

**Kriya Yoga:
Synthesis of a Personal Experience**

Ennio Nimis

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Illustrations by Lorenzo Pentassuglia

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PREFACE

Pure awareness is the most fundamental essence of every human being: a spark of life that has chosen a body to express itself on this earthly reality.

By utilizing the five senses, we learn how to navigate the world, comprehend it, and connect with others. Our movements are driven by our instincts, led by the most genuine thoughts and emotions – those that manifest in our hearts and speak to us in silence.

The tool of thought is invaluable: it helps us comprehend and mold the experience of living. But trying to define the spiritual dimension with our minds is futile because it is elusive. In those moments, we're not truly thinking – we're dreaming, fantasizing, or simply getting closer to a space beyond thought itself.

Scholars who study spirituality from a historical or philosophical perspective are doing significant work because they uncover the traces of the divine in human history. Yet, the Spirit's direct experience cannot be obtained through studying, but rather through an inner journey that is cultivated with silence, discipline, and conscious presence.

This book is focused on *Kriya Yoga* and is designed to assist those who want to comprehend it and incorporate it into their daily lives. *Kriya Yoga* is not just a technique; it is a way of transformation that gradually leads to the perception of spiritual reality – a reality that must be experienced in the heart, in the profound stillness of Awareness, rather than in the mind.

It's not necessary to follow a Master or belong to an organization to start this journey. It's enough to set aside a small space in our home for meditation, a sanctuary where we can discover the most authentic essence of ourselves. Just taking the first step with simplicity and sincerity is enough.

The beginning of my journey was in a state of silence and solitude. Through time, it became more enriched by experiences, trials, and ever-deeper understandings, eventually leading me back to where it all began – in the purity of the start is where Awareness recognizes itself as the only solid and eternal reality that our hope is built upon.

PART I: "MY SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINAL KRIYA"

CHAPTER 1

DECISION TO START PRACTING PRANAYAMA

I provide an explanation of why and how I decided to practice Pranayama which is a Yoga technique. The chapter continues with the description of the initial results of this practice and ends with an important spiritual experience. In chapter 3, I will discuss the effects of Pranayama in more detail, including the possibility of obtaining the breathlessness state, which is considered the most advanced form of Pranayama.

My interest in classical *Yoga* started when I bought an introductory book about it at the age of 15. I don't remember the name of the first book, but it was followed by B.K.S. Iyengar's writings, then by another Indian master's autobiography, which is where I discovered the term *Kriya Yoga*. But let's proceed in order...

In my elementary school years, unlike my classmates, I acquired a handful of esoteric books from my parents' friends. Occultism was the topic of the first book I read from beginning to end.

Despite the fact that it was not suitable for my age, I was still pleased to be able to read and comprehend it. I ignored any advice to devote myself to more formative readings. I wasted a significant amount of time on useless books and a large collection of specialized esoteric journals that had intriguing titles. Their primary objective was to elicit excitement from the audience, making it impossible to differentiate between fiction and reality.

I came into contact with the fundamental ideas of Western esoteric thought, making short trips into phenomena like hypnosis and medium-ship. I kept up with these readings until I was 11. In the end, I felt like I had embarked on a journey through a chaotic world, convinced that many very valuable secrets were hiding in other books that I had temporarily not been able to reach.

THE ATTRACTION TO YOGA

In an esoteric book catalog that was found in my father's letters, I discovered the term '*Yoga*' for the first time. Observing the person sitting in the 'lotus position' on the cover, I was enthusiastic and inexplicably enthralled. I attempted to persuade my father to acquire that book, but failed miserably.

My interest in *Yoga* was renewed at the age of fifteen while I was in high school when a friend told me he had a book that explained various *Pranayama* techniques. I was captivated by his words when he told me that these exercises would lead to an inner transformation.

What were the internal changes he was talking about? It's probable that my friend wasn't discussing specific relaxation practices. He could have suggested significant experiences that had a lasting impact on a person's nature.

As soon as possible, I needed to practice *Pranayama*. But my friend hesitated to lend me the book. When I got to the train station, I saw a simple *Hatha Yoga* manual on the newsstand. Without any hesitation, I bought it and read it in its entirety.

The introduction to this book was long and philosophical, but it failed to pique my interest. I didn't feel emotionally involved in it, nor did it have elements that triggered reflection (*Jiva, Prakriti, Purusha...*).

The author seemed to be exclusively aiming to provide authority to the book. The concepts of Reincarnation, *Karma*, *Dharma*, and *Maya*, which would later become crucial to my life, were still vague due to the tangle of *Sanskrit* terms.

The explanation for *Pranayama* was incredibly simple. The practice of '*complete breathing*' involved inhaling by expanding the abdomen, then the middle portion, and finally the upper part of the chest. Then these three parts of the body were relaxed in reverse order during exhalation. It was obvious that it was merely an introduction, nothing more.

I was certain that the ancient art of *Pranayama* was not just used for chest muscle training, diaphragm strengthening, or establishing specific conditions for blood oxygenation. The main objective was to affect the energy in the psychological-physical system. It was evident that the unsteady state of this energy was directly linked to the conflicts and disharmonies in our mood.

The lack of information on *Pranayama* left me feeling dissatisfied. The author concluded by stating that an expert teacher is necessary for learning *Pranayama*. There were no explicit clues, either the title of deeper books or

the name of certain yoga schools. The author's final statement implied that the Master will be found automatically once we are ready to learn.

As for the *Asanas* (body positions), he explained the meaning of their specific names and provided a short note on the best mental attitude to adopt when practicing each one. It became apparent that these postures were not intended as mere stretching exercises; rather, they were meant to stimulate all internal organs to enhance their vitality. The effectiveness of the sessions I practiced according to the instructions was supported by the sense of satisfaction I felt at the end of the sessions.

During my Physical Education classes, I began practicing the main *Asanas* in a corner of the school gymnasium, but I decided to refrain from researching *Pranayama* at this time. Among the diverse exercises, I put forth my best effort to master the ability of moving the abdominal muscles using the *Nauli* technique.

The teacher, who I thought didn't give me any consideration, came up to me one day. He was curious to find out the secret of moving the abdominal muscles in this unusual way. I attempted to convey to him the simplicity of this secret: create the habit of working every day for a few weeks.

A CHILDISH APPROACH TO CONSIDERING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

I chose to keep a diary during that period. Today when I read it again, I realize how vaguely I understood what the '*spiritual dimension*' of life really meant. The distinction between following a religion and having a truly spiritual experience was unclear to me.

The only idea I had of a spiritual experience was the sense of wonder I felt when faced with the beauty of nature or a person's face. I made an effort to enhance these sensations by exploring the enchanting sites of the small town where I grew up.

Reading poems about nature and farmers' lives has always been a source of inspiration and beauty to me. I had no idea that *Yoga* could enhance my connection with Beauty.

My mother and I had made a pact in the early years of my life before I began kindergarten. I should mention that my temperament was characterized by a very obedient nature. I was given a lot of trust by my mother. When my mother had to go with my father to the fields to work, I asked her to leave me alone at home. For me, it was very unpleasant to go to the fields and sit on the grass among all the insects.

Our agreement was a success: she left me home sitting on a blanket spread out on the ground with complete trust in my solemn promise to never leave

that narrow space. Even after several hours when my mother returned home, I was still there, almost immobile.

I borrowed a book of poems from my school library when I was nine years old and started copying short poems about nature and life in the fields into a notebook. I soon learned them by heart after reading them frequently.

During my contemplation of the hilly landscape surrounding the my village, I was able to increase my emotions by recalling them to my mind. This event was one of those that I looked for almost every day and experienced with an indefinable inner happiness.

Beethoven became my idol when I began to develop a passion for classical music. Despite the tragedy of deafness that struck him during the peak of the creative season, he made the most dignified response. Creating works that he felt were already present in his heart was something he continued to do. He wrote:

I do not have a single friend; I must live alone. But I know that God is closer to me than to other artists; I approach Him without fear; I have always known and understood him and I am not afraid for my music – no adverse fate can touch it. Whoever understands it will be freed from all the miseries that others carry around.

It's improbable that his words didn't have a significant influence on me. A music that was incomparable was drawn from the depths of his being, and he offered it to mankind. The triumph of this weak human being over a stupid and senseless fate had a huge effect on me.

My dedication to the Ideal was strengthened by the daily routine of going to my room and listening to his music. During a 3-month period in high school, when I experienced a sentimental story that seemed impossible, I listened to Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* each and every day.

Despite my uncontrollable emotions urging me to take actions that resulted in destruction to my romantic relationship, my desperate heart found comfort in listening to this masterpiece.

Reading Beethoven's *Heiligenstadt Testament* enhanced my understanding of his heroic and saintly status. He revealed his health conditions and expresses his hope with peace and total determination. Invoking a brighter way of living life, I repeated a phrase from his testament frequently:

O Providence, make it appear for me at least one day of pure joy. For a long time now the intimate echo of true joy has been foreign to me. When, oh when, Almighty God, will I still see it shine in the temple of nature and men? Never? No, that would be too cruel!

During my countryside walks, as I sat on a hill to contemplate a distant landscape and enjoy the warm heat of summer evenings, his music came

back to me from the regions of my memory.

I saw what my heart was craving became real before me, perfect and free from fear and guilt. The spiritual reality, despite my inability to understand or grasp it, was calling me to itself.

THE FIRST STEP IN THE SPIRITUAL PATH

I bought a book that outlined exercises for improving memory. I came across a procedure that I grew fond of, so I practiced it every day as if it were an unavoidable necessity. It made it possible for me to fully comprehend the distinction between 'mind' and 'awareness'.

The process involved staying in a state of pure awareness for a specified amount of time, giving the mind a chance to rest.

It was a straightforward process. After a minute of preparation, I mentally repeated: "I am relaxed, calm, and not thinking of anything." My imagination conjugated a scene in which thoughts, even abstract ones, were being pushed away one by one, as if a hand were gently pushing them from the center of my mental screen to the periphery. Even the thought of practicing a technique was pushed aside.

Throughout the repetition of this action, I focused on the area between my eyebrows, which in my opinion was like a pond where I could rest.

This always happened: after about half an hour, the state of profound calm was suddenly interrupted by the thought that the actual exercise had yet to begin, as I thought I had fallen asleep. While my body reacted with a jolt, my heart started beating rapidly. After a brief moment, I realized that I hadn't fallen asleep and that the exercise had been completed correctly.

During a brief period, the mind had remained tranquil as a state of awareness without any content had emerged. This awareness had stayed unchanged for a few minutes, similar to a point of light that keeps repeating itself.

My belief was that the Cartesian deduction "I think therefore I am" was not valid. In my opinion, the proof and inner certainty of existence is based on the capacity to silence thoughts.

I was unaware that utilizing this technique was the initial step towards the spiritual path. It's vital to comprehend that thoughts are a fleeting reality that obscure the ultimate truth instead of revealing it. In the state of thoughtlessness, you realize that your awareness is indestructible.

Returning to certain fundamental truths of the spiritual path is often necessary. While the technique I was practicing might seem straightforward to comprehend intellectually, it will take several years to

fully comprehend and experience its full implications.

One of the most subtle issues is comprehending that we are not our mind, but something greater: a pure, present, silent awareness that watches without judgment. Although the mind is an excellent tool for navigating material reality, it has limitations that cannot be overcome. It has the ability to analyze, imagine, and remember ... but it lacks the ability to penetrate the deepest dimension of being.

Spiritual reality is something that the mind cannot grasp or possess. When we connect to a deeper feeling, often through the heart, we can open this dimension. "Heart" is not intended to be the seat of superficial emotions; instead, it serves as the intuitive and perceptive center of our being.

In this inner space, understandings are born that are not based on proof or logic, but rather on an inner certainty that comes from direct experience. Although it is a transformative insight, it is often difficult to fully explain in words.

Those who try to express this understanding through words, even with all their passion and sincerity, often encounter the difficulty of fully conveying it. The listener may be able to absorb the words, but they won't necessarily grasp the deeper meaning unless they've already had a similar intuitive experience.

Spiritual truth is not a subject that can be taught, but rather something that is recognized. Only those who are ready to do so can recognize it in the silence of their own experience.

Mathematics was the choice I made at the university. The first courses made me realize that a happy chapter in my life had come to an end and that there would be no room for distractions like enjoying classical literature masterpieces.

Finding an effective study method was my priority to avoid wasting energy. Disciplined thinking was required for both study and free time.

I decided to employ the dynamics of the technique previously mentioned to keep my mind focused. It was necessary to fight the bad habit of daydreaming and jumping from one memory fragment to another just to extract moments of pleasure. This is a true addiction for many individuals. Not only does it waste energy, but it also contributes to numerous failures in life.

I was persuaded that developing disciplined thinking was the most valuable quality I could acquire, as it would lead to fruitful achievement. I was enthusiastic about the decision.

Although I felt a clear, sparkling, heavenly sense of peace of mind for a few hours, I encountered significant resistance. Through my introspection, I realized that other habits were draining my mental energy.

I allowed myself to be consumed by exhausting discussions with friends, which were made dignified by the concept of “socialization”.

My attitude towards my friends changed abruptly. It's clear that my sacrifice was not particularly hard: I had already made a decision, especially because their world had nothing to do with mine.

As I walked in the afternoon, I caught glimpse of them sitting and talking in their usual bar from a distance. I felt a sense of sadness filling my heart. When I saw them together, they reminded me of chickens trapped in a confined space. The idea came up that they were completely guided by their instincts, which included eating, reproduction, and rest.

If their friends suffered a misfortune, it would not affect them. They would continue to have the daily pleasure of wasting time until misfortune struck them personally. The bad thoughts I had, which were characterized by bitterness and anguish, make me feel guilty.

I re-entered my resolve to concentrate on my studies and passing the exams became my sole objective. The experience of living that period was like coming down on a cold night; I was aware that I had to make that heavy sacrifice in order to shape my future.

In order to witness the dawn of 'a day of pure joy', I would have to temporarily endure darkness. To enjoy it, I had to resist the temptation to turn on useless lights for a momentary comfort.

THE SECOND STEP IN THE SPIRITUAL PATH

On a particular day, I came upon myself reflecting on a fact. Those who have dedicated themselves for years with commitment and love to a discipline – artistic, physical, or spiritual – tend to develop refined human qualities: a profound sense of peace, inner mastery, and gentleness. Take into account musicians who have spent years perfecting their instruments, or those who have dedicated themselves to cultivating a discipline such as martial arts. We feel a silent beauty and a nobility of spirit in them.

My understanding was that my encounters with 'Beauty' could become more stable and profound through regular mystical practice. Every day, I could heal, nourish, and refine my sensitivity.

My decision to dedicate myself to *Pranayama* discipline was prompted by attending a concert of Mahler's second symphony, '*Resurrection*'. I read the presentation sheet for the concert. Mahler explained the precise meaning of each part of the symphony in a letter to conductor Bruno Walter.

The author aimed to address the subject of death as the inevitable conclusion of all human adventures. The music conveyed a sense of loneliness, but it was sweet, as if death were like giving up yourself to a peaceful sleep. The contralto's words conveyed a childish, innocent vision with a song full of pain and an infinite dignity:

<i>O Röschen roth!</i>	O red rose!
<i>Der Mensch liegt in größter Noth!</i>	Man lies in direst need!
<i>Der Mensch liegt in größter Pein!</i>	Man lies in deepest pain!
<i>Je lieber möchte ich im Himmel sein.</i>	Oh, how I would rather be in heaven.

As I listened, I imagined myself in the countryside as a light rain began to fall. Spring was approaching and a ray of sunshine was penetrating the clouds. In the vegetation, a small rose stood out. The simple vision brought me peace by sparking the flame of pure enthusiasm: Beauty would always be there for me, in all the places of my lonely wanderings.

The symphony came to an end with these lines:

<i>Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen,</i>	With wings I have gained,
<i>In heißem Liebesstreben,</i>	in love's fierce striving,
<i>Werd'ich entschweben</i>	I shall soar aloft
<i>Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'gedrungen!</i>	To the light that has not pierced eye!
<i>Sterben werd'ich, um zu leben!</i>	I will die, so I can live!
<i>Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n</i>	Resurrect, yes resurrect,
<i>wirst du, mein Herz, in einem Nu!</i>	Will you, my heart, in an instant!
<i>Was du geschlagen</i>	What you have coveted and fought for,
<i>zu Gott wird es dich tragen!</i>	Shall lead you to God!

Over the next few days, I attempted to deepen the significance of this symphony by reading as much as possible and listening to it with a sense of ecstasy in my room. In the midst of those words, a sentence made me sense a radiant possibility. The words: *Sterben werde ich, um zu leben!* ('I will die, so I can live!') reverberated all day in my mind like a thread around which my thoughts were crystallizing.

Was it feasible for me to die to my small ego before I reached the age of sterility?

At that time, I had bought the book '*The Illustrated Light on Yoga*' by Iyengar. His *Pranayama* description was accompanied by a prudential

admonition that sparked my intuition:

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

My wish was to feel the full power of *Pranayama*, to the extent that I figuratively died in it. The fear that might have frightened others motivated me to take on this discipline. If *Pranayama* were to cause a real psychological earthquake, that would be exactly what I desired.

I made a choice that would alter my life forever: to commit myself to practicing *Pranayama* every day. *Nadi Sodhana* was chosen by me as a preparation while *Ujjayi* was chosen as a foundational practice. I opted to incorporate a strong *Mula Bandha* (contraction of the perineum) into every breath pause, leading to a shiver and internal current in the spine.

I seated myself with my back straight, positioned in the half-lotus position. My focus was on ensuring that I followed the instructions and maintained a creative mindset. I was always looking for ways to improve my practice.

