing this during basic *Kriya Pranayama*: now it deals with intensifying at maximum this detail. Focus your attention on the internal gathering of energy into the abdominal region. This manifests as a peculiar ecstatic sensation that is perceived from the abdominal region to the chest region. It comes spontaneous making exhalation last a lot more than inhalation. Rather, you have the impression that the exhalation be *lengthened indefinitely*. The experience is similar to a *Navi Kriya* diffused throughout the body.

Often 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 becomes orgasmic. Only a faint signal of the need of oxygen appeases its progressive growth. (Occasionally, it is good to stop at this phase to enjoy this state, avoiding going ahead with point III.)

**III. Fragmented exhalation**

At this point, only a frail shell separates you from the coveted state where all effort ceases. Very useful to cross this veil, is the subtly fragmented exhalation.

Here we consider dividing our exhalation into about 20-30 fragments or even more. This is in itself a pleasurable experience, especially when each fragment tends to become microscopic.

Only if this is really necessary you can ... "cheat" a little bit, provided it is done with a good measure of delicacy. "To cheat" means to interrupt the exhalation, when necessary, inhale briefly and then take back the exhalation and the downward movement of the energy. (To be able to do this without disturbing the delicacy of the phenomenon is an art.)

**IV. The experience of the Internal Breathing**

The process of *Kriya Pranayama* is leading us toward something stunningly new: a rotation of energy independent from the act of breathing. The exhalation seems to become endless and the fragments of breath seem to have practically dissolved! There is also a faint but clear component of rising energy in the spine. You feel you could lengthen this process infinitely, without ever exhausting its marvel. You have crossed a barrier and reached a seemingly breathless state where there is no air coming out your nose (this cannot be affirmed with scientific certainty.) 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 an immobile mind.

Usually, this experience is enriched by hearing a loud and continuous *Om*. This comforting sound is the confirmation that you are heading in the right direction.

In the initial phases of mastering this practice it is better to avoid any form of *Kechari Mudra*: it might sometimes give the paradoxical impression of hindering your efforts. The reason is that it isolates you from your surrounding environment. During this practice, it is essential that your sensibility be in tune with all that is around.
A great source of inspiration (specific for this practice) is meditating outdoors with the eyes open and with the adamant, steadfast will of becoming one with a mountain, a lake, or a tree in front of us.

A strange phenomenon, that however does not contradict what we have said, is that sometimes the best experiences happen under conditions unfavorable to one's concentration, for example: practicing in a waiting room while pretending to read a magazine; practicing while traveling by train, looking out of the window, giving the impression of being absorbed in one's thoughts... On such occasions, the joy becomes so great that it's difficult to hold back tears.

About the experience of internal breathing

The experience of internal breathing is a peculiar phenomenon of circulation of energy in the body and it is not what a beginner kriyaban experiences. The breath is absent, yet one perceives the circulation of the energy, an "internal breath." We have all the reasons to believe that this is the same experience called in Taoist internal alchemy Macrocosmic Orbit. There are also good reasons to hold that this is the same experience to which P.Y. referred: "...the current will then automatically move by itself and the joy experienced will be indescribable." It may be also 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!"

Even if we don't realize the alchemical Macrocosmic Orbit, the simple fact adding awareness to the exhalation phase of our Kriya breath has surprising effects. It makes you feel the beauty of living as if you had vainly hoped for years on end that the Divine would be part of your daily life, without ever seeing any result, and suddenly you discover that the Divine had 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.

There are also effects that we cannot even imagine. I'm referring to touching the psychological dimension that ties together all the human beings: the vast ocean of the Collective Unconscious. The first perceptible effect is generating Synchronicity phenomenons also called: "Meaningful Coincidences."

In chapter 11 we have dealt with the theme of the mystics that think a Prayer in their body targeting their will to obtain an unlimited internal pressure of their awareness over the whole body, either by concentrating on it as a whole or following an orderly scheme of "conquering" each part of it. Well, the effects
of the above described way of exhaling during Kriya Pranayama is exactly the same, rather more intense.

**Meaning of the experience of Internal Breath**

Each authentic spiritual path has an "ascending" and a "descending" phase. The "ascending" phase is what is commonly intended with mystic path and that we have discussed in the book up to this point except the procedure of utilizing the vibrational power of a Mantra to let the Divine Force descend into our body filling it with awareness; except Kriya Pranayama with internal breath contemplating the same phenomenon but in a more intense and direct way.

Each kriyaban and each follower of any authentic spiritual path has, sooner or later, to experience fully the "descent" phase. What happens then, is a very strange phenomenon: a single person's spiritual realization is able to create an effect upon the surrounding reality. The action of the "descent" process is that of rousing (in those who are around but are in tune with the practitioner) the force that is driving ahead man's spiritual evolution. The "light" of the Spirit descends to brighten up the clouded mental planes of those who are ready to receive it, even if they are momentarily in deep illusion. It is very strange indeed, to see how the destiny of a man is linked with those who are around; however, if we attentively consider the matter from a philosophical point of view, it cannot be otherwise.

A full unfastening of the Muladhara knot cannot happen otherwise. Many kriyabans have the intention of living peacefully, always attuned to the higher Chakras, considering any other related-with-body-and-matter experience as an illusion. This is very common especially among those who love New Age thought. Later they understand by the same intuition kindled by the constant practice of meditation that the only way toward Cosmic Consciousness is to love mankind as our greater Self. When this happens, the "descent" phase begins.

To many mystics the descent experience did not result in states of peaceful expansion of awareness. Being suddenly overtaken by this experience without the necessary protection (cultivating every day a strong awareness of the cells of the body) the ensuing experience resulted in what could have been called a "descent into hell." They suffered from very negative moods and face also physical suffering. The problem is that they went out of themselves and identified with the physical and mental condition of the people they loved. Some accepted this condition and went on heroically with the conviction of expiating in their own flesh what they consider the effect of the sins of mankind. In some occasions they suffered to the point of knowing the blackest desperation. St. John of the Cross calls that state: "The dark night of the soul." Mystics feel as if God had suddenly abandoned them; they doubt the validity of their spiritual path. Although their conscience continually surrenders to God, they keep on believing to be 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. The consequence is the feeling of being irremediably impure, lost for eternity.

In my opinion, this experience (dark night of the soul) could be mitigated or even skipped if mystic learned to guide their Divine Realization into the cells of their body.

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" deriving from the contact with the quagmires of Collective Unconscious. The perfection of Pranayama (achievement of Pranayama with internal breath) is the perfect tool, is the jewel which is going to spare us from many dangers and suffering.

Summarizing:

The first phase of unfastening the Muladhara knot is enter in Sushumna; then follows to cover the mystical ladder of the Chakras, up to perceive clearly the spiritual eye. All this produces a heaven of ecstatic states. But entering the spiritual eye, entering totally and permanently only to a condition: after finding the Spiritual Light and Cosmic Sound in the higher centers of the brain, it is necessary to guide this Light into the lower Chakras and into the body. Later one intuitively learns how to infuse it into what surrender us. By studying the biographies of the mystics, it appears evident that the experience of cooperation with the collective evolution is not an optional, is not a choice that you can avoid. It begins at the most appropriate moment namely when the awareness knocks at the doors of Kutastha. It happens by virtue of a universal law and its first manifestation is a burning love for mankind.

As we have already clarified the "descent" path does not consists in sending "good vibrations" and other pious intentions. The most effective – and at the same time safest – way to proceed is: continuously filling the body with awareness. We make a specific act using of course the power of visualization. The Divine Force descend into our body, spread in each cell and spill over to the external reality. By working in this way we can cross unharmed the thick wall of collective opacity.

The descent process is fascinating. Sure, the encounter with a certain degree of suffering is unavoidable.

It is a basically sound healthy at the point that resolves any our prison made of psychological problems. This is almost always the first fact that you notice. The psychological problems dissolve immediately, indeed you realize, with a sens of relief, they were a complete illusion.

This descent, we said, has difficult moments. Lahiri himself suffered. I am reminded of the famous episode when one day he "drowned" in the body of people who were shipwrecked in a far away sea. Lahiri Mahasaya did not ask that experience, had not endeavored to attract it. It happened suddenly; he
accepted fully it and we don't know, but we can guess, what supreme solace he was able to bring to those poor souls.

I consider also how St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) had many times all the pains of death by being metaphysically near some wounded soldiers who were dying far away from home on the field of battle.

Even if it is a painful process, it is always better practice the descent as a matter of will and choice than wait the life itself exert upon us various sharp downward tugs. Those tugs are an unwelcome experience to force us to focus on the body. Much more better to abandon the obsession of utilizing Kriya only as a means for obtaining the Samadhi state, shunning the idea of working for the spiritual evolution of mankind. Let our Kriya path be complete.

Many, with the emergence of spiritual maturity, appreciate the theoretical possibility for the "spiritual" man to infuse the Divine into mankind, into all the living things, into matter. But then they decide that this is only a romantic ideal. In the last part of their life, some kriyabans are lost in conjectures on improbable levels of Kriya beyond those we already know, claiming that Babaji will introduce us to these levels in the astral worlds. That seems to me a parody of the esoteric and theosophic thought. On the contrary we learn that the last levels of Kriya are not achieved in the beyond but here on earth, facing, when the right moment comes, a perilous contact with the Collective Unconscious, uniting our spiritual realization with the ignorance and opacity contained in all human minds.

Lahiri Baba and saints are a mirror for all kriyabans. What happened in their body will one day happen in our body. Perhaps we may think that we are not ready for following Lahiri Mahasaya's example, but even if we have not his wisdom and neither the inner "Sun" of persons like The Mother, we can at least 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 therefore to strive to perfect our Kriya Pranayama endlessly and any future experience of expansion of awareness will happen in the most favorable modality for our spiritual evolution. We cannot live with a mind lost in illusion and a heart fictitiously open to universal love but in reality hard and resistant like a stone. In this situation our achievement instead of a state of enlightenment risks to resemble a chronic state of drowsiness.

