

PART II: DEFINITION OF THE KRIYA YOGA TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER 6

THE BASIC TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA

Disclaimer of Responsibility

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

I wish to make clear that this book is not a Kriya Yoga manual! I may write one in the future and face the problem of dividing it into different lessons and giving all the necessary instructions for each level. However, certain techniques cannot be learned from a manual. There are delicate ones such as Maha Mudra, Kriya Pranayama, Thokar, and Yoni Mudra, which cannot reasonably be learned without the help of an expert to check their execution. Each person is different so it is not possible to predict what effects an intensive practice might have on a particular individual.

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

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

Introduction to the Localization of the Chakras

The *Chakras* are subtle astral organs inside the spinal cord; ideal steps on a mystic ladder guiding one safely to the deepest ecstatic experience. Many believe they can apply what they have found in books on *Yoga to Kriya* but this won't work. Such books are usually filled with useless, misleading representations. While wasting time in visualizing all of it, a *kriyaban* runs the risk of losing the real meaning of the *Kriya* techniques or part of their riches.

Kriya is a natural process leading to beneficial results and it should not be distorted by the power of so called "creative" visualization, especially if it goes against the physiology of the body -- *Kriya* is not based on creating an artificial condition in it.

When certain particular conditions are established - mental silence, relaxation, an intense desire of the soul - the Spiritual Reality manifests in a captivating way, absorbing all one's attention. Then, subtle movements of energy in the body - or a particular centering of the energy in some parts of the body - reveal the essence of the *Chakras*.

Those who practice *Kriya Yoga* (we will use the term *kriyaban*) start their practice of the basic technique of *Kriya Pranayama* by visualizing the spine as a hollow tube extending from its bottom to the brain. With further practice, they try to locate the seven *Chakras*.

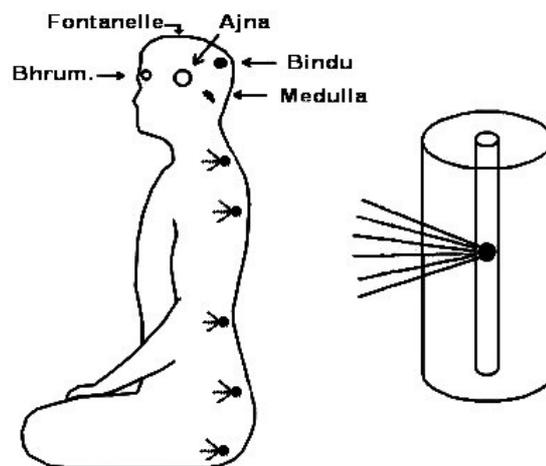


Figure 1. The perception of the Chakras

First Five Chakras

The first *Chakra*, ***Muladhara***, is located at the base of the spinal column just above the coccygeal (tailbone) region; the second *Chakra*, ***Swadhisthana***, is in the sacrum region halfway between *Muladhara* and *Manipura*; the third *Chakra*, ***Manipura***, is in the lumbar region, at the same level as the navel. The fourth

Chakra, Anahata, is in the dorsal region; its location can be felt by bringing the shoulder blades closer and concentrating on the tense muscles in the area between them. The fifth *Chakra, Vishuddha*, is located where the neck joins the shoulders, at collarbones' level. The location of the fifth *Chakra* can be detected by swaying your head from side to side, holding one's bust immobile, concentrating on the point where you perceive a particular "cracking" sound.

The physical localization of the *Chakras* is accompanied by some kind of visualization. The simplest visualization fostering the dynamics of *Kriya Pranayama* is the following -- when the awareness travels up the spine, the *Chakras* are perceived as tiny "lights" illuminating the "hollow tube" which is visualized at the place of the spinal cord. When the awareness comes down, they are internally perceived as organs distributing energy (coming from above) into the body. Luminous rays depart from their locations, enlivening that part of the body which is in front of them. To take the trouble to abide by such elementary visualization, avoiding those suggested by *New Age* or *tantric* books, is the best guarantee that you are carrying on a profitable work.

Even if it might seem now as premature, it is useful to remark that the true location of the *Chakras* can happen only in the astral dimension -- as they are not a physical reality. This is achieved when *Kriya Pranayama* takes, so to say, the "inward route", and you are listening to the inner sounds emanating from each *Chakra's* physical location. As soon as the mind is sufficiently calm (during a deep and long session of *Kriya Pranayama*) you will be able to listen to those astral sounds and locate astrally each *Chakra*.

There are different levels of development of this ability: *Kechari Mudra* brings about a great internalization process which fosters the experience especially when the "wind" of the breath subsides. What is the importance of locating astrally the *Chakras*? It is tied with the ability of traveling along the spinal tunnel, which in its turn is the basis of a higher achievement: to realize that the first five *Chakras* are five different states of consciousness. *Kriya* tradition puts them in relation with the five *Tattwas*: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Offering each *Tattwa* individually to the light of the "spiritual eye" gathering and intensifying in the region between the eyebrows, is the highest action ever conceived to destroy the last shell of illusion. We are going to introduce all these aspects of the *Kriya* practice in the next chapter; our anticipation is intended only to discourage *kriyabans* from being maniacally precise about the location of the *Chakras*: the practice of the different levels of *Kriya Yoga* will refine such perception.

Ajna (Medulla Oblongata, Bhrumadhya, Kutastha)

According to tradition, the location of the sixth *Chakra, Ajna*, is in the central part of the head. Some identify it with the hypophysis, others with the pineal gland, others with the third ventricle of the brain. It is preferable to abide by the following two-step procedure.

1. First detect the seat of the *medulla oblongata* (on top of the spinal

cord). Raise your chin tensing the muscles of the neck at the base of the occipital bone; concentrate on the small hollow under the back of the head and come ideally inside a couple of centimeters; maintaining the contraction of the muscles of the neck swing your head sideways (about a couple of centimeters left and right); relax the muscles of the neck and keep your concentration on *medulla oblongata* for one minute: you will notice how any restlessness disappears. (It might be interesting to add that the tradition recommends to visualize *medulla oblongata* as shaped like the back of a little turtle.)

2. Remaining centered in *medulla oblongata*, converge your inner gaze at *Bhrumadhya*, the point between the eyebrows, and observe the internal light in that region. Your perception can be vague but if you go on looking internally being satisfied with whatever luminous perception comes, such light will intensify. If you come backwards about eight centimeters from the place where the light appears, you have found the seat of the sixth *Chakra*, *Ajna*. Meditating with your awareness focused on it will prepare you for the experience of *Kutastha* (also known as "third eye" or "spiritual eye"): a luminous point in the middle of an infinite spherical radiance. In this region, one day, you will experience the radiance of a million suns, having the coolness of a million moons.

Ajna Chakra is the royal door to experience that part of the Divine Consciousness which is immanent in our physical universe. You will feel the entire universe as your own body. Such experience is also called "Kutastha Chaitanya," "Christ consciousness," or "Krishna consciousness."

Sahasrara (Bindu, Fontanelle)

According to tradition, the location of the seventh *Chakra*, *Sahasrara*, is the top of the head. It is visualized as having the form of a horizontal disk about 12 centimeters in diameter, lying immediately beneath the upper part of the cranium. In phase 3 of *Kriya Pranayama*, when we raise our awareness from the sixth to the seventh *Chakra*, such visualization is enough to get ecstatic absorption. But in *Kriya Yoga* there is always room for improvement. The most reliable *Kriya* schools (being careful not to cause difficult-to-sustain effects), are those that teach a gradual approach to concentration on *Sahasrara*. They counsel to place the awareness in *Bindu* and from there to become aware of the *fontanelle*. *Bindu* is located in the occipital region, where the hairline twists in a kind of vortex (where some Hindus with shaved heads wear a lock of hair). During the first part of *Kriya Pranayama* the consciousness touches *Bindu* briefly, at the end of each inhalation. In the higher phases of *Kriya Pranayama*, when our awareness finds Tranquility in *Bindu*, we become aware of the *anterior fontanelle*. The correct name of that region in an adult person is *Bregma*; it is located at the junction, on the skull, of the coronal and sagittal sutures. It is recommended not to override the previous stage of localization of the sixth *Chakra* (*Ajna*) and to practice concentration on *fontanelle* only when this is explicitly required by your teacher -- do not use your own initiative.

A Suitable Position for Meditation

One should sit facing East. According to Patanjali, the *yogi's* posture (Asana) must be steady and pleasant. Most *kriyabans* are comfortable with the so-called ***Half-lotus***. This position has been used for meditation since time immemorial because it provides a comfortable and easily managed sitting position. The key is to maintain an erect spine by sitting on the edge of a thick cushion so the buttocks are slightly raised. Sit cross-legged with the knees resting on the floor. Lift the left foot and bring it toward the body so the sole is resting against the inside of the right thigh. Draw the heel of the left foot in toward the groin as much as possible. The right leg is bent at the knee and the right foot is comfortably placed over the left thigh or calf or both. Let the right knee drop as far as possible toward the floor. The best hand position is with fingers interlocked as in the well known photo of Lahiri Mahasaya. This balances the energy from the right hand to the left and vice versa. The shoulders are in a natural position. The head, neck, chest, and spine are in a straight line as if they were linked. When the legs get tired, reverse them to prolong the position. For certain health or physical conditions, it may be beneficial to practice the half lotus on an armless chair provided it is large enough. In this way, one leg at a time can be lowered and the knee joint relaxed! ***Siddhasana*** (Perfect Pose) is of medium difficulty: the sole of the left foot is placed against the right thigh while the heel presses on the perineum. The right heel is against the pubic bone. This leg position combined with *Kechari Mudra* closes the pranic circuit and makes *Kriya Pranayama* easy and beneficial. It is said the position helps one to become aware of the movement of *Prana*. In the difficult ***Padmasana*** position, the right foot is placed on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh with the soles of the feet turned up. It is explained that when this *Asana* is combined with *Kechari* and *Shambhavi Mudra*, it results in an energetic condition that produces the experience of the internal light coming from each *Chakra*. It helps keep the body from bending or falling over as it tends to do when deep *Pratyahara* is practiced. Sitting in *Padmasana* (lotus position) is uncomfortable for a beginner because the knees and the ankles become extremely painful. I would not advise anyone to perform this difficult posture. There are *yogis* who have had to have knee cartilage removed after years of forcing themselves into the *Padmasana*.

THE BASIC TECHNIQUES OF KRIYA YOGA

The techniques related to the first initiation of *Kriya Yoga* are eight: *Talabya Kriya*, *Om Japa (in the Chakras)*, *Kriya Pranayama* (often called simply *Pranayama*), *Navi Kriya*, *Maha Mudra*, *Kriya Pranayama with short breath*, *mental Pranayama* and *Yoni Mudra*. In the technique of *Kriya Pranayama* we shall distinguish three phases.

Let us anticipate a theoretical scheme, a map that can be appreciated by

those students who love having a complete picture of all the phases of *Kriya Yoga* as they are conceived in this book. (A more in-depth discussion will be resumed in chapter 7).

The *Kriya* path is divided in four phases

Phase 1: *Jihuah (Jiwha) Granthi Bheda* -- Raising the tongue.

Phase 2: *Hridaya Granthi Bheda* -- Piercing the heart knot.

Phase 3: *Navi Granthi Bheda*-- Piercing the navel's knot.

Phase 4: *Muladhara Granthi Bheda* -- Piercing the last obstruction that blocks the full merging into the "spiritual eye".

I. The technique of *Talabya Kriya*, the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* (in three parts), the achievement of *Kechari Mudra* embodies phase 1 of *Kriya Yoga*.

II. The second part of *Kriya Pranayama* is related to phase 2 of *Kriya Yoga*. The appearing of the internal sounds -- especially the sound of a bell -- begin to melt any obstacle tied with the transit of the energy from the higher *Chakras* to the lower part of the spine and vice versa.

III. *Navi Kriya* embodies phase 3 of *Kriya Yoga* where the breath begins to calm down completely.

IV. *Maha Mudra*, *Pranayama with short breath*, *mental Pranayama* and *Yoni Mudra* are the tools that embody the last phase of *Kriya Yoga*. This phase is the most delicate work. The *Kundalini* energy is awakened (*Maha Mudra*); it is patiently guided through all *Chakras* (*Kriya Pranayama with short breath* and *mental Pranayama*) and finally is made stable at the point between the eyebrows (*Yoni Mudra*).

1. Talabya Kriya ¹

Starting with the tongue in a relaxed position, and with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the upper teeth, the *kriyaban* presses the body of the tongue against the upper palate to create a suction cup effect. While pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth, the bottom jaw is lowered to stretch the *frenulum* (the small fold of tissue under the tongue that attaches it to the base of the mouth). This stretching effect should be felt clearly (see figure 2). The tongue which has been pressed against the upper palate releases itself with a clicking sound and moves down into its natural position. The tongue is then stuck out of the mouth and pointed toward the chin. At the beginning, do it no more than 10 times a day to avoid straining the *frenulum*! Eventually, you want to be able to do 50 repetitions. The entire procedure of 50 repetitions takes about 2 minutes (110-120 seconds) to complete. Many practice *Talabya Kriya* incorrectly by

¹ I am planning to improve the explanation of the following techniques. You can visit at least once in a year the Web site www.kriyayogainfo.net to check if there are refinements in their explanation.

instinctively turning their tongue backwards (or keeping it vertical) but this cancels the whole effect. It is very important to have the tongue tip touching the back of the upper teeth before pressing it against the upper palate.²

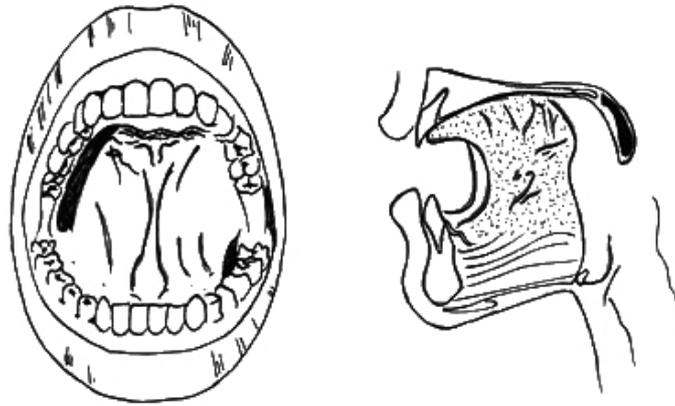


Figure 2. Talabya Kriya

After some months of practicing *Talabya Kriya* regularly, it should be possible to insert the tongue into the nasal pharynx cavity: this is called *Kechari Mudra* (see figure 4 in the next chapter). Let a beginner not ask too many question about it. It will be described in detail in the next chapter. Because *Talabya Kriya* creates a perceivable relaxing effect on the thinking process, it should continue to be practiced even after you are able to do *Kechari Mudra*. It is not known why this stretching of the frenulum reduces thought production. However, anyone practicing this technique can readily verify this.

2. Om Japa (in the Chakras)

Don't pay any attention to the breath. Starting with *Muladhara* (first *Chakra*), chant the *Mantra* "Om" while concentrating on it; then do the same with the second *Chakra* and so on up to the cervical *Chakra* (*Vishuddha*) and *Bindu*. During this ascent of awareness, do your best to intuitively touch the inner core of each *Chakra*. Then chant "Om" in the *medulla*, then in the cervical *Chakra* and so on, all the way back down to *Muladhara*. During this descent of awareness, try to perceive the subtle radiation of each *Chakra*. One ascent (*Chakras* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and *Bindu*) and one descent (*medulla*, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) represent one cycle that lasts about 30 seconds. Six to 12 cycles are performed. It is fine to chant the *Mantra* aloud during the first three cycles. In the remaining cycles, it can be chanted either aloud or mentally. This exercise, performed with concentration, helps "generate" the best form of *Kriya Pranayama*.

² In *Hatha Yoga* books there are different suggestions for lengthening the *Fraenulum*. One which is well known one is wrapping a piece of cloth around the tongue and, with the help of the hands, gently pulling (relaxing and repeating different times) the cloth both horizontally and also up, toward the tip of the nose. Lahiri Mahasaya was absolutely against cutting the *Fraenulum* to obtain faster and easier results.

3. Kriya Pranayama (Spinal Breathing)

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

First Part of Kriya Pranayama: Mixing Prana and Apana

Kechari Mudra is applied for those who can do it -- if not, the tongue tip is turned back to touch the middle of the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft. The mouth is closed. The eyes are closed and relaxed but focused on the region between the eyebrows. The awareness is in *medulla oblongata*.

One *Kriya* breath happens in the following way

1. A deep inhalation through the nose, producing an unvoiced sound in the throat, acts like a hydraulic pump to raise the energy (*Prana*) from the base of the spinal column up to the *medulla oblongata* and to *Bindu* (occipital region).

2. The movement of the air is suspended briefly, helping the activity of the mind to be suspended as well: a state of stability appears. This should be a short pause (2-3-seconds).

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

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

Reference literature says perfect *Kriya Pranayama* is 80 breaths per hour -- about 45 seconds per breath. *Kriyabans* can only reach this rhythm during long sessions. Beginners should set a rhythm of about 18-20 seconds per *Kriya* breath and complete 12 breaths in a natural and unhurried way (about 4 minutes).

Remarks

- a. The path taken by the energy gradually reveals itself during practice. No difficult visualization is required. You are centered in *medulla oblongata* location, your inner gaze is turned toward *Bhrumadhya* between the eyebrows. The awareness rises from the *Muladhara* along the spinal column toward the second *Chakra*, the third, the fourth, the fifth *Chakra*, the *medulla oblongata* and, if possible, up to *Bindu*. During the pause, the radiance of *Kutastha* appears as a blurred light or glow permeating the frontal part of the brain and that of *Sahasrara* as a slight sensation of crepuscular light permeating the upper part of

the head. In this initial phase of *Kriya Pranayama* the energy cannot reach either the region between the eyebrows nor *Sahasrara*; this will happen in higher stages.

b. The breathing we use during *Kriya Pranayama* is not a free breathing but a restricted breathing creating a clearly heard sound in the throat. The sound in the throat while inhaling is like a quiet *schhhh* /s/. The sound is similar to the amplified background noise of a loudspeaker; there is only a slight hiss during exhalation.

