

The Practice of Yoga

Part I of II

Hatha Yoga

by Chris Murphy

Philosophy

Hatha Yoga is the art of uniting (Yoga) the Sun and the Moon (Ha-Tha). The primary school of thought in Yoga is called the Sankhya Philosophy. Founded by Adi Shankara, the Sankhya school of thought revolves around Shiva and the symbolism of his mythology. Shiva is seen, like in Kashmir Shivaism, to be Brahman. Brahman is the one undivided God who is in the form of Satchidananda (existence, knowledge and bliss) which is true consciousness in the highest sense. Seeing as how the primary aim of this article is in teaching the practice of Yoga, I will not spend too long on the theory, but some basic understanding of it will nonetheless help the Aspirant in its practice. The religious preference of the Aspirant will also not effect the practice of Yoga very much, but I am presenting Yoga here as it is traditionally taught without the new-age influences that have infected it since it came to the West at the turn of the 20th century with Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda. As such, all the religious terminology will be Sanskrit words pertaining to the Sankhya philosophy and I will try to define any sanskrit word I use in parenthesis for the reader.

In the Sankhya philosophy, mankind lives in material world trapped in the illusion of Maya. Maya is the “illusion power” cast by Shakti (feminine principle of the universe) which allows us to identify our Self with our physical body and its lower desires. It is the illusion that sensual pleasure brings happiness and indulgence brings wealth. But what keeps us in this Maya? Why do we stay in it? It is Karma. Most people know that Karma is the law of cause and effect. In hindu and yogic philosophy, the soul is seen as being “caught” in a wheel of life, death and reincarnation called Samsara, and it is the glue of Karma which binds us to this wheel. The Yogi strives to reach “Moksha” (liberation) from the fetters of Maya with the practice of Yoga. By the restraint of the mind and desires, the Yogi crosses the ocean of Samsara in the boat of Sadhana (spiritual practice). He becomes a God-Man. He walks in the material world but is not “in” this

world or “of” it. He can move without creating Karma. He dissolves his Karma in the fire of Sadhana and in the deepest states of Samadhi (spiritual ecstasy in God-Union). He is called a Jivan-Mukta (liberated soul) while still alive.

The practice of Yoga is the expansion of the individual consciousness (Atman) into God’s consciousness (Purusha or Paratman). This is done primarily in one way: the raising of the Kundalini.

Kundalini:

Kundalini is Parvati, Shiva’s consort. She is his Shakti (feminine principle or counter-part) in the form of creative energy and is represented as a snake coiled up at the base of the spine in the Yogi. Through rigorous Sadhana this serpent must be straightened out and forced into the mouth of Sushumna and guided through each chakra on its ascent up the spine into the head. While I could write for much longer and in much more detail about what the Kundalini actually is, that is not the purpose of this article right now. The beginner will discover many things about the essence of the kundalini with good Sadhana.

Chakras:

There are 7 psycho-spiritual centers within the human body known as chakras. They are placed along the spinal chord of the person and are traditionally depicted as lotus-flowers of various sizes and colors. In the mundane man, these chakras are considered asleep, and in the Yogi they are considered awake. What is the difference? Each Chakra is Shiva in one of his emanations. Shiva is asleep until awakened by his consort Parvati (Kundalini). When the Kundalini is not awakened by the yogic fire and brought to her lover, then the chakras are considered asleep. When the Kundalini is brought methodically to each chakra through rigorous Sadhana, then the chakras awaken. The chakras do not all awaken at once on most occasions. They are brought into full activity one by one starting with the base of the spine and ascending to the crown of the head. As each chakra awakens, so does another level of the Yogi’s consciousness. He also develops the Siddhis (magickal powers) of each chakra. A description of the Chakras are thus:

- 1) Muladhara Chakra: This is the seat of the Kundalini, located at the base of the spine at the perineum. It is a four-petalled lotus whose color is red. In the center of the lotus there is the yantra (symbol) of a triangle with its point upwards. In the center of the triangle there is the serpent Kundalini.
- 2) Svadhistana Chakra: This chakra is located at the region of the sex organ a few finger-widths above the Muladhara chakra. Its color is generally depicted as purple but also violet. It is a lotus with 6 petals and contains the sign of an upward crescent moon within the base of the lotus.
- 3) Manipura Chakra: Located at the region of the Navel. Yellow lotus with 10 petals. Contains downward pointing triangle as symbol.
- 4) Anahata Chakra: Located at cardiac plexus in the chest-region of the spine. Green colored lotus, but can also be visualized as red. 15 petals with Hexagram in center of lotus.

5) Visshudda Chakra: Located at throat. Blue color lotus with 16 petals. Symbol of crescent moon within a black ring.

6) Ajna Chakra: Last of the 6 Shat Chakras, the Ajna chakra is located at the pineal gland, but its emanation is a psychic center called the Kutashta, which is located in between the two eyebrows. It is a gray or white lotus with 2 petals and the symbol of OM upon the center of the lotus.

7) Sahasrara Chakra: Generally depicted a few inches above the head, its actual psychic center is located in the Brahmarandhra at the top of the head in the *anterior fontanelle* just below the skull's surface. This is Brahman. It is the lotus of a thousand petals, and is pure white.

Nadis:

There are 72,000 spiritual "veins" in the body called Nadis. These astral tubes carry prana throughout the body from chakra to chakra. The primary nadis are called the Sushumna, Ida and Pingala Nadis. Ida starts in the left nostril, rises up into the Ajna Chakra and crosses over the center line of the body at this point. It then goes down the right side of the spine until the Anahata Chakra at which point it intersects with the Pingala Nadi and crosses back over to the left side of the spine. It continues to go down until the Kanda, which is a spiritual center just above the Muladhara chakra. At the Kanda it crosses over again and ends in the right testicle. The Pingala starts in the right nostril and does the exact reverse of the Ida, ending in the left testicle. The sushumna runs in a straight line from the perineum at the base of the spine up the spinal chord into the medulla of the brain, at which point it goes up into the pineal gland and further up to the Sahasrara Chakra. This Nadi contains within it a smaller nadi called the Brahma Nadi, which is actually the channel the Kundalini takes up the spine.

Prana, Upana and Samana:

There are five different types of Vayus (airs) in the human body. Of these, 3 are the most important. The Prana is the primary spiritual life force of the body. In a mundane man it runs down his spine towards the lower 3 chakras to engage in sensual pleasures. In the Yogi it runs up the spine to the higher chakras to establish Sattvic (holy) mind. It has its base in the Anahata Chakra. The Upana deals with the excretory system of the body. It has its base in the Muladhara chakra. It represents the current of "death" so to say, while Prana represents that of "life". The Samana is the Gastric fire that deals with digestion and assimilation. It is based in the Manipura chakra. The goal of hatha yoga is to unite the sun with the moon. The prana is the Sun and the Upana the moon. The Samana is the means by which the two are united. This is the goal of hatha yoga: to control the flow of the prana and upana and unite them in the fire of samana. This is done by Asanas and Pranayama. This leads to Pratyahara.

End of theory:

That is the very basic theory that is needed for a beginner to be able to make sense of the rest of this article. There are of course many things I did not talk about, and what I did talk about I spoke of in very minimal and simplistic terms.

Part two: Practice

Introduction to practice:

Thus after some basic theory we start the practical exercises of Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga is said to have been founded by the Nath Yogis, whose Mahaguru (head guru) is Adi Nath, whose name is Shiva Gorakshanath Babaji, the mahavatar of this age. He is the disciple of Matsyendranath, the founder of the tantra school of Yoga. After Shiva had taught Tantra Yoga to Matsyendranath, he told him that he could have any gift he desired. Matsyendranath asked that he have a disciple greater than himself. As he was the greatest of all Yogis, Shiva himself incarnated as Goraksha Babaji and became Matsyendranath's disciple. The Nath Yogis are considered the Custodians of Hatha Yoga and Kriya Yoga.

Hatha Yoga is comprised of three angas (limbs): Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara. They are to be mastered in that order, one after another. It is possible to reach the highest of attainments with just Hatha Yoga, because Hatha Yoga in its highest stage results in the complete stopping of the Prana and thus also the thoughts. This is the Chitta Vritti Nirodha (restriction of mind) that Patanjali speaks of as the goal of Yoga. This occurs simultaneously with Sahaja Samadhi, which is the natural state of the human mind before its involution into the world. Raja yoga results naturally from Hatha Yoga, which we will speak about in the next article entitled "Raja Yoga".

Now comes the question of a guru. Many western people are against the concept of a Guru because they can not humble themselves enough to admit that such a person can exist. While we can spend a great deal of time talking about Guru and the qualities with which to test him by, but ultimately the Guru comes when the student is willing enough. At that time, all previous misconceptions about the guru are destroyed. No spiritual Sadhana (practice) should be done without the guidance of a Guru. However, this is not possible for most people right now. So I will change it: Yoga can be practiced without Guru, but the highest attainable stages of perfection can not be achieved in Yoga without the specific and secret direction of the Guru. People think that everything about Yoga has been published. This could not be more wrong! Only neophyte (aspirant or beginner) things on Yoga have been released. Guru must teach the rest. Sometimes the guru is not physically incarnate, sometimes he is. Regardless, he will always come except for in cases of extreme past-life recapitulation in which the guru is not needed because the secrets of Yoga are remembered by the Yogi. What I will present here is good enough for any one to practice yoga and achieve definite degrees of spiritual evolution and expansion of consciousness.

To finish the introduction, it must be kept in mind that while Hatha yoga can achieve all results, it is generally taught so that the Chela (disciple) can clean the nadis and astral body and awaken the Kundalini so that Raja Yoga can then be pursued. However it is worth mentioning that perfection in Hatha Yoga is the only means of maintaining a physically immortal body according to a certain alchemical formula of the Nath Yogis. Perfection in other Yoga can still allow the physical body to live in relative youth for a few hundred years, such as the case of Trailanga Swami and Old Haidhakan Babaji. Now that I've undoubtedly sparked some curiosity, on to the actual practice!

Part I: Asana

Asana is the first task of the Hatha Yogi. How can one meditate or even sit to breath if one can not sit properly in the first place. It is up to the Yogi to decide which Asana to master as his sitting Asana. He is to pick one and only one. It is to be practiced until it can be held for great lengths of time with no discomfort. Once the Asana can be held for 3 ½ hours in one stretch comfortably, he has achieved Asanajaya (Mastery of Asana). This is marked by a very comfortable and enjoyable feeling when the Asana is taken. No discomfort should occur at all. When sitting in the Asana, concentration should be fixed on the physical body. The thoughts should be tamed to always come back to the body when they drift. Contemplate that the body is a statue. In this way it will become rigid and still. The Yogi can also contemplate upon the Naga, the Hindu snake deity who supports the earth. As Naga supports the earth, so does the Asana support the Yogi. It is said by Patanjali in the Yoga sutras that the qualities of the gods can be achieved by meditation on them. Likewise here, we meditate on Naga. Most will contemplate the statue depending on religious preference though.

The Sitting Asanas:

Padmasana:

By far the most popular Asana. It translates as "lotus pose". The Yogi sits with his left heel against the hip on the right thigh, with the right heel against the hip on the left thigh. The heels should be high enough so that the strain in the ankles are minimal. At first, most westerners will have a hard time with this pose. You will feel pain in your knees. This is due to inflexibility at the hip joints. There are some exercises to help you gradually reach Padmasana:

1) Put the right heel into the crevice of the left elbow and pull it up in front of the chest. The right arm reaches around the leg and grabs the left hand. This resembles the cradling of an infant, with the infant being the leg. Slowly cradle it left and right so that you feel the stretch in the hips and hamstring muscles. Do the opposite with the left leg.

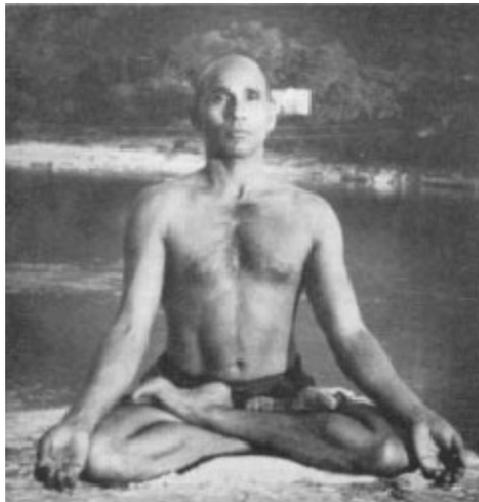
2) Place the right heel on the left hip in half-padmasana. The right leg should be on top of the left leg. The left leg should be folded in as if sitting cross-legged. Sit with spine completely erect. If the stretch is not felt in hips and thighs, then keep back straight while slowly leaning forward to place the forehead on the ground or against the knees. Make sure that the right leg is flat on top of the left leg. The knee should not be up in the air due to inflexibility. If this occurs, take the right hand and slowly push the right knee down. Do the opposite with the other leg.

3) Take the right heel and put it on the left thigh as in half-padmasana. This time, the left leg should not be directly under the right leg. Instead, the left leg is placed (still bent) slightly in front of the right leg so that the knee of the right leg can be pushed down to the floor without interference from the left leg. This being done, stretch forward and place the forehead against the left heel, which should be a few inches in front of the right knee. Hold this for 20 seconds, or as long as comfortable. Do the opposite with the other leg.

Once steps 1-3 can be done comfortably, then the heels will be able to be placed in full padmasana. At first aim for 20-30 seconds. After a week or so, try to get a few minutes and gradually increase the time according to common sense.

Benefits of Padmasana:

By forcing the lower back straight due to the position of the hip joints, the back can finally become completely straight. Padmasana, when perfected, feels as if the Yogi is sitting upon a throne. It locks in the static electricity caused by intense Sadhana and preserves the Prana. The straightening of the lower back allows the Kundalini to pierce the Brahma Grantha (knot of Brahma) in the Muladhara Chakra. The mind naturally calms in this posture. It allows the yogi to maintain an upright sitting position with no physical effort during deep meditation. This is one of the best postures for the practice of Pranayama and meditation. A householder (one who has not renounced sex or does not intend to) should sit in this Padmasana. Women can sit in it too.