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)
Appendix 1 – About premature Kundalini awakening

While browsing through the Web pages dealing with Kriya Yoga or Yoga in general, you will find some pages warning against the dangers of "premature awakening of Kundalini". The list of the problems that the allegedly premature awakening 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.

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 having its seat at the base of the spine.

Some authors foster the idea that this great concentration of energy has its seat in our entire body, not only at the base of the spine. It sleeps in our body, underneath the layers of our consciousness, waiting to be aroused by spiritual discipline.

In Kundalini Yoga a seeker aspires to harness this tremendous power through specific techniques (particular breathing patterns, Bandhas, Mudras, Bija Mantra...) and guide its rising from the Muladhara up through the Sushumna, activating each Chakra. It is explained that when Kundalini arrives at the crown Chakra (Sahasrara), it bestows infinite bliss, mystical illumination etc.

The concept of Kundalini is very useful since it can be utilized to express what generally happens in any authentic spiritual path. The concept of Samadhi (or religious ecstasy) is very akin to "Kundalini awakening". It may manifest as a series of bliss waves rising through the spine and entering the brain. The experience usually lasts from few instants to a couple of minutes. It is like having a volcano erupting inside, a "rocket" shooting up through the spine! Other times, it may appear like an intense bliss in the chest region – suddenly you are inside an immense joy and wake up with tears in your eyes. Sometimes an electric wind on the surface of the body, propagating from feet up to head, announces the experience.

The deepest experience is when the point (Bindu) in the center of Kutastha expands into a tunnel. The awareness is pulled through it. It is like burning with endless joy for several seconds – you are filled with the euphoria obtained by this short but unforgettable plunge into Eternity.

Some were so elated by their experience that wrote about it. I remember an article in a specialized magazine in which the woman who had the experience attributed the event to an imaginary individual who, purportedly, granted her every intimate detail. You understand that it is the lady herself to write since it is highly improbable that another person had communicated her such profusion of details of the event. Her alleged act of humility was annihilated by the title she
gave to her article: "Forerunners of a new race"!

She gave the impression of not having understood the teaching contained in the experience. In her description, *Kundalini* awakening happened in her body as a privilege bestowed to a person by divine intervention. We know instead that this event is very common to those who open for the first time a spiritual book like a Saint biography. The experience comes before any practice is done; it may spring from the vibratory shock produced by the same idea of the overwhelming power of the mystical path capable of sweeping away all man's certitudes.

But let us come back to the main talk, the alleged dangers coming from an hypothetical *Kundalini* awakening. We read also that: "Through practicing *Kundalini Yoga*, 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. If one makes up that a yogi died of spontaneous combustion during the practice of *Pranayama*, he can verify that, after a couple of months, this story will appear on some web sites.

Other things instead, make one feel very sad. I read that *Yogis*, sooner or later, are inclined to fall into sorcery and black magic because they evoke, unaware, negative entities. The 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 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 dear to close my eyes, I couldn't! I became a psychiatric case, and 26 times I've been hospitalized."

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 should believe that by breathing fresh air, focusing the mind on the spine and on particular centers in the head while mentally chanting a *Mantra* (in extreme synthesis *Kriya Yoga* can be reduce to this) 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. They referred contemptuously the same techniques that I had experimented so many times, with so much love, drawing the purest delight.

When I heard all this, my reaction was: "How, with what attitude, with what expectation, did these persons approached *Kriya Yoga*? *Kriya* cannot be responsible of all this. Impossible! They say *Kriya* will make me crazy ... well, if I must go crazy, I prefer to go crazy because of *Kriya*, instead because of living a materialistic life, where the spiritual dimension has no place. 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."

This was my way of thinking and of dismissing the topic. Now, I keep on with the usual enthusiasm but I am prudent when I talk about *Kriya* to other people especially if I perceive them as having specific problems of mental or emotional loss of balance.

As for the patent exaggerations and absurd accusations about alleged dangers from *Yoga* in general or specifically from *Kundalini Yoga* or *Kriya Yoga*, I cannot abstain from a strong suspicion that such charges come from persons who had for a long time some forms of deviant behaviors, such spiritism or magic and drug abuse.

*A short remark upon drug use and mental disturbances*

Personally, I've always been taken aback when some people blamed their *Kriya* practice (even the most simple preliminary practices), for damaging their psyche but said nothing about different drugs they have taken for years!

Here is a typical example. A friend that recently has shared our interest for meditation tells us that after practicing some simple techniques of meditation (something very mild like awareness of the breath or concentration on the *Chakras*) has lost his mental equilibrium and has experienced the most intense attacks of anguish and terror. He makes a big fuss about it, posting on *Yoga* forums, stigmatizing with ungrateful words both our early incitement to practice and our later reassurances when his uneasiness began to manifest.

Instead of feeling angry with him, we react calmly and start reasoning why he went to India each year, for a long series of years, without ever showing interest for *Yoga* or for the Indian spirituality. To get different types of drugs at a low price and consume them obviously! We are adamant about that. Later by other common friends we come 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.

At this point, we need to stop trying to get him to reason upon how absurd is to believe that some simple *yogic* exercises have caused his unhappy mental situation. It is obvious that he wants to exorcize the rather frightening thought of having seriously damaged his brain thorough drugs abuse and of being in a condition of permanent, fatal psychic disorder. The very idea that his past unwary choices can reasonably be put in causal relation with his present mental disorder is removed.

It falls to our lot to do nothing else than listening to him without reacting while he puts all the blame on *Yoga* for all his troubles and tragedies. Oh, if only we had a magic mirror in which our friend could see a synthesis of his past years and realize how inconsiderate and cruel he had been toward his body and therefore toward his cerebrospinal system!
The experience of Gopi Krishna

To those who practice the classical Pranayama (especially with Bandhas and with long pauses of holding the breath) the experience of a rising energy through the spine happens and they can have an experience of panic. Usually, this irrational fear disappears within a couple of days.

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 in Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man [currently available under the title Living With Kundalini]. His book is of great inspiration: it 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 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."

From then onwards, Gopi Krishna believed that this experience originated a
process in which his whole nervous system would be slowly reorganized and
transformed: he tried to write 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.

Now, we notice that:

a. He did exactly what in *Kriya* you are asked not to do (exclusive concentration
upon Sahasrara Chakra.)
b. He saved himself by doing exactly what in Kriya you are asked to do (raising a cold current through the spine.)

In Kriya we learn that a routine which is totally based on a strong concentration on the Sahasrara is not appropriate for beginner or medium level students. The concentration on Sahasrara should be prepared by a long concentration on the point between the eyebrows or at Medulla or at that point which is called Bindu (see chapter 6). This preparation should last years 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.

Then, let us reflect upon to 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. He tried to create a cold current coming up toward the brain within the central channel of the spine. This action, patiently repeated, helped him out of his predicament.

Note
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 the 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.

Kundalini awakening and Kriya Yoga

When Kundalini experience happens as a result of Kriya practice, you won't feel disoriented. If not refused or repressed, the repetition of such experience gives you an unshakable certainty of the value of Kriya techniques. However you must understand and accept one thing: you are like one who, dead in appearance, had visited the afterword and then had returned to walk again amongst human beings. It is clear that no one understands you. Therefore keep silent and try to improve your practice of Kriya.

After having experienced Kundalini awakening, some settle in a lethargic situation in which they are perfectly satisfied in establishing an agreeable atmosphere in their life. And this happens mainly because they rationalize they have received enlightenment and thus no further effort is required.

Don't deceive yourself: your Ego is intact, it hasn't turned into a "divine Ego". The path to become an Emancipated Soul, begins now and there is no step that can be disregarded.

Avoid going to "traveling gurus" to tell what has happened to you. They have no time to take care of anyone. They repeat hastily some general guidance and go away. They may even don't recognize the authenticity of the experience. Their lack of spiritual realization is, in some cases, really remarkable. You have the means to be your own Acharya. Let us consider what might be a simple criterion to judge the excellence of your routine. It should not be the amount of pleasure received while practicing a Kriya technique. Going ahead seeking pleasurable sensations during meditation means to put your ego as the compass needle of your spiritual journey. Tuning with the Omkar reality during the practice; achieving the breathless state when the routine is on the verge of ending; a sense of perfect fulfillment after Kriya, being moved to tears when you are alone and look at a mountain or at whatever beautiful corner of your surrounding landscape ... the coexistence of all these signs is surely a more reliable criterion.

You must be able to see the Divine in everything, to find joy in everything: work, free time, family, friends, contemplation of nature, art ... Sometimes it is difficult to be always attuned to an internal authentic feeling of fulfillment ... but you must study your routine, refine it continuously until this happens.

Never relax your guard and never stop using the common sense. Meditation relaxes the mistrustful side of your personality; you will tend to disregard your inner wisdom. I could bring many examples but I want to consider here the teachings that tend to poison you against the world, that alienate you from the society you are in. They try to amputate your individuality and your desires; they try to cut you from everything interesting and thrilling in life.

Do not impose chastity to yourself believing you must behave like a saint. Some rational and intelligent kriyabans believe impossible things. They state
authentic nonsenses and live excruciating conflicts getting to the refusal of love.

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! )

Sometimes the experience of a substantial and spontaneous rising of energy through the spine happens. Although being blissful in itself, you could react with a feeling of uneasiness and undefined fear. Usually this fear (which can turn into real anguish or panic) is absorbed in a short time, without problems. Sometimes, you might feel being walking in equilibrium on a rope between mental health and alienation. This phenomenon has happened to almost all mystics. There is nothing to fear! However it is always wise you have a sheet anchor at disposal – here you can find the two urgent actions to be done.

I. Mula Bandha (108)
Sit quietly and practice slowly, but intensely, 108 Mula Bandha. Contract all the muscles at the base of the spine, maintain the contraction for a couple of seconds and relax. Repeat. Forget the breath, try to attune to calmness in the point between the eyebrows. 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. Beside this, try to have plenty of physical activity.