Unfortunately you cannot refer to the many examples of *Ujjayi Pranayama* sound to be found on the web. There are plenty of video clips of *yogis* who make an horrible sound during *Ujjayi*. They are using their vocal chords: this is not correct -- it might be correct for some form of *Ujjayi* but not for *Kriya Pranayama*. To be certain that your sound is correct, concentrate only on increasing the friction of the air flowing through your throat. A muffled sound will originate. Increase its frequency. If the environment is perfectly noiseless, a person will be able to hear it within 4-5 meter radius -- by no means outside it. However we do not expect sound perfection now. When *Kechari Mudra* is being done correctly, the exhaling sound will be flute-like: *Sheee Sheee* /ʃi:/. We are going to discuss the meaning and the implications of this sound in the next chapter.

c. The inhaling air is felt as moderately cool whereas the exhaling air is felt as moderately warm; as a consequence the rising energy is felt as moderately cool whereas the descending energy is felt as moderately warm.

d. During inhalation, the abdomen expands and during exhalation the abdomen is drawn in. The breathing is mainly abdominal; during inhalation, the upper part of the lungs is filled two thirds full. It is incorrect raising the rib cage and shoulders.

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

f. During the first breaths of *Kriya Pranayama* avoid chanting *Om* or another *Mantra* in each *Chakra*. Do not disturb the employment of a great mental intensity during the inhalation to obtain the raising of the energy.

Second Part of Kriya Pranayama: Om Japa in each Chakra

While during the first part the awareness was in *medulla oblongata*, now it tries to expand in all of the occipital region up to *Bindu*. We keep a fixed purpose: to succeed in listening to the internal sounds (variations of *Omkar* sound), without closing our ears. During inhalation, *Om* is mentally chanted (or more accurately "mentally placed") in each of the first five *Chakras*. During the pause, *Om* is chanted in the *medulla*, in the point between the eyebrows, and again in the *medulla*. During exhalation, *Om* is mentally chanted in each *Chakra* as you return to *Muladhara*. While coming down, each *Chakra* is gently "touched" from the back. The energy is thus visualized flowing down along the back of the spinal column. What is essential is bringing forth a continuous will of internal listening. Focus all your attention on subtle sounds that come from within, rather than the audible sounds from outside. Awareness of inner sound must happen, sooner or

later. Your listening skills will improve and you will become more sensitive. Each chanting of the syllable *Om* should be accompanied by an unswerving will of tracking down the echo of that vibration you are internally producing. Repeat the procedure at least 24 times.

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

The event of perceiving them is not produced by the intensity of a unique moment of deep concentration, but by the accumulation of effort manifested during the daily sessions of *Kriya* (the effort is the meticulous attention to any internal sound, no matter how feeble it may be). Those who are not able to hear any internal sound, should not conclude something is wrong. Maybe they have done an enormous effort whose fruits will be enjoyed during the next day's practice. A sign one is heading in the right direction is a sense of mild pressure, like a sensation of a liquid peace above or around the head. Often a certain humming accompanies this pressure; it serves no purpose to wonder if this is the real *Om* sound or not. Probably, it is just a signal that the real experience is approaching. Patience and constancy are required. One day, one awakens to the realization of being actually listening to a sound of "running water".

Om sound is similar to the sound of running water or to that of waves breaking over the cliffs. The only task of a *kriyaban* is being absorbed in the comforting sound of *Omkar*. Lahiri Mahasaya describes this sound as "produced by a lot of people who keep on striking the disk of a bell". He adds that it is continuous "as the oil that flows out of a container".

Third Part of Kriya Pranayama

During the first part of *Kriya Pranayama* the awareness is in *medulla oblongata*, during the second part it is focused in the occipital region. Let us learn how to move the awareness in the upper part of the head. Only when you have reached the daily number of 48 *Kriya* breaths, possibly when *Kechari Mudra* is achieved, phase 3 of *Kriya Pranayama* can be approached. Always begin your practice with phase 1 for at least 12 breaths, then skip to the second until you have completed 48 *Kriya* breaths.

Shambhavi Mudra is usually defined as the act of concentrating on *Bhrumadhya*, the space between the eyebrows, bringing the two eyebrows toward the center with a slight wrinkling of the forehead. Let us consider now a higher form of *Shambhavi Mudra*. Although the eyelids are closed or half-closed, the eyes look upward as much as possible, as if looking at the ceiling but without any head movement. The light tension that is perceived in the muscles of the eyeballs gradually disappears and the position can be maintained rather easily. A bystander can observe the white of the cornea under the iris because very often the inferior eyelids relax. (Lahiri Mahasaya in his well known portrait is showing

this *Mudra*.) Through this form of *Shambhavi Mudra*, all one's being is at the top of the head. Go on practicing the instructions given in the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* (chanting of *Om* in the prescribed places) save the center of awareness which is now in the upper part of the head. Go on with it until you have completed the prearranged number of repetitions (60, 72, and so on). This practice is a real jewel, it represents the quintessence of beauty; while experiencing it, time goes by without much notice and what could seem to be an exhausting task -- like reaching 108 or 144 repetitions -- turns out to be as easy as a moment of rest. You will remark how the breath is rather slow. You will enjoy the beautiful feeling of the fresh air that seems to come up through the spine and piercing each *Chakra*, and that of the warm exhaled air permeating each zone of the body from top to bottom. You will perceive this; you will not produce this sensation through your imagination! Your attitude is apparently passive, in actual fact sensitive, and therefore active in an intelligent way. The sound of the breath is smooth and unbroken like the continuous pouring of oil from a bottle. The practice reaches its maximum power and seems to have a life of its own. You will eventually have the impression of crossing a mental state which is like falling asleep then suddenly returning to full awareness realizing you are basking in a spiritual light. It's like a plane emerging from the clouds into a clear transparent sky.

4. Navi Kriya

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

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

5. Maha Mudra

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

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

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

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

As we have seen, the big toe is grasped while one is in the outstretched position. Some schools insist on this detail and explain that by repeating this action on each leg the balance between the two channels *Ida* and *Pingala* is improved. A variation is to squeeze the toenail of the big toe with the thumb of the right hand; the index and middle fingers are behind it and the left hand cups the sole of the foot. When the procedure is repeated with both legs outstretched, both toes are grasped with the interlocked hands. (A variation is that the thumbs

³ The correct pronunciation for 'Om' is like the 'ong' in 'song' but drawn out and with the 'o' pronounced like its alphabet name. It must not be pronounced like the 'om' in Tom e.g. 'ahm'. In this technique, "Om" is a pure vowel sound and the 'm' is silent. The 'm' is silent because the 'o' sound is prolonged. At the end, the mouth is not completely closed - thus creating the nasal sound "ng". When pronouncing Indian *Mantras*, like *Om namo bhagavate ...* or *Om namah Shivaya ...*, the consonant "m" in "Om" is heard.

of each hand press the respective toenails and the index and middle fingers hold the toe from behind).

Maha Mudra incorporates all the three *Bandhas*.⁴ When applied simultaneously with the body bent forward and without using excessive contraction, it helps one to be aware of both ends of *Sushumna* and produces the feeling of an energetic current moving up the spine. In due course, one will be able to perceive the whole *Sushumna Nadi* as a radiant channel.

6. Kriya Pranayama with Short Breath

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

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

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

Go on like that, repeating the procedure between *Muladhara* and the fourth *Chakra*, *Muladhara* and the fifth *Chakra* (then *Bindu*, *medulla*, fifth, fourth, third and second *Chakra*.) One cycle is made of 10 short breaths. Repeat more than one cycle, until you perceive that your breath is very calm -- almost imperceptible.

7. Mental Pranayama

Forget your breath. Move your awareness up and down the spine pausing in each spinal center. Start with the first, move to the second, third and so on. After ascending to the *Bindu*, begin the descent, pausing in *medulla*, fifth *Chakra*, fourth *Chakra* and so on. *Om* may be mentally chanted in each *Chakra*. Sometimes, it is more convenient to simply center your attention for 10-20 seconds on each *Chakra*. The *Chakras* are like knots that can be untied if "touched" with one's concentration; the secret lies in maintaining the awareness in each of them until a sensation of sweetness is felt - as if the *Chakra* were "melting". Besides the melting sensation, one may also perceive the subtle radiation of each *Chakra* in the body. This is a matter of pure awareness; a natural feeling leading to the realization that the *Chakras* are sustaining each part

⁴ We have given the definition of *Bandhas* in chapter 1

of the body's vitality. Sometimes, a light is perceived in the upper part of the head and a *kriyaban* is able to keep his awareness there a long time without feeling any fatigue.

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

Remark

Some do not understand the subtle difference between *Om Japa* and *mental Pranayama*. Practicing *Om Japa* before *Kriya Pranayama* is designed to stimulate each *Chakra*. One pauses only a short time in each one to vibrate the *Mantra*.

During *mental Pranayama*, one is more passive, more willing to perceive than to stimulate; the pauses are much longer. When the awareness stays for at least half minute upon each one of them, the perception of a pleasurable sweet sensation is almost immediate. Some inner sounds as well as hues of light pouring forth from their locations deepens the contact with the *Omkar* dimension.

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

8. Yoni Mudra

At night, before going to bed, begin your practice by calming the whole psychophysical system with a short *Kriya* routine (a few *Kriya Pranayama* breaths as well as a short practice of *Navi Kriya*). After that, raise the energy with a deep inhalation into the central part of the head. If you are able to do *Kechari Mudra*, press the tongue firmly on the highest point inside the nasal pharynx – otherwise leave the tongue in its normal relaxed position. Close every "opening" in the head -- the ears with the thumbs, the eyelids with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers, the lips with the ring and the little fingers -- so all the energy "lights up" the region between the eyebrows. Throughout the practice, both elbows are parallel to the floor and point out to the side. Do not let them drop, prop them up somehow, if necessary. During this special light-witnessing act, the index fingers must not put any pressure on the eyes -- this would be harmful and serve no purpose! If a *kriyaban* is distracted by the pressure of the index fingers on the eyelids, he draws the eyelids down with the index fingers and applies pressure on the corners of the eyes - on the upper cheekbones.

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

Inhaling deeply and holding the breath usually causes discomfort after a few seconds. Here is a short suggestion on how to reduce the discomfort and make it possible to deepen the practice. At the end of a moderate inhalation (not a typical *Kriya Pranayama* one but a shorter one), a *kriyaban* fully plugs all the head openings except the nostrils, exhales a very small quantity of air, then immediately closes the nostrils. The thoracic muscles are to be relaxed as if one intended to begin a new inhalation: this will give the sensation that the breath has become quiet in the area between the throat and the point between the eyebrows. In this situation, concentration on the point between the eyebrows and the repetition of *Om* several times can be enjoyed to its fullest. Traditional instruction advises increasing the number of *Om* repetitions by one per day up to a maximum of 200. Of course, forcing is always to be avoided.

Suggestions about the Routine

The complete routine that we have already implicitly given by numbering the techniques from 1. to 8, does not work for everyone. Many utilize *Maha Mudra* and *Navi Kriya* as preliminary techniques and avoid after *Kriya Pranayama* techniques requiring movement. In this way they find that *Kriya Pranayama with short breath* is not necessary. The routine is very simple and extremely enjoyable:

- Talabya Kriya • Maha Mudra • Navi Kriya • Kriya Pranayama • Mental Pranayama
- + Yoni Mudra at night

Some teachers claim that *Yoni Mudra* should not be practiced during the day. In reality, it can be done anytime! However, the technique is best done in the deep calmness of the night and when one is totally and perfectly relaxed. *Yoni Mudra* at night can be experienced in the following way: after calming one's thoughts and relaxing one's body with some deep breaths, *Maha Mudra* is practiced. Then *Pranayama with short breath* is enjoyed as much as possible, then *Yoni Mudra*. Then one remains concentrated as long as possible in the point between the eyebrows trying to perceive the light in *Kutastha*. *Yoni Mudra* generates such a concentration of energy in the point between the eyebrows that the quality of the ensuing sleep changes for the better. In other words, after crossing the subconscious layers, one's awareness may succeed in reaching the so-called "superconscious" state.

In the beginning, *Kriya Pranayama* is usually practiced 12-24 times, therefore only the first and the second part of it. Occasionally (for example during a longer meditation once in a week) you can add more repetitions; in that occasion it is fine to experience the third part of *Kriya Pranayama* also.

The ideal moments for practicing *Kriya* are before breakfast, before lunch at noon, late afternoon before dinner, and at night at least 2-3 hours after eating.

Don't try to practice only the third part of *Kriya Pranayama*: a routine which is totally based on a strong concentration on the *Sahasrara* is not appropriate for beginning or medium level students. Developing a strong magnet in *Sahasrara* through the third part of *Kriya Pranayama* is the most powerful way of stimulating the *Kundalini* awakening. This implies that a lot of material from the subconscious mind is brought to the surface. (See also the discussion in chapter 9.) You can experience all a range of negative moods, from a marked alienation from reality to a panic attack.

You must never forget to give the highest importance to the soothing phase of *mental Pranayama*. A *Kriya* routine which does not end with *mental Pranayama* is like an orchestra tuning their instruments and then leaving the stage! It is the phase that brings everything together; the ripples in the mind's lake are stilled, the awareness becomes transparent, and the Last Reality is revealed. It is a diffuse calmness; the mind is at rest and silent and gains the energy necessary to be more acutely alert. It is like a spiral which gradually and systematically takes care of all the levels of one's being: it is a healing process. Its value becomes apparent during the difficult moments of life when important decisions have to be taken. One has the impression that nothing can get in the way and that even the greatest difficulties dissolve. Inside the perfect transparency of an inner order, all problems are solved. One is born to *Kriya* through the engaging practice of *mental Pranayama*: it projects us into sheer heaven and its beauty overflows our lives.

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

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIRST KRIYA SET OF TECHNIQUES

After having described the techniques of the *First Kriya*, we shall discuss the theory which lies at the basis of *Kriya Yoga*. The point of view we are going to introduce is the product of years of practice, supported by the study of the works of *Swami Nityananda Giri*, *Swami Satyananda*, *Sri Sailendra Bejoy Dasgupta* and all the works translated in english by *Yoganiketan* and *Arya Mission*. The work of *Swami Satyeswarananda* was also taken into consideration.

Most books about *Kriya* contain tedious rhetoric and innumerable repetitions, all soaked in useless references to abstruse philosophical theories -- there may be one or two interesting lines, whilst the rest can be discarded. Some rare text contain a concise and comprehensive theoretical outlook of *Kriya Yoga*. The ideas contained in them can be precious to inspire the personal practice. An important text is surely: *Kriya Yoga Vijnan*, by *Swami Nityananda Giri*. This work appeared on the Internet for some months and then it was removed. Now it can be acquired from www.sivabooks.com. I have recently discovered that the thread of similar ideas can also be found in *Swami Sadhananda Giri's Kriya Yoga: Its Mystery and Performing Art* (1998). In it we find a few pages which are a real treasure. Three other important works are: *Kriya Quotes from Swami Satyananda* (2004), *Sri Sailendra Bejoy Dasgupta's Light of Kriya Yoga* (2008) and *Kriyagita a spiritual commentary by Lahiri Mahasaya*, published recently by *Arya Mission*.

When *Kriya* initiates carry out for months the instructions shared in the previous chapter, there are some results that begin to appear. Understanding from a theoretical point of view what is happening is useful to avoid hindering this process and to move in the best of the ways toward the coveted goal.

This chapter is devoted to the students who have shown their commitment to the practice of *Kriya*. The right moment to study it, is after practicing *Kriya Yoga* daily for at least 3-6 months, when the desire to learn *Higher Kriyas* begins to appear.

Four Knots to be Unfastened

Kriya Yoga is a four-step spiritual path to prepare one to *Kundalini* awakening.⁵ The steps are defined in the following way:

1. Raising the tongue
2. Piercing of knot of the dorsal center
3. Crossing knot of the navel
4. Crossing of knot of the coccygeal center

There are so many subtle phenomenons happening during these four phases. *Kriya Yoga* cannot be reduced to the sheer destruction of four obstacles. The *Prana* in the whole body has to be appeased, the contact with the *Omkar* reality has to be created and deepened indefinitely. This leads to experience, when the time is ripe, the breathless state. When this state is mastered, *Kundalini* has to be patiently raise to its primary seat at the top of the brain. It is good we keep this in mind, now that we are going to describe what it means to unfasten the four knots.

1. Tongue Knot (*Jihvah -- or Jihva -- Granthi*)

The tongue knot consists in the physiological fact that our tongue is normally unable to touch the uvula and, consequently, enter the nasal pharynx. Because of this, we are not kept connected with the reservoir of energy in the *Sahasrara* region. When through *Kechari Mudra* we succeed in tapping this inexhaustible inner source, we can reap the best from our practice of *Kriya*. Many subtle transformations are going to happen in our psycho physical system: a quietening down of all useless, unwanted thoughts, intruding main mental process and a rekindling of the vital force in our body. A subtle substance (*amrit*) begins to trickle down through the tongue into body and spine and is clearly perceived.

It should be clarified that crossing the knot of the tongue is also partially accomplished when the tongue tip is simply turned back and touches the middle of the upper palate at the point where the hard palate becomes soft; it is also fostered by *Talabya Kriya* itself, which should not be considered a simple preparation for *Kechari Mudra*.