I concentrated on the alternating sensation of cold and warm on my fingers and palm when I used my right hand to open and close my nostrils while practicing *Nadi Sodhana*. It was a pleasant experience to observe the smooth, even flow of my breath.¹

THE INITIAL EFFECTS OF THIS DISCIPLINE

Pranayama practice was a pleasant activity that resembled learning to play a musical instrument, with my breath being the instrument. As time went on, I began to feel the impact of this practice on my mental state.

To me, *Pranayama* was the most ideal of all arts, especially because it didn't have any inherent limitations. I was confused as to why I had waited so long to decide to practice it. I have finally been able to enjoy all its power! I was certain that my old school friend had spoken the truth about the internal changes that these exercises can make.

My mind would frequently repeat a phrase from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

(The *yogi*) knows the eternal joy beyond the pale of the senses which the reason cannot grasp. Dwelling in this reality, he moves not thence. He has found the treasure above all others. There is nothing higher than this. Having achieved it, he shall not be moved by the greatest sorrow. This is

¹ The two techniques used are fully described at the end of chapter 6.

the real meaning of *Yoga* – a deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow.

My heart was filled with joy as I repeated those lines. My perception of the things I saw began to change. The most intense colors were a source of attraction for me: they were fascinating to me, revealing an essence that was beyond material reality.

I frequently spent time outside contemplating my surroundings during the first sunny days after winter, when the sky was crystal clear and blue like never before.

A couple of weeks ago, some flowers that were born during the cold winter months had blossomed in a ditch that was covered in ivy, and the sun was shining on them. They had remained alive despite the warmer days, and they were still shining in their captivating brilliance.

Closing my eyes, I felt an inner radiance accompanied by a feeling of pressure at the level of the heart. Turning my gaze, I saw through the trees, a cluster of distant houses surrounding a bell tower. My being was spellbound by this vision. The inexpressible 'First Cause' of all things could not be discovered in books, but only in the realm of Beauty.

It was reasonable to expect that *Pranayama* would provide me with mental clarity. It could help me to prevent the fragile miracle of encountering Beauty from being spoiled by a jumble of thoughts. But now *Pranayama* could even enhance the experience of the Sublime or even bring it forth unexpectedly.

Just before sunset, I walked through the trees on a quiet afternoon. I would occasionally glance at a commentary on some Upanishads that I had with me. One particular phrase: 'Thou art that!' brought an immediate realization to my consciousness!

I unwound the book and began to repeat those words with an ecstatic joy. Even though my rational mind grasped it, it couldn't fully comprehend the incomparable implications of that statement.

The spring that brought new life and the gentle green light filtering through the leaves were both a part of me. When I returned home after my walks, I did not attempt to record the various moments of grace that characterized my experiences in my diaries because it would have been impossible for me to do so. My sole intention was to immerse myself in this new internal source of knowledge and understanding.

A MOMENT THAT WAS CHALLENGING

At that time, I wasn't aware that the first encounter with spiritual reality

could be accompanied by moments of fear. I recently acquired the autobiography of an Indian master, whom I will refer to as PY.² After seeing the book years ago, I realized it didn't have practical instructions, so I didn't buy it.

I hoped to find some good *Yoga* School addresses in it now. This autobiography was an amazing read and brought me to a phase of intense aspiration towards the mystical path. At certain times, I was literally burned by an inner fire.

As I was engrossed in reading this book, I felt a shiver, like an electric current running through my body. Although a 'shiver' did not mean anything, it still scared me. My reaction was a bit strange because I had always thought I was immune to any fear of things related to transcendence.

I had the idea that a more significant event would occur soon and be so overwhelming that I wouldn't be able to stop it. I felt as though my memory had an unexplainable familiarity with it, and my instincts knew its inexorable power. I decided to allow the experience to unfold unobstructed and continue reading.

As the minutes went by, my restlessness turned to anxiety. The fear became too much for me to handle. It was as if something unknown posed a threat to my existence.

This is something I never experienced before. When faced with danger, I would become paralyzed and unable to think. Now, my thoughts were frantically moving, hinting at the most horrific outcomes: losing psychological balance, encountering an evil entity, or perhaps even death.

Despite not knowing what, I was compelled to do something. I assumed the position to meditate and waited. The anguish intensified. There was a moment when a part of me, possibly even the whole entity I refer to as 'myself', seemed about to disappear altogether. Without any clear reason, I was burdened with the worst, threatening thoughts.

I had a good understanding of what had happened to *Gopi Krishna*, who

² The reader will comprehend why I do not mention PY's name - it is not a difficult task to determine his identity in any case! Some *Kriya* schools propagate his teachings with precise legitimacy. One of these stated clearly that they would not tolerate any form of copyright infringement. But also, their beloved Master's name being mentioned in discussions about *Kriya* through the Internet was not something they liked. The reason for that is that in the past, some individuals used that name to misdirect the research of individuals who were genuine in their desire to receive the original teachings. In the following pages I will simply hint at those teachings, without explaining them. It is good that the reader does not give up the privilege of turning to the original literature!

wrote *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. He recounted the experience of spiritual awakening he had after a long period of concentrated meditation on the seventh *Chakra*. Following this practice he had serious physical and psychological problems because his body was probably unprepared.

As reported by him, a strong energy started to flow through his spine from the coccyx region towards the brain. The flow was so strong that he couldn't perform normal physical functions and had no choice but to go to bed. He felt like he was experiencing a burning internal fire that was unable to extinguish.

Weeks later, he discovered how to regulate the phenomenon through his intuition. The upward flow of energy through the spine became an ongoing experience of inner realization.

I was afraid that I might have come close to experiencing the same problems as him, especially since I was not in India and people around me might not comprehend. The outcomes would have been terrible!

No one could have guaranteed me that my experience would have a beneficial outcome like *Gopi Krishna*.

During those dreadful moments, the spiritual world appeared to me like a terrifying nightmare, capable of destroying and killing the individual who had irrationally approached it. Ordinary life, on the other hand, seemed to me to be the most important and beneficial reality.

I was persuaded that by intensively practicing two basic breathing exercises, I had opened a door that I shouldn't have opened, so I attempted to stop the experience. I got up and ventured out into the fresh air.

I was alone at night and unable to convey my fear to anyone! In the center of the courtyard, I felt oppressed, suffocated, crushed by a sense of despair, and wished I had never practiced *Yoga*.

I felt remorse and shame for the harsh words I had spoken to my friend who had previously participated in my spiritual research. He, like many others, abandoned all practice and instead made the choice to 'enjoy life'. I used my youthful boldness to address him with words that were not affectionate, and these words were now repeating in my head.

I was filled with pain for showing unjustified cruelty toward him without comprehending what was truly in his mind and heart. I aspired to express my regret for violating his right to live as he deemed appropriate. It's possible that he aimed to safeguard his mental health rather than alienating himself from reality and losing his mind because of practices he felt unsafe about.

My love for classical music led me to listen to good music to avoid anxiety and restore my normal state of mind. Beethoven's *Concerto for violin and orchestra* was the music I heard using headphones in my room. My soul felt soothed by this and I fell asleep within half an hour.

The following morning, I awoke with the same dread. Through the cracks in the shutters, sunlight entered the room. I had a full day to live. I departed from the house to try to amuse myself, among others. I went to meet up with some friends, but I didn't disclose what was happening to me.

I spent the afternoon making fun of various things and behaving like the people I had always thought were lazy and intellectually dull. By doing this, I managed to hide my pain. This was the way the first day went; my mind was exhausted. The fear subsided after three days and I finally felt at ease.

I UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF THIS PANIC ATTACK

I started reflecting on the significance of what had happened. I realized the nature of my reaction to the episode: I had, in a cowardly manner, turned my back on the experience I had been trying to pursue for so long! The dignity in my soul told me that I had to keep searching from the point where I had stopped.

I was prepared to accept all that would occur and let it unfold, even if it meant losing my physical and mental equilibrium. I restarted my *Pranayama* practice, with the same intensity as before. For a few days, I did not experience any form of fear. Afterwards, I experienced something truly beautiful.

It was night. While relaxing in the corpse pose, a pleasant sensation swept over me and felt like an electric wind was blowing on the outside of my body. In a wave motion, it spread quickly, starting from the feet and moving up to the head. My body was unable to move even though my mind pushed me to take the meditative position.

I was deeply peaceful. There was no fear in my heart. The sensation of the electric wind was replaced by another one, which resembled an enormous force that penetrated the spine and rapidly reached the brain. There was an indescribable feeling of bliss. The perception of intense brightness accompanied everything.

I would define it as 'a clear and euphoric certainty of being in an unlimited ocean of awareness and bliss'. It was unusual that when the experience happened, I found it familiar.

A. Frossard, who is the author of *God Exists, I have met him*, attempts to give the reader an idea of his spiritual awakening experience. An avalanche falls, beginning slowly but then rapidly and violently.

Frossard suggests the concept of a “reverse avalanche” that commences by gathering strength at the foot of the mountain, climbs higher, is pushed by more power, and then leaps skyward. This was the experience I had along my spine.

I'm not sure how long my experience lasted, but it reached its climax within a few seconds, repeated itself a couple of times, after which I turned on my side and slept peacefully without any interruption.

The memory of the day following that experience

I woke up without recollecting that experience. It wasn't until a few hours later, during a walk, that I remember it. The memory popped up unexpectedly. I rested against the trunk of a tree and remained calm for a short period of time. Everything happened as if a sudden awareness had triggered a region of the brain that I hadn't previously utilized.

The significance of that experience was clear and obvious. I contemplated a reality that appeared to have always been present in me. It had been buried deep within my mind for a long time, but now it was beaming brightly in front of me. I saw it as if it were the most solid reality in human existence. Until that point, it had been completely foreign to my life.

Since I was a child, I have been searching for the true dimension of Spirit in my own unique way. It was a surprise to find out that *Yoga's* practice could lead me to a concrete experience. Pranayama was done by me in a way that I would describe as 'absolute', with such deep concentration that it was as if there was no tomorrow.

I made the best decision of my life by dedicating myself to this discipline. Spiritual Reality came to me through waves of bliss rising up my spine and reaching my brain.

Throughout the years, this experience had repeated itself countless times, with each time lasting from a few moments to a few minutes. At times, these waves resembled the eruption of an internal volcano, a 'rocket' that pushed my consciousness beyond my body.

On rare occasions, there were no waves, but rather an intense bliss that built up in my heart and filled me with a sudden burst of joy. I returned to reality with tears in my eyes, attempting to retain the brief glimpse of Eternity in my memory.

After this experience, I slowly began to believe that my pursuit and love of Beauty was actually a desire to get closer to the spiritual dimension of our existence.

I became certain through my intuition that I would choose a job that wouldn't consume all of my vital energy. I would never separate myself from this awareness. I was confident that I wouldn't betray this task.

THE NEXT STEP

The enthusiasm for *Pranayama* increased continuously. Starting this practice was like planting the seed of a mighty tree during the feverish season of my youth and watching it grow healthfully throughout all the seasons of my life.

The experience of energy rising up the spine occurred several times, but it did not become a constant. I experienced this when I focused on studying my exam subjects until late and then lay down exhausted on the bed. Upon its appearance, my heart overflowed with gratitude towards a greater Reality, situated in a dimension beyond my comprehension.

As a novice, I was unable to resist trying to convince others of the positive benefits of *Pranayama*. I was convinced that it could aid anyone in living a better life. It was my assertion that *Pranayama* would guide their energies towards achieving a more balanced temperament.

My friends responded with kindness, but they did not share my enthusiasm. A number of people reacted by asserting that closing oneself in a room and practicing *Yoga* exercises while abstaining from many aspects of social life was, in their opinion, a route to alienation.

The essence of *Pranayama* that I kept praising incessantly appeared to them as the pinnacle of selfishness. A 'Hippy' friend of mine fully understood my words and expressed empathy, but he still criticized me for being too enthusiastic about the automatic effects of *Pranayama*.

He was certain that I was the sole source of my success in this practice. In his viewpoint, *Pranayama* was not a form of art that had its own reward, rather it was an 'amplifier' of what I already had inside, something that benefited and enhanced what was already within me.

In his opinion, *Pranayama* had no power to create anything new. In my view, *Pranayama* was the process of "ascending" towards a higher level of consciousness. In that state you reach something radically new.

I was disoriented to hear that it was just an "amplifier." I was unable to see that the two visions could coexist – I was young and I divided everything

into black or white.

I FOUND OUT THAT KRIYA YOGA IS THE FINE-TUNING OF PRANAYAMA

The many pages of P.Y.'s *Autobiography of a Yogi* did not contain any practical instructions. The author referred to a specific type of *Pranayama* (*Kriya Yoga*) that was taught by a famous yogi known as *Lahiri Mahasaya*. I thought there had to be something distinctive about this discipline when I learned that this technique had to be mastered through four levels.

The *Ujjayi Pranayama* technique was something I enjoyed, and the idea of enhancing a *Pranayama* technique through different steps was very intriguing to me. If the techniques I had already practiced had yielded beautiful results, it was evident that the *Kriya Yoga* system with four levels would have produced even greater results!

The technique was a secret that required direct initiation from a Master. Where could I have acquired this knowledge? It was not possible for me to leave for India. Was it feasible to learn the technique through books?

I had strong reasons to believe that *Kriya Pranayama* entails a slow and deep breathing technique with attention focused on the spine.

When performing the *Kriya* technique, the inner energy should have been rotated around the *Chakras*. Upon reading P.Y.'s article about the *Kriya* technique being mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*, I was able to locate this quote and attempted to comprehend it in a practical way.

Offering inhaling breath into the outgoing breath, and offering the outgoing breath into the inhaling breath, the yogi neutralizes both these breaths; he thus releases the life force from the heart and brings it under his control. [B. G. IV 29]

The *Bhagavad Gita* states that by performing this action repeatedly, the *yogi* attains a noticeable calming of the breath and enters the state of meditation. With a pure heart, he remains immersed in a state of peace for an increasing length of time.

Steadfast a lamp burns sheltered from the wind;
Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind
Shut from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven... [B. G. VI 19]

When I read verse [IV 29], I was unable to grasp its meaning. What is the process for a person to simultaneously inhale and exhale?

I came to understand the meaning of that verse after a considerable amount of time. During inhalation ("*inhaling breath*"), the energy enters the body along with the air through the nose and descends into the lungs. While this

is happening, another form of energy (*Apana*) rises from the base of the spine, moves inside the spine, and reaches the upper *Chakras*. These two energetic movements happen **at the same time**.

A similar fact occurs during exhalation ("exhaling breath"), as the stale/used air leaves the body. As this occurs, a subtle energy (*Prana*) descends from the *Medulla* to the *Muladhara*, penetrating each *Chakra*. *Kriya Pranayama* constantly brings together the two opposite forms of energy, *Apana* and *Prana*. In everyday life, the current of *Apana* tends to move downwards while that of *Prana* tends to move upwards. In *Kriya Pranayama*, they are instructed to move away from their natural direction.

The repetition of this fact results in *Prana* and *Apana* merging and becoming stable in the region of the belt (navel). The state of 'Tranquility' is achieved through repeated inhalations and exhalations.

P.Y. emphasized the importance of *Pranayama* in the process of evolution. He stated that the spine resembled a ferromagnetic substance, consisting of elementary magnets that align in the same direction when a magnetic field is superimposed. This magnetization process can be compared to the action of *Pranayama*.

Kriya Pranayama burns the 'bad seeds' of our *Karma* by uniformly orienting all the subtle parts of the physical and astral essence of our spine.

³ Later, I became aware that this was truly a significant idea in the P.Y.'s teachings.

³ We refer to *Karma* when we report the common belief that a person inherits a large mass of latent tendencies from previous lives, comparable to seeds destined to flourish in their current life. It's not necessary to accept this belief to experience *Kriya*, as it's a practice that can be experienced without it. However, since the concept of *Karma* is at the core of Indian thought, it is worth understanding and freely speaking about it. This belief states that *Pranayama* is a process that extinguishes the effects of *Karma* seeds before they manifest in our lives. It is explained that those who are intuitively drawn to procedures like *Kriya Yoga* have already experienced something similar in a past life. In practice, in the present incarnation, the person resumes their path exactly from where they had abandoned it in the distant past.

CHAPTER 2

FROM UJJAYI TO KRIYA PRANAYAMA

I give an explanation of how my initial Ujjayi technique became Kriya Yoga. This instruction was given to me by a spiritual organization whose teachings have been the foundation of my understanding of the spiritual path for a long time. I express my initial impressions about the characteristics of the organization.

Note

In the previous chapter, I explained how I made a serious decision to embrace *Pranayama* discipline. I won't go into other significant experiences in this chapter. My focus will be on the delicate topic of the difficulties I faced after giving up being an independent seeker and embracing the guidance of the main spiritual organization that disseminates the teachings of the Indian master P.Y.. If you're not interested in this subject, I suggest that you skip to chapter three, where I resume the narrative of how my inner evolution continued. In that chapter, I will address the significant outcomes I obtained from a specific method that relies on listening to internal sounds, which I received from the same organization I was a part of, despite being widely known in India as *Nada Yoga*. I'll only cover this practice in chapter three because it was engaging and had nothing to do with the problems I encountered within the organization. In that space, I will also share how, as a free seeker, I managed to master the practice of *Pranayama*.

I discovered from his *Autobiography* that P.Y. had established an organization that produced a comprehensive set of *Kriya Yoga* lessons that could be received via mail. With great excitement, I applied for this course without delay. I received the first lesson after four months of applying and found out that I would have to wait for at least one year before receiving the technique of *Kriya Yoga*. A sense of despair came over me.