II. Create a cool sensation inside the spine utilizing your breath
(This is exactly what Gopi Krishna did to get out of his awful situation.)
When the problem persists, 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 the position of Sitali Pranayama or through the left nostril – having closed somehow the right nostril. To practice Sitali, raise the borders of the tongue to form a "U" e let it protrude beyond the lips. Inhale deeply through tongue and mouth. Exhale through the nose. Feel a fresh sensation in the mouth, transfer it in the spine. Repeat this for a couple of minutes until you feel something changing.

Further recommendations

1. Be always prudent while holding your breath
Be always cautious with Kumbhaka (holding your breath). The famous author J.K. Taimni in his The science of Yoga (The theosophical publishing house Adyar, Chennai, India • Wheaton, Il, USA) writes:
"Kumbhaka affects the flow of pranic currents in a very marked and fundamental manner and enables the Yogi to gain increasing control over these currents. [...] Not only is Kumbhaka the essential element of real Pranayama but it is also the source of danger in the practice of Pranayama. The moment one starts retaining the breath, especially after inhalation, in any abnormal manner the danger begins and one can never know what it will lead to. [...] Kumbhaka unlocks the doors of unexpected experiences and powers. If it is taken up without the necessary preparation and guidance it is sure to lead to disaster."

Kumbhaka is very powerful and in Kriya Yoga it is adopted with special procedures: Yoni Mudra, Thokar... Between the two extreme eventualities: to never hold your breath or to overuse Kumbhaka, chose an intermediary percentage of seconds of Kumbhaka. Regulate this percentage according to your ability to bear the originated power. If this is respected, if it is combined with Maha Mudra, Navi Kriya and Yoni Mudra, you will cover all the spiritual journey in a safe way.

2. Concentrate upon the Chakras in a balanced way
Don't cultivate stupid theories according to which all your problems originate from the blockage of this or that Chakra. Don't utilize techniques that work on a single Chakra with the hope of unlocking it. Our internal knots are not as we usually visualize them, namely like ordinary rope-knots. They have a kind of mutual dependence, they are subtly inter-twined, one inside the other.

After studying the theory of knots (Granthis), do not focus too insistently upon eliminating the one that you deem is the most important. You risk to enforce those very knots you want to eliminate. 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.

It is correct to affirm that the knots are the root cause of our miseries, because they nourish the exhausting world of superficial emotions and thoughts. But it is not correct to think that they are our arch-enemies. They blur our vision of the Spirit but without them we would immediately dissolve in the Spirit, we could not lead a normal life. They are at the base of the instinct of self preservation.

Remember that the balanced techniques of Kriya Pranayama, Thokar, Thokar Tribhangamurari and mental Pranayama work upon all the knots simultaneously. Increasing gradually the repetition of these basic procedures is always the best choice!

If you concentrate for some time on Muladhara, give the same concentration to all the other Chakras and always end by concentrating on the point between the eyebrows. In one commentary by Lahiri Mahasaya to the sacred writings, it is written: "Being tranquil at the coccygeal center, do not stay longer. If you stay longer at the coccygeal center, then negative Samadhi (a negative state of absorption) will take place. So after getting up again, you should start practicing Kriya." If, just to give an example, you use Thokar to hit different times the Muladhara Chakra and you don't integrate this with other practices to stimulate the higher Chakras, the result is mainly a state of greyish
mind that appears in the day following the practice. It is difficult to sustain that uncomfortable sensation – as if your soul were scratched.

3. Do not utilize procedures wholly based on the power of visualization

Usually visualization techniques are introduced as an omni-beneficial activity. But visualization is a force acting in your psychic inner world, thus necessarily there should be obstacles and dangers to be considered.

Some schools teach you to create a virtual reality through the power of your imagination. The visualization procedure brought to the extreme limit is useless and treacherous. You believe you are entering the spiritual dimension but you are entering the kingdom of alienation. Always remember that when you do a purely mental work that doesn't envisage verification, the danger is certain.

Remind Jung's words:

"The deliberately induced psychotic state, which in certain unstable individuals might easily lead to a real psychosis, is a danger that needs to be taken very seriously indeed. These things really are dangerous and ought not to be meddled with in our typically Western way. It is a meddling with Fate, which strikes at the very roots of human existence and can let loose a flood of sufferings of which no sane person ever dreamed." (C. G. Jung, Introduction to The Tibetan book of the Dead.)

What are, according to Jung, the "deliberately induced psychotic states"? Unfortunately he does not explain it in detail and does not bring examples. However it is not difficult to understand that a psychotic state is the one in which you see things that do not exist, have a relationship (listen to voices, receive messages) from a dimension you have created in your mind and that exists only for you.
Appendix 2 – Cleaning the Kriya path from all esoteric-magic manias

Sometimes I ask myself if the ideas discussed in appendix 1 and 2, could have been placed in a Preface. But few people ever read a Preface. Most kriyabans when discover my writing behave like timorous animals in unfamiliar territory, wondering whether to give a modicum of trust to the author. They prefer to get a general idea of the author's motivations (...and obsessions) by concentrating on certain techniques to see how deeply they are discussed. Only if they are convinced of the value of a book, they might pay attention to other parts of the book and only at the very end they would pay attention to the Preface. Therefore I think that this is the appropriate place.

Let us dwell upon the theme of the wrong attitudes towards the Kriya path. This problem is more serious than what it seems. Sometimes I think that sudden realization of the real situation would drive a Kriya Yoga teacher to despair. Where can you find a kriyaban who has not received strong conditioning, and drags himself ahead not only by reason of a sincere aspiration but thanks to unmotivated and irrational expectations?

The point is that many forget that Kriya is not a psychological journey in the realm of our mind but a spiritual path. Forgetting this gives all deformations green light. The two main wrong attitudes ensuing from it are: practicing Kriya with the hope of entering a general physical and mental healing process and nurturing great expectations for Kriya, seen as the greatest esoteric secret. If you find yourself in both attitudes, know that you are not alone!

As for the hope of applying the Kriya techniques to get free from depression, this may come naturally after reading Kriya literature. Some schools of Kriya have tons of literature spreading this idea. This attitude leads nowhere. If you have a sick mind and after having experimented with alternative remedies, you follow the counsel of too much enthusiastic persons and try the Kriya path too, you won't obtain anything, except for a headache. If something good happens you will not recognize it and get only anguish.

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"? In this situation there is no love for Kriya. You fear in your heart you will be disappointed and you will. 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 camouflage your skepticism by pretending a nonexistent spiritual interest. Kriya can work even if you are not a "religious" person, but it should be the object of your enthusiasm and aspiration.

As for the second wrong attitude: nourishing the groundless expectation that Kriya practice might amplify your mental powers. This idea is subtly fostered by some Kriya literature.

I don't want to say that this is the only idea that comes out from certain literature. By no means! It describes the spiritual path in a correct way, inviting you to seek the Divine only, quoting the Gospel with authority. Yet the preceding
idea disturbs indeed. It gives origin to an almost inextinguishable oscillation between seeking the Divine only, surrendering to His will without asking any other thing, and to use will, imagination and effort to get some tangible results – which it is the aspect that, just in order to be understood, I call "magic".

This situation is made more unstable by the fact that, owing to religious conditioning, the idea of moving towards God might remain, for many persons and for a long time without an ounce of attractiveness. While the goal of the spiritual path seems a deviation of the natural instinct liven in the cold dark of churches, the literature goes on encouraging you to develop this, to develop that.

The dawning of a spiritual awakening is when suddenly the Omkar dimension enters one's life. Omkar is important, very important. Without it, you can repeat all day long: "Thou art that" but you don't grasp its meaning. You are only enjoying lofty ideas. Even if you believe in a Higher Self and desire to live without betraying it, if you are not in contact with the Omkar reality, you betray your Higher Self continuously.

I am not afraid of saying that without this baptism, one's practice of Kriya is a caricature of Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya. You cannot talk only about evolution. "Evolution" is a vague, inconsistent mirage which destroys all genuine spiritual aspiration. An hypothetical evolution is less than nothing compared to the experience of contacting and merging into the Omkar vibration.

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 self-made religion. I went through the whole history of western esotericism. You can understand where the boundary line between the genuine mystical quest and the cultivation of magic ambitions lay when you are familiar not only with the history of the mystical movements but esoteric too.

I was delighted to prepare the lessons by studying 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 religious movements which flourished freely around the great religions.

This was an unclouded period of my life: I was very gratified to have time and opportunity to pursue such studies. The impact of certain readings, the liveliness of certain historical facts, had the effect of cleaning my path from useless dogmas admitted innocently into my life through the door of meek adapting to the ideals of my first Kriya organization. I was struck by the devastating inconsistency of many esoteric movements, widely recognized as demanding and elitist. Many magnificent terms, which would have once allured me, turned out to be totally empty of any significance. Their redundancy filled me with nausea as if they were an obscenity brought forth by a monster. I was stricken by the weakness of the human mind, by its discouraging slowness in dissolving glaring deceptions and fallacies.

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 which lays beyond the territories of the mind -- unattainable by the acrobatics of a never satisfied mind.

The problem was that that something beyond mind was unintelligible and had no appeal for most part of them. I repeated to no purpose how frail (full of suggestibility and vulnerability) was the human psyche when it deals with approaching the spiritual path. I saw that my students showed scant regard for this theme. They didn't seem to realize the relation it had with their own life. Rather someone contested me remembering me the great value of the curiosity in bringing forth the scientific search.

I realized with cold mind that some listeners came to my lessons in the hope to receive support and fuel for their illusions. Towards the end of cycle of lessons I tried to extoll the concept of a "clean mystical path" – a path directed one pointedly towards the total surrender to God and not polluted by the fantasies and deformations of the human mind.

I talked privately with some students about how to approach the very core of the spiritual path. I extolled the value of spiritual classics like: "Tales of a Russian Pilgrim".

I extolled how beautiful and valuable it was feeling like pilgrims, like those souls who followed the thousand-year-old spiritual tradition of Continuous Prayer. It was evident that I had strongly strayed off of my didactic theme. However they forgot everything just five minutes after our conversation and revealed the stimulus of the most curious illusions with the firm proposal of cultivating them on their own with great delight.