⁵ The main feature of *Kriya Yoga* is that its steps follow the "Pre-Reverse Order". Why "Pre-Reverse"? From the moment of our conception, *Kundalini* began a slow journey of descent starting from the cells forming our brain and medulla into the cells of our new spine. This is the direct path. *Kundalini* awakening follows a "Reverse order" -- from Muladhara to the brain. The four-step *Kriya* path is a "Downward journey" because the knots are opened from top to bottom (tongue, heart, navel, coccyx). Thus it follows a "Pre-Reverse Order". (This explanation is meant only to clarify the term "Pre-Reverse Order" that you can find in the books. What is important to understand, is that we work in four different places, abiding by an order which is contrary to the one followed by *Kundalini* during its awakening.)

2. Heart Knot (*Hridaya Granthi*)

After achieving *Kechari Mudra*, the downward journey of static *Prana* from *Sahasrara* toward *Muladhara*, opening each knot and dissolving all obstacles, has begun. The next obstacle to be crossed is *Hridaya Granthi* (the heart's knot): this is accomplished by the second part of *Kriya Pranayama* and by the first three *Omkar Kriyas*.

In the *First Omkar Kriya*, the twelve syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra* ("*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*") are mentally placed in each *Chakra*. From this moment onwards, a *kriyaban* endeavors to constantly remain immersed in the holy *Omkar* sound.

In the *Second Omkar Kriya*, the heart knot is **struck** by applying a particular kind of pressure or blow (*Thokar*) at the *Anahata Chakra*'s location. The mind becomes dead and Conscious Absorption manifests.

In the *Third Omkar Kriya*, the heart knot is **pierced** by repeating the *Thokar* procedure over and over. The state of Conscious Absorption yields a higher experience: a *kriyaban* perceives and becomes one with the element "air" (the fourth of five *Tattwas*) which has its seat in the fourth *Chakra*. The *Tattwas* (Sanskrit) are the five subtle elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether (space). It has been explained that everything that exists in the universe is made of a combination of these five forms of energy. To a *kriyaban* the theory of the *Tattwas* is not a theme of useless speculation. They are conceived as a concrete series of states of consciousness, whose intimate essence is experienced in the last part of the devotee's journey toward the Absolute Consciousness.

Tuning with the air *Tattwa*, allows a person enter a sublime state: the awareness of Divine Sound and Light is intensified greatly. The breathless state is achieved because breathing is controlled by the cardiac plexus.

3. Navel Knot (*Nabhi Granthi*)

Crossing the navel knot happens through the action of *Navi Kriya*. *Prana* and *Apana currents* are united in the navel region, after they are activated and balanced through *Kriya Pranayama* (and through the first three *Omkar Kriyas*.) *Samana* current, whose role is guiding all the *Prana* present in the body into the *Sushumna* channel, is intensified.

In order to understand what happens through the action of *Navi Kriya*, it is necessary to refer to the *Dantian* center. Such center, introduced by the Taoist Internal Alchemy it is not just a theoretical hypothesis but a tangible reality. It is located about two and one-half inches below the belly button and about one and one-half inches inside: it can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter.

Now, crossing the navel knot means reaching with the awareness the *Dantian* center. It is explained that to settle into this zone, means to be born to the spiritual life. *Dantian* is the place where the sexual, love, and spiritual energies are gathered and blended. It contains our unique, individual vibration, the "note" which embodies our will to live in the physical body. In *Kriya Yoga* books you don't find expression like: "Cultivation of the spiritual embryo" or of

the "elixir of immortality"; "Coming back to the center"; "The birth of the golden flower"; "The creation of the dazzling gem". They call this event the "Transcendental state of *Kriya*." They explain that "the process of *Samadhi* begins in the navel center."

Very interesting is the explanation that the vibration which is created in the *Dantian* ascends spontaneously into the heart region and then into the point between the eyebrows. They claim we have three *Dantian* -- in the abdomen (lower *Dantian*), in the heart region (middle *Dantian*) and in the region between the eyebrows (upper *Dantian*).

This matches perfectly with the description of the three main stages of *Savikalpa Samadhi*: merging with *Omkar* and Tranquility (in the navel); merging with *Bhakti* (in the heart); merging with spiritual Light (in *Kutastha*.)

4. Muladhara knot (*Muladhara Granthi*)

When *Prana* in our mental and physical body is perfectly calmed, we face the task of unfastening the last knot. Through the *Third Omkar Kriya*, the space of the heart was enlightened; now we try to obtain a similar experience in the location of the different *Chakras*. Through the *Fourth Omkar Kriya*, the different colors of the *Tattwas* will be perceived. It has been explained that after twelve *Pranayama* of the *Fourth Kriya*, the screen of illusion is broken and the awareness can enter *Sushumna* and move towards *Kutastha*. This will happen through the *Fifth Omkar Kriya* technique. In the beginning only a faint thread of energy is able to enter *Sushumna* but by repeating this procedure for a great number of times, the three knots Tongue, Heart and *Muladhara* are completely unfastened -- *Kundalini* is then free to rise in all its power.

Through the *Sixth Omkar Kriya*, perpetual stay of *Kundalini* in the *Ajna Chakra* is achieved. This technique implies the experience of a peculiar sensation of movement within the perfect stillness of each *Chakra*. This experience is the surest way toward the annihilation of the Ego.

At last, through the *Seventh Omkar Kriya* (also called *Sahasrara Kriya* or the particular *Parabhasta* which happens after the *Parabhasta* of *Kriya*) you can achieve the final freedom (*Moksha*).

Global Scheme

Purpose of each phase	Practices	Higher Kriyas
PHASE 1 Crossing the tongue knot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kechari Mudra (either simplified or proper form). Talabya Kriya 	_____
PHASE 2 1.Piercing the heart knot utilizing the Mantra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kriya Pranayama Part 1&2 	First Omkar Kriya
2.Piercing the heart knot utilizing the Thokar procedure	_____	Second and Third Omkar Kriya
PHASE 3 Crossing the navel knot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Navi Kriya 	_____
PHASE 4 1.Crossing the Muladhara knot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maha Mudra and Yoni Mudra 	Fourth Omkar Kriya (Gayatri Kriya)
2.Cooperating with the rising Kundalini and going ahead with the work of acting upon the knots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pranayama with short breath with its improvements 	Fifth Omkar Kriya in three parts (Tribhangamurari Macro)
3.Making Kundalini stable at Kutastha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Yoni Mudra 	Sixth Omkar Kriya in two parts (Tribhangamurari Micro)
Last work in Sahasrara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kriya Pranayama Part 3 ■ Parabhastha 	Seventh Omkar Kriya

This chapter develops by dealing with three themes:

1. Giving some variations of the basic techniques of *First Kriya*. Some procedures are added which are not part of *Kriya* tradition. They are recommended by some teachers to complete the action of the basic techniques. All these instructions are interesting but by no means necessary.
2. Giving more details on the practice of *Kechari Mudra*
3. Discussing a criterion to organize one's routine of *Kriya Yoga*

1. VARIATIONS OF THE BASIC TECHNIQUES

While applying the following instructions, one might think of making one's routine intricate and unnatural. If one has a self learning instinct, there will be no problem in making the routine flow natural. I believe that one should not add simultaneously different technical details: it is important to experience each one separately and utilize it for at least one week before adding the next one. Each detail intensifies the power of one specific phase of *Kriya*, engraves it in one's awareness. Therefore it should be gradually integrated in one's personality.

Variations of Om Japa (in the Chakras)

Variation 1. Breathing in the Chakras

Focus your awareness at the *Muladhara Chakra* location. Breathe freely and imagine that the air is entering and exiting the body at that point. Feel yourself inhaling and exhaling directly into *Muladhara*. Move up to the second and then to all the other *Chakras*, breathing in and breathing out once in each *Chakra*. At first it will not be a single point of which you become aware, but more like an area. For example, you may feel sensations in a large part of your spine instead of just at the *Anahata Chakra*. These sensations will become more localized. After reaching *Bindu*, go down, back to *Muladhara*. Repeat the circuit 6-12 times. You might find that you are automatically making the sounds in the throat like in *Kriya Pranayama*. This will help your internalization.

Variation 2. Circulation of the light

Forget your breath: by lifting your eyebrows, become sensitive to inner light in the point between the eyebrows. Then guide intuitively the light into the "frontal component" of each *Chakra*. This concept - rarely quoted in *Kriya* literature - has not been introduced so far. "Frontal" means on the anterior part of the body. Thus, after *Kutastha*, the awareness comes down through the tongue into the upper front part of the throat, which is linked to the fifth *Chakra*. The perception of the inner light happens at that spot for few seconds. The awareness comes down in the central region of the sternum ... inner light is perceived there ... then in the navel ... then in the pubic region and finally in the perineum. Then the concentration moves up along the back of the spinal column, and the same light perception happens in the second *Chakra*; then in the third ... and so on up to the *medulla*, the occipital region, the *Fontanelle*, ending in *Kutastha* again, where you pause longer.

Variations of Kriya Pranayama

In comparison to the already explained *Kriya Pranayama* in three parts (chapter 6), the following variations can be defined "simplifications"; yet they might be inspiring and useful. They are to be practiced with mouth closed and, possibly, with the tongue in *Kechari Mudra*. The throat sounds are those we have already explained (chapter 6).

Variation 1. Circuit inside and on the back of Sushumna

Inhale, visualizing the breath coming up through *Sushumna*, feeling its coolness touching each *Chakra* from *Muladhara* to *Vishuddha*, then *medulla* until it reaches the point between the eyebrows. *Om* mentally is chanted in each one of these points. After a short pause with the awareness totally focused in the point between the eyebrows, exhalation begins. During the first part of the exhalation, the current comes up over the forehead, then bends and moves backwards over the brain, under the cranial bones, under fontanelle, piercing *Bindu*, then *medulla*. The exhalation is completed by visualizing the breath coming down through the back of the spinal column. Feel the warmth of the breath touching each *Chakra* at the back, from *Vishuddha* to *Muladhara*. *Om* is mentally chanted in *Bindu*, *medulla*, *Vishuddha*, *Muladhara*.

Variation 2. Pranayama with Aswini Mudra

Aswini Mudra means contracting repeatedly the muscles at the base of the spine with the rhythm of about two contractions per second. ⁶ A wise procedure is to practice *Aswini Mudra* intensively and continuously during *Kriya Pranayama*. During inhalation and exhalation of the first 12 *Kriya* breaths, *Aswini Mudra* should be strong; subsequently, it should decrease in intensity and become like a slight internal contraction of the inferior part of the spine -- this is just our sensation, because it is clear that the spine cannot be contracted.

If this procedure appears annoying and disturbing, it is essential to be unshakeable and go ahead with it. At a certain point, by going on impassively, one has the certainty that something positive is happening. One perceives a pleasurable shiver in the spine. The continuous practice of *Aswini Mudra* during *Kriya Pranayama* creates the condition for *Kundalini* awakening. It gently pushes the *Apana* current upward to the navel region where it meets *Prana*. *Kundalini* awakens when there is immobility of the body and *Prana* and *Apana* unite. It is only the union of these two currents that can open the door of *Sushumna*. The day after the practice of *Kriya Pranayama* with *Aswini Mudra* a diffuse joy during all the day is perceived, even if one can devote only five minutes to the practice of *Kriya*.

Variation 3. Pranayama with Mula Bandha

Mula Bandha means contracting the perineal muscles, while a mental pressure is exerted on the lower part of the spine (we have only one long contraction and not a series of contraction and release like in *Aswini Mudra*.) We practice *Mula Bandha* during the pause of the breath after inhalation. The purpose is to create the perception of *Kutastha*. This is a very delicate procedure that should be learned gradually.

I. During the last instants of inhalation, before doing *Mula Bandha*, we visualize the current reaching *Bindu*, then the current "rotates" left, comes down

⁶ While learning the technique, a *yogi* contracts the buttock muscles, perineum or even the entire pelvic region also; with time, the contraction involves only the sphincter muscles.

a little bit and enters the *medulla*.

II. It is in this moment that *Mula Bandha* is practiced intensely, the breath is held and the eyebrows are raised. You will feel that the energy is pushed from *medulla* into *Kutastha*. Simultaneously internal light is perceived spreading from *Kutastha* to the upper part of the brain.

Then the exhalation begins, all the tension is released and the energy goes down to *Muladhara*. Breath after breath, the power created in *Kutastha* will kindle the great golden-white light of the spiritual eye. *Kechari Mudra*, if achieved, cooperates with this process: during the *Mula Bandha* thrust, the tongue is pushed upward and forward.

Variation 4. So Ham Kriya

Accompany *Kriya Pranayama* inhalation with a total awareness of the sound "So". Accompany the exhalation with a total awareness of the sound "Ham". Try to actually hear those sounds! Feel how they vibrate in your spine. Very soon you will fall into a deeply internalized state. You will enjoy a never before experienced relaxation. This will inevitably lead you to the *Om* perception.

Variation 5. Rate 2:3

An important school considers the 2:3 ratio (inhalation:exhalation) much more natural of the already discussed 1:1. In this more liberal approach to the length of breath in *Kriya Pranayama*, it is explained that breath retention should be at least 4 seconds, but the optimum is equal the length of inhalation. Just to make an example: 12 seconds inhalation; 4 seconds pause; 18 seconds exhalation is correct, but the ideal timing to reach is: 12-12-18.

Variation 6. Counting the Kriya Breaths on the Chakras

The following cannot be called a real variation: it is only a particular way of counting the *Kriya* breaths, without using mala or movement of fingers. Maybe it seems a trifle, but if you adopt it, you will realize how deeply it calms your mind. Practice any of the afore described *Kriya Pranayama* variation. During the first breath, focus on all the spine but on *Muladhara Chakra* in particular -- as if it were the most important point of the spine. During the second breath, consider the *Swadhisthana Chakra* as the most important point of the spine... and so on (third, fourth, fifth, medulla, again medulla, fifth, fourth ... *Muladhara*). It is as if with each further breath you evoke the calmness, the sweetness of a different *Chakra*. After twelve breaths you will realize that something has changed, that you are more introverted.

Variations of Navi Kriya

The following two variations of *Navi Kriya* are very mild and comfortable.

Variation 1. Breathing through the Silver Chord

Consider the basic explanation in chapter 6. All the details up to the bending of the head forward remain unchanged. In this variation the *Om Mantra* is mentally chanted in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel (*Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *Om* in the navel, *Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *Om* in the navel... and so on). Optional (but very useful if done with a relaxed attitude) is to synchronize the breath with the *Om* chanting.

Let us dwell on this delicate point. Visualize a tiny silver channel that connects (outside your body) the point between the eyebrows with the navel. When it comes natural to have a very short inhalation, inhale only what is necessary, visualize the movement of air rising, through the visualized channel, from navel to the point between the eyebrows, pause an instant there just chant *Om* mentally. When it comes natural to exhale, exhale, visualize the movement of air going down, through the visualized channel, into the navel, pause and chant *Om* mentally in the navel. By repeating this, you will markedly feel that your breath begins to subside and disappear. When this happens, go on mentally chanting the *Om Mantra* in alternation between the point between the eyebrows and the navel and moving the focus of your awareness between these two points, without ceasing being aware of the "silver channel". Go on. When *Om* is chanted about 75 times, bend your head backwards and repeat a similar procedure by chanting *Om* in alternation between the *Bindu* and the third *Chakra*. Visualize another tiny silver channel that connects (outside your body) the *Bindu* and the third *Chakra*. Let your breath -- if there is still a trace of breath -- flow freely in that channel. When *Om* is chanted about 25 times, resume the chin's normal position and chant mentally *Om* in the point between the eyebrows, *medulla*, *Chakras* 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. This is one *Navi Kriya*. The optimum is to have 4 cycles of *Navi Kriya*. It is natural and desirable that from the second repetition onwards, the breath has no role at all.

Variation 2. Descent through Four Directions

The following variation of *Navi Kriya* is the one many *kriyabans* like the best. Let us remind that the *Dantian* is located about two and one-half inches below the belly button and about one and one-half inches inside. It can be visualized as a ball about one and one-half inches in diameter.

As usual, a *kriyaban's* awareness goes slowly up along the spinal column placing the syllable *Om* (ooong) in the six *Chakras*. Then the chin is brought down toward the throat cavity. A short inhalation is followed by a very long exhalation, during which, the energy is felt descending, along a path *outside* the body, from the frontal part of the brain to the navel, reaching through it the

abdominal region -- the *Dantian*, precisely. During this exhalation, *Om* is chanted mentally, rapidly, 10-15 times, accompanying the descent of energy throughout its path, as if applying some "soft pushes". The head resumes its normal position. This is followed by a short inhalation (two seconds maximum, without concentrating on the *Chakras*) which raises the energy into the head again. The head bends toward the *left* shoulder, without turning the face. A long exhalation (with the same chanting of *Om, Om, Om...*) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the brain's left side and moves along a path *outside* the body at its left side (forget that there is shoulder or arm) down to the waist where it bends and moves toward the inside of the abdominal region (*Dantian*). The head moves back into its normal position; again a short inhalation follows (two seconds maximum, without concentrating on the *Chakras*) to raise the energy into the head. The head now bends backwards. A long expiration (with the same chanting of *Om, Om, Om...*) accompanies the downward movement of energy which starts from the occipital region and moves (outside the body) down to the waist where it bends, passes through the third *Manipura Chakra* and moves toward the inside of the abdominal region (*Dantian*). The procedure is repeated likewise on the *right* side, then on the *forward*, to the *left*, and so on.

The basic session of this particular form of *Navi Kriya* consists of 36 descents (9 full rotations of the head). It ends with mental chanting of *Om* in each *Chakra* from *Ajna Chakra* to *Muladhara*. (One session typically lasts 8-10 minutes and replaces the 4 repetitions of the commonly established form of *Navi Kriya*.) As the practitioner proceeds with the rotations, the movements of the head become less marked; this is quite normal. One can have encouraging results also by gradually reaching immobility and completing the prescribed number by a sheer mental process.