Padmasana--Taken from Sivananda's "Kundalini Yoga"

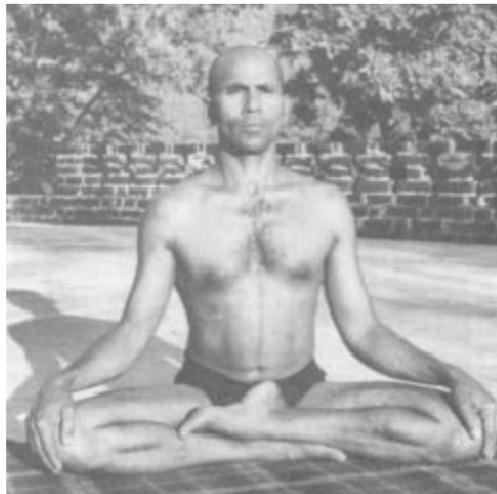
Siddhasana:

The "perfect pose". This posture is adopted by many yogis, as is Padmasana. This

posture is also hard for most people at first, though to some it is easier than Padmasana. It is sometimes considered to be the best Asana, even over Padmasana. The Yogi takes the right heel and places it at the base of the perineum. The left leg is placed over the right leg, with the left heel inverted upwards so that it touches and exerts some pressure at the region immediately above the sex organ. This posture requires some ankle flexibility, as well as hip flexibility and hamstring/inner thigh flexibility. Practicing splits while sitting helps the knees to be wide enough apart for this Asana. The hips also have to be rotated forward slightly so that the heel can be inverted. As with Padmasana, some people are naturally good at this Asana and others have to labor a great deal to achieve it.

Benefits of Siddhasana:

The right heel, by placing pressure on the perineum, stimulates mulabhandha (root lock) by contraction of the anus and sphincter muscles, which forces the Apana upwards. It also stimulates the Muladhara chakra and Kundalini. The left inverted heel stimulates the Svadhistana Chakra and redirects the flow of sexual energy from downwards into Muladhara to upwards in the Anahata chakra, Visshuddha Chakra and Ajna Chakra. This is the best pose for a Brahmacharya (celibate renunciant). It is not to be practiced by women. The pressure on the perineum and sex organ can cause nerve damage to the reproductive system. The male may lose sexual urges, or at least not be able to indulge in them. This Asana should be saved for those seriously pursuing their Sadhana as a Brahmacharya.



Siddhasana-Taken from Sivanada's Kundalini Yoga

Sukhasana:

This is called the “Easy Pose”, and rightly so. In Sukhasana, the Yogi simply sits comfortably with his legs crossed. This is generally better for people who start their practice late in life and can't achieve Padmasana or Siddhasana. It is also used by Chelas (disciples/aspirants)

who are doing some spiritual exercises but have not perfected Padma or Siddha Asanas. It has little spiritual benefits outside of being easy to sit in for a beginner.

These are the sitting poses that the Yogi should choose from. There are others, such as vajrasana (rock pose), but they do not provide as good a benefit in Yoga, so they have been omitted here. While the Yogi is working at perfecting Padma or Siddha Asanas, he can practice Sukhasana for his yoga. He should strive hard to perfect one of the two main sitting Asanas before the practice of pranayama. While he is practicing his Asana, it is good to also perform several other key asanas that can be kept in the Yogi's Sadhana for years or a lifetime. There are three key Asanas, the performance of which will guarantee a flexible body and clean astral body.

Three key Asanas:

_____ In the West, a common practice of Yoga is called a "yoga flow" in which the yogi moves from one yogic position to the next, spending only a few seconds on each Asana. This is agreeable to people who can not keep their mind on one point for too long. B.K.S Iyengar and Patabhi Jois teach this system of Asana Yoga. This is not found in the traditional Yogic texts, particularly the two which pertain immensely to Hatha Yoga, being the Hatha Yoga Pradipika of Svamimaram and the Goraknath Paddhati by Shiva Goraksha Babaji. It is declared in the scriptures that the Yogi must endeavor to hold the Asana for a great deal of time, employing the proper breathing techniques and visualizations taught by the guru. In this way, the Asanas become much more than just a physical workout. They control the movement of the prana and help still the mind to develop Ekagrata (one-pointedness of mind). This is not to say that the Yoga flows are ineffective, but just that they do not allow the yogi to sit in the Asana long enough to reap the full spiritual benefits. Due to this, the three key Asanas are to be practiced for prolonged periods of time. The Yogi should hold each Asana as long as possible (which at first is usually about 5 minutes each) and then increase its length according to common sense. 1 or 2 minutes a week is usually good for most people. I will not provide the proper visualizations and mantras (when used) for the Asanas, as this is something that should be learned directly from the mouth of the Guru and they change slightly depending on the chela's spiritual progress and Karma which the guru can see. While some specific pranayamas can be used in the Asanas, Ujjayi Pranayama is the best natural breathing sequence. Inhale through the nostrils, retain the breath as long as comfortable, and then exhale. Proper ratio is 1:2:1. For example, breath in 5 seconds, retain the breath for 10, and exhale for another 5. Other ratios used are 1:2:2 and 1:4:2.

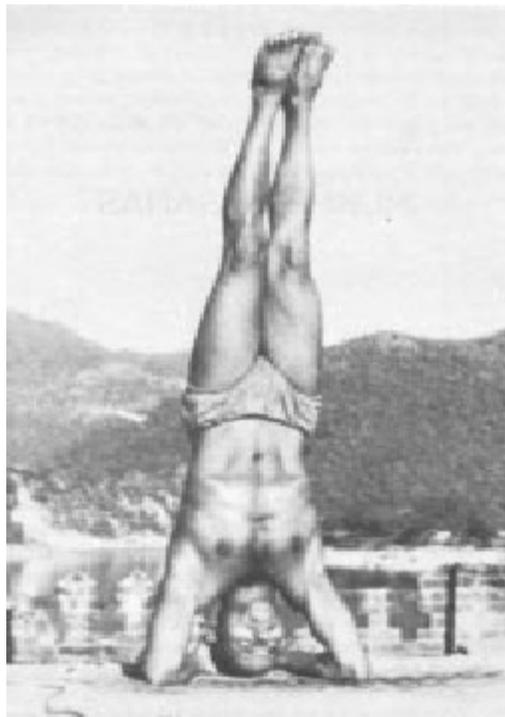
Sirshasana:

This is called the King of all Asanas. It is said that just by perfection of this Asana the highest stages of yoga can be reached. The Yogi, sitting on his knees, bends over and places the top of his head on the ground. His hands reach up and interlock the fingers together behind his head. He then acquires a point of balance on the top of his head, shifts his weight to the head and lifts up the trunk and legs of the body into the air in a vertical ascension so that the Yogi stands completely on his head with hands locked behind his head and elbows placed firmly on the ground for support. Having gained balance, the yogi closes the eyes and contemplates his body as a statue to acquire stillness. If the body is moving and shaking, then the mind is not still. If the mind is still

enough, body will become still. You will see with practice.

Benefits of Sirshasana:

This asana redirects sexual energy from the lower chakras into the Ajna Chakra to be transmuted from sexual energy into mental energy. This is a good Asana for fighting lustful urges. It also awakens the Kundalini and drives it up the spine. It tones the shoulders and back and develops neck strength as well. It is good for helping you to wake up in the mornings, and can be done before meditation to help the mind enter into a meditative mind-set. The Yogi who can hold this Asana for 3 hours achieves Siddhis (yogic powers) and great spiritual benefit. He enters into the deepest states of meditation.



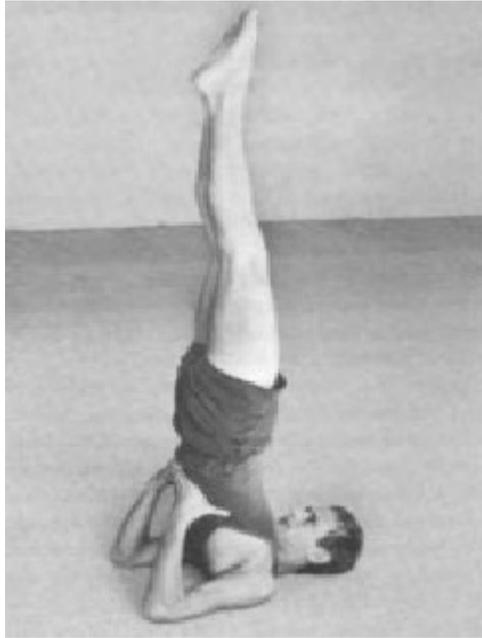
Sirvangasana:

As Sirshasana is a head-stand, Sirvangasana is a shoulder-stand. Laying flat on the back, the yogi should raise the trunk and legs of his body vertically over him, keeping the back and legs as straight as possible so as to form a straight line. The chin locks in Jalandhara Bandha against the chest. If eyes are open, concentration is at tips of toes above the head. If eyes are closed, concentration is on body or specifically between the eyebrows.

Benefits of Sirvangasana:

This Asana keeps the nectar *Amrita* within the head above the palate of the mouth, instead of allowing it to drip down into the stomach and be wasted. This generates an intense amount of mental and creative energy. Aside from this, it does the same benefits of Sirshasana, but in a less extreme manner. I will give the primary importance of this Asana in a cryptic manner that the

Yogi can realize with practice and experience: *In Sirvangasana, the moon takes the place of the sun and the Sun becomes the moon, allowing shiva to embrace Shakti in the fire yajna (sacrifice).*



Sirvangasana-From Sivananda's "Kundalini Yoga"

Paschimottanasana:

The third key Asana is Paschimottanasana. The Yogi sits and stretches both legs directly in front of him flat on the ground. Both feet are placed next together. The yogi stretches forward the trunk of the body and reaches the hands out to the feet, grasping the big toe of each foot by the index and middle fingers, with the thumbs pressing down on the front of the big toe at the toenail. Another manner is to interlock the fingers of both hands with each other, keeping the big toes in the middle of the lock. The former is the best. The pressure on the big toe stimulates an important Nadi. The back must be kept as straight as possible. The yogi must make extra effort to keep the lower back straight while stretching forward. The head locks in Jalandhara Bandha against the chest., or is placed with the nose between the two knees. It is a good practice to keep neck straight with nose between knees during inhale, and then move to Jalandhara Bandha for retention and exhalation of breath.

Benefits of Paschimottanasana:

This asana helps vitalize the Sushumna nadi with the fresh prana acquired from the Ujjayi Pranayama. It stimulates the Kundalini to rise up to the ajna Chakra. It stimulates the chakras with Prana. By keeping the spine flexible with this Asana, the Yogi can help retain his youth and also enhance production of the spinal fluid and effectiveness of the nervous system.



Paschimottanasana-Sivananda's "Kundalini Yoga"

These are the three key Asanas for someone who does not wish to rigorously practice hundreds of Asanas. These help maintain physical strength as well as spiritual strength. They should be practiced in the above given order. These three asanas will give the basic spiritual balance in the Yogi's Asana Sadhana, but should he desire for physical balance as well, there are two other Asanas that should be done to make sure the spine is stretched in all the needed directions. These can be done after Paschimottanasana.

Matsyendrasana:

This is a strong spinal twist. The yogi sits down in sukhasana. Now lift the right leg up and over the left leg so that the right foot is placed firmly in the ground to the left of the left knee. The right arm is placed in front of the right leg and stretches back to grab the big toe of the right foot. The trunk twist to face behind you, with head focusing on wall behind you. The left arm reaches across the trunk to the left side and rests on top of the right hip. This is very hard for people with too much fatty tissue around the gut. The opposite is done with the other leg turning the other direction.

Benefits of Matsyendrasana:

This vitalizes the Sushumna straight up to Sahasrara Chakra. It also exercises the spine

and back to increase spinal fluid and spinal health. This increases overall health. It is said in the hatha Yoga Pradipika that the yogi who masters this Asana attains all Siddhis.

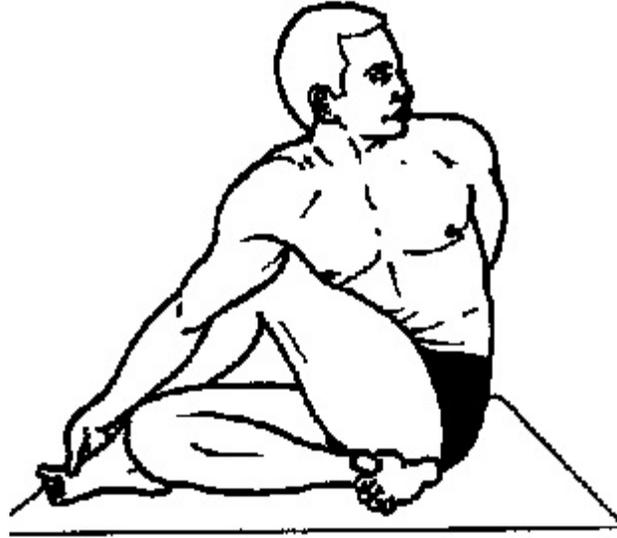


FIGURE 6

from hatha Yoga Pradipika-Svatmarama. Elsy Becherer's translation with commentary from Hans Ulrich Reiker

Bhujangasana:

_____ This is the cobra pose. It stretches the spine in the opposite direction of paschimottanasana. The yogi lies flat on his stomach first. Then placing the hands firmly flat on the ground the upper body is pushed upwards to that it inversely arches upwards. The hips are left flat on the ground, and the arms should not be completely stretched out in a locked position because it kinks the shoulders and can cause harm. The spine bends backwards. The arms are left slightly bent so that they do not lock out. This creates a good workout.

Benefits of Bhujangasana:

This helps awaken the Kundalini. It also drives the prana up the spine from the lower chakras into the Ajna chakra. Ujjayi Pranayama done in this Asana will help expand lung capacity.

I have no picture for this particular pose. The description should be suitable. If not, the reader can easily look online to get this picture.

Other Asanas:

There are over one hundred other Asanas, with at least 70 of those being traditional. They all have some value, but most of them are impractical to hold for long periods of time. I have given the base of the Yogi's Asana Sadhana. You may expand upon it according to your like, and I refer the reader to B.K.S Iyengar's "Light on Yoga" and Swami Sivananda's "Asanas" for further study and practice of the other groups of Asanas. Those Asanas which I have included are the most important ones for awakening of the Kundalini and purification of the Nadis.

Part II: Bandhas

Now aside from the Asanas, the Hatha Yogi also employs a certain selection of physical locks called Bandhas. There are several Bhandas, and I will cover the three most important which comprise the Traya Bandha (lit. three locks). These are Mula Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha and Uddiyana Bandha. These are primarily done at different stages in the pranayama as a means to aid the flow of the Prana and Apana and help stir the Kundalini.