At the end of this didactic experience I had clear in front of me the great danger to consider any spiritual path as a magic process. Actually, there are some aspects of Kriya advertising that seem an invitation to tread the path of Magic. "You will develop this, you will develop that...." There is a subtle conditioning, seeds of illusion that will flourish at due time.

I don't advertise Kriya, but I know what I would say: "Kriya Yoga is a spiritual path based on good methods of concentration and Prayer. These methods had been utilized for centuries." Not a word more. I would never show pics of people who were successful in Kriya, I didn't either report of famous personages praising Yoga in general or Kriya Yoga ... since this gives the idea you want to sell something.

I don't appreciate that some Kriya school use sometimes (during mass initiation) rites similar to Magic. They employs symbolism, purification fire rites, to engender belief. The greatest similarity is that both (Kriya and Magic) require to take an oath of secrecy about the techniques. In religion there is discretion not secrecy. Discretion comes spontaneous to intelligent and sensitive people, secrecy is unnatural, irrational, impractical and therefore requires an oath.
There are two tendencies in magic and therefore two ways of straying a spiritual path. The first is the mania of receiving initiation from exponents of an ancient lineage, the second is the mania of knowing all the most powerful procedures in the world in order to find out the best of the best.

A recollection of two very particular kriyaban friends
By my first Kriya teacher, I knew a person who wasn't there in the spasmodic search for original Kriya but because of the illustrious line of descent of that teacher. He said that "line of descent" was the most important thing to care while approaching a spiritual teacher.

He was adamantly practicing Kriya with wrong modalities, making glaring mistakes. For instance, he neglected the normal rules of health, refused, during meditation, to assume the correct position of the backbone, didn't even try to get immobility in the final part of his routine. It was impossible to correct him. He behaved toward me in a very cordial way but, when he talked about the absolute place to be given to ethic rules listed by Patanjali, he was able to make me feel like a worm. He criticized my obsession to master the practice of Kriya. He explained that the very desire to master a meditation technique meant cultivating desire and this was against Buddhist principles.

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. But he was convinced that spiritual progress cannot happen except through receiving this "power". In his life he was destined to wait 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 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 be serious in the practice of the Kriya techniques – he said they were just to purify oneself before receiving the real "initiation" which for him meant "power." What I never understood of him was that now and then he went to assist to the liturgical practices of a Catholic church only "as a bland form of exorcism."

Unfortunately, he went on paying attention to the revelations coming from a healer (a channeler 10) to whom he went in order that the spirits reveal to him the karmic reason of a light illness that in my opinion, could be cured easily following the usual hygienic rules. Later he met a group of people who practiced spiritualism and had Kardec as occult teacher. It was enough for him to hear that name to immediately feel part of that group who had the characteristics associated with Cultic Groups. What was

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10 Classical spiritualism - characterized by a person (medium) who enters a trance state at a desk, answers the questions put by the bystanders through a code of loud raps - has handed over its place to more modern methods such as those where all the participants, putting their hands on an upside-down glass to move it among the letters of the alphabet stamped on a comfortable flexible tablet (Ouija board). Many prefer the more accessible revelations of a channeler who lets the invoked entity express through the flood of his own eloquence. It is interesting to see how the channeler's biographies trace a common scheme. All tell that once they were skeptic of their own faculties and would not accept yielding to the higher Will who had decided to entrust to them the mission to serve as medium between spirits and humanity. Once their mission was accepted, from the same ultra mundane source came the inspiration to mix the flow of the various revelations with the diagnosis of unlikely illnesses, with prescription of expensive alternative remedies.
lived there seemed to me a child's play were it not for the fact that my friend supported handsomely his group.

He plunged into situations of such a narrow vision that his life style appeared grotesque. It was a revelation for me to witness his mental fragility. It was as if, from behind the mask of his face, another personality appeared, extremely self-confident but paradoxically allowing others to defraud him in the worst of the ways. His original desire to find a channel that put him in direct contact with the power and blessings of the ancient masters ended in the worst of all prisons. He gave all his possessions, and the totality of his time, to a person who was an authentic rogue. 11 He claimed to have had the privilege … to communicate directly with P.Y. and with Lahiri Mahasaya. It was pathetic and, to an extent, even amusing being told that his message coming directly from the hereafter: "In this epoch, the Kriya is old-fashioned and useless. Devotion is enough!"

Another kriyaban friend seemed to live only for "improving" his Kriya by incorporating various esoteric procedures, even those described in some esoteric books. He was convinced that only by using certain formulas and initiatic symbols, was it possible to complete the evolutionary jump conducive to liberation.

After a great insistence, I accepted to read what for him was a masterpiece of initiatic literature. The book surprised me for the quantity of information it contained. While reading it, 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 with words, the author's imagination dared to develop free from the relationship with reality and from the rules of logic. The whole thing was only a pure mental enjoyment – comparable to that of reading a fantasy novel. Reading Tolkien would have been immensely more interesting and wise. How can you think of experiencing something concrete by just reading such junk? I counseled to my friend some good books; he stated he had already read them. But it was a lie – he preferred to keep them at a distance.

I came to know that he was the spiritual guide of a small group of persons. I can't imagine what he taught them since he never talk to me of this activity.

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 few privileged 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 na"ive as it seemed; he used an enchanting terminology similar to that of the Kabbalah (mystical

11 I have some grounds to believe that the untrustworthy soil of spiritualism is one of the best areas to cultivate splits inside one's personality. Apart from the automatic writing in which the one who asks is the same person that gives the answer, the Medium knows in advance the preferences and anticipations of the person who addresses him. Therefore all becomes like a closed circuit: question and answer reverberate in an endless loop like the feedback of a microphone set next to its loud speaker. As anyone can observe, the messages are always agreeable. Every adept, even of limited intelligence, receives the message that the Divine has assigned him an important mission… I believe that this is, psychologically speaking, very dangerous.
teaching within Judaism) 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.

Conclusion

We all know that to be entangled in esoteric, magic, occult rituals, spiritualistic practices... is an amazingly easy way of destroying, in a short time, years of genuine spiritual effort. Study and understand this topic until until you feel it as a nightmare.

Erase once and for all the insane idea that Kriya is the art of manipulating your karma and thus acceleration your evolution. Let Magic be the art of manipulating aspects of reality through knowledge of occult laws.

Regard Kriya as the art of Prayer and of "complete surrender" not through the mind but through tranquillizing all the Prana in your body. Feel you are a pilgrim in this world. Start the practice of Japa with all your heart while your mind will judge it a dull activity. From now on, consider the state of Continuous Prayer the shining destination of your spiritual venture. Don’t occupy your thoughts with any other achievement. By following through with your resolution, all will be perfect in your path.
Appendix 3 – Importance of studying the Radhasoami movement

Why should kriyabans give their time study the Radhasoami cult? Because Sri Yukteswar and P. Yogananda were part of it and because the literary material produced by this movement is very inspiring for all those who are seeking to be in tune with the Omkar Realty.

The Kriya path is a process of refining, in successive stages, one's attunement with Omkar. Now, we are going to discover that Radhasoami is a monotheistic religion having the Omkar Reality as the "single God." We can say the same about Kriya Yoga. Omkar is the final goal of Kriya and the unique essence which percolates through all its phases.

Radhasoami movement teach procedures that are very similar to the techniques Hong Sau, Om, Kriya Pranayama and the technique that P.Y. calls Second Kriya. These 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".)

Every kriyaban who feels a strong tie with P.Y.'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 also referred to as Sant Mat (Path of the Saints). It is considered a derivation of Sikhism. Even if the spiritual organization Radhasoami (Radha Swami) was formally founded in 19th century India, actually, the tradition is much more ancient and it relates to the teaching of Kabir and then Guru Nanak.

The writings of Kabir (1398 Benares - 1448/1494 Maghar), have deep similarities with the experiences and thoughts of Lahiri Mahasaya. 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, but it 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 12 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.
Hinduism to be two roads converging toward a unique goal. He was convinced of the possibility of overcoming the barriers that separate these two great religions. He did not seem to base his teaching upon the authority of the holy writings; he shunned the religious rituals. Kabir taught not to renounce to life and become a hermit, not to cultivate any extreme approach to the spiritual discipline, because it weakens the body and increases pride. God has to be recognized inside of one's own soul - like a fire fed by continuous care, burning all the resistances, dogmas and ignorance. This is beautifully stated in Kabir's: "One day my mind flew as a bird in the sky, and entered the heavens. When I arrived, I saw that there was no God, since He resided in the Saints!" Hinduism gave Kabir the concept of reincarnation and the law of *Karma*; Islam gave him the absolute monotheism - the strength of fighting all the forms of idolatry and the caste system. I found the full meaning of the *yogic* practice in him. He says that there is a garden full of flowers in our body, the *Chakras*, and an endless beauty can be contemplated if the awareness is established in the "thousand-petal Lotus".

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

Beloved Guru Nanak gave the same teaching. He disapproved of ascetic practices and taught instead to remain inwardly detached whilst living as a householder. "Asceticism doesn't consist in ascetic robes, or in having a walking staff, nor in visiting burial places. Asceticism is not mere words; asceticism is to remain pure amidst impurities!" Traditionally, release from the bondage of the world was sought as the goal, therefore the householder's life was considered an impediment and an entanglement. In contrast, in Guru Nanak's teaching, the whole world became the arena of spiritual endeavor. He was bewitched by the beauty of creation and considered the panorama of nature as the loveliest place for worship of the Divine. He expressed his teachings in Punjabi, the spoken language of northern India. His disregard for Sanskrit suggested that his message was without reference to the existent Holy Scriptures. He made a deliberate attempt to completely cut off his disciples from all the ritualistic practices, orthodox modes of worship, and from the priestly class. His teaching demanded an entirely new approach. While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, he described God as not wholly unknowable. God must be seen through "the inward eye", sought in the "heart". He emphasized that the revelation of this is to be achieved through meditation. In his teachings there are hints as to the possibility of listening to an ineffable internal melody (Omkar) and to taste the nectar (Amrit).

