

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

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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. The 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 mediumship. 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.

FIRST INTEREST IN 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.

At the age of fifteen, while in high school, my interest in *Yoga* was rekindled when a friend informed me that he had a *Yoga* book that explained different *Pranayama* techniques. I was mesmerized by his words as he mentioned that these exercises result in an inner transformation for a person. What were the internal changes that he hinted at? It's likely that my friend was not talking about achieving specific relaxation conditions, and certainly not about vague concepts like integrating the Eastern vision of existence with the Western lifestyle. It's possible that he was suggesting some profound experiences that had lasting effects on the person's nature. I had to learn and practice *Pranayama* as soon as possible! But the friend was hesitant to lend me the book.

Upon arriving at the train station, I saw a simple *Hatha Yoga* manual at the newsstand. I bought it without any delay 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.

THE INITIAL VAGUE CONCEPT OF THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

During that period, I made the decision to keep a simple diary. As I reread some of the pages today, I realize that at the time I didn't have a precise idea of what the '*spiritual dimension*' of life was. I lacked understanding of the crucial distinction between professing a particular religion and having a spiritual experience. The only thing I pictured as a spiritual experience was a feeling of enchantment when looking at the beauty of nature or of a person's face. I attempted to support these experiences by visiting stunning locations in the village where I grew up. Studying literary works and listening to classical music was something that I thoroughly enjoyed. I had no idea that *Yoga* would 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. We established a pact between us. 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. She gave her approval to that request. 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 hard to believe that these words didn't have an impact 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* daily. 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.

MY FIRST MEDITATION EXPERIENCE

During this time frame, I bought a book that included exercises to enhance the memory. The author offered an exercise that recharges our mind-body

system with new energy by allowing our thinking faculties to rest. I was enticed by the promise, which was undoubtedly exaggerated, that if you stop all mental functions, you could achieve mental rest that is equivalent to several hours of sleep in less than an hour. It was essential to avoid falling asleep and stay in a state of pure awareness for a certain period of time. The process was simple. After two minutes of silence, I mentally repeated: 'I am relaxed, I am calm, I don't think about anything.'

I pictured thoughts, including abstract ones, being pushed away one at a time, as if someone were gently transporting them from the center of the mental screen towards the periphery. It was imperative to put aside all thoughts, even the thought of practicing a technique. Upon pushing away each thought, I would always focus on the peaceful place between my eyebrows that resembles a small lake and rested there. The duration of this rest was never longer than 25-30 minutes.

The conclusion of my practice was always the same: the state of profound calm was always interrupted by the thought that the actual exercise had still to begin. The heart started beating rapidly as the body reacted with a jolt. After a few seconds, I was certain that the exercise had been completed perfectly.

Thanks to this technique, which became part of my daily routine, I finally understood the distinction between 'mind' and 'awareness'. (To put it simply, the distinction between letting the activity of thought run free and simply being aware of existing.)

When the mental process slows and becomes perfect silence, a state of perfect awareness emerges without any content. It remains unchanged for some minutes, just like a bright spot that repeats itself endlessly. Without any thought, you feel like you exist and understand that your existence is indestructible. You know that thoughts are a fleeting reality, and that they obscure the ultimate truth instead of revealing it. This was 'meditation' for me and it still is now.

I am of the opinion that the Cartesian deduction of 'I think therefore I am' cannot be sustained. To put it more accurately, the proof and the intimate certainty of existence are only found in the ability to silence thoughts.

MY STUDIES

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 let myself get caught up in exhausting discussions with friends, which was wrapped and made dignified by 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. My heart was filled with sadness. While they were my friends and I loved them, their resemblance to chickens confined in a confined space was apparent when I saw them together. I assumed that they were completely guided by their instincts, including eating, reproduction, and rest. Regardless of what tragedy had happened to their classmates, it did not affect them. They would continue to have the daily pleasure of wasting time until misfortune struck them personally. I feel guilty for these bad thoughts of mine. If I think about it today, I remember that they were characterized by bitterness and anguish.

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.

DECISION TO UNDERTAKE THE DISCIPLINE OF PRANAYAMA

For some time now, I have been thinking about how individuals who have committed themselves to a demanding discipline for years display noble characteristics that set them apart from others. They exhibited a sense of sweetness, of intimate serenity. As an example, I thought of practicing playing a musical instrument since childhood or practicing a difficult physical activity, such as martial arts. I'll elaborate on why I made the decision to dedicate myself to *Pranayama* discipline.

I came across a friend who informed me about Mahler's second symphony, "*Resurrection*", and asked me to attend a performance of this piece. 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 choir proceeded to sing lines from a Klopstock hymn:

<i>Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n</i>	Resurrect, yes resurrect,
<i>Wirst du, Mein Staub,</i>	Will you, my dust,
<i>Nach kurzer Ruh'!</i>	After a brief rest!
<i>Unsterblich Leben! Unsterblich Leben</i>	Immortal life! Immortal life
<i>wird der dich rief dir geben!</i>	He who called you will grant you!

Mahler's own lines were added and the ending was:

<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 to live!') reverberated all day in my mind like a thread around which my thoughts were crystallizing.

Was it possible for me to die to myself, to my small self, to my Ego at any time before sterile old age?

I had no doubt that I would continue practicing the discipline of creating silence in my thoughts. It had become a habit for me to stare blankly at my mind, but I wasn't willing to wait for something to happen anymore. It was necessary for me to make a stronger commitment. It was necessary for me to cross the misty curtain of thoughts, superficial emotions, sensations, and instincts and arrive at the Pure Dimension of existence, where I could truly live beyond the world of thoughts.

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*."

I was filled with an insatiable desire to experience all the power of *Pranayama*, even to the point of dying in it, figuratively speaking. What would have frightened others motivated me. If *Pranayama* practice could bring about an authentic psychological earthquake, that's exactly what I was hoping for. That was the moment when I made the decision that would change my life forever: to dedicate myself to the practice of *Pranayama* every day. I made the decision to practice *Nadi Sodhana* and *Ujjayi* in an intensive manner, using *Bandhas* (muscle contractions) and *Kumbhaka* (breathing retention).

I stood upright on a pillow edge, in the *half-lotus* posture, with my back straight. I focused on applying the instructions correctly while maintaining a creative mindset, and I was always looking for ways to improve my practice.

My right hand was used to open and close my nostrils as I concentrated on the alternating sensations of coolness and warmth produced by the air on my fingers and palm. Everything about the pressure, the smooth, even flow of the breath was pleasant. My vigilant attention was maintained without being stressed by becoming aware of each technical

detail.¹

I have a vivid memory of what I felt when I first tried Pranayama

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

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

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

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.

CONCRETE CONTACT WITH SPIRITUAL REALITY

I didn't know then that moments of fear can accompany the first contact with spiritual reality.

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.

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!

It came to my mind that a more significant event would occur soon and it would be so overwhelming that there was no way I could 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, I couldn't read another line, and 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 have 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 wrote *Kundalini: Path to Higher Consciousness*. 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 worried that I had reached the point where I had lived the same experience, but since I was not in India, the people around me could not understand. 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 passion for classical music led me to believe that listening to good music could help me avoid anguish and regain 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. Although it may seem strange, the idea that every day of my present life brings me joy, at that moment, brought me a sense of horror! I am talking about the belief that practicing a particular discipline can help men attain the spiritual dimension of existence.

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. However, there had been a change.

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. He created the concept of 'reverse avalanche' for this purpose. The 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.

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. In front of me, the significance of that experience was clear and obvious. I considered a reality that seemed to have always existed within me. It had been hidden in the recesses of my consciousness for a long time, but only now was it shining 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.

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.

Reflection

Throughout my adolescence, I have been on a quest to find the pure dimension of Spirit in my own way. Finding out that *Yoga's* practice could guide me to experience it concretely was a surprise to me. After practicing *Pranayama* intensively for a few months, this occurred. With determination, I rely on simple instructions found in a *Yoga* manual rather than following the teachings of a master.

I performed *Pranayama* in a manner that I could describe as 'absolute', with such a high level of concentration that I felt like there was no tomorrow. My life's best decision was to devote myself to this discipline.

I experienced Spiritual Reality with waves of bliss that swelled up my spine and then reached my brain. This experience had been repeated many times over the years, and each time it lasted between a few moments and a few minutes. The waves were like a 'rocket' that pushed me out of the body at times, and they were similar to the eruption of an internal volcano. Sometimes there were no waves, but instead an intense bliss that built up in the heart region, suddenly bringing me immense joy. When it was over, I returned to reality with tears in my eyes, striving to hold onto that brief glimpse of Eternity in my memory.

Based on what I have read, I have come to the conclusion that this experience is what is described in literature as '*Kundalini awakening*'.

Kundalini is an energy that coils around itself like a snake at the base of the spine. *Yoga* teaches the art of guiding this energy through the spinal canal, culminating in the spiritual center at the top of the head. Both the term '*Mystical Enlightenment*' and '*Kundalini Awakening*' mean precisely the same thing.

