

PART III: HOW TO AVOID FAILURE ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

CHAPTER 10

THE IDEA OF A SPIRITUAL PATH THAT IS CLEAN

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

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

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

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

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

In contrast, others acknowledged that practicing *Kriya* could result in a deeper state of awareness. There were times when they experienced moments of quietness and joy. Their spiritual efforts were only rewarded by these rare moments. Nonetheless, this outcome hid a state of dissatisfaction.

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

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

To find the correct answer, it's important to decide to let your heart be constantly active. This is the correct way to confront the spiritual dimension of life.

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

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

So what steps should one take to reach the spiritual dimension? It is important to learn from an early age to live with your heart, that is, your emotions. Those who, for any reason, close the door of their heart with steel chains, will get nowhere even if they use the discipline of *Kriya*.

The spiritual experience can happen to those who open their hearts within a reasonable amount of time – I'm not talking about years, but months. It happens when their heart is filled with an intense desire for something that transcends the ordinary life that most people lead. Those who experiment with passion and intense emotion through a meditation technique will definitely find something unexpected. During this experience, there will be no thought whatsoever.

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

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

It can be tough to grasp that the mind that should guide us on the spiritual path is also the adversary who is aiming to destroy everything that is potentially good and valuable. It is evident that a large number of spiritual seekers have psychological vulnerabilities. Mystical practices can be damaged and progress prevented by the mind's suggestion of misleading attitudes.

Are we truly convinced that *kriyabans* who regularly practice meditation are free from unthinkable and irrational expectations that contradict the spiritual path's foundations? A major problem is that the mind, which appears intelligent, is willing to accept the most ridiculous expectations when we approach the mystical path with it.

In my opinion, misleading advertising about the scientific value of techniques such as *Kriya Yoga* can be misleading. Some individuals become interested in these practices without having a genuine aspiration towards the spiritual dimension of life.

Take into account the substantial number of individuals who have read P.Y.'s autobiography. Regrettably, such reading can sometimes lead to incorrect conclusions.¹ For those who read this text, the prospect of experiencing something unique is a source of excitement. The suggestion is that *Kriya* comes from an avatar and works mathematically.

The organization's correspondence course participants are filled with enthusiasm about the Lessons and feel a sense of harmony and well-being by putting them into practice. It appears that something in their life has finally moved in the right direction! The meaning of life has finally been grasped by them! Their understanding is that these teachings can lead them to something that can turn their existence into an incredible experience of bliss.

It would be advantageous to calm down this enthusiasm. Despite the fact that *Kriya* is the most direct way to attain Divine realization, it is not guaranteed that the individual reader will benefit from its practices. The

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

practice of *Kriya* does not guarantee the obtaining of solid results, unfortunately.

Over time, many individuals have come to realize that the enthusiastic claims about the “*extraordinary effects of Kriya*” have created a significant illusion. We often hear about the “*Science of Kriya Yoga*”, yet *Kriya* is not a science at all. Trying to persuade people that certain practices have a scientific basis in the modern sense of the word, while neglecting the true meaning of science, is a significant deception.

Regrettably, it is believed that spiritual evolution is connected to the number of *Kriya* breaths practiced. It is not uncommon for people to declare that every *Kriya* breath represents a year of spiritual evolution. It seems unlikely to me that someone with wisdom would dare to express this belief in front of a true mystic. They would likely avoid meeting such a mystic's gaze because they would be aware that their absurdity would be immediately exposed.

There are moments when I believe that the notion that *Kriya* can accelerate our evolution is a product of magical thinking. Those who have a familiarity with esoteric thinking will support me. Science is founded on objective facts that can be confirmed with zero failure rates. To put it simply, science is a guarantee of results.

This is not the case with *Kriya*: in order to succeed in this process, it is important to possess the sincerity of one's soul and the openness of one's heart, and this element may be too much for an individual to handle. While it's possible for some to practice *Kriya* for their entire lives without any results, others will see immediate results even with a brief and simple practice.

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

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

After taking into account this situation, it is apparent that there are very few individuals who are truly prepared for *Kriya* and consider it the most important thing in their lives.

CHOOSING NOT TO SPEND TIME ON USELESS STUDIES

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

I focused my attention on revising all the teachings I had received from my *Kriya Yoga* organization. While contemplating them, I came across a very clear fact. Although the *Kriya* techniques were clear and essential, the other teachings that needed intellectual reflection gave me nothing and were not useful to me. To illustrate, the explanation of the meaning of the scriptures was a waste of time. As an illustration, a comprehensive explanation was given about the significance of the book of Genesis in the Bible.

The origin of the teachings comes from the spiritual insights and realizations of the founder of this organization. To be truthful, I am unable to judge the spiritual realization of this Master. No explanation was given to me on how to put these teachings into practice! My conviction has remained constant: I couldn't help but forget them because they were completely useless!

If one is required to read, it would be wise to read about the truths that are rooted in an unshakeable inner conviction that reside in the hearts of human beings. To clarify, I'm talking about the notion that individual consciousness persists even after physical death, which implies that our lives have significance and do not come to an end without purpose.

An intelligence is present in everything and is commonly referred to as God or the Divine. Our hearts are receptive to these fundamental concepts. These ideas have the ability to touch our hearts. If we really want to nourish the intensity of our aspirations, we can search for these writings and live them with our own hearts, feeling the deep emotion that they create in us.

HOW I REACT TO THOSE WHO REQUEST AN INTRODUCTION TO KRIYA

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

Let's not joke about it! It would be similar to telling someone who experiences heartburn after a meal that they need a heart transplant. A lot of people are making the right decision by putting aside any meditation plans, at least for the moment.

It's beneficial for these people to live their lives, and it doesn't make sense to complicate them. Talking to them about spiritual issues requires them to have faced and resolved fundamental existential questions and have a genuine desire to discuss them with us. It's important to distinguish between sincere wanting a comparison and momentary curiosity.

When people demand precise information about *Kriya Yoga*, I make an effort to comprehend their needs. Whenever I notice that someone I am speaking to is not clear on this but still wants to experience it first-hand, I provide a straightforward suggestion. "Try doing *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* and *Ujjayi Pranayama* on a daily basis for at least three months. The time required for this practice is 10-15 minutes. Keep track of the progress as time goes by to determine if this method yields results. Examine yourself and determine if there are any positive effects from this practice."

If someone is unable to maintain a regular practice and does not achieve any results, I hope they will avoid any further inquiries. It's not my intention to abruptly tell that *Kriya* isn't the suitable path for them. It's their responsibility to figure that out on their own.

Should the instructions I have given be successful, I propose that they learn *Kriya* independently and in complete tranquility by reading the instructions in chapter 6 of this book. My desire is for everyone to learn how to walk on their own and create their own destiny. Gaining confidence in one's own intelligence and making decisions for themselves are key to becoming an adult. It's crucial to always be anchored to the path of the Divine. We can embrace the ideas and beliefs we were taught as children with ease, as long as we strive to view everything in a simpler way.

Working with patience and regularity is the key to reaping the benefits of *Kriya Yoga* practice. Appreciating the practice's natural progress is the right attitude. *Pranayama*'s benefits can be seen in everyday life because it changes how we perceive reality.

The potential for aesthetic contemplation is discovered, like having eyes and a heart for the first time. Others will deeply feel the significance of family and the value of a lasting friendship. They may be moved by the intensity of their loving response.

THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE THAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF ALL

It is clear that mastery of the entire spiritual path of *Kriya Yoga* can be achieved with just a few techniques.

If I were to instruct *Kriya* to a novice, which techniques would be most suitable to share? It goes without saying that I want to see good, solid results. I aim to bring that person into a spiritual life through the practice of *Kriya*.

Those who are born into mental life alone are unable to comprehend what it means to be born into spiritual life. This birth rarely occurs, and when it does occur, it does not involve a decision to live differently, adopt certain rituals, or profess a particular faith. Spiritual life doesn't start with mental effort.

A human being must first connect with the joy that lies at the center of their being. The center of one's being is not the mind, but rather, Pure, Perfect, Eternal Awareness. This reality is somehow linked to the spine and the spiritual centers there, but it is primarily experienced through the intuitive vision that occurs through the "third eye."

Now, what instruction is necessary for a person to develop a strong connection with that reality? My intention is to provide an explanation here.

It comes naturally to me to start with a somewhat cryptic statement. I affirm, in fact, that: "only the One exists." Clearly, those who are listening don't understand what I mean. So I calmly clarify that the ONE is the Divine itself.

In other words, my assertion means that everything in the universe is an illusion and that only the Divine exists. It is true that we are all a reflection of the Divine. A reflection that has separated itself from the Divine and has become a single entity that lives on its own through an illusionary construct that distinguishes it from the Divine and is called the 'I', 'Ego', or

'Mind.'

The illusory construction will eventually lose its consistency, and our essence will recognize that we are the Divine, the only reality in the universe.

Starting now, we can do something very important before following a spiritual path through the practice of effective mystical procedures and experiencing beautiful spiritual experiences.

The goal is to **correct our identity**. This signifies the recognition that we are a Consciousness that has no beginning or end. We are not a mind capable of solving problems and grant itself small joys and satisfactions through the practice of *Kriya*.

This may not be clear to a novice. He probably continues to long for *Samadhi* as a means of liberation. Regardless of one's tradition, lineage, or religion, the ecstatic state produced by spiritual practices should not be the ultimate goal.

It's important to allow our mind to rest and view ourselves as pure Consciousness. We won't realize our immortality until then. We can achieve this goal by relying on intuition and consistent practice. The state of being fully Aware of one's own Consciousness is known as **Enlightenment**.

It's important to aim for more than just small accomplishments. It is necessary to attain the state where one is always and constantly **Aware of their own Awareness**. It is only through intuition and experience that one can comprehend what this means.

I met many people after posting the initial drafts of this book online. Only a few met me personally. I exchanged various points of view, and I learned that many complain about various difficulties when practicing *Kriya Yoga*.

I observed a common sense approach in many seekers. Others had undertaken practices I knew were useless or even risky. Some subjected themselves to extreme fasting, while others tried to acclimatize their bodies to very cold temperatures. I acknowledged the choices that were made. I would have liked to see them move forward in a more balanced way: progressing calmly without any trauma or internal upheavals.

I have always shown respect for individual choices. My attitude has always been marked by sincere empathy, often accompanied by a smile for what, in my heart, I considered simply "oddities." I have never imposed anything on anyone: I have chosen to offer simple advice, which I would like to reiterate in this space.

Gradually over time, I realized that the main goal of a spiritual seeker is to

break free from the identification with one's mind, which is, the process of thinking.

Almost every seeker enjoys reading books, attending seminars, listening to teachers, and engaging in endless discussions, without realizing that all these actions are nothing more than refined mental exercises, an almost elegant way to keep inner silence at bay.

Despite the obviousness of this truth, accepting it is a challenge. Why? Because the instrument that most distinguishes us as human beings is thought. Putting it aside causes us to feel naked, without guidance, as if we are giving up our sole security.

We are certain that our thoughts are what we are. To put it differently, we think that what we think is the most authentic and meaningful part of our existence. We believe that if thought were to cease, our existence would also cease. Even when we understand that thought offers no guarantees, we continue to hold onto it.

Identifying oneself with the mind is a sad reality faced by every human being. The act of identifying oneself means one cannot move beyond it. If one can't move beyond their mind, how can they follow a spiritual path?

It's important to understand that when thought dissolves, a deeper awareness emerges: the pure Awareness of existence. Our true nature is embodied by this silent presence that dwells beyond time.

The mind is an invaluable tool for daily life, enabling us to communicate, work, solve problems, and create. But it doesn't accurately represent our true identity. The mind is capable of imagining spiritual reality, but it cannot give us the opportunity to experience it. We must learn to master our minds, that is, to know how to put it to rest when it is not needed for the concrete tasks of life.