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

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

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.

The main teachings and philosophy of Radhasoami

The main features of this movement are the following:

I. Radhasoami affirms that Om is the Word referred to in the Bible: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) The Sound vibration, the dynamic force of creative energy that was continuously being sent out from the Supreme Being at the dawn of the universe's manifestation throughout the ages, molding all things animate and inanimate; could be listened to through a multiphase procedure known as Surat Shabda Yoga.

The central technique of Surat Shabda Yoga aims at uniting the essence of what we call "ourselves" with the Supreme Being through a procedure of inner listening. This techniques consists in attuning the soul to the spiritual current ever vibrating within. God is within us but physical eyes cannot see Him, nor can these physical ears hear His Voice. Nevertheless we can hear the "divine pressure" that hums all around us. By entering into the silence and closing our ears we can perfectly catch that celestial melody and therefore realize the presence of God within ourselves. It takes a little time to develop it and Om can be heard by anyone! This is an amazing, marvelous event for each human being!

From the sacred moment when the student hears this music, he is never again alone. He enjoys the companionship of God Himself. Contact with this Primal Source of peace, love, and bliss, removes our fears, worries and anxieties.
Radhasoami explains that from age to age, the great Masters come to revive this knowledge, after materialism has obscured it. They give us back our supreme joy, that who bring us directly to our ultimate spiritual freedom.

II. Radhasoami emphasizes the need of a living spiritual Master or Satguru. There is no doubt that the concept of Guru has a special place in Indian thought. One of the main Hindu texts, the Bhagavad Gita, is a dialog between God in the form of Krishna and the warrior prince Arjuna. Their dialog summarizes the ideal relationship between Guru and disciple. Radhasoami extols the role of the Guru. In Radhasoami thinking this relationship is elaborated in great detail – exactly in the same way I heard from my Kriya organization but with an important difference: this Guru cannot be dead (or, as they prefer to say, not having relinquished his body through Mahasamadhi). Radhasoami is ironic about those people who imagine themselves followers of some dead Master. They comment: can a woman marry a dead man and live with him? Can a dead doctor give medicine? One person may revere the memory of a dead master or read his writings. One may feel in his heart love and veneration for him. But he can never be a real Initiate of that Master.

Coming back to the real situation, namely the relationship with a living Guru, this role is so important that there is a saying that if the devotee were presented to the Guru and God, first he would pay respect to the Guru, since the Guru had been instrumental in leading him to God. A disciple could never break off the sacred connection with the Guru under any circumstances.

Initiation to Surat Shabda Yoga procedures is a very important moment. Radhasoami does not initiate everyone who asks for it. One has to be spiritually "ready" for initiation. After one has been chosen for initiation, he is taken into a closed room, where the initiator explains the fundamental theoretical points we are dealing with. Beside this, at the time of initiation, he is given a first-hand inner experience of the internal Light which appears in the point between the eyebrows. The initiator activates this Light stationed at the third eye of the disciple. Through it, one comes to "know God". When a soul establishes contact with this Light, the Light takes it back to the Godhead, its original home. Although some sects forbid idolatry, generally the would-be initiate bows, kneels, or generally prostrates before the Guru and worships him. They explain that a Guru takes on himself part of the karma of the disciple, appears to them at the moment of death in order to introduce them to God. As for the meditation techniques, they can be learned later from other authorized persons from the initiator and in any case the disciple takes a vow of secrecy.

III. Radhasoami emphasizes the need of weekly gathering for spiritual fellowship, spiritual service that can manifest in many forms and for listening to the talks of their living Master. Often such discourses revolve round the necessity of coupling meditation with a life of high moral values. (Vegetarian diet, no intoxicants or recreational drugs...) at the same time carrying out their responsibilities to family, friends and society. Attending to these meetings is considered of paramount importance. During them, one has experience of
meditation under the direct guidance of his teacher.

Before giving a summary description of the Radhasoami techniques, let us underline a key factor that Radhasoamis are very proud of. They claim that the limitation of all religions has been their inability to make God real to their devotees. Actually, we can not imagine that men would live as they do, think and act as they do, if God were real to them, if they had actually seen Him and loved Him. God must become real to the individual, not a mental concept but a living reality. To practically all men, God is simply an abstract idea, a mental concept. How can one worship and love a mental concept? When most people say they love God, it simply means that they have a certain emotion induced by different factors. But this has not the least thing to do with God-realization.

There is but one method of making God real to the seeker: that is, to make him see God and hear Him. When the disciple hears the enchanting music of the internal sounds, then this process has begun. But that realization is not complete. When he rises by the aid of subtler procedures to the still higher planes, his "spiritual being" meets with the Light of Kutastha, it is then that he experiences perfect God-realization.

Now, the sound of Om, being the bridge between the physical and the astral world, the conscious and the unconscious, the form and the formless is the best experience to increase devotion for the Divine.

Techniques

The meditation routine is practiced daily in the comfort and convenience of one's own home.

1. Position

The teachers of Surat Shabda Yoga encourage meditation 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 (both feet flat on ground) 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.

2. Perceiving light in Kutastha

In order to begin the upward journey, a Sadhak must learn to "go within" – this is accomplished by concentration at the Third Eye Center. They explain that the seat of the Spirit is at the point between the two eyebrows. It is on this point that the Sadhak having closed his eyes must focus his attention. Concentration moves ideally from that point, horizontally out, 20-25 centimeters from the forehead. No tension is put on the eyes or forehead. The gaze is focused on the middle of the dark inner screen: gradually the darkness will fade to lighter and lighter shades, eventually opening into the infinite space. This experience is deepened during the next practice n.3.
Note
Some modern cults that are a derivation of Radhasoami teach this following right hand position. The eyelids are closed. The index finger rests lightly on the point between the eyebrows; thumb and middle finger rest lightly on each closed eyeball, to steady and stop the eyeballs from moving. Start from the corner of the eyeballs, press very very slightly the eyeballs up from the bottom. You should see the light forming inside your head. You get the sensation that your head is flooded with light. We must emphasize that it is not the pressure on the eyeballs that counts – the purpose of the hand position is meant simply to steady them and to allow you to focus better.

3. Simran at Kutastha
The teacher gives the disciple a Mantra; Simran means the repetition of this Mantra. It is simply a method of helping the mind to come to complete rest and remain at rest in the given center. Repeating internally the Mantra in Kutastha helps one to raise the consciousness of the Self to higher regions. Simran is the key that helps transcending thought (time and space) and opens the door of the inner being.


The disciple sits still, eyes closed, mentally repeating the Mantra, gazing into the middle of the darkness lying in front of him. If he 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. When the inward gaze has brought to a sharp and steady focus, one finds that the darkness will fade and light will emerge. Concentrate in the middle of it and continue repeating slowly your Mantra. Eventually one experiences the withdrawal of the sensory currents and a vary peculiar state sets in: like of ''numbness''. The Inner Light ceases flickering and develops into a bright spot in the central portion of the forehead. Gradually, this brilliance enlightens every constituent of the body from within. Every cell, every tendril is seen as sparkling with a reflection of this unique glow. The divine glow ends the darkness of ignorance. Perfect control of the flow of the thoughts and emotions ensues.

4. Nada Yoga
This technique is practiced covering ears and eyes using an arm prop. Some combine the listening to the inner sounds with the attempt to taste nectar (Amrit) by sticking the tongue to the roof of the mouth. (See technique n.6) In order to hear the "divine sound", novices are asked to block their ears with the thumbs so they cannot hear any external sounds. Usually one places the thumbs in the ears and pulling back just far enough not to be listening to the blood pounding through your ears. [Variation: each thumb is placed in the ear and each hand is twisted upwards so that the four fingers of each hand rest on the top of your head, with each thumb tip lightly but firmly in each ear hole, sealed with the twisting action.]

One listens to the internal sound 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. During this practice, the Mantra given in the previous technique is not repeated.

5. So ham Pranayama
The nostrils in a human body are like the holes in a flute. We know that the in and out flow of air produces typical sounds that you can listen to, concentrate upon and thus amplify especially when the breathing process is deep and slow. The sound of the breath is "So" during inhalation and "Ham" (hung) during exhalation. These sounds are not loud and clear like other audible sounds. Nevertheless, they can be "perceived" concentrating upon each breath in a silent ambient.

Listen to the sound of the in and out breath as "So-Ham": "So" on the in-breath, "Ham" on the out-breath. A great help and inspiration for this practice is to consider breath not only as a flow of air but as a manifestation of the cosmic Om vibration. A Sadhak should also attempt to feel an illuminating current of Prana entering along with the breath; it is absorbed during the following pause and injected into the body during exhalation. If you are constantly aware of this, you achieve the breathless state. Therefore this technique is also referred to as Kevala Kumbhaka. During it you can hear also the internal sounds: the full realization of Nada Yoga can be achieved. The total duration of this practice can range between five minutes (for beginners) to thirty minutes (for the trained).

6. Kechari
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 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. You can combine So Ham Pranayama with Kechari; or you can practice Kechari alone."

7. Locate the Chakras in the dorsal spine
The Radhasoami movement believes that besides the 6 Chakras in the physical body, there are 6 Chakras in the grey 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 while
concentrating upon the physical location of each 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 – the pause upon a Chakra lasts only for the necessary time to have that subtle perception of it.

8. Higher form of So Ham Pranayama
When the physical location of the 6 spinal Chakras is clearly established in the mind, the Kundalini energy can be stimulated by creating a strong mental pressure on the six Chakras along the spinal column. This is possible only after having practiced for a long time the previous techniques.

Let's get to the point: practice So Ham Pranayama with Kechari Mudra: piercing the Chakras happens during inhalation. While breathing in slowly, with the focus of concentration upon the subtle sound of "so", try to feel the pressure of the Prana contained in the inhaled air. It surrounds, winds and tights around each Chakra during its coming up. Exhalation happens as in the basic form of Soham Pranayama: do it very relaxed listening to the sound of the breath coming out as "Ham". By repeating this procedure, the pressure upon each Chakra increases.