CHAPTER 2

FROM UJJAYI TO KRIYA PRANAYAMA

I am going to explain how my initial Ujjayi technique turned into Kriya Yoga. I got this instruction from a spiritual organization that I have become familiar with and whose teachings are the foundation of my practice. I provide an explanation of my initial impressions of the qualities of this organization and mention other very beneficial instructions I received.

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 *Kundalini* experience repeated itself multiple times, but it did not become a constant. It happened when I focused on studying late and then lay down exhausted on my 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.

KRIYA YOGA

The many pages of PY'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 PY'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. [*Bhagavad Gita* 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? ³

³ 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**

PY 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. ⁴ Later, I became aware that this was truly a significant idea in the PY's teachings.

RESEARCH IN THE BOOKS OF ESOTERISM

I discovered from his *Autobiography* that PY 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. ⁵ I made the choice to uncover the

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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Actually, I could be regarded as fortunate. For instance, those residing in countries with a Communist system couldn't receive these materials.

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 *Chakras*. If ancient sages practiced this procedure, as PY stated, I would be able to locate a description of it easily.

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 paid no attention to the texts that focused solely on philosophical themes, but I eagerly perused those that clearly demonstrated practical exercises. 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. My attention was caught by a book that outlined the magical thinking of the *Rosicrucian brotherhood*. Looking through the index, I was intrigued by the title of a chapter: '*Breathing exercises for awakening Kundalini*'. It was a variation of *Nadi Sodhana*.

This could not be PY's *Kriya*, because for sure *Kriya* does not involve breathing alternately through the nostrils. I went back to that bookstore; 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*.

Despite not being familiar with the German language at the time, I immediately comprehended the extraordinary significance of that technique. Using a dictionary at home, I would be able to decipher it without a doubt.⁶ 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.

⁶ I smile when I hear people say that they are strongly attracted to *Kriya Yoga*, but they do not bother to study important texts in English because they fear misinterpreting the language. I am of the opinion that their interest is only emotional and superficial. Such was my enthusiasm that I could have started studying *Sanskrit* or *Chinese*, or any other language in which, alas, the essential teachings of *Kriya Yoga* had been compiled!

I acquired another 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 PY's Kriya and made it a part of my daily routine.⁷

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.

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. Many times in the future I would have experienced how life is made up of brief moments of inspiration and serenity, alternating with vicissitudes where 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

⁷ It wasn't until later that I realized my hypothesis was incorrect.

Kriya Pranayama. He thought that I viewed *Kriya Yoga* as a game for kids and had no understanding of its seriousness. I was visibly confused and began talking about currents and breathing sounds, but he stopped listening and took me to his study.

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 PY'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. It dawned on me that it was natural to shield a valuable teaching from invasive eyes. 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 PY as his *Guru* and he was a substantial figure in his life. The faith experienced by those who were part of his group was identical. The recognition of their *Guru* as the help that God Himself had sent them was seen as the greatest fortune that could ever happen to a person. The friend

made it very clear that abandoning this Master and looking for a different spiritual path would result in a hateful rejection of the Divine hand, which was stretched out in blessing.

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 had a deep-rooted prejudice that any technique learned outside of legitimate channels could only be corrupted, this fact was guaranteed by a specific spiritual law. He shook his head when he saw that I was breathing through my nose. He asked me to explain if there was something I was focusing my attention on while breathing. The books on which my practice was based indicated that the energy should be felt flowing **within** and then **around** the spine. PY's statement that a *kriyaban* mentally directs their life energy to rotate up and down around the six spinal centers was the reason I selected this fact to describe. Furthermore, after reading another book that suggested mentally chanting *Om* in each *Chakra* during *Kriya Pranayama*, I added this additional detail. 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*. The authors of the books I had read did not break the secret that he was bound to! 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!

His behavior underwent a strange change when he realized that he had spent too much time with me. It was as though he had been entrusted with a sacred responsibility: 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.

GROUP MEDITATION

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. This task was reserved for only those who were specifically authorized, and none of our group was authorized. 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. Someone took the risk of making an innocent joke, without offending anyone, but rather just to feel good and smile together. Regrettably, this was in conflict with the devotional attitude held by most of the members and was defeated by their cold reaction.

Your efforts to be pleasant were rewarded with an embarrassed expression and a smile that left you frozen for the rest of the day. These individuals appeared to be unable to exhibit any true joviality. From these episodes, I believe that these individuals were naturally inclined to depression. 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.

Knowing some of them well, having listened to their stories, I was very perplexed by how they behaved because they revealed to me that they felt protected by their *Guru* especially when they faced dangerous situations cheerfully, without due prudence. In my opinion, this attitude

was solely a foolish superstition.

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 individuals seemed to be solely concerned with raising funds, perhaps dreaming of the possibility of expanding our group. Their desire was to transform the meditation room so that it could eloquently convey the meaning of its sacred consecration. Finally, 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!

AN IMPORTANT VISIT IN OUR GROUP

Our group was visited by an elderly woman who had corresponded through letters with PY. The organization recognized her seriousness, sincerity, and loyalty by granting her the position of "Meditation counselor" and giving her authorization to aid us in the practice of the techniques. Her character was very pleasant and she seemed to be more inclined to understanding, more tolerant than inclined to censorship.

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.⁸ We were 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.

The clarification received by the lady had a feeling of sacredness that lingered with me for months. It assisted me in overcoming the initial phase of the practice when it appeared unlikely that the inner sounds would emerge.

I recall the first time I heard Om's sound

As I ponder this encounter, I yearn for the intense love for the Divine that I felt so deeply during those days.

I was living as a hermit during that period. In a room that was both cold and dimly lit, my meditation took place. I was motivated to seek solitude during the rainy days and early winter evenings, which strengthened my resolve to ignite an inner sun through meditation. I diligently practiced listening to the inner sounds for a few weeks, but it was not successful.

While regaining consciousness following a sweet reverie after twenty minutes of quiet effort one evening, I noticed a faint inner sound. The sound was like that of a mosquito's buzzing. The faint sound of small tinkling bells could be heard as I listened attentively. These sounds grew deeper and were like the echo of a distant bell ringing during sunset in the deep green hills.

The sound reached me faintly from an unfathomable distance. The sweet sound of those chimes reminded me of a shower of petals and softly rang through my heart. I experienced an overwhelming sense of fulfillment, as if the spiritual journey had come to an end. The sweetest memories of my childhood lingered on the edges of my awareness, but they didn't interfere with my deep recollection.

Despite the difficulties and misfortunes of my life, a wide and comfortable smile has always been there to protect me. The sound I was currently listening to gave me a similar sense of comfort. All the beauty I had encountered in my life was contained within it. The most captivating and thrilling love experiences had blossomed like splendid crystals around the golden thread of that beauty. Through genuine acceptance, old wounds were healed. My heart was gently touched by the celestial fingers that were

⁸ This technique is not a part of the original *Kriya Yoga*. It is not even an invention of PY. 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'.

boundlessly blue and quiet. I witnessed that even something that seemed impossible and would have been cruel to accept, turned into a concrete achievement in my heart.

I was completely absorbed in this practice for the next few days. The psychological spectrum was crossed and a spontaneous devotion emerged that made the distinction between life and spiritual experience indistinguishable. Reality seemed transformed to me, like how a soft blanket of snow in winter makes every imperfection disappear.

KRIYA YOGA 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 PY 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* PY and a chain formed by five other Masters. PY was the *Guru-preceptor* and *Lahiri Mahasaya* was an intermediary link, whereas the other Masters were *Babaji*, *Jesus Christ* and *Sri Yukteswar*. *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 PY had truly accepted her as a disciple and assumed the burden of her *Karma*. PY, 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!!

According to their explanation, *Christ* once appeared to *Babaji* (*Lahiri Mahasaya's Guru*) and asked him to send some messengers to the West to spread the teachings of *Kriya*. I wasn't confused by this story.

Perhaps I didn't want to ponder it. It was nice to think that the mission of spreading *Kriya* originated from *Christ* himself. However, I was too preoccupied with hearing the explanation of the technique that would soon be presented to pay attention to this fact.

I was feeling a great deal of anticipation for what I had wanted with my entire being and that I had been preparing for months. This event was the crowning of a decisive choice! The joy that would come from the practice of *Kriya* was something that filled my heart with immense happiness.

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 illustration of the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*, I realized that I was already familiar with it! It was a process of enhancing *Ujjayi Pranayama*. I had found this technique in a German book by K. Spiesberger. It was his teaching of '*Kundalini breathing*', which prescribes that the energetic current flow through the spine with the help of the breath. As I previously stated, I had not given this procedure much consideration since PY had stated in his writings that energy in *Kriya* circulates around the *Chakras* in an elliptical pattern. I comprehended that 'around' wasn't the appropriate term and that there was no elliptical circuit.⁹

I experienced bitterness while reflecting on a fact. The *Ujjayi* technique that I had learned at the start of my spiritual journey has been instrumental in bringing many blessings into my life. Why was the organization so insistent on me abandoning it and practicing only *Hong So* and *Om* techniques? Why did I feel so strongly compelled to give up this technique, which was surely an excellent preparation for *Kriya Pranayama* itself?

