

PART III: HOW TO AVOID FAILURE ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

CHAPTER 10

THE IDEA OF A SPIRITUAL PATH THAT IS CLEAN

Once we have finished explaining the Kriya techniques of Lahiri Mahasaya, we need to address a crucial fact. It is essential to acknowledge that an imperfect attitude can impede one's spiritual path.

THE EXPLANATION BEHIND WHY KRIYA YOGA'S PATH CAN LEAD TO FAILURE

While I diligently followed a Forum focused on the *Kriya* organization that I had followed for many years, I began to reflect on the many difficulties that its followers had to face. I made an effort to empathize with them, deeply observing their difficulties.

A few individuals expressed their frustration with not achieving the goal they had hoped for, despite years of diligent practice. Although some cases were superficial and people's minds were almost shattered by inner chaos, the technique still failed to fulfill its promises for many sincere seekers.

Regrettably, a few individuals have been unable to find anything but a constant state of boredom that has occupied their mind. There were observers who were not affiliated with the organization and did not practice *Kriya*, but had been following the Forum for many years. Their belief was that those who practiced these techniques mechanically would continue to do so until death, without ever achieving anything. Sadly, I was aware that these words were prophetic.

Some Forum members who were active realized that practicing *Kriya* could result in a deeper state of awareness. There were times when they experienced moments of quietness and joy. Their spiritual efforts were only rewarded by these rare moments. Nonetheless, this outcome hid a state of dissatisfaction.

I began to think that *Kriya Yoga* is not suitable for those who reside solely in the mental realm or in the dimension of Thought. I am of the opinion that these individuals cannot obtain an authentic spiritual experience with *Kriya*. I doubt that there is a genuine desire to approach such an experience.

To begin *Kriya Yoga*, one should know that filling one's mind with empty concepts, definitions, and theories is not the way to achieve spiritual experience. Dedicating oneself to reading numerous books and attending specialized seminars on topics related to meditation is not very helpful. Pure intellectual research is not sufficient for achieving spiritual experiences.

To find the correct answer, it's important to decide to let your heart be constantly active. This is the correct way to confront the spiritual dimension of life. For each of us, it is a challenge to comprehend what this 'dimension' is. When we are faced with this question, we have two options. The first step is to let our imagination run wild and answer vaguely, convinced that this is a good and acceptable answer. The second step is to accept the harsh reality that there is no rational answer that is complete, exhaustive, or authentic. The answer cannot be derived from our thoughts, but only from a deep emotion that arises from our hearts and cannot be expressed in words.

Our mind likes to fantasize and play with words. A lot of individuals are accustomed to reading numerous books to understand this reality and do not comprehend that their effort is a waste of time that ultimately fails. Those who are calm and can think with their own head realize that spiritual reality cannot be reached, grasped, or understood by remaining only in the mental dimension.

So what steps should one take to reach the spiritual dimension? It is important to learn from an early age to live with your heart, that is, your emotions. Those who, for any reason, close the door of their heart with steel chains, will get nowhere even if they use the discipline of *Kriya*. The spiritual experience can happen to those who open their hearts within a reasonable amount of time – I'm not talking about years, but months. It happens when their heart is filled with an intense desire for something that transcends the ordinary life that most people lead. Those who experiment with passion and intense emotion through a meditation technique will definitely find something unexpected. During this experience, there will be no thought whatsoever.

Those who solely rely on thought feel a powerful urge to search for a dimension similar to Thought. It is true that if we consider it carefully, they cannot do anything else. In this place, curiosity for occultism, esotericism, magical thinking, and New Age fashions arouses. Gradually, a person succumbs to the temptation to seek something that provides tangible

advantages. It's probable that this is something that those who complain about *Kriya*'s lack of results have in their mind.

It can be tough to grasp that the mind that should guide us on the spiritual path is also the adversary who is aiming to destroy everything that is potentially good and valuable. It is evident that a large number of spiritual seekers have psychological vulnerabilities. Mystical practices can be damaged and progress prevented by the mind's suggestion of misleading attitudes. Are we truly convinced that *kriyabans* who regularly practice meditation are free from unthinkable and irrational expectations that contradict the spiritual path's foundations? A major problem is that the mind, which appears intelligent, is willing to accept the most ridiculous expectations when we approach the mystical path with it.

I believe that those who approach *Kriya Yoga* solely through a rational approach without a genuine and sincere spiritual aspiration will ultimately fail. In my opinion, misleading advertising about the scientific value of techniques such as *Kriya Yoga* can be misleading. Some individuals become interested in these practices without having a genuine aspiration towards the spiritual dimension of life.

Take into account the substantial number of individuals who have read P.Y.'s autobiography. Regrettably, such reading can sometimes lead to incorrect conclusions.¹ For those who read this text, the prospect of experiencing something unique is a source of excitement. The suggestion is that *Kriya* comes from an avatar and works mathematically. The organization's correspondence course participants are filled with enthusiasm about the Lessons and feel a sense of harmony and well-being by putting them into practice. It appears that something in their life has finally moved in the right direction! The meaning of life has finally been grasped by them! Their understanding is that these teachings can lead them to something that can turn their existence into an incredible experience of bliss.

It would be advantageous to calm down this enthusiasm. Despite the fact

¹ It's important to point out that PY's autobiography wasn't written to create illusions. The author's intentions were both honest and genuine. The message is clear: those who choose this path should look to the Divine rather than supernatural powers. There are readers who are simply incapable of comprehending the meaning of 'Divine'. The idea of using the power of will to achieve exceptional outcomes for health and life may be appealing to the reader. According to PY's writings, *Kriya* is automatically effective due to her rational basis. Unfortunately, this is only true for some while it is only an illusion for others.

that *Kriya* is the most direct way to attain Divine realization, it is not guaranteed that the individual reader will benefit from its practices. The practice of *Kriya* does not guarantee the obtaining of solid results, unfortunately. Over time, many individuals have come to realize that the enthusiastic claims about the '*extraordinary effects of Kriya*' have created a significant illusion. We often hear about the '*Science of Kriya Yoga*', yet *Kriya* is not a science at all. Trying to persuade people that certain practices have a scientific basis in the modern sense of the word, while neglecting the true meaning of science, is a significant deception.

Regrettably, it is believed that spiritual evolution is connected to the number of *Kriya* breaths practiced. It is not uncommon for people to declare that every *Kriya* breath represents a year of spiritual evolution. It seems unlikely to me that someone with wisdom would dare to express this belief in front of a true mystic. He would likely avoid meeting such a mystic's gaze because he is aware that his absurdity would be immediately exposed. There are moments when I believe that the notion that *Kriya* can accelerate our evolution is a product of magical thinking. Those who have a familiarity with esoteric thinking will support me.

Science is founded on objective facts that can be confirmed with zero failure rates. To put it simply, science is a guarantee of results. This is not the case with *Kriya*: in order to succeed in this process, it is important to possess the sincerity of one's soul and the openness of one's heart, and this element may be too much for an individual to handle. While it's possible for some to practice *Kriya* for their entire lives without any results, others will see immediate results even with a brief and simple practice.

Kriya Yoga is an effective method to start on the spiritual path, but it can only work with the full participation of one's heart. *Kriya* demands constant effort and application. At first, it may not seem like a stroll in the park, but it turns out to be when one's heart is fully engaged with enthusiasm.

In conclusion, I believe that in order for *Kriya* to function, we must adopt a strategy that combines reasoning with profound emotions. Regrettably, the magic associated with *Kriya Yoga* has a powerful effect on the minds of individuals who have nothing else to do but feel intense curiosity. But this is not enough. One must develop the appropriate attitude. It's important to consider more than just the number of *Kriyas* practiced. If this happens to you, your practice will be monotonous and lethargic, lacking warmth and enthusiasm. After taking into account this situation, it is apparent that there

are very few individuals who are truly prepared for *Kriya* and consider it the most important thing in their lives.

CHOOSING NOT TO SPEND TIME ON USELESS STUDIES

I make every effort to keep my path 'clean'. I am aware that even after having genuine contact with the spiritual dimension, it can still be possible to develop an incorrect attitude towards the spiritual path. There are a multitude of ways to ruin one's spiritual experience and therefore drastically deplete it. I make an effort to evaluate every instruction I receive and question if it is only entertaining to my imagination or has practical significance.

I focused my attention on revising all the teachings I had received from my *Kriya Yoga* organization. While contemplating them, I came across a very clear fact. Although the teachings on *Kriya* techniques were clear and essential, the other ones on intellectual understanding did not provide me with anything and were not useful. To illustrate, the explanation of the meaning of the scriptures was a waste of time. As an illustration, a comprehensive explanation was given about the significance of the book of Genesis in the Bible. The origin of the teachings comes from the spiritual insights and realizations of the founder of this organization. To be truthful, I am unable to judge the spiritual realization of this Master. No explanation was given to me on how to put these teachings into practice! My conviction has remained constant: I couldn't help but forget them because they were completely useless!

If one is required to read, it would be wise to read about the truths that are rooted in an unshakeable inner conviction that reside in the hearts of human beings. To clarify, I'm talking about the notion that individual consciousness persists even after physical death, which implies that our lives have significance and do not come to an end without purpose. An intelligence is present in everything and is commonly referred to as God or the Divine. Our hearts are receptive to these fundamental concepts. These ideas have the ability to touch our hearts. If we really want to nourish the intensity of our aspirations, we can search for these writings and live them with our own hearts, feeling the deep emotion that they create in us.

HOW I REACT TO THOSE WHO REQUEST AN INTRODUCTION TO KRIYA

I avoid talking about my *Yoga* practice with anyone who comes across my path. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of those who are totally content with their lives and want to have some fun. Their minds are brimming with plans to push themselves in various, infinite directions. Why should I have a conversation with them about the spiritual path? Perhaps it was because

they informed me of their behavioral problems and I interpreted them as psychological issues? Should I suggest practicing *Kriya*? Let's not joke about it! It would be similar to telling someone who experiences heartburn after a meal that they need a heart transplant.

A lot of people are making the right decision by putting aside any meditation plans, at least for the moment. It's beneficial for these people to live their lives, and it doesn't make sense to complicate them. Talking to them about spiritual issues requires them to have faced and resolved fundamental existential questions and have a genuine desire to discuss them with us. It's important to distinguish between sincere wanting a comparison and momentary curiosity.

When people demand precise information about *Kriya Yoga*, I make an effort to comprehend their needs. Whenever I notice that someone I am speaking to is not clear on this but still wants to experience it first-hand, I provide a straightforward suggestion. Try doing *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* and *Ujjayi Pranayama* on a daily basis for at least three months. The time required for this practice is 10-15 minutes. Keep track of the progress as time goes by to determine if this method yields results. Examine yourself and determine if there are any positive effects from this practice. If someone is unable to maintain a regular practice and does not achieve any results, I hope they will avoid any further inquiries. I don't want to convey to him in a malicious manner that *Kriya* is not the suitable path for him. It's important for him to understand this on his own.

Should the instructions I have given be successful, I propose that he learn *Kriya* independently and in complete tranquility by reading the instructions in chapter 6 of this book. My desire is for everyone to learn how to walk on their own and create their own destiny. Gaining confidence in one's own intelligence and making decisions for themselves are key to becoming an adult. Remaining on the path of the Divine while putting aside different religious beliefs is the only approach that is correct.

Working with patience and regularity is the key to reaping the benefits of *Kriya Yoga* practice. Appreciating the practice's natural progress is the right attitude. *Pranayama*'s benefits can be seen in everyday life because it changes how we perceive reality. The potential for aesthetic contemplation is discovered, like having eyes and a heart for the first time. Others will deeply feel the significance of family and the value of a lasting friendship. They may be moved by the intensity of their loving response.

LET'S WORK ON DEVELOPING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF KRIYA'S PATH

If we delve deeper into the subject, I endeavor to clarify the essential aspects of *Kriya*.

[1] The *Kriya* path is inherently difficult, which the seeker must acknowledge. No matter which *Kriya* tradition one follows, which technique, or which *Guru*, the *Kriya* path is difficult. People don't like hearing this, but it's necessary to acknowledge the truth. *Kriya*'s practice should not be expected to yield a quick outcome. For someone who is already an evolved person, the journey may be short, but it's not certain where they are on their path.

[2] A beginner's mind may struggle to concentrate because it is not yet familiar with self-control, making it take a bit longer for a particular technique to be successful. After a few years, the mind will become clearer and there won't be a need for so many repetitions of *Kriya Pranayama* to achieve good results. P.Y. mentioned that he only required two *Kriya* breaths to enter *Samadhi*. When performed correctly, even two *Kriya* breaths can lead to fantastic outcomes.

[3] It's a fact that modern life doesn't give us enough time to internalize. Meditation is hard to do when you have to lead an active life, work, and possibly have a family. You feel exhausted when you come home from work in the evening. You are required to sit down and consider all the problems of the day or take care of your family. The lack of time prevents one from studying a good spiritual text written by an authentic Master.

[4] People would like to have a fast track to the Divine, but there isn't one. It is necessary for a person to accept their life as it is manifested. Having a lack of mental clarity, practicing techniques irregularly, and not being resolute can make things difficult for most people. However, this is not the sole issue. Finding God is a personal journey, each soul is unique and distinct from others. We can acknowledge and respect an institution for its aid, but ultimately we are responsible for following our own path and what feels appropriate. It is not possible for anyone in the world to dictate precisely what we practice and how we live. It's up to us to figure it out in our own unique way.

[5] The spiritual path requires serious individuals to overcome a significant obstacle, which is something to keep in mind. The ability to create a deep and lasting calm in one's mind is essential for practicing *Kriya*. Several

years ago, I had a hard time comprehending this! Through my reading and intuition, I learned that '*Japa*' was a crucial tool for me. Only after making this discovery did I start walking the spiritual path with true dedication. I was able to achieve the fourth stage of *Kriya Pranayama*, where the breath disappears, by practicing *Japa* every day.

In light of my experience and those of the great mystical paths that will be discussed in chapter 12, I am certain that **practicing *Kriya* without *Japa* is a waste of time**. To sum up, if you are interested in practicing *Kriya*, you must be prepared to calm your mind by practicing *Japa* every day.

[6] Let's consider the lessons of the correspondence course. Approaching them with attention and without hurry is necessary. There are those who want to practice more advanced techniques right away, but they don't have the patience to build a solid foundation. Some are surprised to hear that there have been changes in *Kriya* and do not understand that without such changes, *Kriya* would have been too difficult, almost impossible to face. They fail to comprehend that many people benefit from simple teachings. Personal practice brings about a change in the techniques learned. Purification occurs over time, resulting in changes in understanding and practice. The correspondence course requires those who follow it to be calm and confident.

[7] Of course, it was crucial for me to switch from the organization's teachings to those of Lahiri and then develop on my own an understanding of how important things to be accomplished really are. What does this statement imply? Yes, there is an important task to be accomplished. In my attempt to explain it, I tend to start from a distance. I start with a statement that is somewhat obscure. In fact, I assert that 'The One is the only thing that exists'. It is evident that those who listen to me do not comprehend what I am saying. So I calmly clarify that the ONE is the Divine itself.