Those with a healthy mind can follow an internal discipline to be able to put their mind to rest at will. Patience, perseverance, and sincere dedication are necessary to follow this discipline.

I highly recommend adopting the following procedure to initiate or support any spiritual journey

What methods can we employ to quiet our mind when its activities are not required? It's sufficient to temporarily halt the flow of thoughts, images, and automatic associations. It doesn't matter if this occurs even briefly. This event's importance cannot be overstated, even if it happens for a short period.

Practical Instructions

Take into account the two periods of the day when you can take a break. Reflect on the time you go to sleep or when you can take a short nap in the afternoon. Let's start with the latter.

Lie down in a way that is comfortable. When you feel ready, accept that for a while you will leave aside everything related to your daily life, such as commitments, projects, and worries. It's possible that you feel a sense of emptiness or loss. Accept it without any resistance.

Now pay attention to the spot between your eyebrows. Avoid trying to chase or control your thoughts. Focus on a simple internal gesture: picture yourself gently “touching” the small part of your forehead with your attention.

Keep repeating this gesture without stopping. It's not a physical “touch”, but an act of attention. It's like brushing that point internally over and over again, with a natural rhythm of one second for each touch – or a little less than a second. Just be aware of this repetition. Don't let anything else take up your attention.

Don't pause while repeating this small gesture regularly. Empty spaces are where the mind is most easily able to come back to thought. It's typical for focused attention on this exercise to turn into a thought. Don't be discouraged when you notice this. Acknowledge what occurred and go back to the exercise with calmness and determination.

Variation

To enhance the stability of the exercise, consider focusing on your breath. Imagine your breath as a subtle current that rises and falls in the small space between your eyebrows.

As you inhale, feel three internal touches rising. As you exhale, you feel three touches falling. By simply adding this, it becomes harder to get distracted. In most cases, it's sufficient to maintain a stable practice for several minutes.

When done correctly, the exercise usually lasts only twenty-five minutes. After this period, the mind has a natural tendency to reactivate and the body demands movement. It's as if the body itself is indicating that the period of inactivity has ended.

The result may be unexpected. Even a short amount of time spent practicing this can result in a profound sense of relaxation, clarity, and renewed energy for daily tasks.

Engaged in a simple and constant activity such as this, the mind doesn't become tired. The opposite is true, it regenerates. While the mind remains still, attention remains alive and present. There is not a complete emptiness: there is constant attention.

Over time, you become aware of something more profound than just attention. A silent presence is present: the **Witness**. Being aware of one's existence is what it is. This is not a thought. This is purely Consciousness.

Let's contemplate a night's rest

Begin this rest by using one of the two variations mentioned: it costs nothing. At some point, you will undoubtedly enter a deep sleep. In case you wake up to go to the bathroom, repeat the same procedure.

Now reflect. The first step of the spiritual path, which is silencing the mind and dwelling in pure awareness, is also the last. The ultimate destination of inner exploration is here: when you give up what hinders you from being pure awareness, specifically the mind itself, there is no more to add.

And when time passes and the mind weakens and loses its grip, what remains – if you have truly walked – is profound stillness, the sweet assurance of being just a reflection of the Divine. Then reality manifests itself in its luminescent and silent simplicity. The pure awareness you sought to identify when you embarked on the journey turns out to be the destination of the journey itself.

THOSE WHO ASPIRE TO BECOME MONKS FACE A CHALLENGING SITUATION

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

Let's attempt to ponder over a concrete fact. The establishment of a solid economic foundation is necessary for an organization. Those who make an attempt to make it work must utilize all available means to ensure its continual existence. The organization is in need of monks who are willing to work hard for it. This fact is considered in many decisions that the organization makes.

Secondly, it is necessary for monks to present themselves to the public,

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

The organization's monks are well-integrated and have been supported by a positive ideal: that the message of *Kriya* will spread throughout the world and become a beacon of light for centuries to come. The organization is unable to handle the existential or psychological issues of individual people.

Kriya's practice can be sufficient for the average person without the need for a dedicated guide to talk to regularly. It's unfortunate that if someone is extremely fragile, they may not be capable of helping the organization and may need to leave it to avoid being a burden. It is evident that those who are blissfully occupied with doing nothing have no other choice but to return to their original location.

It's obvious that the organization's well-being should always come first. The question that aspiring monks should ask themselves is: "Can I be of assistance to the organization?" It's evident that they possess a strong mystical aspiration. It's evident that they believe that becoming a monk is the ideal option for enhancing their spirituality and making progress.

It's possible that they're not aware that the organization requires people who can actually contribute to society, not just those who are deeply spiritual and want to attain *samadhi*. An *ashram* is not the ideal place to search for *samadhi*; however it is excellent when spiritual evolution happens in a different way and the person willingly accepts to work physically for the practical benefit of the organization.

To put it simply, the monks are there to promote the organization and its ideals. It is a fact that one can seek God alone while staying at home.

We are dealing now with a problem that few people are aware of. It is necessary for an organization to receive help, even from those who are novices on the path. The organization requires not only individuals who have extensive experience in *Kriya Yoga* but also those who are new to it.

According to *Kriya*, meditation involves experiencing an "ever new joy" but many beginners seldom experience it during their meditations.

But it's important to maintain the belief that all *Ashram* dwellers are elevated beings. So beginners have to pretend to be so, otherwise the devotees become discouraged. In a sense, it's like living a lie. It is obvious that for certain individuals, the experience of living in the spiritual realm is a fiction.

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

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

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

The pursuit of perfection, which is a requirement for those who represent God and *Guru*, can cause serious harm. A lot of people think that the president of the organization must be in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or that the monk who gives a speech at the Convocation must be very advanced. While it may be true, it's not wise to rely on appearances.

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

The initial enthusiasm of devotees has been replaced by a serene tranquility that represents the approach to the precious realization we mentioned earlier: that is to understand, their essence is Consciousness that does not have a beginning or end.

The majority of devotees need spiritual guides who inspire them by presenting themselves as fully satisfied individuals. Guides, even if they pretend, can provide assistance if they perform their role effectively. There is a certain group of devotees who feel the need for a physical person to converse with and take inspiration from.

The worship of the personality begins in this way and is addressed firstly to the senior monks, and above all to the figure of the president. Problems

are a result of these people not being the *Guru*. These beginners cannot be told to seek inspiration from anyone, but to seek their inner *Guru*. This concept is too lofty for them, it is unattainable.

Let's finally discuss a topic that is very delicate. Let's examine a tragic and hallucinatory reality that leads to a lot of unnecessary suffering. The act of becoming a monk necessitates a commitment to living in perfect celibacy. It's unnatural to ask monks to overcome their sexual desires. They are prohibited from engaging in sexual activity.

Let's consider whether this request is justifiable, acceptable, and natural. Accepting this request entails facing a severe internal struggle and discovering that it's virtually impossible to maintain chastity.

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

In my view, if one wants to practice *Kriya*, the issue of chastity should not be considered because sexuality is not a problem, but rather life and health.

In dealing with *Kriya*, it is crucial to have faith in nature's laws. It's not advisable to believe in absolute absurdities. It's not recommended to try to adhere to impossible or unnatural principles. It is not acceptable to experience constant and excruciating conflict, even to the extent of rejecting love.

The diaries of Lahiri Mahasaya reveal that he experienced a strong sexual desire at times. One day, a disciple asked him, "How can I be permanently free from sexuality?" The disciple was astonished by his answer: "I will be free from sexual desire only when my body rests on the funeral pyre." His sincerity is a blessing!

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

Let's attempt to reach a conclusion. Many people have come to the realization that becoming a monk did not produce the results they had expected. The initial feeling of freedom from life's distractions has disappeared. The time they had hoped to devote to the spiritual path was

now spent on other jobs that didn't have anything to do with spiritual evolution.

During meditations, many monks rarely experience intense joy. Their meditations have become shallow and repetitive over time. It is evident that monks face the same problem as everyone else: limited time for practice. I am cognizant of the fact that monks seldom practice for prolonged periods of time.

The appeal of long and intense meditations has decreased because it cannot be achieved inside the Ashram. Eventually, these individuals came to the realization that entering the monastery had been a fatal mistake. I don't think an expert is helping them improve their *Kriya* day after day.

In my view, if they are uncertain about whether they are practicing the techniques they have been taught correctly, they should either limit themselves to consulting the written lessons or keep their doubts to themselves. Furthermore, it's important to remember that even if they're feeling depressed or unhappy, they shouldn't show it to anyone, especially visitors.

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

A FEW EXAMPLES OF INCORRECT APPROACHES TO SPIRITUAL SEARCH

To begin with, the following is not meant to critique specific individuals or groups. The provided examples are meant solely to motivate calm reflection and, hopefully, be met with a smile.

1. The false belief that one must “improve” or “grow spiritually” before practicing

The first major misconception is that one needs to attain a certain level of maturity or psychological growth before beginning to practice *Kriya*.

According to some, it is necessary to work hard on oneself – through psychological analysis, self-control, or specific mental disciplines (sometimes guided by Buddhism) – in order to become a “good devotee” before even beginning *Kriya*. This attitude can sometimes result in excessively harsh self-judgment, guilt, and a constant sense of inadequacy.

People talk with satisfaction about following a “path of personal growth”, but in reality, this manifests a lack of faith in the transformative power of *Kriya* itself. The result is that one never feels ready: the beginning of the spiritual path is endlessly postponed.

It's crucial to embrace one's own uniqueness. It is impossible to eradicate the deep roots of iniquity and selfishness through mental effort alone or psychological self-discipline. It's not obligatory to mix *Kriya Pranayama* techniques with parallel psychological work as a precondition.

The transformation of human nature cannot be accomplished through mental analysis alone. Transformation takes place within the practice itself. Lahiri Mahasaya made a point of reminding us: “Banat, banat, ban jay!” – “Do what you're doing and eventually it will be done.”

The path to success is straightforward: trust in practice and let the process operate internally.

2. The illusion of treating psychological disorders with Kriya

The second illusion revolves around the notion of practicing *Kriya* with the primary objective of resolving serious psychological problems.

Kriya is a source of hope for people who have serious mental disorders and are looking for a solution. Frequently, individuals lack genuine spiritual interest and simply want to feel better.

In general, choosing *Kriya* as a treatment for overcoming depression or common neuroses is not effective. Many people have been misled by superficial messages or misleading advertising. On the spiritual path, outcomes mature when a person is in a stable state of mind and guided by a genuine inner aspiration.

It's probable that if someone only comes to *Kriya* after trying many alternative therapies, perhaps on the advice of an enthusiastic friend, they won't see any tangible benefits. Furthermore, even if something positive begins to manifest, they may not notice it because they remain exclusively focused on their own problems.

In these situations, there is no genuine love for the path, but rather just curiosity or expectation of healing. Disappointment becomes almost unavoidable.

It's not mandatory to be religious to practice *Kriya*. To succeed, one must have a genuine spiritual aspiration and a strong belief in the practice's value. *Kriya* should not be treated suspiciously, as if it were a technique to evaluate: “Will it actually work?”

To embrace it with respect, trust, and a genuine orientation toward the sacred is when its greatest benefit is revealed.

3. The illusion of expanding the potential of the mind

The third illusion consists of believing that the spiritual path serves to increase the power of the mind. This illusion is both subtle and deadly, I would even call it “lethal.”

In the past, a cultural institution asked me to give some lectures about the history of the New Age movement. This experience played a crucial role in liberating me from various esoteric and “magical” conditioning.

As I was preparing those lectures, I found myself thinking about the difference between genuine mystical research and the temptation of magical thinking. I realized the fragility of the human mind, particularly when embarking on the spiritual path.