9. Subtle phases of meditation to intensify Omkar experience
The location of the other 12 Chakras in the brain is gradually revealed by moving the Prana in a circular (or elliptical) 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. There are plenty of such procedures adopted by the different Radhasoami groups. Here I hint to a couple of them (which represent, in my opinion, the most effective and efficient way to merge int the Omkar dimension.)

[I] Awareness and Prana move upwards along the right temple, then to the left (under the skull vault), downwards along the left temple and finally to the right touching Medulla and closing the ellipse. All the movement happens inside the brain.

You will hear internal sound inside the right ear. Then you will hear it inside the left ear also. Go ahead with the internal movement and listen to both tones simultaneously. When the energy in the two is balanced, a circle is formed, creating a force field. It may take you about five minutes to hear both tones at the same time.

Now, guide the two vibrations 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. A deep Bell sound will lead you in the Samadhi state. This is the culmination of this particular practice and contemplation.

[II] Awareness and Prana move forward along the right part of the crown, then move backwards along the left part of the crown, returning to the starting point.
over the occipital region. All movement happens horizontally under the skull vault.

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

**Conclusion**

We were taught that Lahiri Mahasaya learned Kriya Yoga in 1861 from Mahavatar Babaji. We have discovered that he learned also from other sources and brought ahead during his life a continuously process of experimentation. We assume that the hypothesis that he learned also from Radhasoami, (either traditional Radhasoami or something linked with that tradition) is reasonable. But we have no doubt that Radhasoami too can learn from him, because Lahiri Mahasaya is the new Kabir the new Guru Nanak and he has enriched the Surat Shabda Yoga path tremendously.

Lahiri Mahasaya goes beyond traditional Radhasoami because he took from other traditions like Sufi and integrates everything perfectly. Radhasoami teaches that Om is to be heard by closing the ears, Lahiri insists that Om is to be heard without closing the ears (and this feat which is relatively difficult while trying to master Kriya Pranayama becomes possible with Thokar and Kechari Mudra). Radhasoami teaches that the spiritual goal is to reach the higher centers in the brain and be lost in that Light; Lahiri Mahasaya emphasizes that the turning point is to discover the Light in the heart center and be lost there: "Externally oriented air from above has to be made internally oriented. Through Thokar, this air opens the door of the temple of Anahata Chakra. Then deep engrossment occurs." Thokar creates a great stimulus in the fourth Chakra guiding you to meet the white starlet (the true Bindu) whose contemplation opens the door of the Sushumna. The great effect of the Thokar is to "initiate" you to the Omkar dimension not only as Sound but also as Spiritual Light. But you must insist with this over every measure. Further procedures open you to the Omkar dimension in the aspect of movement swinging sensation which is the most subtle and mysterious perception in which it is said resides the key to go belying time and space.

Lahiri Mahasaya although knowing that many need a cult, a structure in which move their first steps, respects the dignity of the human person and was against any cult founded upon his Kriya Yoga. Although knowing that his example was important in the first phase of the student's Kriya path didn't want to play the part of a traditional Guru because he knew that in the long run this pretense was detrimental to the final emancipation of the person.
Appendix 4 – Hidden treasures in P.Y.'s Kriya Yoga

This appendix is devoted to those students who are conversant with the *Kriya* techniques as they are given by the organizations that spread P.Y.'s teachings. Those techniques are only hinted at in the following text, not fully described. The symbols K1, K2, K3 and K4 are utilized to denote the four *Kriyas* as they were given by P.Y., and the preliminary techniques are called their full names, "Hong Sau" and "Om technique." Therefore, when in the following text you read "K2" remember that we are referring to the particular technique of the *Second Kriya* as it was given by P.Y.

After my book appeared on the Web, I had intense email exchanges with various researchers. Among them there was a large group of people who had received the *Kriya* techniques from P.Y.'s organization. They had browsed my book just for curiosity. Having seen the similarity between their experiences and mine, they expressed some of their technical doubts. The purpose of this appendix is to share some ideas about the best employment of some of P.Y.'s techniques.

It is a fact that those who came from P.Y.'s school prove to be the most "serious" and kind people. Some of them would have greatly appreciated a seminar on the *Higher Kriyas* where not only the technical details were demonstrated but also a theoretical scheme had been given providing devotees with resources to conceive – and subsequently improve – their routine in the best of the ways. For many *kriyabans* the crisis with their school began when their request to have a Seminar on the *Higher Kriyas* received an incomprehensible, anachronistic "NO".

Recently a couple of the organizations based upon P.Y.'s legacy proved to have understood that it doesn't pay to behave in such a way.

The ideas expressed here come from my direct experience and from a personal meeting with a *kriyaban* who struck me with his extraordinary commitment to the regular practice of *Kriya*. Although unsatisfied with his understanding of the subtle mechanism underlying those procedures and tormented by many doubts, he never dismissed the practice. Meeting such an ardent devotee meant for me finding again, reflected in his eyes, the gold that once lighted my life when for the first time I skimmed through the pages of the famous P.Y.'s autobiography. He said he was following the *Kriya* path for one reason only: to surpass the boundaries of his mind and merge with the Ineffable, not to worship any human being. He would not dream of mixing P.Y.'s *Kriya Yoga* with any other teaching. Apart from the technique of *Kechari Mudra*, he didn't feel the necessity of adding any other technique to the original Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*.

Our meeting was an extraordinary event. While we were exchanging opinions and experiences, (at different moments of our lives we had studied the same books about *Yoga*) I felt that the bitterness, mixed with curiosity and trust,
that I had perceived in his mind a few minutes before when he had summarized the ups and downs of his Kriya path, was dissolving.

**Mouth-Kriya-Pranayama vs. Nose-Kriya-Pranayama**

The first point of discussion was Kechari Mudra – how to achieve it and how to introduce it into the practice of Kriya Pranayama. Very wisely he practiced mouth-Kriya-Pranayama followed by nose-Kriya-Pranayama.

We discussed about what we read on a Kriya forum: that practicing Kriya Pranayama with mouth open makes "Prana flow into Sushumna." Some kriyabans speculate that mouth-Pranayama is superior to nose-Pranayama. Other think that only the breathless state succeeds in letting energy and awareness flow into Sushumna. A wise position is that students who have learned Kriya through the organization should grant themselves the pleasure of practicing it both through the mouth and through the nose. Mouth-Pranayama has the remarkable power of granting a clear cold/warm sensation of Prana moving along the spinal column – there is no reason to drop it after achieving Kechari Mudra. It is clear that if you practice Kechari proper or simply keep the tip of the tongue touching the middle of the upper palate you cannot breathe through your mouth since the tongue blocks the flow of air through the mouth.

**Problems of Kriya proper**

Those who are not satisfied with their execution, who feel that they are far from perceiving the movement of Prana along the spine, can add Nadi Sodhana Pranayama at the very beginning of their routine. Many kriyabans have made this exercise an integral part of their daily routine. It goes without saying that moderate exercises for the spine, adding to the forward bendings of Maha Mudra some form of lateral bending and torsion, represent the best thing they can do.

Very effective is the preliminary exercise of drawing air in and out through the tube created by the loosely clenched fists. In our opinion this exercise is not only a didactic tool to explain Kriya technique. It is an extraordinarily tool to create a keen sensation of presence in the spine. It is a smart variation of Sitali Pranayama. We can practice it with a fragmented breath. Dividing the breath in small fragments while you are intensely concentrating on the spine, feeling a power that rises millimeter after millimeter (and likewise descends during fragmented exhalation) has a very effective action. After these breaths, a

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13 Sometimes the discussion focuses on the detail of chanting Om in the Chakras and on the first version of PY's Kriya written instructions.

14 "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 fresh breath in all the parts of your body." This is a common way of practicing Sitali Pranayama.
kriyaban can close the mouth, putting the tongue in Kechari Mudra (no problem if a student can only turn the tip of his tongue upward to touch the roof of the mouth – soft palate) and practice in two parts: first avoiding the mental chanting of Om in the Chakras and then chanting Om in each Chakra.

The first part (with mouth closed) is devoted to go close to the required throat-and-nasal-pharynx sound. One should try to remain attuned to the sounds which occur when the technique is practiced with mouth open. Even if the nose-sound of the breath is not loud and clear, one day it will be flute-like and strong. This is a great event; the hidden power, encapsulated in it, will lead one to the peak experience of the Kriya path. It has been explained that a perfect sound awakens the Kundalini energy. A signal that we are near to this event is when the oceanic Om sound becomes audible (with open ears.)

The second part, with chanting of Om in each Chakra, is optional and is devoted to feeling the reality of the Chakras. There should not be a clear departure of intention between the two parts. You reach the second part when there is a minimum of internal listening.

How should the Kriya proper end? Unfortunately many kriyabans do only one thing: they wait for the strong energetic charge to dispel ... like one who is awaiting the absorption of the drug introduced in the body by an intramuscular injection. Much more fruitful is moving the awareness up and down the spine, carrying on an active concentration on the Chakras and pausing in each one of them for 10-20 seconds.

Note:
Let us try to imagine what can result, what tangible effects can be generated by the decision to complete 20736 Kriya Pranayamas second part – either 144 each day for 144 days or 72 each day for 288 days!

All the effort should be directed to listening to the internal sounds, hence to contact and merge with the Omkar dimension. The commitment of one's own will to bring forth a continuous attention to the internal sounds improves the sensitivity to them. This perception happens after repeated, soulful effort employed during many sessions of Kriya. A very wise choice is to utilize also the Mantra Om Na Mo Bha.... A general rule is to use your common sense and let the process itself guide you.

Remarks about K3 and K4

When kriyabans receive K3 and K4, they are not able to resist the temptation of trying K4 on the spot – "if it leads to Samadhi, why not try it now"? After about 15 - 20 rotations, Kumbhaka becomes stressful. Instead of giving up, they repeat the same attempt a couple of times, while discomfort increases and a feeling of nausea or dizziness goes on launching its alarm signals. Eventually they stop, defeated. The gain is zero, less than zero! Not only they have not obtained the slightest trace of Samadhi, but they have lost the initial tranquil state.