My statement is intended to indicate that the universe is an illusion and that only the Divine exists. In reality, each of us is a reflection of the Divine. A reflection that has separated itself from the Divine and is now a unit that can survive on its own with an illusory structure that distinguishes it from the Divine, which is known as "I" or "Ego". But this illusory construction is destined to lose consistency one day, and it will be then that our essence will realize that we are the Divine itself, the only reality existing in the universe.

What is the amount of time that's left until this final realization? It is impossible for anyone to say. However, we have the ability to do what

brings us closer to this final state. In addition to following the spiritual path by practicing effective mystical procedures and enjoying beautiful spiritual experiences, there is something more significant that we can start doing now.

To begin with, it's crucial to comprehend the significance of awakening Consciousness and Awareness. Gradually, this realization takes place. The more you go beyond the body through *yoga*, the more you can discern what is real and what is not. Once you comprehend this, there's only one thing to keep in mind: staying aware of the center that Consciousness gravitates towards during the day. You should not be attracted only to the problems to be solved in practical life, or to designing new meditation routines or how best to enjoy the positive effects of your practice.

The key is **to correct the identity**. This means realizing that we are Consciousness that has no beginning or end. We are not the Ego that solves problems and obtains small joys and satisfaction by practicing *Kriya*. We must be able to let go of our Ego and perceive ourselves as pure Consciousness. It is only then that we will realize that we are immortal. This goal is attained through the practice of *Kriya*. It's no surprise that the path is so challenging. Being aware of one's own Consciousness is a trait of an enlightened *yogi*.

To a novice, this is irrelevant because they lack comprehension. It's possible that even those who are reading these lines are not fully comprehending it. So the beginner only desires *Samadhi* as a means to achieve liberation. This is the product of too much rational thinking, of identifying with the Ego. It's not crucial what tradition, lineage, or religion you belong to, all that matters is reaching beyond your desire for the ecstatic state produced by *Kriya*. Small results should not be the only thing one seeks. It is necessary to attain the state of always and constantly being **Aware of one's Awareness**. The meaning of this can only be grasped through intuition and experience. When this is comprehended, one's *Kriya* grows to encompass *Jnana Yoga*.

THOSE WHO ASPIRE TO BECOME MONKS FACE A CHALLENGING SITUATION

Kriya Yoga's spread through organizations encounters the aforementioned difficulties. Instead, there is another type of problem that postulants and monks who work there face, and we will address it below.

[1] Let's attempt to ponder over a concrete fact. The establishment of a solid economic foundation is necessary for an organization. Those who

make an attempt to make it work must utilize all available means to ensure its continual existence. The organization is in need of monks who are willing to work hard for it. This fact is considered in many decisions that the organization makes.

Secondly, it is necessary for monks to present themselves to the public, giving the impression of self-confidence and, most importantly, happy to be immersed in the spiritual dimension. It is important for the organization to have individuals who excel in public relations. Material support will not arrive if the public does not welcome those representing the organization.

[2] The organization's monks are well-integrated and have been supported by a positive ideal: that the message of *Kriya* will spread throughout the world and become a beacon of light for centuries to come. They are unable to address the existential or psychological problems of individuals. *Kriya*'s practice can be sufficient for the average person without the need for a dedicated guide to talk to regularly. It's unfortunate that if someone is extremely fragile, they may not be capable of helping the organization and may need to leave it to avoid being a burden. People who sit and do nothing without purpose are useless.

[3] It's obvious that the organization's well-being should always come first. Aspiring monks should ask themselves: is it possible for me to be beneficial to the organization? It's evident that they have a strong mystical aspiration. Their belief is that becoming a monk is the best choice for cultivating their nature and making progress. Their own ideals of life are the first thing they consider. Their lack of understanding is that the organization requires those who can provide material assistance to the Society, not just those who are deeply spiritual who only want to enter *Samadhi*.

An *Ashram* is not the ideal location for seeking *Samadhi*. It is preferable if spiritual evolution occurs in a different way and the person agrees to work in a manual manner for the practical benefit of the organization. To put it simply, the monks are there to promote the organization and its ideals, not to seek God. What is meant by this? Searching for God can be done on one's own while staying at home. The organization doesn't require you for that.

[4] We are confronted with a problem that is not widely understood. It is necessary for an organization to receive help, even from those who are novices on the path. The organization requires not only individuals who have extensive experience in *Kriya Yoga* but also those who are new to it.

According to *Kriya*, meditation involves experiencing an "ever new joy" but many beginners seldom experience it during their meditations. But it's important to maintain the belief that all *Ashram* dwellers are elevated beings. So beginners have to pretend to be so, otherwise the devotees become discouraged. In a sense, it's like living a lie. It is obvious that for certain individuals, the experience of living in the spiritual realm is a fiction.

[5] I am cognizant of the fact that a psychologist once investigated some monks who revealed mental issues. The therapist concluded his intervention with a report that stated that all monks faced the same issue: pretending to be spiritual. Yet, it has to be so, one has to pretend, because that is what the public needs. If monks don't seem super spiritual, one may wonder why I should meditate and practice?

I came across a statement on a website that was shocking to me. To put it succinctly, a former monk mentioned that monks mimic ascetic saints on the outside to create the impression of contentment for visitors. Despite their appearance of bliss and reflection of the divine, they actually live a life of **silent desperation**. This is truly awful! Absolutely terrible! I am afraid that this often corresponds to the truth.

Many people think that being a monk is a life filled with peace, contentment, and brotherly love. Psychologists who have visited these *ashrams* have concluded that monks' lives are among the most stressful professions, along with those of air traffic controllers, police officers, and firefighters. Monks are susceptible to experiencing a great deal of anxiety, fear, and even psychosis in their hearts and minds. The pursuit of perfection, which is a requirement for those who represent God and *Guru*, can cause serious harm.

[6] A lot of people think that the president of the organization must be in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or that the monk who gives a speech at the Convocation must be very advanced. While it may be true, it's not wise to rely on appearances. The full background history of these individuals is not apparent to us.

The organization takes care not to disclose the timeline for achieving *Kriya*'s goal or the final liberation from illusion. The ego is accustomed to the notion of working towards achieving something, so even in *Kriya*, it expects a favorable outcome. Those who are new and can't see how far away the goal is. The initial enthusiasm of devotees has been replaced by a

serene tranquility that represents the approach to the precious realization we mentioned earlier: that is to understand, their essence is Consciousness that does not have a beginning or end.

[7] The majority of devotees need spiritual guides who inspire them by presenting themselves as fully satisfied individuals. Guides, even if they pretend, can provide assistance if they perform their role effectively. There is a certain group of devotees who feel the need for a physical person to converse with and take inspiration from. The worship of the personality begins in this way and is addressed firstly to the senior monks, and above all to the figure of the president. Problems are a result of these people not being the *Guru*. These beginners cannot be told to seek inspiration from anyone, but to seek their inner *Guru*. This concept is too lofty for them, it is unattainable.

[8] Let's finally discuss a topic that is very delicate. Let's examine a tragic and hallucinatory reality that leads to a lot of unnecessary suffering. The act of becoming a monk necessitates a commitment to living in perfect celibacy. It's unnatural to ask monks to overcome their sexual desires. They are prohibited from engaging in sexual activity. Let's consider whether this request is justifiable, acceptable, and natural. Accepting this request entails facing a severe internal struggle and discovering that it's virtually impossible to maintain chastity.

Contrary to Hindu traditions and yoga mythology, sexual activity is linked to health and longevity, not the opposite, as some stupid traditions claim. Let's be honest. According to science, sex is good for your health: the cardiovascular, respiratory, and immune systems all benefit from sexual activity; the parasympathetic nervous system (which slows the heartbeat) is strengthened by sex, which makes it more capable of fighting against the sympathetic nervous system (which speeds up the heartbeat).

In my view, if one wants to practice *Kriya*, the issue of chastity should not be considered because sexuality is not a problem, but rather life and health. In dealing with *Kriya*, it is crucial to have faith in nature's laws. It's not advisable to believe in absolute absurdities. It's not recommended to try to adhere to impossible or unnatural principles. It is not acceptable to experience constant and excruciating conflict, even to the extent of rejecting love.

The diaries of Lahiri Mahasaya reveal that he experienced a strong sexual desire at times. One day, a disciple asked him, "How can I be permanently free from sexuality?" The disciple was astonished by his answer: 'I will be

free from sexual desire only when my body rests on the funeral pyre.' His sincerity is a blessing!

Our thoughts cannot tell anything about the nature of the divine. Our hearts are capable of it. Our hearts express that the life of the beings who inhabit the earth is derived from the Divine. Sexuality is something that the Divine loves without exception. This was initiated by the Divine. It was not created by us.

[9] Let's attempt to reach a conclusion. Many people have come to the realization that becoming a monk did not produce the results they had expected. The initial feeling of freedom from life's distractions has disappeared. The time they had hoped to devote to the spiritual path was now spent on other jobs that didn't have anything to do with spiritual evolution. During meditations, many monks rarely experience intense joy. Their meditations have become shallow and repetitive over time. It is evident that monks face the same problem as everyone else: limited time for practice. I am cognizant of the fact that monks seldom practice for prolonged periods of time.

The appeal of long and intense meditations has decreased because it cannot be achieved inside the Ashram. Eventually, these individuals came to the realization that entering the monastery had been a fatal mistake. I don't think an expert is helping them improve their *Kriya* day after day. I believe that if they have any doubts about the correctness of the techniques, they should limit themselves to consulting the written lessons or keep various perplexities to themselves. Furthermore, it's important to remember that even if they're feeling depressed or unhappy, they shouldn't show it to anyone, especially visitors.

In conclusion, we can say that some individuals persevere in their intentions despite all the difficulties, even if it means making tireless and desperate efforts. A significant number of individuals have made the decision to return to the outside world and depart from the *Ashram* definitively.

EXAMPLES TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON INCORRECT ATTITUDES

Do not take what I am writing today as a strong condemnation of the actions of someone or group I have encountered. I have faith that these cases will be received with a smile.

[1] *The first major delusion is the belief that growth on a psychological level is necessary*

Some believe that it is necessary to assist in the practice of *Kriya* by working diligently to enhance their personal development. Occasionally, this occurs when they wish to follow certain mental procedures that are related to *Buddhism*.

A person claims with satisfaction that they are on a path of 'personal growth'. They have a lack of confidence in the transformation that *Kriya* creates. Their tendency is to judge themselves with excessive severity and create feelings of guilt. In summary, they aim to become 'good devotees' prior to practicing *Kriya*. Sadly, doing this will result in them never beginning the spiritual path because they won't feel prepared.

Accept yourself for who you are. Don't believe that self-discipline and striving to improve yourself as a human being can eradicate the roots of iniquity and selfishness in your consciousness.

There is no need to pair *Kriya Pranayama* techniques with psychological work. Your human nature cannot be redeemed through pure mental work. Take pleasure in *Pranayama* while embracing the simplicity of *Lahiri's* promise: '*Banat, banat, ban jay!*' '*Doing and doing, one day: done!*'

[2] *The second illusion involves practicing Kriya with the goal of freeing oneself from severe psychological disorders*

I come across individuals with serious mental disorders who intend to practice *Kriya* with the goal of obtaining better health.

It's easy to see that there's seldom any genuine spiritual interest in them. Choosing to follow *Kriya's* path to overcome depression or other common forms of neurosis is often a futile endeavor.

Many individuals were persuaded by misleading advertising that this was possible. In the spiritual path, the results are achieved when a person is in a good mental state and genuinely involved. If one has a mental disorder and decides to try the *Kriya* path after experimenting with different alternative remedies, following the advice of an overly enthusiastic friend, and attempting it, they are highly likely to receive nothing! Not only that: if something good begins to manifest itself in the person through this process, they will not even notice it and will continue

to perceive only their problems. Regrettably, there is no love in this situation, only curiosity towards *Kriya*. Being disappointed will be a constant worry for them, and failure will happen without fail.

If you are not religious, *Kriya* can still work, but it's important to be passionate and have a deep aspiration towards it. When someone suffers from neurosis, they typically don't feel genuine devotion. *Kriya* should not be viewed with suspicion: 'Does it actually function?' The supreme good of *Kriya* can only be experienced by humans who place it in the ideal area of the sacred with sincere trust.

[3] *The third illusion concerns the desire to enhance the potential of the mind*

Let me tell you that this is an illusion, which is deadly. In the past, I was asked by a local cultural institution to give some lessons on the history of the cultural movement that is now known as *New Age*.

This commitment was instrumental in helping me release myself from various esoteric-magical conditioning. To get ready for these classes, I had to consider the distinction between genuine mystical research and the pursuit of magical interests. I understood the susceptibility and vulnerability of the human mind, particularly as it journeys towards the spiritual path.

I felt gratified when I had the opportunity to study the best essays and textbooks available during this peaceful time in my life. The books written by academics who did not belong (or were smart enough to hide their belonging or affiliation) to any particular mystical school, exhibited a detached attitude toward this matter.

I was highly impressed with the texts that were capable of presenting the essence of the mystical movements that had flourished around the great religions.

Throughout my first lesson, I tried to convey what is commonly described as 'mystical'. I pointed out that in some contexts, the term 'Mystic' implies a connection to mystery and the concept of initiation into secret religious rituals. In Greek μυστικός [mustikos] means 'initiated' and μύω means 'to hide.'

Actually, a mystic is the one who sincerely tries to surrender, with the utmost respect, to something that exists beyond the boundaries of the thinking process. Various mental or physical disciplines are adopted by a mystic. This discipline is about achieving an ideal condition, which is unattainable with a mind that is never satisfied.

The issue was that my definition was not easily understood by most

of my listeners and did not pique their interest. Upon speaking with them privately, I realized that they were cultivating the most astonishing illusions. Regrettably, I discovered that most of them had come to my classes to gain fuel and support for their illusions. Despite my explanations, they still had no grasp of what a mystical path truly is and they were unaware of the boundless joy that can be gained from practicing a 'clean' spiritual path.

One day, after conversing with one of them, I became dismayed and needed to take a walk in the fresh air. It appeared that my feeling of alienation reached the horizon and touched the edge of the sky.

A thought came to me that was bright and filled with warmth. Even if the people I was associated with weren't interested in the ideals of the great saints of the past, I would have stayed committed to my path. I was not concerned if they cultivated the tendency to corrupt any sacred and liberating teaching.

My attitude was formed not because I believed in the potential benefits of my practice, but because it had already given me something invaluable. The radiance of my memory saved me every time, every day without needing to find any form of encouragement.