Mula Bandha:

Mula Bandha is the first Bandha done in the pranayama series. The Yogi retracts the sphincter muscles inwards in this Bandha. For help, he can place the heel of the foot against the perineum should he sit in Siddhasana. At first this is hard to hold for long periods of time, but it becomes easier with practice. In the pranayama, this is done during the retention of the breath. It can also be done during the exhalation as well. Some do it during the entire pranayama, but few can do this. It is best to make sure you do it at least during the retention of breath. This Bandha forces the Apana, which has a downward tendency, upwards so that it can unite with Prana and enter into the Sushumna to awaken and drive the Kundalini.

Jalandhara Bandha:

This Bandha can be done either during the entire pranayama or just during the retention of the breath. It is also done at certain points in some Asanas according to the visualization techniques given by Guru. The Yogi presses his chin against the top of the chest at the crevice of the collar bone. The chin must be pressed firm against the body at this point, but not so much that it causes stress against the neck. This is an easy Bandha. Some have trouble with it because of pains in the back of the neck when they do it. This is due to inflexibility in the upper back muscles. Some stretching along with actual practice of the Bandha will change this. Jalandhara Bandha drives the prana from the chest region into the head and helps maintain the nectar above the palate during inhalation. In exhalation it maintains the amrita nectar above the palate of the mouth and drives the prana downwards towards the rising Apana (from mula Bandha).

Uddiyana Bandha:

This is by far the hardest Bandha to learn, but once learnt it can be easily done. The yogi here retracts his stomach and pulls the intestine into the pit of the stomach just below the chest, thus allowing the stomach itself to retract far back almost to the spine. There is a certain knack to developing this Bandha. A good Guru or teacher can help you. The yogi has to perform a sort of

“internal inhalation” which creates a suction force inside the body and draws the stomach in and upwards. This Bandha is not as necessary as the other two, but is still a great compliment for those who learn it. It drives the prana into the spine and activates the Gastric fire for the blending of Apana and Prana. It also drives the Kundalini up the Sushumna.

Part III: Mudras:

Mudras are yogic techniques which act as seals in the body to help vivify the Nadis and purify the mind. They also help raise the Kundalini. There are many Mudras, but we will be concerned with only three of them which play a key importance in the yogi’s Sadhana.

Maha Mudra:

Literally translates as “Grand Seal”. The Yogi sits down and places the left heel against the perineum while stretching the right leg out in front of the body. Inhaling in Ujjayi Pranayama, the yogi bends forward and grabs his right foot, placing the left hand grasping the sole of the foot and the right hand grasping the big toe by hooking the back of the toe with the index and middle fingers while applying pressure to the front of the toe (at the toenail) with the thumb. He assumes Jalandhara Bandha and retains his breath for as long as comfortable in this position. Fix the eyes in between the eyebrows and concentrate here. Then exhale and lift up slowly during the exhale resuming the original position. This can either always be done with the same leg, or for physical balance can be done once with one leg and then again with the other leg (switching hand positions of course). This Mudra has many benefits. They are too many to list completely. The most important are the stimulating of the Kundalini, Vitalizing of the Sushumna, vitalizing of the Chakras with Prana, Brahmacharya becomes easy, internal organs get worked, siddhis are acquired, etc. As Sirshasana is the king of Asanas, so is Maha Mudra the king of Mudras. This should be done at least 12 times a day.

Yoni Mudra:

In the Goraknath Paddhati, Shiva Goraksha Babaji says “As the Turtle withdraws his limbs into his shell, so does the Yogi withdraw his Indriyas (5 senses) in Yoni Mudra”. Yoni Mudra helps establish Pratyahara. Sitting in Padma or Siddha Asanas, the yogi closes the openings of the head with his fingers as such: the right thumb closes the right ear opening, the right index finger holds the right eyelid shut, the right middle finger pushes the right nostril closed, the right ring finger pushes down on the upper lip while the right little finger pushes up on the lower lip thus closing the mouth. The exact opposite is done with the left hand on the left side of the head. Inhaling in Ujjayi Pranayama, the Yogi directs all of his attention to the point between the eyebrows (Shiva Netri, also called Kutashta). While retaining his breath for as long as possible, the entire consciousness is brought into the head by intense focus on the kutashta and the mantra “Om” is recited mentally in the head. The Yogi must endeavor to see his soul in the Kutashta shining forth like a brilliant white flame. There are deeper stages of this Mudra which should be learned from the Guru that can result in Astral Projection along with other Siddhis. After retaining breath, the Yogi exhales slowly bringing his consciousness back to his body. If he wishes to repeat

the exercise, he leaves his hands in their positions and repeats the exercises. 5 in a row of Yoni Mudra once a day has good benefits on the consciousness. With Yoni Mudra, the Yogi can retain his breath for incredible inhuman lengths of time when the consciousness is absorbed in Yoni Mudra.

Kechari Mudra:

_____ Called the “flying seal”. It is said in the hatha Yoga Pradipika that the Yogi who masters this walks on air. This refers to astral projection of course, however there are more important benefits to this mudra. This Mudra should only be practiced under the skilled guidance of a guru. The Tongue is brought back in the mouth and up into the nasal cavity inside the head, so that one can not see the throat opening when the tongue is thus placed. This requires the lengthening of the Frenellum (small thin connection between the tongue and bottom of mouth) by the skilled and systematic cutting of it one hair at a time over the period of several months with a sharp blade. This should not be attempted by anyone without a skilled Guru’s guidance. The cut is then salted with rock salt to help heal the wound but keep the frenellum from reconnecting. There is another method which does not involve cutting. It is just as effective and much easier, but is hard to teach by writing. It has to be taught by demonstration and example of the guru. Do not, under any circumstances, result to cutting the Frenellum unless under a skilled guru who has done it many times with many students.

This Mudra has many benefits. The Kundalini is drawn up by magnetism to Shiva. The prana inhaled goes directly into the Sushumna. It is said that some of the highest stages of Meditation can only be reached with Kechari Mudra. While I don’t personally believe this, I will say that it amplifies meditative sadhana immensely and the Kundalini wakes easier. Also, when the tongue reaches high into the nasal cavity inside the head it meets a small bulb underneath the Pineal gland. When the tongue rubs this bulb a heavenly nectar is emitted called Amrita. This is the divine nectar of Yogis. It is very pleasing and filling. This is how a Yogi who is always fasting and doing Sadhana can still be healthy and full in appearance, even fat.

Part IV: Pranayama

Pranayama is perhaps the most important cornerstone of Hatha Yoga. There are a dozen different types of Pranayama. For the sake of length (because this is not intended to be a full analysis of Hatha Yoga) and practice, I will provide those Pranayamas which are the most potent and important techniques for the Yogi’s Sadhana. They are primarily three in number: Sukha Purvaka, Bhastrika, and Khapal Bhati. Done in that order, they create a very peaceful and centered feeling along with cleansing the Nadis. Pranayama is the most effective means of cleansing the Nadis and awakening the kundalini. There are two kinds of Pranayama: internal and external. Hatha Yoga pranayama is external (physical), while Raja Yoga pranayama is internal (spiritual).

The inhalation is called Purvaka, the retention of the breath is called Kumbhaka, and the exhalation of the breath is called Recheka. There are two types of Kumbhala; Sahita and Kevalya. Sahita is restraint of the breath with an inhalation or an exhalation. Kevalya is the natural restraint of the breath without inhalation or exhalation. Sahita is normal pranayama. Kevalya is liberation from this world. The Yogi who performs Kevalya rules this world and transcends Maya. Kevalya

is the natural restraint of the breath during Samadhi (ecstatic union with God). The yogi's breath stops for hours in Kevalya. Kevalya and Samadhi do not exist without each other.

Sukha Purvaka Pranayama:

This is a very powerful pranayama. The Yogi cleanses the Ida and Pingali with this pranayama. It induces Nadi Sodhana (cleansing of the Nadis), which is marked by feeling the alternating warm and cool currents of Apana and Prana flowing up and down the spine. In Nadi Sodhana, the nostrils become clear and easy to breath through (hence the name, which translates as "easy breathing"). The skin becomes vibrant and full of health. The yogi emits a pleasant fragrance from his body as well. The exercise is as follows:

- 1) The Yogi sits in Siddha or Padma Asana. He prepares his right hand for the pranayama by taking the index and middle fingers and curling them into the palm, while the ring and little fingers reach over the folded fingers and touch the point of the thumb. This is proper hand position. Only the right hand touches the nostril during this Pranayama. The left hand is placed either in Jnana mudra (index finger touches thumb) or is used to help count the number of Pranayama done.
- 2) The yogi completely exhales to empty the lungs
- 3) The right hand comes up to the nose (maintaining its position). The thumb presses closes the right nostril by pressing down the skin outside the nasal passage. The yogi does purvaka through the left nostril.
- 4) When purvaka is done, while keeping the right nostril closed with the thumb, the other two fingers (ring and little) curl around to close the left nostril as well. Thus both nostrils close and the Yogi retains the breath in Kumbhaka.
- 5) Lift the thumb off of the right nostril and exhale through the right nostril. This is Rechecka.
- 6) Pause a second (without closing nostrils, this is a natural pause between exhalation and new inhalation)
- 7) Inhale through right nostril for Purvaka.
- 8) Do Kumbhaka with both nostrils shut by closing right nostril with thumb.
- 9) Rechecka through left nostril by lifting little and ring finger.

Steps 3-9 comprise one round of Sukha Purvaka Pranayama. Practice it until the motions become natural. It is said in the Goraknath Paddhati that if one sits for Pranayama 4 times a day at the time of Sandhya Prayers (midnight, sunrise, noon, sunset) 40 times a sitting, then the Yogi can achieve Nadi Sodhana in a few months. It is good for the Yogi to be able to work up to 80 rounds at a time. This has great physical and spiritual benefits. The ratio for this pranayama is supposed to be practiced as 1:4:2. For example, purvaka for 5 seconds, kumbhaka for 20 seconds and rechecka for 10 seconds. If you can not do this ratio at first, then work up to it. Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for as long as comfortable, and then try to exhale as close to 10 seconds as you can. Increase the length of time with practice. Always aim for the 1:4:2 ratio. It has the best purging effect on the Nadis. Start with 10 rounds of sukha Purvaka if possible. If not, then work up to 10 rounds. At first, most people will do this once a day. You should always endeavor to sit for pranayama at least twice a day. Start with 10 rounds and slowly increase the rounds. Once you can do 40 rounds at a stretch twice a day, then increase the time of the Pranayama. For example, if you can do 40 rounds of pranayama with 4sec/16sec/8sec pattern, then increase it to 5sec/20sec/10sec pattern. Continue in this manner according to your practice. Most yogis stop

increasing breath time once they can achieve 20sec/80sec/40sec, thus making each breath 2 minutes and 20 seconds long.

There are four levels of success in this Sukha Purvaka pranayama. The first stage is when the body shakes and trembles, and feels intense heat with immense sweating. This stage has to be worked up to. The shaking, heat and sweating are all due to the prana cleaning out the impurities of the Nadis. When the second level of success is achieved, the body becomes totally rigid in its Asana. This is a good stage for meditation. When the third level is reached, the rigid body starts to hop along the floor several inches at a time. There is a fourth level, which is very hard to reach, in which the physical body levitates off of the floor. Few can achieve the fourth level. It requires a very one-sided training routine. The yogi should always strive for balance in his Sadhana (practice). Pranayama should never be pursued just for levitation. No success can be had in that way.

The mind must be fixed firmly on one of two things: the point between the brows, or the pure prana being inhaled and the impurities of the body being exhaled. This is the neophyte's (beginner's) level of visualization. There are some higher levels of visualization which should be learned from the guru.

Bhastrika Pranayama:

This is a very powerful pranayama, and some Yogis claim that just its practice can awaken the Kundalini by itself. The Yogi takes up his customary Asana and does a very strong purvaka followed by a quick and strong exhale. This can be a physically exhausting pranayama. The nostrils are not manipulated in any way. Inhalation and exhalation are done through both nostrils. On the purvaka, the chest is expanded and the stomach does not expand. The Recheka is done forcefully while the shoulders drop back down to their normal position (they lifted when the chest expanded on the inhale). The shoulders are not forced down, they are allowed to drop back to place naturally. The exact technique is best learned by a good teacher or guru. Concentration should be on Kundalini in Muladhara chakra. One round of Bhastrika usually is 10 full breaths in and out (10 actual bhastrika pranayamas). It is not good to do more than a few rounds. 3-5 rounds is good. Too many rounds can make you go unconscious. You should rest for a few breaths in between rounds or else you can also go unconscious as a beginner. 3 rounds of 10 is good for starters. When done, it is a very refreshing and invigorating pranayama. Don't be foolish and do it too many times.

Khapal Bhati:

_____ This translates as "skull cleaner", because it flushes prana throughout the head and refreshes the body greatly. Prana invigorates the blood stream and also rushes through the pores of the skin. This can help prevent wrinkles as well. It stimulates the gastric fire at the pit of the stomach and awakens Mother Kundalini. This is good when done after Sukha Purvaka and Bhastrika pranayamas. The Yogi sits in his usual Asana and makes quick and strong inhalations and exhalations, but on a much lesser scale than Bhastrika. They are short breaths in and out done very quickly. 1 Bhastrika can be done in 2-3 seconds, while 2 Khapal Bhati can be done in 1 second. This is also best learned from a guru so that the proper movement can be checked. I will explain as best as possible. On the exhalation, the yogi pumps the stomach quickly and forcefully

by tightening the abdominal muscles and sucking in slightly. On the inhale the stomach relaxes back to its neutral position. It is not forced out, but is allowed to simply relax. This motion is done very quickly with the cycles of Khapal Bhati. One full round should consist of 20-30 pranayamas according to the Yogi's ability. The rounds is good for starters. The number of pranayama per round and the number of rounds can be increased according to common sense as you become better at your practices. It is not good to do too many rounds. 5 rounds of 100 is good for even an advanced practitioner. It is a wise choice to stop with this unless instructed otherwise by a Guru or you have become very adept at Pranayama.

Part V: Pratyahara

Many people think they can enter into pratyahara. This is a lie due to the lack of guidance from a good Guru. People who have been practicing for only a few months say "I can do pratyahara". This is not the case. They do not even know what pratyahara really is. They think it is simply stopping the thoughts, or attaining an inward peace during meditation. An intense inner peace during practice when the eyes are closed and you are sitting to practice could be called a lesser pratyahara, but that is simply to encourage the Chela (disciple). Pratyahara is a very intense experience. It flows naturally from the practice of Pranayama. It usually takes several years for a student to be able to attain full pratyahara.