My studies included essays and academic texts written by scholars who could maintain a detached and critical attitude towards the mystical movements that arose around the great religions. Their ability to capture the essence without engaging in ideological involvement surprised me.

During the first lesson, I attempted to explain the real meaning of “mystic.” In some contexts, the term is associated with mystery and being a part of secret rituals.

In Greek, *mystikós* means “initiate” and *mýo* means “to close, hide.” Beyond its etymology, a mystic is someone who respectfully gives up to a reality that goes beyond the limitations of thought. The disciplines they adopt are not intended to enhance their minds, but rather to transcend them.

It came to my attention that this definition didn't arouse people's interest. There were many participants who had very different expectations: they were looking to confirm their fantasies. They wanted nourishment for their illusions instead of a path that was sober and authentic.

Despite my explanations, they still hadn't grasped what a mystical path truly meant and were not aware of the unrestricted joy that can be gained from pursuing a “clean” spiritual path.

This struck me deeply. Upon speaking with one of them, I felt disappointed and needed to go for a walk in the fresh air. My feeling of alienation reached the horizon and touched the edge of the sky.

Despite feeling despair, I still had a clear intuition: I would stay true to my path regardless of spiritual trends. I wasn't swayed by the future benefits, but because I had already received something valuable from the practice. The certainty I gained from my internal experience was sufficient for me, without the need for further encouragement. I was saved from despair by the luminosity of my memories.

4. Combining Kriya with “New Age” therapies is nothing more than an illusion.

Mixing *Kriya* practice with various alternative *New Age* therapies leads to an additional illusion.

I had the opportunity to interact with a group of practitioners who combined *Kriya* with cathartic techniques and various therapeutic disciplines. Compared to my first group, which strictly followed P.Y.'s teachings, this environment was more open and less dogmatic. I still have warm memories of that era, particularly of the Indian devotional music we listened to. The music was my nourishment: I felt like I was “eating” it.

I saw naive attitudes and a superficial attempt to replicate an Eastern lifestyle. *Kriya* and “cathartic” practices were combined to bring repressed content to consciousness, with the goal of facilitating spiritual evolution through complete psychological purification.

The idea has logic, at least in theory. However, their commitment to *Kriya* was modest in practice. Their focus was mainly on seminars, group therapies, and often expensive alternative methods, such as aromatherapy, crystal therapy, chromotherapy, and other techniques led by people with no formal training. I sensed that these people were not yet born into the spiritual dimension of existence.

When I brought up my doubts about the validity of these practices, they became annoyed. They told me not to judge without trying. They talked about “*Universal Energy*” and *karmic* opportunities that shouldn't be missed, as if accumulating therapeutic experiences could guarantee safe and rapid spiritual progress.

They asserted that they were experiencing the most excellent opportunity for advancement in all areas. They felt that it was necessary to respond positively and not resist this beneficial stream, otherwise they would have to reincarnate to fully enjoy this opportunity!

I was convinced that they were referring to something that was not real. Their belief was that their spiritual journey would be like a simple stroll

due to their research and costly activities.

My impression was that the obsessive desire to “purify” was a distraction. It's as if you're cleaning and decorating your house constantly while waiting for an impressive guest, but you don't realize that the guest is already at the door and ringing the bell. The essentials are neglected due to the sole focus on preparation

Over time, several of these practitioners became caught up in the expectation of a complete cleansing of their subconscious. The practice of *Kriya* became less noticeable, almost disappearing.

I must acknowledge, nevertheless, that I had a genuine affection for these individuals. I never experienced any disagreements, bitterness, or excessive formality in my relationship with them. Those friends shared everything they had learned passionately, even if it meant sacrificing themselves, and they never tried to force me to do anything.

5. The illusion of searching for a technique that surpasses Kriya

The fifth illusion involves letting go of *Kriya* in order to pursue a technique that is believed to be higher, more secret, or more powerful.

After practicing *Kriya* for a while, some people become convinced that there is an older, more advanced method that was once only for certain exceptional individuals. This belief motivates them to seek out “forgotten” esoteric teachings.

A friend of mine came across a person who claimed to be an expert in occult disciplines and held the secrets of an ancient, now extinct spiritual path. This technique, according to him, has been practiced thousands of years ago, but it is no longer being passed on because humanity has become too materialistic and is incapable of comprehending it. He made a serious conclusion that in the hands of modern man, this teaching may even pose a danger.

This man, who was not naive, utilized refined language, with references to Kabbalah, and proposed unique interpretations of early Christianity. My friend, mesmerized, was willing to accept any terms to receive this extraordinary revelation.

Despite appearing hesitant, the “expert” agreed to convey the secret “on a completely exceptional basis”, whispering: “I do this only for you, only because I feel guided by the Divine to provide you with this teaching.” The donation given during the initiation, with the promise of keeping it completely secret, was truly remarkable. The high value given to that event was reflected by it.

The teacher made it clear that this donation would be transferred to a monk who was aiding in the upkeep of an orphanage. This is an absolute classic! These stories always feature an orphanage.

My friend, overwhelmed with emotion, was certain that the meeting was arranged “from above” and that money could not compensate for the spiritual value received.

The scoundrel was contemplating which technique to explain during the initiation and demonstrating it with remarkable solemnity.

Two days after receiving this instruction, my friend was in a state of pure ecstasy.

As a prisoner of his chimera, he witnessed the rekindling of his passion, and the comedy continued with new offers, revelations, and expenses. The illusion nourished itself.

In actuality, those who fall into this dynamic are not interested in the real spiritual dimension, but in the concept of possessing a particular secret. Spiritual reality does not necessitate the use of hidden tricks, mysterious formulas, or complex visualizations. There are no shortcuts that can be taken.

To walk the true path, one must cultivate mental calmness, inner clarity, and perseverance. Making the process more complex unnecessarily simply reinforces the mechanism of thought instead of transcending it. There are only a few who comprehend this truth and are willing to patiently move towards a state of consciousness that is free from constant mental interference.

6. The illusion of Baraka and its transfer of power.

The sixth illusion is about the idea that receiving a special power – known as “Baraka” – through an unbroken lineage of masters is crucial for spiritual advancement.

There was a practitioner I knew who thought the path was impossible without this transmission. In his lifetime, he had received several *Kriya* initiations from teachers who claimed to be affiliated with an authentic lineage. None of these experiences were significant in improving his understanding or practice.

The idea of the “transmission of power”, not the daily discipline, was what captivated him. He held the belief that the techniques were only preliminary preparation, while the most important thing was the act of initiation, which he understood as conferring spiritual strength that could

guarantee liberation.

He placed a high value on lineage and the practice of moral principles, specifically the *Yama* and *Niyama* described by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. The practices of *Pranayama* and internalization, which I consider to be the core of the path, were secondary to ethical discipline for him.

While being respectful, he suggested that my dedication to perfecting the technique was limited and almost naive. He argued that the desire to master a meditation practice was an attachment, which was incongruous with the spirit of Buddhism.

Over time, I understood that this formal insistence on moral rules, as well as the emphasis on the transmission of power, risked becoming a way of escaping the practical dimension of human life. The center of the path becomes lost when attention is directed towards an external authority that “confers” realization instead of direct experience.

The spiritual path doesn't depend on mystical investiture or inherited power. The basis for this is a sincere practice, internal transformation, and direct experience of consciousness.

7. The illusion of having already reached enlightenment

The seventh illusion is to convince oneself that they have already reached enlightenment.

Some feel they are like *Ramana Maharshi*. The central teaching he gave, “Who am I?”, is profoundly inspiring, and reading about his life can spark a genuine inner awakening. It is possible for everyone to follow this path.

It is not possible to imitate a great sage by pretending to share his state of realization. I am of the opinion that for us, i.e. ordinary humans, an authentic path must be established through a concrete discipline that involves both mind and body, as in the case of *Kriya Yoga*. It's not about mimicking *Ramana Maharishi's* realization, but about seriously incorporating a consistent and demanding practice.

I have come across individuals who are attracted to *Jnana Yoga* and have made it clear – through self-suggestions – that they are already free from *Maya* and do not need any discipline. This belief poses a danger as the mind has the ability to maintain the illusion of its own enlightenment.

I can recall a *Kriya* practitioner who, after using a technique similar to self-hypnosis, declared that he had already reached a state of realization. But self-hypnosis is not a liberation. Lahiri Mahasaya taught *Kriya Pranayama* as a methodical one and pointed out the subsequent state – the profound stillness that follows practice – as the genuine place for

realization. This isn't a mental affirmation, but an experience that came from silence.

The image comes to mind: a person floating on a mattress above a smelly lake with a sense of being in heaven while looking up at the sky. Holding his nose doesn't affect the smell, but the underlying reality stays the same.

These individuals are not lying when they claim to be divine, as there is divine potential within each of us. But potential does not equal to realization. Being trapped in a mental construct is the consequence of confusing the two planes.

They believe that individuals who practice with discipline are still in an illusion and will end up working for nothing. Only when effort does not lead to inner stillness is it truly fruitless. If the practice leads to a state where the mind is calm and you sense your essence beyond time and space, then the path is authentic.

I had a try at arguing with a person who claimed to be permanently in *Samadhi*. It became clear to me that it wasn't a genuine realization, but merely a mental idea. It wasn't *Jnana Yoga*: it was just a well-defined illusion.

8. The false belief that liberation is so far away

The eighth misconception is the idea that spiritual realization is something that is too far away and may not be attainable in this lifetime.

I came across a *kriyaban* who was older than me, a person who was extremely kind and altruistic. Our conversations during his final years were uncomplicated and profound: we strolled and conversed peacefully. I have fond memories of him that I cherish.

Eventually, he came to the conclusion that liberation was not possible for him in this incarnation. His dream was to be born near a great spiritual being in his future life. At a young age, he met the leader of the organization that P.Y. founded, and that encounter had a profound impact on him.

He had come to the realization that achieving success in *Kriya* depended mainly on receiving the love and approval of such elevated person. He viewed that person as an absolute, almost unattainable perfection. I attempted to make him comprehend that idealizing a human being, even if it's inspiring, can be a obstacle.

The issue lay in the fact that he had observed the Divine in other individuals, but not in himself. He became convinced that progress through *Kriya* was too slow and almost meaningless. He kept practicing, but only

as a means of being faithful, not as a means of being transformed.

He had come to accept the notion that there are beings that are already completely free, while ordinary people are expected to wait for countless incarnations before achieving the same goal. This vision had persuaded him that the goal was impossible for him to reach.

One day, he expressed his sadness to me that he was certain that he “would miss the finish line” in his life. He envisions future lives in an *ashram*, close to a self-realized master. He had placed his fate in the hands of that idea.

After his passing, I thought about the fact that it's easy to overlook the transformative value of *Kriya* when one starts to exalt the greatness of figures considered perfect and unattainable. His early years had been characterized by his faith in the practice. For reasons that are difficult to explain, he became convinced that the spiritual Source within him was dependent on being physically close to a “divine” being.

A wave of nostalgia that was almost overwhelming came over me, but it remained immobile around us. I comprehended the serious illusion that humans are subjected to, constantly exaggerating the greatness of certain individuals who appear “impudently” holy, perfect, and majestic.

The illusion involves believing that fulfillment always belongs to someone else or to a distant future. The spiritual source is not in any other place, nor can it be deferred to another life. The being's very core is where it is present, and practice is specifically designed to recognize it in the present moment.

CHAPTER 11

THE VALUE OF JAPA

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

This chapter is located within the third section of the book. Let me emphasize that this section is devoted to comprehending and avoiding the failure of the beautiful practice of *Kriya*.

In the previous chapter, I talked about the beliefs and attitudes that need to be avoided when starting this journey. Our topic of discussion is a new practice that needs to be familiarized with as soon as possible. For all *kriyabans*, it is mandatory.