Well, let us try to set the procedures of K3 and K4 within a well-adjusted training process. A very good idea is to distinguish in the teaching of K3 two different
teachings: K3 without head movements and K3 with head movements.

• K3 without head movements.
Practice the K3 instructions in immobility, without movements of the head. Inhale, placing the syllables where prescribed; intensify the awareness at the point between the eyebrows. Remember to apply the mental pressure at the base of the spinal column. Exhalation begins immediately after the concentration at the point between the eyebrows: it guides the current into the prescribed centers. While vibrating the syllables in the correct places, there could be a micro pause in each one of them; however, the flow of the breath should not lose its quality of smoothness and the inhaling and exhaling sound remains continuous.

It has been explained that this practice in immobility is: "the art of astral diving through the spinal tunnel." The gist of the practice lies in the constant effort of raising the awareness along the spinal column millimeter after millimeter with a continuous mental pressure. One must have trained the power of his concentration to the point of being able to maintain this pressure with uninterrupted continuity. It is like squeezing with the thumb an almost empty tube of toothpaste (from its base up to its opening) to get the last little bit out. Kechari Mudra is extraordinary in creating the necessary "mental pressure." The exhalation is more tranquil: the energy glides downwards as a cascade of light coming from above.

• K3 with head movements
Those who embark on this venture should learn to perform the head movements in a very delicate way. No one should allow the weight of one's head to push the chin toward the chest: in this condition, the physical movement is definitely too powerful and harmful for the neck. Hence, mindful physical effort is required while striking the chest but at the same time resisting the force of gravity. Some define this last movement of the head as a "blow" or a "stroke." Perhaps it is much more correct to define it as a "tap", or a "slight jolt." "Jolt" means that the chin comes down, touches the chest but does not remain glued there – after an instant it comes up immediately. The point is to produce an intense effect within the fourth Chakra.

Let us consider the speed of the movements. Usually they happen without altering that rhythm with which the syllables are mentally chanted during inhalation. But you can go slower. Since De, Va, Ya are chanted in a slower way in order to accompany a full exhalation, you can also chant Te, Va, Su with the same rhythm as De, Va, Ya. In this way, there is plenty of time for concentrating deeper on each blow. To be more clear: if inhalation and exhalation happen in 8 + 8 seconds, the movements of the head with Te, Va, Su happen in a time that varies from 4 to 8 seconds.

• About K4
The difficulty in practicing this technique lies in trying to hold the breath without having first calmed the Prana in the body and raised the energy Apana residing
under the belt into the higher part of the thorax. To increase the number of rotations of the head up to 200, without breathing, seems a mere illusion. On the contrary, this becomes feasible when a kriyaban has completed the right preparation. But what could befittingly be called a right preparation for K4?

The decisive procedure – endowed with a shattering psychological cleaning power – is to complete two Incremental Routines regarding the two afore-hinted aspects of the K3 technique. [See chapter 9 for a definition of Incremental Routine.]

a) The first Incremental Routine concerns K3 without the movements of the head.

Tradition envisages beginning with 12 repetitions and adding one repetition a day until you reach 200 repetitions. This is to be done once a day, during the main routine. (After this practice, forget the breath and remain immobile, practicing the best form of mental Pranayama.) If you have a secondary session, the same technique can be resumed for 12-36 times.

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

Completing this Incremental Routine is a challenging, but not particularly difficult, undertaking; time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task (doing more than 100 repetitions) turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest.

b) The second Incremental Routine concerns K3 with head movements. The plan of Incremental increase is the same of the previous Incremental Routine.

The crucial detail whose importance cannot be over emphasized is that during each movement of the head, while the breath is held, you do not lose the perception of the current reaching and piercing each Chakra (Medulla, cervical and heart Chakra).

At the completion of both procedures (a year or more is required) the student is able to direct a tremendous amount of energy into the heart Chakra and is ready to reach high levels of perfection with K4.

Prudence with K4 is highly recommended!

A wise way of tackling the K4 technique is here described. Ours is not a commonly accepted method but it can help those who are stuck in an unsatisfactory practice of K4.

Let us suppose that while holding your breath in a non-forced way, you are able to practice the movements of K4 for a precise amount n of times; let us also suppose that the day after the practice, you don't feel pain in the cervical vertebrae or in the neck muscles. Well, presumably you are in the condition of
practicing n+6 rotations. In order to feel comfortable, abide by the following technical detail:
During the last part of your inhalation, don't make the act of sealing the lungs (closing the trachea – as when you are diving into water) but keep them as if you are going to begin a new inhalation. Feel an increase of Prana in the upper part of the lungs. You will have the sensation that the breath is annihilated and you can complete your task easily. (Of course that depends on months and months of conscientious practice of K3.)

When n+6 movements are completed, exhale comfortably and don't repeat the procedure till the next day. For one week don't try to increase beyond this new n+6 "record". If there are problems with the cervical vertebrae, you can wisely practice on alternative days. If everything goes in the best of the ways, increase by six rotations a week. However, as you can easily presume, you won't be able to increase the number of rotations indefinitely. At a certain point you will come up against a threshold that seems impossible to trespass. Don't worry if this threshold is small, even inferior to 50-60 rounds. When will you effortlessly reach the 200 rotations as Lahiri Mahasaya prescribed? Never? Don't think so. Read carefully the following instructions and test them.

Keeping your chest expanded and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm perfectly immobile, allow that a minimal (almost imperceptible) sip of air can go out whenever your chin is lowered toward the chest; and an imperceptible sip of air can enter whenever the chin is brought up. Let us be clear: don't make the intentional act of inhaling and exhaling; your role is limited to letting the afore described phenomenon happen freely, not impeded. What is important is that you don't lose the sensation that the physical breath doesn't exist and all the Prana is immobile in the upper part of the lungs.

Increase until it is comfortable – therefore don't set the objective of achieving the 200 rotations.

Do you think that this method is wrong, nothing but a deceitful trick? Maybe it is, but through this way of proceeding, something beautiful is approaching. One day you realize that during your practice the previously hinted little sips of breath don't happen. An increase of energy in the fourth Chakra is strikingly perceived. You realize you are rotating your head while keeping a perfect effortless Kumbhaka. A wonderful sensation of freedom from breath happens. A simple explanation of this event is based on the consideration that the adopted procedure has a soothing effect on the ganglia tied with the breathing process. In this condition, you will be able to reach the 200 rotations.

Information about K2

Many are convinced that K2 as taught by P.Y. is incorrectly named "Second Kriya". Indeed, it is quite different from the Second Kriya as taught by various schools which corresponds to K3. I have known students who felt deceived just for this reason and had dropped it. However the technique is decidedly valuable. The story that P.Y. received this instruction from Swami Kebalananda is
plausible. I believe that a similar technique is hinted at in Gheranda Samhita: "... close ears, eyes, .... meditate on the six Chakras one by one."

The technique K2 is an advanced and extremely difficult teaching which is based on a procedure which is not restricted to "physically locating the centers", but whose purpose is definitely higher. You focus mind and Prana on each one of them until their essence is revealed. The "essence" of each one is the Tattwa related to it. We have already touched upon the theme of Tattwas, the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, ether). K2 leads you to perceive not only their colors but something more: the static Prana related to their vibrational rate.

Actually, there are some writings in which P.Y. explains in a very clear way the physical changes that happen when your awareness attunes to the different Tattwas. Each kriyaban runs into these writings by studying the correspondence course. It's odd that those writings are not specifically linked to those of Second Kriya. P.Y. explains how your breath flows through your nostrils and describes the different flavors you perceive in your mouth when you attune to each Tattwa.

And finally, last but not least, we must point out that in the group of the writings accompanying the K2 instruction, two other extremely important techniques are described. They are given without a specific name: the first, very clearly explained, is a delicate technique conceived to help you to perceive the astral spine, the other could be called the art of "Motionless Thokar".

1. Technique for perceiving the Astral Spine
The technique to perceive the astral spine is explained after P.Y. has expatiated on Kundalini and given a clear hint at the necessity of Kechari Mudra. At a certain point, P.Y. explains how, once stable in the meditation Asana, a kriyaban gently sways the spine, left and right in order to feel the astral spine as separate from the body. The core of the teaching is then experienced in immobility by traveling up and down the spine, mentally chanting Om in the location of the Chakras. 

It is a very simple teaching and yet it is great! The result can leave you astonished! I don't comment on it further, since P.Y.'s few lines about it are exhaustive.

2. Technique of motionless Thokar
The procedure of "Motionless Thokar" is hinted at in a not-easy-to-understand sentence about the "psycho-physical blows given at the different locations of the Chakras." No further practical explanation is given. The information I have received is that the "psycho-physical blows" are obtained by mentally placing the syllables of a Mantra inside a Chakra visualized as a horizontal disk like a coin.

There are many ways of doing this, I suggest here only one.
The breath is forgotten. Mentally repeat in each Chakra (starting from Muladhara and going upwards) the Mantra: Om Na Mo Bha Ga Ba Te Va Su De

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15 There is a direct disciple of PY who teaches Second Kriya exactly in this way. You mentally chant Om at each Chakra’s location, from Muladhara to the point between the eyebrows, then in Sahasrara, cervical, heart Chakra .... This cycle is to be repeated for 6 to 12 times, and the practice is concluded by a final rising into Sahasrara.
Divide the Mantra in four parts: \textit{Om Na Mò} // \textit{Bha Ga Bà} // \textit{Te Va Sù} // \textit{De Va Yà}. Four taps (soft blows) happen when we think the accented syllables \textit{Mò}, \textit{Bà}, \textit{Sù} and \textit{Yà}. You can mentally chant "\textit{Om}" at the left of the center of each \textit{Chakra}, "\textit{Na}" at the right and "\textit{Mò}", with a soft tap, in the center of it. The oscillation perceived during this internal action is a matter of millimeters. A light oscillatory movement of the spine can accompany and strengthen the internal movement. Repeat the same procedure with \textit{Bha Ga Bà}, thus giving a second psycho-physical blow at the \textit{Chakra}. Then vibrate \textit{Te Va Sù} and \textit{De Va Yà}. Repeat the same procedure with all the other \textit{Chakras}. The ideal would be to complete from three to six rounds, up and down.