So then what is pratyahara? It is the process by which the yogi's consciousness is withdrawn completely into the spinal chord. Everything becomes peaceful, and there is total loss of consciousness of the outside world. It is a much different state of mind. In some ways, you are still aware of what is occurring outside of you, but there is such a complete state of indifference that you couldn't really be considered conscious of it. I am not talking from books or people's theories. I am trying to share the experience of actually being in Pratyahara. These things are always hard to put into words. It is the launching point of Raja Yoga. Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (God-Consciousness) all blossom from the lotus of Pratyahara. This is still considered Hatha Yoga because it only occurs once complete Nadi Sodhana (purification of the Nadis) has been attained. Everything is intensely still in Pratyahara. It is an unworldly still, accompanied by an unworldly peace. When the mind is still and withdrawn from the sense organs, the peace of the spirit is able to be sensed. One also hears the great Pranava (OM mantra) uttering forth from the depths of the soul. The anahata sounds (a series of special sounds that the anahata chakra produces) are heard very easily. In pratyahara, all awareness from the sense organs are withdrawn. He is not aware of physical touch, hearing, sight, smell, and taste. He is using astral senses now. There is no exact practice for Pratyahara. Yoni mudra helps develop it. Rigorous Pranayama will allow the mind to naturally enter into Pratyahara after a great deal of practice. There are certain channels which the consciousness must follow to enter into the Sushumna. These can be learned from rigorous practice, but of course is best learnt from the guidance of a Guru. A guru can guide the chela's consciousness straight into pratyahara if the disciple is ready.

This concludes the actual treatise on Hatha Yoga. I have endeavored to give as much as possible about the actual practice of Hatha Yoga without writing a very large book. A great deal

can be written about its full practice. There are many asanas, and many pranayamas. I have included what is needed for success in Yoga and for the Yogi to progress from Hatha Yoga to the higher levels of Raja Yoga. While all can be achieved with Hatha Yoga, it is more natural for Hatha Yoga to naturally flow into Raja Yoga. This is part one of my treatise on the practice of Yoga. Part 2 will examine the practice of Raja Yoga. I will now provide a few supplemental words about the actual guru and his role, as well as provide a recommended training routine in Hatha Yoga for beginners and intermediate Sadhus (those doing Sadhana).

A Few Words concerning the Guru:

I know that most people in the West seem to be determined that there is either no such thing as a Guru or that there is at least no need for one. This is largely due to people's inability to succumb their ego to the divine will of another. Loose the ego! Forget it. You will be humbled over and over again in your Sadhana, so why not start now. In India it is not too uncommon for a man to spend his first year of "training" under his guru as a beggar on the streets. He comes to the guru saying "I now wish to learn Yoga from you", and instead of receiving any secret teachings, he is given an alms bowl and sent on his way being told not to return for another year. A muslim saint once said that Hunger was the quickest way to God. How true his words! How great a humbler is hunger! In India there Guru is seen as God. Why not? The Yogi learns quickly that his Guru's consciousness and that of God are one and the same. Guru is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is a jivan mukta (living liberated soul).

Guru literally means "destroyer of darkness", referring to the Darkness that the neophyte is in when he first pursues his practice. Many people think "I will dispel my own darkness". How? Have you been given any light? Darkness does not destroy darkness. Only light separates it. The Light of the Guru destroys the darkness that the chela(disciple) is in. People in the west have a hard time bowing down to someone greater than them. They think "certainly there is no man greater than I? Why should I bow?". And then the Guru bows to them to show his great humility, and they feel ignorant. Don't live in ignorance. You will hear from vain mouths "there is no such thing as a guru" or "A guru isn't needed". These are the words of a man who has never met his Guru!! Only such a man speaks such foolish things. People say "but there are so many aspirants and not enough gurus. I have been asking for a guru and one has not appeared". This is wrong. There are always enough Gurus. Do you think heaven does not prepare ahead of time! Guru always comes when the chela devotes himself to practice. Then one day when it is needed most, he appears. He is not always physically incarnate on this earth at the time. People think that all the progress can be made without Guru. From what? From your books? Where else did you learn from? You are practicing from books. How little do the books of man reveal about the practice of Divinity! If you are still learning and practicing from books, you are a Neophyte. The guru instructs you in things never written down. He teaches you things passed down by mouth from initiate to initiate for hundreds of years. He perceives the secrets of heaven even with his eyes. He teaches you how to do the same.

There are certain characteristics by which a Guru can be determined. Some gurus have all of these qualities but never display them. Some display all of them. It is hard not to see at least some of them. I have provided a list below:

- He should inspire his students to pursue God with his very presence. He needs no words
- He should be the incarnation of his teachings.
- He knows what his disciples do, no matter the distance
- He knows the thoughts of his disciples
- He gives Shaktipat (transference of his shakti into disciples to clean their auras and help the Kundalini awaken).
- He gives Shivapat (Sharing of his consciousness with his disciples to still their minds and spirits)
- He gives Pranapat (controls the prana flow within his disciples during meditation to ensure proper practice when needed).
- He bestows initiation
- He is always engaged in service to humanity
- He is always engaged in Yama and Niyama (right acting and thinking)

These are some of the characteristics of a Guru. Sometimes the Guru keeps his true nature to himself until the student is ready.

Guidelines for Sadhana:

- 1) There are some principles which should be observed by the Neophyte as he starts his Sadhana. He should neither eat too much or too little. His diet should be controlled. No red meat if at all possible. Vegetables, fruit, wheat and dairy products should be the staple of the diet. These things don't contain the degree of intelligent spirit that animals do. Animals take much more prana to digest. The samana has to work much harder as well. Even the blood rushes into the digestive organs to make the body lazy and lethargic. This is not conducive to Yoga Sadhana. It arouses the passions. Fruit and Vegetables are very conducive to meditation. They cultivate serenity and peace in the mind.
- 2) Yama-This is correct action. I will speak more at length about this in part two of this treatise. The Neophyte should live his life in harmony with his aims. Doing the right thing is Yama. Regulating diet is Yama. Yama is many things. Yama is living in harmony with the universe.
- 3) Niyama-This is correct thinking. Reading and studying scripture, writing poetry, Japa (chanting mantra), thinking about the Lord (whoever he may be for you), maintaining pure thoughts, etc. This is niyama. I will expound upon this more in the next part of the treatise.
- 4) The Neophyte should not sleep too much or too little. 4-7 hours of sleep is good for most ages. You can start with 7 hours and gradually decrease it over time. The deeper in your Sadhana you are, the less sleep you'll need.
- 5) Avoid bad company and Idle talk as much as possible. Try to keep the mind focused on Divine things, even during daily activities.
- 6) Do Karma Yoga. This is performing one's duties and responsibilities every day with no attachment. Do not let the workplace upset you or disturb you. Do not think about it much when you leave.

7) Do not practice too much at first. Start with a short routine and build it up. A good Sadhana for someone who has made progress in his training is 3-4 hours a day. Advanced Sadhana replaces sleep so that the Yogi does his Sadhana sometimes 10-12 hours a day. This is done with Raja Yoga.

Some examples of Sadhana routines in Hatha Yoga: Designed with householders in mind

Beginner:

5:00-5:30AM:

- wake up
- Sirshasana 5 minutes
- Sirvangasana 5 minutes
- Paschimottanasana 5 minutes
- Bhujangasana 5 minutes
- Matsyendrasana 5 minutes
- Savasana (lay down flat on back and relax) 2-3 minutes

5:30-6:00 AM:

- 10 rounds Sukha Purvaka 4:16:8
- 3 rounds of 10 Bhastrika
- 3 rounds of 30 Khapal Bhati

6:00am-6:00 PM:

- Work/Job/Daily Duties

6:00-6:30 pm:

- Pranayamas as before in the morning

10:00 PM:

- before sleeping, read some scripture.

More Advanced Sadhana (Intermediate):

3:45-5:00 AM:

- Wake up
- Stretch legs for Padmasana
- Sirshasana 20 minutes
- Sirvangasana 20 minutes
- Paschimottansana 20 minutes

5:00-6:00 AM:

- 40 rounds Sukha Purvaka 5/20/10 seconds
- 5 rounds of 10 Bhastrika
- 5 rounds of 100 Khapal Bhati

6:00 AM-6:00 PM: Work/job/Daily activities

6:00-8:00 pm: Two hour nap if needed. If not, then scripture study and other acts of Niyama.

8:00-8:30 PM:

- 25 Maha Mudras

-5-10 Yoni Mudras

8:30-9:30 PM:

-repeat morning Pranayama routine.

9:30-10 PM

-Do some relaxing activities and prepare for sleep.

Midnight: (optional)

-it is good to wake up at midnight and repeat pranayama exercises if possible.

Many people say “I don’t have time to practice for 2 or 3 hours a day!”. Most of the time this is not true. Most people can make the room in their day. Even if the workday is as long as 12 hours, this still leaves you 5 hours of time to practice and 7 hours of sleep. It is sacrifice that is the problem. We want to watch T.V shows, play video games, go to the bar and drink, party, etc. How trivial and illusory are such things. How can they be happiness. People say “I enjoy drinking a lot and it makes me happy”, but what is this happiness? It is not permanent. Will you even remember the good time you had while drinking? Will you vomit? Will you say something you didn’t mean to say to a loved one? Will you physically hurt somebody or get hurt yourself? People call this happiness? This is foolishness. Real happiness is the result of Sadhana. What else is their more important? Liquor can’t compare to the nectar of divine realization! Extravagance in earthly clothes does nothing for our spiritual garments. Watching TV shows does not compare to seeing the plays and past-times of the gods! What is intoxication? It is nothing in the face of Divine ecstasy. It is filth. Now this is not to say that one should give up all such worldly things, but not one soul can advance in Sadhana if it is not willing to make even the smallest sacrifice. There are people working multiple jobs and going to school who still do several hours of Sadhana a day. Discipline yourself! In the immortal words of Krishna to Arjuna, “Arjuna, be ye therefore a yogi!”.

Some Last Remarks

This article has far exceeded the length I had originally planned. What the reader must understand is that I have only touched upon the surface of Hatha Yoga. I have given the basics necessary for advancement. Now the routines I suggested above are for people who can wholly dedicate themselves to Yoga. This is not necessary. Even 10 minutes of yoga a day is better than none. It can also very powerfully supplement your other training (should you have some). Now some will disagree with aspects of Yoga along its moral teachings. That is fine also, but it need be kept in mind by the reader that Yoga is a time tested means to achieving self realization. There is a reason for everything. If you reject the moral and ethical teachings of Yoga, you will not make very good progress. I have not written about anything that I don’t have any personal experience in. This entire article is supplemented in many places by my own experiences in Yoga. The example Sadhana routines given above were two different routines I use to follow at different stages in my Sadhana. 2 hours of Yoga practice a day is a good minimum. Less than that and progress can become too slow. Most anybody can do 2 hours.

Now there are obviously many practices I left out in this part of the treatise on Yoga.

Some of them will be covered in my next part on Raja Yoga. I will primarily cover the different stages of Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi, but will also talk a little about Japa and some other exercises along with the practice of Yama and Niyama in full detail. I hope you have enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed typing it.

The Practice of Yoga part II: Raja Yoga

by Chris Murphy

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*“Thus begins the exposition of Raja Yoga”
-Yoga Sutras 1:1*

I have decided to expand upon the scope of this article slightly so that I will not have to write further articles to expand upon certain points. Thus I have included the practices of Yama and Niyama, along with some descriptions of other yogic systems. The bulk of the article will still remain on raja Yoga though.

As one may see from looking at the contents, due to the very nature of raja yoga itself, this article will have to contain a great deal more theory than my previous article on Hatha Yoga. Raja yoga is too abstract to say “do this and that and thus you have raja yoga”. While I will try to remain as short and to the point as possible and provide as much practice as I can, Raja Yoga can be quite intellectual and thus requires a great deal of exposition in certain areas.

Now it must be understood that there are many yoga systems and different people have different temperaments and thus are more inclined to some forms of discipline than others. I believe that any person can adequately perform any system of yoga, but the question is can they dedicate themselves to it? A person who is of a much more emotional and devotional nature will be comfortable and succeed easily in Bhakti Yoga (which is personal, i.e. “god is a personality”), while such a person would feel very uncomfortable in a non-personal (God is not a personality but is brahman, and all comes from this essential being) philosophy of Raja Yoga and Jnana (jee-ana) Yoga. Likewise, someone who believes that self-realization is won through hard work would be more comfortable with Kriya, Hatha, and Raja Yoga. One who is more intellectual in his pursuit of God may be more inclined to Jnana Yoga. A musician may prefer nada yoga while a devotee will usually feel at home with Japa and Bhakti Yoga. For one who believes that we are here to work, Karma Yoga is said to be the way of realization. What I provide here is a discourse on that

philosophy and practice called Raja(royal) Yoga. I believe that this system provides a methodic means for the achievement more so than some of the more devotional yogas which rely more on grace and extreme religious devotion. Someone of any religious disposition can generally feel comfortable practicing this. Regardless of whether you believe God to be a personality or one essential presence or source from which all the other gods emerge (the idea of Brahman or Purusha), the highest success can still be achieved with Raja Yoga. All that is needed is firm determination.

Moreover, Raja Yoga proper is the necessity of all yoga. No yoga can be done without it. Raja Yoga is Dharana (dar-ahn-ah), Dhyana (dee-ahn-ah) and Samadhi (Sah-mahd-hee). While there has been a certain tradition of teachings that are associated with what is called Raja Yoga, ultimately all Yoga is Raja Yoga or it is not yoga. Therefore it is universal. What yoga is not achieved through Raja Yoga? In Bhakti Yoga, the devotee always keeps his mind on the lord, constantly reciting his name and remembering his past times. He remembers the image and qualities of his lord and thus enters into Dharana. When the concentration (Dharana) becomes even more intense then the mind flows into the lord as a river into an ocean. Thus the Bhakti enters into Dhyana (meditation) on the lord and knows him intuitively. When his love and devotion increase even more and the mind constantly remembers the lord and hears his name, then the devotee sees the Lord everywhere and in all things and enters into Samadhi. Though the process may be slightly different than that of the so-called "Ashtanga Yogi", it is ultimately still Raja Yoga which is Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. The Nada Yogi begins his Dharana on the subtle sounds of the divine body, the Jnana Yogi begins his on the Atman or soul, Hatha Yogis start Dharana on the chakras and Kriya Yogis the Kutashta point in the center of the brows. The Karma Yogi begins his Dharana on his work, the Japa yogi on the divine name. All of them begin their Dharana and thus evolve gradually into Dhyana and Samadhi. They become Jivanmuktas (liberated souls) in this very life. It is Raja Yoga. There is nothing special about the different yogas other than where the Dharana begins. Ultimately they all end up in the unity of samadhi. They all perform raja yoga upon the ideals they focus on for liberation. Raja yoga is better suited as a verb than as a noun. As such, I will make reference to the various stages of Raja Yoga employed by the different schools of yoga throughout the article, and then look at those schools separately at the end.