It goes without saying that many mystics from all spiritual traditions stress the significance of practicing “*inner prayer*”, which is called *Japa* in India. This topic has already been brought up in Chapter III. I want to remind you of my description of the great inspiration I received while studying the lives of *The Mother* and of *Swami Ramdas*.

My life wouldn't be complete without practicing *Japa*! As I have already stated, I hold the belief that when we practice *Kriya Pranayama*, if we have lived our day normally without calming the mind, it's too late to achieve the main result of *Kriya*, namely the state of “*calm breath*.” My personal practice involves starting with *Japa* a couple of hours before starting the *Kriya* routine.

A BOOK THAT IS A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

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

No one can be sure if it is a true story about a particular pilgrim or a spiritual novel that was written to spread the mystical dimension of the Christian Orthodox faith. Certain testimonies have led some to identify the author as Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov, a Russian Orthodox monk. Regardless of the historical accuracy, this pilgrim is the perfect representation of everyone who spends their lives traveling to sanctuaries,

churches, monasteries, Mount Athos, and the Holy Land, searching for God through *Continuous Prayer*.

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

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

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

The main attraction of the book "*The way of a pilgrim*" was the portrayal of a pilgrim's life as a model for those who want to lead a spiritual life. Our role as *kriyabans* is to travel from one pseudo-guru to another, often experiencing exhaustion and exasperation. Each pseudo-guru is a frighteningly ignorant person who believes that Westerners are gullible and enjoy deception.

This book provides us with the inspiration to try *Japa* (whisper the *Prayer* we choose) for a couple of hours daily. Let's choose to experience the divine sweetness of *Contemplative Prayer* instead of indulging in idleness. This leads us to a genuine act of opening our hearts to the divine.

We discover over time that the goal the Russian pilgrim has set for themselves is not a fantasy, but something that can be accomplished in our own lives. Our objective is to attain a state of *Continuous Prayer*, a genuine Heaven on earth, a state of unmatched beauty.

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA'S THOUGHT

Teresa of Avila's writings are a source of spiritual light that can never be exhausted. Her teachings emphasize the importance of cultivating **Interior**

Prayer, which she believes is a vital path for those seeking to approach the mystery of the Divine.²

Teresa is strongly urging those who have not yet embarked on this practice to not deprive themselves of such a precious grace. In her opinion, attempting to enter the spiritual world without first learning to dwell within oneself is sheer foolishness.

Each person is gifted with *interior prayer* by the Divine to progress towards purity of heart. Every individual has the possibility to attain the true objective of life: to enter decisively into one's self and pursue it with tenacity. Teresa stated that those who lack *interior prayer* are like a body with paralyzed hands and feet, unable to progress along this path.

According to her, *Interior Prayer* starts with **vocal prayer**, selecting a simple and distinctive formula that should not be recited hastily but with attentive care. When a prayer is memorized and repeated consistently, it engages both the body and soul, and becomes a strong foundation upon which to stand. Teresa cautions that it's not sufficient to just speak words; we need to be involved with our hearts, intelligence, and love.

There's no reason to worry about involuntary distractions: as long as the sincere desire to commune with the Divine remains alive, the initial attention will silently guide the soul towards Him. Prayer loses its significance if it fails to connect us with the Divine, and the connection happens when we open ourselves to trust and surrender. Bringing our entire lives, including our wounds, limitations, and hopes, into prayer is the act of those who believe in the transformative power of divine love.

When this beginning point is established, the heart of Teresa's teaching comes to life: Internal Prayer is the experience of the overwhelming love of the Divine. It is no more a repetitive and mechanical act, but rather a personal expression of love, an intimate friendship, and a loving conversation with Him who loves us infinitely. Teresa sums it up with her memorable words: "*Prayer doesn't consist in thinking much, but in loving much.*"

Spiritual life demands a vibrant and passionate devotion. It's imperative to pray now and not wait for future benefits. Throughout the day, it can be beneficial to recall the resolution that developed during prayer: to continue all activities in the presence of the Divine. There are multiple ways for

² Saint Teresa of Ávila (March 28, 1515 – October 4, 1582) was a Carmelite nun. Her teaching comes from concrete experience and not from the study of books. She intuited a fundamental fact: with a simple Prayer, to be repeated incessantly, a soul can go through all the different levels of the spiritual path until the definitive union with the Divine.

Him to attract souls to Himself, but prayer remains the most certain way. The act of abandoning it implies the loss of one's self.

Teresa assures us that despite neglecting prayer, the Divine always shows us the same love. He does not change; we change. Our loss isn't something he fears; the only thing He grieves about is when we stop seeking Him or lose trust in Him. Occasionally, He fills us with greater graces after long periods of separation. No one who has trusted in the Divine as their friend has ever placed their faith in Him in vain.

Don't forget that it's the Divine that inspires the heart to pray; He is the one who listens, responds, and waits. Teresa encourages us to stay silent in prayer instead of speaking incessantly to make it deeper. Silence is a place where we can hear a voice that makes no noise, yet speaks everything.

She explains that with the Prayer:

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

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

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

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

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

In conclusion, Teresa holds that *Prayer* is essential to the mystical path. She said: “Prayer is EVERYTHING in the mystical path.” Without creating the habit of *Prayer*, she firmly believed that the soul would not attain the mystical goal. No other exercise is as much emphasized and

given as much importance by her in all her writings.

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION TO JAPA

Our discussion in the second part of the book focused on the discipline of *Kriya Pranayama*. It's important to emphasize that the goal of *Pranayama* is to use the breath to quiet down the mind. In order to calm the mind, *mental Pranayama*, which involves allowing the breath to freely flow, is absolutely necessary. Practicing *mental Pranayama* is not an option but a necessary practice.

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

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

Chapter 3 explains how during my practice, I endeavored to feel the *mantra's* vibration in my head and chest. It was clear to me that *Japa's* effect was to eliminate the “background noise” in my mind. I acknowledge that the noise's effects constantly disrupt our meditation.

During meditation practice, there are thoughts that can be visualized, identified, and blocked, but a constant background noise hinders any attempt to enjoy the main outcome of meditation, which is the breathless state.

We don't live in silence; we're not hermits. After a day that is filled with many preoccupations and distractions, we settle down in our room and practice *Kriya* there. It becomes apparent that twenty or thirty minutes does not provide the ideal conditions to reach a state of complete mental

silence. The mind requires more time to calm down. Even though the *Kriya* process is done with great attention, the background noise in our minds remains an impediment that cannot be overcome.

Japa is the only way to calmly neutralize the noise that keeps the mind constantly active. By practicing *Japa* before our *Kriya* routine, we can reduce the mind's background noise to absolute immobility and transparency. This becomes clearly apparent during the last phase of our routine. The state of breathlessness occurs unexpectedly.

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

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

The state of *Japa*, which affects all levels of our mind, will give us the chance to experience the breathless state. I am confident that you will take what I said seriously. I am sincerely optimistic that what has been successful for me and some of my friends will also be successful for you.

Guidance will also be provided on a meditation technique that is connected to *Japa* and is called "*Prayer of the Heart*."

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR MANTRA

Many books that introduce *Japa's* practice insist on a lot of banalities. Frequently, these essays are ineffective and lacking intelligence and passion. As an example, I read that the *mala* should be made of a specific material; it is important that it is not visible to others; it is important to never cross the *Sumeru* bead (where the *mala* begins and ends), to practice the *mala* again, you need to turn it and have the last bead become the first bead of the second round.

These indications are utter garbage. According to my reading, the power of *Prayer* is not due to your effort but rather to a "Grace" that can only be achieved by using a particular formula canonized by a traditional pattern of worship. It is clear to me that this is another falsehood. There is a "Grace", but it is connected to the fervor you put into your practice.

Hence, select a *mantra* that appeals to you. It is true that if you have multiple preferred prayers, you can opt for one that has twelve syllables and include *Om* or *Amen* at the beginning or end, if needed. Twelve is an ideal number because it can be used in *Kriya Pranayama* by placing each syllable in a different *Chakra*.

Spiritual chants or poems can yield a variety of beautiful twelve-syllable mantras. As an example, from the well-known *Adi Shankara's* chant, you can select the beautiful 12-syllable verse: *Chi-da-nan-da-ru-pah-shi-vo-ham-shi-vo-ham*. [That Form which is pure consciousness and bliss, I am that supreme Being!]

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

In general, a good choice is one that has both a forceful and gentle tone. Be attentive to the vibration that your *mantra* triggers in your body and heart. It's important to feel a surge of passion in your heart when starting each *Prayer* session.

In an interview, a nun who lives in a cloister revealed her prayer/mantra choice: “Thy face, O LORD, will I seek!” Can we feel the deep emotions that these words evoked in her bosom when she selected them (among the *Psalms*) and the passion she infused in its repetition throughout her life?

In literature, it is evident that certain *mantras* have been constructed with great skill. Here is the *Krishna mantra*: *Om Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopi-jana Vallabhaya Swaha*. Here is the *Shiva mantra*: *Om Nama Shivaya Sing Vang Kim Am*.

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

The ancient yogis opted for these sounds because of their beauty and vibration. Humans discovered them, they were not given by a god. These seed *mantras* may not hold any meaning, but they can enhance a *mantra* that does.

Don't choose a *mantra* based solely on the power of certain literature that extols the virtue of a particular *Bija mantra*. Examine your mood and

emotions after rigorous practice of a particular *mantra* - let your reaction guide you!

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

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JAPA PRACTICE

Although *Japa* is recommended by Eastern traditions to be practiced mentally, I am not hesitant to suggest vocalizing it for at least 108 repetitions, whispering it softly in a normal voice. ³

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

When you practice walking back and forth in a room, it's likely that you'll have an irresistible urge to order your surroundings. This explains how *Prayer* repetition produces a similar order in your mind as well.

In reality, it purifies your mental substance and organizes all your mental "furniture." The practice is comparable to a jackhammer that smashes the concrete of the mind. It enables you to traverse the quicksand of the mind without any harm and attain the state of pure awareness.

The possibility of becoming discouraged and confronting the idea that *Japa* is a mind-numbing practice is a significant obstacle that can be fatal for many individuals.

You may hold the view that collaborating with spiritual evolution using more powerful and effective methods is the better option. The mind is suggesting **this massive illusion!**

In the event that this occurs, use your moral resolve and transform your doubts into a calm euphoria. Break up the barrier of impossibility that life has placed before you. No matter how much mental confusion and spiritual

³ A very self-confident teacher recommended that I pronounce any *mantra* only mentally. I tried to do this but saw that it did not work. After several months I was truly exhausted by this practice. Then I started reciting it again in a low voice: before completing the 108 repetitions, a "spring" burst into my heart.

dryness you are in, practice *Japa* and repeat your *mantra* with superhuman calm and determination!

Finish the 108 repetitions, shut your mouth, and let the *Japa* flow smoothly into the background of your consciousness. Feel a protective shell that is made of tangible peace around you.

I am not requesting that you adopt a certain visualization, but rather to be conscious of the subtle and peaceful "substance" that surrounds you. Occasionally, people who come into contact with you will also feel this substance.

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

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

PUSHING THE LIMITS OF ONE'S POTENTIAL

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

Taking part in a group pilgrimage was what caused everything to change. Someone started reciting the Catholic Rosary on that occasion and all the pilgrims joined in this practice. My friend, despite being tired and almost out of breath, did not avoid this act of devotion.

While walking and whispering the *Prayer*, he entered a state of tranquility that he hadn't experienced before. As he moved forward, he looked at the scenery around him with a different set of eyes, and it seemed to him that he was living in a heavenly location.