The details of *Maha Mudra* and *Jyoti Mudra* were explained in such a manner that there were no ambiguities. If we're unsure about a detail being accurate, we could get guidance from the school management. From that moment onward, I made an effort to do this. To obtain advice, I was

⁹ 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.

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.

Upon receiving my *Kriya* initiation, I took my organization's advice and always practiced *Hong So* and *Om* before beginning *Kriya Pranayama*.

The first technique would have resulted in a calmer breath, which would have led to a higher level of concentration. Next, I listened to the inner sounds. Next I practiced *Maha Mudra*. *Kriya Pranayama* started strictly following all the instructions, after returning to the immobile position, trying to recover the state of sacredness. The *Kriya* practice concluded with ten minutes of pure concentration in *Kutastha* after performing *Jyoti Mudra*.

The two preliminary techniques, in my practical experience, didn't get the attention they deserved. The *Hong-so* technique's beauty was impeded by the thought of having to interrupt it to switch to the *Om technique*, which caused disturbance during execution. The *Om technique* was interrupted to practice *Maha Mudra* as well.

Interrupting the *Om listening technique*, which was entirely a universe and resulted in mystical experiences, was much worse than a simple disturbance. All logic was incompatible with this interruption. It was as if, after recognizing a friend in the crowd with a pleasant surprise and engaging with him, I unexpectedly turned away from him. Then I mingled with the crowd and hoped to meet him again shortly to resume the conversation that had been suspended.

The sound of *Om* represented the mystical experience itself, the Goal I was looking for. Why would I have to interrupt that sublime tuning and then regain it through another technique that, however, did not give me immediate and tangible results like the *Om technique*? Was it because *Kriya Pranayama* was a higher procedure? I did not understand why it should be considered "higher."

Pranayama had definitely helped me achieve a positive outcome. The *Om* listening technique had allowed me to enter the spiritual dimension. Interrupting it to practice *Kriya Pranayama* was not the most rational thing to do!

This absurd decision was something I had to force myself to make for an extremely long period of time. 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?

The succession of similar episodes confirmed that numerous of my *kriyaban* friends mechanically performed the daily ritual of *Kriya* session, almost like they wanted to ease their conscience. They did not receive any encouragement to trust the clarity of self-observation. My interest in using the techniques in the best way was criticized by all of these *kriyabans* except for one person. Unfortunately, this person had some unusual notions about the spiritual path, which led me to believe he might be mentally unbalanced. The other individuals simply stated that devotion was the most important factor of all. 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.

My organization provides me with their particular form of Second Kriya ¹⁰

My *kriyabans* friends who were part of the meditation group didn't seem to be very interested in this technique. I inquired a friend of mine who was a devout *kriyaban* who had received *Kriya initiation* a long time ago and used to live at our organization's headquarters, if she had practiced the *Second Kriya*. It seemed that she didn't comprehend the question.

I reminded her that a disciple of *Lahiri Mahasaya*, *Swami Pranabananda*, had accompanied the moment of his death with the practice of the *Second Kriya*. She appeared altered, declaring that the quote clearly addressed the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*: one breath followed by another, and this "second breath" was, she stated, the '*Second Kriya*!' I was amazed: I looked at her with bewilderment. It seemed like she was uncomfortable with the idea of adding another technique to the ones she already received and practiced every day. Perhaps, the fact that she had made such a great effort to become familiar with the daily practice of *First Kriya* made her not feel like facing even greater challenges. In my opinion, she has remained unwavering in her conviction to this day.

The practice was to focus on each *Chakra*, trying to perceive something subtle, and then move on to the next one. Despite not noticing much in the *Chakras*, I verified 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.

¹⁰ 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.

When I finished the required practices in my routine and couldn't lie down to rest, I began practicing what I later called '*mental Pranayama*', a procedure that was carried out by leaving the breath free. From then until today, I have maintained this good habit. I recall something that happened during the routine and I mentally recall it gently, by allowing my breath to become more calm. I can become engrossed in a state that is free of thoughts, reflections, or a dimension beyond my mind.

On a certain day, I wrote in my diary: "The dimension of time disappears: I don't know where I am. I will always be lost in that sweetness. The bells rang at the conclusion of my routine and I was unsure whether it was evening or morning. The transition to reality happens slowly and with some resistance because I don't want to leave that state."

A concise overview of Patanjali's teachings

Patanjali was a pioneer in the practice of rationally contemplating the mystical path, attempting to discern a universal, physiological direction of events. He explained why one aspect of the spiritual path is preceded by another and must follow another. Patanjali identified eight steps in the spiritual path: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*. *Yama* and *Niyama* are the classic principles of good behavior and a healthy way of thinking.

According to Patanjali, *Asana* (body position) must be both stable and comfortable. He refrains from stating anything further about it. *Pranayama* does not include any mention of preliminary concentration or meditation exercises. In essence, it is the regulation of *Prana* that is obtained by repeating specific breathing patterns. The process of internalizing awareness and distancing ourselves from external reality is known as *Pratyahara*.

Concentration on a physical or abstract object is what *Dharana* refers to. The essence of an object is contemplated through *Dhyana*. *Samadhi* involves immersing yourself in a continuous stream of consciousness until you become lost in it.

Kriya Yoga practitioners interpret the term "concentration on an object" as focusing on the spine and *Chakras*. The ecstatic state that comes after long concentration is what occurs when one contemplates the essential nature of an object. When you immerse yourself in a continuous stream of consciousness, you will experience a dissolution of your mind, leading to the realization of your Self. Patanjali's essential teachings are the description of these stages, starting with *Pranayama* and finishing with *Samadhi*.

CHAPTER 3

THE VALUE OF JAPA: THE BREATHLESS STATE

In the beginning of the chapter, I discuss the challenges I faced while adherent to the teachings of the organization I mentioned. The chapter's main focus is on Japa's utility in quieting the mind's background noise, which can hinder meditation practices. The very day I started this practice, I was experiencing a state of breathlessness. This is why the impact of Japa led to a pivotal moment in my Kriya Yoga practice.

Since then, there have been two or three years. I received the *Higher Kriyas* through correspondence. It was unfortunate that these lessons had parts that were not clear. For example, PY 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 PY's written teachings. I will recount facts that I came to know many years later. The first half of this third chapter describes the internal turmoil that this problem caused in me during that time. If readers aren't interested in this topic, I suggest skipping the first half of this chapter and going straight to the final paragraphs where I share my thoughts on discovering *Japa* and experiencing the breathless state.

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 these practices. Written lessons were the means by which she learned these techniques since direct initiations were never given after PY's *Mahasamadhi*. Although she had multiple chances, she felt regretful for not having her *Higher Kriyas* examined by ministers who were direct disciples of PY. 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 *Third* and *Fourth 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 PY organization has always been seen as trustworthy and respected by me. My study of correspondence lessons and their literature was like preparing for a university exam. I have only asked this organization to explain the much-coveted jewel of *Kriya Yoga* in full. 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? How did he promise to help me? It was impossible for me to pretend that nothing had happened: I was very upset. Those who met me immediately after that interview said that 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. It's possible that this man, once back at the PY organization headquarters, could speak negatively about me. 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 PY'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 PY. By comparing them to spiders, she compared them to how they used to spread the honey of love towards the master and catch 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 PY 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. It wasn't a peculiar feeling, others had also expressed it to me. 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, PY 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 PY'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 was aware that in order to experience deep devotion, I needed to overcome a significant obstacle. It is necessary for me to create lasting inner tranquility, acknowledge my preferred form of the Divine, and perform this act of inner surrender with complete honesty every day of my life.

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. A former acquaintance who had known him for a long time described him to me as a curious person who frequently asked questions to the senior ministers. Considering my understanding of the rules of monastic discipline, I was confident that his inquiries had not always received immediate replies.

MY REACTION: STUDYING ALL THE MATERIALS I COULD FIND

The desire to comprehend PY's writings on *Kriya Yoga* took a particular course of action. I had knowledge of the names of three of his direct disciples who had had a disagreement with the main organization and ultimately set out on their own. My expectation was to locate essential clues in their writings that would assist me in resolving my uncertainties. I

acquired all of their publications, including recordings of lectures given by one of them. My hope was that their level of Realization would enable them to clarify PY's teachings through their direct experience of the various phases of *Kriya*. I was looking for high-quality teaching materials suitable for those who rely on these disciples rather than the primary source.

Although the first disciple was proficient in remembering even the most insignificant moments of his *Guru's* life, the didactic material that he shared did not include any mention of the *Higher Kriyas*. The second individual seemed more professional and had a didactic spirit, but the material he presented contained almost nothing new. The third disciple caught my attention because he confronted the tragedy of mental illness and was able to deliver an impressive account of it. I was only able to find an enlightening sentence about the role of *Kechari Mudra* in his literature, everything else was devastatingly banal. The secrets, if there were any, were well kept by these three disciples!