Now then, onto the manner in which a yogi should govern his mind and body. I did not cover the concepts of Yama and Niyama thoroughly in the first part of this treatise entitled "Hatha Yoga", so I will explain them in detail here.

Yama:

In Indian philosophy there are three Gunas or qualities from which all others come. These are called Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva is purity and Godliness, Rajas is action or passion, and Tamas is laziness or inertia. Most people live and breath a Tamasic and/or Rajasic lifestyle. Thus their mind leaps from one place to another constantly, incapable of stopping on subject for even 10 seconds. The lower passions drive the higher mind and the latter is enslaved by these passions. The chakras stay inactive, the body is unhealthy, the mind is impure. How can success in Yoga ever be realized by such people? One who wishes any success at all must strive the utmost in

living out a sattvic lifestyle. The Yogi eats sattvic foods, lives in sattvic ways, thinks along sattvic minds. Thus his mind is always on God, and God is always acting in him. I will explain more on sattvic foods in the section on Sadhana.

Yama is the means of living a physically sattvic life-style. Thus the body becomes a vessel of divine light in the world, being an ever-perfect temple to house the Self-Realized mind in. Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras says Yama consists of five parts: Ahimsa (ah-heem-sa), Satya (sah-tyah), Asteya (ah-stay-yah), Brahmacharya (brah-mah-char-yah) and Aparigraha (ah-par-ee-grah-ha). We will consider each of these.

Ahimsa: Ahimsa is defined by Patanjali as “Abstinence from injuring and killing”, i.e. non-violence. This virtue has to be particularly practiced by the Yogi and is also perhaps the hardest . to perfect. The term itself is relative and does not necessarily mean “no violence at all under any condition”. Rather, it means that the mind of the yogi is to refrain from hate and violent thoughts, and that even if violence is necessary in a situation, it is done only according to the merit of he who receives it. Ultimately it should be avoided under any circumstances, but depending on your duties that may change. For example, a ruler can not always practice such strict Ahimsa as it may put his country in jeopardy. Rather he should be chivalrous to the utmost if any violence is to be enacted out at all. Refrain from mental violence as well, for this is very damaging to the mind. Do not insult or feel hatred of others, especially if unwarranted. Let vibrations of peace emanate from you. If there is ever a peaceful way out of something, it should be done. Perfect Ahimsa develops the Bhuta Siddhi which allows the Yogi to tame wild animals with his mind. It is the cultivation of Ahimsa which plays a large part in the peaceful vibrations of a God-Realized man. Ahimsa is easy for one who has overcome his false-ego (Ahamkara) and attachment to this world of illusion (Maya).

Satya: Satya means “to speak the truth”. Avoid lies and deceit. They are the results of the false-ego, the false sense of self associated with your lower desires. Govern your speech. How can one govern the mind if he can’t even control the tongue? Surely no yoga could be done at all by such a man.

Asteya: “Non-Stealing”. This is self-explanatory. Do not covet or be jealous, and then Asteya is achieved with ease.

Brahmacharya: Celibacy. This is necessary for one who wishes to become a Sannyasin or renunciant of the world. It is not necessary for the householder yogi who works and has a family. Nonetheless, the sexual passions should be controlled and moderated by anyone seeking success in Yoga. This applies more to men than women, for men lose a great deal more spiritual energy when there is a discharge of semen. The mind becomes hard to control and the kundalini will be much harder to control if the body discharges frequently. The goal is for the energy to run up the spine to the spiritual centers and not down the spine to the sexual centers in the body. If you live life with the energy constantly going down into the lower centers, success in Yoga is impossible. One discharge of semen can set your practices back quite a bit. You will have to work harder for a while to make progress again afterwards. Most people complain saying that the sexual urges should not be restrained, and this is due to the false-ego. Such restraint is hard for worldly minded

people. They will have no success in Yoga. If they worship their sexual organs, then Yoga is not for them. Some will say “but what of tantric yoga?”. Any yoga that involves the Kundalini is technically Tantric Yoga. Some people became deluded by the symbolism of tantra that Matsyendranath taught and took it literally. Even so they achieve some success, but most people are incapable of maintaining the mind-set necessary for Tantric sex. The correct mind-set for Tantric Sex is even harder to achieve than complete celibacy. The yogic scriptures say a householder can engage in sexual activity once a month without being detrimental to his Sadhana. Lomer in his “Hermetic Letters” says twice a month, and I will second his opinion. Celibacy is best, once a month is acceptable and twice a month is the absolute most that can safely be done without causing serious damage to your progress in Sadhana (spiritual practice). Some say that the highest level of Samadhi called Nirvikapla Samadhi cannot be achieved unless observing strict celibacy. Others say that it can be achieved if sexual activity is restrained to only a few times a year. While people’s “sexual freedom” and expression is their own priority, I can say that someone who can not exercise the self control needed for sexual restraint can not be expected to ever succeed in Yoga. He is like a gardener who plants no seed and tills no ground, and then wonders where his crop is.

Aparigraha: Freedom from greed. A man who indulges in greed and jealousy can have no yoga. He can have no peace of mind. How can he? His mind is stuck in the swamp of maya pursuing snakes as he becomes more and more lost. Greed is from ignorance. Ignorance is from the false-ego (Ahamkara). Greed causes no real satisfaction. It gives temporal satisfaction and ultimately leads to strife. It is an unsatisfiable hunger. It will always eat and never be satisfied. Why feed it? It is better off dying of hunger. A man who has no greed has a clear mind and can think and act better in all walks of life. He will be successful at whatever he puts his mind to. He will act on his own and not be guided by false promises. Some people achieve success in this world with greed. In reality they achieve no success. A man who achieves the same success without greed has obtained real success. The difference may not be what they have physically, but it will be what they have spiritually and mentally. Greed makes no success. Determination and perseverance only do. Greed is like an appendage that is to be cut off due to disease before it takes over the body.

Niyama:

Niyama is the means of purifying the mind and body. When Niyama is practiced with Yama, the mind becomes very sattvic and ready for the practice of yoga. The purifications of Niyama are Kriya (Kree-yah), Santosha, Tapas (Tah-pahs), Svadhyaya (Swvad-hyai-ya), and Isvarapranidhana (eesh-wvar-ah-pran-eeed-hah-nah).

Kriya: Patanjali uses the word Kriya to denote a series of physical and mental exercises for purification. In a sense, all of Niyama is Kriya, Do not confuse this use of the word with the Yoga known as Kriya Yoga taught by Paramahansa Yogananda. Kriya in the sense of its use in Niyama covers a broad spectrum of things. Specifically we can see it as referring to the physical kriyas of doing asana along with the Shat Kriyas of physically purifying the body, touched upon slightly in my Hatha Yoga article, as they are hatha yoga practices. It also refers to mental cleansing exercises such as concentration and pratyahara. One could see it as all yoga up to Dhyana. Kriya is not separate from the practice of yoga. It also refers to physical cleanliness by taking showers

and mental cleanliness by keeping the mind concentrated on loft things. In the actual Yoga Sutras, Patanjali seems to use the term to refer to the following four practices of Niyama, considering them all as Kriyas to be observed by the yogi in his Sadhana.

Santosha: Santosha means contentment. Be ever glad, be ever joyous. Do not let Maya take hold of you. The emotional body is perhaps the hardest for the mind to control. Emotion is the presence or absence of contentment. When the mind is content, the spirit is blissful and peaceful. When you are sad, angry, jealous, irritated, or upset it is because of lack of contentment. Why do you let the world upset you so little Rama? You have the entire universe within you. Explore! You will find infinite contentment. There is only room for Joy in the Atma (soul). There is no room for any sadness in the spirit. It is Satchidananda (power, consciousness, bliss). It is real. It is the essence of reality itself. You are immortal. Now Realize! Patanjali states “supreme happiness is achieved through contentment”. The Yoga Vasishtha states that Santosha, Santi (peace), Vichara (discrimination of real from unreal) and Satsanga (association with spiritual people) are the four guards at the door of Moksha (liberation from Maya).

Tapas: Tapas generally means austerities or penance. It is common in the vedas and in the other hindu literature for great sages go perform austerities for years to achieve liberation. Yoga is Tapas. Fasting is a form of Tapas. Religious observance is Tapas. There are three types of Tapas; those of body, speech and mind. Body is things such as pranayama, asana, religious observances, etc. Speech is regulating the tongue and controlling it so that no lies are spoken, and each word is chosen carefully and weighed before speaking. It is also the evasion of idle talk, which is like poison to the mind, and reciting the name of God. Mind is Chitta-Vritti Nirodha, restricting (Nirodha) the thoughts (Vritti) that appear in the mind (Chitta). Patanjali states “Through Tapas, due to the destruction of the impurities, arise psychic powers in the body and the senses”.

Svadyaya: This is the study of scripture. It has a wonderful uplifting and cleansing effect on the mind. When waking in the morning, the Sadhu (yogi in his Sadhana or training) should see to it that all bathroom duties are done first thing. Then he should take a cold shower and sit for the study of scripture at least 30 minutes. He can also have a glass of milk or water. This will calm and center the mind to ready it for the morning Sadhana (spiritual practice). Read things that are sacred to you. Keep some scripture in the meditation room, as it has a purifying effect on the atmosphere. Reading it out loud will also spread spiritual vibrations throughout the atmosphere of the room. It is good to chant a few slokas from the 6th chapter of the Bhagavad gita and contemplate them before sitting for meditation. Read various scriptures according to your religious preference. Patanjali says in the 44th sutra of chapter 2 in his Yoga Sutra “By Svadyaya comes the communion with the Ishta Devata (personal deity)”.

Isvapranidhana: Self surrender. This should be cultivated greatly by the yogi who seeks liberation. What does this mean? It is two-fold, for there are two selves. The one is ahamkara (false ego), the other is Atman (True Ego or Divine Self). In the context of the ahamkara it means considering others before you. You are a Yogi. Your treasure is somewhere else. Help those who still have their treasure stored up here. The help may be meaningless to you, but it may mean the world to them. Always engage in selfless help to humanity. This is great Karma Yoga.

Liberation can be achieved by this alone. Gandhi was a jivanmukta who achieved liberation in this manner. When the Ahamkara is put in constant troubles for the sake of humanity, the mind moves to higher planes and realizes the Atman. The Ahamkara becomes nothing more than a tool for the Atman, instead of being the seat of consciousness. Not all are suited for this path. Karma yoga is very hard indeed. The second type of self-surrender is that of the Ahamkara into the Atman, and the Atman into the Brahman or Purusha. This is called samadhi. It is liberation.

Part II: Raja Yoga

Dharana:

Many people hear the word Dharana and think “ahh, I can concentrate easily. I will go on to Dhayana.” This is a false conception of Dharana. The english word “concentration” is used to translate the sanskrit word “Dharana”. Concentration is not an exact translation. “Dharana” means much more than just the western concept of concentration. It is best defined as the complete absorption of the mind into one point. The Yogi can perform Dharana on many things to achieve new levels of consciousness and Siddhis (occult powers). For consciousness and realization he does Dharana on the chakras, or the Anahata Sounds, or on Jiva and Atman. For Occult Siddhis he does Dharana on body parts and elements, or the chakras.

The yogi must have cultivated a very calm mind indeed should he wish to enter into this state of consciousness. The leaping deer of the mind must have been tamed and the tiger of the passions subdued. Dharana does not come for a worldly person. They think they have some experiences, but they are fooled by their senses. The prana must flow in certain grooves, and this is not possible for a worldly person. In Dharana there is no wandering, there is no world or universe. There is no body. There is just knower and known. The mind literally becomes the object of concentration. Nothing else at all exists. This is Dharana.

Requirements for Dharana:

Some yogis begin with Raja Yoga only at dharana and have a hard time. It takes much effort and time to advance only a little. Karma yoga is good to start with. Before any yoga can be done at all, the mind and body must be purified for several months at least with Yama and Niyama. Work constantly in charitable ways, and regulate all aspects of life. Do not sleep too much, work too much, sleep too little or work too little. Do eat too much or too little. Do not play too much, do not idle talk often. Read scriptures and think of divine things constantly. This will help the mind and body prepare for Raja Yoga. Then it is good to do Hatha Yoga for a long time until success is had in Asana, pranayama and Pratyahara. This will purify the Nadis and chakras. Once Nadi Sodhana is achieved (complete cleansing of the Nadis), then pratyahara come on its own and Dharana is very easy. Dharana is impossible without Nadi Sodhana. Do not even attempt it. You will waste precious time. Nadi sodhana can be achieved as such: Sit four times a day at the sacred junctions being sun rise, noon, sunset, and midnight. With each sitting do 40 sukha purvaka

Pranayama, giving you 160 sukha purvaka a day. This will take around 4 hours a day for most people. Continuing in this manner and firmly established in Yama, Niyama and Brahmacharya (celibacy), Nadi Sodhana will be achieved in six or seven months, and less than that under the guidance of a Guru. Guru can make Nadi Sodhana happen very quickly with just his aura. How does one know that Nadi Sodhana has been achieved? The body becomes firm but light, the gastric fire in the pit of the stomach is strong, Ekagrata (one-pointedness of mind) is developed, peace and harmony flow freely from the mind and body, sleep is minimal, diet becomes very small but body stays strong and full, and a sweet smell emits off the Yogi. The sexual energy is transmuted into mental energy for the practice of Yoga. Such a person will succeed in Raja Yoga very easily.

Nadi Sodhana is not the only thing necessary for Dharana. Pratyahara is even more important, and is best entered after Nadi Sodhana has occurred. The consciousness draws into the sushumna in the spinal chord while the senses in the body shut off. The Yogi feels his body going to sleep as one would feel a leg or arm going to sleep when he lays on it too long. The blood even draws inwards a little resulting in a pale complexion for some during pratyahara. The breathing process becomes very slow. This is a very enjoyable state for a yogi, and Dharana must be entered from here alone. Pratyahara is the gateway to Dharana, Dharana is the gateway to Dhyana and Dhyana is the gateway to samadhi. Each blooms into the next in a continuous stream of consciousness.