The shipping of the lessons resulted in significant delays. I did not want to wait for such a long time. ⁴ I made the choice to uncover the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*, searching for a similarity in the finest *Yoga* texts or to trace it back to esoteric traditions. I should have identified a *Pranayama* technique that involved visualizing the energy that revolves around the

⁴ Actually, I could be regarded as fortunate. For instance, those residing in countries with a Communist system couldn't receive these materials.

Chakras.

A memory tucked away in a corner of my mind awakened me. I recalled seeing images depicting a variety of energy pathways within the human body in an occult literature. I tried to consult esoteric books that contained illustrations that resembled such paths.

I began visiting a used book store. Perhaps due to its previous role as a reference library for Theosophical Society, the library was well-stocked. I double-checked a book before purchasing it to see if it mentioned the possibility of directing energy through certain subtle channels of the astral body, leading to the awakening of *Kundalini* energy.

One day the owner led me to a hidden corner of the shop and allowed me to explore a muddled stack of papers stored in a cardboard box. There was a vast amount of material to examine, including the entire Theosophical magazine series and scattered notes from an outdated hypnosis course. I stumbled upon a book written in German by K. Spiesberger, which showed various esoteric techniques, among them *Kundalini breathing*.

Even now, the description of this technique still surprises me. Air was imagined to flow inside the spinal column during a deep breath. When you breathe in, the air moves up; when you exhale, it moves down. Two particular sounds that originated in the throat were described as well.

I acquired a book that had an extensive description of the *Magical Breath*, which involved visualizing the energy flowing around the spine. As you breathe in, the energy moves up **behind** the spinal cord and reaches the center of your head, and when you breathe out, it moves down along the **front** of your body.

I read that the *Magic Breath* was one of the most valuable secrets ever discovered. If practiced constantly, with the power of visualization, it would be able to build an internal substance that would lead to the spiritual eye's vision. I was persuaded that this was P.Y.'s Kriya and made it a part of my daily routine.⁵

I WAS INTRODUCED TO A MEDITATION GROUP THAT ADHERES TO THE TEACHINGS OF P.Y.

The organization that was sending me the correspondence course sent me a letter letting me know about people who practiced *Kriya Yoga* and lived in my city. A meditation group was formed by them. I felt enthusiastic and thrilled with the joyous anticipation of meeting them. I struggled to get to sleep that evening.

⁵ It wasn't until later that I realized my hypothesis was incorrect.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

Thus wrote *Sri Aurobindo*. I had no idea that such words would be applicable to the outcomes of my encounter with this group! I am willing to admit with bitter irony that that period of my life was too joyful to last too long.

The time had come to deal with the issues, constraints, and distortions that arise when the human mind loses its innocence and ability to think logically. In the future, I will encounter many instances where life is characterized by brief moments of inspiration and serenity, followed by periods of turbulence when everything seems lost and the distortions created by the human mind reign supreme.

Even with my total and disarming sincerity when approaching the young man in charge of this group, I had no idea what a hard hit I would receive.

He was surprised when he welcomed me, excited to meet someone who shared his passion. Immediately after our meeting, I expressed my enthusiasm for *Kriya* practice before even entering his house. As a response, he inquired about my *Kriya initiation*, assuming it was received from the same organization where he was a member. He was shocked and smiled bitterly as he saw that I had tried to choose a breathing technique from a book and deluded myself into believing it was *Kriya Pranayama*.

He clearly stated that *Kriya* cannot be learned through books. He started sharing the story of Milarepa, a Tibetan *yogi*, who, although he received genuine spiritual techniques from an unauthorized source, did not obtain encouraging results despite practicing them with great intensity. Finally, after receiving the same instructions from his *Guru's* mouth, this famous *yogi* was able to achieve the results that he had hoped for.

This story would be repeated to me so many times in the future that it would make me sick. It is well-known that the human mind is influenced more by a narrative than by logical inference! Despite being entirely imaginary, a fictional anecdote can have a kind of 'internal brightness' that affects a person's common sense. By inducing a strong emotion, it can lead to acceptable conclusions that would seem absurd to the reasoning faculty. In reality, this story had silenced me and I was uncertain of what to say.

He stated that there was only one way to learn *Kriya*: by being initiated by a 'Minister' authorized by P.Y.'s organization! According to him, no other

person or entity was permitted to teach that technique. He and the others in the group had received the technique from this authorized source and had made a precise and solemn promise of secrecy.

The word '*Secrecy*' sounded strange to me! It held a mysterious fascination over my being! Until that moment, I had always believed that the way a certain teaching was learned was not of much value.

In my opinion, the most crucial aspect was that such teaching should be practiced correctly. But there was no reason for me to complain about the secrecy request. After several years, I would come to a different opinion after noticing the nonsense that arose from this injunction.

He stared me in the eye, with a great deal of emotional impact, and started to tell me that a practice learned from any other source was worthless. Spiritual achievements would not be achieved, and other effects would be a dangerous illusion that will trap the ego for a long time. In an ecstasy of absolute faith, he began to discuss the significance of the '*Guru*' (spiritual master).

The concept was unclear to me, particularly because it was attributed to a person he had never met directly. He viewed P.Y. as his *Guru* and he was a substantial figure in his life.

The *Guru* was the assistance given by God to a devotee, and it was the greatest fortune that could ever happen to a person.

He asked me to demonstrate the *Kriya* technique I learned from books. It's obvious that he was driven by curiosity and, perhaps, the desire to validate that my *Kriya* technique was not genuine. He shook his head when he saw that I was breathing through my nose.

I observed an expression of personal happiness on his face as I explained this. He was certainly convinced that my practice was light years away from his *Kriya*. While pretending to feel sorry for my natural disillusionment, he asserted in an official tone that my technique did not have anything to do with *Kriya Pranayama*!

He advised me to send a written description of my vicissitudes: maybe they would welcome me as a student and eventually give me the sacred initiation into *Kriya Yoga*.

I was speechless by the tone of our conversation. To restore the initial amicability of the meeting, I tried to reassure him by relating the beneficial results of my practice. The statement had the effect of worsening the situation, which gave him the opportunity for a second reprimand, not completely wrong, but nonetheless inappropriate.

He made it clear that in the practice of *Kriya*, I should never seek tangible

results or boast about them, as doing so would cause me to lose them. The clever guy had mistakenly put himself in a clear contradiction: if the results were too vital to lose by telling them, it meant the technique worked!

He declared that he would pray for me! The game had been lost by me on that day! I made an assurance to him that I would abide by his advice. I gave up my *Pranayama* routine completely and confined my practice to simple concentration at the point between the eyebrows (*Kutastha*), as he recommended.

A group of people met just to meditate together

Twice a week, a group of people from his city practiced *Kriya* together. The room intended for this activity had furniture that was both basic and pleasant. The payment of rent was made by each member to ensure that it was used solely for spiritual purposes without being affected by the owner's whims.

I began to take part in these meetings. The experience of listening to Indian spiritual songs translated and harmonized in Western style, and most importantly, meditating together was a genuine joy! Even though the time dedicated to practicing the techniques was short – no more than 20 minutes, frequently only 15 – everything seemed heavenly to me.

We had to leave in silence at the end of every meditation session, so I only started to get to know my new friends more closely during the monthly social lunch. This was a great opportunity to spend a few hours together, conversing and savoring each other's company.

It was not feasible for many of us to obtain approval or support from our families to practice *yoga*. Being in a group of people who had the same ideas and interests could have been a peaceful and relaxing experience.

Unfortunately in this group we couldn't talk about every topic that came to mind. The organization's leaders strongly discouraged any talk about other spiritual paths or specific details of *Kriya Yoga* techniques.

It was difficult to find a topic of conversation because of the need to guide the content on well-defined tracks. Worldly gossip was not welcome here, and it was not suitable for a spiritual group. All that remained was the beauty of the *Kriya* path and the luck of discovering it!

After a few meetings of mutual exaltation, the group experienced a sense of almost hallucinating boredom. These individuals appeared to be unable to exhibit any true joviality. Their enthusiasm for *Kriya* was lukewarm, and it seemed they practiced the few techniques they knew as a way of atoning for their 'guilt' of existing.

A consistent recycling process was observed in the group; many members who had been enthusiastically involved abandoned it definitively with visible relief, trying to erase this experience from their memory.

Using my open temperament, I was able to approach certain individuals and form a connection that ultimately became a genuine friendship. It was not easy to find someone who was a free seeker in the spiritual field. Numerous people showed a devotion that was too emotionally charged. Some appeared to be nothing more than social misfits.

Even without asking, I was still given lessons in devotion, humility, and loyalty by anyone, but my interest in *Kriya* became a real craving, a fever that consumed me. A *kriyaban* mocked me. He spoke to me cynically: *Kriya* won't be given to you! He argued that a devotee should not desire a technique with such intensity. This desire can only be directed towards God.

I made an effort to act like a devoted disciple, but at the same time, I was impatiently waiting for my initiation. While I made an effort to convince myself that I was a part of a group of people with similar passions, I had to acknowledge that the reality was quite different!

A SIGNIFICANT VISIT

Our group was visited by an elderly woman who had corresponded through letters with P.Y.. The organization recognized her seriousness, sincerity, and loyalty by granting her the position of "Meditation counselor" and as a result, she was authorized to assist us in practicing the techniques prior to *Kriya*.

She gave us a brief overview of two meditation techniques that need to be practiced before *Kriya Pranayama*: the *Hong So* concentration technique and the *Om* meditation technique. The first procedure leads to relaxation of the breath and mind; the second leads to listening to the internal sounds produced by the *Chakras*, sounds which gradually merge into the sound of *Om*.

In regards to the *Hong So* technique, she mentioned that despite its apparent simplicity, it required serious commitment. She smiled and said, 'The technique has everything you need to connect with the Divine.'

She then dwelt on the technique of listening to inner sounds. ⁶ We were

⁶ This technique is not a part of the original *Kriya Yoga*. It is not even an invention of P.Y. It is clearly described in classical *Yoga* books under the name of *Nada Yoga* or the '*Yoga of Sound*'. It is very useful in that instead of emphasizing 'doing', it emphasizes the attitude of 'feeling'.

explained by her that *Om* is the "*Amen*" in the Bible, the sound of energy vibration that sustains the universe. The *Om* technique enables one to perceive this vibration.

KRIYA YOGA'S INITIATION

I finally reached the point where I could formally request the *Initiation Technique of Kriya* through correspondence. I waited daily for the much-desired material for four months, and finally an envelope arrived. I had high expectations for it when I opened it, but I was left feeling disappointed because it only had introductory material.

The index of this material informed me that I would receive the actual technique in about four weeks. I will have to study the nursery rhymes I have been familiar with for another month.

Despite this, during that time, two ministers from the P.Y. organization came to our nation and I was able to take part in an initiation ceremony.

There were approximately one hundred people who, just like me, were prepared to receive Initiation. We were escorted to a beautiful room rented for the occasion, decorated with numerous flowers. I have never seen so many flowers in my life, not even in the most luxurious weddings.

The ceremony was introduced in a scrumptious manner. In a row, approximately thirty individuals, who were dressed in a sober uniform, entered the room with a solemn face and hands folded in prayer.

I was made aware that these people were part of the local group, and their leader was a stylist who had designed the choreography for the triumphal entry. The two Ministers who arrived from overseas walked behind the procession with a humble and disoriented air. The actual ceremony started.

I had no objection to the requirement of an eternal fidelity promise for both *Guru P.Y.* and a chain formed by five other Masters. P.Y. was the *Guru-preceptor* and *Lahiri Mahasaya* was an intermediary link, whereas the other Masters were *Babaji*, *Jesus Christ* and *Sri Yuktswar*. *Guru-preceptor* was by definition the Master who would partially assume the weight of our *Karma*.

It would have been very odd if there were no doubts about everything that was explained to us. A friend asked me if P.Y. had truly accepted her as a disciple and assumed the burden of her *Karma*. P.Y., who lived in the astral worlds, was unable to validate this.

To avoid her thoughts impairing her enjoyment of this fascinating ceremony, I assured her that had undoubtedly been accepted!

The introduction speech was carried on in a suggestive manner. The *Kriya* technique is a manifestation of God's most effective blessings to His privileged creature, humans, who are endowed with seven *Chakras*, unlike animals.

During the explanation of the *Kriya Pranayama* technique, I realized that I was already familiar with it! The purpose was to enhance the *Ujjayi Pranayama* technique. However, the energy circulation did not follow an elliptical path. This is what I thought after reading P.Y.'s Autobiography.⁷

The *Ujjayi* technique that I had learned at the start of my spiritual journey has been instrumental in bringing many blessings into my life. However, following the advice of the friend I had met who was practicing *Kriya Yoga*, I abandoned the practice. I was a complete idiot!

The details of *Maha Mudra* and *Jyoti Mudra* were explained in such a manner that there were no ambiguities. In the event that we were uncertain about a detail's accuracy, we could receive advice from school management. To obtain advice, I was restricted to interacting only with authorized individuals.

I paid close attention to what the ministers who had initiated me maintained, as if they couldn't be wrong. In my opinion, they were channels for the *Guru's* blessings. Furthermore, I was convinced that, despite not acknowledging it out of humility, they had already attained the highest level of spiritual realization.

I RECEIVED MY LAST SET OF LESSONS

A couple of years have passed since that time. I received the *Higher Kriyas* through correspondence. It was unfortunate that these lessons had parts that were not clear. For example, P.Y. stated that practicing *Kechari Mudra* regularly was necessary to awaken *Kundalini*.

It was unfortunate that there were no instructions on how to perform this *Mudra*. In chapter 18, I will provide an explanation for the lack of clarity in P.Y.'s written teachings. I will recount facts that I came to know many years later.

I reached out to the elderly woman, who has been officially designated as a 'Meditation counselor'. She couldn't help me clarify multiple doubts about

⁷ In his early years living in the United States, PY taught a different circuit that allowed for the visualization of current flow. This earlier teaching is where the term 'elliptical' comes from. Upon completing his autobiography, he made the decision to modify this circuit and teach another circuit where current flow could be visualized.

these practices. Written lessons were the means by which she learned these techniques since direct initiations were never given after P.Y.'s *Mahasamadhi*.

Although she had multiple chances, she felt regretful for not having her *Higher Kriyas* examined by ministers who were direct disciples of P.Y.. She also had several doubts about their correct execution.

I got in touch with my *Kriya* school's *Mother Center* and scheduled a meeting with their representative, a Minister, who would be visiting my country to teach *Kriya Yoga*. My expectation was that this minister would be able to answer my questions. I did not want to bother someone with trivial matters.

In my opinion, the minister would have only taken two minutes to reply to me. I had a strong desire to attend that appointment. When I met with this minister for the first time, he assured me that he would resolve my doubts as soon as he had some spare time from his commitments.

It was a disappointment to me that he kept postponing our meeting without any valid excuse after a few days. I persevered until the meeting took place. I experienced something truly unpleasant.

I was confident that individuals who practiced and taught *Kriya* were completely free from hypocrisy, bureaucracy, formalities, numerous small falsehoods, and subtle violence against honesty that are common among businessmen. In my view, he was a person who was impatient and easily irritable.

He refused to talk to me about *Kechari Mudra* without giving a reasonable explanation. After hearing the rest of the questions, he advised me to only practice the *First Kriya* technique and not use the other *Kriyas*.

He stated that he had been monitoring me and noticed my nervousness, which suggested that I had not practiced *Kriya* correctly. Feeling deeply troubled, I informed him that I would take his advice seriously, but I requested that he demonstrate how to perform these *higher Kriyas* to me in case I might be capable of practicing such techniques in the future.

He perceived my response as arrogant. He was clearly annoyed and quickly demonstrated the head movements of those techniques, while still being silent. He told me to send my inquiries in writing to the organization's leadership. He got up before he finished speaking and walked away. I was faced with a brick wall and a complete refusal to carry on with the interview.

The organization has always been regarded with trust and respect by me. I studied all the correspondence lessons and their literature in a manner similar to preparing for a university exam. Now I had requested this

organization to clarify some doubts I had about the four levels of *Kriya Yoga*. What caused the Minister to react in such a manner?

The state of my mind and emotional state was terrible. I questioned the reason why this organization failed to clarify all the technical details of the *Kriya Yoga* they taught. If our ministers didn't demonstrate how to put into practice what we learned through correspondence, why did they go to conferences and initiation ceremonies in different parts of the world?

Maybe my insistence on having an interview had caused him to be annoyed? Then why did he promise to help me? It was impossible for me to pretend that nothing had happened: I was very upset.

Among my friends, a lady with a honeyed voice mentioned that I had received a serious reprimand from our *Guru*. She stated that up until that moment, my attitude had been too confident. I had to acknowledge that I did not possess the right level of humility. I was confused by the relation between humility and the desire to comprehend meditation techniques well.

Deep inside, I had a feeling that this negative experience would eventually turn into a beneficial and essential part of my spiritual journey. I was unable to let any difficulty discourage my love for the *Kriya path*. I felt calmer and more serene as a result of this. A question came to my mind that I could describe as childlike.

Could this man say something negative about me when he returned to the headquarters of P.Y.'s organization? The likelihood of receiving needed clarifications in the future could be reduced by this. I was worried that my good relationship with the *Kriya* organization had been tarnished.

The meditation counselor, who was not present due to a meeting with the minister in another city, claimed that I had made him feel nervous and lost his self-control. I composed a letter that was laced with resentment and inadvertently insulted her. With firm conviction, she declared that our friendship had come to an end.

Later, she lowered her tone and invited me to her house to reevaluate what had happened. Several weeks later, the meeting took place. I conveyed to her that I was irrevocably determined to explore every available source to clarify my doubts.

I mentioned the idea of departing for India. She started mumbling about the veracity of the information about *Kriya* available in India. She let me know that a *Swami* who was closely connected to P.Y.'s life had been contacted by some *kriyabans* in a prominent *Ashram* recently. The pseudo *Kriya* techniques he taught them were perceived by her as meaningless or dangerous.