[4] *The fourth illusion is created when Kriya and 'New Age' therapies are combined.*

My encounter with a *New Age* group of *kriyabans* was similar to meeting a family that was somewhat bigger and less dogmatic than my first *Kriya* group, which strictly abides by the teachings of P.Y.. Whenever I listen to the recordings of devotional songs that I bought in the past, I recall this specific time in my life. An Indian devotional song was something I used to fall in love with and chant it inside me all day long. To me, it tasted like food; I actually felt like I was consuming that music.

At times, I couldn't comprehend their clumsy attempts to honor an oriental lifestyle. Their behavior exhibited innocent manias.

Kriya practice and 'cathartic' techniques were combined by the new group to create a purification process. The aim was to cleanse their psyche by exposing any repressed material to awareness. They stated - and it's not absurd - that removing the inner blocks would make the evolutionary process of *Kriya* easier.

The efforts they made in practicing *Kriya* techniques were not remarkable. They utilized all external means (readings, devotional songs, workshops) to find any trace of religious attitude or spiritual aspiration in their psyche. I'm not sure if any of them were born into spiritual reality.

Expensive distractions to *Kriya* were caused by searching for alternative medicines and group therapies directed by eccentric individuals with no academic training.

It was striking how much money was spent on training seminars that focused on unusual therapeutic methods like aromatherapy, crystal-therapy, and chromotherapy.

They became annoyed when I attempted to question the validity of the whole thing. They told me that I should not be perplexed by their practices without giving them a try.

They stated, "Our *Karma* is giving us the best of all opportunities to grow in all fields. We must respond positively. It's important we don't oppose this beneficial current, as otherwise we might have to be reborn on this physical plane to fully experience this opportunity! The energy from our body and the flow of *Universal Energy* will unify in the practice of our *Kriya*, leading to great benefits."

Upon hearing the term '*Universal Energy*', I sensed that they were referring to something illusory.

They were persuaded that their research and costly activities would make their spiritual journey as simple as a stroll.

My relationship with those researchers was built on genuine affection and never resulted in disagreement, bitterness, or empty formalities. Those friends shared everything they had learned with passion, regardless of how much it cost them, and they never tried to push anything on me.

My overall impression was that being too insistent on the cleaning process was wasting time. It is like preparing your home to receive a distinguished guest, cleaning it continuously, and decorating it with rapt awareness of all that the house offers. While the expected guest is neglected on the doormat despite he repeatedly rings the bell.

Several years have gone by, but some friends are still waiting for the complete cleansing of their subconscious mind. The work carried out in *Kriya* has been entirely forgotten and reduced to nothing.

[5] *The fifth illusion involves frantically seeking out a technique that is superior to Kriya*

There are individuals who don't devote themselves to the *Kriya* technique and, after following it for a while, abandon it, searching for a spiritual evolution technique that is more advanced than *Kriya*. They are convinced that a 'higher' technique existed centuries ago and was only taught to a small group of extremely advanced individuals.

One of my friends came across a self-proclaimed master of occult matters who claimed to know the secrets of a lost esoteric path. This expert

maintained that he was well-informed about a spiritual technique that was practiced thousands of years ago. He believed that as humanity becomes more materialistic, this teaching is not revealed to anyone. He finally concluded with a sigh after a pause, that "today's students would not know how to appreciate it, and in their hands, it could be dangerous."

The expert appeared to be a dreamer, but he wasn't as naive as he appeared. Using terminology that was reminiscent of *Kabbalah*, he effortlessly spoke about original Christianity and was able to interpret its texts (canonical and apocryphal) in an unconventional way.

My friend made an effort to appear as a genuine expert, stating that he was willing to accept any request so that the exceptional secret that the expert claimed to possess could be revealed to him.

The intelligent expert, after expressing some reservations, finally pretended to agree and whispered: 'Then it's fine, but only for you, just because I feel guided to make an exception.'

A poor victim who was overwhelmed by emotion, my friend experienced the most memorable moment of his life, convinced that the meeting with the expert was arranged in 'higher places'.

The donation offered during the initiation, along with the promise to keep it entirely secretive, was truly remarkable. It reflected the high value attached to that event. The teacher clearly stated that this donation would be transferred to a monk who helped maintaining an orphanage. This is truly a classic! An orphanage is always present in these stories.

The friend was completely satisfied. He was ready to accept the explanation, adamant about the fact that it was a gift and that nothing could adequately pay for the blessings it would bring in his life. At the same time, the rascal was pondering which technique he would explain during the initiation, demonstrating it with dazzling solemnity. Upon receiving everything, my friend spent two days in a state of pure ecstasy.

While incarcerated in his chimera, he witnessed the rekindling of his passion and the comedy was repeated. He spent money on other unimaginable revelations. The illusion is actually indestructible.

These people are not interested in the spiritual dimension. This dimension is only revealed to those who are ready to destroy the world of thought and, armed with sincere aspiration, have the courage to move forward. To attain spiritual reality, there are no other prerequisites to attain, no other tricks, secrets, strange visualizations to create, or formulas that confer particular powers. It's crucial to calm down and clear your mind. There exists no alternative method. Other approaches may only increase the mechanics of the thinking process.

There are only a handful of people who comprehend this and can patiently progress towards achieving a state of consciousness where there is no thought-induced disturbance.

[6] *The sixth illusion is the belief in Baraka's power*

Many people believe that the *Baraka* power of the great Masters of the past is still present in their descendants as a non-stop chain. I encountered a *kriyaban* who was certain that spiritual progress couldn't occur without receiving this 'power'. He informed me that in his lifetime, he received multiple *Kriya* initiations from individuals who claimed to have a valid lineage, but the teachings he received did not add anything to his existing knowledge. The idea of 'transmission of power' was something that captivated him. The power that was given was capable of giving a person complete freedom.

He did not attach much importance to the practice of *Kriya* techniques, saying that they were only used to cleanse himself before receiving the actual 'initiation', which meant 'power' to him. He was of the opinion that 'lineage' was the most crucial aspect to keep in mind when approaching a spiritual teacher.

He frequently mentioned the significance of adhering to moral principles (*Patanjali's Yama* and *Niyama*). The phases of *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara*, which were my alpha and omega, were insignificant for him without *Yama* and *Niyama*. Although he was polite towards me, he made me feel very poor and limited when he talked about the absolute importance of the moral rules listed by *Patanjali*. He disapproved of my obsession with perfecting the *Kriya* practice. He stated that the desire to master a meditation technique meant cultivating a desire that was not compatible with the principles of *Buddhism*.

In the end, I came to the conclusion that this method of following moral rules was an insult, lacking any depth or understanding of human nature.

[7] *The seventh illusion involves the belief that one has already achieved enlightenment*

Those who want to practice *Kriya Yoga* know that there is a lot of daily discipline waiting for them.

Let us consider those who spontaneously become "Enlightened" (or rather self-realized, freed from ignorance, having received enlightenment from their inner Self). The sage *Ramana Maharshi* is a good example to use. Everyone is free to pursue what *Ramana Maharshi* advised, or to continue to ask the question 'Who am I?'

There is no doubt that reading books about his history can inspire us. Unfortunately, we cannot emulate such a sage by "pretending" to be 'Enlightened'.

I realize that my objective is to pursue a discipline that necessitates both mental and physical effort, not just mental gymnastics. That is why I adhere to the breathing technique known as *Pranayama*.

I am perplexed by those who have chosen to follow the *Jnani* path and engage in mental work to convince themselves that they are like *Ramana Maharshi*. It seems to me that their idea is an illusion that the human mind is prone to sustain.

I met someone who used to practice *Kriya*, but after using a technique similar to self-hypnosis, he became convinced that he was already free from *Maya* and no longer needed any other discipline.

It's obvious that self-hypnosis is not good. We were taught *Kriya Pranayama* by Lahiri Mahasaya, who then explained how to move beyond it and achieve *Paravastha* state. The correct method is this, not self-hypnosis.

Although it's not appropriate to say, the image of a person enjoying a beautiful day lying on an inflatable mattress floating above a lake of manure comes naturally to me. The mattress is supported by rotten material that has a foul smell that is revolting. The individual contemplates the sky and fantasizes about being in the sky, surrounded by a pure dimension of light. Holding his nose is enough to disengage from the odor that surrounds him.

When these individuals state that they are free from *Maya*, they are not telling a lie. There is a potential for us to be Divine! It is also true that when they express their thoughts openly, they should recognize that 'potentially' is not the same as 'really'.

From their philosophical perspective, we *kriyabans* are in a state of deception. Our fate is to struggle and toil for the entirety of our lives without achieving anything.

This is the scenario that arises if we don't learn to reside in the state that arises after *Kriya*, in which the mind has become calm and we discover our true essence, beyond time and space.

One day, I felt compelled to argue with one of these individuals and persevered until I ceased. I comprehended that his approach was not genuine *Jnana Yoga* but merely a mental illusion. Observing the person's wide-open eyes as he attempted to demonstrate the *Samadhi* state to me made me realize that he was experiencing mental troubles.

[8] *Eight illusion: the belief that the moment to achieve liberation is still very far away*

There are individuals who lack self-confidence and think they are inherently inferior to those they perceive as spiritually evolved beings.

This happened to my *kriyaban* friend, who was older than I and had started his journey towards *Kriya* numerous years prior. He was deserving of the highest respect. Our encounters were during the final phase of his life. I felt a sense of sadness when I couldn't visit him for months. We walked freely, talking calmly during the short afternoons when we met. As I write, I feel emotional because I have truly never met a person as kind and altruistic as him.

I observed a natural progression that led him to believe that his spiritual objective was to live, in a future incarnation, near a highly advanced devotee - similar to the one he met in his youth.

He told me that when he was young, he had the good fortune to meet the lady who led the organization founded by P.Y.. Well, he asserted that achieving success in *Kriya* was dependent upon receiving a benign expression of love and approval from that person! This "divine being" was indeed a living proof of perfection for him. I endeavored to convince him that worshipping any inspirational figure might be the end of his spiritual journey.

He felt discouraged because he had seen God in someone else, but not in himself. This way of thinking caused his spiritual disposition to be corrupted.

He expressed something he hadn't even contemplated in years: the alleged evolution of the individual achieved through *Kriya* was undeniable, but, to him, it was so slowly that it was practically insignificant. He found the *Kriya* technique to be like a religious ritual that needed to be carried out with care, but only to demonstrate one's loyalty to this spiritual path.

He had completely accepted the idea that special people existed on this planet who were self-realized and free from *Maya* forever. On the flip side, there were individuals who were so common that they would have to wait for countless incarnations to achieve freedom in Spirit. That vision supported the texture on which he had been weaving his thoughts.

On a particular day, he expressed all his sadness. Considering how superficially – as he said – he had practiced meditation techniques, he had no doubts that he would certainly have missed the 'goal' in this life. Future incarnations were already on his mind where he would practice in an

ashram near a Self-realized Master. He had already put his heart into this ideal destiny.

I experienced a huge swell of unfathomable nostalgia that was nearly overwhelming, yet it remained immobile around us. Today that he is gone. I am pondering if the understanding of *Kriya's* cathartic value was gradually erased from his mind because of the human tendency to emphasize the greatness of certain people who are "impudently" holy, perfect, and majestic.

The faith in *Kriya's* power was the source of his aspiration, was his sustenance during the first years of his journey. For unexplained reasons, he made a great mistake later. He became convinced that the eternal spiritual Source that is at the center of his being would die if he were deprived of living near a divine being. He devoted all his ardent expectations of heart to the divine being he met in his youth.

CHAPTER 11

THE VALUE OF JAPA

The subject matter discussed is Japa's practice. We will explain that this practice makes it easier to prepare for a Kriya Yoga routine that can produce excellent, immediately perceptible results.

INTRODUCTION TO JAPA

I am optimistic that the reader has reflected on the considerations in the initial part of chapter 10. We discussed the inability of thought to establish contact with the spiritual dimension.

Two ways of approaching spiritual reality that are both healthy and correct have been mentioned: *Pranayama* and *Japa*. Our discussion in the second part of the book focused on the discipline of *Kriya Pranayama*. It's important to emphasize that the goal of *Pranayama* is to use the breath to quiet down the mind. In order to calm the mind, *mental Pranayama*, which involves allowing the breath to freely flow, is absolutely necessary. Practicing *mental Pranayama* is not an option but a necessary practice.

It's time to talk about *Japa* right now. We will discuss the need for this practice to achieve an extraordinary state of calmness in our brain, allowing us to reach the breathless state.

When practiced continuously with the attitude of the 'Presence of the Divine', *Japa (Interior Prayer)* is a wonderful spiritual discipline that is a complete path in itself. The purpose of this type of *Prayer* is not to ask God for things that are necessary for material existence. Mystics use *Prayer* as a means to confirm their intention to worship and surrender entirely to the Divine.

Chapter 3 explains how the idea of practicing *Japa* became a part of my life. During my practice, I endeavored to feel the *mantra*'s vibration in my head and chest. I devoted all my heart's aspirations to this repetition.

It was clear to me that *Japa*'s effect was to eliminate the 'background noise' in my mind. I acknowledge that the noise's effects constantly disrupt our meditation. During meditation practice, there are thoughts that can be visualized, identified, and blocked, but a constant background noise hinders any attempt to enjoy the main outcome of meditation, which is the breathless state.

We don't live in silence; we're not hermits. After a day that is filled with many preoccupations and distractions, we settle down in our room and practice *Kriya* there. It becomes apparent that twenty or thirty minutes

does not provide the ideal conditions to reach a state of complete mental silence. The mind requires more time to calm down. Even though the *Kriya* process is done with great attention, the background noise in our minds remains an impediment that cannot be overcome. *Japa* is the only way to calmly neutralize the noise that keeps the mind constantly active. By practicing *Japa* before our *Kriya* routine, we can reduce the mind's background noise to absolute immobility and transparency. This becomes clearly apparent during the last phase of our routine. The state of breathlessness occurs unexpectedly. The tool of *Japa* is unique and has the potential to bring about this miracle!

Through daily *Japa* practice, the mind can be immersed in the aspiration towards the Divine and perform one of the greatest actions: stopping the unnecessary internal dialogue of the mind. Stopping this continuous loss of energy is the key to achieving complete peace in our thoughts.

Spiritual reality manifests naturally in the state of *Mental Silence* without any further effort. If we fail to obtain complete silence, we run the risk of dragging our existence forward, admiring the lives of the saints but resigning ourselves to the false idea that mystical experience is fatally precluded to us.

The main results of *Kriya* will happen in our lives once we have achieved perfect *Mental Silence*. It's wise to rely on *Japa*'s help. The state of *Japa*, which affects all levels of our mind, will give us the chance to experience the breathless state.

I am confident that you will take what I said seriously. I am sincerely optimistic that what has been successful for me and some of my friends will also be successful for you.

The first part of this chapter will instruct you on how to practice *Japa*. The subsequent portion explains a meditation practice related to *Japa*, known as '*Prayer of the Heart*'.