Some books that I read were written by Lahiri Mahasaya disciples, not by PY disciples.¹¹ Some sacred scriptures were the subjects of these commentaries, which were attributed to Lahiri Mahasaya. The printing of those interpretations was done by *P. Bhattacharya*, his disciple. Recently, these books have been translated into English. These texts left me feeling very disappointed. The value they had was almost negligible from an exegetical perspective. To me, it was almost impossible to believe that those interpretations were actually given by Lahiri Mahasaya. I was incapable of seeing the practical wisdom and incredible realization that he expressed in his journals and letters.

I came up with the idea of Lahiri Mahasaya verbally annotating certain sacred texts of the Indian tradition. It's possible that he was inspired by the strength of his acumen while reading those verses, and completely forgot the texts to comment, which inspired him to speak widely and freely about the subtleties of *Kriya*. It is probable that his remarks on that occasion were taken as a specific comment on those texts. It is likely that the editor added to those comments other parts originating from his personal understanding.

The Meditation Counselor found out months after the fact that I had read a 'forbidden' book, written by a disciple of PY who had left the organization. Additionally, I had gifted this book to a couple of friends! She sent a letter to a friend of mine and labeled me as 'one who stabs his *Guru* in the back and distributes daggers for others to do the same!' In her conclusion, she

¹¹ At that time, books like Ashoke Chatterjee's *Purana Purusha* were not yet available to readers.

stated that intelligence is a double-edged sword: it can be utilized to eliminate ignorance, but also to ruthlessly hinder the flow of spiritual energy!

Her reaction was so frenzied that it didn't cause any injury to me. She had reacted to an emotion that was uncontrollable. Decades of conditioning had had an impact on her common sense. I had a feeling of compassion towards her and it brought a smile to my face as I pictured her mood when she wrote that letter. Seeing that her apprehensive expectations of me had come to fruition, I believe that her expression was initially serious, but eventually calm and serene, like that of someone who enjoys a sweet, intimate satisfaction. She could well say that she had foreseen all of this, or that she had sensed my... "betrayal."

REVISITING THE LESSONS

I decided to start studying the correspondence course again, with the aim of taking it from a fresh perspective. I organized regular meetings with a few of my *kriyaban* friends. We read the most important lessons and talked about the topics covered, hoping to find inspiration to improve our *Kriya* practice. Our endeavor was not successful. Our efforts seemed pointless, like trying to extract blood from a turnip.

The lessons didn't just teach meditation techniques of *Kriya Yoga*. Advice was provided on various topics of daily life, including how to interact with friends, manage relationships, tips on selecting a job that won't impede spiritual progress, as well as maintaining a balanced vegetarian diet. In addition, we were introduced to some esoteric teachings, although they are not mandatory for *Kriya practice*, they sparked our curiosity.

I realized that I had inflated the importance of these collateral topics. I have been learning ways to develop telepathy, send energy for pranic healing, and recognize friends from past lives. While the lessons emphasized caution and discernment, I came to the realization that I had applied the teachings uncritically, blindly following my emotions.

My behavior was as if I were always being supported by the High One, believing that the *Guru's* strength and blessings were always with me. My understanding of the illusion of being able to comprehend every aspect of the lessons became clear after time, which was shattered by the evidence of failure. I was devastated because I had wasted my time and not done anything to help or heal anyone. Not only had I been a fool, but I had also disrupted the peace and intimacy of others.

When it comes to past lives, I realized that my imagination had gone wild, creating a series of mental movies that I convinced myself were real memories of a distant past. The terrible truth that hit me was so

overwhelming that I couldn't think clearly for months. I was deeply bewildered. This was a tragic moment!

THE IDEA OF JAPA ENTERS MY LIFE

I slowly came to the realization that anything in the material I studied that was not related to the explanation of meditation techniques was OF NO USE. Although such teachings may be harmless to most people, they had been a heavy burden for me to bear. It had weighed on the way I thought and acted. I began to yearn for a pure spiritual path that had nothing to do with improving the mind's realm. My approach to *Japa*, or the practice called *Prayer* by religions, was motivated by this desire.

I attempted something vain before *Japa*. I made an effort to follow the renowned instruction of consistently maintaining an impartial mindset towards both pleasant and unpleasant circumstances, while remaining detached as a "witness". My enthusiasm for this new purpose led me to achieve a state that seemed ideal and good, but I became extremely stressed after a few days, like everything was a fiction or a miserable play. It was not feasible to carry on this ridiculous fiction. Only a person who is "enlightened" can truly live in such a high state of consciousness.

At that moment, I was introduced to the writings of *Mère (The Mother)* and *Satprem*. *Sri Aurobindo's* disciple, *The Mother*, continued his research 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!

The Mother inspired me to make *Japa* a constant reality in my life.

Philosophy was not a part of *Mother's* thoughts. 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. *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 been become a way of life deemed deplorable or criminal by society.

The second concept was about how she approached the subject of *Japa*. 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.

In *The Mother's Agenda*, *Satprem* and *The Mother* discuss how the *Mantra* calms those around it and creates an intense atmosphere that prevents 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.

SWAMI RAMDAS' MANTRA WAS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR ME

The writings of *The Mother* inspired me to add a *Mantra* to my *Kriya* practice. I chose the *Mantra* utilized by *Swami Ramdas* (1884-1963.)

This Indian saint 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.

THE METHOD I UTILIZED TO REACH THE BREATHLESS STATE

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. The *mantra* I chose to repeat was that of *Swami Ramdas*: *Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram Om*.

I practiced it 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. My *Mantra* was chosen based on clear predisposition, and I enjoyed feeling its vibration. 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 achieved perfect stillness, but at some point, I came to the realization 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.

A recollection came back to me. 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*.

I have had an experience similar to hers, now in my life. 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*.

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 the *Third 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. A gentle concentration has to be given the first three *Chakras* (in sequence) and then devote all the remaining time to settling on 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.

My memories of the summer that followed that experience

My summer routine consisted of practicing *Japa* in the morning and *Kriya* in the afternoon in the countryside. The end of each routine resulted in a state of breathlessness. For several months, this event occurred every day from June to September. It's impossible for me to describe what I experienced in that state. I remember opening my eyes often. Immediately, my consciousness deepened and 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. I was blown away by the purity of this idea, which was something new to me and filled with excitement and emotion.

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!

As winter approached, I sat in my warm room and tried to recall the memories of my summer experiences. The landscape that I had contemplated so many times during my Kriya routine was now an image sealed in pure transparency. I had several opportunities to contemplate the significance of everything that had occurred.

Upon reviewing my previous years' *Kriya Yoga* practice, I come to the realization that my attitude was inappropriate. I had separated myself from my own personal way of thinking and feeling and had embraced a set of ideas that were not in line with my natural self. The values that my culture instilled in me were unconsciously violated by me while being in the organization.

I had been possessed by the worst illusion. Finding *Kriya* was considered '*a stroke of luck*' by me. I truly believe that this idea is foolish. Seeing it as a stroke of luck prevents you from focusing on your duty to perfect this art. *Kriya Pranayama* should not be a habit that can be practiced with a lazy mind.

During my initial attempts to learn the *Ujjayi* technique, I was consistently striving to improve. I was always active and stimulated by my intuition. Throughout each practice, I expected an unavoidable improvement, and even when I was calm, I remained enthusiastic throughout every moment. It was always my intention to pursue my ideal of perfection and beauty.

After receiving Kriya, I lost focus on my effort due to the notion of practicing the '*fastest technique in the field of spiritual evolution*'. My iron discipline was softened by the hypnotic promise of the *Guru's* blessings.

"Aren't you glad you have found a true *Guru*?" For years, I have been hearing this refrain from my *Kriya* organization. "Isn't it wonderful that He was chosen for you by God Himself?" "Yes, I am happy!" My response was filled with almost hysterical excitement. This notion was more detrimental to me than any other factor. It was the basis for a lazy

attitude.

It was a pernicious mistake to keep practicing *Kriya* while having an overactive mind. I had waited for too long to experience the value of *Japa*. The Divine can only enter our lives by calming the mind, which allows it to traverse all the layers that protect the ego, such as thoughts, emotions, and sensations. Only in a state of mental silence can genuine and sincere intuition become the only guide, not the mind. My path had to continue differently now.

A VERY SPECIAL PERIOD OF MY LIFE BEGINS

Experiencing the breathless state was like experiencing an earthquake. Now that I'm thinking about it, I'm unsure whether a person can endure such an experience without causing a significant disruption to their daily routine.

It's challenging for me to recognize truth. In my opinion, I went crazy right after the summer experiences. My desire was to live life fully, acquire new knowledge, and of course, travel.

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 PY 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 PY 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* has become 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.

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.

It was revealed to me that *Swami Hariharananda* would have a brief stay in Europe before proceeding 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. 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 my 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. The most crucial aspect of *Kriya Pranayama* was to listen to the inner sounds constantly.

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. By withdrawing strength from the breath, a great mental relaxation was achieved.

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*.¹² 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.

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 have led me to conceive of *Kriya Yoga* in a new way.

He was firmly committed to the idea that *Kriya* had to be utilized to enter the *Omkar* reality. 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 realize the essence of the *Omkar* experience, he was introducing us to another dimension by giving himself completely to us.