She mentioned that there were many teachers who were not authorized but

portrayed themselves as faithful followers of P.Y.. She compared them to spiders and observed how they distributed love to the master and captured devotees, who were their prey.

This lady had the capability to speak for an extended period, but I interrupted her with a sentence that came from my heart. "If the most despicable person in the world were to teach me *Kriya*, I would be able to turn that instruction into gold. In the event that the teaching was adulterated, I would be capable of reverting it to its original form."

She shook her head and informed me that my *Guru*-disciple relationship was in danger of losing its grace with such an attitude. The words she uttered were both clear and terrifying to me. The photo of P.Y. that was taken on the day of his death caught my eye. The frame was made with care, with flowers and an incense packet in front of it.

As I observed, PY's tender eyes seemed to be forming a tear during this moment of silence. I informed her of this feeling. Her expression changed and took on a serious tone. Her gaze was directed towards an indefinite point in the distance as she sighed heavily. "The *Guru* is not pleased with you and what you have experienced is simply a warning." She was definitely not making fun of anything.

It dawned on me that even if she hadn't met him in person, P.Y. was a 'presence' in her life! I took a look at some lilies of the valley that had been arranged in a small vase neatly beside P.Y.'s photo. We acquired them from the train station shortly after I arrived in her town. I was told by her that she always gave fresh flowers to her *Guru*.

This idyllic scene had an impact on my heart despite my unfamiliarity with the *Guru*-disciple relationship mindset. It's my impression that her life was full of sweet comfort! I understood that if I wanted to experience devotion with such fervor, I had a challenging task to accomplish, starting with fostering a lasting inner tranquility.

She admired my dedication to the spiritual path, but she was disappointed that the devotion she had to her *Guru* was totally foreign to me. I got the impression from his beautiful and sad eyes that she was always expecting me to act unfaithful to the *Guru* or the organization in some way.

My organization's minister, whom I had a conflict with, was correct when he said that I was not at all calm. I felt as anxious as a coiled spring while seeking technical explanations. My desire to remain loyal to my *Kriya* organization was matched by my refusal to accept vetoes. I was steadfast in my determination to know *Kriya* thoroughly and nobody could prevent me from doing so.

The sensation of watching a man in a position of authority make senseless

decisions faded away over a few days and was replaced by another consideration. It's possible that the minister had imparted the same discipline to me as he had during his postulant period.

I WAS MOVING TOWARDS BECOMING INDEPENDENT FROM THE ORGANIZATION

A significant period in my life occurred when I read the writings of three of P.Y.'s disciples, who, following a disagreement with the main organization, decided to follow their own path. I also obtained recordings of the lectures given by one of them. I was optimistic that their level of spiritual realization would enable them to make clear P.Y.'s teachings through their own direct experience. To put it simply, I was looking for teaching materials that were authentic and could support my inner practice.

The first disciple was exceptional at recalling even the most minute details of his *Guru's* life, but he did not mention the *Higher Kriyas* in his teachings.

Despite the second disciple's didactic and methodical approach, his material was well-organized but didn't offer anything truly new.

I was impressed by the third person's sincerity as he recounted the painful experience of mental illness with a powerful force. In his literature, I found only one sentence that was truly illuminating – about *Kechari Mudra* – and everything else was almost unbearably dull.

If there were secrets, the three disciples took great care to keep them hidden!

While conducting my research, I came across texts that are thought to be written by the disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya. According to tradition, Lahiri Mahasaya himself dictated commentaries on sacred scriptures and *P. Bhattacharya* published them. These texts were recently translated into English.

These writings seemed of little value to me based on an exegetical perspective, and my disappointment was profound. It wasn't easy for me to accept that these interpretations were actually from Lahiri Mahasaya. The practical clarity and sublime realization that were visible in his diaries and letters were entirely absent.⁸

I then began to hypothesize that Lahiri Mahasaya had verbally commented on some sacred texts and, inspired by the fervor of the moment, had let his teachings on *Kriya* flow freely, transcending the literal meaning of the verses. The possibility exists that those words were transcribed and

⁸ At that time, books like Ashoke Chatterjee's *Purana Purusha* were not yet available to readers.

interpreted by his listeners as commentary on the texts, and then the publisher added his own personal understanding.

A few months later, the *Meditation Counselor* uncovered that I had read a banned book, written by a former disciple of P.Y., and, moreover, that I had given a copy to two friends.

In a letter to an acquaintance, she gave her opinion and referred to me as “a person who stabs his *Guru* in the back and gives daggers to others for the same purpose”.

I was not hurt by her excessive reaction. I comprehended that she was overcome by uncontrollable emotions. Her common sense was weakened by decades of conditioning.

My only emotion towards her was compassion, and I smiled as I imagined her state of mind while she wrote those words. It's possible that she felt a certain, personal satisfaction seeing her fears about me come to pass: she could now claim to have predicted everything and sensed my “betrayal.”

I MADE THE DECISION TO REVISIT THE LESSONS

I made the choice to start studying the correspondence course again, with the aim of approaching it from a fresh perspective. I organized regular meetings with some *kriyaban* friends. We read the most significant lessons together and enthusiastically discussed them, hoping to find inspiration in them that could deepen our *Kriya* practice. However, every attempt was unsuccessful. It was like trying to squeeze blood from a stone: no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't extract new life from those pages.

The lessons were not solely focused on teaching *Kriya Yoga* meditation techniques. The guide offered advice on daily life, including how to cultivate friendships, manage relationships, choose a career that aligns with one's spiritual growth, and even suggest following a balanced vegetarian diet.

In addition to these practical topics, there were also more esoteric teachings that, although not necessary for the practice, had a certain fascination for us.

Slowly, I realized that I had given too much significance to these secondary aspects of the spiritual journey. Telepathy, pranic healing, or recognizing people from past lives were practices that sparked my interest.

I must admit that I did not follow the advice given in the lessons about prudence and discernment. I was led astray by enthusiasm and shallow emotions, lacking the necessary clarity.

During that time, I had a sense of constant support from a higher force, confident that the *Guru's* guidance and blessings were always present in my life. With time, I came to understand that my dream of following every instruction to the letter was actually a naive fantasy. Upon the demise of that belief, I felt lost. I had the impression of having wasted energy and not having healed or assisted anyone. In fact, I was feeling like I had made a fool of myself and, more painfully, that I had offended the sensibilities of others.

I realized that I had been swept away by fantasy, particularly regarding the topic of past lives. I had concocted films in my mind, convinced that they were authentic memories. I was deeply shaken when the truth became clear, and for months, I struggled to think clearly. During that time, there was much confusion and silent pain.

In time, I came to the conclusion that anything in the teachings that wasn't directly related to meditation techniques was **superfluous** for me. Although some topics may seem harmless, they had the opposite effect on me: they burdened my mind and made my journey more challenging.

This inspired me to seek out a path that was more fundamental, without any mental distractions, and was grounded in simplicity and direct experience.

My desire for authenticity was the driving force behind my introduction to *Japa* practice. In many traditions is called *Inner Prayer*. Through quietness and awareness, I was able to reconnect with the living essence of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

THE VALUE OF JAPA: THE BREATHLESS STATE

To start, I want to talk about an important technique that I learned from the organization mentioned in the previous chapter. I then discuss my belief that Japa is beneficial in reducing the background noise that hinders meditation practice. In the end, I share my experience with the state of breathlessness.

We were introduced to the technique of perceiving the cosmic sound of *Om* by a meditation counselor who visited our meditation group one day. For months, her words had a sacred quality that stayed with me, assisting me in overcoming the initial stage where it seemed impossible for internal sounds to emerge.

As I reflect on that encounter, I long for the deep love for the Divine that this technique brought forth, which I felt so vividly then.

In that time, I lived almost like a hermit. I sat in a cold and dimly lit room for meditation. Rainy days and early winter evenings drew me to solitude, fueling my desire to awaken my “inner sun” through meditation.

Although I consistently practiced inner listening for weeks, I did not achieve any results.

Until one evening, after twenty minutes of quiet effort, something happened. I was slowly returning to full awareness after a brief, sweet reverie when I perceived a faint sound, like the buzzing of a mosquito. As I continued listening, the sound transformed into a faint tinkling, like tiny bells.

The sound intensified and turned into the echo of a distant bell, which seemed to resonate during the sunset from deep-green wooded hills.

I was delicately reached by the call that came from an unfathomable distance. The tolling was as sweet as a shower of petals and gently knocked on the doors of my heart.

I felt a sense of complete fulfillment, as if my spiritual journey had suddenly achieved its longed craved goal.

The deepest memories of my childhood surfaced at the edges of my consciousness without disrupting the profound recollection I was in.

Throughout my entire life, even in the toughest times, I have always felt protected by a benevolent smile that has been around me. The sound I was listening to gave me the same feeling of comfort.

All the beauty I had ever encountered in my life was contained in it. Around that golden thread, the most exhilarating and captivating love experiences had developed, like dazzling crystals.

I sensed old wounds melting away, as if a deep acceptance was causing a spontaneous recovery. The celestial hands touched my heart, filling it with an endless, blue stillness. What I thought was impossible for years and was cruel to accept had now brought a silent and real fulfillment into my heart.

In the days that followed, I was completely engrossed in this practice. I experienced a new, spontaneous devotion within myself, which brought together my inner life and daily experience. As if a winter landscape were softened by a blanket of snow and every rough patch was erased, reality appeared transfigured.

MODIFICATION OF THE SEQUENCE OF TECHNIQUES

Since receiving my *Kriya* initiation, I had always adhered to my organization's guidelines, which include starting with *Hong-So* and *Om* technique and then proceeding with *Kriya Pranayama*.

The purpose of *Hong-So* was to calm the breathing and encourage greater concentration. The internalization of consciousness was further enhanced by listening to the *Om* sound. *Maha Mudra* was followed by *Kriya Pranayama* once immobility was restored. *Jyoti Mudra's* instruction was followed by ten minutes of pure concentration in *Kutastha*.

The two preliminary techniques, according to my experience, did not receive the attention they deserved. The *Hong-So* practice's beauty was interrupted by the thought of moving on to the *Om* technique, which disrupted the calm that had been achieved. Furthermore, I had to stop listening to the sound of *Om* and dedicate myself to *Maha Mudra*.

The act of stopping to listen to *Om*, which for me meant an entire universe and a direct path to mystical experience, was not just an inconvenience. It almost became a pain and a loss I could not accept. It had no logic.

It was as though I recognized a friend in a crowd, had a brief moment with him, and then voluntarily moved away from that location, with the intention of finding my friend again later to continue our discussion. What is the purpose of interrupting what I was already experiencing in a way that is both direct and concrete?

The sound of *Om* was something I have always sought. Why abandon it in the hope that another technique can bring me back to such a sublime experience? Even though *Kriya Pranayama* was important, it didn't provide me with immediate and tangible results like listening to the internal sounds that I was required to abandon.

The spiritual dimension had become more accessible to me through inner listening technique. For me, the most rational choice was to continue with it instead of switching to *Kriya Pranayama*.

Nevertheless, I had to adhere to this pattern, which I found to be illogical. At that time, I thought that using logic and drastically altering the routine was a sign of stupid arrogance. Our group's 'loyalty' was a name given to that madness, which had such power! Regrettably, I have to admit that I had become like one of those animals who are fed by humans and have lost the capacity to be self-reliant.

When I attempted to talk about this issue with other *kriyabans*, I was met with a lot of unreasonable and overwhelming resistance. There were those who were not pleased with their practice but planned to improve it in the future, while others were incapable of understanding what I was saying.

Despite pretending to listen attentively, a woman who had almost become part of my family ultimately bluntly stated she already had a *Guru* and didn't need another one. Her remark was a severe blow to me because I was only aiming for having with her a rational interview. What happens to friendship when one person expresses themselves so abruptly?

My desire to utilize the techniques in the most efficient manner was questioned. *Kriyaban* friends interrupted my debate by stating that devotion was the most crucial factor. Often, they talked about a concept that, according to me, was not appropriate for *Yoga*: the supreme value of loyalty towards P.Y. and its organization.

One day, I chose to use my brain and make a change to my routine. The inspiration for this routine was the teachings of *Patanjali*. I decided that either one of the two techniques, *Hong So* or *Om*, should be used in the final part of the routine, or not at all.

On the days when I chose to practice the *Hong So* technique, I performed it 'inside' my spine. The practice of *Kriya Pranayama* increased my spine's sensitivity, and I could 'observe' my breath as if it were moving not in and out of the lungs but up and down along the spine.

From that point on, my practice of *Kriya Pranayama* was marked by an emotion and sense of sacredness that I am unable to describe. Before I began practicing, I frequently recited as a *mantra* a phrase of *Lalla*

Yogiswari, quoted in *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

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

This image increased my enthusiasm and strengthened my determination to continue perfecting my *Kriya* practice and always rejoice in his power.

I RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING KRIYA

Two years after learning the so-called *Kriya proper*, I was given the technique of the *Second Kriya* by correspondence.⁹ This *Second Kriya* involved dwelling on each *Chakra*, trying to perceive something subtle, and then move on to the next one. Although I had little experience in the *Chakras*, I found that the practice was effective. When I had the chance to lie down and rest after this practice, profound experiences occurred.

My state of mind saw a remarkable increase in love for the Divine. During a spontaneous energy rise in the spine, this love was particularly intense. A sense of celestial music accompanied my vision of *Kutastha*. My heart is filled with a yearning that is unparalleled, as if my being had been divided into a thousand and each was filled with joy and love.

The repetition of experiences resulted in a specific state of mind that characterized the entire day. In my diary, I wrote: 'This thing that I have is exactly what I wanted. There is nothing more important to me than that.' All the things I still long for in life have become a reality in my heart.

At the start of the summer, I received a book that discussed the habit of a mystic (*Brother Lawrence*) to speak with the Divine as if it were present. I made an effort to start this practice with some difficulty. This practice was akin to going against the flow in comparison to my habits, but I persevered with it for a few days. I cannot remember what I actually did, but it was a truly monumental effort.

When I couldn't lie down and rest after my routine practices, I began practicing what I later called '*mental Pranayama*'. I let my breath flow freely, focused on each *Chakra*, both ascending and descending, and was overwhelmed by a profound sensation of sweetness. My thoughts calmed down and went away.

One day, I wrote in my journal: "The time dimension disappears: I am no longer aware of my location. I would remain in this state forever, captivated by such sweetness. At the conclusion of my meditation session today, I heard the bells ringing in the distance, but I couldn't tell if it was

⁹ It took many years for me to comprehend that what I learned wasn't the true *Second Kriya*, but a unique and profound lesson that PY had chosen to impart.

evening or morning.”

I AM BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH JAPA PRACTICE

It took months, even years, before I was introduced to the thoughts of *Sri Aurobindo* by a friend. I began studying the writings of *Mère (The Mother)* and *Satprem*. *Sri Aurobindo's* disciple, *The Mother*, continued the research of this Master after his death in 1951.

Throughout her life from 1958 until her death in 1973, *The Mother* shared her unique exploration with *Satprem*.

The transcripts of their interviews are available in *Mother's Agenda* (6000 pages in 13 volumes). It was an amazing revelation! In the thought of *Sri Aurobindo*, *the Mother* and *Satprem* there was a concept, a clear, immovable objective: to direct the Divine (which *Sri Aurobindo* preferred to name *Super-mind*) in the physical realm, specifically in the cells of our body.

The Mother sparked a strong attraction in me: I had never heard anything like her teaching before. It was, dare I say, irreverent. *The Mother* had a typically Western way of reasoning. She discussed the themes of Indian spirituality in a language that was at once lyrical and rational and beautiful to the highest degree.

The Mother gave voice to my innermost convictions in a fantastic way. Two fascinating concepts were able to shock me and save me from my current condition.

The first concept concerned her commentary on *Sri Aurobindo's* aphorism n.70: "Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more charitable and pitying to others." Commenting on it she wrote:

The need to be virtuous is the great obstacle to true self-giving. This is the origin of Falsehood and even more the very source of hypocrisy – the refusal to accept to take upon oneself one's own share of the burden of difficulties.

Do not try to appear virtuous. See how much you are united, one with everything, that is anti-divine. Take your share of the burden, accept yourselves to be impure and false and in that way you will be able to take up the Shadow and offer it. And in so far as you are capable of taking it and offering it, then things will change. Do not try to be among the pure. Accept to be with those who are in darkness and give it all with total love.

Reading this comment gave me an immediate burst of joy.

Saying on another occasion: 'Morality is the greatest obstacle on the spiritual path', she emphasized the value of not trying at any cost to

become pure in the eyes of others. It was crucial to act in accordance with the true essence of oneself. Her belief is that everyone should acknowledge their negative side. Deep within the human being, that same substance stirs: in some cases, it has become a way of life deemed deplorable or criminal by society.

The second concept was how she approached the subject of *Japa*. I was influenced by *the Mother* to make *Japa* a constant reality in my life.

According to her, repeating a *mantra* was a spontaneous and natural thing she did; she didn't receive a solemn initiation.

During a film screening in *Sri Aurobindo's Ashram*, she recounted hearing a devotional chant "*Om Namō Bhagavateh*" and wondered what would occur if she repeated it during her daily meditation. She carried out that action, and the outcome was exceptional. She reported that:

It (the *Mantra*) coagulates something: all the cellular life becomes one solid, compact mass, in a tremendous concentration – with a single vibration. At the place of all the usual vibrations of the body, there is now only one single vibration. It becomes as hard as a diamond, a single massive concentration, as if all the cells of the body had ... I became stiff from it. I was so stiff that I was one single mass. [This quotation is drawn from *Mother's Agenda*.]