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR MANTRA

Many books that introduce *Japa*'s practice insist on a lot of banalities. Frequently, these essays are ineffective and lacking intelligence and passion. As an example, I read that the *mala* should be made of a specific material; it is important that it is not visible to others; it is important to never cross the *Sumeru* bead (where the *mala* begins and ends), to practice the *mala* again, you need to turn it and have the last bead become the first bead of the second round. I am cognizant of the fact that these indications are utter garbage. According to my reading, the power of *Prayer* is not due to your effort but rather to a "Grace" that can only be achieved by using a particular formula canonized by a traditional pattern of worship. It is clear

to me that this is another falsehood. There is a "Grace", but it is connected to the fervor you put into your practice.

Hence, select a *mantra* that appeals to you. Don't feel obliged to use Lahiri Mahasaya's favored *Vasudeva mantra* ("Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya".) It is true that if you have multiple preferred prayers, you can opt for one that has twelve syllables and include *Om* or *Amen* at the beginning or end, if needed. Twelve is an ideal number because it can be used in *Kriya Pranayama* by placing each syllable in a different *Chakra*. Spiritual chants or poems can yield a variety of beautiful twelve-syllable mantras. 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!]

The one thing that should be stated objectively is that YOUR *mantra* needs to express or evoke exactly what YOU want to achieve and embody the attitude you want to express. *Mantras* that begin with *Om Namō* express the attitude of surrender, while other *mantras* may express the complete non-dual realization. In some instances, the significance of the meaning can be overshadowed by remembering for example a saint who employed that *mantra*.

In general, a good choice is one that has both a forceful and gentle tone. Be attentive to the vibration that your *mantra* triggers in your body and heart.

It's important to feel a surge of passion in your heart when starting each *Prayer* session. In an interview, a nun who lives in a cloister revealed her prayer/mantra choice: 'Thy face, O LORD, will I seek!'

Can we feel the deep emotions that these words evoked in her bosom when she selected them (among the *Psalms*) and the passion she infused in its repetition throughout her life?

In literature, it is possible to observe the beautiful construction of *mantras*. Here is the *Krishna mantra*: *Om Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopi-jana Vallabhaya Swaha*. Here is the *Shiva mantra*: *Om Nama Shivaya Sing Vang Kim Am*.

By studying the concept of *Bija mantra*, you can create some beneficial *mantras* for yourself. To enhance a previous *mantra*, add seed *mantras* like *Aim*, *Dum*, *Gam*, *Haum*, *Hoom*, *Hrim*, *Hrom*, *Krim*, *Shrim*, *Strim*, *Vang*, and others...

The ancient yogis opted for these sounds because of their beauty and vibration. Humans discovered them, they were not given by a god. These

seed *mantras* may not hold any meaning, but they can enhance a *mantra* that does. Don't choose a *mantra* based solely on the power of certain literature that extols the virtue of a particular *Bija mantra*. Examine your mood and emotions after rigorous practice of a particular *mantra* - let your reaction guide you!

There are people who make unfortunate choices that seem like they are punishing themselves. The sentence they chose to repeat may have a negative connotation and unambiguously emphasize their limitations and unworthiness. It becomes evident that their *Japa* practice will fall apart after a short period - they will repeat that *mantra* only once or twice during the day, like a sigh of dejection.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JAPA PRACTICE

Although *Japa* is recommended by Eastern traditions to be practiced mentally, I am not hesitant to suggest vocalizing it for at least 108 repetitions, whispering it softly in a normal voice.²

If you want to avoid disturbing those near you, you can whisper the *Prayer* while keeping the volume low so that you can hear yourself. The great secret lies in listening to yourself while repeating your *mantra*, which is why a Master stated that *Prayer* is done through the ears rather than the mouth! Make the syllables resonate in the mouth, chest, and various areas of the head by pronouncing them.

When you practice walking back and forth in a room, it's likely that you'll have an irresistible urge to order your surroundings. This explains how *Prayer* repetition produces a similar order in your mind as well. In reality, it purifies your mental substance and organizes all your mental 'furniture'. The practice is comparable to a jackhammer that smashes the concrete of the mind. It enables you to traverse the quicksand of the mind without any harm and attain the state of pure awareness.

The possibility of becoming discouraged and confronting the idea that *Japa* is a mind-numbing practice is a significant obstacle that can be fatal for many individuals. You may hold the view that collaborating with spiritual evolution using more powerful and effective methods is the better option. This is just a great deceit created by your mind! In the event that this occurs, use your moral resolve and transform your doubts into a calm euphoria. Break up the barrier of impossibility that life has placed before you. No matter how much mental confusion and spiritual dryness you are in, practice *Japa* and repeat your *mantra* with superhuman calm and

² A very self-confident teacher recommended that I pronounce any *mantra* only mentally. I tried to do this but saw that it did not work. After several months I was truly exhausted by this practice. Then I started reciting it again in a low voice: before completing the 108 repetitions, a "spring" burst into my heart.

determination!

Finish the 108 repetitions, shut your mouth, and let the *Japa* flow smoothly into the background of your consciousness. Feel a protective shell that is made of tangible peace around you. I am not requesting that you adopt a certain visualization, but rather to be conscious of the subtle and peaceful "substance" that surrounds you. Occasionally, people who come into contact with you will also feel this substance.

It can be advantageous to practice *Japa* at least one hour before the *Kriya* session. Remember that the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* is followed by a prolonged period of internalization during which the senses cease to be affected by external reality and are completely receptive to internal reality.

If you opt to practice the *Higher Kriyas*, which involve physical movement, start your routine with 24 *Kriya* breaths. Once you have finished your *Higher Kriyas*, you can restart your *Kriya Pranayama* practice. The purpose of this is to restore a state of stillness in your being. After that, you're prepared to practice *mental Pranayama*.

PUSHING THE LIMITS OF ONE'S POTENTIAL

I made an effort to share this experience with others. I recall a friend who tried *Kriya* but didn't achieve any results. I told him about *Japa*, but I couldn't articulate my thoughts adequately. He showed me how he had understood my instruction one day, and I witnessed a lifeless practice: a tired appeal for God's mercy. I realized that *Japa* was merely a brief emotional release for him. The *mantra* he had selected was nothing but an expression of self-pity. It wasn't surprising that he stopped practicing after a while.

Taking part in a group pilgrimage was what caused everything to change. Someone started reciting the Catholic Rosary on that occasion and all the pilgrims joined in this practice. My friend, despite being tired and almost out of breath, did not avoid this act of devotion. While walking and whispering the *Prayer*, he entered a state of tranquility that he hadn't experienced before. As he moved forward, he looked at the scenery around him with a different set of eyes, and it seemed to him that he was living in a heavenly location. Throughout his 20-mile journey, he recited the *Prayer* continuously, completely unaware that he was exhausted and sleepy. During the group's break, he was fortunate enough to be left alone undisturbed. While introspecting, he felt a presence emanating from his heart that he recognized as *Spiritual Reality*. The ecstasy became firm like a solid rock, and was almost unbearable, completely engulfing him.

My friend's concise summary of his thoughts on how to practice *Japa* is truly inspiring. He argues that the secret lies in attaining and

surpassing the state of exhaustion. By the way, after a few days, he made the decision to practice *Japa* by altering his *mantra* and using the *mantra* I had selected for my own practice. The result was that he experienced a state of breathlessness.

Perhaps it's not necessary to exceed the limit of exhaustion. To achieve excellent results, it is usually recommended to complete one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) every day out loud and then allow the repetition of one's *mantra* to continue mentally and automatically. However, his 'law of exhaustion' is an invaluable tool for overcoming any internal resistance and experiencing the breathless state for the first time.

Examine Lahiri Mahasaya's ethos of '*Banat, Banat, ban jay!*' ('doing, doing, one day done!') It illustrates a person who consistently exerts effort without ever giving up and eventually achieves their objectives. You have to put effort into eliminating the obstacles created by your mind. The spiritual dimension will become manifest without any additional effort on your part if you practice *Japa*.

We look for God in books, but it is in *Prayer* that we find him. *Prayer* is the key that opens the door to God's heart for us.

(Padre Pio of Pietrelcina)

SOME KRIYABANS WERE CONTESTING

I was unable to maintain my enthusiasm for *Japa* practice because of the difficulty in responding to objections I received from some *kriyabans*.

They told me that the *Kriya* techniques have everything that is necessary for the spiritual path, so we don't require any other practices. They added, '*Japa* was not taught by *Guruji* or Lahiri Mahasaya - *kriyabans* don't require it.' It was apparent that they were uncomfortable with the idea that practicing *Japa* could affect the purity of their spiritual path.

I believe that many individuals who sought initiation from Lahiri Mahasaya not only practiced *Japa* but also pursued *Kriya Yoga* to deepen and intensify their practice.

Their opinion was that *Kriya* practice did not embody any intrinsic difference from *Prayer*, where they had already poured their soul. For some, receiving *Thokar* initiation could be the ultimate culmination of their efforts to attain the elevated state of the *Prayer of the Heart*. There appears to be an explanation for why *Continuous Prayer* ("*Inner Prayer*", "*Prayer of the Heart*", "*Dhikr*") is the fundamental technique employed by numerous mystics.

It's possible that individuals with pride and arrogance have helped to

perpetuate the misconception that *Japa* is a too simple practice, suitable for those who lack knowledge about *Prana* and *Chakras*.

It's a shame that *Kriya* schools are not actively teaching the correct way to use *Japa*. I saw the eyes filled with joy and sincere surrender to the Divine of those *kriyabans* who embraced the practice of *Japa* during the day.

Try to reflect for a moment: if all religions recommend *Prayer* as a fundamental act of their faith, will there be a valid reason? Or should we think that millions and millions of people are not very intelligent and it is we alone with our *Kriya* who know the right thing to do? I think we better humbly surrender to the evidence.

There are many reasons for practicing *Japa*. The project of giving up the pleasures of uncontrolled thinking during the day is a sacrifice that generates a new mind. Pursuing this goal, *Japa* transforms *Pranayama* from a simple exercise that aims to modify the state of some energetic currents in our body in cohabitation with a continuous state of bliss.

You won't find another practice as valuable as *Japa* to improve your *Kriya*. In order to practice *Kriya*, it is necessary to have a state of solid mental silence, not just pure and simple willpower.

Decide to embrace this celestial dimension daily while staying committed to your *Japa* practice. The magic of your bright, shimmering *mantra* will extend to all aspects of your life.

You can only feel alive along the Spiritual Path in this dimension. When it happens, the feeling of being breathless is unforgettable. Every day of your life, you will attempt to recreate it.

A BOOK THAT IS A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

I advise you to read the book "*The way of a pilgrim*." An anonymous writer wrote this novel in the mid-ninth century, and it was translated into English in 1930, making it the best introduction to the spiritual current of *Hesychasm*.

No one can be sure if it is a true story about a particular pilgrim or a spiritual novel that was written to spread the mystical dimension of the Christian Orthodox faith.

Certain testimonies have led some to identify the author as Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov, a Russian Orthodox monk. Regardless of the historical accuracy, this pilgrim is the perfect representation of everyone who spends their lives traveling to sanctuaries, churches, monasteries, Mount Athos, and the Holy Land, searching for God through *Continuous Prayer*.

The narrative revolves around a pilgrim who was on his way back

from the Holy Sepulcher and paused at Mount Athos. The initial words are memorable. 'I am a Christian through God's grace, but my actions have resulted in great sins, and because of my calling, I am a homeless wanderer from humble birth roaming from place to place. My worldly possessions include a backpack with dried bread inside, and a Bible in my breast pocket. That's all.'

The following is a description of the pilgrim's determination to travel to infinity on the steppes to find a spiritual guide who would reveal the secret of *Continuous Prayer*. The novel is a narrative of his own exploration of how to pray continuously, as recommended by St. Paul.

The pilgrim's devotion was rewarded one day when he was accepted as a disciple by a spiritual master and all the details of the practice were explained to him. The pilgrim was instructed to repeat the *Jesus Prayer* 3000 times per day, then 6000 times per day, and finally 12000 times per day. One day, the pilgrim, having followed this advice, found out that the *Prayer* had reached the secret and mysterious area of the heart. *Prayer* syllables were pronounced in synchrony with the heart's rhythm spontaneously. Regardless of what happened, the pilgrim would never be separated from God again.

The main attraction of the book '*The way of a pilgrim*' was the portrayal of a pilgrim's life as a model for those who want to lead a spiritual life.

We *kriyabans* are pilgrims who move between pseudo-gurus due to our exhaustion and exasperation. Each pseudo-guru is frighteningly ignorant, believing that Westerners are gullible and enjoy being deceived.

This book provides us with the inspiration to try *Japa* (whisper the *Prayer* we choose) for a couple of hours daily. Let's choose to experience the divine sweetness of *Contemplative Prayer* instead of indulging in idleness. This leads us to a genuine act of opening our hearts to the divine. We discover over time that the goal the Russian pilgrim has set for themselves is not a fantasy, but something that can be accomplished in our own lives.

Our objective is to attain a state of *Continuous Prayer*, a genuine Heaven on earth, a state of unmatched beauty.

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA'S THOUGHT

Teresa of Avila's written works are a source of great inspiration, particularly her emphasis on the importance of '*Interior Prayer*'. Let us cherish her teachings.³

³ Saint Teresa of Ávila (March 28, 1515 – October 4, 1582) was a Carmelite nun. Her teaching comes from concrete experience and not from the study of books. She intuited a fundamental fact: with a simple Prayer, to be repeated incessantly, a soul can go through all the different levels of the spiritual path until the definitive union

She encourages those who have not yet tried *Interior Prayer* to not deprive themselves of such a blessing. Her instruction is that expecting to enter the spirit world without first entering ourselves is a form of madness. The Divine has given *Interior Prayer* as the means to achieve perfection. Each person is given the chance to achieve the true purpose of their existence: they need to grasp their lives with determination and pursue a path of moving towards the center of their being. Those on this journey who lack *Interior Prayer* are like a body with paralyzed hands and feet that cannot move.

In her explanation, the practice of *Interior Prayer* starts with the voice, which is by using a specific formula without reciting it quickly and paying attention. Selecting one formula is the way to go, not selecting multiple formulas.

A *Prayer* that has been memorized is frequently used. It needs to be uncomplicated but must involve both the body and the soul. It's important to stick to it. It's clear that this *Interior Prayer* should not be reduced to reciting words without thinking about what's being said: you have to participate with your heart.

There is no need to worry if involuntary distractions occur. Unless we choose to voluntarily withdraw our desire to enter communion with the Divine, the attention we gave when praying will continue to guide us towards the Divine. *Prayer* is a waste of time unless it leads us to touch the Divine, and this happens when we enter into confidence and surrender. It is necessary to bring our whole life, pains, and limitations into *Prayer* with the trust of those who believe in the healing power of the Divine's love.