Practices for Dharana:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana, or Sukhasana if legs hurt too bad. Hang a picture of Lord Krishna, or Rama, or Jesus on the wall in front of you. If neither picture appeals to you, then hang a painting or picture of the sanskrit "OM" in black upon a white background in front of you. With eyes open, stare as long as possible at the picture without blinking until tears roll down the cheek. Do not let the mind wander even once. Have tunnel vision. All that exists is the picture. This is called Trateka. It has wonderful effects on both cultivating concentration to prepare for Dharana and healing the eyesight. Many people have been able to give up their glasses because of this exercise. Start for just 30 or 40 seconds. Gradually extend it to 30 minutes without blinking. This will come easier than you think. Persevere and you will see great benefits. This helps cultivate Clairvoyance as well.
2. Perform Trateka on the chosen image for a few minutes, and then close the eyes. Mentally concentrate on the image. Recreate the entire image perfectly in full detail. See every piece of armor on Vishnu, every bead on Shiva and every hair on Jesus. The mental image must be an exact replica of the physical image. Gradually build up your power of concentration until the image can be held for 30 minutes easily.
3. When working and performing duties throughout the day, stay completely concentrated on the task at hand. Do not build castles in the air during work. People will say "day dreaming helps relieve stress". If your concentration was good you would have no stress! Develop concentration always. This exercise must be done for a long time every day. It does no good at all to sit for meditation 3 hours a day, and then spend the rest of the day letting the mind wander at whatever

the eyes see or the desires wish. Then Yoga become useless. Such a person will make only a little progress in long time. People have been practicing 4 or 5 hours a day for 10 years and wonder why they still have no success. This is why. Concentration is your real friend. A person with good concentration will do much more work in a shorter period of time than a normal person. When you drive, focus on the road. Do not watch t.v or listen to radio while you eat. Do not think so much about work when at home, or about home when at work. In this way you will make great progress. You will become a liberated soul in this life. This is very hard.

4. The Yogi should sit in Sukhasana, Padmasana or Siddhasana and withdraw the senses in Pratyahara. This being done, let him do Namah Japa. The mind should become completely absorbed in the Mantra. Have good Bhava (absorption) and Bhakti (Devotion). Continue in this manner for an hour at least. The mantra should come automatically. Namah Japa is a very easy way to purify the mind and make it suitable for Dharana. Concentrate on the image of the Lord or on the sound of the mantra itself and its meaning. Dharana will come on its own in this manner. Only the mantra will exist. It becomes very easy to do namah Japa all night long while sleeping. The Yogi has dreams and visions of the Lord and wakes up still repeating Japa.

5. Having mastered the first two exercises, sitting in his Asana the Yogi should see the image of the Lord or of OM in his mind without looking at the image physically. Do not let the mind wander. Hold this image for an hour. This is good Dharana. When only the object exists, you have Dharana.

6. Sitting in Asana, visualize one of the 6 Shat Chakras (from Muladhara to Vishuddha) intensely. Their images have been described in the first part of this treatise concerning Hatha Yoga. Do Dharana on this. It will send subtle psychic channels to that chakra so that the mind can benefit from it. Siddhis will come if the chakra is awakened. This is an excellent practice for Dharana. I will give the Chakras in all their details at the end of this treatise.

Dharana will become very easy after a great deal of practice. Dharana becomes Dhayana. They are not too separate things. There are however exercises which are more conducive to entering into Dhyana than those above, but dharana has to be cultivated before they can be practiced with any success. The exercises above are for the sole purpose of developing Dharana. Dharana is only for entering dhayana. That is its entire purpose. At first you will not be able to enter into Dhyana. You will have to practice Dharana rigorously. Then Dhyana will come after a few hours of Dharana. Eventually you will be able to do Dharana on an object and go almost instantly into Dhyana. Exercises 1 and 2 should be practice first, and three should always be done. All of the others can be done according to your own preference. Exercises 4-6, if expanded upon slightly, can lead all the way into Samadhi with years of practice. Do not think that Samadhi will be achieved easily in a few short years. For a beginner concentration is very hard. This must be overcome.

Dhyana:

Dhyana is not something which can be talked about too much. It is a deeper state of Dharana. Rather, Dharana blossoms into Dhyana. However it is not necessarily as simple as

concentrating very hard and then suddenly Meditation ensues. What most people call meditation is not meditation. We say “I am going to go meditate now”, not knowing the characteristics that define Dhyana. There is not the same problem is translating the sanskrit into English as we have with Dharana and the word “concentration”. Meditation is a great word to define what Dhyana is, but the problem is that the English word itself has been improperly used, at least in a yogic sense. Dhyana is a very exact state of consciousness. The senses being withdrawn and the mind absorbed in one object alone, the consciousness rises from the lower chakras up into the head at the Medulla junction located roughly where the atlas bone is. This stage of consciousness, called meditation, can not be achieved without control of the Kundalini. Therefore let us first look at the Kundalini a little more in depth than in the first part of this treatise on Hatha Yoga so that everyone understands its functions.

Shakti is the feminine principle of the universe which is said to exist co-eternally with Shiva the male principle of the universe. In the supreme Brahman (the undifferentiated Supreme being called Shiva by the Yogis) these two states of being (Shiva and Shakti) exist together in perfect unity. When the Brahman “Wills”, then shakti emerges separately from Shiva and we have this separation into a lower phase of reality. In Hermetic/Kabbalistic parlance, this is the unfoldment of the divine Atziluthic Deity into the realm of Briah and thus the initial spark on the Tree of Life. Thus a new universe emerges in which there is separation, whereas prior there was always unity. Keep in mind that any “order of events” is purely metaphorical so that the human mind can grasp inhuman things easier. This Shakti unfolds and gradually forms the universe, ultimately ending with the symbolism of Om Namah Shivaya, in which the “Om” represents the masculine source of God, and the “Namah Shivaya” is the Universe, which is feminine in nature. The Kundalini is the fifth unfoldment of this Divine Shakti as it manifests in human beings. There are three separate Kundalini Shaktis in the Human Body, but we will stick with the one most talked about in yogic scriptures, being the Kundalini at the base of the spine.

Now Kundalini, which is represented symbolically in myth by the Divine Goddess Sati, longs to be with her husband Shiva. In the mundane man, she is separated from her lover but in the Yogi she enjoys his company. It is the task of the Yogi to see to it that Sati at the base of the spine is re-united with her lover Shiva in the Ajna Chakra. When this full union occurs, the yogi is called Self Realized and is beyond the wheel of Samsara (reincarnation). There are various levels of samadhi. The lower and impermanent ones occur in ajna Chakra, the permanent Samadhi occurs in the Sahasrara chakra. Now that we understand what the Kundalini is, I will describe its manner of operation.

At the base of the spine near the Coccygeal Plexus lies the Muladhara Chakra. This is not at the tail-bone as many seem to believe. The Muladhara is in the Perineum. For a male this is between the sex organ and the anus, and for a female it is actually inside the sex organ. Here lies the red hued Four Petalled Lotus. In the center of the lotus lies an upright triangle atop the sanskrit Bija Mantra “Lam” with Brahma on the left side and Dakini on the right. In the center of the triangle lies an upside-down Linga called the Svayambhu Linga. Kundalini is coiled as a serpent three and one-half times around the Svayambhu Linga with her mouth open covering the entrance to the Brahma Nadi. The Brahma Nadi is a very fine tube within the Sushumna. There is a common mistake here. Some think that the Kundalini rises up the Sushumna and this is not wholly correct. The Kundalini enters into the Brahma Nadi, the Prana is what enters into the

Sushumna and cleanses it so that the Brahma Nadi will open up. The Kundalini can not rise safely unless the Sushumna Nadi is purified. How does one go about purifying the Sushumna? It is a two stage process. First the Ida and Pingala must be cleansed by rigorous pranayama and observance of Yama and Niyama. Once Nadi Sodhana occurs, then the Sushumna becomes active and the yogi can work directly upon the Sushumna Nadi by various Pranayamas and visualizations. Nadhi Sodhana results from purifying the Ida and Pingala, Kundalini awakening results from purifying Sushumna. This takes much longer than Nadi sodhana if the Yogi is not careful. He must not stray from his sadhana even one bit. When the Prana runs freely in the Sushumna then Kundalini ascends. Its ascent is guided by the Guru and by the Sadhana of the Yogi. By Asanas, Bandhas, Mudras, Pranayamas and specific concentration exercises the Kundalini is guided up methodically along the spine. When the Sushumna is cleansed and the Kundalini awakened, then Dhyana is easily achievable. It comes naturally. When the Kundalini wakes up, the body will sometimes levitate. This is not actually that rare. In people who have not had the proper training under the guidance of a Guru, the Kundalini awakening can be drastic. They will go into comas, be temporarily paralyzed, loose control over their actions, be very emotional, develop psychological disorders, become very ill, etc. While this is not always the case, it is best to play it safe and awaken the Kundalini under the guidance of a Guru and a proven system.

So why is this necessary for Dhyana? It all revolves around the Pranic flow in the Sushumna. The Kundalini “waking up” does not necessarily mean it is ascending. It generally just means that now the Prana is flowing in the Sushumna Nadi. I will describe this Nadi and its effect on the Yogi. When the Prana flows in the Sushumna nadi then Pratyahara ensues easily. Within this sushumna Nadi is the subtler Vajra Nadi. When the Prana, after much effort, flows in the Vajra Nadi then Dharana ensues easily. Within the Vajra Nadi is a subtler nadi called Chitra. When the Prana flows in this then Dhyana ensues easily by the consciousness raising up the spine into the head. Within this Chitra Nadi is the very fine and subtle Brahma Nadi in which the Kundalini flows. When the kundalini flows in the Brahma Nadi then the consciousness rises into the Brahmastrandhra at the top of the skull and Samadhi ensues easily. Thus are the workings of the Sushumna. So we see that the Prana must flow in the Sushumna first before there can be any hope of entering into Dhyana.

To enter into Dhyana, first the mind must be totally absorbed on the object in Dharana. With practice, the mind will start to “flow” within the object knowing it inside and out. By intuition you will know the object on multiple realms. Instead of holding steadfast on the image, the mind will move into subtler meanings of the object. When doing Dharana on Shiva the mind will flow into the very essence of Shiva himself contemplating his attributes and qualities as reflected by his weapons and symbolism. The Mind becomes absorbed in the meaning of the object on an intuitional level. The subconscious even becomes absorbed and you merge into the object knowing it from the inside-out instead of from the outside-in. This process is very hard to describe. How can I describe something taking place on a super-conscious level? It has to be experienced, so start practicing right now. You will experience it with effort and time. It is a very peaceful state, residing in the inner worlds of peace and harmony devoid of time and hardships. It is a safe haven for the yogi in times of temptation. A yogi thus established can easily spend 12 hours absorbed in Dhyana in one sitting. It will effectively replace sleep as well. It replenishes the body, mind and spirit in ways regular sleep can not come close to. For a house-holder Yogi it is

very beneficial to learn to gradually replace sleep with meditation so that he can achieve the long periods of Sadhana needed for eventually achieving Samadhi. Samadhi is not something achieved in your leisure time. It has to be sought after with extreme diligence and perseverance.

Exercises for Dhyana:

While most of the exercises I gave for Dharana will eventually evolve into Dhyana, there are certain exercises which absorb the mind very easily and thus make for good objects of meditation.

1. Pranava. This is the recitation of OM mentally. The mind must be completely absorbed in Om. This is not a Japa exercise in which you repeat OM quickly. It is to be done slowly and powerfully. Start out loudly, and then repeat it in the mind. Every 10 repetitions, let the mind dwell in silence for a minute or two listening to it very carefully. Continue on in this manner. You will eventually start to hear OM reverberate in the mind in the minutes of silence. Once you can hear it, extend it. At first it will be very fleeting. You have to learn to extend the time of silent listening so that you can spend 30 minutes or more hearing OM the entire time. Now there is a trap here which the rishis set. They say “Listen to OM in the right ear after repeating it”. This can not be done, because it is not the word “OM” that repeats itself in the moments of silence. I will tell you a secret that not many people know. It has to be learned by the Guru, but I will reveal most of it. OM is not OM. The word “OM” (or AUM) is the outer shell only. It is a disguise which the Rishis used to trap the ignorant. They say “Hear OM in the right ear”, but they do not mean to literally hear the word. Rather they are using the key to refer to what it unlocks. The pronunciation of the word “OM” is the Key, and when used it unlocks the real AUM, the Cosmic AUM which reverberates throughout the Universe. The cosmic AUM is not a word, it is a vibration which ensues after the word. This is the treasure. I will not tell you what it sounds like. You must learn to hear it yourself and then you will know. Once you can hear it, become absorbed in it. It is the manifestation of God in sound. If you are aware of this, then the mind will enter into full blown Dhyana while listening to this Cosmic AUM. I am not speaking out of books right now. This exercise, called the Omkar Sadhana, can result in full blown Samadhi. It is very powerful if the entire technique is known. I have not given the entire technique, just enough to get started. Just this will lead the mind to very high places and super-conscious states. This is a jewel. The technique above is given in many yogic texts, I have just tried to give you some extra help for those of you who don't have a guru yet. The Vibration of the Cosmic AUM will be felt sharply in the entire body from head to toe. If this is felt then you are progressing along the right lines.

2. Contemplation on the Mahavakyas. These are the “great sayings” of the Upanishads. A good one is “Aham Brahma Asmi” which means “I am Brahman”. Let the mind be absorbed completely in this utterance. Understand its meaning. Feel yourself as the Divine Being from which all came and all returns to. Contemplate on the essential unity of all things, and as the entire universe being nothing more than an extension of your Greater Self. Here you are mentally contemplating and meditating on a concept which becomes fully realized in deep Samadhi. This practice helps prepare the mind for Samadhi. You must try very hard to identify your consciousness with God's. Affirm to yourself “I am all Bliss, I am all Light, I am all Consciousness, I am infinite, I am all pervasive, I am immortal”. This type of meditation is considered as Jnana Yoga. This is meditation on identifying the Atma with the Atman, the Jiva (soul) with the Brahman. This

exercise leads to very deep meditation quickly. Keep the concentration on the Kutashta center between the brows. You will see lights, saints, sages, gods, etc...when deep meditation occurs. Listen to their advice. Guru will appear also and give advice.