During the day the *Mantra* became a sweet presence:

On the days when I have no special preoccupations or difficulties (days I could call normal, when I am normal), everything I do, all the movements of this body, all, all the words I utter, all the gestures I make, are accompanied and upheld by or lined, as it were, with this *Mantra*: *Om Namō Bhagavateh... Om Namō Bhagavateh...*, all the time, all the time, all the time.

Satprem is told by the *Mother* how the *Mantra* calms those around him and creates an intense atmosphere that avoids disharmonies

Mantra has a great action: it can prevent an accident. It simply springs forth in a flash, all of a sudden: "It has to spring up without thinking, without calling: it should issue forth from the being spontaneously, like a reflex, exactly like a reflex.

The Mother could tell the difference between those who have a *Mantra* and those who do not:

With those who have no *Mantra*, even if they have a strong habit of meditation or concentration, something around them remains hazy and vague, whereas *Japa* imparts to those who practice it with a kind of precision, a kind of solidity: an armature. They become galvanized, as it were.

The writings of *The Mother* inspired me to add a *Mantra* to my *Kriya*

practice.

PREDILECTION FOR THE MANTRA OF SWAMI RAMDAS

This Indian saint (1884-1963) traveled across India continuously chanting the *Mantra* 'Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om'. Discovering the simplicity of his life and the grandeur of his experiences was incredibly motivating. His photo and the almost childlike simplicity of his smile made me feel tremendous admiration for this person.

His father instructed him on the *Ram Mantra*, telling him that the perfect peace he desired would be achieved by repeating it relentlessly. *Ramdas* gave up his job and became *Sadhu*, a beggar in search of God.

His lips were constantly reciting the *mantra* 'Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om'. Apart from *Japa*, he embraced the discipline of seeing all people as a manifestation of *Ram* (God) and accepting every situation as a result of God's will. In a brief amount of time, the *mantra* vanished from his lips and entered his heart.

At the point between his eyebrows, the Spiritual Eye was clearly visible to him. Soon, he became accustomed to abiding in the light of the Spirit as a permanent experience. The year 1963 was when *Swami Ramdas* achieved *Mahasamadhi*. His teaching was incredibly straightforward:

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

Utter Rama's name any time, amid all of life's distractions, whenever there is a momentary return of your consciousness to Self-awareness. When this happens, feel the ensuing joy and concentrate on it as long as possible. Perfect your surrender to God, when facing every event. At night, when free from worldly duties, devote yourself to intense practice of *Japa*.

Wouldn't it be feasible for me to use his method and undergo all the stages of internalization? I made an effort to follow what he did, which was to mentally repeat the *mantra* throughout the day. I experienced three beautiful days that filled me with delight. As I sat on a bench in the public park and chanted my *mantra*, I shed tears of joy.

But the effort was too much, so I quit practicing. By striving too hard I was at risk of developing an aversion to this practice. I endeavored to utilize wisdom and recharge myself with aspiration towards the Divine.

MY THIRD ESSENTIAL STEP IN THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

On one occasion, a colleague of mine gave me a Catholic rosary after he returned from a pilgrimage to *Medjugorje*. I brought it along for my countryside walk and decided to use it. I practiced the Mantra: *Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om* loudly for approximately 108 times, using the rosary twice. A Catholic rosary is made of 60 beads, but I later acquired a 108-grain *Mala*.

The *Mantra's* sound, which I had previously heard on a spiritual chants recording, was extremely pleasant. I whispered thru my lips, making it vibrate within my chest, and infused it with the aspirations of my heart. My attitude wasn't like that of a devotee begging the Divine for something, but the one of a man who knows that he's nearing his goal. Through this method, I created a genuine act of devotion from my heart.

In my view, devotion is to express gratitude to a reality that is superior to my ego, whose beauty I feel as if enchanted. Despite feeling a bit dizzy at times, I persevered to complete my 108 reps quietly.

No special activity took place during the rest of the day: there were no spiritual readings or devotional songs. I went to my room in the evening to practice my *Kriya* session. I felt a sense of tranquility in and around me, but nothing seemed to indicate that a few minutes later I would experience something that had a profound impact on my life.

During *mental Pranayama*, while moving up and down the spine, I felt that my cells were being supported by fresh energy that was not derived from inhaled air. I enjoyed this sensation calmly and continued my practice without any interruptions. I stood still for a moment on each *Chakra*, akin to a bee attracted to the nectar of flowers, hovering on each one in great delight.

The more I relaxed, the more I could simultaneously observe the *Chakras* and the physical body. The discovery of an inner light and complete mental transparency was a signal that a new state of consciousness was being established in me. The breath became very short, but eventually reached stillness, like a pendulum gently reaching the point of equilibrium.

My mind had calmed down completely. I had reached perfect stillness, but eventually realized that I was completely breathless. The condition lasted a few minutes without any discomfort and there wasn't even a sudden sensation of surprise or the thought of 'Finally I have it!'

A tranquil euphoria could be felt beyond the confines of the mind: the assurance that I had finally found something stable and immutable. This substance was solid, unlike the evanescent flow of existence that I

encountered at times, which had the consistency of a continuous succession of reflections on the water.

Several months ago, I read about *Mother's* encounter with *Sri Aurobindo*. *The Mother* mentioned sitting next to *Sri Aurobindo* on the floor. She felt a sudden surge of massive peace and silence coming down from above, clearing her mind, removing all contents, and ending in her heart region.

The Mother remained sitting for a while while *Sri Aurobindo* was conversing with someone else, and then quietly and without disturbing anyone, she got up and left. She was unable to do anything but express her gratitude to the Divine and *Sri Aurobindo*. My experience with *Japa* reminded me of what she had experienced.

It was a surprise to me that one of the simplest techniques in the world, like *Japa*, had yielded such a valuable result! Where my best efforts were unsuccessful, *Japa* came up with the miracle!

The same event occurred again in the days that followed, always during *mental Pranayama* and after my daily *Kriya* breaths. I had never exceeded 36 *Kriya* breaths. The practice of *Japa* had a perfect connection to the attainment of breathlessness. My previous attempts at quieting my mind were perceived as elusive, short-lived, superficial, and illusory in comparison to the results achieved through *Japa*.

MY MEDITATION ROUTINE IS NOW PERFECTED

This event happened every day, but only when I met the following conditions:

[1] *Japa* has to be practiced with the voice and not mentally for at least one *Mala* (108 times).

[2] It should not have to be practiced immediately before the *Kriya* session: a couple of hours before was the ideal time.

[3] Once completed the 108 repetitions, the *Japa* has to proceed mentally, effortlessly, regardless of whether the mind is concentrated or not.

[4] The routine should include the practice of one *Higher Kriya* (12 repetitions) preceded by a short practice of *Kriya* breaths (20) and followed, to achieve a deep relaxation, by the practice of 16 very deep and calm *Kriya* breaths.

[5] The breathlessness occurs after this practice by letting the breath free. This is achieved by gently focusing on the first three *Chakras* (in sequence) and then dedicating all the remaining time to establishing a connection with the *heart Chakra*.

I have never, I repeat never, reached beyond this fourth *Chakra*. Within it, I discovered the ultimate state of perfection! Many years later, I came to understand why I couldn't go beyond this *Chakra*. I comprehended that concentrating on the first three *Chakras* is the method for reaching the *Samana* current located in the navel area.

By using this current, you can enter *Sushumna* and establish consciousness in the fourth *Chakra*, making it possible to attain a breathless state. Going beyond this *Chakra* was a waste of time.

During the summer, my routine consisted of practicing *Japa* in the morning and *Kriya* in the countryside at noon. Each routine culminated in a breathless state. For several months, this event occurred every day from June to September.

In those moments, my mind's work, which is thought, did not function. I was only pure awareness. Often, I remember opening my eyes. Immediately I felt a sense of inner freedom. The awareness of the inner energy that sustains the body increased. I was captivated by the sparkling splendor of the Divine that manifests in my cells. Through a calm but deep emotion, I had an experience that was completely new to me.

Sri Ramana Maharshi wrote:

Hearken! It stands as an insentient hill. Its action is mysterious, past human understanding. From the age of innocence it had shone in my mind that Arunachala was something of surpassing grandeur, but even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai I did not realize its meaning. When it drew me up to it, stilling the mind, and I came close I saw IT STAND UNMOVABLE.

Well, the experience of breathlessness that I shared was the 'UNMOVABLE' for me!

THE IMPLICATION OF WHAT I HAD EXPERIENCED

The arrival of winter naturally prompted introspection due to the presence of something in the air. The slow fire of a wood-burning stove warmed up the room, allowing my thoughts to delicately return to the experiences of the summer months, in particular, those moments of solitude in the woods when time seemed to stand still and my *Kriya* practice revealed a whole new experience.

The landscape I saw from above, from a refuge hidden among the trees, stayed in my memory like a seal of transparency, an image that extends beyond the realm of the external world to encompass the internal dimension. During those profound silences, breathing stopped, not because

there was lack of air, but because of a sort of natural suspension, in which a silent inner force emerged, able to support the body from within.

The experience was not mystical in the usual sense, but it pointed out the existence of something greater – a living, non-conceptual Presence, which is often referred to as the Divine. The experience was not a theoretical thought or a belief, but rather a tangible, delicate, and life-changing one.

The breathless state felt like an internal earthquake to me. Getting back to daily life was not an easy task. I experienced an overwhelming urge to live more intensely, go beyond known limits, and open myself to new horizons of understanding and experience. The desire to travel and learn new languages grew more intense.

An understanding arose slowly. I realized that what I had experienced was not a significant alteration in my personality. I had returned to my original self, who had embarked on the path of *Pranayama* many years ago after studying it in a *Hatha Yoga* manual. This occurred before I even started reading P.Y.'s book.

What I thought was a radical change was actually a return to authenticity. Despite its simplicity, this truth was powerful. It wasn't about being a different person, but to give up on what no longer felt like my own – beliefs, roles, formal affiliations that once were significant, but had lost their power. I now felt free and had the strength and motivation to live this state.

It's simple, particularly in certain structured spiritual paths, to follow a doctrine outwardly while seeking something different inside. The experience I had enabled me to identify my true identity and reveal what was truly mine.

By joining P.Y.'s organization, I removed myself from my own thinking and adopted a set of ideas that didn't align with the dimension where my heart was.

I acknowledge, but it makes me feel uncomfortable to admit it, that I had “*played*” the role of a faithful and dedicated disciple in that scenario. In fact, my heart was completely foreign to that environment. Being a member of this spiritual organization had created an illusion – believing that the path consists of conformity rather than transformation.

For a time, I chose the path of obedience and form, guided by the hope of receiving valuable teachings, which in my case was the transmission of *Kriya Yoga*. But the authentic path is not based on role-playing or passively waiting for blessings. True discipline is a result of a profound need for beauty, truth, freedom, and perfection.

Kriya was deemed a 'stroke of luck' by following the organization's suggestions, a unique gift given to a select few. It took me a while to realize how far this idea was from the truth. My true 'luck' was not the formal initiation into *Kriya Yoga*, but the decision to practice *Ujjayi Pranayama* technique without any guidance. My true beginning occurred at that moment, when something inside me recognized an authentic path.

It was apparent that *Kriya Yoga* was simply a more refined version of what I already had started spontaneously. I hoped to open new doors of knowledge when I joined an organization, but it wasn't the case. Instead, it became an ambiguous experience: more of a form than a substance. My participation, rather than bringing about new possibilities, resulted in stifling my initial enthusiasm.

My sense of belonging and belief in receiving the Master's blessings led me to gradually stop listening to the intuition that guided me there. The certainty of being in the right place, surrounded by the *Guru's* blessings, caused my mind to lose the urgency of perfection and the freshness of enthusiasm. Regrettably, a practice that was once valuable has lost its vitality.

Now I had the ability to view everything from a new perspective. When I reflect on my initial self-teaching attempts, I saw a clear distinction: back then, every breath was an exploration and every practice was a field of discovery. I was following a teaching that I had chosen for myself instead of being guided by others. Each practice session brought with it a silent expectation, a calm enthusiasm, and a hidden joy. My aim was to achieve beauty and perfection, not because it was imposed from the outside, but because it was born from in my heart.

The *Kriya Yoga* I was searching for outside had already been present since the beginning, thanks to *Ujjayi Pranayama*. The 'sacred' technique that was passed down as a secret was nothing more than another form of what I had already discovered on my own. I have come to the realization that the most authentic spiritual experience are not obtained externally – but rather **recognized** in the realm of spontaneously arising experiences.

I made a decisive change when I realized I needed to change direction.

At that time, I came across inner prayer, which is simply reciting the divine name, as described in the book *The way of a Pilgrim*.

The idea of *Japa*, which involves repeating a *mantra* or prayer, touched me deeply. My choice wasn't based on blind faith or naive hope, but rather on

my inner intuition: I sensed that there was something alive there, something that could aid me in rediscovering my lost connection.

Through this simple practice, I gained a new experience of Kriya Pranayama and the light went on. To advance, I didn't need any sophisticated technique or external guidance, just courage and following my intuition. Genuine transformation is possible through the prompts of your heart.

And so it happened. Although it was subtle, the change was real. Only then did the practice of Pranayama reveal its hidden power.

I comprehended that even though I had experienced a profound experience, like the breathless state, the self-taught attitude I used to have had returned. Although I went through an internal upheaval, my temperament, mental habits, and personality structure, formed over time by life and environment, have not disappeared. My character, which was created over time, remained intact.

During the breathless state, I experienced moments of pure joy, a feeling of inner freedom where everything was clear, simple, and silent. During those moments, all conflicts are resolved and the heart finally takes back control.

But the most significant thing I realized was that my mind disappeared while in the breathless state and I became “pure awareness.” Once the meditation session is over, my mind reappears, but my thinking is more lucid.

Gradually, I learned how to use my mind in a healthy way and let go of many conditionings. I acquired the skill of never losing focus. Habits return with all their strength where vigilance is absent.

Transformation that is genuine is slow, patient, and persistent. We have to stay present, observing what happens within us day after day, without any drama or judgment. The spiritual path becomes a practice of constantly being aware, not just a collection of exceptional experiences.

CONCLUSION

Today, I regret not discovering the transformative value of *Japa*, the internal repetition of the sacred Name much earlier. It has only been with time that I have come to realize how fundamental it is to calm the mind on the spiritual path. A quiet mind is necessary for becoming receptive to the presence of the Divine, and this is an essential rule.

When the mind is quiet, even for a short time, a door opens. Through that door, the inner light has the ability to penetrate into the most deep layers of

one's being, bypassing thoughts, fleeting emotions, and fragmentary sensations, until it gets to the body itself, its cells, and its silent consciousness. True contact, the transformational one, takes place here.

In the end, the spiritual path only necessitates simplicity and silence. The goal is not to escape the world or seek exceptional experiences, but rather to learn to listen with deep intention. A restless or impatient mind is not where the Divine manifests itself. When we stop looking anxiously and begin to become more aware with humility, it becomes apparent.

Japa, in its discretion, gives us precisely this: a rhythm that harmonizes, a presence that brings us back to our hearts. Through perseverance, internal tensions can be released and a peaceful environment can be created. The space where the true encounter can take place, not with a notion of the Divine, but with its alive, subtle, and unmistakable reality, is the one made of silence, patience, and sincerity.

CHAPTER 4

SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINAL KRIYA

Following my enthralling experience of the breathless state, I met several Kriya teachers with the aim of further improving my practice. As time went by, I realized that there was no way to make an improvement. Nevertheless, I came across several aspects of Kriya Yoga that were unfamiliar to me at that point.

I was sucked into the idea of learning the German language and spent a month in Vienna to attend a German course for foreigners. I purchased a book that stated that the *Kriya* of Lahiri Mahasaya was the genuine one, not the one taught by my organization. *Swami Hariharananda*, who wrote the book, stated that his life's purpose was to impart the knowledge to those who contacted him in person.

I had a suspicion (now proved correct) that P.Y. had taught a simpler version of *Kriya* to meet the needs of his Western disciples. I flipped through that book with the intention of comprehending the *Kriya* being taught by the author.

It was unexpected to discover that the practice of *Pranayama* is inaccurate if the practitioner does not hear the internal sound of *Om* after taking enough breaths. The sound had to be listened to with the ears open.

The sentence kept me awake at night. I understood that an unimaginably profound and valuable method of spiritual realization had been removed from me by P.Y. due to his difficulty in transmitting it to his first American disciples.

I endeavored to experiment without any guidance, and something started to function. The attempt to incorporate listening to internal sounds with *Kriya Pranayama* was starting to yield results. In my opinion, this idea was brilliant.

My days began to fill up with a distinct form of inner joy. The experience I was having was intensely emotional for me. I read and reread *Swami's* book and felt happy by underlining certain sentences.

It's a shame that my daily use of *Japa* became less intense. I shifted my focus away from deepening my breathless state and towards discovering how this *original Kriya* could benefit me.

The following thought occurred to me a few months ago: "I will never be

forced to give up the pleasure of being breathless, not even for a moment, for the rest of my life. This is the most authentic experience I have ever had!"

But my mind was shaken by the frantic search to fully understand this *original Kriya*. I had opened a door that was difficult to close.

I was informed that *Swami Hariharananda* would have a short stay in Europe before going to the United States for surgery. Excited by this news, I made all efforts to meet him and receive his initiation into this *Original Kriya*. Eventually, that time came.

The emotional impact of the introductory lecture was significant. His appearance was regal and dignified. His handsome appearance was accentuated by his ochre robe. An old man with long hair and a beautiful beard was the personification of the sage. I spotted him hidden behind a group of people; I sensed that his speech was based on genuine experience.