After determining the starting point, it's intriguing to observe Teresa of Avila's approach to discovering the essence of the practice. *Internal Prayer* is all about experiencing the overwhelming love of the Divine towards whom you are praying. *Prayer* is no more a repetitive, mechanical, mnemonic verbal recitation, but a personal expression of love towards the Divine! *Prayer* transforms into an intimate relationship of friendship, a means of entertaining ourselves with the One who loves us deeply. Teresa of Avila's writings reiterate this idea: '*Prayer* is not about thinking a lot, but about loving a lot.'

A lifetime of passionate devotion towards the Divine is a must. It's crucial to pray now rather than waiting for uncertain fruit to come from it. During the day, it's a good idea to recall the resolution we made during *Prayer* that is to continue our activities in His presence.

God has many ways to lead souls to Himself, but *Prayer* is the most

with the Divine.

reliable route. Leaving it results in becoming lost.

She believes that if we don't pray for a while, the Divine will treat us with the same warmth as before. The word of God is immutable: God doesn't change, we do. Regardless of how we forget about Him, God remains unafraid. His fear is that we won't search for Him! He is worried about us losing our trust in Him. In some instances, He bestows us with greater graces even after we have abandoned Him for a while!

No one has ever taken the Divine in vain as their friend. Remember that He is the one who drives us to pray! It's Him who listens and responds. He's not heard because we keep talking and talking. Let's make an effort to remain silent. We will eventually hear that voice that is quiet but still talks a lot!

She explained that with the Prayer:

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

Sometimes her words may seem obscure to people – however with the practice they become clear. Let's look at this instance:

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

Her explanation is focused on what happens when spiritual energy enters the heart. This statement is completely accurate. If you encounter such a force, your response will be a massive wave of love towards the Divine. The force in the heart center intensifies, like a strong hand had gripped it. When you return to the normal state of consciousness, you won't be able to stop the tears of devotion.

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

In conclusion, Teresa holds that prayer is essential to the mystical path. She said: 'Prayer is EVERYTHING in the mystical path.'

Without creating the habit of *Prayer*, she firmly believed that the soul would not attain the mystical goal. No other exercise is as much emphasized and given as much importance by her in all her writings.

You can do nothing without *Prayer* and you can do miracles with it.

We need to stop at this point and reflect on this concept: The soul that does not create the habit of *Prayer* will not achieve the mystical goal! This statement is similar to an arrow that comes from the Divine itself. It gives me chills.

I am curious about what a person who only has the 'scientific' method of *Kriya* can do without *Prayer*. Teresa asserts that this soul will not achieve the mystical goal. It is my belief that we can now comprehend the reason for the failure of numerous people.

A SHORT NOTE ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM

It goes without saying that *Tibetan Buddhism* places such importance on the value of *mantra*, therefore I couldn't help but mention this source of inspiration.

The teaching is to repeat the phrase "*Om Mani Padme Hum*" repeatedly until the confusion of thoughts dissipates. Practical teachings are rarely encountered, but they are available if you keep searching.

I discovered a beautiful lesson in the midst of a plethora of tedious rhetoric. I am attempting to make it shorter: repeating a *mantra* causes the heart's pulse to become distinctly perceptible and the attention is directed to the effortless movement of the breath through the nostrils... in and out... in and out. You are no longer distracted by thoughts. You have regained your composure. Your mind is in a state of meditation. Love and compassion are revealed by the layers covering your true Self.

Tibetan Buddhism stopping there would result in perfection! Unfortunately, there are obvious exaggerations, including the claim that any animal or insect hearing this *mantra* before death will be reborn in the pure land of *Amitabha*. It is also said that by reciting the *mantra* with participation and correct understanding will dissolve all suffering and prevent the rebirth of seven generations of that person's descendants in the lower realms...

We were somewhat annoyed by the affirmation that viewing the written form of the *mantra* has the same effect as reciting it. We also read

that rotating the written form of the *mantra* around a wheel gives the same benefit as saying the *mantra*. We are accustomed to such nonsense and we are certain that the beauty, purity, and value of meditating on the *mantra* with our voice and heart cannot be replaced.

THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

Allow me to reconsider the book '*The way of a pilgrim*' once more.

We are told that the pilgrim, following the Master's instructions, discovers that the *Prayer* is present in his lips and mind every time he is awake. It's as spontaneous and effortless as the breath itself. He can experience the effulgence of divine light, the intimate 'secret of the heart', in this wonderful condition.

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.

Our focus now is on discussing the 'inner secret of the heart'. Many think that the *Prayer of the Heart* is a prayer pronounced with sincere devotion, reflecting on the meaning of the words it is composed of.

In reality, it's a lot more than that! By definition, one should mentally repeat the prayer in sync with their heartbeats, with each beat associated with a syllable of the prayer. In fact, the practice leads us to the bliss that is primarily derived from the inner dimension that we can call "spiritual heart".

I highly recommend this preparatory practice

Take a few deep breaths in accordance with the following instructions. As you breathe in, energy moves from the left side of your body to the right side. When you exhale, the energy moves from the right side of the body to the left. A cross is made by taking another breath after this one. Energy that is perceived in the abdominal region flows upward through the dorsal region during inhalation and returns downward during exhalation. It's obvious that *Prayer* and breath movements can be combined. Experiment to find out what feels most comfortable for you to combine your breath and prayer. By 'drawing' this cross with two full breaths, one cycle is practiced. It only requires 6 cycles to make breathing automatic and effortless. Each inhalation and each exhalation lasts for approximately 3 seconds.

Keep practicing this way for at least 10 minutes. Experience the natural intensification of concentration on the heart *Chakra*.

By repeating this practice in the future days, you will see how the procedure becomes internalized. In other words, you will start to feel the energetic movement as your breath gets shorter and shorter, until it's nearly nonexistent.

You will be impressed by the efficiency of this procedure. It takes no more than 30 minutes to complete 108 unhurried cycles.

This *Prayer* has the potential to be a decisive and providential aid for a person who is experiencing a rift between the realm of the mind and that of the heart. I am certain that the greatest and lasting outcomes will not only be observed by you, but also by those who have known you for some time. With genuine amazement, they will witness your transformation.

Having practiced this exercise for a long time, you are now ready to practice the actual '*Prayer of the Heart*.' You must have at least 20 minutes of free time.

Concentrate all your attention on the 'heart center' and ignore your breath. Try to perceive the heartbeat. It is not required that this perception be very clear. Only a bit. Persisting will result in a clearer perception over time.

In the meditation position, with the chin slightly lower, synchronize each beat with the syllable of the *Prayer*. It's challenging, but keep going. By applying this new criterion constantly, you will eventually come to a point where your breath and heartbeat tend to slow down. Ultimately, you will comprehend the significance of '*praying without having your mind in your head, but rather with your mind in your heart*.'

Your spiritual efforts will finally flow in the right direction when you reach this point. Although your mind remains the same, you will have the impression of having access to a completely different perception of reality. The reason for this is that the heart plays a crucial role.

The idea that the heart functions like a brain is a fascinating concept to explore through literature. A person who is attentive and perceptive will see the evidence that this 'heart brain' has an impact on our consciousness. It's apparent that establishing a peaceful relationship with it is imperative to our evolution.

It's like following an internal teacher who advises you to manifest a more subtle and creative intelligence. Your life undergoes a significant transformation.

You will become conscious of the filter formed by conditioning that has distorted your perception of reality. The best qualities in your

personality will blossom (deep satisfaction, gratitude for every beautiful thing that happens in your life, and unconditional love for the Divine).

When the *Prayer of the heart* is practiced seriously, the *Prayer* becomes continuous. During any possible moment of silence, you will be mindful of the *Prayer* that gently and comfortably repeats itself, just like music in the background of your consciousness. In the absence of silence, you will preserve the silence within your heart. You will experience a sensation of a burning fire that is situated in the chest area. The initial mild sensation can transform into a feeling of the heart solidifying, which feels like a point surrounded by incomparably strong pressure.⁴ Living in this way means always remembering God. During sleep, this harmony is preserved.

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

The soul is aware of a profound sense of fulfillment. A taste that evokes eternal life enters your being. You experience the sensation of being in contact with something infinitely good. The intensity of this state is increasing day by day.

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*)

⁴ St. Teresa also explains the same concept: "From this pressure a strange experience of pain arises. We perceive the Divine, endless Light and we burn with love. We realize that the moment to become one with that endless Light and Bliss has not yet arrived: for this reason we feel an intense nostalgia."

CHAPTER 12

TECHNIQUES IN OTHER SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND IN KRIYA YOGA

I refer to my research on spiritual meditation techniques that are derived from other traditions. The intention is to determine significant parallels between them and the practices of Kriya Yoga by Lahiri Mahasaya. This study's objective is not solely culturally focused. Its aim is to gather information that can help develop a more mature and engaging Kriya Yoga practice.

In the beginning of the book, I mentioned that Lahiri Mahasaya had attempted to combine the methods used by different mystics in the past centuries to develop a system of *Yoga* practices that even though it was simple, it was still complete. I found it interesting and beneficial to search for traces of practices similar to *Kriya* in specific spiritual traditions that have a long history.

In order to prove my hypothesis, I will provide information on four spiritual paths that have clear indications of *Kriya Yoga*. *Hesychasm*, *Sufi* practices, *Internal Alchemy* (*Nei Dan*), and ultimately the *Radhasoami* path are all topics that I will be referencing.

What is preventing us from obtaining strong inspiration from these great mystical traditions and improving our practice, starting by perceiving it with a different perspective?

My aim is to motivate the reader to study and explore these paths, and discover inspiration from them. These spiritual traditions provide precise references to the knowledge and skills that *kriyabans* must learn and master. Let's keep in mind the essential aspects required to master *Kriya Yoga*.

The initial phase of a *kriyaban* involves performing *Kriya Pranayama*, a technique where air is inhaled and exhaled with a slight friction in the throat. Well, *Hesychasm* teaches exactly this even though it devotes few words to it.

Then in the navel region, a *kriyaban* is taught how to gather energy. *Hesychasm* makes this action its primary procedure and articulates something that is not fully explained in *Kriya*, namely the final objective of guiding energy in this region. In reality, it is the most reliable way to reach the '*place of the heart*.' This is a reason to practice *Navi Kriya* passionately and not neglect it like some people do.

When the *kriyaban* reaches the '*place of the heart*', they use the powerful action known as *Thokar*. By this procedure, the door to *Sushumna* is opened. We discover that *Thokar* is the primary method of the *Sufi* discipline, which is also known as *Dhikr* or *Zikr*. Reading about what this practice represents to the *Sufis* inspires us and prompts us to engage in an intense practice.

Inner Alchemy offers a completely new perspective on the meaning of *Kriya Pranayama* by revealing how it can blend and balance the three powerful energies present in the body which are sexual, love, and spiritual. This practice gives us an explanation for what *Kriya's* theory does not say.

Finally, the *Radhasoami* movement provides us with all the wonder, charm, and mystery that we discover in the practice of *Kriya*, specifically the *Omkar* dimension, and pursues this objective with unwavering determination.

Progressing on our journey of *Kriya Yoga* isn't always easy. The reasons for difficulties can range from not having enough time to practice, practicing with little emotional devotion, or stopping practice without enjoying the phase in which the breath calms down.

It's probable that studying these four mystical paths will give us luminous intuitions on how to view our practices, which we're used to, with new eyes. The importance of this inspiration cannot be overstated.

Let's stop searching for inspiration and new ideas in the wrong places. Those who choose the path of *Kriya* are often acting naively. They aim to find a book that explains the techniques of *Kriya* in detail, with clear illustrations and useful diagrams, which will be a significant help to their efforts. They acquire whatever they come across on the market. Almost always, they are disappointed. It's unfortunate that many books are filled with boring rhetoric, endless repetitions, and an abundance of useless references to abstruse philosophical theories, making everything else useless except for a few interesting lines. Disappointment sets in when they realize that they haven't found what they were looking for due to the lack of useful information. The most effective reaction is to throw the book in the garbage and forget the unnecessary effort of buying it.

My recommendation is to select the path that inspires us the most and allow it to guide us until we discover what appears to be written specifically for us. We should endeavor to connect with a significant figure who has followed that tradition. It is important to keep what we remember from his words in our minds. The words and example provided will be crucial in reviving our passion for *Kriya Yoga* practice.

[I] HESYCHASM

Hesychasm is derived from the Greek word '*hesychia*', which signifies internal stillness, tranquility, and calm. This state is necessary for meditation to take place. This mystical path is based on the constant repetition of the *Jesus Prayer* ("*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me*"), which is the basis of the discipline. The beginning of this spiritual practice is by whispering the *Prayer* and then progresses to mental repetition. The *Church Fathers* who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries already used it.

The desert was home to hermits who sought inner peace and spiritual introspection by practicing contemplation and self-discipline. They were confident that obtaining knowledge of God was solely possible through purity of soul and *Prayer*, not through mere study or mental pleasures in the field of philosophy. Their ascetic method eventually became a concrete set of psycho-physical techniques, which is what constitutes the core of *Hesychasm*. The *quietist* theory was developed by *Simeon* (1025-1092) with such precision that he can be considered the father of this movement. The practice involved specific body positions and precise breathing patterns to aid in the perception of the *Uncreated Light of God*.

Practical teachings

First part: particular form of breathing and repetition of the Prayer

To begin with, it's suggested to perform several forward prostrations (bending from the waist area). Twelve prostrations should be enough. According to the explanation, these prostrations warm the body and boost the fervor of *Prayer*.

After that, a specific body position is taken. *Pseudo-Simeon* advises sitting in a quiet cell and being alone in a corner. The more precise instruction from *Gregorio of Sinai* is to sit on a seat that is nine inches in height. It seems that he wasn't contemplating a standard chair, but rather a low, backless banquet. In itself, this is an innovation. Such advice would have seemed far more unusual to a reader in the thirteenth or fourteenth century than it does to us. Standing was the usual position for Christian prayer in ancient times.

Pseudo-Simeon advises that you slow down your breathing rhythm and make it longer while remaining in this position.

His teachings are very precise: they suggest limiting the amount of air that passes through the nostrils and breathing in such a way that breathing becomes difficult. A noise is produced in the throat as the breath flows through the nostrils. It is explained that an expert guide is not

necessary to use this instruction correctly.

We are aware that this particular detail is the core instruction of *Kriya Pranayama*.

As soon as the breath reaches a steady and regular rhythm, *Prayer* is associated with the breath. In ancient times we do not find an indication as to exactly how the rhythm of the breathing and the words of the *Prayer* are to be coordinated. Such teachings remained vague – perhaps intentionally. In modern practice it is common to mentally say the first half of the *Prayer*, "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God*", as you breathe in, and the second half, "*have mercy on me*", as you breathe out. This is the procedure that is recommended in the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. To understand the teachings of *Hesychasm*, this text is crucial.

Proceed for a minimum of 15 minutes; after a couple of weeks it goes to 30 minutes. It is very useful to count the number of repetitions on the beads of a rosary.