Throughout his 20-mile journey, he recited the *Prayer* continuously, completely unaware that he was exhausted and sleepy. During the group's break, he was fortunate enough to be left alone undisturbed. While

introspecting, he felt a presence emanating from his heart that he recognized as *Spiritual Reality*. The ecstasy became firm like a solid rock, and was almost unbearable, completely engulfing him.

My friend's concise summary of his thoughts on how to practice *Japa* is truly inspiring. He argues that the secret lies in attaining and surpassing the state of exhaustion – after a few days, he made the decision to practice *Japa* by altering his *mantra* and using the *mantra* I had selected for my own practice. The result was that he experienced a state of breathlessness.

Perhaps it's not necessary to exceed the limit of exhaustion. To achieve excellent results, it is usually recommended to complete one *Mala* (a rosary of 108 beads) every day out loud and then allow the repetition of one's *mantra* to continue mentally and automatically.

However, his “law of exhaustion” is an invaluable tool for overcoming any internal resistance and experiencing the breathless state for the first time.

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

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

SOME KRIYABANS WERE CONTESTING

I was unable to maintain my enthusiasm for *Japa* practice because of the difficulty in responding to objections I received from some *kriyabans*. They told me that the *Kriya* techniques have everything that is necessary for the spiritual path, so we don't require any other practices.

They added, “*Japa* was not taught by *Guruji* or Lahiri Mahasaya – *kriyabans* don't require it.” It was apparent that they were uncomfortable with the idea that practicing *Japa* could affect the purity of their spiritual path.

I believe that many individuals who sought initiation from Lahiri Mahasaya not only practiced *Japa* but also pursued *Kriya Yoga* to deepen and intensify their practice. Their opinion was that *Kriya* practice did not embody any intrinsic difference from *Prayer*, where they had already poured their soul.

For some, receiving *Thokar* initiation could be the ultimate culmination of their efforts to attain the elevated state of the *Prayer of the Heart*. There

appears to be an explanation for why *Continuous Prayer* ("*Inner Prayer*", "*Prayer of the Heart*", "*Dhikr*") is the fundamental technique employed by numerous mystics.

It's possible that individuals with pride and arrogance have helped to perpetuate the misconception that *Japa* is a too simple practice, suitable for those who lack knowledge about *Prana* and *Chakras*.

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

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

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

You won't find another practice as valuable as *Japa* to improve your *Kriya*. In order to practice *Kriya*, it is necessary to have a state of solid mental silence, not just pure and simple willpower. Decide to embrace this celestial dimension daily while staying committed to your *Japa* practice.

The magic of your bright, shimmering *mantra* will extend to all aspects of your life. You can only feel alive along the Spiritual Path in this dimension. When it happens, the feeling of being breathless is unforgettable. Every day of your life, you will attempt to recreate it.

THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

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

Let us imagine a person sitting by the fire while the winter outside is raged by the biting wind and bitter cold. The flames dance and the warmth covers the room, and they can contemplate the beauty of the season, even when it seems unwelcoming, in that protected silence. The experience of

the *Prayer of the Heart* is the same: learning to perceive life in every aspect, whether it's marked by sadness or illuminated by joy. Their heart has found an infinite sky, a horizon that never closes, in its deepest recesses.

The *Prayer of the Heart* is a gem like no other: it warms from within and gradually, almost unnoticed, spreads its presence into every corner of life. The power it possesses changes how we live, as when we finally emerge from a dark room and the fresh air welcomes us, and the sunlight envelopes us, reminding us that everything can shine again.

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

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

I highly recommend this preparatory practice

Take a few deep breaths in accordance with the following instructions. As you breathe in, energy moves from the left side of your body to the right side. When you exhale, the energy moves from the right side of the body to the left. A cross is made by taking another breath after this one. Energy that is perceived in the abdominal region flows upward through the dorsal region during inhalation and returns downward during exhalation.

It's obvious that *Prayer* and breath movements can be combined. Experiment to find out what feels most comfortable for you to combine your breath and prayer. By 'drawing' this cross with two full breaths, one cycle is practiced. It only requires 6 cycles to make breathing automatic and effortless. Each inhalation and each exhalation lasts for approximately 3 seconds.

Keep practicing this way for at least 10 minutes. Experience the natural intensification of concentration on the heart *Chakra*. By repeating this practice in the future days, you will see how the procedure becomes internalized.

In other words, you will start to feel the energetic movement as your breath gets shorter and shorter, until it's nearly nonexistent. You will be impressed by the efficiency of this procedure. It takes no more than 30 minutes to complete 108 unhurried cycles.

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

Having practiced this exercise for a long time, you are now ready to practice the actual "*Prayer of the Heart*." You must have at least 20 minutes of free time. Concentrate all your attention on the 'heart center' and ignore your breath. Try to perceive the heartbeat. It is not required that this perception be very clear. Only a bit. Persisting will result in a clearer perception over time.

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

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

The idea that the heart functions like a brain is a fascinating concept to explore through literature. A person who is attentive and perceptive will see the evidence that this "heart brain" has an impact on our consciousness. It's apparent that establishing a peaceful relationship with it is imperative to our evolution. It's like following an internal teacher who advises you to manifest a more subtle and creative intelligence. Your life undergoes a significant transformation.

You will become conscious of the filter formed by conditioning that has distorted your perception of reality. The best qualities in your personality will blossom (deep satisfaction, gratitude for every beautiful thing that happens in your life, and unconditional love for the Divine).

When the *Prayer of the heart* is practiced seriously, the *Prayer* becomes continuous. During any possible moment of silence, you will be mindful of the *Prayer* that gently and comfortably repeats itself, just like music in the background of your consciousness. In the absence of silence, you will preserve the silence within your heart.

You will experience a sensation of a burning fire that is situated in the chest area. The initial mild sensation can transform into a feeling of the

heart solidifying, which feels like a point surrounded by incomparably strong pressure.⁴ Living in this way means always remembering God. During sleep, this harmony is preserved.

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

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

Unheard of Light is born from this ineffably,
And thence, beyond all telling, the heart's illumination.
Last comes – a step that has no limit
Though compassed in a single line –
Perfection that is endless.

(*Monk Theophanis, the Hesychast ascetic of the 8th century*)

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

CHAPTER 12

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

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

Progressing on the path of *Kriya Yoga* can be challenging at times. Difficulties can arise due to various factors such as time constraints, lack of emotional involvement, or the tendency to interrupt the exercise before entering the crucial phase where the breath calms down.

When we're looking for inspiration, we often end up looking in the wrong place. Naive individuals often approach *Kriya* with the expectation of finding a book that perfectly explains all techniques with detailed explanations, clear illustrations, and perfect diagrams. They buy anything that seems promising, but are almost always disappointed.

It's unfortunate that many texts are burdened by unnecessary rhetoric, endless repetitions, and references to complicated philosophical theories that don't provide any real help. Those who read them are quick to recognize that they have wasted energy. At times, it's wise to throw the book in the trash and forget about buying it.

I propose a different strategy: select one of the paths I will discuss and allow yourself to be deeply inspired by it, until you discover what appears to be written specifically for you. Let's become more acquainted with the great figures who embody those traditions. Take a moment to recall their words, teachings, and example. These seeds are exactly what rekindle the passion for an intense and lively practice of *Kriya Yoga*.

The mystical paths I will discuss can lead us to luminous insights and renew our approach to daily practice. This inspiration is precious and often decisive.

In the first part of the book I formulated the hypothesis that Lahiri Mahasaya aimed to incorporate methods from various mystical traditions and create a simple yet comprehensive system of *Yoga*.

It was exciting to seek out evidence of *Kriya* practices in ancient spiritual schools, like *Hesychasm*, *Sufism*, *Inner Alchemy* (Nei Dan), and lastly the *Radhasoami* path. We can draw strength and clarity from these traditions without any barriers, thus enhancing our practice and learning to view it with new eyes.

My aim is to motivate the reader to investigate these paths and find inspiration in them. They give clear indications of what each *kriyaban* is required to master and learn. Let's go back to the basic points of the journey.

The first step is *Kriya Pranayama*, which uses a breath accompanied by gentle rubbing of the throat. *Hesychasm* teaches precisely this, despite being described in a few words.

Subsequently, the *kriyaban* acquires the ability to gather energy in the navel area. In *Hesychasm*, this practice is fundamental and clarifies a rarely explained aspect in *Kriya*: directing energy to the center of the navel is the most direct route to reaching the “*place of the heart*.” This is why *Navi Kriya* deserves a lot of attention and should not be neglected.

The powerful *Thokar* technique is applied by the *kriyaban* after reaching the “heart”, which opens the door to *Sushumna*. We thus discover that *Thokar* is the central method of the *Sufi* discipline, known as *Dhikr* or *Zikr*. The act of reading about what this practice means to *Sufis* inspires enthusiasm and calls for a profound commitment.

Inner Alchemy offers a fresh outlook on *Kriya Pranayama*, emphasizing its ability to blend and unify three fundamental energies: sexual, love, and spiritual. This is a clear explanation of what *Kriya* theory only hints at.

Finally, all the fascination, wonder, and mystery contained in *Kriya*, known as the *Omkar* dimension, are at the heart of the *Radhasoami* path, which seeks this state with extraordinary intensity.

[I] HESYCHASM

In Greece, *Hesychasm* comes from the term *hesychia*, which describes inner stillness, tranquility, or deep calm. This quiet is necessary for meditation to develop and transform a person.

The Hesychast path is founded on the constant repetition of the Jesus Prayer: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.*” The Church Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries were already familiar with this ancient practice. The first step is to whisper the prayer and then repeat it silently in your mind until it becomes a breath of the soul.

The ancient desert hermits looked for inner peace by practicing contemplation and discipline. Purity of heart and constant prayer were the only ways they could achieve knowledge of God, not through study or reasoning. This ascetic method evolved into a specific set of psycho-physical techniques that constitute the core of Hesychasm over time.

Symeon (1025–1092) is credited with developing this tradition with such precision that he is regarded as the founder of *Quietist* theology. His practice consisted of specific postures and breathing patterns meant to enhance awareness of God's "*Uncreated Light*."

Practical Teachings

1. Breathing and Prayer

Their starting point is twelve forward prostrations that warm the body and awaken the fervor of prayer. Then they assume an appropriate position.

In order to be quiet, *Pseudo-Symeon* advises sitting alone in a corner of the cell. Gregory of Sinai proposed a seat that was low, with a height of about 23 cm, and resembled a stool without a backrest, which was a novelty at a time when prayer was usually performed standing.

In this position, it is recommended to slow and lengthen breathing. *Pseudo-Symeon* is extremely detailed in his recommendations, suggesting that you reduce the air flow through your nostrils to produce a subtle and regular breathing pattern that makes a light sound in your throat. This instruction is surprising because it coincides with the fundamental teaching of *Kriya Pranayama*.

When the breath becomes calm, it is merged with the *Jesus Prayer*. Ancient texts do not provide precise instructions on how to coordinate words and breath; today, it is common to inhale while mentally saying, "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God*" and exhale while saying, "*Have mercy on me*", as suggested in *The Tales of a Russian Pilgrim*, a key text of Hesychasm.

They perform the exercise for at least 15 minutes, then increase the time to 30. To count the repetitions, a rosary can be helpful. Over time, physical techniques are given up and the focus is solely on mental repetition, resulting in natural breath flow.

True discipline lies within: techniques can help focus, but they cannot substitute the heart's attention. It is precisely the state of mind during prayer that gives strength to the prayer. The hesychast must pay attention to the heart and let go of images and distractions. This concentration

creates a stillness that is the gateway to divine blessings: a hidden treasure that is waiting to be discovered.

2. *Discovering the “place of the heart”*

Sit in a comfortable position, with your head slightly tilted forward and your eyes focused on your abdomen. You fix your physical gaze and mental attention on the navel region, trying to “enter” it as if it were a door that needed to be opened.