Important Remark

The following procedures are not part of the traditional set of techniques of Kriya Yoga. They are currently taught by some Kriya Acharyas because they have offered a great help in dealing with some difficult cases. Their power of removing almost any psychological hindrance is noteworthy and unparalleled. But they require great care because they affect the person's behavior during the daily life. You could excessively react to trivial impediments and to the irrational behavior of people. In short, some sharp personality traits of yours may surface. Obviously, they do not appear out of nothing -- they express what you had held within you for a long time. The positive aspect of these procedures is that they have the power to rekindle the "inner fire" of the spiritual path.

Variation 3. Inverted breath (Nabhi Kundalini)

The breath follows a "reversed" path -- reversed in respect to what is experienced in *Kriya Pranayama* proper. *Prana* present in the inhaled air is drawn down at the level of *Manipura*. *Apana* is pushed upwards with the

exhaled air. Inhalation happens in three portions: through the first portion, draw breath and energy from the point between the eyebrows into *Vishuddhi*, make a little pause to feel the energy gathering there; through the second portion, draw breath and energy from *Vishuddha* into *Anahata*, make a little pause to feel the energy gathering there; through the third portion, draw breath and energy from *Anahata* into *Manipura*.

While holding the breath, intensify the concentration on the *Manipura* through the three *Bandhas* (*Mula Bandha*, *Uddiyana Bandha* and *Jalandhara Bandha*). Mentally chant *Om* 12 times in *Manipura* exerting a form of mental pressure upon that center. Then release the *Bandhas* and exhale in three portions: through the first portion feel the warm energy from the *Manipura*, rising through the spine into *Anahata*; through the second portion feel the warm energy rising into *Vishuddha*; through the third portion guide the energy into the point between the eyebrows. Instruction is traditionally given to repeat this practice 12 times, adding 12 breaths every 6 months, until one reaches 108 repetitions.

There is a more traditional version of *Nabhi Kundalini*. Place your attention at the *Manipura Chakra*. Visualize in its center a flaming, inverted triangle. Inhale gradually through the nostrils, and feel that the breath actually enters *Manipura*, heating it intensely, like a blaze afire. Holding your breath, perform *Mula Bandha*, *Uddiyana Bandha*, *Jalandhara Bandha* -- while keeping your attention on the blazing hot *Manipura*. Visualize a series of drops of white light falling into it, while mentally chanting *Om* with each drop. Release all the *Bandhas*, and release the breath. Exhale gently and slowly, feeling the warm energy rise along the spine, heating the *Anahata Chakra*, then the *Vishuddha Chakra*, the *Ajna Chakra*, and *Sahasrara Chakra*. Chant *Om* as it passes through each *Chakra*. Pause some instants at the *Sahasrara Chakra*.

Variation 4. Vase breathing

The best time to practice *Vase Breathing* is when breath flows evenly through both nostrils -- therefore the utility of *Nadi Sodhana* and *Maha Mudra*. Sit quietly, breath a few breaths, until you can tangibly feel yourself breathing energy. Visualize your body as being completely hollow inside. In the center of your body, just in front of the spine is the central channel, a transparent hollow tube about the size of a small coin. It runs straight from the base of your spine to the crown of your head. There are two further channels departing from the right and left nostrils respectively, travel upwards to the top of the head and then curve to run downwards on either side of the central channel. They join the central channel at the *Dantian's* level.

Take a full breath through both nostrils. Air and *Prana* travel from the nostrils down through the right and left channels reaching the *Dantian* and thus the central channel. ⁷ Simultaneously, practice *Mula Bandha* raising energy to the

⁷ Don't substitute the *Dantian* center with *Manipura*! The tendency to remove from the *Kriya* praxis anything which may seem non yogic is narrow-minded and needlessly confining. Just to give an example, there are some teachers who have altered *Navi Kriya* - either eliminating it entirely or erasing the concentration on the navel, thus reducing the technique to a pure concentration on the *Manipura*. Many devotees will

Dantian. As you finish your inhalation, swallow and push down gently with your diaphragm in order to firmly compress the energy brought down from above. The air energy is completely locked in, compressed from above and below. It is like holding an air ball between two hands -- here you use your mental concentration and a light muscular pressure to bring about this feeling of compression. Feel energy and warmth increase in the *Dantian*. Hold your breath for as long as it is comfortable. Relax your lightly tensed muscles and exhale gently and completely. The warmth is brimming over into the surrounding region. Visualize that air and *Prana* rise up through the central channel like the mercury in a thermometer and dissolve in the crown. Once your first exhalation is complete, again tighten the lower muscles, inhale a second time, swallow and push down with the diaphragm, thus again compressing the air energy at the area below the navel. Hold your breath and concentrate on this area, feeling the energy building there. Then, again, when it becomes uncomfortable to hold the breath any longer, exhale, releasing the air up the central channel once again.

Those who want to intensify this practice, visualize in *Dantian* a growing flame that gets hotter as the practice progresses. They also prolong the *Kumbhaka* period gradually.

Let us see how this technique evolves when it is practice a great number of times (about fifty). After about ten breaths, feel that *Anahata Chakra* is reached by the internal flame. Each ten cycles of *Vase Breathing* you reach a higher stage: after another ten breaths, feel that *Vishuddha Chakra* is reached by the internal flame. After another ten breaths, feel that *Ajna Chakra* is reached by the internal flame. When this happens, the nectar (*Amrita*) is perceived. It travel downwards via the path of the tongue (*Kechari Mudra*), it heals the whole body and originates a blissful state. From that moment onwards visualize the exhalation *Prana* directed to fill each part of your body up to a cellular level. The physical breath seems to dissolve.

If this practice is done without preparation, just to experiment something, one achieves only a nervous mood -- as if something had not gone to right way. The generated power, in fact, doesn't succeed in being absorbed. If the person abides by a wise gradualness, some important results will appear. The results are a great quiet in the breath followed by an extraordinary mental clarity and by a sense of bliss. Later this bliss increases and short states of *Samadhi* appear, especially if the *yogi* has the wisdom of laying down after the practice.

not shift their awareness a single centimeter from the spinal column fearing their practice will become less "spiritual!" This is obviously a false argument: *Kriya Yoga* happens first outside the spine in order to enter the spine.

Variations of Maha Mudra

Two precious variations of *Maha Mudra* will be discussed first. They are very useful to produce the experience of the internal sounds.

Variation 1. Forward bendings

Before the practice of *Maha Mudra* proper, sit in the half-lotus position or on the heels. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in *Kriya Pranayama*) visualize the first *Chakra* rising into *Ajna Chakra* location, in the center of the head; hold the breath, bend the body forward. The head is placed in the region between the knees (see figure 3). Touch the pavement with the forehead. The hands may be used if you want; the breath is retained during the entire bending sequence. The head comes near the right knee, the face is turned toward the left knee so that it is possible to perceive a pressure on the right side of the head; a sensation of space is perceived inside the left side of the brain. Then repeat the same exercise with the other side of the body, reversing the perceptions. Then the head is placed in the region between the knees again, the face turned downward. A pressure is felt on the forehead. A sensation of space is perceived inside the occipital region. After completing the three movements, resume the starting position with the head and spine erect. The energy is brought down from *Ajna Chakra* to *Muladhara* through one long exhalation.

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



Figure 3. Forward bending starting from sitting on the heels or starting from the half-lotus pose

What we have explained is only the external hull of the practice. By repeating this "*Chakra awakening procedure*" for various days, when you focus on a *Chakra*, you will perceive a feeling of movement, a swinging sensation, in it -- this is a very important experience. Furthermore, when the head is touching the pavement, it will be easy to feel the same swinging sensation both in the part of your head that is down and in the part that is up. If this doesn't work, remain more seconds with your head on the pavement, breathing normally. In this eventuality, make a deep inhalation when you come up, in order to complete each

bending with the deep exhalation required to bring the energy down.

Variation 2. Improving traditional Maha Mudra with the subtle perceptions of the previous exercise

Now practice *Maha Mudra*, but when the right leg is extended, the right hand grabs the toes of the right foot while the left hand grabs the inner side of the right foot (the arch of the foot); the face is turned left while the breath is retained. A sensation like an inner pressure is felt on the right side of the head. It contrasts with the free space sensation in the left side of the brain. Practicing the opposite position, the sensations are reversed. When both legs are extended, the pressure must be felt on the front part of the head. As usual, this exercise is repeated three times. While stretching forward holding your breath in the position envisaged for *Maha Mudra*, chant *Om* coming up in each *Chakra*, trying to perceive the oscillation in each one. (The technique can be practiced more slowly and without holding the breath.)

Procedures, not part of traditional Kriya Yoga, completing the action of Navi Kriya and Maha Mudra

Read what we have written before introducing the variations 3 and 4 of *Navi Kriya*. The same warning is to be repeated now.

1. Nauli, Kapalabhati, Bhastrika

Traditional practice of *Nauli* (only few persons are able to do it) fosters the *Kundalini* awakening. Practice by standing with your feet spread a bit more than shoulder width apart with knees a bit bent, and leaning forward enough to rest hands on your knees. Expel all the air from your lungs, and then go up and down with the diaphragm. Breathe normally. Then with air out, contract abdominal muscles by pressing down on our knees through both your arms. You will notice your abdominal muscles bulging out vertically. In time one learns how to "twirl" those muscles: the key to twirling is separating the flexing of left abdominal muscle from the flexing of right ones, and then coordinating the two flexings into a twirling motion. This happens by pressing differently on knees -- weeks are required. (One finds instruction in *Hatha Yoga* manuals.) Do at least twenty rotations. Just pause, take a deep breath or two, exhale again, and continue. It has been explained that the effect is that *Kundalini* will begin to awaken. As you become familiar with *Nauli*, you will also be able to do it less formally in situations that do not involve the standing position. In time you will be able to do it without visible motion. Generally speaking, *Mudras* and *Bandhas* begin as pronounced and visible, and then naturally refine over time acting deep upon our nervous system.

Kapalabhati Pranayama is used here in a targeted way to work on the navel. Perform inhalation and exhalation rapidly; exhalation should be done by contracting the abdominal muscles forcibly and quickly, resulting in a backward push. Exhalation and inhalation alternate with equal lengths and occur about two times per second. The navel acts as a pump and it's almost like using the abdomen as bellows. Exhalation is active, inhalation passive. A sudden

contraction of the abdominal muscles raises the diaphragm and a volume of air is expelled from the lungs. The sound slightly resembles blowing one's empty nose. As soon as the air is forced out, the abdominal muscles relax, this allows the same volume of air to rush in; inhalation comes automatically. During each expulsion, *Prana* is sent to the navel and *Om* is mentally chanted in the navel. After 15-20 of these short exhalations, there is a pause and the breath resumes its normal rhythm. Then another 15-20 of these short breaths are repeated for about 100 mental chants of *Om*.

Bhastrika Pranayama is one of the most important *Pranayamas* of classic *Yoga*. It consists in forced rapid deep breathing, done with the diaphragm only. It is used here in a targeted way to raise the energy activated with the previous practices in the heart region. You breath through the nose, about one complete breath per second, being aware of what is happening in the spine. You can begin with six repetitions. By focusing behind the heart *Chakra*, you feel the energy oscillating approximately 3 centimeters below and above it. It is like cleaning vigorously the area behind this *Chakra*. You will feel warm in the region of the fourth *Chakra*. Then inhale deeply, hold your breath and feel the warm sensation increasing. Exhale intensifying that sensation. In time, you can increase the length and the repetitions of this technique.

2. *Tadan Kriya. (Inviting Kundalini to Enter Sushumna)*

Inhale deeply feeling that the breath fills from top down the lungs while the *Prana* (contrarily to what happens in *Kriya Pranayama*) goes down toward *Muladhara*. At the end of inhalation, your awareness is focused on *Muladhara*. Lift the body just a few millimeters with the help of the hands and then let the buttocks touch the floor with a mild jolt. Exhale freely perceiving an ecstatic feeling -- this happens when the jolt is experienced not as a physical movement but as an intense mental stimulus upon *Muladhara*.

3. *Inverted breath touching Muladhara (different from inverted breath of Nabhi Kundalini)*

Inhale like in the previous exercise. During inhalation the breath goes down toward *Muladhara*. Then, during exhalation, breath and *Prana* roll upward through the spine to the crown of the head. Listen to the sound of your breath. Hear "Hahm" on the intake and "Sah" on the exhale.

After 6 breaths, exhalation is fragmented. After each "Hahm" just pause a moment, then release the breath through the nose in short bursts, hearing "sah, sah, sah, sah," as many times as it takes before your lungs empty.

Breath about 6 times in this way, then release *Kechari Mudra* and exhale through the lips, increasing the fragmentation: s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s ... (The different "s" are perfectly audible). The lips touch in the central part and the air comes out through the corners of your mouth, inducing a warm feeling in the lips. Transfer it mentally at the base of the spine, perceiving a heat that spontaneously comes up through the spine. Channel this warm sensation in the heart *Chakra*. After about 12 breaths, the technique is completed.

Variations of Pranayama with short breath

Variation 1.

Reconsider the technique of *Pranayama with short breath*. This wonderful technique is important for two reasons: it fosters the listening to the internal sounds and *Om* sound and helps achieving the breathless state. This procedure can be "completed" by making *Ajna Chakra* the pivot of the situation.

After some cycles of the basic technique, focus your attention on *Ajna Chakra* at the center of your head. When it becomes natural to inhale, inhale only what is necessary, as quickly as per instinct (about one second), from *Muladhara* to *Ajna Chakra*. When it feels natural to exhale, exhale from *Ajna Chakra* to the second *Chakra*. Then inhale from the second *Chakra* to *Ajna Chakra*. Exhale to the third *Chakra*. Go ahead in this way ... (Third -- Ajna -- fourth; Fourth -- Ajna -- fifth; Fifth -- Ajna -- fourth; Fourth -- Ajna -- third; Third -- Ajna -- second; Second -- Ajna -- first. Go ahead repeating this cycle of 9 short breaths.

After some cycles of this beautiful procedure, it will come natural to experience a short pause in each *Chakra*. (Inhalation from *Muladhara* to *Ajna Chakra*, pause in *Ajna Chakra*; exhalation from *Ajna Chakra* to the second *Chakra*, pause in the second *Chakra* and so on.) During these pauses, you can mentally chant *Om* one, two or three times, visualizing you are touching the *Chakra* where you are enjoying this pause. Strive to perceive the astral sounds in the internal part of the right ear. We have already explained how you can listen to different kinds of sounds during the second phase of *Kriya Pranayama*. The secret is an unsubduable will to listen. The same happens here.

Variation 2. Advanced, with strong effects on the psyche

Consider the dynamic of the technique: the inhaling current moves upward, the exhaling current moves downward. Perceive these two currents in the right and in the left lobe of the brain, respectively. This perception, if it is repeated for a long time, will help you to perceive the astral sounds in the internal part of each ear. At a certain point these two currents will create a circular force field. Perceive inside *Ajna Chakra* a counterclockwise movement (when looked from behind.)

Each breath should give momentum to this circular movement. When the breath disappears, the movement goes ahead through the sheer power of concentration. The white spiritual light appears in the central part of your head. Go ahead, relentlessly absorbed in it. This will lead you to the *Samadhi* state.

Be very careful! The effects are deep and therefore difficult to metabolize. If you feel that during the day you have a temper, stop your practice for a couple of days.

2. KECHARI MUDRA

Before considering some important variations and developments of the fundamental techniques of *First Kriya*, we shall discuss in detail how to achieve *Kechari Mudra*.

After several months of regular practice of *Talabya Kriya*, a *kriyaban* may decide it is time to attempt *Kechari Mudra*. The test is whether the tip of the tongue can touch the uvula. If so, then for a few minutes a day, use the fingers to push the base of the tongue inward until the tip goes beyond the uvula and touches the hard palate above it. One day, on removing the fingers, the tip of the tongue will remain "trapped" in that position. This is possible because the soft palate (the part from which the uvula hangs) is soft and movable and when the tip of the tongue is able to enter a centimeter or so into the nasal pharynx, it creates a hook. This prevents the tongue from slipping out and returning to its usual flat position. This is the turning point.⁸

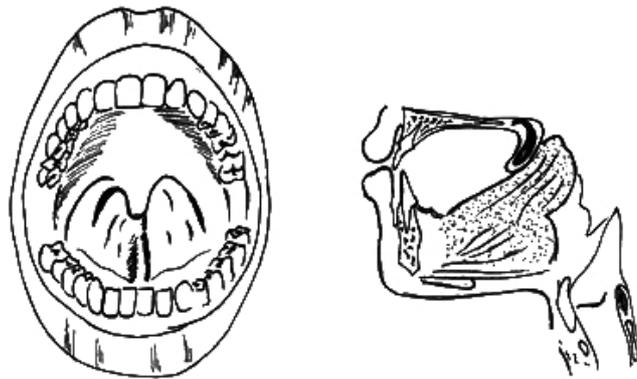


Figure 4. Kechari Mudra

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

⁸ *Talabya Kriya* and *Kechari Mudra* are completely different! (Compare figure 3 with figure 2 in chapter 6). By opening the mouth in front of a mirror, during the first part of *Talabya Kriya*, notice the hollow parts at the sides of the *Fraenulum*, which will appear as isolated from the body of the tongue. Whereas during *Kechari Mudra* you see only the root of the tongue: it is the uvula that comes forward.