Lastly, shift to purely mental repetition, allowing the breath to flow naturally. It should be noted that true discipline must be internal, not external. While physical techniques may enhance concentration, they cannot replace the inner alertness of the intellect.

The state of mind in which this *Prayer* is made determines its power. Every *Hesychast* must adhere to one recommendation: keep your attention focused in your heart. *Prayer* requires all efforts to be directed towards this outcome. This procedure eliminates distractions, clears the mind of images, and thus aids in achieving inner calm. It is recommended to turn to the Lord so that you receive His blessing: this is the 'pearl that is worthless and is buried in the field as a hidden treasure.'

Second part: discover the place of the heart

The instruction is to sit comfortably with the head bowed forward and the eyes focused on the abdomen. The navel region is the focus of both physical gaze and intellect. It's important not to look anywhere, but only focus on the navel.

A person attempts to enter it as if they were trying to open a door. Intelligence and intuition are utilized to locate the spiritual heart, where all the powers of the soul are situated. It is stated that what will be encountered may initially look like a kind of joyless darkness, but if one keeps practicing this steadily, they will gain unlimited happiness. When the heart's open space is visible, one can contemplate the '*Uncreated Light*'.

The heart will overflow with blissful love! This extraordinary experience will make you realize that everything else you've ever experienced was insignificant!

When the *Hesychast* texts speak of 'locating your spiritual heart', they imply that we should initially focus on the physical region of the heart. We can connect with our inner Self and uncover the true dimension of our personality in the Divine through this concentration. By allowing the intellect to 'come down from the head to the heart', one can achieve integration and recognize oneself as a unified whole created in the divine image.

Hesychasts state that the center between the eyebrows cannot be used for all phases of meditation. When the energy of thoughts flows to the throat, like when praying, it gains an evocative power that is recharged with emotional values. As a result, it is easy to get lost in mental associations. By bringing the center of awareness into the heart, the attention reaches complete cohesion. It is sustained by a higher intensity, and nothing that is not related to our concentration can disrupt it.

Lahiri Mahasaya's teachings and *Thokar*'s practice both lead to the same destination. *Hesychasm* instructs us to reach the heart space by starting from the navel region and exerting long and persistent effort to open the inner temple door. The door finally opens on either path and one rejoices in the fruit of their efforts.

Historical note

Had not their methods been labeled as superstitious and absurd, the monks of Athos could have quietly continued to contemplate the *Uncreated Light* (which they regarded as the highest goal in life).

Barlaam of Seminara, who served as abbot at a monastery in Constantinople, traveled to Mount Athos. He came into contact with the *Hesychasts* and heard about their practices. Barlaam, whose training was in Western Scholastic theology, became scandalized and began to fight them in both verbal and written forms. The objection was mainly because he did not accept the idea that their *Uncreated Light* was a part of the Divine essence. *Hesychasm*'s associated practice was deemed to be 'magic'.

He called *Hesychasts* 'omphalopsychoi', which means people with their souls in their navels due to the long time they spent concentrating on the umbilical region. Barlaam asserted that humans could never see any part of God. He suggested a more intellectual method of comprehending God.

S. Gregorio Palamas was entrusted with the defense of the *Hesychasts* practice. He stated that the *Divine Light*, which according to him was uncreated (meaning it had not appeared with the creation of the Universe but existed before), was knowable by man.

He distinguished between God's inaccessible essence and the energies or works of God that the devotee can experience divine life through. To summarize, the essence of God is unknowable, but His energies are accessible both now and in the future life. Through the experience of the *Uncreated Light*, the *Hesychast* receives the true spiritual knowledge of God.

Palamas asserted that *Hesychast* practices could be defended from a theological perspective. Practical aid could be achieved through their practices if used prudently and wisely.

By 1341, the dispute was resolved and Barlaam was sentenced to return to Calabria, where he later became a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, the *Hesychast* doctrine was established as the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. Today, Mount Athos is commonly referred to as the center of *Hesychasm* practice.

Similarities with Yoga

While there are evident similarities with *Kriya*, there are also differences. *Kriya*'s techniques for breathing are extremely detailed. *Kriya* extends inner exploration to regions below the heart. Moreover, there is not just a downward movement but also an upward movement that starts from the *Muladhara Chakra* up through the spine to the *Kutastha* center between the eyebrows. The *Hesychast* is always in the heart's place and will not return to ascend. According to Lahiri Mahasaya, the final ascent happens when the *Sushumna* door is opened.

[III] SUFI

Sufis have a wealth of knowledge to impart to us! Their favorite *Prayer* is '*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh.*' To his *Muslim* disciples, Lahiri Mahasaya gave them this *mantra*.⁵ This *mantra* is utilized by many *Sufis* to practice what they refer to as *Dhikr*. Both *Japa* and *Thokar* refer to the same process called *Dhikr*.

Practice of Dhikr without head movements

Many *Sufis* use *Dhikr* as an intimate form of *Prayer* during the stillness of their body, or while walking. The *Muslim* expresses their remembrance of God through *Prayer*, and this remembrance becomes pure adoration. When you open your heart to *Allah* and speak His praise, *Allah* gives you strength

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

and inner peace:

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

The seed of recollection is planted in the heart and nourished daily through *Dhikr* until the tree of *Dhikr* becomes deeply rooted and bears fruit.

According to the *Sufi*, *Dhikr* is meant to purify the heart and soul, allowing us to move towards the Divine light without being distracted by anything. *Dhikr* is of utmost importance.

The first step in *Dhikr* is to audibly say the *Prayer* (*Dhikr* of the tongue) until a state of great absorption renders it impossible to continue. Mental practice commences at this point. By putting forth effort and concentration, even the mental syllables pronounced in *Prayer* can be erased from the conscience, leaving the meaning behind. The mind becomes so relaxed that it can't think, whereas the deepest emotions are awakened. The Divine Remembrance drives the mind crazy, and the most intoxicating joy bursts forth.

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

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

The simplest way to practice turns out to be the best.

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

When the practice of Dhikr involves head movements

Let's examine how the chanting of '*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*' is accompanied by head movements.

Although we do not have the exact details of this procedure, it seems reasonable to sum up it in this way. The *Prayer* and head are elevated from the navel region or below it all the way to the brain.

This can occur with or without the use of the breath. As soon as the *Prayer* gets to the brain, it's shifted from one shoulder to the other, and then it's brought to the heart with a tap.

In some *Sufi* orders, if someone wants to guide *Prayer* into their heart, they must first keep their tongue pressed against the palate, lips and teeth firmly clenched, and hold their breath.

The prayer starts with the syllable '*Lâ*', which is inhaled from the navel to the brain. Once you have the letter '*Lâ*' in your head, it is important to hold your breath. The head bends to the right, and '*Ilaha*' is placed in the right shoulder (and in the upper right part of the chest under the right shoulder). With the head bent to the left, '*Illaal*' is positioned in the left shoulder (and in the upper left chest below the left shoulder). The '*lâh*' is firmly inserted into the heart while the head is tilted forward. Exhale. Then inhale, lift your chin and place again "*La*" in the head. The movements and the *mantra* are repeated many times. Deep intoxication is felt in the heart as the number of repetitions of the technique increases in intensity.

At the end of the chosen number of repetitions, the phrase '*Muhammad Rasool Allah*' is said by moving the head from the left to the right side. Finally it is said: "My God, Thou art my goal and satisfying Thee is my aim."

If you choose to follow the *Sufi* path and use *Kriya* techniques, there will be no difficulties. Without a doubt, you possess a strong self-taught spirit.

It's up to you to respect the repetition numbers given in *Kriya* schools or go beyond them in a completely different dimension. A *kriyaban* would find it unimaginable to practice a number of repetitions as a *Sufi* practitioner.

To practice this *Dhikr* effectively, it is recommended to adopt the correct attitude. Preparing for something tremendously powerful is not the point, it's about getting lost in the beauty of the prayer and *mantra*. This is what *Sufis* do!

An ardent sentiment of soul and sincerity is evident in *Sufi* literature. The celebration of the Creator of the universe shines with a strength and breadth that is unmatched. The *Sufis* express their fondness for the beauty that exists on this planet. They let you know how their intense form of *Prayer* transforms them from contemplating this beauty to directly experiencing the Divine.

Take into account the immense inspiration that Rumi's verses can provide:

I died as a mineral and became a plant; I died as plant and rose to animal;
I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by
dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blessed; but
even from angel-hood 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*)

Similarities between Hesychasm and Dhikr

The practice of *Dhikr* implies: [1] Physical positions (touching the chest with the chin.) [2] Breath control (connecting invocation with the movement of breathing.) [3] Movement of the head towards the center of the chest. This involves the descent of the *Prayer* from the lips down to the heart.

Muslim teachers and Orthodox teachers are in agreement that external techniques cannot automatically lead to union with God. The focus of both traditions is on paying attention to the inner heart and comprehending that encountering the One who is invoked is a pure gift on His behalf.

[III] INNER ALCHEMY (NEI DAN)

The practice of *Internal Alchemy*, which is a spiritual discipline, is the esoteric core of *Taoism*, a mystical tradition from ancient China. The first book I looked at for information was *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality*, written by Charles Luk & Lu Kuan. Reading was a powerful force that completely engrossed me. I thoroughly inspected the pages that had essential teachings.

Copying those pages, I glued them onto four sheets of paper that summarized the four phases of *Inner Alchemy* individually. It is obvious that studying *Inner Alchemy* is extremely profitable for a *kriyaban*.

Reading the description of the basic procedure (*Microcosmic Orbit*) of this ancient discipline made me realize how similar it is to *Kriya Pranayama*, but not exactly the same. The use of different metaphors to explain the mechanism of the *Microcosmic Orbit* (the inverted bagpipe, the flute without holes) brought back memories of something I had heard in the past. The analogies were surprising and were similar to some explanations about *Kriya Pranayama* that I had received from an excellent Indian teacher of *Kriya Yoga* many years ago.

The difference with *Kriya Pranayama* is that in the *Taoist* technique the energy descends down into the body touching the surface of the body that is connected with the *Chakras*. By applying force of concentration, it is possible to target the Adam's apple, central sternum region, navel, pubic region, and perineum. As practice develops, the distinction between the two procedures diminishes, as the results achieved on the body's energy are identical.

I was taken aback: perhaps *Kriya Yoga* was a form of *Taoist Internal Alchemy* taught in *India*, with explicit use of Indian techniques and procedures (like *Navi Kriya*) that were only Indian in appearance? *Kriya Yoga* seemed to be a discipline that could be explained using symbols from

two different cultures, as far as I could tell. Is it possible that this connection with *Internal Alchemy* is the reason why *Kriya Yoga* is so much more extensive and comprehensive than *Tantric Kundalini Yoga*?

I didn't find it odd to think that the mythical *Babaji* is one of the 'immortals' of the *Taoist* tradition.

[1] Microcosmic Orbit

The first stage is the basis of the whole internal alchemical process: it is about activating the *Microcosmic Orbit*.

Breathe freely. Raise your eyebrows and become aware of the inner light. Try now to intuitively perceive this light in the frontal part of each *Chakra*. Awareness descends from *Kutastha* via the tongue to the laryngeal prominence (the frontal component of the fifth *Chakra*).

For a short amount of time, the perception of the internal light occurs at that point. In the central region of the sternum, awareness descends and the perception of inner light happens.

The same thing occurs in the navel, then in the pubic region, and lastly in the perineum. After that, the concentration moves up behind the spine. In the second *Chakra*, the inner light is perceived, followed by the third *Chakra*, the fourth, the fifth and then on to the *Medulla*, the occipital region, and the *fontanel*, before ending in *Kutastha*. In *Kutastha*, attention stops for extended periods of time. Do this mentally for weeks, then use the breath.

As you take a breath, the *Control channel* (behind the spine) is where awareness and energy (*Qi*) are lifted and allowed to flow downwards when you exhale through the *Function channel* (in front of the body). The purpose of this action is 'to bring three to two, and two to one'. What is the meaning of this enigmatic phrase?

Three refers to the three energies: **Jing** = Sexual Energy, **Qi** = Love Energy and **Shen** = Spiritual Energy.

Sexual energy is not just what the name implies, but it is the agent that makes us enjoy sensory perceptions and gives us the strength and determination to fight the battle of life. It is necessary for us to acquire all the necessary things for our life. It is unfortunate that we also struggle to obtain things that are not essential to our lives, but this is another issue.

The energy of love is a profound sentiment towards another individual, living beings, and life in general, and it is also the delight that we feel when we witness artistic expression. It is the fuel of actions that are just and impartial and come from noble intuitions and ethical laws.

The spiritual energy is present during the most intense moments of aesthetic contemplation, where profound prophetic visions can manifest.

It has been explained that these three energies originate from a single reality, that their division took place during our birth and was strengthened through education and social interactions.

Well, the *Microcosmic Orbit* recreates the original harmony. Through this practice, sexual thoughts, which seem to have strengthened, gradually transform into thoughts of love. The energy of love is transformed into strength and determination to resist any obstacle, and it is then transferred to the brain where it is combined with the energy of the Spirit. Only in this way can any fracture in our personality be eliminated: our life full of contradictions begins to flow naturally and unimpeded towards the Spiritual dimension. We are aware that the *Microcosmic Orbit* involves a continuous healing process on the entire personality.

I trust that you grasp the fact that *Kriya Pranayama* is akin to the *Microcosmic Orbit* in that it recreates the original harmony and heals us from the fractures in our personality. Let us learn how to practice *Kriya Pranayama* with heightened awareness and profundity!

In *Kundalini Yoga*, the main goal is to experience divine ecstasy, while in *Taoist Internal Alchemy*, we learn how to create a deep healing process in our being.

Many religious paths teach to maintain, and indeed cultivate as a virtue, the division between matter and spirit, and sexuality is repressed as impure. It is well-known that this is the primary reason for the exhaustion of conflicts in individuals who tend to be spiritual.⁶

If we view *Kriya Yoga* solely as a 'ascent' path, it would be incomplete and should have been balanced with a descending movement. Actually, *Kriya* involves continuous descending moments (during exhalation) until one reaches a calm state of balance and harmony.

No tradition has more respect for the mystery of human nature than the *Taoist Internal Alchemy*. If someone wants to follow the spiritual path, they

⁶ Some *kriyabans* develop sexual thoughts, sometimes they reach sexual arousal during the initial deep breaths of *Kriya Pranayama*. It is comforting to be reassured that this is a normal phenomenon. Those who practice *Kechari Mudra*, either true or a simplified form of it, and concentrate, during exhalation, on the flow of *Prana* will immediately experience how sexual thoughts disappear and become pure love. It is very helpful to visualize that this flow descends from the top of the head, passing through the tip of the tongue into the throat and body like a blissful, healing rain that brings life back to each cell. This great energy of love is transformed into pure aspiration for the spiritual goal.

must listen to the practical wisdom that this path embodies. By doing so, a wide range of problems could be avoided. Only common sense, love for natural laws, and the intuition that comes from meditation promote the true inner search that leads to Self-realization. It is important to consider the heavy conditioning we receive from our education, examine its possible limitations and dangers, and take the courageous responsibility of correcting them.