Your intellect and intuition are used to search for the spiritual heart, the seat of the soul's deepest faculties. At first, the practice may bring about a kind of joyless darkness, but with perseverance, it can lead to unlimited happiness. The heart opens and you contemplate the “*Uncreated Light*”, bringing love and bliss into your heart. You'll realize that all of your previous experiences were insignificant once you have this exceptional experience!

The texts suggest that “finding the spiritual heart” is achieved by starting from the physical heart and establishing a connection with our inner Self, discovering the true dimension of our personality in the Divine. By allowing the intellect to descend from the head to the heart, one can achieve integration and realize that they are a unified whole created in the divine image.

Attention can achieve complete cohesion by bringing the center of awareness to the heart. It is maintained by a higher intensity, and anything not related to our concentration cannot interrupt it.

The teachings of Lahiri Mahasaya and the practice of *Thokar* lead to the same goal. Hesychasm invites us to enter the heart through the navel region, gradually opening the door to the inner temple. The door opens in both paths, and we can reap the rewards of our efforts.

Historical Note

Controversy arose over the practices of the Hesychasts during the 14th century. Barlaam of Seminara, a theologian who was trained in Western scholasticism, visited Mount Athos and studied its teachings, but concluded that they were superstitious. In rejecting the idea that the “*Uncreated Light*” was a genuine manifestation of divinity, he accused the monks of believing that the soul resides in the navel and mocked them by calling them *omphalopsychoi*. He maintained that God could only be understood intellectually, not through sight or experience.

Saint Gregory Palamas defended the Hesychasts by distinguishing between the essence of God, which is totally inaccessible, and the divine

energies, through which man can truly experience divine life. The *Uncreated Light* is a part of these energies and can be contemplated.

The Orthodox Church acknowledged Hesychasm's value in 1341, and Barlaam was sent to Calabria, where he was appointed as a bishop in the Catholic Church. Since then, Mount Athos has been regarded as the core of the Hesychast faith.

Similarities with Yoga

Hesychasm and *Kriya Yoga* share similarities, but they also have significant differences. *Kriya* employs meticulous breathing methods and concentrates on the entire energetic axis, starting from the lower centers to *Kutastha*, between the eyebrows, with an ascending and descending motion.

Hesychasm, on the other hand, remains in the heart. Its path does not involve ascending through the energetic centers, but rather the continuous deepening of the spiritual heart. Lahiri Mahasaya explains that the final ascent takes place when the door of the *Sushumna* is opened; the Hesychast directs its focus towards the “door of the heart”, where the encounter with the Divine Light happens.

[III] SUFI

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

Practice of Dhikr without head movements

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heavens and earth contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me." (*Prophet Muhammad conveying the words of God – Hadith Kudsi.*)

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

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

When the practice of Dhikr involves head movements

The *Prayer* and head are elevated from the navel region or below it all the way to the brain. As soon as the *Prayer* gets to the brain, it's shifted from one shoulder to the other, and then it's brought to the heart with a tap.

Let's examine how the chanting of '*Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh*' is accompanied by head movements. Although we do not have the exact details of this procedure, it seems reasonable to sum up it in the following way.

The prayer starts with the syllable '*Lâ*', which is inhaled from the navel to the brain. Once you have the letter '*Lâ*' in the head, it is important to hold your breath.

The head bends to the right, and '*Ilaha*' is placed in the right shoulder (and in the upper right part of the chest under the right shoulder). With the head bent to the left, '*Illaal*' is positioned in the left shoulder (and in the upper left chest below the left shoulder). The '*lâh*' is firmly inserted into the heart while the head is tilted forward. Exhale. Then inhale, lift your chin and place again "*La*" in the head. The movements and the *mantra* are repeated many times.

Deep intoxication is felt in the heart as the number of repetitions of the technique increases in intensity. At the end of the chosen number of repetitions, the phrase '*Muhammad Rasool Allah*' is said by moving the

head from the left to the right side. Finally it is said: "My God, Thou art my goal and satisfying Thee is my aim."

If you choose to follow the *Sufi* path and use *Kriya* techniques, there will be no difficulties. Without question, it is essential to have a strong self-taught spirit. It's up to you to respect the repetition numbers given in *Kriya* schools or go beyond them in a completely different dimension. A *kriyaban* would find it unimaginable to practice a number of repetitions as a *Sufi* practitioner.

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

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

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

I died as a mineral and became a plant; I died as plant and rose to animal;
I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by
dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blessed; but
even from angel-hood I must pass on: all except God doth perish. When I
have sacrificed my angel-soul, I shall become what no mind e'er
conceived. (*Rumi, Translated by A.J. Arberry*)

Similarities between Hesychasm and Dhikr

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

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

[III] INTERNAL ALCHEMY (NEI DAN)

Internal Alchemy is the mystical core of *Taoism*, an ancient Chinese tradition. The first book I consulted to understand it was *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality*, written by Charles Luk & Lu Kuan. It had such a powerful evocative power that it completely absorbed me.

After carefully studying his teachings, I copied and rearranged the pages that described the four phases of *Internal Alchemy*, which became my initial working outline. I believe that studying *Inner Alchemy* is particularly helpful for *Kriya Yoga* practitioners.

I found that the description of the *Microcosmic Orbit*, which is the main procedure of the Taoist path, had a striking resemblance to *Kriya Pranayama*, even if it is not a copy. The metaphors utilized to encapsulate the motion of energy, like the “inverted bagpipe” and “flute without holes”, recalled the teachings I received from an excellent Indian *Kriya Yoga* master several years ago.

One of the main differences is that in the taoist version, the energy descends and touches the frontal surface of the body at the points corresponding to the *Chakras*. Concentrating can involve looking at the Adam's apple, center of sternum, navel, pubic area, and the perineum. The differences fade away with practice, and the effects on the energy body become virtually identical.

I was taken aback by this discovery: is it feasible that *Kriya Yoga* is a reworking of *Taoist Internal Alchemy* for India, enhanced by Indian techniques including *Navi Kriya*?

In fact, symbols from both cultures seem to be used to explain *Kriya Yoga*. It's possible that this connection allows for a more expansive and complete structure compared to *tantric Kundalini Yoga*. I didn't find it odd to consider the possibility that the mythical *Babaji* may be part of the tradition of the taoist “Immortals”.

1. The Microcosmic Orbit

The first phase of *Internal Alchemy* consists of activating the *Microcosmic Orbit*, which is the foundation of the entire alchemical process.

Breathe naturally. Slightly raise your eyebrows and become conscious of the inner light. Intuitively perceive this light in front of each *Chakra*. The flow of awareness begins with *Kutastha*, then moves through the tongue to the laryngeal prominence (front of the fifth *Chakra*), then moves through the sternum, navel, pubic region, and perineum.

The next step in the process of awareness is along the back of the spine: the second *Chakra*, followed by the third, fourth, fifth, the *medulla*, the occipital region, the seventh *Chakra*, and finally *Kutastha*, where attention can be retained for a longer period. For at least a few weeks, mentally perform this circulation before starting to synchronize it with your breath.

As you breathe in, awareness (and Qi) move upwards through the *Control Channel*, behind the spine. As you exhale, it descends down through the *Function Channel* in front of the body.

The purpose of the practice is expressed by the formula “bringing three to two and two to one.” Let's elaborate on the meaning of this phrase.

The Three Energies

Jing is sexual energy, which sustains vitality, sensory perceptions, determination, and the ability to face life. Sexual energy is not just what it sounds like; it is the factor that allows us to enjoy sensory perceptions and provides us with the strength and determination to tackle life's challenges. We need to acquire all the necessary things for our lives. It's unfortunate that we also struggle to get things that are not essential to our lives, but that's another story.

Qi is the energy of love; it is the profound feeling towards others, towards life, and towards beauty, which generates righteous and intuitive actions. The energy of love is a profound feeling towards another individual, towards living beings, and toward life in general, and it is also the joy we experience when we witness artistic expression. It drives just and impartial actions and is derived from noble intuitions and ethical laws.

Shen is spiritual energy; it manifests in the highest moments of vision, intuition, and contemplation. During the most intense moments of aesthetic contemplation, spiritual energy can manifest profound prophetic visions. As explained, these three energies come from a single reality, were divided during our birth, and can be strengthened through education and social interactions.

These three energies originate from a single source, but they become separated through birth and education. The *Microcosmic Orbit* tends to bring them back together. Thus, sexual thoughts gradually transform into feelings, which become strength and determination. This strength is carried to the brain where it unites with the Spirit.

By recombining internal fractures, a harmonious flow towards the spiritual dimension can be established. The *Microcosmic Orbit* is a process that heals the entire personality on a continuous basis.

Therefore, there is a strong affinity with *Kriya Pranayama*: both reestablish original harmony and foster profound internal balance.

Kundalini Yoga places a high value on divine ecstasy, while *Internal Alchemy* emphasizes the emergence of ecstasy as a consequence of a balanced and integral rebirth of the being.

Inner Alchemy respects and unites every aspect of the human being. In many spiritual paths, sexuality is often demonized as impure due to a rigid separation between matter and spirit. This inevitably leads to internal conflicts.⁶

Kriya Yoga is more than just an ascent; it also includes a downward movement, specifically during exhalation, which leads to profound balance.

Taoist Internal Alchemy is the only tradition that holds the mystery of human nature in the highest regard. To follow an authentic spiritual path, it is essential to listen to practical wisdom. By doing this, we can avoid numerous problems and proceed with common sense, love for natural laws, and meditative intuition toward Self-Realization.

It's crucial to examine the heavy conditioning we receive from our education, explore its potential limitations and dangers, and take on the courageous responsibility of rectifying them.

2. Guiding the energy into the lower dantian

By practicing the *Microcosmic Orbit*, the spiritual energy accumulated in the head is directed into the *lower Dantian*, which is situated approximately four centimeters below and inside the navel.

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

During a deep inhalation, energy descends into the *Dantian*. The breath is held with *Jalandhara Bandha* and *Mula Bandha*. Following, a quiet exhale takes place. Repeating this visualization multiple times compresses the energy in the *Dantian* until it becomes a “pearl”, leading to a growing internal heat.

Kriya Yoga involves the union of *Prana* and *Apana* to create the *Samana* current. The process is intuitively understood by using taoist metaphors like “return to the center”, “union of heaven and earth”, “birth of the golden flower”, “resplendent gem”, and “creation of the elixir of immortality”.

The process of stabilizing in the *Dantian* involves rediscovering a profound connection with one's spiritual nature.

3. Pushing the energy toward the Middle and Upper Dantian

Symbolic language is often used to describe this phase, which can cause confusion. The clearest approach is to hold a final breath with *Jalandhara Bandha* and *Mula Bandha*, then slowly exhale, allowing the energy accumulated in the abdomen to rise spontaneously towards the heart.

Light is emitted by energy in the *Middle Dantian*, which is considered to be the 'heart space', and it reveals the true serenity, the “*fundamental nature*” of the practitioner.

As you continue to contemplate this light, the energy rises along the central axis of the body, in front of the spine (the *Thrusting Channel*), until it reaches the center between the eyebrows, which is called the *Upper Dantian*. From here, it is possible to activate the *Macrocosmic Orbit*.

4. The Macrocosmic Orbit

As energy ascends through the *Thrusting Channel* and gets to the *Upper Dantian* (*Kutastha*), a more expansive energetic circuit spontaneously starts up: the *Macrocosmic Orbit*.

Here, the three energies – sexual, love, and spiritual – unite, creating the “elixir of immortality”, which nourishes every cell of the body. This occurs during “*prenatal breathing*”, an internal movement of energy similar to the *Microcosmic Orbit*, but experienced in *Kevala Kumbhaka*, the breathless state.