I was ecstatic at the prospect of making improvements to the *Kriya* techniques that I had practiced without interruption for many years. At certain points during the conference, I was unable to give him enough attention because of my enormous curiosity in finding new technical details.

This master's words, which were both stupendous and fascinating, were a major revelation for me. It is certain that the concepts I absorbed from the conference and initiation led me to conceive *Kriya Yoga* in a new way. He was firmly committed to the idea that *Kriya* had to be utilized to enter the *Omkar* reality. All the different phases of *Kriya* had to be traversed by the *Omkar* perception, just like a thread for stringing pearls.

According to him, this must not only be perceived through sound and light, but also through a feeling of oscillation, movement, or internal pressure.

He touched the heads and chests of some students in the front row to transmit a tremor to their bodies and help the students understand these three aspects. In order for us to comprehend the essence of the *Omkar* experience, he offered all of himself to us.

During my initial *Kriya* school experience, I believed that the *Omkar* reality was limited to the technique of closing the ears to listen to inner sounds. I have come to understand that the *Omkar* reality encompasses multiple aspects and involves every aspect of *Kriya Yoga* practice. This discovery was one of the most significant ones along my spiritual path.

My obsession was centered around the question of what sounds should be produced in the throat during this *Original Kriya* and which center should the energy rise to when inhaling.

After much anticipation, I finally received initiation from him. The technique was very different from what I was used to. I attempted to combine this teaching with what I already had a good understanding of.

The goal was not to diminish the validity of what I had already experienced, but rather to add some more specifics that would enhance its effectiveness.

I conducted numerous experiments to come up with this fusion. His exceptional "*Forward bends*" and *Maha Mudra* were very appealing to me. His advice was that breathing should always happen through the nose and not through the mouth.

The breath should have a subtle sound and the breathing process shouldn't be excessively long. The sound remained subtle or disappeared eventually after many repetitions.

After this practice, there was another one that focused on imagining the spine as a well. Using a ladder that had the *Chakras* as its steps, you went down and up this well. The first breath helped you reach *Ajna* with awareness starting from the *fontanel*. The second breath helped you reach the fifth *Chakra* and so on, reaching all the remaining *Chakras*.¹⁰ Following several full rounds, you found yourself completely engulfed in a state of bliss.

After conducting a lot of research, I cannot now say that his *Kriya* is the *original one* taught by Lahiri Mahasaya. There are various methods of practicing *Kriya*, and each has valid and effective ways to bring consciousness inside the spine.

However, the decision to apply the principle of listening to the sound of *Om* without closing my ears during *Kriya Pranayama* helped me deepen my meditation in a fantastic way.

What I recall about that time

When I practiced the '*Om technique*' (which I received from my school), I was aware that every effort to listen to internal sounds was well-rewarded. The spiritual passion that arose from my heart at that time, along with an increase in devotion to the Divine, has never been eclipsed by any other events. I was fascinated by the prospect of rediscovering and reliving that period through the use of a more subtle form of *Kriya Pranayama*.

¹⁰ Later on, I became aware that *Swami Hariharananda's* teachings were entirely based on the teachings of the *Radhasoami movement*. Chapter 12 is where I will talk about this spiritual movement. Chapter 14 will provide a detailed explanation of *Swami Hariharananda's* complete teachings.

I was able to welcome the return of the old, familiar sweetness to my life with gratitude and an open heart. I felt as if I was experiencing heaven on earth for several weeks, thanks to my daily contact with the *Om* vibration.

I cannot imagine anything that can make a person feel so content. I realized that I now possessed a state of inconceivable sweetness and that I could enjoy it every day, not only during meditation but also when I am free from work or different commitments and I am relaxed. I focused solely on nourishing this experience in my *Kriya* practices.

During the winter of that year, I had an experience that I will always remember. I was off work for three weeks. Every morning, I stayed in my warm home, practicing as much as I could and applying the fundamental concepts that *Swamiji* had insisted on so much. I stayed at a beautiful winter sports resort for a few days and I was free to wander through the snow-white countryside without a specific destination.

While walking aimlessly, the sunset came early and the landscape was tinged with marvelous colors. The village that was buried in snow reflected all the possible colors of the spectrum, in those few seconds of splendor. That wonderful time in my life will always hold a special place in my memory.

Swami Hariharananda's specific form of *Second Kriya* was given to me after a year. The purpose of this technique was to experience the six *Chakras* in a deep way and then transcend their essence. All *Chakras* received equal distribution of *Prana*, which was intensified. Following several repetitions of the entire process, one feels that their consciousness is separated from the physical body, as if they were a cloud drifting in a peaceful sky.

After being initiated into *Second Kriya*, I wandered around the city where *Swamiji* was living: everything seemed even more beautiful than before. The sun shone and the bells rang during the splendor of noon. I lived in paradise. At this point in my life, I felt complete fulfillment, as if my learning journey on the *Kriya* path had come to an end.

One day at work, I sat in a room with a glass door and was able to view the mountains from afar. It was admirable to see a layer of snow on their top and a celestial sky above the snow. I was elated! My future years, represented by the distant sky, would be fully dedicated to *Kriya Yoga*. The thought of staying in this state for the rest of my life captivated me.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Next year, I had the chance to have a private interview with the *Swami*. My goal was to acquire information on the part of the *Second Kriya* that I already knew about, but which was not disclosed to me during the initiation. The entire *Sanskrit* alphabet syllables were employed in this section.¹¹

He recommended that I refrain from practicing this procedure. Instead, he guided me in the practice of the *Forward bends* procedure, which was a truly blessed experience! He repeated all the essential ideas in his teaching as if he wanted to fix them in my memory.

Regarding *Kriya*, he stated that the original essence of it has been lost in this generation. He said that he wished that I would experience and live in this spirit. In order to accomplish this, it was crucial to only practice what I already had, and nothing else.

As he looked at the shelf in his room, he pointed out a heavy document folder and asked me to bring it to him. He unlocked it and showed me numerous illustrations that depict various stages of *Kriya*. It appeared to me that he intended to demonstrate his complete knowledge of *Kriya*, but he assured me that what I had learned was sufficient for my present and future needs.

He observed my curiosity but made me realize that my desire to learn about other techniques in the future would result in a lack of commitment to essential techniques.

During that evening, I meditated at his feet alongside other devotees. I felt inspired by being there but I was a little disheartened. What were the means by which I could gain knowledge of the original *Higher Kriyas*? For those who had been acquainted with this *Swami* for a while, it was common knowledge that only certain disciples who accompanied him on his journeys and worked for him could receive higher teachings.

For years, I was kept up-to-date on the master's adventures. I noticed that a significant number of his disciples, who appeared to me to be devoted to him, deserted him. His refusal to teach anything more than his *Second Kriya* caused many to lose interest and led to his isolation.

It appeared that he didn't take into account the insatiable curiosity of the majority of *kriyabans*, who were willing to overcome any obstacle to their search.

The people most essential to him were alienated by an automatic reflex

¹¹ This information was obtained by me many years ago. I publish it in the Appendix.

triggered by his unfortunate decision. Regrettably, these individuals, driven by their desire for a complete teaching, began to search for other teachers.

He was disappointed by their defection, but he remained steadfast in his decision. Those who attempted to persuade him of the absurdity of the situation and then correct it found themselves in front of a wall.

The soil he was plowing and cultivating became barren. He possessed all the necessary resources to attract the Western world. The book he wrote was a strategic move that made him very popular and established him as a key figure in *Kriya*. Furthermore, his Indian sage figure was a source of inspiration for others.

There were numerous researchers who were enthusiastic about him and prepared to back his mission. They would always view him as a 'god' and behave equally kindly towards any of his associates or successors.

There were individuals who were pleased with his *Kriya*, however, they were not highly motivated and would not have gone out of their way to organize seminars for him. To put it succinctly, the loyalty displayed by different students was not sufficient to prevent the worst outcome.

Although his admirable efforts and subtle subtleties to enrich our *Kriya*, making it more beautiful, were not enough to prevent him from encountering the shipwreck of his mission – at least here in Europe.¹²

Some individuals who had been occupied with organizing his seminars used the same leaflets with only minor changes in photos and names to invite another teacher from India.

Their actions were based on the understanding that this new teacher (*Shibendu Lahiri*) advocated for the complete explanation of *Kriya*. It is true that those who had already encountered this new teacher in India realized that he did not have a good spiritual realization. Maybe this invitation was made due to desperation rather than conviction.

How my quest to find the complete form of Swami Hariharananda's Kriya continued several years later.

A French researcher contacted me a couple of years after I first published this book. He stated that he was a former disciple of an ex disciple of *Swami Hariharananda* and expressed gratitude for posting *Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya* online. After discussing his interests, we proceeded to discuss *Swami Hariharananda's Kriya*.

He was pleased to finish my understanding of the *Second Kriya* and elaborated on the *Third Kriya*, hinting toward the start of the *Fourth Kriya*. I gained a full

¹² There is a little left, but it's not much compared to what he could have achieved if he had been more receptive to sharing his knowledge.

understanding of the *Fourth Kriya* when an American researcher shared a document with me years later. With the help of these two researchers it was possible for me to prepare the recent edition of chapter 14. The complete explanation of *Swami Hariharananda's Kriya* can be found there.

DIFFICULT PERIOD

The *Kriya Pranayama* practice was well established at that point, but I had yet to resolve my doubts about P.Y.'s *higher Kriyas*. I discussed this with a friend who had shared with me the journey I had undertaken to meet *Swami Hariharananda*.

Having no idea how to proceed, we made the choice to receive *Kriya* initiation from two teachers who were considered “minor” and were former close collaborators of a well-known *Guru*, but who had later become independent.

It was evident to us that they had limitations: their preparation appeared mediocre and sometimes superficial, and there were signs of instability on both personal and moral levels. Their understanding of *Kriya Yoga* was limited and their method of teaching it was approximate.

However, we hoped that they could provide us with some clarification on the so-called *original Kriya*.

In the end, we accepted an initiation ceremony that, in retrospect, appeared to be more like a formality than an actual spiritual event. The explanations were concise and ambiguous. I endeavored to persuade myself that I was acquiring valuable knowledge.

I often mistaken a simple feeling of well-being, which comes naturally when experimenting with a new technique, for proof of its effectiveness. I was unaware that I was allowing my ego to be my guide on my spiritual journey.

I rebuffed the idea that this new initiation had made little difference to what I already knew. I had put aside profound experiences that I had previously had, like hearing the *Om* vibration or experiencing spontaneous breath suspension.

Access to every seminar was enshrined in a solemn promise of secrecy. We all pledged it, but the moment the meeting concluded, the information was freely shared with other *kriyaban* friends of us. I began to feel the weight of this contradiction.

Through my association with these teachers, I discovered a school that presented *Kriya Pranayama* in a way that was initially intriguing to me.

It was evident that it was not based on the teachings of Lahiri Mahasaya.

The method's foundation was the teachings of someone who was born in India and relocated to the United States, and claimed to be *Babaji's* direct disciple.

The school didn't mention essential practices like *Talabya Kriya*, *Kechari Mudra*, *Navi Kriya*, *Omkar Pranayama*, *Thokar*, and other ones, which I would have to learn about later. Instead, the emphasis was on basic *yoga* techniques, which are similar to those commonly taught in gyms.

At the end of several long and uninspiring classes, the so-called “*Samadhi techniques*” were introduced with solemnity. In reality, these were uncomplicated and well-recognized exercises that are easily accessible in any beginner's *yoga* guide.

It was a shocking moment for me when I received banal teachings disguised as elevated practices. It dawned on me that this was not the path I was seeking. My confidence in that teacher declined significantly, particularly when he talked about his supposed encounter with *Babaji*. The utterly banal remarks attributed to this figure, such as the invitation to the teacher's wife to write a book of vegetarian recipes, left me convinced that such a meeting never took place, and I was therefore deeply disappointed.

The first glimpse into the “Kriya of the Cells”

My intention is to focus on the school's main teaching: *Kriya Pranayama*. The first step in the practice was to perceive sexual energy rising towards the brain through the *Ida* channel with each inhalation. This energy was depicted as having a rotatory movement in the crown region and undergoing a subtle transformation in that area.

The energy – that had been transformed into spiritual substance – was guided down through the *Pingala* channel during exhalation and spread throughout the body.

Since exhalation lasted twice as long as inhalation, there was sufficient time for this energy to “touch” the cells. The idea of a possible *Kriya of the cells* was born out of this detail.

However, there was a aspect of the technique presentation that I found to be irritating and at times nonsensical. After a small number of breaths – less than twenty – it was recommended to abruptly interrupt the practice and move on to the so-called *Dhyana Kriya*.

The latter involved creating a fantasy and visualizing it in minute detail until it seemed real.

It seemed inconsistent and meaningless to me that I suddenly switched from a profound technique oriented toward a lofty spiritual goal to a purely

imaginative exercise.

After several unsuccessful attempts, I came to the realization that the most reasonable decision would be to continue pursuing the main objective of *Kriya Pranayama* without using the breath, completely ignoring it.

My view was that the task should be entirely mental, relying solely on willpower, intuition, and visualization abilities.

I started practicing this way, and the results were immediate. I was very interested in this experiment and continued it for several months.

My experience was interrupted when the new *Kriya Yoga* teacher from India, whom we had been eagerly anticipating, finally arrived in my country. Even though I had been following this new teacher for six years, I still occasionally practiced what I now call my *Kriya of the Cells*.

The experience was so engrossing with insights and reflections that I decided to make a distinct chapter for it: chapter 17.

A BEAUTIFUL EVENT

Remember the instance when I was seeking clarification on the *Higher Kriyas* I had received through the correspondence course and the Minister refused to provide assistance. Nine years had elapsed. Although I felt somewhat distant from this organization, I still respected it. I took a *Kriya* review course in my country during the visit of two Ministers (two ladies). What I had once hoped for and was brutally denied, occurred naturally and with absolute ease during a break between classes.

I had a private conversation with one of the two ministers and everything was clarified. I had the luck of meeting a kind person who spoke directly from experience. I was able to clarify P.Y.'s statement that *Chakra* activation can occur through psycho-physical blows directed towards them. The use of the *Mantra* associated with breathing was mentioned in the statement, which made me feel reassured. She explained that by mentally chanting a syllable intensely in the seat of a *Chakra*, you can create a 'psycho-physical blow'.

This clarification inspired my practice. Upon my return home, I discovered unimaginable methods for perfecting the final portion of my *Kriya* routine. Through mental chanting the *Mantra* into every *Chakra*, I discovered the ability to touch its core with an almost physical intensity. This procedure was so sweet that the body stiffened like a statue and the mind became transparent like a crystal.

I wished to end my search for *Original Kriya* and consider my current *Kriya* routine as definitive. My routine was a wonderful amalgamation of

what I had been taught by my organization and *Swami Hariharananda*. Unfortunately, the eagerness to learn about *Kriya* had already caused chaos and injected a lethal poison into my soul.

SHIBENDU LAHIRI WAS THE LAST TEACHER I HAD

Due to visa problems, the teacher who was invited to Europe had to wait for two years to arrive. As soon as he got there, he discovered that a large number of *Swami Hariharananda's* disciples were already waiting for him. His arrival was received with enthusiasm, like a messenger sent by God. He was the one who presented us with the key to *Kechari Mudra*, imparted *Navi Kriya*, and shared other valuable teachings, including the *Higher Kriyas*.¹³

When I first met him, I wasn't in the best of moods. From some information I had, I knew that I was about to start a very different path, which made me feel uneasy because I didn't want to give up the stability of my spiritual routine. The *Omkar* dimension, which I had discovered thanks to *Swami Hariharananda*, remained deeply attached to me. I couldn't forget or put aside this dimension.

In the end, I agreed to meet with the new teacher solely to receive what my previous teacher had chosen not to convey to me. I went to that meeting with a determination to distance myself if I felt like I was losing my connection.

But my attention was drawn to new, increasingly intense practices and I forgot to listen to my internal sounds. It was a major mistake. It wasn't until later and with regret that I came to realize the foolishness of abandoning such a profound and beautiful practice.

I felt disconnected from the spiritual sweetness that I was used to, as if I had been transported to a foreign continent, immersed in experiences that were not meaningful to me.

I came into contact with *Shibendu Lahiri* at a yoga center. During his *Kriya* introduction, he stressed that his teaching was not about expanding the mind or the ego, but rather going beyond the mind itself. After some time, I realized that his method was influenced by *Jiddu Krishnamurti's* teachings.

Although he remained open and curious, I observed certain aspects of his personality that left a negative impression on many people. He was prone

¹³ *Kechari Mudra* and *Navi Kriya* will be discussed in chapter 7. Chapter 9 is where the detailed explanation of his teachings on the *higher Kriyas* will be given.

to anger and frequently drew too much attention to simple concepts, making them tedious.

I have a memory of someone asking him a genuine but pointed question during the meeting. As if he was shaken by an hypnotic state, he reacted furiously and verbally challenged the questioner, causing him to be humiliated in front of everyone. He frequently perceived the questions as personal attacks and responded with irritation, believing they were attempts to challenge his authority.

In spite of this, I chose to concentrate on learning his *Kriya* method, overlooking his personal shortcomings. I believed that his trip to the West was motivated by a desire to restore the authentic teaching, and this alone alleviated my initial discomfort. Although the techniques presented in the initiation seminar were sometimes briefly explained, they were generally clear.

While the instructions for *Kriya Pranayama* were correct, they were only understandable to those who had been practicing *Kriya Yoga* for some time. Despite everything, I believed that my effort to find the *original Kriya* was making progress. I was his student for several years. I will explain why I made the decision to discontinue all contact with him at a later time.

KECHARI MUDRA

After the initiation seminar ended, it took me three months to reach *Kechari Mudra*.¹⁴ The *Kechari* caused me to feel grogginess for several weeks. After experiencing mental foginess, I eventually learned to live in a constant state of tranquility.