[2] Guiding the energy in the lower Dantian

The Spiritual energy that is stored in the head due to the *Microcosmic Orbit* is transported to the *Dantian*. We are aware that *Dantian* (also known as "*Lower Dantian*") is the size of a ball that has a diameter of approximately two-and-a-half inches. To locate its position one must concentrate on the navel, coming approximately one and a half inches back and below for the same extent.

The energy is guided into the *Dantian* by a deep inhalation. Here, the breath is held with *Jalandhara Bandha* and *Mula Bandha*. A quiet exhalation follows this action. The act of visualization is repeated numerous times, allowing the energy in the *Dantian* to be compressed to the size of a pearl. Inner heat increases.

Kriyabans believe that combining *Prana* and *Apana* through *Kriya Pranayama* results in the *Samana* current. The expressions of *Internal Alchemy* inspire us greatly. For example: "Return to the center"; "The union of heaven and earth"; "The birth of the golden flower"; "The Creation of the Resplendent Gem"; "The creation of the elixir of immortality. "

It's important to realize that discovering stability in this incredibly deep *Dantian* region leads to reconnecting with the spiritual dimension.

[3] Push the energy towards the Middle Dantian and the Upper Dantian

It's difficult to comprehend the prescribed procedures at this point. The use of many evocative terms and metaphors in related literature makes it difficult to gain a clear practical understanding because the suggestions are embellished in an abnormal way.

It's reasonable to assume that using exhalation is the best option. After utilizing *Jalandhara Bandha* and *Mula Bandha* to hold the breath for one last time, a quiet exhalation will cause the energy in the abdomen to spontaneously move to the heart region.

This energy radiates light into the '*space of the heart*' (the *Middle Dantian*). This presides over the manifestation of '*true serenity*', which reveals the '*fundamental nature*' of the practitioner.

As you continue to contemplate this light, the energy moves up along the central axis of the body in front of the spine (*Thrusting Channel*.) It reaches the center between the eyebrows (*Upper Dantian*) from where the *Macrocosmic Orbit* will then be set in motion.

[4] Macrocosmic Orbit

When energy is increased in the *Thrusting Channel* and reaches the *Upper Dantian* (*Kutastha*), a spontaneous phenomenon of energy circulation in the body (*Macrocosmic Orbit*) is set in motion, which has enormous implications.

The elixir of immortality is created when sexual, love, and spirit energies are harmoniously mixed. It flows into the body and provides nourishment to each cell. This occurs in a state called '*prenatal breathing*' which is a movement of internal energy that gives perceptions similar to those obtained with the *Microcosmic Orbit* but is now experienced in the breathless state (*Kevala Kumbhaka*). The spiritual path is complete when the Divine is infused into our body through this subtle experience. The spiritual journey is not finished with a journey into the rarefied dimensions of Spirit. The *Macrocosmic Orbit* reveals scenes of perfect beauty that are beyond one's imagination.

As time goes by, the downward movement turns into an unending pressure on all the cells of the body. This event unexpectedly expands the boundaries of awareness. To experience this means that you have reached the final stage of the spiritual journey.

This is a very unusual phenomenon of energy circulation in the body. The breath is absent, but the body is charged with static *Prana*. The obstruction at the spine's base has been completely removed. The circulation of energy is perceived as an internal breath.

An individual spontaneously experiences a state of perfect peace and well-being and perceives a significant infusion of energy that flows like a golden liquid through the body, in all its cells. In other words, the breath is completely oriented inwards.

[IV] RADHASOAMI

Radhasoami, a religious movement, believes in the Divine as a vibration, sound, or word instead of a person, force, or intelligence. There are several names for this sound, including *Shabda*. To connect with this reality, a straightforward method is provided. That is, focus on what you can perceive in your body, such as internal light and sound that you actually experience during meditation. Receiving this simple method makes a devotee an initiate. Many other details to be respected, such as a vegetarian

diet, have absolutely nothing to do with it: they are inventions of some teacher.

In the 19th century, the *Radhasoami* spiritual organization, which is also known as *Sant Mat* (Path of the Saints) was established in India. It is regarded as a descendant of *Sikhism*. In reality, this tradition is much older and is rooted in the teachings of *Kabir* and *Guru Nanak*.

Around the thirteenth century, there was a group of teachers who became well-known in the northern part of the Indian sub-continent. In modern times, *Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh's* name was the first to be reported, as he established the *Radhasoami* movement in January 1861. The founder's death occurred in 1878 in *Agra*, India. After his death, there was a succession crisis because he didn't appoint a successor.

Many similarities exist between the *Radhasoami* movement and the *Kriya* path. It is a fact that some *Kriya* teachers state that the *Kriya* path is a process of refinement that progresses in stages of tuning with the *Omkar* vibration which is nothing but the *Shabda*. According to this viewpoint this vibration is the ultimate objective of *Kriya*, the only essence that permeates all its phases. Both the *Kriya Yoga* and *Radhasoami* paths aim to achieve the same goal.

Practical teachings: how to get started

Meditation occurs in the early morning (before breakfast) and before bedtime. The beginning of meditation is by relaxing the body and making it quiet. Sitting with your spine straight and in a comfortable position is possible whether you're sitting in a chair or cross-legged. It's crucial to gradually develop the ability to sit comfortably and without any physical tension.

The teacher imparts a *mantra* to the disciple, which is repeated to ensure the mind relaxes completely. Reciting the *mantra* internally in *Kutastha* aids in elevating the consciousness of the Ego to higher levels. This is the key that assists in transcending thought (time and space) and opening the door to the inner essence. It is encouraged for disciples to use the five names of God: *Jot Nirinjan, Ongkar, Rarankar, Sohang, Sat Nam*.

We quietly sit with our eyes closed, mentally repeating the *mantra* and gazing into the central portion of the darkness that stands before us. If you are able to perceive the inner light, the focus is on it. Breath is a natural and free-flowing process. The process automatically redirects the spiritual currents, which are usually dispersed and dissipated throughout the body, toward the spiritual center. It is stated that the seat of the Spirit is situated in the region between the eyebrows. After closing their eyes, the disciple must concentrate on it.

The exercise of *Talabya Kriya* is not present in *Radhasoami*, but only the following instruction: 'Turn your tongue back to touch the roof of your palate. Then touch the *uvula* with your tongue and experience *Amrita* the divine nectar that flows continuously through the body. Move forward and enter the nasal cavity.' It is explained that only after a long period of practice, nectar can be tasted. It is regarded as the 'living water' and 'bread of life' that Jesus mentioned.

Listening to inner sounds

A devotee must learn to withdraw within to begin their upward journey. The procedure involves concentrating on the primordial vibration that sustains the Universe, the "Music of the Spheres".

In order to hear the "divine sound", novices are instructed to close their ears with their thumbs to avoid external sounds. The practice of this technique involves using an arm support.

The *Radhasoami* teaching is simpler than the various spiritual teachings described in ancient scriptures, as it only necessitates a quiet, contemplative, and inner listening. No other system can so easily lead to the higher regions of mystical experience. Spiritual liberation can only be achieved through the *Omkar* experience. No one can ever escape the web of *Karma* and reincarnation, or ever become free and happy without real participation in the current of life that is heard internally.

The inner sounds can be heard - the ones that were described in the *Kriya* literature. Inner sounds are perceived first from the right side of the head and then from the top of the head. At a certain point, the devotee is enchanted by being drawn up with increasing power. The sound becomes akin to a bell. Complete absorption in it is achieved when one listens to it with rapt attention and deep delight. This sound would be something one would never want to give up listening to.

Increasing the Omkar experience by utilizing the breath

Considering the breath as not only a flow of air but also as a manifestation of the cosmic vibration *Om* can provide significant assistance. It's vital to feel the *Prana* coming in with each breath, which is then absorbed during the next pause and injected into the body during exhalation. By reiterating this action with awareness, one can attain a state of breathless.

Let's discuss a highly efficient method now. Deeply inhale and exhale with awareness of your breathing. Before all the air has been exhaled, inhale again and repeat the exhalation, never letting all the air out. In the right and left lobes of the brain, you can perceive two energy currents. A current that is connected to inhalation rises to the right, while a current that is

connected to exhalation falls to the left.

Through every breath, the energy needed for the energy path increases, eventually becoming a perfectly circular path. From behind, it is counterclockwise and encompasses the central part of the brain. It gathers around *Ajna*, the sixth *Chakra*, which has its main seat in the center of the brain and two secondary seats in *Kutastha* and *Medulla*. Our focus is on stimulating the main seat. As time goes by, the perception of *Ajna*'s seat becomes more clear and intense.

The breath's sound is produced as '*So Ham*': '*So*' during the inhalation and '*Ham*' during the exhalation. The *Divine Word* is the sound that is created by breathing.

By practicing this awareness for a prolonged period and continuously boosting the two energy currents around *Ajna*'s seat, you will be able to hear astral sounds in the inner part of each ear. In the right ear, you will hear the inner sounds and then in the left ear.

If you keep up with this breathing for a long time, you'll hear a buzzing sound three centimeters above your right ear. Above the left ear will be heard as well. To hear both sounds simultaneously will take approximately five minutes.

When there is a balance between energy, a circular force field is formed. At the center of the brain, the two sound vibrations will come together and produce a slightly different sound. Upon completion of this procedure, the spiritual eye is revealed.

When there is no breath, the movement will be led by the power of concentration. The center of one's head is seen to be filled with a white spiritual light. Get lost within it. You can enter *Samadhi* by listening to a deep sound that resembles that of a bell. This is a culmination of this specific method.

The Chakras

According to the *Radhasoami* movement, there are six *Chakras* in the physical body and six in the gray matter of the brain, as well as six in the white matter. The 6 spinal *Chakras* are materialistic, so it is not recommended to stimulate them (*Bija mantras* are not used to activate them like in *Kundalini Yoga*), but only astrally localized. It may seem strange, but meditating on the *Chakras* is not the correct method to achieve '*Mukti*' (liberation.) Instead, by astrally locating them, we acquire the ability to leave the body at will - a practice sometimes referred to as 'dying while living.'

The technique consists of assuming the *Kechari Mudra* and focusing the inner gaze on *Kutastha*, while part of the attention identifies the seat of a *Chakra* until its particular luminous vibration begins to appear. When this

occurs, we don't concentrate on the *Chakra* itself, but rather on the location of the subsequent *Chakra* and so forth. To put it differently, the pause associated with a *Chakra* is just long enough to allow for a subtle perception of it.

By moving *Prana* in a circle in the brain, the location of the other 12 *Chakras* can be gradually revealed. The use of a subtle breath is only necessary at the beginning of this procedure, then it is replaced by pure willpower. This is, in other words, *Swami Hariharananda's Third Kriya* technique (see Chapter 14.)

After completing a large number of these rounds, the soul has sufficient strength to penetrate the eighteenth "*Portal*". This is the highest *Chakra*, which is located in the white part of the brain. Through this *Portal*, one can access the true and indestructible ocean of the Spirit. The ultimate objective of meditation practices is to attain this.

Kabir and Guru Nanak inspired the Radhasoami movement

The literature on *Kabir* (1398 Benares - 1448/1494 Maghar) and *Guru Nanak* (1469 Nankana Sahib - 1539 Kartarpur) is of great inspiration. Their teachings are in perfect alignment. *Radhasoami's* teaching is based on them.

I want to dwell on these two highly respected and much loved Masters because I have rarely met two individuals who have similarly doubted the worthiness of relying on the study of sacred scriptures and the cults and ceremonies of a particular religion to direct one's spiritual journey. I can state that their thinking was utterly pure and uncontaminated.

Kabir, an illiterate weaver and *Muslim* by birth, was a remarkable mystic. His poems and sayings are conveyed in a language that is particularly effective and will leave a lasting mark on the reader.

In the last century, the great mystical poet of Calcutta, *Rabindranath Tagore*, regained the importance of his teachings and the power of his poetry, and created a stunning English translation of his songs.

Kabir was constantly confident that he could overcome the obstacles that divide the two major religions of *Islam* and *Hinduism*.

It is not appropriate to portray him as a bridge between their beliefs. He was equally harsh towards both, frequently seeing them as similar in their own misguided ways. He made it a point to declare his independence from both. He was unable to tolerate the mindless, repetitive, and proud habit of claiming scriptures. He ferociously attacked the flaws of these religions and sought to foster similar independence and bravery in those who claimed to follow him.

The holy scriptures did not seem to affect his teachings, and he did not attend religious services. He recommended that you avoid giving up life to become a hermit and not adopting an extreme approach to spiritual discipline, which can weaken your body and bring about pride. He questioned the necessity of having any holy book or religion. *Kabir* recommended that people look within and recognize that all human beings are manifestations of God's living forms. *Kabir* suggested that if you want to know the truth, you should drop the 'I' or ego. It is necessary to recognize God internally in one's soul, as a fire that, with constant care, can burn away all resistances, dogmas, and ignorance. He said: 'One day, my consciousness flew to heaven and entered it like a bird. Upon my arrival, I noticed that God was not present. In fact, I realized that He was present in the hearts of the saints.'

The concept of reincarnation and the law of *Karma* was imparted to *Kabir* from *Hinduism*, while *Islam* gave him absolute monotheism and the ability to fight caste and all forms of idolatry. He discovered the complete meaning of the *yogic* experience. He affirms that our body contains a garden of flowers called *Chakras* and encourages us to meditate on the infinite beauty through the *Thousand-petal Lotus*.

According to some scholars, *Kabir's* ideas had a significant impact on *Guru Nanak*, who founded *Sikhism* in the 15th century. *Sikh* scholars argue that there are discrepancies between *Kabir's* views and practices. We are aware that *Guru Nanak* was raised as a Hindu and eventually joined the *Sant Mat* tradition in North India, which is the same movement *Kabir* is associated with.

The teachings of *Kabir* were given by beloved *Guru Nanak*. He advocated for inner detachment by living a householder's life, not asceticism. Wearing clothes, carrying a walking stick, or visiting burial places are not part of asceticism. Asceticism is not simply about words; it's about being pure in the face of impurities! His teaching is not about adherence to scriptures, but about altering the nature of the human mind. At any time, anyone can attain direct experience and spiritual perfection. All human beings possess direct access to God without the use of rituals or priests.

Liberation from worldly slavery was traditionally the goal, which led to the landlord's life being viewed as a hindrance and obstacle. *Guru Nanak's* teaching made the world the arena for spiritual endeavor. The beauty of creation was something he was enchanted by and viewed the natural landscape as the most beautiful setting for worshipping the Divine. He made it a point to completely free his disciples from all ritual practices,

traditional ways of worship, and the priestly class.