The concept that he had passed on to us created an understanding of the entire *Kriya* practice as a single progressive process of being in tune with the reality of *Omkar*. All the different phases of *Kriya* had to be traversed by the *Omkar* perception, just like a thread for stringing pearls.

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.

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.

¹² 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.

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*.

During my attempts to accomplish this ideal in the following days, the old, well-known sweetness returned to my life, and I accepted it with gratitude and an open heart. For many weeks, my daily contact with the *Om* vibration was what made me feel like I was in heaven on earth. 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. This wonderful period of my life will always be etched in my mind when I think of that landscape.

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. I practiced with a lot of intensity. 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.¹³ 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. He concluded the meeting by making this statement. 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 triggered by his unfortunate decision. Regrettably, these individuals, driven by their desire for a complete teaching, began to search for other teachers.

¹³ This information was obtained by me many years ago. I publish it in Appendix No. 5.

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.¹⁴

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 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.

¹⁴There 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.

DIFFICULT PERIOD

I was calm during this time. The practice of *Kriya Pranayama* had now become well-established, even though doubts about the *higher Kriyas* of PY remained intact. I shared my thoughts with a friend who was a companion of mine during my journey with *Swami Hariharananda*.

We chose to receive a few initiations from a few 'minor' teachers who once served as the right-hand of an illustrious *Guru* but later became independent. Our idea was that these teachers were mediocre, sometimes uneducated, and immoral.

Some episodes also validated the impression of mental instability. Their knowledge of *Kriya Yoga* was limited and they taught it superficially, but we still believed they taught '*Original Kriya*', leading us to become blind.

We always acted with respect or tolerant attitude towards them, forgiving them when they betrayed our trust.

We accepted the farce of the initiation ceremony. Their explanations were always short and shallow. I was making an effort to convince myself that I had discovered something valuable. Frequently, a vague feeling of well-being that arises when practicing a new technique for the first time was a testament to its excellence. I didn't realize that by doing so, I had made my ego the compass that guided my spiritual journey. I had forgotten my previous accomplishments of listening to the *Om* vibration and experiencing the breathless state. I felt like I was under hypnosis.

I was unwilling to accept that the new initiation had only added something unimportant to what I already knew. Surely, acquiring new techniques was akin to a hobby. The password required to be accepted in every initiation seminar was a solemn promise of secrecy. Each of us made this promise, but as soon as the session ended, we shared the news we obtained with others friends who had not received that initiation.

By following these teachers, I discovered a particular school where *Kriya Yoga* was severely lacking in the classic *Higher Kriyas*. Various teachings of classic *Yoga* were combined with *Kriya*. I want to make a short note about this last school where I encountered the poorest point of my research, but It gave me my first glimpse of the *Kriya of cells*, which I will describe in chapter 17.

This school was not close to the teachings of Lahiri Mahasaya. The *Kriya Yoga* that was taught was based on the teachings of a man born in India, who later went to the United States and who claimed to be a direct disciple of *Babaji*. The school provided three levels of *Kriya* that could be accomplished in three years, or even just two. The book that introduced this school was strange in that it didn't mention techniques like *Talabya Kriya*, *Kechari Mudra*, *Navi Kriya*, *Omkar Pranayama*, *Thokar*, and others.

The primary method was known as *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama*. Many other teachings were combined and organized into four main denominations: *Hatha Yoga*, *Dhyana Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga*, and *Bhakti Yoga*.

There is no question that this school's *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama* technique was beautiful. The second level's core was the introduction of Indian *Mantras*. I was perplexed by some other teachings, but I persevered as I placed my hope in the third level.

The final *Third Level* was an unbearable disappointment. There were no actual *Higher Kriyas*, but rather classical *yoga* techniques that are suitable for a pre-course for individuals interested in *Kriya*. The six techniques of *Samadhi*, given at the end of an exhausting and uninteresting course, comprised well-recognized and straightforward practices that can be found in a basic *yoga* book.

We were given a different version of the *Hong So* technique, three commonly used visualization techniques, the standard advice to keep awareness continuous throughout the day, and finally a variation of the *Om technique*.

It seemed that the *Hong So technique* and the *Om technique* were created by a lazy mind who wanted to avoid being accused of copying from PY's organization. For instance, the '*Hong-So*' *Mantra* was replaced with '*Om-Babaji*', disregarding the fact that '*Hong-So*' is a universal *Mantra* whose syllables have been chosen to sooth the breath and have a vibrational connection.

Receiving the *Kriya* techniques offered by the PY organization again, disguised and passed off as *Samadhi* techniques, was a shocking experience for most of us.

It was evident that this path was not what I was searching for. My trust in this teacher decreased significantly, especially when he mentioned his hypothetical meeting with *Babaji*. Hearing the disconcerting platitudes that this *Babaji* would have said to him, such as saying his wife would have done a great job writing a vegetarian recipe book, left me amazed.

I was especially interested in two details of the *Kriya Kundalini Pranayama technique*, which was the most intriguing aspect of this path. The initial aspect involved recognizing sexual energy and focusing on elevating it to the brain during each inhalation, then take notice of its transformation and distribute it throughout the body while exhaling. The second aspect was that the exhalation would be twice as long as the inhalation.

The recommended routine's most irritating aspect was that once the required number of breaths were completed, the process that was already happening had to be stopped abruptly to practice the so-called *Dhyana Kriya*. Instead of focusing on the spine and energy control, this meditation

technique now focuses on visualizing a fantasy chosen at will. The change from an exercise that aimed to achieve a specific beautiful goal to an exercise that aimed to achieve something else through imagination seemed quite foolish to me.

A BEAUTIFUL EVENT

I remember the episode where I was looking for clarification on the *Higher Kriyas* that I received through the correspondence course, but the Minister refused to give me any. 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 informed that the *Kechari Mudra* would progress gradually, specifically by making sure to touch the uvula with the tip of the tongue. I was able to clarify PY'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 had the sensation of reliving the most memorable time of my life. 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, MY LAST TEACHER

The new teacher who was invited to Europe had to overcome visa problems and took two years to arrive, but upon his arrival, he discovered that most of *Swami Hariharananda's* disciples were there. The people were ready to welcome him as a messenger sent by God. This teacher provided us with the necessary key to acquire *Kechari Mudra*, taught *Navi Kriya*, and shared other invaluable teachings, including the *Higher Kriyas*.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Kechari Mudra* and *Navi Kriya* will be discussed in chapter 7. Chapter 9 is where

I was not in a good mood when we met up. Based on some indications, I knew that I was about to adopt a radical new approach. I was concerned that this might disrupt the beautiful routine I had settled into. *Swami Hariharananda's* passionate immersion in the magical dimension of *Omkar* was something I could not forget or cast aside. I went to this new teacher, determined to reject him if I felt I was moving away from this reality. I agreed to meet him solely to receive what *Swami Hariharananda* had decided not to give me.

Regrettably, the *Omkar* reality slipped out of my grasp when I lost my way during the research of this '*Original Kriya*.' The reason is that I started experimenting with other methods, without listening to the internal sounds.

It's a sad truth that I learned the hard way that it's not advisable to abandon such a beautiful practice. I experienced a profound disconnection from that sweet reality. I felt as though I had stepped into a different continent and encountered environments that did not mean anything to me. I attempted to rediscover the overwhelming emotion that emanated from listening to the inner sounds with no success. I spent a significant amount of time trying to reconnect with the *Om* vibration. My decision to detach myself from the *Om* vibration was a huge mistake, and I slowly and sadly understood it.

I met this new teacher at a *yoga* center. The purpose of *Kriya's* introductory speech was to emphasize that its objective was not to enlarge the mind and Ego, but rather to embark on a journey beyond the mind. Over time, it became clear to me that his thinking was based on the teachings of *Sri Krishnamurti*.

While maintaining an indulgent, almost amused attitude, I observed some traits of character in him that had actually made a bad impression on others. For instance, he had a short temper. The teaching of simple and mundane things that even kindergarten children comprehended was characterized by a great abundance of words and concepts being repeated ad nauseam. During the audience, someone asked, in a gentle but firm manner, for a precise explanation. He seemed to come out of a hypnotic state. With an expression of anger, he threw insults at him to humiliate him and shut his mouth. In the presence of legitimate questions, he would often display anger outbursts because he believed he saw a hidden intention to challenge his authority.

I devoted all of my attention to learning his *Kriya* form and ignored his glaring shortcomings. I believed that his trip to the West was meant to

the detailed explanation of his teachings on the *higher Kriyas* will be given.

restore the original teachings, which was sufficient to overcome my initial discomfort.

Despite being unusually synthetic in some parts, the initiation seminar's explanation of techniques was fairly clear. *Kriya Pranayama* instructions, while officially correct, were only understandable by those who had already practiced *Kriya Yoga* for a long time. However, I realized that my search for the *original Kriya* was progressing well. I have been a follower of this teacher for several years. Below, I will provide an explanation for why I ended all of my relationships with him.

KECHARI MUDRA

After the initiation seminar ended, it took me three months to reach *Kechari Mudra*.¹⁶ The *Kechari* caused me to feel grogginess for several weeks. After experiencing mental foggiess, 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!

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**. There was no room for criticism in 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

¹⁶ 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.