There are two main stages of *Kechari Mudra*. After several months of tireless practice of the just described stage 1, one achieves stage 2 where the tongue reaches the junction of the nasal passage inside the hole in the palate. The soft tissue above the holes in the nose is alluded to in *Kriya* literature as the "uvula above the uvula". The tip of the tongue reaches this small area and will remain "stuck" there comfortably. It is stated in *Kriya* literature that the tongue can also be pushed further up so that its tip touches a higher center in the upper part of the pharynx. As any good anatomy book will reveal, the tongue that fills up the nasal pharynx cannot extend any further. Lahiri Mahasaya's sentence can be understood symbolically and it refers to the rising of the energy. Actually, by extending the tongue to its limit, it is possible to experience a great attraction toward the region between the eyebrows along with the sensation of having reached, with the tip of the tongue, a higher position. The same literature also affirms that through *Kechari* one is able to perceive "Amrita", "Nectar", the elixir of life which is a sweet tasting fluid trickling down from the brain onto the tongue and into the body. As for the importance of sipping the nectar, I cannot comment since I haven't had the experience nor, I must admit, have I even tried to have it. Even if the following information leaves me perplexed, I share it for the sake of accuracy and completeness. Literature on *Kriya Yoga* explains that in order to have this experience, the tip of the tongue should touch three specific points: the uvula, a small asperity in the roof of the nasopharynx under the pituitary gland, and the soft tissue above the nasal septum. The tip of the tongue should rotate on these spots for at least 20-30 seconds; then, in the manner of sipping a liquid, a flavor will be tasted on the tongue's surface. The exercise can be repeated several times during the day. It is explained that when the real nectar sensation manifests, one should focus on it while keeping the tongue in contact with one of the centers described above. (Although such explanations may at first be fascinating for the *kriyabans*, after an initial period of intense excitement, these are often forgotten and the practitioner does not care about these things anymore.) *Kechari Mudra* can be compared to an electrical bypass of the mind's energy system. It changes both the path and the direction of *Prana* flow, and causes the life force to be withdrawn from the thought process. Silence and transparency begin to become the feature of one's consciousness. *Kechari* stops the internal chatter and gives the mind an essential rest. The mind works in a more restrained way; each thought becomes more concrete and precise. Indeed, this in itself is a major accomplishment! At times, during daily activities, moments of pure calmness and mental silence fill the practitioner's entire being! Sometimes without any additional *yogic* practice, inexplicable explosions of inner joy appear in unpredictable ways.

Kechari Mudra enables a *kriyaban* to take a giant step toward perfecting *Kriya Pranayama*. During *Kriya Pranayama* with *Kechari Mudra*, the exhalation arising in the nasal pharynx has a fine flute-like sound like a faint whistle. Some schools call it the *Shakti Mantra*. It has been likened to the "flute of Krishna". Lahiri Mahasaya described it as "similar to blowing air through a keyhole". He described it as "a razor with which cuts off everything related to the mind". It has the power to cut out any external distracting factors including thoughts and

comes at the maximal point of relaxation. Blowing gently on the edge of a sheet of paper approximates this sound. When distraction and anxiety arises, the sound vanishes. Practicing *Kriya Pranayama* in this way and enjoying its aftereffects is an enchanting and astonishing experience, one of the best moments in a *kriyaban's* life. Cultivating the perfection of this sound, concentrating firmly on it, means creating the best basis to arouse the *Om* sound without moving to the second phase of *Kriya Pranayama*. Literature on *Kriya Yoga* explains that when this event happens, the *Omkar* experience acquires the dynamism of *Kundalini*; the soul travels through the spinal cord and burns in the joy of *Samadhi*. Modesty is always welcome but when this result is achieved, the positive euphoria is so overwhelming that it cannot be contained (like finding Aladdin's magic lamp). In *Kriya* literature it is said that those who realize a perfect *Pranayama*, can achieve everything through it. Well, if we dream of a faultless *Kriya Pranayama*, then *Kriya Pranayama* with *Kechari Mudra* and flute sound matches that principle.

Important Remark

As soon as you achieve *Kechari Mudra* (assuming that one keeps this position each day for an average of at least five minutes), during the first week of its employment, you may experience a feeling of "dizziness" where the mental faculties seem to be fogged up. You must be prepared for this eventuality and consider, during that week, abstaining from driving and from any work implying a significant percentage of risk.

3. HOW TO ORGANIZE A KRIYA YOGA ROUTINE

A *Kriya Yoga* routine following strictly to the "Pre-Reverse Order", where there is a specific action upon each one of the four knots does not work properly for everyone. Many prefer to put all the techniques requiring movement at the beginning of the routine. From a certain moment onward, they want to practice in perfect immobility.

There is a deep reason for this. We can ideally divide the work for each knot into two parts: a strong action requiring physical movement and a subtle action that transforms this movement in mental pressure. The latter is favored by a restrained movement or by immobility. Strong actions like *Maha Mudra* and *Navi Kriya* (which are conceived to foster phase 4 and 3 of *Kriya*) can be practiced at the beginning. They help in developing an unimpeded *Kriya Pranayama*. They fill the body and mind with elation and vitality, stabilizes them for meditation, and help balance the left and right brain hemispheres.

Then we can practice *Talabya Kriya* with a strong awareness of the essence of the knot of the tongue. We have already explained that *Talabya Kriya* is utilized not only to stretch the frenulum; it closes an important circuit. When the tongue sticks to the palate and the mouth is opened, in that instant the split between our body under the *Ajna Chakra* and the upper part of our head (seat of

static *Prana*, a great reserve of energy) is momentarily healed. We should be also aware that the pressure-pull provoked by the sucker effect of the tongue on the palate creates a sudden calmness in our thinking process.

The immobile part of our routine begins with the first long inhalation of our *Kriya Pranayama*. After inhalation, pause for three seconds, exert mental pressure on the *Ajna Chakra*. During exhalation exert mental pressure on the navel; when exhalation is completed, direct this pressure against the *Muladhara*. During the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*, touch with mental pressure each of the first six *Chakras* chanting *Om* in each one of them. Use the third part of *Kriya Pranayama*, to invite calm *Prana* from *Sahasrara* to come down, surround each *Chakra* and press upon it. During *mental Pranayama* relax all effort, just sip a particular form of joy in each different *Chakra*.

About the next chapter

Kechari Mudra, *Kriya Pranayama*, *Omkar Kriya* and *Thokar Kriya* are the four key instructions that, like pillars, support the vast structure of *Kriya Yoga*. Therefore the *Higher Kriyas* can be defined the exhaustive treatment of the art of *Omkar Kriya*, (that we partially know, because we have neared its nucleus by practicing different procedures of *First Kriya*), and of *Thokar* (that we have not experienced yet.)

The *Higher Kriyas* have been designed to attain the highest stage in tuning with *Omkar*. Do not forget that this can also be obtained by unswerving listening to the flute-like sound of breath during *Kriya Pranayama* with *Kechari Mudra*. The *Higher Kriyas* are called the *Kriyas* of *Sthir Vayu* (tranquil breath). To fully enjoy them, a *kriyaban* should first learn the art of going away with breath. This is precisely the purpose of *First Kriya*.

DEFINITION OF THE HIGHER KRIYAS IN SIX PHASES

We are going to illustrate the techniques of the *Higher Kriyas* trying to figure out the best way a teacher could choose to illustrate them. Here you will find clear words that will convey the meaning of a technique, but you won't have the presence of a *Kriya Acharya* who can communicate even with his sheer presence, with a simple gesture, with a glance.

Higher Kriyas are usually taught one at a time, and between one technique and the next, not only months but years could go by. We will consider therefore the problem of how to close a *Kriya* routine, when, as it usually happens, you don't practice all the complete series of *Higher Kriyas* one after the other. Of each technique we will also give a criterion to understand when the time is ripe to move to the next level. Some variations of *Thokar* and of the *Fourth Kriya* technique are added at the end of the chapter -- the purpose is to give an example of how, when the gist of the procedure is well printed in the mind, a *kriyaban* can decide to adopt a slightly different tool to work with and obtain always excellent results.

First Omkar Kriya

This technique is akin to the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*. It is preliminary to all the *Higher Kriyas*. The *Vasudeva* Mantra "*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*" is introduced; its twelve syllables are mentally placed in each *Chakra*, while the awareness moves up and down inside the spine. The difference between *First Omkar Kriya* and the already explained second part of *Kriya Pranayama* is the following:

- a. A short *Kumbhaka* happens now in each *Chakra*
- b. The breathing process becomes now more subtle
- c. Great importance is given to the pauses at the top and at the bottom of the spine, with precise instructions to abide by.

The similarity between the *First Omkar Kriya* and the second part of *Kriya Pranayama*, has led some teachers not to mention this technique. There are reservations about this choice because if a *kriyaban* learns to increase the state of Stability in the upper part of the brain (this is exactly what happens during the *First Omkar Kriya*), the following *Thokar* will have a tremendous impact.

Furthermore, the sweet effects of *First Omkar Kriya* generate a continuous improvement of the technique of *Kriya Pranayama*. Both techniques help to perceive the internal Sound and spiritual Light. Without such perceptions, our *Kriya* practice would be deprived of its own essence and the same concept of *Kriya* meditation would risk to crumble down.

The Technique of the First Omkar Kriya

The hands with fingers intertwined rest on the abdomen. Inhalation and exhalation are divided into six + six parts. Starting with your chin on the chest, inhale moving your awareness along the spinal column upwards, while simultaneously raising the chin as if to accompany and push the energy up. The syllables of the *Vasudeva* Mantra ("*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*") are mentally placed in each *Chakra* location, while making a short pause in each. ⁹

During the first "sip" of inhalation, the concentration is on the *Muladhara*, where the syllable *Om* is ideally placed; during the second "sip", the concentration is on the second *Chakra*, where the syllable *Na* is ideally placed ... and so on, until *Ba* is placed in the *Bindu*, the inhalation is completed and the chin is horizontal. The exhaling breath too is divided into six punctuated parts like pulses. While lowering the chin, the awareness comes down along the spinal column. The syllable *Te* is placed in the *medulla*, *Va* in the fifth *Chakra*... and so on ... *Su*... *De*... *Va*, until *Ya* is mentally chanted in the *Muladhara*.

As soon as it is comfortable, add a pause of 2-3 seconds both at the end of inhalation and of exhalation. During these pauses, the awareness makes a complete, counter-clockwise turn along the crown of the head and around the *Muladhara Chakra*, respectively. The rotation above happens inside the brain, under the cranial bone, starting from the occipital region, over *Bindu*, and coming back to it; the head accompanies this inner movement with an almost imperceptible rotating movement (tilting back slightly, then to the right, the front, the left, and finally to the back). The counterclockwise rotation around *Muladhara* happens in immobility.

During inhalation, the muscles at the base of the spinal column can be slightly contracted. This contraction is held up not only to the end of the inhalation but also during the ensuing pause; then it is released and the exhalation begins. (This detail should be introduced gradually, so that it doesn't disturb the harmony of the general picture.)

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

An idea concerning how to end your Kriya routine when you are trying to master this level of Kriya and you don't practice any other further technique

Let the breathing process go along normally at its own rhythm. Visualize each *Chakra* as a horizontal disk, surround it with the repetitions of the related syllable making three counterclockwise rotations. ["Counterclockwise" in this

⁹ I am sure the reader knows the correct pronunciation of the *Mantra*; that is why I will not add any phonetic symbols. Notice that in the *Bindu* we don't mentally verbalize *Va* but *Ba*: this convention has been established over the years.

book is always intended as if viewing from top]. The syllables are obviously *Om, Om, Om...* for *Muladhara*; *Na, Na, Na...* for *Swadhistan*; *Mo, Mo, Mo* for *Manipura*..... Going up this way from *Muladhara* to *Bindu* and coming down is one round: the time required is approximately 6-9 minutes. Completing three to six rounds is a very good achievement! Moving from a *Chakra* to the next one, you will notice the change of the vibration of light in the region between the eyebrows. The practice converges toward perceiving a wonderful state of calmness. You enjoy a particular sensation of physical immobility; it becomes so strong that your spine will be perceived as a steel bar.

Subtle aspects to be discovered in time

From a certain moment onwards, all the physical details are lived in a very subtle way. It has been explained that there comes a moment when the breath takes the "inward route". The breath produces only a slight, weak sound or it comes out soundless. The movement of the head is only hinted and later disappears when perfect immobility is established. The counter clockwise rotation of awareness around the crown of the head seems to sink inside and touch the *medulla* too, winding around it. This perception extends in a natural way to the other *Chakras*. The downward and upward path of the energy is no more linear but similar to an helix that surrounds each *Chakra*. This is the stage where the control of *Prana* happens no more by using the breath as a mediating agent but through pure mental power.

When you mentally place a syllable in a *Chakra*, exert a mental pressure on it. The center of your awareness remains placed all the time in the occipital region. There is no difference when you are coming up with your chanting or going down, the pressure is always the same. Some *Kriya* schools explain that the awareness comes up "inside" and goes down "behind" the spine -- just as it happens in *Kriya Pranayama*. Here you will experience that, from a certain moment onwards, only the pressure on the seat of each *Chakra* counts; this pressure happens from all parts -- not only from behind.

When after months of practice of the *First Omkar Kriya* technique, your breath becomes more subtle, on the verge of disappearing, when each *Chakra* is felt clearly as a concentration of calm energy, while your awareness is effortlessly stable in the region of the sixth *Chakra* (from the point between the eyebrows to the occipital region), that is the best time to begin the following practice.

Second Omkar Kriya [commonly called Second Kriya]

There are two levels in the practice of *Thokar*. Hridaya-Granthi (the knot in the *Anahata Chakra*) is **struck** by the *Second Omkar Kriya* and **pierced** by the *Third Omkar Kriya*. The *Second Omkar Kriya* is an intensification of the earlier two *Pranayamas* (*Kriya Pranayama* and *Omkar Pranayama*): when the breath is sealed, the chest is pressurized by the movement of the chin. We shall describe therefore how a complete counter clockwise rotation of the head, followed by a jerk through which the chin is drawn toward the center of the chest is done. Consequently, the spiritual force moves from head to the *Anahata Chakra*. While during the previous two *Pranayamas* the awareness was established in *Ajna Chakra*, now it becomes stable in the *Anahata Chakra*. This event causes the death of the mind: conscious "absorption" manifests. Experiences of happiness, devotion and peace are felt emanating from the heart *Chakra*, pervading the chest area.

The Technique of the Second Omkar Kriya

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. With the chin resting on your chest, inhale raising the awareness along the spinal column, touching each *Chakra* with the syllable of the *Mantra* (*Om* is placed in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second, *Mo* in the third ...) - simultaneously, raise the chin as if to follow the inner movement. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed upon the navel area so as to push the abdominal region upward, thus creating a mental pressure on the first three *Chakras*. The breath produces only a slight, weak sound in the throat or it comes out soundless. When the chin is up and horizontal, the inhalation ends and the awareness is in the *Bindu*. Hold your breath. The head begins its round by moving to the left shoulder (left ear moves slightly toward the left shoulder, the face does not turn left or right and the movement is free of all bouncing); *Te* is thought in the *medulla*. The head tilts back a little and in a sweeping arc reaches the right shoulder, (the right ear coming near the right shoulder), the syllable *Va* is thought in the cervical *Chakra*. The rotation proceeds, the head bends forward just a little and moves left until the left ear is near the left shoulder (the face is not turned to the left).

From this position, the chin is tilted down diagonally as if to strike the center of the chest, while simultaneously *Su* is thought in the heart *Chakra*. Through this last movement, a kind of hitting is felt in the heart *Chakra*. A short pause follows: the breath does not move in the nostrils and the mind is enraptured in the radiation of energy emanating from in the heart *Chakra*. The contraction at the base of the spinal column is eased off; via a very subtle exhalation the remaining syllables of the *Mantra* are "placed" in the first three *Chakras* -- *De* into the third one, *Va* into the second one and *Ya* into the first one.

While doing this, the head is usually kept down. The duration of this process is about 24 seconds. For several weeks, a *kriyaban* is guided to perform this technique 12 times a day, then to gradually increase the number of repetitions of one a day up to 200 repetitions.

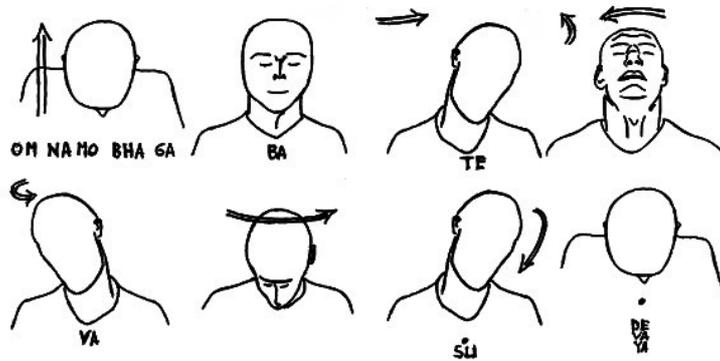


Figure 5. Rotation of the head in the basic form of Thokar

An expert *Kriya Acharya* should check that the physical strike is not forceful. One should not allow the weight of one's head to push the chin toward the chest: in this condition, the physical movement is definitely too powerful and harmful for the head and neck. Hence, mindful physical effort is simultaneously aimed at lowering the chin, while resisting the force of gravity, concluding with a slight jolt which is intensely felt within the fourth *Chakra*. The presence of physical problems (the cervical vertebrae are vulnerable indeed!) may require that one stop the technique for a few days or practice on alternate days. It is better to add more cycles over time rather than face the prospect of experiencing continuous head and neck pain throughout the entire day!

A counsel how to end your Kriya routine here

After the practice of the *Second Omkar Kriya*, retrieve psychological and physical immobility by practicing at least 12 repetitions of the *First Omkar Kriya*. Then practice *Pranayama with short breath* followed by *mental Pranayama*.