A slight contraction of the muscles around each \textit{Chakra} may accompany this action but, as the procedure begins to produce its sweet effect, physical immobility becomes predominant.

\textit{Some Remarks about the Hong Sau Technique}

The routine recommended by the organizations that spread the teachings of PY is: Recharging exercises; Hong Sau; Om technique; Maha Mudra; Kriya proper; Jyoti Mudra; Final concentration in the spine and in the Kutastha. When the Higher Kriyas are added, they are practiced after Kriya proper or after Jyoti Mudra.

In time, there comes a tendency to simplify. Many eliminate entirely the preliminary techniques \textit{Hong Sau} and \textit{Om}; some practice only one or both after \textit{Kriya proper}, at the place of the final concentration in \textit{Kutastha}.

Both techniques are excellent if practiced after \textit{Kriya} proper. They give their best effect if enjoyed alone without any hurry.

Facing the issue of the \textit{Hong Sau} technique, we agree that this is not a technique that gives you the ability of concentration. Whoever decides to practice it seriously must be endowed with the ability to maintain a high level of concentration. The procedure, as designed by P.Y., starts with some deep breaths. Literature explains that they oxygenate the blood and calm the system; actually, they put into motion the essential mechanism of \textit{Kriya Pranayama} – mixing and balancing \textit{Prana} and \textit{Apana}.

As for the \textit{Hong-sau Mantra} \textsuperscript{16} there's not much to say about it; it should not be taken as a "magical formula". It must merge with your breath, of which you must be constantly aware. If you relax your keen awareness of it and remain there as if hypnotized by the pleasing sound of the two syllables \textit{Hong} and \textit{Sau}, you shall be disappointed. Your mind will not be prone to being internalized and it won't surrender to the meditative state.

If you respect two fundamental principles, in a matter of two three minutes you shall find yourself in a fantastic state.

\textsuperscript{16} This techniques is also taught with \textit{Sau} during inhalation and \textit{Hong} during exhalation. You discover that the effect is same.
The first principle (which sounds strange to many students) is to never establish a rhythm in the mental chanting of Hong Sau. The mental chant of this Mantra, repeated over and over, can easily and naturally conform to a hard-to-change rhythm. If your breath follows this rhythm, it is clear as the sun that it will never settle down! Once the rhythm has stabilized itself, even if the body "could" physiologically stay off-breath for some instants, the breathing process will continue implacably.

I am sure that many students don't realize they are in the condition of living the experience of the breathless state. The fact is that many have practiced this technique for years and cannot doubt the correctness of their practice. When students understand that a rhythm was almost always present in their practice, then the problem is nearly cured. But sometimes one must take a significant amount of time to dwell upon the concept of rhythm. After inhalation or after exhalation, a student must always wait for the impulse to breathe to appear. When there are the physiological conditions that a pause could naturally appear, kriyabans should not accept that the implacable rhythm created in their mind (hong-so-hong-so...) prevents it. The pause should be experienced, no matter if it lasts just a couple of instants! Students who abide by this principle will soon verify how this small detail is sufficient to ease the breath off, in a very drastic way.

The second principle consists of considering another factor that conspires to annihilate the pause after inhalation and in contrasting it. A kriyaban must become conscious of the movement of the rib cage. During inhalation, the chest swells out and gets into an elastic tension. This elastic force tries to be released immediately after inhalation. The pause of the breath after inhalation is jeopardized not only by the rhythm of the mental chanting of Hong Sau but also by the chest elasticity. When you get over the problem of the rhythm, then there is only this second detail to be observed. Students must be aware of this elastic strength and should block the instinct to release it. The pause after the inhalation should exist freely. Again, a student must always wait for the impulse to breathe to appear. Putting all this into practice, a "virtuous circle" between this growing calmness and the reduced necessity of oxygen is realized.

Variation of the Hong Sau technique

After Kriya proper, remain conscious of the breath and go on visualizing the spinal channel. Feel the breath coming up with Hoooong and going down with Soooo. The breath is natural, short. Being aware of the spine calms it further. When it subsides and becomes so short that the procedure is on the verge of evaporating into nothing, try to feel this micro breath happening in each Chakra. One short, almost invisible breath happens in Muladhara and it is blended with the soothing chant of "Hong" and of "Sau". The same happens in the second Chakra, then in the third ... and so on ... until there is no more breath, only Hong Sau in each Chakra.
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 In Yoga no practice of Pranayama is considered complete without the Bandhas. They are energy valves as much as they are locks, not simple muscle contractions, which prevent the energy from being dissipated and redirect it inside the spine. [See Jalandhara Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Mula Bandha] 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 sustained.

Bindu A spiritual center located in the occipital region where the hairline twists into a kind of vortex. 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 completed the work of cutting of the heart knot.

**Bhrumadhya**  The region 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 Yukteswar'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.

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

**Hesychasm** The word Hesychasm derives from the Greek word "hesychia" meaning inner quietness, tranquility and stillness. Outside this condition, meditation is not possible. It is a discipline integrating the continual repetition of the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"). It was already used by the early Church Fathers in the 4th and 5th centuries) with the practice of asceticism. There were hermits dwelling in the desert, seeking inner peace and spiritual insight, while practicing contemplation and self-discipline: they had no doubts about the fact that knowledge of God could be obtained only by purity of soul and prayer and not by study or mental amusements in the field of philosophy. Later, their method of asceticism came to the fore as a concrete set of psychophysical techniques: this is properly the core of Hesychasm. It was Simeon, "the new theologian" (1025-1092), who developed the quietist theory which such detail that he may be called the father of this movement. The practice, which involved specific body postures and deliberate breathing patterns, was intended to perceive the *Uncreated Light of God*. The monks of Athos might have kept on contemplating peacefully this Uncreated Light (they considered it to be the highest goal of earthly 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 Fraenulum 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 point between the eyebrows. Those are the places where Ida, Pingala and Sushumna Nadi meet.
**Brahma Granthi** (located in Muladhara) is the first knot. It 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 located in the area of the heart Chakra (Anahata), and 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, and religious orders. 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. At a point between the eyebrows, the Ida and Pingala Nadis cross over and then come down in the left and right nostrils, respectively. Ida and Pingala are time bound; 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.

The four phases of Kriya Yoga are experienced by unfastening all the afore mentioned knots, in the following order:

I. Knot of the tongue  
II. Knot of Vishnu (heart Chakra)  
III. Knot of the navel  
IV. Knot of Brahma (Muladhara) & knot of Rudra (point between the eyebrows)

As we can see, in Lahiri Mahasaya's vision, two secondary knots (tongue and navel) have become of primary importance and two main knots (Brahma and Rudra) are considered a two-phased event that characterizes the fourth and last stage of Kriya. [see chapter 7 for further discussion.] It has been explained that there is a strong connection between Brahma and Rudra knots. Actually, having already unfastened the knots of tongue, heart and navel, as soon as you cross the door of Sushumna (in Muladhara), you come up instantaneously, unimpeded, to the "door of the infinite" in the point between your eyebrows.

**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.
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 [Kriya Pranayama], prayer [Japa, Mantra] 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 some variations of Navi Kriya and 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 (or during any procedure linked with the Third Kriya) 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 Thokar (or during any procedure linked with the Fourth Kriya) 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 Kriya theoretical framework 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 we have 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 perinea 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—to 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 eases 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 -- it may be a variation of Kriya Pranayama utilizing the Mantra Om Na Mo Bha..., it may include the practice of Thokar.

**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 Khechari 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.

Personally, I do not counsel anyone to perform this difficult posture. 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 term 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 psychophysical 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 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, Mantra]**

Prayer is an act of communion with the Higher Reality that allows a person to make a reverent plead, to seek guidance, to offer praise or simply to express their thoughts and emotions. 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.

**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; a particular pressure over the head may be felt.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Sushumna** [see Nadi]

**Talabya Kriya** It is a stretching exercise of the muscles of the tongue, and particularly of the Fraenulum. 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 calm Prana - collected in the head through Kriya Pranayama - toward the location of one (usually the 4th) or more
Chakras, by a particular (jerking) movement of the head. Guiding Prana into the Anahata Chakra, a light grows in the region between the eyebrows. This fosters the breathless state. By increasing the concentration on the spiritual light, the lights of all the other Chakras are revealed. The practice of Thokar is to be deepened throughout the years in order to get the ability to enter the state of Samadhi with just one stroke. Studying the practices of the Sufis, (see the studies conducted by Gardet and M. M. Anawati, esp. Gardet in Revue Thomiste (1952-3)), we discover that Thokar is a variant of the Sufi's Dhikr. Dhikr is the practice of the "memory" of the Divine, which is brought about by repeating a particular short prayer during the day and by guiding it, during moments of seclusion or group devotional practice, into particular centers of the body through specific head movements. It might have happened that Lahiri knew this technique since youth. Some forms of prayer he saw were mild forms of Thokar. It was His genius to develop it to the utmost perfection.

**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). This path begins in Bindu, bending to the left, it descends into the seat of the Rudra knot (the region from Medulla oblongata to Bhrumadhya between the eyebrows), goes across it and continues toward the right side of the body. Then it reverses direction cutting the Vishnu knot whose seat is in the heart Chakra. Then it reverses again its direction pointing toward the seat of the Brahma knot in the coccyx region, which is also crossed by entering the spine and coming up toward Bindu.

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.

**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 inhale (perform the same action of an inhale without actually pulling any air into the body.) Draw the belly up as much as possible. Hold your the 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.


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


______________. *Hatha Yoga: The Hidden Language, Symbols, Secrets and