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.

I must clarify why I wrote that this vow was absurd. In my view, it's a waste of time to ask people who are eager to learn *Kriya Yoga* techniques to take this vow and then respect it. 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 there are problematic behaviors in a student, why not wait for the effects of *Kriya* before tearing your clothes? It has been observed that individuals who had lived a morally questionable life have succeeded with *Kriya*, spontaneously achieving a virtuous life, whereas individuals who strove to exhibit highly moral behavior have failed

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.¹⁷ 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 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 present a proposal to our teacher. The request was for a guided group practice of *Kriya* to be added after his initiation seminars. This would provide a deeper understanding for new initiates and a refresher for those who were already practicing. I communicated my request to the teacher

¹⁷ I measured how much time he spent explaining the basic technique of *Kriya Pranayama* one day, and it only took two minutes!

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. In reality, he no longer considered me to be 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. This opportunity made me happy because I had imagined finally being able to explain *Kriya* in an in-depth and complete way. I hoped that my students never had to endure the agony of unanswered legitimate questions.

About a year passed when I realized I was doing unproductive work. 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 miserable 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 OUR SEPARATION

The following months were spent in a peaceful and relaxed state, not comparable to the restless years I previously described. The end of a nerve-racking situation came after dismissing that mean individual. 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.

I was uncertain about the outcome of the newly created *Kriya* groups, which he had frequented up until that time. 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.

Unfortunately, I had to take note of the fact that the magical period when I had only deeply experienced *Swami Hariharananda's Kriya* had slowly

dissolved. My perseverance in learning the *Original Kriya* gave me other insights, but had also made me forget the beauty of that time. As I stated earlier, that experience was achieved by constantly listening to the inner sounds, including *Om*, while practicing *Kriya Pranayama*. It was a lengthy process to fully recover that crucial detail.

This second teacher had guided me into the realm of the *Tribhangamurari* movement. This teaching requires patience to be explored, and I am still working on it. He also gave me the benefit of being introduced to *Krishnamurti's* thought.

J. Krishnamurti

This study provided me with the decisive and conclusive push that would help me break my addiction to this teacher of *Kriya Yoga* after many years of faithful and controversial discipleship.

Krishnamurti's statement, 'What is the need for a *Guru*?', was difficult to fully agree with at the time. My rationale asserted: 'This is a sophism; even *Krishnamurti* acted as a *Guru*.' He continued: 'It's important to walk alone, begin the journey alone, and during that journey, you have to be both your own teacher and student'. As now I read those words, I was certain that they conveyed a profound truth. I was unable to apply this wise warning due to fear and conditioning. I had to receive many slaps before I was able to assert my freedom from the *Gurus*.

While I have studied many books by this author, none have been as beautiful as *The Only Revolution*. It is not simple to comprehend its meaning immediately. Reading one chapter at a time and repeating it over and over in the following days is required.

It takes repeated exposure to sunlight to get a tan, and similarly, we need to expose our minds to its teaching several times before grasping its meaning. Bring this small book along on your walks until you grasp the significance of this teaching.

The Only Revolution is the perfect blend of poetry and wisdom. "Life begins where thought ends" wrote *Krishnamurti*. Are you willing to make this teaching your own? Don't rush. Take your time. The practice of *Kriya* will inexplicably deepen

Other events

- After spending some time at an *Ashram* in India, a friend found out that they offer *Kriya Yoga* classes. Despite the absence of the monk who led this *Ashram* (*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*), the friend was initiated into *Kriya* by one of his disciples. He bought a large volume that had a summary of the techniques. After returning from India, my friend, who was

visibly satisfied, made me some photocopies of this book. The techniques weren't much different from what I knew, but there was a lack of information.

Kechari Mudra and *Thokar* were not mentioned in any way. Instead, I recall a complicated technique that was centered around the visualization of the *Chakras* as mentioned in the *tantric* texts. Each technique was accompanied by a theoretical introduction that included quotations from ancient books. A meticulous gradual routine was given at the conclusion of the book. There was also a statement that all of these techniques constitute *Kriya* as explained by *Babaji*, the mythical *Guru* of Lahiri Mahasaya.

I couldn't fool myself into thinking that my research was over and that those notes had what I was searching for! My belief was that *Babaji* did not create *Kriya Yoga* by only combining the various spiritual practices of *Tantrism*. It was beyond belief to assume that *Thokar* was just another common variation of *Jalandhara Bandha*!

I had the opportunity to listen to a lecture given by the head of the *Ashram* (the *Swami* mentioned above). In it he said that he discovered these techniques in certain *tantric* texts. He selected them with care to build a coherent system of *Kriya*. What led to the claim that *Babaji* was the source of these teachings?

Like many other Indian teachers, his disciples, not himself, were the ones who edited the book. They devised a clever plan to make it more intriguing by hinting at the derivation from the mythical *Babaji*. Reflecting typical Indian custom, the teacher had never reviewed those notes. Upon learning about that addition, he was bewildered. In spite of this, he defended the work of his disciples by asserting that... 'The origins of *Babaji's Kriya* can be traced back to *Tantra*.'

- A friend experienced a unique event when he met *Sri Banamali Lahiri*, a direct grandson of the great Lahiri Mahasaya, who had a great academic education and experience in *Kriya*. There are many spiritual seekers who view him as a saint, wearing the garment of humility.

My friend couldn't learn anything from this teacher, instead, he came back to me very confused. His succinct description of his experience helped me comprehend why he, despite his eagerness to learn, was incapable of hearing the advice of that wise man.

This friend said me that *Kriya* is no longer practiced in Varanasi and possibly elsewhere in India. I was able to maintain control without interrupting or challenging him. I tried to comprehend what had happened by asking him some seemingly minor questions. As he used to do, my friend started the conversation by introducing topics that were irrelevant. He recalled that he was at Lahiri Mahasaya's house towards the end of the

interview. He inquired if any relatives of Lahiri Mahasaya were still practicing *Kriya*. The dazzling listener must have been overcome by his attitude, which revealed my friend's belief that a negative reply was almost taken for granted. Actually, the answer, containing bitter sarcasm, was negative. To say it differently, it translates to 'No one practices it here any more: you're the last one left practicing it!'

At the end of his story, the friend gazed at me with astonished eyes. I am uncertain if he was hoping to persuade me or if he was distraught about the news he received.

I was silent. It's my opinion that he didn't realize how foolish he had been with that noble person. It wasn't until one month later that he found out that an old friend of his had received *Kriya* initiation from the same person. The news left him very upset and offended, so he made a plan to return to India and protest against that noble and austere individual.

Unfortunately he did not return due to a serious illness which led to his death after several months. Despite the vast diversity of our personalities, I will always be grateful to him for everything he wanted to share with me on the *yoga* path.

- In those days, I became aware that a new *Kriya Yoga* master could be invited to Europe. I was willing to work on this project with him by offering to cover some of his travel expenses since he was a well-respected person. A close friend traveled to India to meet and converse with him. About a month later, he called me back to Italy. A few hours afterward, we were seated in my room. He had a private interview with the new teacher and received positive information. I was fully enthralled. They had talked about the terrible state of *Kriya*'s spread in the West. The teacher expressed his sadness and expressed his willingness to offer assistance. The expert himself checked the friend's *Kriya Pranayama* at the end of that meeting.

This friend surprised me by asking me to practice *Kriya Pranayama* in front of him. He asserted that he uncovered a flaw in my practice. I inquired about it and his response stunned me: he told me that he couldn't reveal it because he had made a solemn commitment to the teacher not to reveal anything.¹⁸ He clarified that he had requested the teacher's approval to correct, in our group, any possible errors in our practice. The answer had been negative. The teacher had required a genuine oath to refrain from disclosing anything.

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.

It is possible that the teacher, who had indicated his intention to aid us, was concerned that we would no longer invite him to our group once our mistakes were cleared up. Was he really so mean? I was not expecting my friend to give me a complete account of everything he and the teacher had said to each other. I couldn't and didn't desire to enter the intimacy of that experience, but how could he permit me to persist with the practice he thought was incorrect?

The fact that my friend appeared almost satisfied with finding my mistake was what caused me to feel upset. In previous times, I shared every detail about the spiritual path with him. We went through all the ups and downs associated with my previous teachers, and we both experienced the same suffering. He was content with his decision to go to India and probably expected me to do the same. I didn't fight, but I reacted in a very negative manner. I stood up and left, leaving my friend alone.

A few days later, I received a message from the master's secretary and was appalled by the way she managed the financial aspects of the trip. I rejected the offer. To be honest, I didn't have the desire to start a major organizational task all over again. I didn't even consider the possibility of traveling to this master. I knew that he would ask me to take the classic oath to never disclose anything to my friends. Returning to them, what should I have said? To obtain some crumbs of information about *Kriya*, my friends would need to be taken on a charter flight and sent to India. This was the only way they were able to obtain this information. Was this the assistance he was so eager to give us?

If that had been the sole possible solution, there would have been countless charter flights each year to transport those interested in *Kriya* to India. No matter what their age or health status, they were required to travel to a distant Indian city, such as a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Fatima! This sham was not even worthy of consideration. I felt a sense of anger and despair. It was time to bring an end to this ridiculousness: I couldn't take it any longer.