When the Divine permeates the body through this subtle circulation, the spiritual path is finished. The *Macrocosmic Orbit* displays extraordinary beauty in its inner landscapes.

Over time, the downward current turns into a diffuse pressure on all cells, broadening awareness. When this happens, it means that one has reached the final stage of the spiritual journey.

While breathing is absent, the body is saturated with static *Prana*. The obstruction that has been there for ages at the bottom of the spine disappears. Energy flows through all cells like a golden vibration, like an internal breath. Awareness attains a full, vast, and radiant status.

[IV] RADHASOAMI

Introduction

When someone inquires about the main and reliable methods of pursuing the spiritual path, I am quick to respond: 1. Dissolving the self-identification with the Mind. 2. Practice of *Japa*. 3. Procedures that involve the breath. I frequently forget to mention a crucial fourth technique: internal listening to *Om* (*Omkar*).

In Chapter 3, I discussed how I first heard *Om* using the technique provided by P.Y.'s organization.

In that chapter, I recall the intense love for the Divine that was created by practicing this technique. The sound of a bell echoing from an unfathomable distance made me feel blissful. This sound was the initial manifestation of the authentic sound of *Om*. The bell tolled sweetly and gently reverberated through the doors of my heart. The most tender moments of my life appeared at the edges of my consciousness. Old wounds were healed by this sound. I sensed that this sound was the essence of every beautiful thing I had experienced in life.

From a technical perspective, I grasped that the outcome was not due to a specific moment of concentration, but rather to the cumulative effort that was experienced over months of intense sessions.

In chapter 4, I go over the teachings given by *Swami Hariharananda*. The method he taught was not the same: to listen to the internal sounds of the chakras during *Kriya Pranayama*, without closing your ears, was the fundamental practice. To achieve success, one must continuously strive to listen internally.

I believed that the *Omkar* reality could only be manifested through the technique of closing the ears and listening to the internal sounds. I came to understand that the *Omkar* reality encompasses multiple aspects. This discovery had a significant impact on my spiritual journey.

Kriya Yoga comprised several stages but was conceived as a single,

progressive process of attuning to the *Omkar* reality. A gentle pressure above or around the head was used to convey the sensation of progressing in the right direction.

This new teaching brought back the old, familiar sweetness that I experienced when first embracing P.Y.'s teachings, and I welcomed it with gratitude and an open heart.

For many weeks, daily contact with the *Om* vibration made me feel as though I was experiencing heaven on Earth. I couldn't imagine anything that could make a person feel so satisfied. I came to the realization that I now had a state of inconceivable sweetness, and that I can enjoy it every day, not only while meditating, but also when I am not working or having other obligations.

As I gazed out at the distant mountain peaks while at work, I felt a unique happiness as my heart told me that this was how I was going to live my future years.

In my *Kriya* practice, chanting the *mantra* in each *Chakra* was a way for me to connect with the core of each *Chakra* with an almost physical intensity. My body was so relaxed during this procedure that it became rigid like a statue and my mind became crystal-clear

As I was about to conclude my search for the original *Kriya* and accept my current *Kriya* routine as the final one, I came into contact with other masters. I did it solely to obtain the *higher Kriyas* that *Swami Hariharananda* had decided not to transmit to me. I arrived at those meetings with a determination to distance myself immediately if I believed that following these alternative teachings would result in a loss of connection with the *Omkar* experience.

Over time, I became involved in new practices, sometimes very intense, and became disengaged from my efforts to listen to internal sounds. It was a major mistake. It was only later, with remorse, that I came to the realization of how foolish it was to neglect this profound and beautiful practice, almost without realizing it.

In fact, I felt a distance from the spiritual sweetness I was used to, as if I had landed on a foreign continent, immersed in experiences that didn't have any significance for me.

Much later, I came to understand that *Swami Hariharananda's* teachings were rooted not only in *Kriya Yoga* but also in the *Radhasoami movement* which is what I am currently discussing.

Historical Notes

The *Radhasoami* movement, also known as *Sant Mat* ('Path of the Saints'), was formally organized in India during the 19th century. Even though it may be considered a branch of *Sikhism*, its origins are deeper and connect to the teachings of mystics such as *Kabir* and *Guru Nanak*.

During the medieval period, between the 13th and 14th centuries, a group of masters who were focused on the cultivation of inner light and sound emerged in northern India. In contemporary times, *Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh* is the first master that can be identified by records, as he founded the *Radhasoami* movement in Agra in January 1861. Following his death in 1878, he did not appoint a successor, resulting in the movement's natural fragmentation.

Affinities with Kriya Yoga

In *Kriya*, it is believed that the practice gradually leads to the *Omkar* vibration, considered the final essence of the path. *Shabda* is the name given to this vibration by *Radhasoami*.

In *Radhasoami*, the Divine is conceived as a vibration, a primordial sound called *Shabda*, rather than a person, energy, or external intelligence, making it a unique spiritual movement.

The direct pathway to contact with the Divine is attributed to the experience of this vibration. The proposed technique is straightforward: during meditation, one concentrates on what is perceptible within oneself, particularly on the internal light and sound that emerge when the mind reaches a state of calmness.

Those who are given this method are referred to as “initiates.” Other requirements, typically associated with the movement, such as the need for vegetarianism, were not part of the original teachings and were introduced only by a few teachers.

Practical Teachings: How to Get Started

Meditation is best practiced twice daily: early in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before bed.

Sit in a position that is comfortable for you and with your spine straight. You have the option to sit either on a chair or cross-legged. The initial objective is to relax the body and maintain a steady, stress-free standing position.

The student is instructed by the teacher to mentally repeat a *mantra* to calm their mind. By focusing on the *Kutastha* area (between the eyebrows), internal recitation can help consciousness rise above thought and enter a state of internalization.

The use of five divine names has historically been *Jot Nirinjan, Ongkar, Rarankar, Sohang, Sat Nam*.

Close your eyes and concentrate on the center of the darkness in front of you. When you detect an inner light, allow your attention to focus on it. Your breathing continues to be natural and free.

It is taught that the “seat of the Spirit” is located between the eyebrows: there, consciousness is gently directed.

Radhasoami does not have a *Talabya Kriya*, but instead provides a straightforward instruction: bring the tongue back until it touches the palate and, with practice, you will be able to perceive a subtle flow of energy or “nectar”. Many mystical traditions mention this nectar, which is symbolically referred to as “living water” or “bread of life”. It is claimed that this perception only comes about after a long period of practice.

Listening to the Inner Sound

To initiate the inner journey, the devotee is taught to withdraw their consciousness and listen to the primordial vibration, which is known as the “Music of the Spheres”.

Eliminating external noises can be done easily by closing your auditory canals with your thumbs and using an arm support.

The highest levels of consciousness can be reached by listening to the Divine Sound, which is considered the most direct and natural path. There is no other system that can make it so easy to reach the higher regions of mystical experience.

According to *Radhasoami*, the only way to achieve true spiritual liberation is by directly experiencing the *Omkar-Shabda* vibration.

According to this view, no one can completely transcend the cycle of *karma* and reincarnation without connecting with the inner current of life.

The internal sounds described are similar to those mentioned in *Kriya Yoga*: initially, they are perceived on the right side of the head, then towards the crown. As one practices, the sound becomes clearer, similar to a bell, and draws the consciousness upward with increasing intensity.

When one's attention is fully focused on this sound, a profound peace and joy arise, making it one of the most precious experiences on the spiritual path.

Using the Breath to Deepen the Experience of Omkar

In the *Radhasoami* path, the breath is regarded as both a flow of air and a manifestation of the cosmic vibration *Om*. While practicing, it's important to recognize the *Prana* that enters with inhalation, is assimilated during the brief pause that follows, and disperses throughout the body during exhalation.

The cultivation of this awareness, breathing after breathing, can eventually lead to a state of profound stillness, even reaching the “breathless state”.

A simple and powerful procedure is to inhale and exhale with full attention. Before the exhalation is complete, inhale again and continue this way, without ever completely emptying your lungs.

Over time, you may perceive two subtle currents in the brain: an ascending current on the right side, linked to inhalation; and a descending current on the left side, linked to exhalation.

By breathing and then breathing again, these two currents form a circular motion. When viewed from behind, the flow appears to envelop the central part of the brain and concentrate around the *Ajna Chakra*, the sixth energy center. The center of the brain is where it's located, with two additional locations in the *Kutastha* and *Medulla*. In this practice, the primary focus is on the central location, which gradually becomes more apparent and noticeable.

The natural sound of breathing is recognized as the spontaneous *mantra* “*So Ham*”: “*So*” on the inhalation, “*Ham*” on the exhalation. This vibration is regarded as the true Divine Word.

By practicing this awareness for a certain period of time, the energy currents around *Ajna* intensify, and the first internal sounds begin to manifest. It is perceived first in the right ear and then in the left.

After a few minutes, you may hear a buzzing sound a few inches above the right ear, followed by a similar sound on the left side. A circular energy field is formed when the two vibrations come into balance.

The sounds merge in the brain's center, resulting in a single, more subtle vibration.

At the end of the procedure, breathing calms to the point where it almost disappears. The main factor in guiding the internal process is concentration. In this stillness, a white light may appear in the center of the head: this is the perception of the “spiritual eye.”

Allow yourself to be engulfed by this light. A sound that is deep and bell-like can occur spontaneously, resulting in inner absorption (*samadhi*). The technique has reached its apex at this point.

The Chakras According to Radhasoami

According to the *Radhasoami* system, there are six *Chakras* in the physical body and twelve in the brain, six in the gray matter and six in the white matter.

The six spinal *Chakras* are considered too closely tied to the material dimension. For this reason, they are not stimulated through *bija mantras*, as is done in *Kundalini Yoga*. Instead, they are simply “localized” astrally without activating them.

According to this tradition, *Mukti* (liberation) is not achieved by meditating directly on the *Chakras*. Locating them, however, allows one to develop the ability to perceive detachment from the physical body, an experience described as “dying while living”.

In order to follow the procedure, one must assume the *Kechari Mudra*, focus their inner gaze on *Kutastha*, and dedicate a small portion of their attention to locating the *Chakra* that needs to be found. When a subtle luminous vibration arises, one doesn't stop at this *Chakra* but moves to the next location. The brief pauses are just enough to grasp the essence of each one.

By moving *Prana* in a circular flow within the brain, the twelve higher *Chakras* can gradually emerge. Initially, the use of breathing is very subtle; later, it is almost completely replaced by pure intention. In essence, this practice is comparable to the *Third Kriya* taught by *Swami Hariharananda* (see Chapter 14).

When a sufficient number of cycles have been completed, the consciousness acquires the strength necessary to penetrate the eighth portal, located in the white part of the brain. In this perspective, this portal enables access to the “indestructible ocean of Spirit”, which is the ultimate objective of the meditative path.

Kabir and Guru Nanak inspired the Radhasoami movement

The literature on *Kabir* (1398 Benares - 1448/1494 Maghar) and *Guru Nanak* (1469 Nankana Sahib - 1539 Kartarpur) is of great inspiration. Their teachings are in perfect alignment. *Radhasoami's* teaching is based on them. I want to dwell on these two highly respected and much loved Masters because I have rarely met two individuals who have similarly doubted the worthiness of relying on the study of sacred scriptures and the cults and ceremonies of a particular religion to direct one's spiritual journey. I can state that their thinking was utterly pure and uncontaminated.

Kabir, an illiterate weaver and *Muslim* by birth, was a remarkable mystic. His poems and sayings are conveyed in a language that is particularly effective and will leave a lasting mark on the reader. In the last century, the great mystical poet of Calcutta, *Rabindranath Tagore*, regained the importance of his teachings and the power of his poetry, and created a stunning English translation of his songs. *Kabir* was constantly confident that he could overcome the obstacles that divide the two major religions of *Islam* and *Hinduism*.