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

Sooner or later you reach the level when you listen to a distant sound of a long-sustaining bell. It is of paramount importance to try to deepen that experience! A *kriyaban* must be let being totally absorbed in it. At its very first manifestation, this sound gives total contentment and ease, as if the path had come to its fulfillment. Its beauty is inexplicable. There is no other thing in the universe as concrete and real as this vibration -- expression of *Om* cosmic vibration. In its delicacy, it gives the feeling of an unfathomable distance. Light as the falling of petals, knocks softly on the doors of your intuition. We feel that this sound is the Reality underlying all the Beauty experienced in life and that all the experiences of love are like crystals blooming around its gilded thread. From now onwards, provided that this tuning is maintained, meditation becomes a love story with

Beauty itself. This ineffable experience will surround you in misfortune, guiding your steps when events seem to conspire to make you forget the spiritual path. A real understanding is attained, a healing process of old wounds through the awakening of wisdom. The deepest layers of your psyche will be harmoniously affected. Everything will appear as transfigured, surrounded by a padded coat that reduces all dissonance. Our old memories, conflicts and impossibilities, revive, appease, come true in the azure limitless immobility spreading from the center of our heart. A first ever *Bhakti* (devotion) will arise spontaneously from your heart, cross the wall of the psychological dimension and make life and spiritual experience indistinguishable.

We told to increase the number of repetitions from 12 up to 200. When you practice over 50 repetitions, the afore described movements of the head should be only hinted: the chin does not come close to the chest and the hitting of the fourth *Chakra* is mainly achieved by the sheer power of mental concentration. If you have any difficulty whatsoever stop before reaching the 200 repetitions. However when you reach the 200 repetitions, or after six months of 36 repetitions per day, you can start the practice of the third step of Kriya.

Third Omkar Kriya

[commonly called Third Kriya]

The heart knot is **pierced** through the *Third Omkar Kriya*, that we are going to illustrate now. This technique is a tremendous acceleration of the *Second Omkar Kriya*, contemplating that the physical and mental blow is applied over and over in the heart area. This will happen in the state of *Kumbhaka*, whose length is gradually extended.

The purpose is to become one with the element "air" (the fourth of five *Tattwas*) which has its seat in the fourth *Chakra*. The *Tattwas* (Sanskrit) are the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether (space). This is a philosophical theory that claims that everything in the universe can be broken down into five primal energies. To a *kriyaban* the theory of the *Tattwas* is not a theme of useless speculation. They are conceived as a concrete series of states of consciousness, whose intimate essence we experience in our last journey toward the Absolute Consciousness. Now, tuning with the air *Tattwa*, allows a person enter a sublime state. Since the heart rate slows down, the breathless state can be achieved at last.

The Technique of the Third Omkar Kriya

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. The technique is the same of the *Second Kriya*, but the mental chanting of *Te* in *medulla*, *Va* in the cervical and *Su* in the *Anahata Chakra* is done not once but several times (*Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su, Te, Va, Su ...*) while holding the breath.

After having inhaled (with *Om, Na, Mo...*) and raised the *Prana* in the upper part of the lungs, keep the muscles of the thoracic cage just like one who is going to begin a new inhalation. The act of sealing the lungs (trachea) as one does on a dive should be avoided. In this relaxed mood, repeat many cycles of the movements of the head with no hurry whatsoever. Stop when intuition suggests to stop, slowly exhale and place the syllables *De, Va, Ya* in the first three *Chakras*. While doing this, keep your head down. This practice is done rigorously once a day only. Tradition teaches to begin with 12 rotations and increase by one every day. To give an idea of the speed of the movements, the entire process from inhalation to exhalation with 12 repetitions of the rotation of the head (each rotation concluding with the movement of the chin toward the chest) may last around 70-80 seconds. The tradition explains that this *Kriya* can be considered completed (mastered) when one reaches 200 rotations, holding the breath.

Counsel upon how to end here your Kriya routine

The previous ideas about meditation after the *Second Omkar Kriya* are still valid after the *Third Omkar Kriya*. Practice therefore at least 12 repetitions of the *First*

Omkar Kriya; then *Pranayama with short breath* followed by *mental Pranayama*.

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

Let's speak clearly: whoever reads the preceding explanation, thinks that the specific instruction to hold the breath while rotating the head for such a great number of times is an impossible feat, a self-injuring attempt to thwart the physiologic laws of the body. Some can even malignantly think that such request only brings about a series of bitter failures; this then drive *kriyabans* to... definitely give up that practice and stop annoying the teacher with the premature request of receiving initiation into the *Higher Kriyas*.

Now, there is no doubt that trying to get to a high number of rotations at a high speed, obsessed with holding the breath, amounts to a mere violence against one's body. Notwithstanding this, the practice of the *Third Kriya* is feasible. The correct way of practicing is a matter of inner realization -- an instinct which is discovered in time, provided that the previous practices have been brought ahead honestly and with acute intelligence.

Taking always as a firm point the fact that if you have problems with your cervical vertebrae, you must practice on alternative days, let us see now how the manifestation of a natural instinct can be made easier. I will give two important keys:

1. Fill the upper part of the thorax, the throat and the region around *Ajna Chakra* to the utmost possible extent with *Prana* -- the idea is that of a pot filled with water to the brim.

Start with 12 rotations and increase of one a day. Simplify the dynamic and the physical intensity of the movements. Move the chin toward the chest before having completed the rotation of the head. Namely, after rotating your head from left to right, let your chin "fall" down toward the chest from the right side, then lift it to left side and go on with the rotations. By the increase of the rotations, the movements of the head should be only hinted, the chin should not come close to the chest. When you feel that you have neared your limit and you are far from reaching the required 200 repetitions, start again with ten or twenty repetitions short and, with a lot of patience, increase again of one a day.

2. If the previous instruction doesn't work, try the following, interpreting it with intuition and creativity. While keeping the chest expanded and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm perfectly immobile, let a minimal (almost imperceptible) sip of air go out whenever the chin is lowered toward the chest and an imperceptible sip of air enter whenever the chin is brought up. Don't do any specific act of inhaling or exhaling: relax yourself and the afore described phenomenon happens of its own accord. The sensation will always be that of not breathing at all. A time will come when you realize you are rotating your head and the breath is actually dissolved! The breath seems frozen, vanished somehow into your body and *Kumbhaka* will be perfect. A never before experienced joy and a feeling of freedom will flood your consciousness. You will realize the meaning of Lahiri Mahasaya's sentence: "My worship is of a very strange kind. Holy water is not required. No special utensils are necessary. Even flowers are redundant. In this worship all gods have disappeared, and

emptiness has merged with euphoria." No one can say at what point of the process this will happen.

As for the *Omkar* experience, the most important thing is to seek and cultivate the experience of the Spiritual Light. A luminous point (*Bindu*) appears in the heart *Chakra*. A strong concentration in the point between the eyebrows appears effortlessly and is accompanied by a tremendous increase of bliss. A tiny white star illuminates the path of Eternal Freedom. The springing forth of the inner Light means that the door of *Sushumna* is opened. Mind and intoxication mingle and mind enters perfect stillness. The burning aspiration which is born in your heart digs a stream of genuine devotion. You shall merge in something so intensely beautiful. Amid the ruins of many illusions, this procedure, in the simplicity of its essence, will open the doors of the spiritual realization.

It is clear that having experienced these two aspects of the *Omkar* Reality (internal Sound and Light) you can be assured you have practiced correctly the procedure of *Thokar*. If you honestly realize you are far from these results, avoid trying your hand at other higher procedures. Practice long sessions of *Kriya Pranayama* (three phases) and of *First Omkar Kriya* and seek the *Omkar* experience through them.

When you reach the 200 rotations during one single *Kumbhaka*, you can practice the *Fourth Kriya* technique. If the attainment of the 200 rotations seems impossible and the two previous keys seem not to work, concentrate all your efforts to reach the breathless state during the final phase of your *Kriya* routine (in the third part of this book, chapter 11, you will find other precious counsels about how to reach and consolidate that state). When the breath seems to become almost non-existent or when you achieve the perfect breathless state, then start the daily practice the *Fourth Omkar Kriya*. A good routine is: *Maha Mudra* // 20 *Kriya Pranayama* // *Third Omkar Kriya* with 24-36 rotations of the head // 12 *First Omkar Kriya* // *Navi Kriya* // *Fourth Omkar Kriya* // *Mental Pranayama* // *Yoni Mudra*.

Once you have obtained good effects through the *Fourth Omkar Kriya* technique, you should attempt again the attainment of the 200 rotations of the head during the *Third Omkar Kriya* technique.

Fourth Omkar Kriya [commonly called Fourth Kriya]

Through *Thokar* we have perceived the spiritual Light in the form of a "*Bindu*" (a dot) in the heart *Chakra* and discovered that this light shines in *Kutastha* too. We are going to expand this "revelation", by experiencing the spiritual Light in each *Chakra*. The *Fourth Kriya* is an extension of the *Third*, which in turn is an extension of the *Second*. The peculiar state created in the heart *Chakra* through the practice of the *Third Kriya* is now produced (or, better said, "discovered") in each *Chakra*. In the *Third Kriya*, we have applied a tremendous physical and mental pressure on the heart *Chakra*, we extend now this pressure to each *Chakra*, utilizing a combination of psycho physical means.

This procedure is called the *Dhyana* phase of *Kriya Yoga* and it is this very procedure that will succeed in unfastening the *Muladhara* knot. The contribution of this *Kriya* in entering *Sushumna* and traveling to *Kutastha* is exceptional. Not only the breathless state, but the *Samadhi* state will also manifest. *Kriya* literature claims: "After twelve rounds of *Fourth Kriya*, one goes beyond the realms of the Stability so far achieved. The last shell of illusion is broken."

The Technique of the Fourth Omkar Kriya

Practice for each *Chakra* (in the order: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, medulla) the following actions:

1. Contract the muscles near the physical location of the *Chakra*. Relax and repeat 3 times. Utilize this physical action to exert a great mental pressure upon the *Chakra's* location.
2. Through a deep inhalation (not necessarily as long as in *Kriya Pranayama*) visualize the *Chakra* coming up into the point between the eyebrows, where you perceive it as a full moon.
3. Hold the breath and focus on the "inner space" between the eyebrows. This comes out easy with *Kechari Mudra*.¹⁰ The mental pressure is now exerted simultaneously on the physical location of the *Chakra* and on this "inner space". On the screen between the eyebrows you will have a particular light experience which is different for each *Tattwa*.
4. There is a *Mantra* (specific for each *Chakra*) which is mentally vibrated at least three times during the previous action.

¹⁰ "Ke-chari" is literally translated as "the state of those who fly in the sky, in the ether". A particular "space" is created in the region between the tip of the tongue and the point between the eyebrows and is perceived as a "vacuum", although it is not a physical void. By merging into this empty space, it is more easy for a *kriyaban* to perceive the rhythms of each *Chakra* and distinguish them one from another.

5. Through a long exhalation, the energy is lowered from the point between the eyebrows to the location of the *Chakra*.

Here you find the details for each *Chakra*:

First *Chakra Muladhara*

Physical action to help the mental pressure -- practice *Mula Bandha* until abdomen and spine vibrates. Relax. Repeat 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Bhur*¹¹

Second *Chakra Swadhisthana*

Physical action -- practice *Vairoli Mudra* (contract and relax both the urethral sphincter and the muscles of the back near the sacral center.) Repeat 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Bhuvah*

Third *Chakra Manipura*

Physical action -- quickly contract and relax the navel, the abdominal muscles and the lumbar area of the spine. Repeat 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Mahah*

Fourth *Chakra Anahata*

¹¹ The structure of this technique is well known in India and is considered the subtlest way of utilizing the *Gayatri Mantra*. With small variations and further ritual additions it is published in some booklets. The *Gayatri Mantra* is considered to be a supreme vehicle for gaining spiritual enlightenment. Its purest form is *Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargho Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodayat*. (Oh, great Spiritual Light who has created the Universe we meditate upon Your glory. You are the embodiment of Knowledge. You are the remover of all Ignorance. May You enlighten our Intellect and awaken our Intuition.) This *Mantra* is prefaced with either a short or a long invocation. The short invocation is: *Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha*. The terms *Bhur, Bhuvah, Swaha* are invocations to honor the three planes of existence (physical, astral and causal respectively) and to address their presiding deities. The long invocation is: *Om Bhur, Om Bhuvah, Om Swaha, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om Tapah, Om Satyam*. This invocation is more complete since it recognizes that there are more planes of existence: the seven *Lokas*. *Mahah* is the mental world, the plane of spiritual balance; *Janah* is the world of pure knowledge; *Tapah* is the world of intuition; *Satyam* is the world of Absolute, Ultimate Truth. We can be satisfied with the explanation that these sounds are utilized to activate the *Chakras* and connect them to the seven spiritual realms of existence. In our procedure we use just the opening long invocation, in the complete form, and not all the parts of the *Gayatri Mantra*. The *Kriya* tradition we are here following ties *Manipura* with *Om Mahah* and *Anahata* with *Om Swaha*. The reason is that the world of thinking, evoked by *Om Mahah*, is more fit for the nature of the third *Chakra*, while the causal world of pure ideas, recalled by *Om Swaha*, is related to *Anahata Chakra*. In conclusion we associate a *Mantra* to each *Chakra* in this way: *Muladhara* - *Om Bhur*; *Swadhistana* - *Om Bhuvah*; *Manipura* - *Om Mahah*; *Anahata* - *Om Swaha*; *Vishuddhi* - *Om Janah*; *medulla* - *Om Tapah*; *Bindu* - *Om Satyam*.

Physical action -- bring the shoulder blades together and concentrate on the spine near the heart. Relax. Repeat 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Swaha*

Fifth *Chakra Vishuddha*

Physical action -- move your head quickly from side to side (without turning your face) a couple of times, perceiving a grinding sound in the cervical vertebrae. This is only to localize the cervical center. Now contract the muscles of the back of the neck near the cervical vertebrae and relax. Repeat the contraction of the muscles 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Janah*

Medulla Oblongata

Physical action -- raise the chin, tense the muscles near the *medulla* (under the occipital region), clench the teeth and see the light at the point between the eyebrows. Relax and repeat 3 times.

Mantra to be utilized -- *Om Tapah*

Add a particularly intense concentration on *Bhrumadhya* (point between the eyebrows) by knitting the eyebrows and repeating (at least three times) the *Mantra: Om Satyam*.

Now complete the "round" lifting *Chakras* 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 using the afore explained procedures (contraction, *Mantra*, having particular light experience...) The instruction is to practice 12 rounds.

You don't need to ask what to do after it. Very probably, before completing the 12 cycles, you will be overwhelmed by a deep introverted state and won't be able to do anything else but remaining "lost" in a state of bliss. You will see that it is difficult to complete those cycles. When you will be able to do this, you will touch the *Samadhi* state.

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

One day you will discover that the chanting of the *Mantra* goes on more than three times. The *Tattwa* related with a *Chakra* has captured you! The point between the eyebrows is a region where you can dissolve the "seal" of each *Chakra*. You will experience a sense of immobility and lightness, as if the body were made of air. The *Chakra* in which you are concentrated will be experienced as a great, luminous sphere. A similar experience will happen in the next *Chakra*... and so on. As the number of mental chants of the *Mantra* increases, the number of cycles diminish in proportion. Use a rough calculation, keeping in mind the global time. The goal is to reach -- without forcing -- 36 repetitions of the *Mantra* for each *Chakra*. In that ideal situation there is one single cycle. It is clear that during the 36 repetitions, your breath is held effortlessly. *Prana* always remains in the region of the sixth *Chakra*. If you feel any uneasiness, if you notice that *Prana* comes below the throat, you should not be annoyed. Sweetly exhale and transfer your attention to the next *Chakra*, raising it as taught.

Many find the following technical detail very useful: before lifting a *Chakra*, let inhalation ideally start from its "frontal" component, come towards its location in the spine and then come up to the point between the eyebrows. The concept of "frontal" component of a *Chakra* was introduced in chapter 7.

[*Muladhara* -- perineum. *Swadhisthana* -- the pubic region. *Manipura* -- the navel. *Anahata* -- the central region of the sternum. *Vishuddha* -- the upper front part of the throat.]

Another detail is this: when you hold your breath and your awareness is in *Kutastha*, raise your eyebrows, become aware of the light, relax them, knit them slowly, be aware of the light. Repeat a couple of times.

Kriya literature explains that once the *Fourth Kriya* has been mastered, the *kriyaban* does not need any more guidance. He divines processes of *Fifth*, *Sixth* and other higher *Kriyas* in order to remain continuously immersed in the Eternal Tranquility. Renowned *Kriya Acharyas* claim that the *Tribhangamurari* movement which is the basis of the following *Kriyas* comes spontaneous as a natural experience. I don't know if this is one of the usual exaggerations.

In my opinion, after six months of *Fourth Kriya* practice, you can begin the practice of the *Fifth Kriya*. Let us keep present that this procedure requires an enormous amount of time.

Fifth Omkar Kriya [commonly called Fifth Kriya]

Through this *Fifth Kriya*, *Kundalini* is invited to rise through *Sushumna*. In the beginning only a faint thread of energy is able to enter (due to our mental restlessness). There is no breath, all the process is purely mental. No matter how much *Prana* enters, this is guided into the head. Then *Tribhangamurari Mudra* needs to be accomplished. "*Tribhang*" means to break (*bhang*) from three (*Tri*) locations. These are the three knots (Tongue, Heart and *Muladhara*). When the *Prana* comes down into the body, these knots are crossed. The most perceivable effect is on the heart knot which is crossed by the current like by a spear. The more concentration is applied, the more bliss (euphoria) is generated in the seeker, therefore the seeker feels a natural tendency to practice it again and again. By repeating this process for a great number of times, *Kundalini* becomes free to rise in all its power. When this happens, the spiritual practitioner attains the form of *Tribhangamurari Krishna* -- namely his knots are unfastened.

The Technique of the Fifth Omkar Kriya

Kriya tradition requires that this technique is taught in three separate sessions. The following three procedures have one element in common: awareness and *Prana* come up inside the spine and go down along a three-curved path called *Tribhangamurari* (Tri-bhanga-murari = three-bend-form). This path begins in *Bindu*, bends to the left, descends into the seat of *medulla*, crosses it and continues toward the right side of the body. Once a particular point in the back (about 5-6 centimeters above the right nipple's height), is reached, it reverses direction cutting the *Hridaya Granthi* in the heart *Chakra*. After having reached a point in the back that is 5-6 centimeters under the left nipple's height, it changes again its direction pointing toward the seat of *Brahma Granthi* in the *Muladhara*. (See figure 6)

Tribhangamurari is the best symbol of *Kriya Yoga* because it shows the cutting of the three main knots. It is also a symbol of *Sri Krishna*. Its shape, as depicted in the iconography, is also a form with three curves: his neck, legs and back are kept in a peculiar position clearly outlining these three curves. A sentence attributed to Lahiri Mahasaya is: "To make this body *Tribhangamurari* (*Krishna*-like) three knots have to be crossed".