The teaching he gave necessitated a completely different approach. Even though we cannot fully comprehend the Divine, he defined God as not entirely unknowable. God must be seen through the inner eye and sought in the heart. He emphasized the importance of meditation in revealing God. His teachings hint at the possibility of hearing an ineffable inner melody (*Omkar*) and tasting the nectar (*Amrit*).

CHAPTER 13

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE

In the first part of this chapter, we discuss a different approach to using Kriya Yoga techniques. In the second part, I touch on the controversial issue of the premature awakening of Kundalini. I propose some basic techniques taught in Hatha Yoga that may be useful, even 'providential', for those who believe they are experiencing this issue.

The overall title of the chapters 10 to 13 of this third part of the book is *How to Avoid Failure on the Spiritual Path*. The problem has always struck me because I have observed several serious and motivated individuals who have left *Kriya* after a few years of practice.

I advised *Japa* to avoid this situation, which is a tangible method to succeed in *Pranayama*, the breathless state. If you have chosen to stop practicing *Kriya* for any reason, please take a moment to consider what I have to offer in this chapter.

My intention is to express the significance of practicing an '*Incremental Routine*' for any *Kriya* technique. An experience like this can lead one to a new vision of the *Kriya* path.

An '*Incremental Routine*' involves using just one technique and increasing the number of repetitions until you reach a large number that has been handed down to us by the tradition. Each step is only practiced once a week. After completing this process, you can take a break to evaluate another technique and follow the same process for it.

In chapter 9, we have already encountered an incremental routine related to the practice of *Tribhangamurari Thokar*. As you have read, this method requires a substantial amount of preparation. There are few people who are willing to go through it. What I want to do here is offer you something simpler.

An '*Incremental Routine*' is not recommended for anyone starting *Kriya* practice. The beginner is instructed to practice the same set of techniques every day, without altering the order of practice and the number of repetitions.

What are the alternatives if they discover that their efforts have been totally ineffective and their initial enthusiasm has vanished after several months of implementing the same routine?

In theory, it is recommended to persevere in practicing *Kriya* even when faced with frustration. What can I say to those *kriyabans* who are experiencing a stalemate that seems impossible to progress? It's a nightmare for them to practice *Kriya* daily for the rest of their lives, a cage

they want to escape from. This is easy to understand.

Dogmatic *kriyabans* would say that they are too focused on the results. Even if it appears that *Kriya* is not working, they should hold on to their loyalty and keep proceeding without any hindrance, just as they have done to this point. You may have been informed of the tale of the *kriyaban* who was always devoted to his *Guru* and practice. A few hours before his death, the disciple had his first spiritual encounter.

I propose that you could utilize your time in a different way. I'll add a parenthesis: consider what occurs in athletics. *Kriya* and athletics share some similarities. Both avoid using brute force and focus on achieving specific goals by channeling their strength diligently. To gain knowledge from experience, both want to evaluate their own performance.

What happens in athletics is a good example that I ask you to consider. To achieve noteworthy goals, athletes need to increase the intensity and quality of their practice in some way. They can only achieve otherwise unattainable performance through very intense sessions in which they push their physical and mental resistance to the maximum. It is necessary to rest for several days after each session to ensure complete recovery. This law cannot be avoided by anyone.

I repeat: it's necessary to rest, forget, and stop thinking about it. Sadly, many *kriyabans* find their daily commitment to be an obsession (a curse). It's no surprise that they eventually send everything to hell and forget about it!

I would appreciate it if you could take a look at the two examples of incremental routine I am going to comment on.

[I] An incremental routine of a discipline that converges energy in the abdominal region

I chose to practice *Navi Kriya* for a total of $4 \times 2 = 8$ repetitions. In the following steps, I tried the following increments 4×3 , 4×4 ... These steps were something I did once a week. On other days, I would abandon myself to the soothing sensation of a long and quiet *Japa*.

Regrettably, I discovered that the practice of *Navi Kriya* was both boring and uninspiring. I was given a recommendation by a friend of a beautiful technique that also aims to bring energy together in the abdominal region, but in a way that I found much more stunning.

A method for approaching the Dantian in four distinct directions

This procedure is a tradition that dates back to ancient China. The *Dantian* is the size of a ball with a diameter of around eight centimeters. To locate its position, you need to focus on the navel and reach about four

centimeters further back and lower for the same extension.

The act of entering the *Dantian* with awareness has a very significant value. In fact, it activates the *Samana* current and creates an immediate state of meditation where rational thought tends to disappear and pure existence awareness arises.

How to practice

Inhale deeply and experience the rising energy sensation. Move your head slightly forward. Perform a prolonged exhalation to observe the energy that descends from the forehead along a path outside the body, moves towards the navel, crosses it, and reaches the *Dantian*. As you exhale, *Om* is mentally chanted 10 to 15 times quickly, with concentration, to participate in the descent of energy along the way.

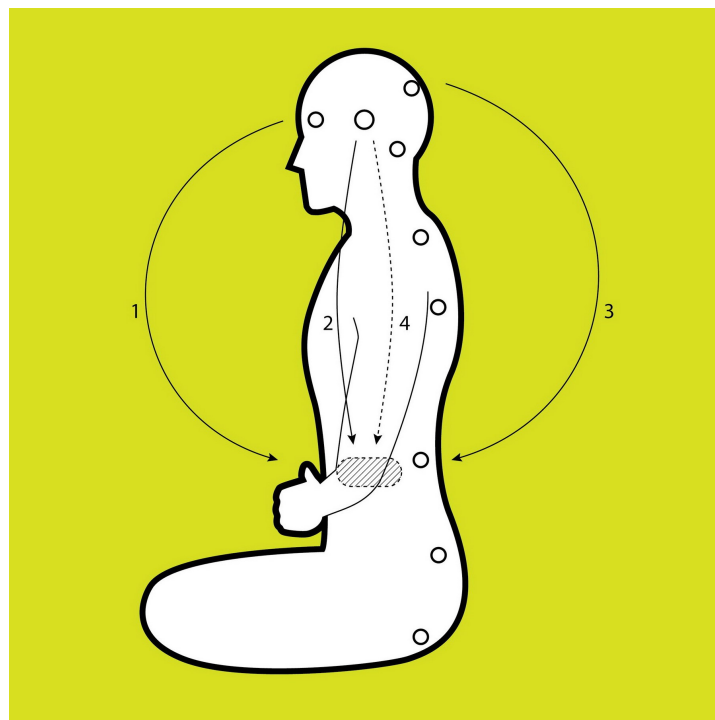


Fig.14 The energy enters the *Dantian* along four directions

After a short stop in the *Dantian*, a short inhalation raises the energy in the head once more. At the same time, the chin is raised. Everything now repeats itself, but the energy descends on a different path. The head bends, not forward, but on the left shoulder. The face is not turned; you always look forward. A long exhalation (accompanied by the chanting of *Om, Om, Om...*) accompanies the downward movement of the energy that descends from the left side of the brain, moves along a path outside the body to its left – as if shoulder and arm are not present. The energy descends towards the *Dantian* by passing through the left side of the belt.

A short inhalation after a brief stop in the *Dantian* raises the energy in the head once more. At the same time, the chin rises. The head is now

tilted back. Along with the *Om, Om, Om....* chant, a long exhalation is required to accompany the downward movement of energy that originates from the occipital area and moves (outside the body) down towards the belt where it bends, passes through the third *Chakra Manipura*, and moves towards the *Dantian*. Following a brief pause in the *Dantian*, the same procedure is repeated on the *right* side.

This last exhalation closes the small cycle consisting of four exhalations accompanied by four descents of energy towards the belt and, crossing it, towards the *Dantian* region. In this cycle, you have come up with a vision of four spirals that shrink from the outside and enter the *Dantian*. The mini cycle is repeated 9 times. In summary, there are a total of $4 \times 9 = 36$ energy descents. What we have described can last from 8 to 10 minutes and is equivalent to 4 repetitions of the basic form of *Navi Kriya*.

You can start with 36 descents in the *Dantian*, then multiply that by 2, resulting in 72 descents. The next steps will be 36×3 , $36 \times 4 \dots 36 \times 19$, 36×20 . I opted for this method and will forever be grateful for its incredible power.

As you practice energy descents over 36×4 , the head movements become less pronounced and are barely noticeable. To put it differently, the chin's movement is limited to just a few millimeters forward, backward, and sideways. As the practice becomes internalized, this occurs spontaneously.

The result of a large number of repetitions of this procedure on your breathing is a remarkable phenomenon! This technique actually enhances the quality of your breath.

Let's try to describe this experience: while you formulate the will to exhale, you will feel as if your lungs are unable to move. It seems like they were impeded, as if there was opposition to moving and contracting.

A few moments later, you will become aware of a subtle substance beginning to enter the body. You will experience a new way of exhaling, which resembles a mental act and a pressure that spreads throughout your body. A particular sense of well-being, harmony, and freedom will be achieved with this. You will have the impression that you can remain in this state for an eternity. Despite logic suggesting that the breath still comes out of the nose, you might swear otherwise.

This technique has the ability to untangle things that, from an emotional and sentimental point of view, are an unsolvable mystery for you. It feels like a much stronger and determined personality has emerged from your depths. Gradual development is recommended for this technique. If you think you're smart and do more repetitions one after the other, realize that it's like doing nothing because the inner channels are closed. It's not possible to eliminate inner obstacles in just one day; your inner strength is

not powerful enough to overcome them. Initially, this inner power is weak and needs to be improved every week. Moreover, this process needs to be integrated with a regular active lifestyle.

Taking a long walk in the evening is necessary if you always practice in your room. Everything will be carried out in a manner that is harmonious and you will definitely experience the blessing of an inner silence that is filled with bliss.

It's within your power to make your practice day as enjoyable as you can. I suggest that you break up the lengthy sessions into two parts; obviously, everything should be finished in one day. It's possible to close each part by lying on a mat in *Savasana*, also known as the corpse pose, for a few minutes. It is possible to commence a portion of the practice in the morning, but make sure to take your time and pay attention to every detail. After a light meal and short nap in the afternoon, seek out a beautiful location where you can sit and contemplate nature. After being fully absorbed in the practice and feeling relaxed, finish the remaining repetitions. You'll observe how the effects increase as the day approaches twilight.

It's important to remember that this gradual routine could lead to tension with those around you.

In order to understand the meaning of this work, we must first understand what it means to cut the navel knot. According to explanation, cutting the umbilical cord at birth splits a single reality into two parts: the spiritual and the material. The higher *Chakras* and the head are where the spiritual part, which reveals itself as joy and calm, is situated; while the material part is situated in the lower *Chakras*. The division of "spirit" and "matter" within every person is always a source of conflict. The healing of this fracture is achieved through this *Incremental Routine*. Although healing is a good thing, others may interpret what happens outside as negative.

Your temperament may display harshness at times, and that's the problem. Your words may be perceived as offensive and cutting by others, but in your mind, they are an expression of sincerity. With a strong intuition, you could verbally harm your friends and only hours later, alone and unattached, see how insensitive those words were.

Even if others judge you, remember that your personality is meant to gather around a central point and heal all inner conflicts. An interior order is inevitably established in practical life, with each action appearing to be surrounded by a halo of calm and proceeding directly towards the goal. This is akin to the tone *Achab* takes in *Herman Melville's Moby Dick*:

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!

I hope that you do not abandon this practice because you think it is not appropriate for you. This practice has a positive effect on mental clarity. By synergizing thoughts and emotions more efficiently, a more calibrated, precise, and clear logical process will emerge. During those moments in life when important decisions must be made, intuition will flow freely and aid in coping.

This technique can assist you in confronting significant and decisive challenges that life throws at you. For instance, you may feel the need to strive for something that appears like a utopia, a notion that may seem impossible according to common reasoning. Well, the practice described will provide you with the energy potential needed to achieve this objective.

[III] Incremental routine of Kriya Pranayama

Let's begin with a straightforward question: 'Why do I need to practice the incremental routine of *Navi Kriya* before that of *Kriya Pranayama*?' The reason for this is that *Navi Kriya* establishes a strong foundation that enables individuals to tackle the demanding practice of the incremental *Kriya Pranayama Routine*.

36x1, 36x2, 36x3,... 36x 20 *Kriya* breaths is the best plan. A lighter but still valid plan is: 24x1, 24x2, 24x3,... 24x 24.

In chapter 6, we presented various stages of *Kriya Pranayama*. Ensure that all of them are part of your routine. Begin with the simpler details and then gradually introduce the others. The simpler details are always reviewed when the practice is split into two or three parts, like between morning and afternoon.

Go ahead carefully. Take into account the breathing rhythm that is appropriate for your constitution. If you come to the realization that your breath is actually quite short, don't worry about it! But it is necessary to maintain a minimal amount of breath during each phase of the process until you've completed the number you chose to practice on that day. To put it differently, the process should never become purely mental.

Note 1

During this sensitive time, it's possible to practice *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* both during the week and on the day of the Incremental Routine practice. A dramatic transformation will take place through it - different patterns of energy imbalance will disappear. This balancing action is essential for achieving an attentive yet calm readiness, which is the foundation of the meditative state of *Kriya*. After practicing *Nadi Sodhana* for a long time without any other techniques, a meditative state

can naturally occur.

Note 2

Don't be surprised if this routine turns into an extraordinary trip into memory at certain points. By focusing one's attention on the *Chakras*, we can achieve a specific effect: the inner screen of our consciousness begins to display numerous images. It's true that this is a physiological fact, and there's a good chance that those who claim to be exempt may not have the clarity to observe it.

The *Chakras* are like caskets that contain the memories of a lifetime, giving birth to the full splendor of lost reminiscences. The essence of past events, the beauty contained in them and never fully appreciated, is relived in the quiet pleasure of contemplation, while the heart sometimes is pervaded with a restrained cry. It is a revelation: the light of the Spirit seems to shine in what seem trivial moments of our lives.

Other incremental routines

There are ways to create multiple incremental routines. Specific effects will be experienced in the day after practicing each technique intensively. There are effects that can be cause for worry. Being familiar with the basic laws of the human psyche is essential for a *kriyaban*.

It's not necessary to have an expert next to you if you want to practice an incremental routine of any technique. When planning how many repetitions to do, keep in mind the following criterion: the first step should take 15-20 minutes, and then increase the number of repetitions to about six hours in the following weeks. If you wish to proceed more cautiously and complete the task within a maximum of four hours, that's acceptable.

Through the incremental routines, you will be able to identify any errors in your understanding and figure out how to fix them. With an incremental routine, you can break the childish habit of always relying on others for advice and clarification. Important clues will come your way during practice, particularly when you have gone through different stages of the incremental process. You will eliminate certain details of the technique that may seem heavy, unbearable, or unnatural. Others will disappear on their own without you even noticing; instead, those that seemed non-essential to you will be amplified and deepened with good effects that you could never have imagined. In the days that follow your long practice sessions, you will intuitively understand the essence of the chosen technique and gain a better grasp of it. You may even significantly change your view on why it is important to practice *Kriya Yoga*.