It is not appropriate to portray him as a bridge between their beliefs. He was equally harsh towards both, frequently seeing them as similar in their own misguided ways. He made it a point to declare his independence from both.

He was unable to tolerate the mindless, repetitive, and proud habit of claiming scriptures. He ferociously attacked the flaws of these religions and sought to foster similar independence and bravery in those who claimed to follow him.

The holy scriptures did not seem to affect his teachings, and he did not attend religious services. He recommended that you avoid giving up life to become a hermit and not adopting an extreme approach to spiritual discipline, which can weaken your body and bring about pride.

He questioned the necessity of having any holy book or religion. *Kabir* recommended that people look within and recognize that all human beings are manifestations of God's living forms.

Kabir suggested that if you want to know the truth, you should drop the 'I' or ego. It is necessary to recognize God internally in one's soul, as a fire that, with constant care, can burn away all resistances, dogmas, and ignorance.

The concept of reincarnation and the law of *Karma* was imparted to *Kabir* from *Hinduism*, while *Islam* gave him absolute monotheism and the ability

to fight caste and all forms of idolatry.

He discovered the complete meaning of the *yogic* experience. He affirms that our body contains a garden of flowers called *Chakras* and encourages us to meditate on the infinite beauty through the *Thousand-petal Lotus*.

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

The teachings of *Kabir* were given by beloved *Guru Nanak*. He advocated for inner detachment by living a householder's life, not asceticism. Wearing clothes, carrying a walking stick, or visiting burial places are not part of asceticism.

Asceticism is not simply about words; it's about being pure in the face of impurities! His teaching is not about adherence to scriptures, but about altering the nature of the human mind. At any time, anyone can attain direct experience and spiritual perfection. All human beings possess direct access to God without the use of rituals or priests.

Liberation from worldly slavery was traditionally the goal, which led to the landlord's life being viewed as a hindrance and obstacle. *Guru Nanak's* teaching made the world the arena for spiritual endeavor.

The beauty of creation was something he was enchanted by and viewed the natural landscape as the most beautiful setting for worshipping the Divine. He made it a point to completely free his disciples from all ritual practices, traditional ways of worship, and the priestly class.

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

CHAPTER 13

INCREMENTAL ROUTINE

In this chapter, I discuss a different approach to using Kriya Yoga techniques.

If your *Kriya* practice isn't working for you, consider what I have to offer you in this chapter.

I intend to discuss how an '*Incremental Routine*' can be beneficial for any *Kriya* technique. An experience like this has the power to completely alter your view of *Kriya*.

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

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

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

Typically, once a person discovers that their efforts are not working and their initial enthusiasm has faded after implementing the same routine for several months, it's suggested to persist in their *Kriya* practice even when confronted with frustration.

What is my message to the *kriyabans* who are facing a stalemate that appears insurmountable? It's a nightmare for them to practice *Kriya* daily for the rest of their lives, a cage they want to escape from.

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

the disciple had his first spiritual encounter.

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

What happens in athletics is a good example that I ask you to consider. To achieve noteworthy goals, athletes need to increase the intensity and quality of their practice in some way. They can only achieve otherwise unattainable performance through very intense sessions in which they push their physical and mental resistance to the maximum.

It is necessary to rest for several days after each session to ensure complete recovery. This law cannot be avoided by anyone. I repeat: it's necessary to rest, forget, and stop thinking about it. Sadly, many *kriyabans* find their daily commitment to be an obsession (a curse). It's no surprise that they eventually send everything to hell and forget about it!

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

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

I chose to practice *Navi Kriya* for a total of $4 \times 2 = 8$ repetitions. In the following steps, I tried the following increments 4×3 , 4×4 ... These steps were something I did once a week. On other days, I would abandon myself to the soothing sensation of a long and quiet *Japa*. Regrettably, I discovered that the practice of *Navi Kriya* was both boring and uninspiring. I was given a recommendation by a friend of a beautiful technique that also aims to bring energy together in the abdominal region, but in a way that I found much more stunning.

A method for approaching the Dantian in four distinct directions

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

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

How to practice

Inhale deeply and experience the rising energy sensation. Move your head slightly forward. Perform a prolonged exhalation to observe the energy that descends from the forehead along a path outside the body, moves towards the navel, crosses it, and reaches the *Dantian*.

As you exhale, *Om* is mentally chanted 10 to 15 times quickly, with concentration, to participate in the descent of energy along the way.

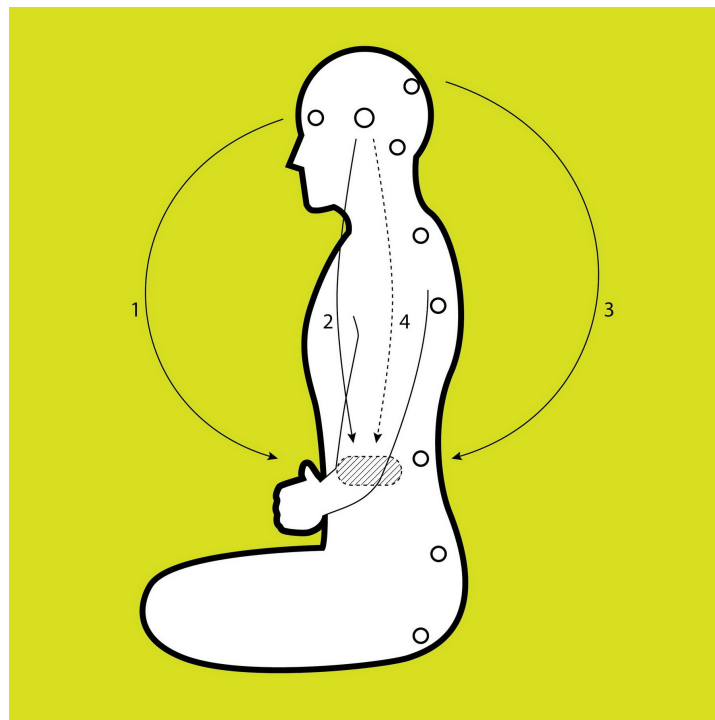


Fig.14 The energy enters the *Dantian* along four directions

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

A short inhalation after a brief stop in the *Dantian* raises the energy in the head once more. At the same time, the chin rises. The head is now tilted back. Along with the *Om, Om, Om....* chant, a long exhalation is required to accompany the downward movement of energy that originates from the

occipital area and moves (outside the body) down towards the belt where it bends, passes through the third *Chakra Manipura*, and moves towards the *Dantian*. Following a brief pause in the *Dantian*, the same procedure is repeated on the *right* side.

This last exhalation closes the small cycle consisting of four exhalations accompanied by four descents of energy towards the belt and, crossing it, towards the *Dantian* region. In this cycle, you have come up with a vision of four spirals that shrink from the outside and enter the *Dantian*. The mini cycle is repeated 9 times. In summary, there are a total of $4 \times 9 = 36$ energy descents.

What we have described can last from 8 to 10 minutes and is equivalent to 4 repetitions of the basic form of *Navi Kriya*. You can start with 36 descents in the *Dantian*, then multiply that by 2, resulting in 72 descents. The next steps will be 36×3 , $36 \times 4 \dots 36 \times 19$, 36×20 . I opted for this method and will forever be grateful for its incredible power.

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

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

Let's try to describe this experience: while you formulate the will to exhale, you will feel as if your lungs are unable to move. It seems like they were impeded, as if there was opposition to moving and contracting. A few moments later, you will become aware of a subtle substance beginning to enter the body.

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

This technique has the ability to untangle things that, from an emotional and sentimental point of view, are an unsolvable mystery for you. It feels like a much stronger and determined personality has emerged from your depths. Gradual development is recommended for this technique. If you think you're smart and do more repetitions one after the other, realize that it's like doing nothing because the inner channels are closed.

It's not possible to eliminate inner obstacles in just one day; your inner

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

Taking a long walk in the evening is necessary if you always practice in your room. Everything will be carried out in a manner that is harmonious and you will definitely experience the blessing of an inner silence that is filled with bliss. It's within your power to make your practice day as enjoyable as you can.

I suggest that you break up the lengthy sessions into two parts; obviously, everything should be finished in one day. It's possible to close each part by lying on a mat in *Savasana*, also known as the corpse pose, for a few minutes. It is possible to commence a portion of the practice in the morning, but make sure to take your time and pay attention to every detail.

After a light meal and short nap in the afternoon, seek out a beautiful location where you can sit and contemplate nature. After being fully absorbed in the practice and feeling relaxed, finish the remaining repetitions. You'll observe how the effects increase as the day approaches twilight.

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

In order to understand the meaning of this work, we must first understand what it means to cut the navel knot. According to explanation, cutting the umbilical cord at birth splits a single reality into two parts: the spiritual and the material.

The upper *Chakras* (from the fourth upwards) are where the spiritual part is located, which reveals itself as joy and calmness; while the material part is situated in the lower *Chakras*. The division of "spirit" and "matter" within every person is always a source of conflict. The healing of this fracture is achieved through this *Incremental Routine*. Although healing is a good thing, others may interpret what happens outside as negative.

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

Even if others judge you, remember that your personality is meant to gather around a central point and heal all inner conflicts. An interior order is inevitably established in practical life, with each action appearing to be surrounded by a halo of calm and proceeding directly towards the goal.

This is akin to the tone *Achab* takes in *Herman Melville's Moby Dick*:

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

I hope that you do not abandon this practice because you think it is not appropriate for you. This practice has a positive effect on mental clarity. By synergizing thoughts and emotions more efficiently, a more calibrated, precise, and clear logical process will emerge.

During those moments in life when important decisions must be made, intuition will flow freely and aid in coping. This technique can assist you in confronting significant and decisive challenges that life throws at you.

For instance, you may feel the need to strive for something that appears like a utopia, a notion that may seem impossible according to common reasoning. Well, the practice described will provide you with the energy potential needed to achieve this objective.

[III] Incremental routine of Kriya Pranayama

Let's begin with a straightforward question: “Why do I need to practice the incremental routine of *Navi Kriya* before that of *Kriya Pranayama*?” The reason for this is that *Navi Kriya* establishes a strong foundation that enables individuals to tackle the demanding practice of the incremental *Kriya Pranayama Routine*. 36x1, 36x2, 36x3,... .36x 20 *Kriya* breaths is the best plan. A lighter but still valid plan is: 24x1, 24x2, 24x3,... ..24x 24.

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

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

Note 1

During this sensitive time, it's possible to practice *Nadi Sodhana Pranayama* both during the week and on the day of the Incremental Routine practice. A

dramatic transformation will take place through it - different patterns of energy imbalance will disappear. This balancing action is essential for achieving an attentive yet calm readiness, which is the foundation of the meditative state of *Kriya*. After practicing *Nadi Sodhana* for a long time without any other techniques, a meditative state can naturally occur.

Note 2

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

The essence of past events, the beauty contained in them and never fully appreciated, is relived in the quiet pleasure of contemplation, while the heart sometimes is pervaded with a restrained cry. It is a revelation: the light of the Spirit seems to shine in what seem trivial moments of our lives.

Other incremental routines

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

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

Through the incremental routines, you will be able to identify any errors in your understanding and figure out how to fix them. With an incremental routine, you can break the childish habit of always relying on others for advice and clarification.

Important clues will come your way during practice, particularly when you have gone through different stages of the incremental process. You will eliminate certain details of the technique that may seem heavy, unbearable, or unnatural. Others will disappear on their own without you even noticing; instead, those that seemed non-essential to you will be amplified and deepened with good effects that you could never have imagined.

In the days that follow your long practice sessions, you will intuitively understand the essence of the chosen technique and gain a better grasp of it. You may even significantly change your view on why it is important to practice *Kriya Yoga*.