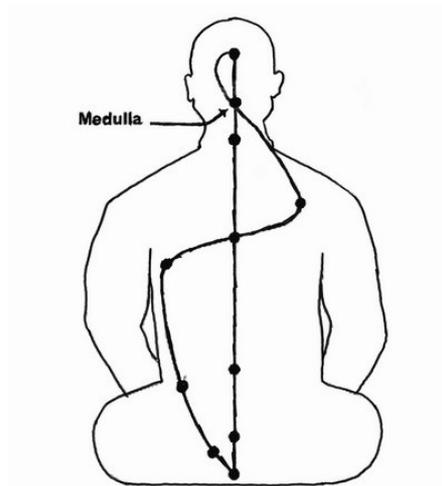


Figure 6. Internal movement Tribhangamurari

Fifth Kriya -- first technique: Amantrak

After the practice of *Kriya Pranayama*, forget the breath entirely. Practice *Kechari Mudra*. Lift Prana and awareness into your brain just like you have learned to do with the previous *Omkar Kriyas*. Let your awareness come upwards along the spinal column: half a minute is required for reaching *Bindu*. Then come downwards with your awareness through the *Tribhangamurari* path -- the three-bended path illustrated in figure 6. Half a minute is required to reach *Muladhara*.

One complete round lasts one minute. If it turns out to be shorter, let us say 45/50 seconds, this does not mean that the procedure has been done too much quickly. It might be fine, but take the resolution to reach the exact timing. For two weeks repeat this technique 25 times once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times, then for another two weeks 75 times and so on up to 200 times for two weeks. Only then you can practice the second technique.

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

Through the *Fourth Omkar Kriya* we have crossed the obstruction of *Muladhara* and now we are ready to invite *Kundalini* to come up. In order this action is successful, it should be lived in a particular breathless state which is called *Antar Kevala Kumbhaka*. What will happen is fantastic; often it seems to overcome us, leading us beyond our capacity of endurance.

Before beginning the *Fifth Kriya Amantrak*, after having reached a state of giant calmness of the breath through the previous *Kriyas*, inhale deeply filling your lungs. Expand your rib cage and keep it expanded after completing the inhalation. Try to remain in the same condition you instinctively adopt when you are going to take another sip of air. Focus your attention on the air and *Prana* filling the upper part of your rib cage: they are immobile there, like frozen. Go beyond the thought of breathing. The light tension in the muscles of your rib cage prevents you from exhaling. This state is not stable: after a few seconds, if you abstain from doing specific actions, it is likely you would feel the necessity of breathing. To achieve a stable state, you have to enter immediately with your

awareness the subtle channel of the spine. Therefore move your awareness as afore explained, coming up inside the spine and down along the *Tribhangamurari* path.

If you are able to complete, without feeling the necessity to breathe, your planned number of repetitions, the experience will be fantastic and this is the proof you have worked perfectly with the previous *Kriyas*.

If, as it is quite likely, you encounter some difficulties, make a considerable use of the following key:

After having inhaled deeply filling your lungs and expanded the thoracic cage, concentrate on *Muladhara* and begin rapidly chanting *Om, Om, Om...* mentally, many times. Don't remain in *Muladhara*: climb the innermost channel of the spine like an ant, millimeter after millimeter continuously repeating *Om Om Om...* mentally (and of course avoiding inhaling). After no more than 15-20 seconds you'll have reached the heart *Chakra*. Now you perceive a deeper and stabler freedom from the breath. Very probably, you are ready to begin the technique of *Fifth Kriya Amantrak* feeling you are completely free from breath.

Otherwise repeat with great mental intensity this action many, many times in the following days. This will help you to complete the crossing of the knot of *Muladhara*. Never cease trying day after day until you are able to practice the best form of the *Fifth Kriya Amantrak*.

Generally speaking, however it is practiced, the first phase of the *Fifth Omkar Kriya* can be difficult to sustain. It has been explained that the *Tribhangamurari* flux cleans a lot of internal dirt, namely it touches much inert material. The action of this technique decreases the hectic condition caused by superficial emotions, fed by certain energies springing from the lower *Chakras*. This leads to a total modification of the perspectives through which we see life. Sometimes you will feel that it separates yourself from reality. The oneiric activity is very involving, as if you had lived a deeply intriguing and captivating adventure. During the day, your mental state will be very strange: you could feel a lack of enthusiasm; it is as if there exists no activity that can produce any satisfaction. You will feel extraneous to what before would involve you. Some days you will like to remain at home, as if in a state of convalescence. By increasing the number of repetitions, when you approach 200, you will feel like you are going to explode!

Fifth Kriya -- second technique: Samantrak

After the completion of the 200 repetitions, the perception of the *Tribhangamurari* current is intensified by mentally chanting the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*.

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. While *Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga*, are vibrated into the first five *Chakras* and *Ba* in *Bindu*, *Teeeee* is vibrated from *medulla* to the point between the eyebrows; *Va, Su, De, Va* are put outside the spine in the four new centers; *Ya* is vibrated in *Muladhara*. These four new centers are four "vortexes" inside the main flow of the current -- they are not a new set of *Chakras*. Each vibration of a syllable is like a mental *Thokar* (hit) into the

related center's location: since the technique is performed slowly (half a minute for raising the awareness, the same for coming down) there is plenty of time to make these tappings very effective.

For two weeks repeat this technique 25 times once a day. Then for another two weeks repeat it 50 times, then for another two weeks 75 times and so on up to 200 times for two weeks. Only then you can practice the third technique.

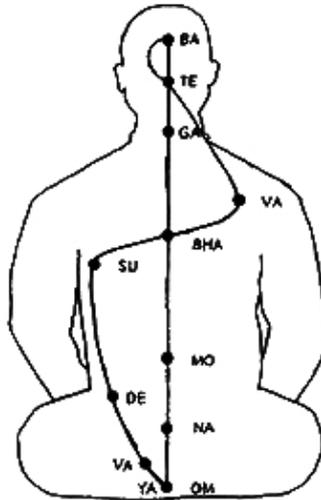


Figure 7. Placing the 12 syllables along the Tribhangamurari path

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

When you begin to practice the technique of *Samantrak* you think that it consists simply in practicing the *Amantrak* technique, namely to feel the entire current millimeter after millimeter, and, in addition to this, thinking the 12 syllables in the 12 centers. This will induce you to go speedy because no one would let the mental chanting of the *Vasudeva Mantra* lasts exactly one minute. But it is only when you decide to go ahead slowly that the *Tribhangamurari* path begins to be "lit." In this technique, despite the pause in each Chakras is short (surely not the time we devoted to each *Chakra* in the practice of *Fourth Kriya*), we reap the rewards of the *Fourth Omkar Kriya*.

The colors of the *Chakras* or the colors of the relative *Tattwas* will start, first timidly and then with always great surety, to be perceived. You will have the impression that practicing the *Samantrak* technique is like turning on various lights along the *Tribhangamurari* path.

The manifestation of the *Omkar* reality as light of various colors becomes even more strong for those who can find the time to couple this practice with 200-300 *Kriya Pranayama* a day.

Before further boosting the intensity of your perception of this *Tribhangamurari* movement through the following procedure, it is necessary not to have neglected to complete the 200 repetitions first with *Amantrak* and then with *Samantrak*! If you abide meekly by this injunction, be assured that the following practice -- the essence of the *Fifth Omkar Kriya* -- will never disappoint you and will become, besides *Kriya Pranayama*, your favorite technique.

Fifth Kriya -- third technique: Thokar along the Tribhangamurari path

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. Starting with the chin on the chest, move your awareness very slowly along the spinal column from *Muladhara* upwards. Your chin comes slowly up following the inner movement. The *Chakras* are touched with the syllables of the *Mantra* (*Om* is placed in the first *Chakra*, *Na* in the second ...). The movement is charged by the maximum possible mental intensity. The hands (with interlocked fingers) are placed upon the navel area so as to push the abdominal region upward, thus creating a mental pressure on the first three *Chakras*. When the chin is parallel to the ground, the perception is at the *Bindu*.

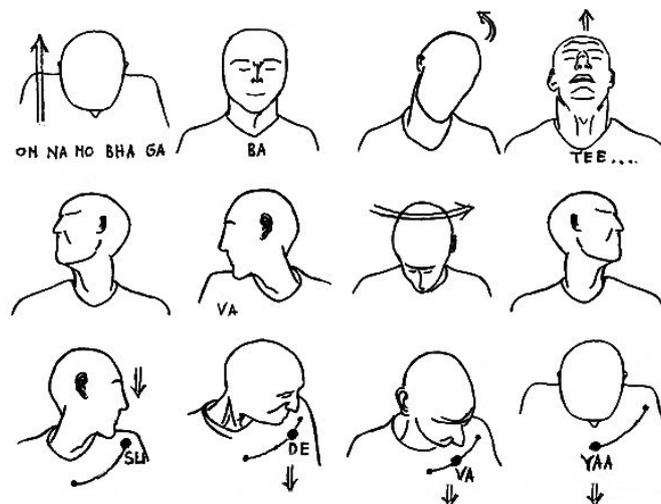


Figure 8. Thokar - Tribhangamurari

Without turning the face, the head moves toward the left shoulder, then the head tilts back a little and in a sweeping arc begins to move toward the right shoulder; but it stops in the middle where the chin is raised as much as possible. The neck's rear muscles are contracted. During this movement, the *Tribhangamurari* flow descends to the left from *Bindu* to *medulla*. *Teeee* is vibrated from *medulla* to the point between the eyebrows. From that chin-up position the face turns to the right (as with the intention of looking attentively at the area at your right, as far as possible). During this movement (be careful: the movement is slow!), the inner *Tribhangamurari* flow reaches the eighth center. The chin is above the right shoulder; from there it touches the right shoulder for an instant (this is the first of five strokes; the shoulder also makes a small motion upward to make contact with the chin easier) while the syllable *Va* is vibrated in the eighth center. Then the face begins to turn left in a very slow motion, accompanying - millimeter by millimeter - the perception of the inner flux moving across the fourth *Chakra*. The face turns to the left (as with the intention of looking attentively at the area at your right, as far as possible). The second stroke takes place on the left side when the syllable *Su* is vibrated in the ninth center. Then the chin, grazing the left side of the collarbone, slowly moves toward the position in the middle of the

chest. During this movement - exactly when the syllables *De* and *Va* are thought in the tenth and eleventh centers - two light strokes are given to the collarbone in intermediate positions. In the end, when *Ya* is placed into *Muladhara*, the last chin stroke on the chest (central position) is carried out.

This procedure is repeated 12-36 times. As in the previous technique, half a minute is ideally required for raising your awareness and the same time is required to let your awareness descend through the *Tribhangamurari* path. If you employ 45/50 seconds, it's all ok; however try always to reach the ideal speed which is 60 seconds.

The supervision of an expert helps to avoid any problems. I am referring to stress and pain in the cervical vertebrae and in the muscles of the neck. Abrupt movements should be avoided; it is thus possible to reach deep mental concentration when thinking of each of the five syllables in their respective centers. During the first weeks it is wise not to practice every day, but spread out the practice to every two or three days.

At this point one starts the incremental routine by practicing (strictly no more than one day a week!) the amounts : 36x1, 36x2, 36x3,..... 36x35, 36x36. This is really a colossal venture. A minimum of 8-10 months is required to complete it; usually the required time is longer because a *kriyaban* can choose to rest for some weeks.

Subtle aspects of this procedure (to be discovered in time)

The tendency to proceed quickly is very strong, but in such way you risks to never understand the essence of the procedure. Even if this technique was called by some "*Thokar* of the five strokes", actually here **the *Thokar* happens along the whole path**, in every millimeter of it. The practice of *Kechari*, the continuous movement of the chin, the experience of great numbers of the two preceding techniques *Amantrak* and *Samantrak* create a particular power. The most important concept to be understood is that the internal moving sensation is charged by the maximum possible mental intensity: like squeezing with a pencil an almost empty tube of toothpaste to get the last little bit out. The five blows are *Thokar*, this is sure; but *Thokar* happens also along all the path because *Thokar* means "touching with pressure".

End each part of the *Fifth Kriya* with a deep concentration on the point between the eyebrows. The technique of *Yoni Mudra* is perfect for this purpose. Begin the practice of the *Sixth Kriya* technique when you have completed all three parts of *Fifth Kriya*. The effects of the incremental routine of *Thokar* up to 36x36 repetitions are very strong and can be defined a deep internal cleansing. To whom has the time and the good will to complete it, I recommend it as the greatest enterprise that one can achieve in life.

Sixth Omkar Kriya

[commonly called Sixth Kriya]

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

Let us understand an important concept: perceiving a movement within a perfect stillness -- which is impossible to be intellectually grasped -- has an enormous impact upon a *kriyaban's* ability of unloosing his/her small individuality in the greater Self. This experience is the surest way toward the realization of the Self. Only few *Kriya* schools have disclosed the nature of this micro movement *Tribhangamurari* and revealed its importance. Unfortunately, many seek frantically impossible surrogates of it! This internal movement is the deeper aspect of the *Omkar* reality. It comes in your life to annihilate any form of duality present in the *Chakras* and in your awareness.

The Technique of the Sixth Omkar Kriya

Kriya tradition requires that this technique is taught in two separate sessions

Sixth Kriya -- first part: Amantrak

Practice *Kechari Mudra*. Through a short inhalation, raise the *Prana* contained in the *Muladhara Chakra* into the point between the eyebrows. When the presence of the energy is clearly felt in the point between your eyebrows, stop the breath and look "down" at the *Muladhara Chakra* -- visualized like a horizontal disk, having a diameter of approximately 2-3 centimeters. Draw on that disk the form of the *Tribhangamurari* movement in reduced dimensions -- similar to that already experienced in large-scale dimension. Refer to figure 9; start from point B (back part of the *Chakra*) and go straight to F (frontal part of the *Chakra*); then return from F to B along the snakelike path. Don't worry about the time required: it may be short, it may be long ... no matter! But try your utmost to perceive something. Exert a moderate but continuous pressure on the disk as if you had a pen and drew accurately a clear continuous mark. You can do a very faint movement of the spinal column (forward, left, right, left, back to starting position). This movement should be almost invisible to an observer placed before you. Repeat two more times. Your breath is held effortlessly; the *Prana* remains totally in *Ajna Chakra*. After three perceptions of the complete movement (a complete movement is a straight movement from B to F, followed by the

snakelike movement from F to B) you can have a subtle exhalation, relax and let *Prana* come down. Move to the second *Chakra* and repeat the same procedure.

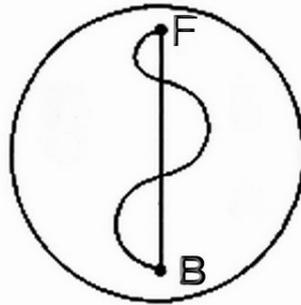


Figure 9. Tribhangamurari micro-movement inside a Chakra

Repeat the same procedure for *Chakras* 3, 4 and 5, then in *Bindu*, then in *medulla*, then in the four centers outside the spine (those introduced in the previous *Fifth Kriya* technique), and finally in *Muladhara*. This is round 1: practice twelve rounds. Be faithful to this practice for at least six months before starting to familiarize with the second part.

Sixth Kriya -- second part: Samantrak

The technique is the same but the mental pressure is increased through the repetitions of the syllables of the *Vasudeva Mantra*.

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

Repeat the *Vasudeva Mantra* three times. Your breath is held effortlessly. *Prana* remains totally in *Ajna Chakra*. In this second part, the best choice is to remain in perfect immobility and not use any movement of the spinal column. After three perceptions of the complete movement, you can have a deep exhalation or you can choose to let the *Chakra's* energy remain in the point between the eyebrows without doing a conscious exhalation.

Repeat the same procedure in *Chakras* 2, 3, 4 and 5, then in *Bindu*, then in *medulla*, then in the four centers outside the spine, and finally in *Muladhara*.

This is one round: practice twelve rounds. Go ahead with this practice until you reach the age where you can retire from your work and have all the time for meditation.

Routine

Practicing every day all of the techniques of *Kriya Yoga* is ideally possible but you must check carefully that they co-operate to establish a foundation of harmony and calmness. The good effects of peace, inner joy, calmness of the breath and listening to inner sounds should always go on increasing.

The technique of *Maha Mudra* can be put at the beginning of the routine. On the contrary, *Navi Kriya* is very useful before *Fourth*, *Fifth* and *Sixth Kriya*. The reason is that it calms tremendously your breath. *Kriya* literature says: "At least, six or seven hours of practice are necessary. Practice the *Mantra* slowly." The final result happens after years of serious commitment. Final liberation (*Moksha*) is not attained in one day. During the epoch of your life when you are occupied with this procedure, many splendid experiences will happen and the last internal obstacles will be cleared one after another.

While waiting for the moment you can retire from work, a deeply rewarding incremental routine of the *Sixth Kriya* is the following:

Perceive, on the first day, the micro-movement 12 times in each of the 12 centers -- just one round. After one week, on the second day of your incremental routine, perceive the micro-movement 24 times in each of the 12 centers -- just one round. Then 36 times in each *Chakra*/center... Increase of 12 in 12, up to reach 12x12. This means that the last day you will perceive 144 micro movements in the first *Chakra*, 144 in the second...and so on.