3. Ajapa is the natural repetition of the “Soham” or “Hamsa” mantra with every breath. This goes on all day long. In ajapa Sadhana you simply become conscious of the practice. Sit for Sadhana and interiorize the mind. Make the breath loud by slightly closing the glottis so that the breath sounds like wind or ocean waves with each inhale and exhale. If you listen closely, you will hear “Ham” on the exhale and “Sa” on the inhale. You could also hear “So” in the inhale and Ham” on the exhale. It makes no difference. Soham means “I am”, and Hamsa means Swan (which represents the illumined consciousness). The meditation is the same for both. We will use Hamsa for illustrative purposes because that is what I personally use. With the exhale, inwardly hear the breath form “Ham” while exhaling all false conceptions of self and negativity. On the Inhale inwardly hear “Sa” while identifying the consciousness with Brahman, similar to exercise 2 above. Suspend the breath in between each inhale and exhale. Understand the difference between holding the breath and suspending the breath. When you “hold” the breath, the glottis closes and the breath is retained below the neck. When the breath is suspended you are just extending the natural pause between inhale and exhale. Take a few deep slow breaths. You will notice this natural pause. Extend this pause and the breath is considered to be suspended. This is what occurs in Samadhi when one enters the “breathless state”. The breath feels as though it is being retained in the nostrils and head. This is more natural. With time as the meditation deepens, extend the time of this suspension gradually while identifying the mind with God. The deeper the concentration the easier the suspension of breath will be. When the mind is perfectly still the prana stops causing the breath to stop as well. This occurs in Samadhi when the mind enters perfect silence. In time, you will be able to suspend the breath for very long lengths of time. Eventually the breath will stop altogether causing the yogi to enter into Samadhi. The Hamsa Yogis in the Himalayan mountains achieve liberation with just this technique. It is very powerful.

4. Concentrate on the image of your Ishta Devata (personal deity or God that you worship). As concentration becomes intense, let the mind enter into the image of concentration. The mind must learn to only move within the subject of meditation. It moves to the various symbolisms of the Lord’s forms and names, his or her weapons, etc. This will evolve into deep Dhyana. It becomes a mental invocation. The consciousness will actually enter into the form of the deity and be in direct communion with it. You will have visions of God. You will understand his workings with Intuition. You will have God communion eventually. This is a good meditation for people of a devotional nature.

5. Contemplate on the body. Now expand the consciousness into that of the Ishta Devata. Assume the form of the Ishta Devata with your own body. Meditate on the body and mind transforming into the deity. See the skin change, the hair change, the eyes change, formulate the symbolism around you. Associate your consciousness with the God. Expand the consciousness now so that you feel like the Ishta Devata. Think “My head is the heavens, my body is the Universe and my legs and feet are in the underworld, My word is the creative OM, the entire universe is contained in my body”. This is a very powerful meditation. It is a yogic invocation. It connects the individual consciousness to the cosmic consciousness of the Ishta Devata very easily. You will have visions.

6. Absorb the consciousness into the Sushumna Nadi. Let the mind become this Nadi so that you feel like you are the Sushumna. See radiant light everywhere and feel peace and bliss. Feel the magnetism of the sushumna and think of Shiva at the top of the spine and Kundalini at the bottom. This exercise is very simple and very effective for entering into Dhyana from Dharana. When the consciousness enters into Sushumna Nadi you will have Pratyahara. Dive deeper and deeper and when the consciousness enters into the subtler Vajra Nadi you will have Dharana. Deeper still into subtler layers of the astral and mental bodies into the chitra nadi and you will enter into full blown Dhyana. The breath may stop, but the consciousness should not. Continue to go deeper and eventually the consciousness will enter into the Brahma Nadi plunging the consciousness into the Super-consciousness of the Divine Self and driving the Kundalini up the spine. Then you will have Sahaja Samadhi.

7. Concentrate intensely on each Chakra for 2 and ½ hours each from Muladhara up to Visshuda. Keep the mind particularly fixed on the Deities of that Chakra and its element. In this manner, you will achieve control over all of the elements. You will have many siddhis, and no force of the elements will be able to overcome and kill you. When you enter into Samadhi on a Chakra, you will achieve the Siddhis of that chakra. This is what it means to actually “awaken” a chakra. Some people think that some simple concentrations and mantra will activate a chakra. They feel a subtle vibration or movement of prana in that Chakra and think that their chakra is active, just like people sit up straight and think their Kundalini is awakened. To awaken the Chakra requires the Kundalini. More on the chakras and the Kundalini will be dealt with near the end of this article

There are two types of meditation called Saguna and Nirguna. A Saguna meditation is one which involves forms and images. Exercises 4-7 are Saguna meditations. They are easiest to start out with and train the mind on. Once the mind can enter into Dhyana with Saguna exercises then you should move on to Nirguna classically. This means “without form”, and exercises 1-3 belong to this category. Depending on the aptitude and inclination of the student, you may start with Nirguna instead of Saguna. Follow the Guru’s advice. If you are practicing by yourself then it is usually best to have a small mix that is predominantly Saguna at first and then evolves into being predominantly Nirguna after a while of training. Saguna will train the mind for Dharana easier, and Nirguna will absorb the mind in Dhyana and Samadhi easier for most people.

Let it be known that before any exercises in this article are attempted with any sort of fervor, the student should follow the exercises in the first part of this treatise called “Hatha Yoga” until he has achieved Nadi Sodhana. You will be wasting your time otherwise. You will have fleeting illusions of success only. I will cover this more thoroughly in the section for Sadhana routines a little later on.

Samadhi:

_____ Samadhi is the entire reason of Yoga. In the words of Patanjali, “Yoga is Samadhi”. It is the “Yoga” or joining of the mind with the super-conscious self. Then we call this Self Realization. Samadhi however is not a homogenous level of consciousness. There are many subtle layers of super-consciousness, and thus different types of Samadhi ensue when the consciousness

reaches these. The work is not done for a yogi in Samadhi!

The varying levels of Samadhi all depend on the object of Samadhi and the Samskaras (karmic impressions) left on the soul. Each time the Yogi enters into Samadhi he burns his Samskaras, but he must enter deeper and deeper so that once all Samskaras are burnt in the fire of Sadhana, the mind can then retain its state of super-consciousness all of the time without being pulled back down. Now different schools use different terms to describe the varying levels of Samadhi. I will try to use universal terms, and include other names when needed.

The Samprajnata Samadhis:

Samprajnata Samadhi is when there is still an object of meditation, and thus it is also called Sabija samadhi and the vedantins call it Savikapla Samadhi and Sahaja Samadhi. The samskaras are not really burned up by this Samadhi. Whereas the higher Samadhi involves complete restriction of the mind and its vrittis (thoughts), this requires vrittis. So then why enter into it? For one, it is the first level of Samadhi you will achieve. Aside from this, its primary purpose is to understand the reality of the object upon which the Samadhi is entered into. It is in this manner that the Yogi acquires many different siddhis and realizations of the universe and its functions. Each level of samadhi has different “Avastas” or states of consciousness depending on the way in which the Samadhi is entered and its depth. In Samprajnata Samadhi the famous “breathless state” is achieved also called Kavalya Kumbhaka. There are four Avastas of Samprajnata Samadhi:

1. Vitarka Samadhi: The mind becomes connected with the physical form of the object of meditation, or its “image”.
2. Vichara Samadhi: The thought processes become more restricted, and the mind intuitively understands the astral level of the object of meditation.
3. Ananda Samadhi: The thought processes become even more stilled and the consciousness realized the Divine level of the object of meditation, feeling it as an intense bliss and peace understanding the object on all levels.
4. Asmita Samadhi: the thought process become more restricted and the Yogi realizes the object in Brahman and as nothing more than an extension of himself. Then he has mastered that Object. This is a very high level of consciousness and is the highest form of samprajnata Samadhi. The Yogi is caught up into the heavens and enjoys the pure peace and bliss of Brahman.

By constantly entering into Asmita Samadhi in which the consciousness is absorbed in Brahman, the Yogi’s Ahamkara (false Ego) starts to dissolve into his Self and he starts to dive into the realm of samskaras. When this absorption of the mind into Brahman occurs and the Vrittis completely subside, then he starts to enter into Asamprajnata Samadhi, also called Nirbija Samadhi.

Asamprajnata Samadhi:

At first, this new state is very fleeting. The Yogi will have to constantly strive to enter into this over and over again increasing its length each time. He will find that because of both current and past-life samskaras he will not be able to maintain this Samadhi in waking consciousness for

long. It will be pulled down by the samskaras, and so the Yogi has to one by one dissolve these afflictions of the Self. Dissolving these Samskaras is the task of Asamprajnata Samadhi. Caught within the bliss of Brahman in his Self, the Yogi constantly discriminates between his mind and his Self (the Pure Divine Being) and thus destroys his Samskaras. Past-life Samskaras will appear again and again and must be burnt in the fire of Samadhi. This is restricting the Vrittis in a higher manner. In Samprajnata Samadhi the vrittis are restricted by destroying latent desires, but in Asamprajnata Samadhi the very source of the desires themselves are destroyed and thus the activities of the mind stop completely allowing the Mind to become completely absorbed in the Self by the destruction of all past life Samskaras. When this has been achieved perfectly and the conscious mind is in perfect control of the Self at all times then Dharmamegha Samadhi occurs.

Dharmamegha Samadhi:

This is the highest level of consciousness achievable by the Yogi in Asamprajnata Samadhi. It is a waking Samadhi in which full self-realization is obtained. It causes the Unmani Avasta (state of no-mind) which is the mark of a perfect being. Such a yogi will never lose his consciousness though he die and reincarnate a thousand times. He leaves no Karmic footprint. The universe is nothing but materialized thought which he can play with at his will. He is an Avadhoot, or God-Man. He has all Siddhis.

Part III: Samyama

Samyama is defined as the doing Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi simultaneously upon one object. An easy way to explain this is that you go into Savikapla or Samprajnata Samadhi on the object, particularly in the vichara and ananda Avastas. This isn't full merging as in the Asmita Avasta, but in the lower Avastas of Vichara and Ananda there is still the trinity of knower, known and knowing. At this level of Samadhi you are still doing Dharana on the object (in as much as you are visualizing it), but also doing Dhyana because you are intuitively a part of it on a causal level and performing Samadhi upon it because you are in Samprajnata Samadhi. Thus this active trinity of Yoga is what is called Samyama. Now then, why use this state? Samyama is the means by which the Yogi actively achieves Siddhis. A great deal of Siddhis (Occult Powers) will occur as a result of Sadhana, but should there be other Siddhis he specifically wants which he did not develop automatically, then he will have to use the yogic process of Samyama on a certain internal, external or spiritual object. While there are many Siddhis, I will list the 8 main ones according to Hindu Scripture:

- 1)Anima: The Siddhi to make oneself as small as an atom.
- 2)Mahima: The Siddhi to make oneself as large as you wish
- 3)Laghima: The ability to become weightless
- 4)Garima: The Siddhi of becoming as heavy as you desire.
- 5)Prapti: Teleportation more or less. Defined by Sivananda as "the power of reaching

- anywhere(power to approach distant things), even the moon, to touch it with the tip of the finger”.
- 6)Prakamya: The power of having any desire realized.
- 7)Ishatva: Creative Power. Especially materialization.
- 8) Vasitva: perfect control over the elements.

There are many other minor siddhis such as knowing the future, levitation, clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc...but these are the 8 primary Siddhis. Why these? They seem rather odd, but they are considered as the major siddhis for one reason: taken literally, they would require the greatest command over Maya to perform in relation to all the other siddhis. Now Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras provides a list of things to perform Samyama on that can induce certain Siddhis, and I will quote him accordingly:

1. “By Samyama on the Sun come knowledge of the worlds”. Pretty self explanatory.
2. “By Samyama on the moon comes knowledge of the stars”. Probably referring to Jyotish, which is Hindu Astrology.
3. “By Samyama on the Pole Star comes knowledge of the movement of the stars”.
4. “By Samyama on the strength of elephants and others, you will get their strengths”. Saying that whatever you do Samyama on you will get the abilities of.
5. “By Samyama on the form of the body, the power of comprehension being checked, and the connection between eye and light being severed, comes the disappearance of the body”. This is referring to making the body invisible by making the light around you not be perceived by an onlooker.
6. “By this the making of words, etc...disappear as explained”. Referring to the same technique as given above, but done on the other sense organs of the body either on yourself or someone else.
7. “By Samyama on the signs of others comes the knowledge of their minds”. Doing Samyama on a person.
8. “By Samyama on a small point in time comes discriminative knowledge.” Vichara (discrimination between real and unreal) occurs.
9. “By Samyama on the relation of ear and ether comes Clairaudience.” Self-Explanatory. This is essentially the exact technique given by Bardon in “Initiation into Hermetics” for the development of Clairaudience.
10. “By Samyama on the three modifications of mind, comes the knowledge of the past and the future.” The modifications of mind refer to the Samskaras or karmic impressions left on the mind from both the current life and past lives. Essentially you are doing Samyama on your own mind here, and the knowledge of past and future is probably more related to your self than the universe.
11. “By Samyama on the Samskaras comes knowledge of previous births.” Pretty self-explanatory.
12. “By Samyama on the power of cognition, the essential own nature, egoism, qualities and purposefulness or condition of senses comes the mastery over the sense organs.” By doing samyama on the sense organs and what they perceive you achieve mastery over them.
13. “By Samyama on Udana Vayu, the yogi will not have any contact with water, mud, thorns and others and can die at will.” The Udana Vayu is what separates the astral body and physical body at death. It also works upon the circulatory system with the prana-vayu and helps in digestion of food. By “not touch” it means the yogi can not die unless he wishes.
14. “By Samyama over Samana vayu comes effulgence”. The Yogi glows, and can even emit fire from the body like Sage Sarabhanga did after having the Darshan (vision) of Lord Rama.