SELF-TAUGHT

Slowly, I realized that a significant period of my life had come to an end. My spiritual journey began with me being self-educated, and now I was slowly reverting back to that same state.

This is what came to my mind. According to tradition, individuals who don't have a *Guru* follow their ego as their *Guru*. Yet, it's possible that this is a truthful statement. I am certain that the human mind, despite its flaws, has the ability to create an excellent *Kriya* routine. Anyone can confirm the effectiveness of their routine without the need for others'

opinions!

Sri Yukteswar's spiritual chant is known for saying: 'Let *Pranayama* be your religion. *Pranayama* will give you salvation. From now on, this will be my way of living on the spiritual path. I am solely dependent on my intuition and the unparalleled power of *Pranayama*.

I recall the time when I learned *Pranayama* from a book and had fantastic experiences without anyone controlling me. Self-confidence was built upon this foundation. After many years of *Kriya* practice, I discovered on my own the value of adding *Japa* to the practice of *Kriya* and achieved the state of breathlessness.

Despite my encounters with "authorized" *Kriya* teachers, they did nothing but repeat what I had already learned. They became annoyed after a few questions. The organizations and even the Indian masters, as I previously stated, left me feeling deeply disappointed. The organization had become a distant memory and the Indian masters I had encountered or tried to contact had failed to manifest any intelligence or humanity.

In this time frame, I started to understand the actual situation regarding the spread of *Kriya Yoga*. Our understanding of *Mahavatar Babaji*, the immortal master, is quite limited. Our knowledge of what Lahiri Mahasaya learned from him is even less. It's possible that the teaching he received was so high that he didn't think about sharing it with anyone. What is my approach to thinking about this? I draw the conclusion from the fact that many prominent individuals who later disseminated *Kriya* considered Lahiri Mahasaya to be the father of *Kriya Yoga*, asserting that he excelled in simplifying the complicated techniques that had been handed down in the tradition of classical *Yoga*. According to them, he identified four essential levels of *Kriya* that, when applied in the daily meditation practice, are fully sufficient to achieve final liberation. What was the purpose of his study if he could have just transferred *Babaji's* teaching?

Nevertheless, his research was crucial and forms the basis of the *Kriya Yoga* that his direct disciples disseminated to the whole world. In a nutshell, he designed a form of *Kriya* that was appropriate for his disciples through his ingenuity and wisdom, making classical *Yoga* less complicated.

From my perspective, Lahiri Mahasaya was always attentive to the spiritual development of his disciples and to the challenges they faced in their lives throughout his lifetime. It was explained to me that in the last part of his life, he began to consider the difficulty encountered by some people in trying to take a very long breath, long as his teaching required. He also thought about the more serious challenge that some faced when holding their breath for an extended period, which is common during the *Higher Kriyas*. Evidence suggests that he included a new system of *Higher Kriyas* in addition to the earlier ones. In these later teachings, the breath is

either left free or not taken into account at all. Consequently, there were two main approaches to conceiving the techniques of the *Higher Kriyas*. Breathing holding is regularly used in the first method, while the second method completely ignores it. In Lahiri's main disciple, *Panchanan Bhattacharya*, we can observe both approaches in his teachings.

The only approach I was taught by *Shibendu Lahiri* was the second, with no mention of the first. This version of the *Higher Kriyas* is what I describe in chapter 9. I dedicate chapter 8 to the initial method.

Let's examine the idea, which is endorsed by P. Y.'s organization, that the *Kriya Yoga* they teach is identical to that transmitted to Sri Yukteswar by Lahiri Mahasaya, and transmitted without any modifications to P.Y. I believe this idea is incorrect. The *Radhasoami* spiritual movement had an influence on both of these two Masters (Sri Yukteswar and P.Y.). Consequently, *Kriya* received additional techniques from them. These techniques were intended to be used as preparation for *Kriya*. Now, P.Y. taught a particular form of *Kriya Pranayama* in the early years of his preaching in the United States, which was different from the one taught by Lahiri Mahasaya. It is possible for anyone to verify this by searching on the internet. This *Kriya* form has been discontinued by P.Y.'s organization. P.Y. changed it a few years later explaining that the form of *Kriya Pranayama* he had chosen to give up originated from Sri Yukteswar. He proposed a technique that is still taught today, but it is not exactly the same as Lahiri Mahasaya's original one.

To sum it up, each of the three masters (Lahiri, Sri Yukteswar, and P.Y.) decided to teach *Kriya Pranayama* in a way that would be palatable to the spiritual seekers who approached them.

CHAPTER 5

DECISION TO WRITE A BOOK

I describe why I chose to write a book to share all the information I had about Lahiri Mahasaya's Kriya Yoga. In order to reach this decision, I had to undergo a long and profound internal work to overcome strong conditioning.

During the winter, I went skiing in the nearby mountains with a few friends. Everything went smoothly. During my 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.

The obstacles mentioned in the previous chapter are what make understanding difficult. They appeared as an absurdity disguised as a nightmare, and I felt an unending feeling of rebellion.

In my dream, I saw a book about *Kriya* that had detailed explanations for every technique. I have 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 had the impression that this choice had resulted in suffering for individuals and an interminable wasting of time and energy.

Let's go back to the vision of a book. My imagination was enough to give me an idea of the color of the cover. 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. Perhaps there were 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. Certain individuals 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. Human nature causes these things to occur. It is certain that the real researchers would

have recognized the strength and self-sufficient evidence of the original text.¹⁹

It's unfortunate that such a book hadn't been written! 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] The text makes very ancient techniques current, feasible, and clear to the intuition's eyes.²⁰

I dreamed of writing a book similar to this one that was completely devoted to Lahiri Mahasaya's *Kriya Yoga*. 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. In every field, there will always be a demand for good teachers. What is the way to persuade people who have strong brain chemistry conditioning to accept this fact? 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 spreads a false teaching.' The book's direct and sober exposition, without

¹⁹ 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! 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!

²⁰ 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.

any frills, may have caused some researchers to dislike it. It would have been rejected if they had stated that it didn't have good vibrations.

I would strive to write in such a way that my story feels like their story, and then I would exert effort to rethink my approach.

My purpose for writing was to reach out to individuals like myself who are disillusioned with organizations and travel gurus. Upon finding such a book, they would have felt immense relief. I was already enjoying their happiness. Thanks to them, the book would keep spreading, and it's unclear how many times it would come back before the eyes of the teachers who had condemned it.

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 been tried and considered many times already.

OVERCOMING A DIFFICULT CONDITIONING WAS A CHALLENGE

In the days that followed, I was confronted with the various conditionings I received from my first *Kriya* organization. I became aware that they were still deeply ingrained in my thoughts. Nevertheless, it was imperative to get rid of each of them individually. 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 was also trying to determine which master I could consider myself a disciple of. I had another question: is the idea of a *Guru-disciple* relationship serious or merely a fantasy?

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!

Upon going back, I recalled *Guru Ramakrishna's* description of *Naren'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.

THE CONDITIONINGS START TO DISSOLVE

I started practicing the *Thokar* technique in a large number during this time. This technique aids in the dissolving of the knot in the heart. This knot can also be referred to as *Vishnu Granthi*. The knot of the heart can be a support for the desire to believe in traditions and religious authorities. Spiritual teachings and dogmas that are integrated into a solemn ceremony can cause people to become particularly sensitive and susceptible to them. *Thokar* helps you discover your inner dignity, allowing you to be less easily influenced by ceremonies. Through such practice, you can greatly

benefit by relying on your courage. Your thoughts become consistent and free from external influences.

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.

The way this book conveyed abstract concepts in such a short amount of time was very impressive. 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. His duty is 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'. In other words, the mirror should reflect not only the man Lahiri Mahasaya, but also the *kriyaban* themselves, indicating the wisdom and spiritual

realization that the practice of *Kriya* can possibly bring. 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.

CLASSIFYING THREE PERIODS IN MY LIFE

Three basic periods have been part of my life. The initial phase, which was both happy and stress-free, was a self-taught experience. My sole method of learning *Pranayama* was through two pages of a Hatha Yoga book. Learning it well was possible because of my earnestness and consistency in practice. I was given an insight into the nature of spiritual experiences.

The second phase was distinguished by moments of peace and joy, but also by difficulties and real crises. I became a member of an organization that imparted *Pranayama* more fully than I had previously known. I received more than just *Pranayama* from this organization. In truth, it facilitated my acceptance of Eastern beliefs regarding the significance 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.

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?' I had no trouble accepting this fact; it seemed apparent to me, yet it turned out to be false.

The belief that the *Guru* and God are identical led to the idea that the *Guru's* organization was not just an institution. The organization was not just 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*.

A clear demand for secrecy was created due to the belief that knowledge acquired outside the organization was of no value. This demand ensured the organization's irreplaceable role was preserved.

My organization resembled a church in many ways. PY'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 is more about the magical realm than the spiritual realm.