Routine to be practiced in the last part of your life

The most challenging of all the incremental routines, suited for those who have retired, is the following. On the first day, the micro-movement is perceived 36 times in each of the 12 centers. Only one complete round is done; one has a total of 36x12 perceptions of the micro movement. After one week one perceives 36x2 = 72 times (72 times in the first *Chakra*, 72 in the second...and so on). After some days, the amount is 36x3 in each *Chakra*.... Always just one round!

At a certain point, an entire day is not sufficient to complete one round. The work-load must be divided into two days. On the morning of the second day, the technique is resumed exactly where it had been interrupted the previous night. After these two days of practice, you might need to rest for one week or a couple of weeks.

Go ahead increasing. At a certain point, a single stage will require three days, then four, and so on. The final 36x36 will require a week, or even more days, to be completed! This incremental routine is really a giant achievement, however a *kriyaban* should grant himself the joy, the privilege of going on slowly. Slipping into a hurried practice leads to nothing. A particular joy springs out of the *Chakra* in which the awareness dwells. One should intentionally wait for a particular feeling of enjoyment after each chanting of the *Mantra*. During

each stage, it is wise to keep silent, avoiding any opportunity for conversation. However, the use of common sense should always prevail; if addressed, a polite reply is always imperative.

The afore described *Incremental Routine* is the best preparation for the conscious exit out of the body at death (*Mahasamadhi*). It is explained that it burns forever the necessity of reincarnating. As the *Yoni Mudra* marks the last moment of the day when, having concluded all activities, a *kriyaban* withdraws his awareness from the body and from the physical world - a "small death", so to speak – the afore described intensive procedure is like a *Yoni Mudra* in greater dimensions, a farewell to life, a return to the origin. In this way one "dies forever": dies to one's desires, to one's ignorance. According to this tradition, death's mechanism is to be invited (when the right moment comes) by calming the heart and by merging deeply with the *Omkar* reality.

In the months preceding that moment – intuition guides the advanced *kriyaban* to guess when such a moment is approaching – one should practice this technique extensively. It is recommended to perceive the micro movement in the point between the eyebrows 36x48 for each center. This means perceiving a total of 20736 micro-movements. Since it is possible to complete this with reasonable ease in a period of 24 days, one can assume that this process is supposed to be repeated more than one time. It is not sure that, in the moment of death, a *kriyaban* performs the technique of *Thokar*. We may reasonably assume that it is not always possible to perform the physical movement of *Thokar*. To be aware of the point between the eyebrows may be the only thing possible. *Kriyabans* vibrate there their beloved *Mantra* and merges with the Infinite. To be able to experience that, is our ardent hope and determination.

Appendix A: Hypothetical Seventh Omkar Kriya

The *Kriya* system that I describe in this book is made of *First Kriya* with eight techniques, followed by the six steps of *Higher Kriyas* -- called *Omkar Kriyas* or *Kriyas* of *Sthir* (static) *Prana*. Why add to them an hypothetical *Seventh Kriya*? Because in some respectable *Kriya* literature there are convincing hints to this advanced procedure. Recently, I have received technical information that seem to match perfectly those hints. Since this is a book for students and researchers, I don't think it is a bad thing to share what I know, trusting that it is not taken in a dogmatic way. Therefore I will be concise, leaving aside any rhetoric.

Summarizing the received information, I find very interesting one aspect of this technique: it could be defined what *Kriya Pranayama* becomes when the ability coming from mastering all the previous *Kriya* techniques is fully applied. This is a fascinating theme that concerns each *kriyaban*.

In this practice we shall amalgamate:

1. The third part of *Kriya Pranayama*, experienced in the highest form of *Shambhavi Mudra*.
2. A rhythm of breathing considered almost beyond the limits of human abilities: each breath lasts 60 seconds.
3. The *Tribhagamurari* path we already know but containing an essential modification.

The Technique of the Seventh Omkar Kriya

After a deep practice of the first two parts of *Kriya Pranayama*, start its third part. Use all the power of your concentration to establish yourself over *Sahasrara* -- of about 8 centimeters. Go ahead with a mind perfectly tranquil trying to slow down your breath rhythm. Don't force. You might require months to reach the unusual rhythm of one breath a minute. The current comes up in 30 seconds and returns down in 30 seconds. We can avoid considering the pauses of the breath, because when you are at the end of this slow inhalation or at the end of this slow exhalation, it is almost impossible to say if you are breathing or not. (But if you are an hair-splitter, I will satisfy you immediately. Consider the afore quoted 30" + 30" divided in: inhalation 27" + pause 3" + exhalation 27" + pause 3".) Be patient and you will reach this rhythm. Only then, guide your breath according to the following instructions:

a. Come up with a long inhalation putting the syllables *Om, Na, Mo, Bha, Ga* in the first five *Chakras* and *Ba* in the fontanelle. (I remind that we are hinting at the anterior fontanelle, as pointed out in chapter 6).

b. Start a slow exhalation feeling the current going up of a couple of centimeters, bending to the left and turning down. Such current enters again the brain and comes down to the left towards *medulla* where you chant *Teeee*. Then all the other parts of the path are those described previously in the *Fifth Omkar Kriya*. In other words the *Bindu* point is substituted by the *fontanelle* and the current that should go downward, starts going up for a small length, then makes a U-turn and moves downwards. (This particular part of the path -- coming up from *fontanelle* and then turning downwards -- is seen in Lord *Shiva's* iconography. The Ganges river makes her way through the locks and clusters of *Shiva's* hair and comes down upon the earth.)

While coming up and going down, don't practice *Thokar*, don't move, remain immobile as you did in the two first parts of *Fifth Kriya*. Don't use any mala to count the breaths.

Go on indefinitely. 100-200 breaths pass by without noticing but almost always absorption will engulf you and bring your awareness into the *Samadhi* state.

Appendix B: Some interesting variations of the Thokar procedure

1. A sweet and comfortable way of practicing Thokar

It is fair to reserve space to describe how a *Kriya* school conceives the practice of *Thokar*. It is correct to make a mention of it because it is very comfortable. It can be useful to those who don't love the strong impact of the described *Thokar* and prefer a more delicate approach.

Inhalation happens like in the basic form of *Thokar*. The chin moves up... *Om*, *Na*, *Mo*... *Ba* in *Bindu*. Then the breath is held. The chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity: a certain internal pressure is felt on frontal part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and then bends slightly toward the left shoulder, without turning the face. The same experience happens: a certain internal pressure is felt on the left part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and bends backwards: the same experience happens and pressure is felt on the back of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position and bends slightly toward the right shoulder, without turning the face: the pressure is felt on the right part of the heart *Chakra*. The head resumes its normal position, then the chin bends forward, toward the throat cavity... pressure is felt on the frontal part of the heart *Chakra*. The head then resumes its normal position. During this five bendings holding the breath, no *Mantra* is utilized. Then the exhalation leads the awareness through the *Chakras* to *Muladhara*. *Te* is placed in the *medulla*, *Va* in the fifth *Chakra*... and so on ... *Su*... *De*... *Va*, until *Ya* is mentally chanted in the *Muladhara*. The time employed depends on the individual; usually it is approximately 20-25 seconds, but it can be longer. The procedure is repeated at least 12 times. It should be remarked that the different pressures on the heart *Chakra* are more similar to a supply of energy flowing down in a tranquil way from a region above the head than the typical tapping of the *Thokar*. The head movement is comparable with the movement of a lid of a pot which by moving allows the pot to be filled by a stream of energy.

It is obvious how this form can evolve. After inhalation, the whole set of the movements of the head can be repeated different times before exhaling -- always holding your breath. The movements become more fluid: after bending forward, the head does not resume its normal position and, immediately afterwards, it hits to the left, then backwards...

2. An interesting way of practicing Thokar extending its action upon the first four Chakras

The physical pressure upon each *Chakra*, is obtained by a very natural and instinctive extension of the basic *Thokar* procedure. Inhalation happens like in the basic form of *Thokar*. The chin moves up... *Om*, *Na*, *Mo*, *Bha*, *Ga* and *Ba* in *Bindu*. Then the breath is held. Without turning the face, the head moves toward the left shoulder, then the head tilts back a little and in a sweeping arc begins to move toward the right shoulder. This is only half done: the head stops in the middle where the chin is raised as much as possible. In the meantime, the energy has descended from *Bindu* to *medulla*, not in a vertical line but curving to the left. When the chin is up, while chanting *Teeee*, all one's awareness like an arrow is injected into the point between the eyebrows. (During this act, *Mula Bandha* can be added -- if this does not disturb.) While keeping one's breath held, from this chin-up position the face turns to the right (as with the intention of

looking attentively at the area at your right, as far as possible) and then to the left (as for looking attentively at the area at your left, as far as possible.) During this movement, the fifth *Chakra* is perceived and the syllable *Va* is mentally chanted in it. Then, from the left position, the chin strikes the middle of the chest along a diagonal (just like in the basic form of *Thokar*), and the syllable *Su* is vibrated in the heart *Chakra*.

Then, while keeping one's breath held, another similar diagonal movement of the chin from the left to the chest is repeated and the energy is directed toward the **third Chakra** where the syllable *De* is vibrated; another similar movement directs the energy and the syllable *Va* into the **second Chakra**; finally a last stroke directs the energy and the syllable *Ya* into **first Chakra**. A very long exhalation accompanies the movement of the energy which, like a liquid light, climbs up the spine, crosses each *Chakra* up to *medulla*, *Bindu* and *fontanelle*.

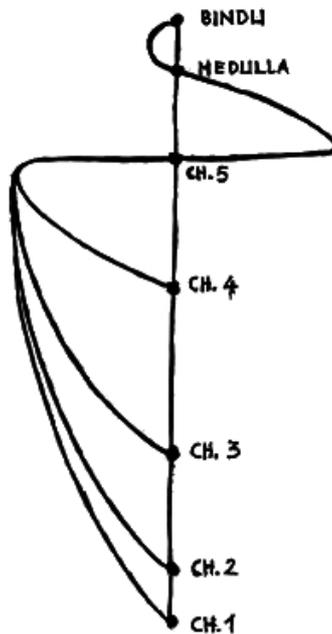


Figure 10. Scheme of the movements of the chin

The movement of the energy is intensified by the movement of the chin which is raised *very slowly* as if to push the energy up. This procedure can be repeated for a total of six to twelve times. But, usually, just one repetition could be enough. Only an expert *Acharya* can guide a *kriyaban* to increase the repetitions of this technique. Its effects are very difficult to assimilate! ¹²

At the end of this practice, *Kundalini* is invited to awaken. This is obtained by a series of very long and deep exhalations (each exhalation is preceded by a quick inhalation which does not require any visualization) through which we push the energy

¹² Some *Kriya Acharyas* teach at this point to lift the body just a few millimeters with the help of the hands and then let the buttocks touch the floor with a mild jolt. This action is called *Maha Bheda Mudra*, "Position of the great perforation" -- obviously it is the knot of the *Muladhara* to be crossed and cut. If the jolt is accompanied with the correct mental intensity, an ecstatic shiver is perceived.

up from *Chakra* to *Chakra*. From the *Muladhara Chakra* the energy rises like waves of a tide moving higher and higher, reaching a *Chakra*, then again falling down and moving from the base of the spine to a higher center. The centers of the head are awakened by increasing the mental pressure around each one of them in the last part of each exhalation, when the dissolution of the breath is accompanied by an increase of mental power.

3. A very interesting way of extending the *Thokar* procedure to all the *Chakras*

After having inhaled (with *Om, Na, Mo...*) and raised the *Prana* in the upper part of the lungs, keep the lungs as when you are going to begin a new inhalation. With a very relaxed mood, start rotating the head -- but take care of making slight movements! In comparison with the movements of the advanced level of *Thokar*, diminish further the dynamic of the movements of the head. Considering *fontanelle* like a point, the rotation of the head now draws a circle of no more than 2 - 3 centimeters of diameter. There could be also a light but visible oscillatory movement of the body (torso) that accompanies the movement of the head.

Transfer the repetitions of *Te, Va, Su* into the head. There are different ways of doing this: think *Te* in the left lobe of the brain, *Va* in the right one and *Su* in the frontal part of the head. While you think *Su*, you can have a small (almost invisible from the physical point of view) jolt -- you are lightly tapping on the door of *Kutastha*. Repeat different times. Exhale and inhale, taking back the rotation of the head.

You can activate a counterclockwise internal movement in each *Chakra*. While part of your awareness remains in the head, try, at the same time, to be aware of the fifth *Chakra*. Transfer the repetitions of *Te, Va, Su* into the fifth *Chakra*. Think "*Te*" when you move to the left, "*Va*" when you move to the right, "*Su*" when there is a soft tap in the center of the fifth *Chakra*. Repeat about three times. The gist of the procedure is the ability to create a mental pressure inside each *Chakra*. Exhale and inhale, taking back the rotation of the head. Shift your attention to the fourth *Chakra* and repeat the procedure. Repeat in the third *Chakra*... and so on (2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2), up and down your spine different times. Develop the ability of creating a mental pressure well precise directed towards the nucleus of each *Chakra*. Make milder movements till you reach a perfect immobility. In this immobility there is a treasure to be enjoyed. We said to exhale and inhale between one *Chakra* and another. This is not an obligation. If you have mastered the Third Omkar Kriya, you will be able to do all the work during one single breath.

Appendix C: Some interesting variations of the Fourth Kriya procedure

1. Fourth Kriya with "*Te, Va, Su*"

The instructions are the same, but, instead of chanting the Mantra *Om Bhur* or *Om Bhuvah* ecc, chant always *Te, Va, Su*. This for each *Chakra* that you raise. The perception inside each *Chakra* and inside *Kutastha* are those we have described in the previous variation of *Thokar* (n. 4).

2. Stimulating the crown

The ellipse of the crown, seen from above, may be ideally divided into 12 parts. Thanks to a short inhalation, the *Muladhara Chakra* is ideally raised into the crown of the head, over the occipital region, on the right (into part "1" of figure 11). Now forget the breath but keep the *Prana* in that point.

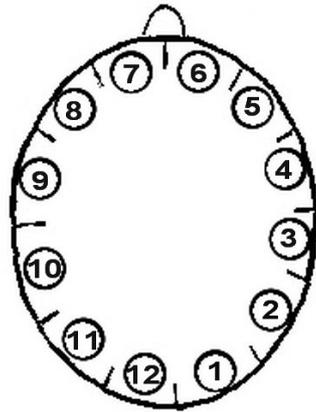


Figure 11. Crown seen from above

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

3. Stimulating important centers inside the brain, opening your way to Sahasrara

Inhale raising the *Muladhara Chakra* into **medulla**. Hold your breath. *Micro Thokar* is practiced now inside *medulla*. Oscillate slowly your head left - right - return to center, keeping the focus of concentration in *medulla oblongata*. Think (mentally chant) *Te* when you move to the left, *Va* when you move to the right, *Su* when you return to the center and, in order to intensify your perception of *medulla oblongata*, give a faint jolt with your chin. Repeat three times, always holding your breath. Exhale.

Now raise the second *Chakra* into the posterior part of the **cerebellum**. Hold your breath. Repeat three times the afore described procedure with *Te, Va, Su*, focusing all your attention into the posterior part of the cerebellum. Exhale and come down at the third *Chakra* location: inhale and raise it to the **Pons Varolii** (in order to perceive it come from cerebellum toward the center of the head, over *medulla* -- a few centimeters forward). Hold your breath. Repeat three times the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*, focusing all your attention on the Pons Varolii. *Exhale and come down in the fourth Chakra*. Inhale, raise it over the pons Varolii in the point marked with "4" in figure 12. To perceive it, slightly swing your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from the point between the eyebrows backwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the *fontanelle*. This center is the point of intersection of the two lines. When you have it, repeat three times in that point the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale and come down in the fifth *Chakra*. Inhale, raise it in the point marked with "5" in figure 12. To perceive it, swing slightly your head back and forth. Feel a horizontal line that comes from *Bindu* forwards. At the same time feel the vertical line that comes down from the *fontanelle*. This center is the point of intersection of the two lines. Repeat three times in that point the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale and come down in *medulla*. Inhale, raise it into **Bindu**. Repeat three times in *Bindu* the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*. Exhale and come down at the point between the eyebrows. Inhale, raise the

whole region between the eyebrows into *fontanelle*, which is the seventh *Chakra* trigger point. Repeat three times at *fontanelle* the procedure with *Te, Va, Su*.

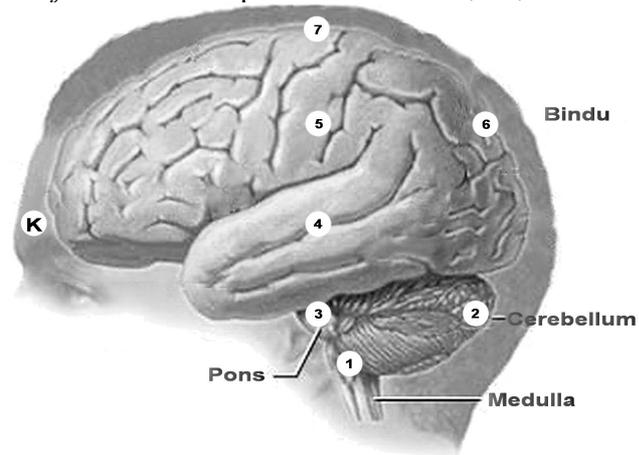


Figure 12. Locating some particular centers inside the head

Exhale from *Fontanelle* to the point between the eyebrows. Inhale. Exhale from *Bindu* to *medulla*. Inhale. Exhale from point "5" to cervical *Chakra*. Inhale. Exhale from point "4" to *Anahata Chakra*. Inhale. Exhale from pons Varolii to third *Chakra*. Inhale. Exhale from Cerebellum to second *Chakra*. Inhale. Exhale from *medulla* to *Muladhara*. Repeat all this maxi round from the beginning, making the movements subtler and subtler until you reach the perfect immobility -- of body, mind and breath.