Occasionally, I went for a walk. When I met someone and stopped by to talk, I was so happy that I couldn't hold back tears of joy. I suddenly felt joy burst into my chest and rise up to my eyes. By focusing on the distant mountains, I tried to direct my emotions in a way that would transform my paralyzing joy into an aesthetic rapture.

I used this as a way to conceal my joy. By comparing this new condition to that of the mystics, I became aware of the difficulty of living, completing daily and worldly duties, without feeling paralyzed by an ever-present sensation of intoxication!

¹⁴ It would be fair to inquire as to why the *Kriya* organization I adhered to did not teach a straightforward technique like *Talabya Kriya* to attain *Kechari Mudra*. Over time, I came to realize that this organization faced many difficulties and had to deal with more significant matters.

I got started with organizing initiation sessions for this teacher. I saw a flaw in the way this teacher explained *Kriya* techniques, which was the haste and superficiality with which he explained them. Philosophical discussions were a major focus, particularly on the day before initiation and throughout it. The main focus of these talks was on presenting the theme of **no-mind**.

I have absolutely no reservations about what he said; everything was correct. The problem was that several students were experiencing discomfort while sitting on the floor, causing their backs and knees to hurt. They patiently waited for the explanation of the techniques, enduring these conversations that were an annoyance to them.

In order to initiate, he asked for a coconut, which was extremely difficult to acquire in our locales, resulting in the students searching desperately for it from shop to shop. Due to his usual late arrival, those from other cities saw their plans for the return journey crumble and were very agitated.

Despite someone leaving the room in time to catch the last train, he still lingered on *Patanjali's Yama* and *Niyama*. He requested to make a vow that was absurd. From that point forward, male students should consider women (except for their spouses) as mothers, and women should consider males (except for their husbands) as fathers. The audience listened to his ravings with a sigh of unconcealed discomfort.

In my opinion, asking individuals who wish to learn the techniques of *Kriya Yoga* to make this vow and maintain it is a waste of time. Why not trust the transforming power of *Kriya* instead of asking this? Why does one think that a *kriyaban's* life should be dissolute without this oath?

When one experiences the sweetness of spiritual experience, the inclination to respect ethical values can manifest spontaneously. If a student displays unfavorable behavior, why not wait to see how *Kriya* affects him before insulting him by threatening to deny him *Kriya* initiation?

Not only was the technical explanation given in a hurried manner, but there was also another problem: he demonstrated the procedure by making an exaggerated vibrato sound.¹⁵ Although he knew that this sound was incorrect, he kept using it. I believe that it avoided the inconvenience of having to individually approach every learner, as is typical for *Kriya* teachers.

Regrettably, he did not take the time to explain that the sound should be smooth and not vibrate. I am aware that numerous people, believing that

¹⁵ I measured how much time he spent explaining the basic technique of *Kriya Pranayama* one day, and it only took two minutes!

this was the secret he brought from India, made an effort to make the same noise. In spite of the kind counsel of his close collaborators, he continued in this way.

THE REASONS WHY I LEFT THIS TEACHER

Those were the years during which I coordinated the seminars of this teacher in Italy. I had the pleasure of being visited by a few *Kriya Yoga* students who were initiated by *Swami Hariharananda*. They, like I, organized the tours of the new teacher in Germany. They stressed the need to communicate an intelligent proposal to him. The request was for a guided group practice of *Kriya* to be added after his initiation seminars.

I communicated my request to the teacher through a friend who was about to depart for India. I gave him a letter I wished he would receive personally, along with my greetings and a warm embrace.

It was unfortunate that the teacher took my letter as a criticism of his methods. As a result, he removed me from the list of tour organizers. Another Italian coordinator received his decision and didn't bother to inform me.

A few months have gone by. If I hadn't gone to welcome him upon his arrival in Europe, my adventure with this teacher would have ended there. We embraced as if nothing had happened. He probably perceived my presence as a sign of remorse. The master was resting when his collaborator, with slight embarrassment, explained to me what had been happening behind the scenes. He informed me that the master no longer regarded me as his disciple.

Dismay and disorientation overwhelmed me. I thought of giving up everything and ending any relationship with this master. To maintain the peace of those who were my friends and had followed me on this adventure, I made the decision to pretend that nothing had happened.

I made the choice to carry on working with him and to move past the subject discussed in the letter I had sent to him. If I had gone away, I would have disturbed the initiation into the *Higher Kriya* procedures based on the *Tribhangamurari* movement.

The next day was when this initiation was planned to take place. On that occasion, the beauty of Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* was revealed to those who had the sensitivity to see it. I was in charge of translating the lesson. I was capable of carrying out this function with ease, reporting every little detail. The person who would replace me in this task would have forgotten to translate 80% of the speech.

During the initiation, the teacher demonstrated the head movements in

Thokar (Higher Kriya) in a significantly different way from the previous year. When someone present asked for clarification about the change, he claimed that he had not made any changes, and added that there had been a translation problem in the previous year.

It was obvious that he was lying. The *kriyaban* recalled perfectly the head movements he had observed earlier. I knew, but could not tell, that the previous year the teacher had made some movements that were not correct.

Eventually, when he was alone and looking for something in a room, I found the courage to tell him that he had changed the *Thokar's* movements. With hatred in his eyes, he turned to me and yelled at me that my practice was not his concern. This was the only technical conversation I had with him during the years I was following him, as far as I can recall.

That was the moment when everything changed forever. I began to control myself and made the decision to always agree with him. Because of my good acting, he asked me to teach *Kriya* to those who expressed interest but couldn't meet him on his tours.

I accepted the task, but after a year, I realized that I was wasting time. I granted *Kriya* initiation by adhering to the fixed protocol that the master had instructed me to follow. Upon my departure from those students, I was aware that a large majority would practice for a maximum of ten days and then abandon everything to pursue other esoteric interests.

Usually, a few of the most persistent students would come up with questions and phone me, just to have the impression of maintaining a relationship with a genuine person remotely.

As soon as the teacher arrived in our country, I invited all new initiates to the seminars where this teacher would be present.

Sadly, many were not able to “survive” this encounter. They were used to asking questions and receiving exact answers, so they attempted to do the same with the teacher. Good heavens! He chuckled at most of the questions, stating that they were signs of unbalanced thinking.

It was common for him to get angry. Many of them experienced a profound crisis due to his complete lack of human understanding.

There were a lot of things that were not perfect. It was my belief that this man, who I tried to satisfy every whim like a sacred act, did not have a deep love for *Kriya*. Instead, he made use of it to lead a much more beautiful life in the West than his difficult life in India, as he often described to me

One more year had gone by. I went to a group of people abroad who wanted to be instructed in *Kriya Yoga*. In that group, I came across a very

serious student who had a good understanding of my teacher's methods and only attended the initiation seminar to review. He asked me important questions and always found accurate answers. "Who taught you all these details?" he inquired.

From a didactic point of view, my teacher was a complete disaster, as he was aware. He perceived that I had assimilated numerous details from other sources. Was it right for me to provide explanations using knowledge that had not been given to me by my teacher?

He comprehended my embarrassment and was puzzled that, even though he had given me permission to teach *Kriya*, I had never had the opportunity to speak openly to him about technical details!

It was my responsibility to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Despite my teacher's short temper, I hesitated heavily, but there was no other option.

Through a friend, I wrote him a letter that mentioned my problem and begged him to make time for us to discuss the matter after he arrived in my group during his next tour. Although he was in Australia, I should receive a response within a week at the latest.

I was prepared for a cataclysm in my subconscious. It was probable that he would get extremely angry and act irrationally. If things escalated and he stopped participating in our group due to our split, those who were close to him would suffer.

Very few could have comprehended the explanations for my actions. An imperfect but still comfortable situation would have been disturbed by me. In fact, my friends had a liking for him. The fact that he would come to our group every year was very stimulating, and they prepared for that event by intense *Kriya* practice.

A few days later, the reply arrived. To address me indirectly, he sent a fax to another coordinator. In a contemptuous manner, he wrote that my dependence on techniques would hinder my ability to transcend my mental dimension.

According to his view, I was similar to St. Thomas, eager to validate the soundness of his teachings. He stated that he would grant my request, but only with the purpose of satiating my ego. After reading "satiating my ego", I realized that he had not understood anything.

It's a shame we never talked seriously! I was pondering why he had never permitted me to discuss these issues. My intention was not to challenge him or destroy him. I contacted him to establish a definitive agreement on what to say and what not to say to the *kriyabans* during the initiation. Why had he always avoided me?

I chose to act as if I had not noticed his tone. I was just curious about what he would do. I avoided apologizing or responding resentfully. I made an effort to make it clear that I was teaching *Kriya* with his approval and that I needed to go over certain aspects of the *Kriya Yoga* techniques with him.

I pointed out that the other three European individuals who had received similar authorization from him to give *Kriya Yoga* initiation could also participate in this event. I made him realize that he wouldn't use up his time or breath solely for me.

Neither then nor ever again did I receive an answer. Weeks later, I was informed that my village was no longer listed on his website due to a modification in the plan for his visit to Italy. My second letter marked the decisive break.

The nightmare had been brought to an end! I took time off and went on a lengthy walk. I spent a lot of time walking, feeling nervous and imagining a possible conversation with him.

At one point, I shed tears of joy. It was a great experience – I was free. My time with this guy had been too long, and now it was truly over! I questioned myself as to why I had been following him for so long.

Receiving information about *Kriya* was not the reason I sacrificed my dignity. These techniques had already been explained to me by a friend of mine, who had studied under his father.

My conflicting behavior stemmed from my strong interest in the spread of *Kriya* here in Europe. It was significant to me that he traveled extensively throughout both the USA and Europe to spread *Kriya Yoga*.

He never asked for anything for his initiations (except for a free offer and a fair share of the costs of renting the seminar room) and I've always had a strong inclination to collaborate with him.

I faced every expense necessary to permanently set up a room in my house to host *Kriya* initiation seminars during his visits. My unconscious had begun to rebel when I observed his way of teaching, hasty and superficial, addressing us as if we were complete idiots.

I still remember a dream where I was swimming in manure. When I recall the innocence of my *Yoga* beginnings, I had a vague nostalgia for those times. The regions of my memory were waiting for me to show a simple sign of coherence and integrity, which would allow them to rise again and blossom without any disturbance.

When I received his disrespectful and inappropriate response, I understood that my inner truth was now in danger and I said to myself: "Now or

never!" At that time, I couldn't stand the slightest distortion of truth. I threw off all diplomatic masks and ended my relationship with this second teacher.

My *kriyaban* friends became bewildered due to their affection for him. They came to understand my intentions over time and stood by me. With a domino effect, other coordinators in Europe decided to cut ties with him because they could not tolerate his behavior anymore. Their desire for a good understanding of *Kriya* was not fulfilled by the heavy philosophical discussions and poor technical explanations.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THIS EVENT

The following months were spent in a peaceful and relaxed state, not comparable to the restless years I previously described. I was able to overcome a nerve-wracking situation by separating myself from the person with such a hostile character.

It was not necessary for me to go everywhere to organize *Kriya* seminars for him anymore. I felt relieved that I didn't have to hide under a mask of hypocrisy and respond with fake enthusiasm to those who called me to inquire about him. While I had every reason to celebrate this release, I was feeling the weight of all the wasted time and silly things I had done without thinking.

CHAPTER 5

CHOOSING TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT KRIYA YOGA

Let me give an explanation of why I made the decision to write a book to share all the information I had on Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya Yoga. I needed to overcome my strong conditioning and undergo a long process of internal reflection to make this decision.

During the winter, I went skiing in the nearby mountains with a few friends. Everything went smoothly. During the afternoon break, I found the time to be alone.

I paused to observe the distant mountains that adorned the horizon in every direction. In less than half an hour, the sun would have made them pink - especially those in the eastern region, which would fade to blue for those in the western region.

I pictured India as being back there, as if the Himalayas were an extension of those mountains. My thoughts were directed towards all *Kriya* enthusiasts who, like myself, faced insurmountable obstacles in comprehending their beloved discipline. Those obstacles appeared as an absurdity disguised as a nightmare, and I felt an unending feeling of rebellion.

In my imagination, I saw a book about *Kriya* that had detailed explanations for every technique. I pondered the question of what would take place if Lahiri Mahasaya or one of his disciples wrote it! I was afraid to assume that Lahiri Mahasaya made a mistake by not writing his techniques.

However, I realized that his decision to keep the *Kriya Yoga* techniques a secret caused suffering to individuals and a constant loss of time and energy.

But let's go back to the vision of a book. I observed myself scrolling through the pages that were simple and easy to understand. If this book had been around, it would have provided us with a reliable *Kriya* manual that would have prevented the numerous small or large variations created by different teachers.¹⁶

¹⁶ Such a text would also fulfill an important function: to be able to find and review what is explained during the initiation. A traditional initiation is accompanied by a particular frenzy. All practical instructions are given quickly and in a short time!

For the first time, I allowed myself to ponder what could have happened if I had written a book like this. The aim of the book would have been to summarize all the knowledge I had about Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya* by harmonizing theory and techniques in a clear and rational way.

I had a model in mind: Theos Bernard *Hatha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience* [1943] This text makes some ancient techniques of *Yoga* feasible, and clear to the intuition's eyes.¹⁷

I dreamed of writing a book similar to this one. The foundations for a new school would not have been laid by it. It would have been free from rhetorical claims of legitimacy! In my view, the book would not pose a threat to the activities of honest *Kriya* teachers.

It's possible that there would have been some commentators who tried to change its meaning to fit their theories. I have no doubt that certain pseudo-gurus would have claimed that the techniques included were meant for beginners. Only “authorized” individuals were able to access the more advanced techniques and communicate them to qualified disciples.

Some persons would have taken the bait, reached out to the author, and paid considerable sums to acquire techniques that he had developed either by using their imagination or stealing from an esoteric book.

Additionally, there was another possibility. There are *Kriya* teachers who might have viewed the book as a threat to their activities.

I am talking about those who live on donations they receive during initiations and wield power over people thanks to the bond of secrecy. It's possible that something that seemed immutable may change. The possibility of losing their privileges would make them feel afraid: living as kings, surrounded by people who would satisfy all their whims to receive crumbs of the hypothetical “secrets” of *Kriya Yoga*.

They would make every effort to sabotage the reliability of such a book through ruthless censorship. As they quickly read and sifted through it, I had a vision of their contemptuous remarks: 'It only contains fantasies that have no connection to the teachings of *Babaji* and Lahiri Mahasaya. It

After a few days, people tend to forget almost all the details and enter into a crisis. The teacher is no longer present and the other kriyaban friends refuse to provide necessary explanations, claiming that they are not authorized to do so. Everything is absurd!

¹⁷ Some authors only hint at certain procedures (whether they are part of the authentic *Kriya* or often invented by imagination) and leave the reader feeling unsatisfied, motivated to go to the author for the secret that was left undiscovered.

spreads a false teaching.'

The book's direct and sober exposition, without any frills, may have caused some researchers to dislike it. They would have stated that it didn't have "good vibrations" and then rejected it.

On my part, I would strive to write in such a way that my story felt like their story. I would have worked hard to reconsider my approach in that regard.

My purpose for writing was to reach out to individuals like myself who were disillusioned with organizations and travel *gurus*. Upon discovering such a book, they would experience a great deal of relief. I had already anticipated their happiness. Thanks to them, the book would keep spreading.

I was aware that it was impossible to persuade those with deep psychological conditioning rooted in their brain chemistry of this reality.

Looking up into the blue sky above the golden peaks of the mountains, I perceived that situation as deeply real. The dream unfolded in a few seconds and overwhelmed my consciousness like a floodwater, as if it had already become actualized.

THINKING ABOUT VARIOUS FORMS OF CONDITIONINGS

The next few days were devoted to dealing with the various conditionings that were given to me by my first *Kriya* organization. I couldn't imagine breaking the rule of secrecy by describing the techniques of *Kriya Yoga*.

In a note of the first chapter, I made it clear that the techniques taught by this organization are not explicitly described but only hinted at in a general manner. At this moment, my only focus was on Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya*.

I revisited *Guru Ramakrishna's* description of *Naren's* (Vivekananda's) 'investiture.' I read that at the end of his earthly life, *Ramakrishna* entered *Samadhi* and his disciple was present. *Vivekananda* fainted due to experiencing a strong current. Upon awakening, his *Guru*, crying, whispered, "Oh my *Naren*, I have given you everything today. Now, I only exist as a poor fakir who has nothing left. This power will enable you to do a great deal of good in the world."

Ramakrishna later clarified that the powers he had given to *Vivekananda* could not be utilized by his disciple to accelerate their own spiritual awakening. Each person must carry this burden alone; the power he gained will be useful in his future career as a spiritual teacher.

This image brought me to acknowledge that I couldn't question something that is so evidently valuable and important. The relationship between the

Guru and *disciple* is remarkable and can never be questioned or disregarded.

I revisited *Dostoevsky's* remarkable talk about the old fathers, *Starets*, in Russian monasteries (*The Brothers Karamazov*.)

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

It's truly astonishing how amazing this passage is!

My thoughts reached an impasse that remained unresolved for months. It was a challenging task to assemble all the significant points of my reasoning into a logical order.

Mental and physical fatigue and the inability to clearly identify every conditioning hindered my ability to reason. Despite my attempts to think sequentially, each conditioning was a separate entity with its own life. Whenever I attempted to create a coherent and complete vision, it always seemed to me to be a monstrosity.

LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S THOUGHT IS ONE I TRUST

During this time, the book *Purana Purusha* was a source of inspiration in my life. Without doubt, this book is the premier biography of Lahiri Mahasaya that exists. The responsibility of writing it rests with the *Kriya* master *Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee*. The biography is based on Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries and the personal support of *Satya Charan Lahiri* (1905 - 1978), a grandson of Lahiri Mahasaya.

The latter was the physical owner of those diaries. Bengali was used to publish the book and then it was translated into French and English. This book features a selection of the most significant elements of Lahiri Mahasaya's diaries. Regrettably, this text doesn't seem to be in line with the logical order in the topic arrangement. There is a plethora of repetitions and rhetorical phrases that can be found in it.

However, it enables us to comprehend the character of Lahiri Mahasaya. By using the speed of an arrow, it assists you in intuitively grasping the essence of *Kriya*.

I brought the book to the countryside and read it in the summer. Frequently, I would look at the mountains that were distant and think to myself, 'Oh, finally!'

On the cover, there was a picture of Lahiri Mahasaya. When that photo was taken, what was the nature of his elevated state? Similar to the *Shambhavi Mudra*, which creates awareness at the top of the head, his forehead displayed horizontal lines and his eyebrows raised. It could be inferred from observing the slight tension in his chin that he was practicing *Kechari Mudra*.

During that time, his presence, with that faint smile of happiness, was like a bright sun in my heart; it was the representation of the perfection I aimed to attain. He asserted that the whole journey of *Kriya* was an exceptional journey that starts with *dynamic Prana* and ends with *static Prana*.

Whenever you come across sentences that are filled with light, like '*Kutastha is God, it is the supreme Brahma*', a wave of happiness comes over you. It's amazing how much importance Lahiri placed on *Pranayama*, *Thokar*, and *Yoni Mudra*.

Lahiri Mahasaya declined to receive worship as a deity. He made it clear that the *Guru* is not identical to God. It seems that some of the people who follow him have forgotten this truth.

According to him, it is his responsibility to ensure that the authentic *Guru* (i.e. the Divine) is not separated from the disciple. In reality, he declared his aspiration to be considered a '**mirror**'.

This concept is of great importance and difficult to grasp. In a nutshell, every *kriyaban* should look into this mirror not only to see the man Lahiri Mahasaya but also to see their future, meaning the wisdom and spiritual realization that the practice of *Kriya* will ultimately lead to.

The final point is that when the *kriyaban* realizes that his *Guru* is the representation of what is potentially inside him and what he will become in the future, the mirror **should be thrown away**. It's up to you to like it or not, he just says that.

Those who have learned the typical dogmas of the *Guru-disciple* relationship will find these words difficult to understand.

To face the truth, one must employ an intelligent and discriminating approach that assists in dissolving illusions, particularly those that are comfortable and enjoyable. In order to overcome the tendency to be suggestive, one needs to have a great deal of courage.

THE SITUATION I ENCOUNTERED WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

In my organization, there were a lot of individuals who believed that God and the *Guru* were one entity. A representative of my organization stated: 'Didn't you realize that *Guruji* and the *Divine Mother* are the same thing?'

It was easy for me to accept this fact, it seemed obvious to me, but it was completely false! The belief that the *Guru* and God are identical led to the idea that the *Guru's* organization was not just an institution dedicated to spreading the Master's teachings, but it also served as the sole connection between God and those who wanted to approach Him through *Kriya Yoga*.

The belief that knowledge obtained from outside the organization was worthless resulted in an obvious demand for secrecy. Thanks to this demand, the organization's irreplaceable role was maintained.

The rational analysis revealed that the organization's justifications for demanding secrecy were weak. Their argument was that the purity of the teachings can be preserved through secrecy. Since P.Y. made a slight modification to the *Kriya Pranayama* technique compared to that taught by Lahiri Mahasaya, it would be more appropriate to say that "secrecy helps preserve the purity of the modifications."

My organization resembled a church in many ways. P.Y.'s teaching had a religious nature. In my opinion, every religion should have discretion, respect, but not a vow of secrecy. Intelligence and sensibility are naturally receptive to discretion, but secrecy is inherently irrational and unnatural, so it necessitates a solemn vow.

The biographies of saints contradict the notion that breaking the secrecy rule would result in devastating consequences. Instead, the esoteric-magical aspect of some brotherhoods is exactly the same – in fact, secrecy is vital to their existence.

The oath of secrecy doesn't have anything to do with the spiritual realm but rather involves esoteric-magical practices.

I wondered if the *Guru-disciple* relationship was a serious concept or just a fantasy I was unable to understand which master I should consider myself a disciple of.

The organization I was part prompted me to accept Eastern concepts about the meaning of the *Guru-disciple relationship*.

The important thing was that I finally acknowledged with some discomfort that **I had never had a real *Guru-disciple* relationship in my life.**

Even though I was still a long way from having a *Guru*, my initial *Kriya* organization made me believe that I had one. It was unfortunate that this

relationship was completely ideal. The great *Guru-disciple* relationships that I had read about were created after an actual physical meeting between two people.

Over the years, I have been surrounded by people who say they humbly follow their *Guru*, yet like me, they have never actually met him. The dream we all had was to have stable contact with an entity that was clearly existing in another dimension. This was both comforting and motivating for our progress.

I have been told repeatedly that the *Guru* is the one who brings you to God, and that following this path is the only way to salvation. We were sure that the *Guru* was a special helper chosen by God Himself, even before we began our search for spiritual guidance.

This *Guru* is capable of eliminating some of our negative *karma*. To receive the precious initiation to *Kriya*, legitimate channels (authorized disciples) must be used, then our task is to make the *Guru* a tangible and real part of our lives, even though he is no longer here physically.

We had enjoyed happy times under the protection of this captivating belief, but now it seemed like a **sweet illusion** to me.

Following a lengthy walk in the evening, I returned home feeling weakened by sudden exhaustion. As my mind became frayed, I became engrossed in this final problem that was emerging obscurely, like it was a wound rather than a theory revealing its myths. The CD player has been programmed to repeat *Beethoven's Emperor Concerto's* second movement.

I contemplated the individuals who had participated in all the possible initiation ceremonies that were held through legitimate channels. They received the *Guru's* blessings repeatedly. I turned off the lights and sat down to watch the sun set behind the trees on a hilltop. The sun's large disc, which looked like red blood, was partly obscured by the silhouette of a cypress tree.

That was a beauty that lasted forever! This reality has always been the guide for my search. This beauty was my unwavering inspiration and guide, not the ceremonies!

That evening, as I was practicing *Kriya Pranayama*, I experienced an inner vision. I saw three beautiful mountains. The tallest and central one was black and seemed to be a obsidian arrowhead. My heart was shaken, I was deeply in love with that image, and I found myself crying with happiness. I remained calm as the pressure intensified and tightened around my chest with a blissful grip.

The image in front of me was both powerful and vivid. There was nothing more beautiful than that: I was filled with love. I realized that that image

represented the force that had brought me to my current life path. It was the guiding principle of all my actions.

To me, that mountain was the epitome of the universal mystical path. I came to the realization that while a Master who grants you initiation may be important for your spiritual evolution, your personal efforts when you are on your own are much more significant. You come to the realization that your path is an individual journey between you and your inner Self.

Eventually, you must let go of the notion that a relationship with a *Guru* you've never met in person is definitive and unchanging. Direct experience of the Divine is the only thing that is unchangeable.

A DECISIVE PUSH TO WRITE THE BOOK

I checked out *Kriya Yoga* forums to see if others had the same difficulties as me in finding information about the *Kriya* practice taught by Lahiri Mahasaya.

Numerous users were searching for information about *Kechari Mudra*, but they were unable to obtain any answers. Without hesitation, I would have provided them with everything I knew if they had just left an email.

The pedantic tone of some participants caused me to feel deeply hurt, as they mocked or downplayed the legitimate curiosity of other practitioners. Although they appeared compassionate, they actually demonstrated blatant disrespect. The desire to deepen their *Kriya* practice was viewed by them as an unhealthy obsession.

Their advice was often in a patronizing tone, telling them not to go beyond what they had already received from P.Y.'s organization. In actuality, they stifled anyone who dared to ask intelligent and legitimate questions.

I questioned why these 'experts', without understanding the spiritual path of others, could so arrogantly intervene in the intimate life of a *kriyaban*, treating him as a superficial novice. Admitting that they did not know the answer to those questions would have been more honest.

I remember a discussion that caused me a lot of irritation. A user claimed to be in touch with the genuine masters of the *original Kriya*, but declined to share their names or contact details.

This seemed quite foolish to me. I believed that the petty thought of possessing secret knowledge was the only thing that held the disconnected parts of his infantile mind together. It's possible that keeping a secret allowed him to feel powerful. Why should he be the one to possess the beauty of the *original Kriya*?

AN ILLUSION OF THE POWER OF 'AUTHORIZED' TEACHERS

A document called '*Truth and Falsehood Behind Kriya Yoga*', which was published by an Indian practitioner who stated that they spent twenty years reconstructing the history of *Kriya*. According to the text, *Kriya* is only effective when transmitted by a *Guru* who is 'authorized.' Without it, it would not be effective.

I am urging the reader to reflect: does a technique stop working solely because the person teaching it had not received official authorization? In what way does this make sense? In my opinion, this statement exemplifies the beliefs of those who frequent circles that cultivate magical, occult, and esoteric thinking.

These associations are well-known to be in no way connected to the spiritual path. Think about prayer, the spiritual act that stands above all others. Is it necessary for it to be taught by an authorized minister to be considered valid? Doesn't it only make sense when it's from a genuine heart?

I have encountered individuals who were not initiated by authorized disciples, but had acquired knowledge of *Kriya* in different ways and had greatly benefited from it. To start the spiritual path, sincerity and dedication are needed, not certification stamps.

REFLECTION ON CERTAIN MYSTIC TRADITIONS

I investigated practices that were similar to *Kriya* and found in other spiritual traditions: Hesychasm, Sufism, Chinese Internal Alchemy (*Nei Dan*), and the Radhasoami movement. It was obvious that Lahiri Mahasaya had synthesized the nucleus of those ancient methods in an extraordinary way.

I figured out that by publishing a book on *Kriya Yoga*, I would not reveal secrets, but rather emphasize something that is profoundly human and universal. My purpose in writing was to address serious seekers who were fervently seeking these original teachings and had not always been able to find them. At times, they were deceived, and I was trying to prevent them from enduring a lot of suffering and wasted time.

I was opposed to challenging the sacredness of the *Guru-disciple relationship* as a means of receiving the *Kriya* teachings. I would only have said that one could also learn *Kriya* from other sources and perfect it on one's own.

In my vision, I imagined a network: every spiritual seeker was a connection to that network, and from that connection, various connections

formed, similar to those between neurons in the brain.

The consciousness of a person striving for a state beyond life's normal realm resonates through the threads of the network in close proximity. It's conceivable that any seeker can benefit. Spirituality-seeking individuals are instrumental in the evolution of others.

I am thankful to the organization I gave my support to for a dozen years. I received a great deal from it. But I also gained great help from the reflections and insights that came from reading many important books.

ANOTHER MASTER OFFERED ASSISTANCE TO MY FRIENDS

During that time, I found out that there was an opportunity for a new *Kriya Yoga* master to come to Europe. He was highly respected, and I offered to pay a portion of his travel expenses. A close friend went to India to meet him.

A month passed before the friend announced his return from India. After a couple of hours, we were sitting across from each other in my room.

The teacher conveyed his eagerness to assist us, while lamenting the disorganized state of *Kriya* in the West. During that meeting, he looked at my friend's practice and gave him some corrections.

Something unexpected occurred. My friend requested a demonstration of how I was practicing *Kriya Pranayama*. I did it without hesitation.

The friend claimed to have observed a mistake in my practice. When I asked him what it was, he said he couldn't reveal it. He had solemnly sworn to the master not to share anything.¹⁸

He clarified that he had requested the teacher's permission to fix any errors in the *Kriya* practice that were found in our group. The answer was a negative one. The teacher demanded a genuine oath to refrain from divulging anything.

The teacher, who had expressed his intention to aid us, may have been concerned that we would not invite him back to our group once our potential mistakes were clarified. Was he truly base-minded?

It's important to note that I wasn't expecting my friend to give me a complete account of everything he and the teacher said. I couldn't and didn't want to be in the midst of that experience, but how could he let me

¹⁸ After thinking back to the episode, I realized what my mistake was: I hadn't taken a visible abdominal breath. I am confident that this is true because it was the only thing my friend could see. We did not go into the internal details of that practice.

keep practicing a practice he thought was wrong? I was astonished by my friend's apparent satisfaction in identifying my error.

In the past, I shared all the details of my spiritual journey with him; we went through all the ups and downs related to my previous teachers, and we both experienced the same suffering. Did he hide behind a vow of silence?

His decision to go to India was certainly satisfactory and he probably expected me to do the same immediately. I was struck most by how he seemed almost pleased with the situation that was created.

Although I did not say anything, something snapped inside of me. I stood up and left him alone.

A few days later, I received a communication from the master's secretary asking me to handle certain financial matters related to the master's possible trip to Italy. Her approach surprised me and I declined.

I had no intention of arranging the master's trip. In addition, if I had come to India to visit him, he would have most likely imposed the same silence on me. When I got back to my group, what should I say? Was it necessary for them to fly all the way to India to obtain a simple piece of information?

It was madness. If this was the sole means of learning, we would require an entire fleet of charter flights every year. No matter their age or health, it was necessary for them to travel to a faraway Indian city, similar to a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Fatima!

Was it the assistance he had been so eager to give? This absurd and unacceptable situation only exacerbated my frustration. I thought it was time to make a permanent change.

COMPREHENDING THE REAL SITUATION OF KRIYA YOGA'S SPREAD

During this period, I began to comprehend the real situation concerning the spread of *Kriya Yoga*. There is a lack of knowledge about the legendary master *Mahavatar Babaji*. And the amount of information we have on what Lahiri Mahasaya learned directly from him is even less.

I think it's possible that the teachings Lahiri received were so profound and elevated that they couldn't be transmitted in the same way.

Many influential teachers who later spread *Kriya*, recognized Lahiri Mahasaya as the father of this discipline. They asserted that he had played a significant role in simplifying, making complicated techniques from the most advanced *Yoga* tradition accessible.

It is said that Lahiri identified four fundamental levels of *Kriya*, which, if practiced daily in meditation, are sufficient to achieve final liberation.

Lahiri's work was of great significance. It was he, with his intelligence and profound spiritual understanding, who created a version of *Kriya Yoga* that was more suitable for his disciples. He achieved this by adapting the most profound and challenging *Yoga* to the realities and needs of ordinary people.

Lahiri Mahasaya was keenly aware of the obstacles that practitioners faced. According to what I was told, he observed in his later years that many individuals were unable to attain the level of breath control needed by the techniques: very slow breathing, particularly the prolonged breath retention required in the more advanced *Kriyas*, proved too difficult for some.

For this reason, it seems that he introduced a new system of *Higher Kriyas*, in which the breath was no longer rigidly controlled but left free, even forgotten.

Two major approaches to the practice of the *Higher Kriyas* have emerged: the first involves breathing retention as a fundamental element, while the second eliminates that detail entirely.

The teachings of *Panchanan Bhattacharya*, one of his main disciples, contain both of these approaches. *Shibendu Lahiri's* teaching was solely based on the second approach, which did not include breath control. In any case, the reader can obtain a clarification of both paths in chapters 8 and 9.

P.Y.'s organization supports the belief that *Kriya Yoga* taught is the same, identical, and unaltered version that was transmitted from Lahiri Mahasaya to Sri Yukteswar and then from him to P.Y.. I am of the opinion that this idea cannot be sustained.

We must accept that the teaching of *Kriya* has undergone inevitable changes over time. It is true that there are numerous lineages, and each has modified the techniques to some extent. Each authentic master transmits a unique energy and has the ability to sense the genuine needs of each disciple.

Beginners, intermediates, and more advanced students have different needs, and teaching must take these into account.

For this reason, there are no pure techniques or unchanged teachings. When an authentic master speaks, his words can be misinterpreted by those who are not prepared to understand them immediately.

In conclusion, it is clear that Lahiri Mahasaya himself, despite receiving a specific teaching, transformed it into what he believed to be the most effective, adapting it and transmitting it along with his own modifications.

To put it succinctly, there are no *Kriya* techniques that are original and intact. No lineage can be considered totally pure, because if a practitioner is still spiritually immature, even the most authentic teaching will end up being distorted by that student's limited understanding.

THE INEVITABLE END OF THE SITUATION

I began to rearrange all the notes I had taken on the various *Kriya* techniques I had learned in different seminars. I reproduced it for my companions, those who had not yet gained access to all levels of *Kriya*.

I acquired a computer, deactivated my social life, and started writing. It wasn't easy: I had a lot of notes that came from different teachers. The process of putting together a huge puzzle was similar to putting together a puzzle without seeing the final result before my eyes.

The book began to take shape. In the first part, I recounted my spiritual journey; in the second part, I shared everything I had learned about the theory and practice of *Kriya Yoga*. Furthermore, I talked about ways to maintain enthusiasm and overcome spiritual crises that affect many *kriyabans* over time.

The book was completed over a period of years. There were friends who doubted I would ever make it. I wasn't in a hurry at all. My goal for that period was to live calmly, with a single and significant objective in mind. At last, the book was ready. Thanks to a friend's help, we quietly published it online.

My second teacher's reaction came a few months later after a young man brought my book to his attention during a seminar. He claimed that I had a desire "to do business with Kriya" and accused me of being an "intellectual prostitute." After a night without sleep, I had a sense of happiness, which is unusual to say. Finally, a book was made accessible to everyone who had sincerely sought it.

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

What was created,
must perish!
What perished, revive!
Cease from trembling!
Prepare yourself to live!

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)