The rational analysis revealed that the organization's reasons for requesting secrecy were flimsy. The argument was that secrecy is necessary to maintain the purity of the teachings. The fact that PY made a slight modification to the *Kriya* technique compared to that taught by Lahiri Mahasaya means that secrecy is a way to preserve the purity of the modifications.

Now, is there a way that I could challenge the sacredness of the *Guru-disciple* relationship as the sole means of receiving *Kriya* teachings? This idea did not fit into my life or that of the many people I knew. Conflict can no longer arise when one learns *Kriya* from different sources and continually perfects it.

The decision to add *Japa* to *Kriya* was made by me, not by a hypothetical *Guru*. Unless we are referring to the inner *Guru*, which is our heart. This decision I made from my heart was the most significant event in

the years that caused my dependence on the Organization I followed to crumble.

In the third phase of my life, I was obsessed with finding the *original Kriya* of Lahiri Mahasaya. I discovered many valuable information, but perhaps the most fortunate discovery was the book *Purana Purusha*.

What was my current condition? I felt very alone, without any illusions. What was my understanding about my life? Undoubtedly, there have been individuals who have assisted and inspired me.

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. A person's consciousness resonates through the threads of the network in close proximity when they strive to achieve a state beyond normal life. The soul can be strengthened by the positive response of others, but it can be hindered by the indifference and apathy of others. I am of the belief that those who pursue spirituality are aiding in the evolution of others. This network is what unites us all, and it is called the *Collective Unconscious*.²¹

Beethoven's life and works have been crucial in helping me find a purpose in my life. Although I was alone, I was not entirely alone. *Beethoven's* life and music have a significant impact on my existence and have directed me toward the Infinite. I have already discussed the significant impact that *The Mother* (disciple of *Sri Aurobindo*) had on my spiritual journey.

I attempted to emotionally relive these two solid sources of inspiration over the course of several days by physically rereading my diaries.

I remember a vision that inspired me

As I was practicing *Kriya Pranayama* one evening, 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

²¹ For Freud, the Unconscious was similar to a warehouse full of old, repressed things - rejected by an almost automatic act of will - a mass that today we are no longer able to recall to consciousness. Jung identified a deeper level of it: the Collective Unconscious, which connects all humans to each other through the deepest layers of their psyche. Our brain structure inherited the Collective Unconscious, which is a collection of typical human responses to the most intense situations that can occur in life.

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. The *Guru-disciple* relationship is a fantasy that can be useful and soothing, but it only comes true if you are immersed in the realm of thoughts and don't have access to what's beyond them.

Giving up the illusion that the *Guru-disciple* relationship is a definite and immutable relationship is inevitable. The direct experience of the Divine is the only thing that cannot change.

THE MOST DECISIVE STIMULUS FOR WRITING THE BOOK

I used to consult certain forums dedicated to *Kriya Yoga* on a regular basis. My intention was to discover if other *kriyabans* had encountered the same obstacles in obtaining free information on unmodified *Kriya* as me. Many individuals were seeking information about *Kechari Mudra*. If they had disclosed their email address, I would have promptly sent them all the necessary information.

The pedantic tone of some Forum users who challenged the legitimate curiosity of other seekers was something that affected me. The low form of respect they showed by being tender, which was false, led them to view the desire to deepen the practice of *Kriya* as a dangerous mania. Advising seekers to keep practicing what they have received and not search for anything else is a way to silence them.

I wondered how the wise and competent "advisers" of the Forum dared boldly enter (without invitation) into the intimate dimension of the spiritual journey of a *kriyaban* they did not know, and treated him as an inexperienced novice! Is it truly that difficult to sincerely say 'I don't have the information you're seeking'?

I encountered an unpleasant discussion in the Forum that caused me to feel sick. A person claimed to be able to access the *original Kriya*. He stated that the *original Kriya's* authentic masters are still there, but he felt it was inappropriate to share their names and addresses.

I thought this was quite silly. I had the impression that the small idea of having secret knowledge was the only thing that held together the disjointed parts of his childish brain. Why should the joy of possessing the

beauty of the *original Kriya* be exclusive to him?

This person produced a paper written by a *Kriya* practitioner who resides in India. The title was: "*Truth and Falsehood Behind Kriya Yoga*"

The author of the paper claims that he spent twenty years acquiring knowledge about *Kriya Yoga*'s history. As per the paper, *Kriya* can only be effective if the *Guru* has been authorized to impart it, otherwise it is useless. It is mentioned that Lahiri Mahasaya initially authorized the teaching of *Kriya Yoga* to a limited group of people. After his passing, the number decreased. *Panchanan Bhattacharya*, who was the top disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, became his successor. Only five people were authorized by him. Over time, the situation became uncertain. There were some new individuals who were allowed to teach, but others were not. There were those who taught accurately without any modifications, while others made changes. There are lines that are valid, but they are no longer accessible.

The paper's focus is on this. I want the reader to carefully consider one point now. Is it feasible to think that a competent teacher's correct technique is not effective if they are not authorized? Can you explain the significance of this fact?

To my understanding, this statement exemplifies magical, occult, and esoteric thinking that is not associated with the spiritual path.

Consider the simplest form of spiritual activity, which is *Prayer*. Is it valid only if it has been taught to us by a minister who is authorized? Wouldn't it be superior to say that it is valid when it's expressed with genuine aspiration that comes from within?

In some cases, individuals who were not initiated by authorized disciples but were familiar with *Kriya* techniques in various ways have fully experienced their effectiveness. If one wants to embark on the spiritual path, they must have sincerity of heart and an unwavering commitment.

After that, I went through the notes I had taken on the different *Kriya* techniques I had learned in various seminars. I made some duplicates for my friends who have not yet finished all the *Kriya* levels. To advance in my work, I made the decision to buy a computer and reduce my social life to a minimum. Extracting the fundamentals of *Kriya Yoga* from my extensive notes, which had been inspired by different teachers, was not an easy task for me. I felt as though I was assembling a large puzzle without any idea of what would occur in the end.

In the first section of the book, I shared a summary of my spiritual journey, and then in the second section, I shared my knowledge on the theory and

practice of *Kriya Yoga*. The third section examined the actions that a *kriyaban* should take to maintain their initial enthusiasm and withstand the effects of time. It is well-recognized that many *kriyabans* have a hard time keeping their interest and dedication towards the practice.

I also explained how to locate clear references to procedures similar to *Kriya Yoga* in various spiritual paths' practices. I gave examples of four mystical paths: *Hesychasm*, the practice of *Dhikr* or *Zikr* in *Sufi* brotherhoods, *Internal Alchemy* (*Nei Dan*), and the *Radhasoami* movement.

Upon analyzing these movements in depth, I came to the realization that Lahiri Mahasaya had created a powerful blend of methods that had been practiced by various mystics for centuries. The thought of this removed a burden from my heart: I wasn't disclosing secret practices, but something that had been well-known for a long time!

The length of time required to write the book was significantly longer than expected. The friends who were notified of my intention were puzzled and stated that I would never end the project. Nonetheless, I did not feel any urgency. I aspired to live that quiet time of my life, appreciating the sense of calm and satisfaction that comes to those who dedicate their entire effort to a single purpose. On a certain day, the book was ready and with the aid of a friend, it was uploaded online with total tranquility.

My second teacher's reaction came after a few months. He expressed his opinion of my actions during a seminar as if I were someone who wants to engage in business with *Kriya*. He labeled me as an 'intellectual prostitute'. My reaction was unexpected: I was unable to sleep that night, but I was still extremely satisfied. Eventually, there was a book on *Kriya* that was readily available to all.

Was entstanden ist, das muß vergehen! What was created, must perish!

Was vergangen, auferstehen!

What perished, revive!

Hör auf zu beben!

Cease from trembling!

Bereite dich zu leben!

Prepare yourself to live!

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

SHORT ADDITION

Before I move on to the second part of the book, I will tell you about the main events that enhanced my research in *Kriya Yoga* after my breakup with *Shibendu Lahiri*.

First of all, having followed his teachings and not yet completed the incremental processes that are expected in this school of *Kriya Yoga*, I contacted a researcher who had been a disciple of *Satya Charan Lahiri*, the father of *Shibendu*, and a researcher who had been a disciple of *Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee*, the main disciple of *Satya Charan Lahiri*. My aim was to understand if *Shibendu Lahiri* could have made any modifications to the techniques of this *Kriya* school. I was informed that there had been minor modifications.

There were others who wrote to me to clarify additional details about *Kriya Yoga*. Three of the teachings I received were of utmost importance.

The first was the *Kriya in loops*, which I used in chapter 6 as an aid for those who have great difficulty with *Kriya Pranayama* as it is normally explained. This teaching was then interpreted by me in a particular way, which I illustrate in Chapter 16. The second factor was the contact with a specific school, which is mentioned in chapter 15. *Swami Pranabananda* is said to be the originator of this school. I am aware that several readers of my book have benefited greatly from these teachings.

The third teaching was highly effective in making the practice of *Thokar* (*Thokar* understood both in the classical form and in the *Tribhangamurari* form) more complete and effective. I refer to the teaching called *Tummo*, which I describe in chapter 16.