15. "By Samyama on friendliness and other virtues comes the power to transmit the same to others." Self-explanatory.
16. "By Samyama on the distinctive relation between Sattva (purity) and Purusha (the soul), come the powers of omnipotence and omniscience." Sattva is the pure relation between the realized soul and Brahman. By doing Samyama on this concept the Yogi achieves the divine qualities of Brahman being Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence.
17. "By Samyama on the distinctions of the word, meaning, and knowledge which are confused with one another and appear as one because of similarity comes the knowledge of the sounds of all living beings." By Samyama on the sound (word), its meaning and what its use comes the knowledge of all languages of both animal and man.
18. "Karma is of two kinds; those that are to be fructified quickly and those that will bring fruits slowly. By Samyama over these or by portents, the yogi gets the knowledge of the time of his death." By Samyama on Karma you get knowledge of your death.
19. "By Samyama on the chakra of the navel comes knowledge of the body". Do Samyama on Manipura chakra.
20. "By Samyama on the chakra at the pit of the throat (visshuda) comes removal of hunger and thirst". These are some of the siddhis produced by the chakras once they're awakened by the kundalini in samyama.
21. "By Samyama on the light of the head (Sahasrara Chakra) comes the Darshan of the Siddhas." By Samyama on Sahasrara chakra you will have visions of saints and sages. They will appear in the third eye in the midst of light, and will usually give you tips on your practices or deliver important messages. The guru may also come and give a message or give you his Darshan. Some of these sages are disincarnate and others are incarnate usually meditating in the Himalaya mountains.
22. "By Samyama on the heart (Anahata chakra) comes the knowledge of the contents of the mind". This is usually seen as referring to knowing other people's minds.
23. "By Samyama on the Kurma Nadi comes the steadiness of the body". The kurma-nadi is located in the upper chest below the throat. By Samyama on it you achieve Asana-Jaya (victory over Asana).
24. "By Samyama on the inner light comes the knowledge of the subtle, the obscured, and the remote." Here the inner light either refers to the Ananda chakra inside the Anahata chakra or the Kutashta in the center of the brows. The Siddhi referred to is clairvoyance and divine intuition.
25. "Experience comes from the absence of discrimination between Sattva and Purusha that are absolutely distinct from each other. This enjoyment being for another, knowledge of Purusha comes by samyama on himself." Basically saying that by doing Samyama on the identity of the soul with Brahman comes self-realization. The next sutra goes on to say that this causes such Siddhis as clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, etc.
26. "By Samyama on the gross form, substantive nature, subtle form, qualities and purposefulness of the elements comes mastery over the elements." This produces a lot of Siddhis, and in my own opinion is best done within the chakras.

These verses are taken from the third chapter of the Yoga Sutras. I have used Swami Sivananda's translation as I personally find it to be the best as far as yogic terminology is concerned. A lot of modern english translations translate the yoga terminology poorly resulting in confusion. I highly recommend everyone read this chapter as there is a good deal I didn't include.

Part IV: The Chakras

I will describe the chakras, specifically their images and meanings, in a more detailed way now than I have previously in the Hatha Yoga part of this treatise. The yogi who wishes to pursue his Sadhana with meditation in the Chakras will be much benefitted by this section and should take care to memorize the images of the chakras with their Devas, Devis, and Bija mantras exactly. By meditation on the chakras comes many Siddhis. The yogi should not spend less than 2 and ½ hours on a chakra in deep meditation if he wishes to effectively unite the Kundalini with that chakra and receive its Siddhis. Once the chakra is fully awakened, you will hear its specific frequency of “AUM” being vibrated usually as one of the Anahata sounds. Yogananda gives the sounds as such: In Muladhara comes the sound of bees buzzing, in Svadishtana there is a flute playing, in Manipura a harp, in Anahata a gong bell, in Visshudha thunder, and in Ajna a very beautiful combination of all the sounds ultimately resonating in AUM. These are called the Anahata sounds because they are heard in the right ear of the meditating yogi via a nadi that connects the ear to the Anahata chakra. Now then onto the chakras themselves. I will be quoting and using a great deal of information from the Shat-Chakra Nirupana, which is undoubtedly the best Yogic Text concerning the details of the chakras. If you can acquire this text I highly recommend it. Other sources for the detailed information provided below comes from two other Nath Yoga text the Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati by Shiva-Goraksha-Babajji and the Goraksha Paddhati written by a disciple of Goraksha. Some subtle teachings about the chakras comes from disciplic succession to me. For full comprehension of the following section you will need to do a lot of research on sanskrit letters and the images of the various Hindu deities.

1. Muladhara Chakra:

The Muladhara chakra is in the coccygeal region of the spine, and is specifically at the perineum between the penis and anus in men, and inside the vagina of women (I’m assuming we are all mature enough for some anatomy terms). There resides a four petaled lotus red in color. Upon each petal in gold is one sanskrit letter, all four being Va, Sha, Sha, and Sa (the two Sha letters are different). Learn these sanskrit letters in Devangari script if you intend for any serious meditation on the chakras. The petals are red, the letters gold and the center bulb of the lotus itself is white. In the center of the lotus there is a yellow square indicative of the tattva (element) of Prithvi (earth). Within this yellow square upon the lotus is the bija mantra “ram” in red hue upon the yellow background of the tattva symbol. Within the lotus at the bottom is the king of Elephants seen beautifully ornamented and wielding 7 trunks each colored according to the 7 main colors of the light spectrum. Upon his back in the center of the Lotus is Brahma on the left and Dakini on the right. Brahma is usually depicted with four arms holding the four vedas and four heads looking to the four directions. Dakini is of a red complexion wearing a red sari with long black hair, one face and four arms. In the left arms she wields a skull in the left upper hand, and in the right upper hand she wields a sword. The two lower hands are upon the knees as if in meditation. Her eyes are brilliant red. In between them both is an upward facing triangle with upside down linga in the center. This is called the linga of Svayambmanu, and around it coiled three and one-half times is the Kundalini serpent with her mouth open covering the Brahma nadi at the base of the Sushumna nadi. The Brahma Nadi starts here at the top of the Svayambhumanu linga in muladhara chakra, whereas the sushumna nadi doesn’t officially start until a centimeter or

two above the muladhara in a center known as the Kanda, from which all of the nadis of the body emanate. The Yogi should meditate on Svayambhu in his Linga form with Kundalini coiled around him within the red triangle called Kamarupa. In doing so, he achieves the awakening of the Kundalini. If he meditates upon the Gods he achieves awakening of the Chakra by the marriage of the two deities (the respective forms of shiva and shakti in each chakra). The chakra is seen as facing with petals downwards until the shiva and shakti (the god and goddess in each chakra) wed. Then the petal turns right-side up and shines brilliantly. This achieves many siddhis. The yogi should meditate for 2 and ½ hours upon the Tattva of the chakra each day until he attains mastery over that element. In this way that element can never cause him death.

2. Svadishtana Chakra:

A few inches above the Muladhara chakra located at the root of the sex organ (the reproductive center itself, which for women is inside a few inches above muladhara and for men at the base of the penis), here there is a 6 petalled lotus of vermilion color called Svadishtana. Located in the lotus is the brilliant upwards crescent moon of the Tattva apas (water). The crescent moon is very large, and at its base is the Makara (basically a crocodile) curved upwards along the moon's curve. In the background on the lotus is the Bija Mantra of Vam in Devangari script. On the left side of the lotus is Lord Hari, who is Vishnu. His skin is blue and he wears golden raiments beautifully ornamented with four arms. On the right is the goddess Rakini who is of a pale bluish-red color with 2 heads and four arms wearing a cone-shaped crown on each head and in vermilion dress. The Yogi, meditating upon this Lotus gains control of the Bindu (semen) and the sexual urges. He transmutes the sexual energy into Ojas as a pure mental energy. He conquers Brahmacharya (celibacy) in both mind and body. The Shat-Chakra Nirupana says "he is freed from all of his enemies". The enemies here are things like Ahamkara (false ego), Avidya (Ignorance), moha (attachment), etc. Why does he conquer these? It is said that the enemies of the Yogi on the psychological and spiritual battlefield are manifested by the improper use of the sexual energy. With mastery of the Svadishtana Chakra the sexual energy is mastered and carefully preserved to be transmuted into Ojas, thus the enemies of the Yogi have no food from which to eat or water to drink. He starves them by not feeding them from improper use of the Bindu. In this way does he conquer all of his enemies. By meditating on the tattva of water and its relation to Svadishtana and the Universe the Yogi gains control over the water element in both the microcosm (svapinda) and macrocosm (Brahmana). He can never drown, and will have control over the emotions and sexual energy. By meditating on Vishnu and Rakini the chakra awakens once Kundalini weds them together and the Yogi acquires many Siddhis.

3. Manipura Chakra:

At the navel is a lotus of ten petals with deep purple hue. Let it be noted that this chakra is sometimes described as being yellow due to its solar nature. In the lotus is the red triangle of the Tattva Agni or fire (also called Tejas). This is very important. It is the legendary Gastric Fire. This tattva rides upon the back of a Ram. In the background of the lotus there is the bija mantra of "Ram" shining like fire. On the three sides of the triangle of Agni Tattva there is a tav cross, also red in color, sticking out in that direction. On either Side of the center of the lotus there is Rudra and Dakini. Rudra is usually depicted on the right side and not on the left in this chakra. He is of a white complexion with ashes smeared on his body and red clothing. He has two hands, one head

and three eyes when visualized here, with his hands in the mudra of blessing. On the left is the Goddess Rakini who is of a dark complexion with yellow clothing, four arms and one head.

By meditating on this chakra one gains the ability to “create and destroy worlds” according to the power of Rudra himself. Rudra is a form of Shiva, and according to Shivaite philosophy is Shiva when he takes form, whereas Shiva himself is formless as Brahman. Thus any image or murti (statue) you see of Shiva is actually Rudra. The Linga (an Oval shaped stone or clay figure with three stripes across the center and the bindu in the middle) is the symbol of OM, and thus is used as the symbol of Shiva himself as the formless Brahman. The Shiva Purana says that you meditate upon the image of Rudra with Namah Shivaya or Om Namah Shivaya, whereas you meditate upon the Linga with just OM. Now the Manipura chakra is perhaps the most important of all the chakras in the body (the 6 shat chakras not including Sahasrara which is outside the body) as far as the raising of the Kundalini is concerned along with most of the Yogi’s Sadhana in the early years of training. The manipura chakra is designated in the Bhagavad Gita by the character of Arjuna and is indicative of the Yogi himself in relation to Maya and Brahman. It is a very important chakra indeed. Allow me to explain it thoroughly for you so that you will benefit as much as possible. In the Bhagavad Gita the devotee of the Lord is Arjuna, and the Lord is Krishna. Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu is the inner spirit urging the Yogi to realization. Arjuna and Krishna are assembled on the field of Kurukshetra for a massive battle between the Pandavas and the Kurus. Krishna and Arjuna are on the side of the Pandavas with Arjuna as one of the key warriors of the army and Krishna as his charioteer. The Kurus are the “bad guys”, but many of them are long time friends and relatives of Arjuna. Arjuna is hesitant to slay them, but Krishna urges him on to do so. Why is this? The Pandavas with Arjuna and Krishna represent the inner spiritual forces such as purity, discrimination, non-attachment, celibacy, etc...while the Kurus are the sense faculties of the body and evil inclinations which bring the Yogi down into Maya. The Yogi (Arjuna) does not want to slay the Kurus at first just as the fledgling beginner does not want to part with his lower desires and sense indulgences at first. The Kuru army is thus the three lower chakras of Muladhara, Svadishtana and Manipura while the good Pandava army of spiritual intentions and qualities are Manipura, Anahata and Visshudha Chakras. Manipura, represented by Arjuna, is the link between both “armies”. When the sexual energy flows outwards from Manipura to Muladhara the person is engaged in maya and misuses the senses and life-force. When the Yogi “slays” these lower desires then the energy runs up the spine from Manipura to the Visshudha chakra and he is situated in the internal spiritual realms and their virtues by eventually bringing the kundalini into Ajna chakra by the virtue of the upward flowing sexual energy. This is the symbolism of Arjuna listening to Krishna (the Ajna Chakra) in slaying the Kurus (lower desires represented by downward flow of energy into the three lower chakras. Thus Manipura and its function properly reflects the human being itself, who has the decision of looking “downward” into Maya or “upward” into the spiritual worlds. This is the symbolism of the centaur Sagittarius with his lower body from the navel (manipura chakra) down being a horse representing the animal desires of the lower chakras, but from the navel up he is a human being with a bow and arrow aiming upwards into the heavens showing the spiritual pull of three shat chakras above the navel and the good spiritual qualities therein when the energy flows upwards. This is what is meant by the yogi being able to “create and destroy worlds”, namely he can destroy by having his sexual energy flow downwards and out or create by having the sexual energy flow upwards towards the noble chakras.

Within this chakra is the Gastric Fire which awakens the Kundalini as well as the Samana current. Now the Samana-Vayu (one of the five major forms of prana in the body) is yellow in color and is extremely important. In the Muladhara chakra is the Apana-Vayu and in the Anahata chakra (at the chest) is the Prana-Vayu. When the Apana is pulled upwards by the Yogi with Mula Bandha and the Prana is forced downwards by Jalandhara Bandha then they both enter into the Samana current. If the samana current is then activated by Uddiyana Bandha (I have given all three Bandhas in the first part of this treatise entitled "Hatha Yoga") then the Apana and Prana merge together here. This causes the prana to enter into the Sushumna nadi causing Nadi Sodhana and awakening the Kundalini. So we see that this chakra is of the utmost importance to the Yogi.

4. Anahata Chakra:

In the region of the solar plexus is the Anahata Chakra which is a lotus of 12 petals usually described as green in color, but the shat-Chakra Nirupana describes it as vermillion, as does Swami Sivananda. Either will work just fine. Here there is the tattva of Vayu (Air) in the center with its form as a smoky colored Hexagram. Here there is the bija mantra "Yam" in the background. On the right side is Kakini who is yellow in complexion with blue clothing. She has four arms, the upper left has noose, the lower left holds a spear, the upper right bears a shield and the lower right wields a skull. She has four heads. On the left side is Ishvara, a form of Shiva with blue complexion, two arms and one head with three eyes. In his right hand is the spear and his left hand does the mudra of dispelling fear (the mudra of blessing or benediction done facing downwards and out instead of upwards).

I will tell you something not many people know. In the center of this lotus is another lotus called the Ananda chakra of a pure golden color. It is the seat of the pure bliss which emanates from the Anahata chakra in the Yogi. It is this chakra by which the Guru enters into the spiritual bodies of the disciple and does his work and initiation. It forms a powerful link between guru and disciple. This chakra is directly linked to the mental body of the Yogi.

The Yogi who meditates upon this chakra (anahata) can levitate, and has a fair voice. He becomes very radiant and emanates peace and bliss from his body. The intuition becomes very keen and many other Siddhis occur, such as entering another's body. The twelve petals of the Anahata chakra symbolize the twelve zodiac signs as well as the 12 nadis which work from the Anahata chakra.

5. Vishuddha chakra:

In the pit of the throat is a 16 petalled lotus called Vishuddha. It is of a smoky purple color, but can also be visualized as blue with efficiency. In the lotus is a white circle which is the Tattva of Akasha (source of the 4 elements). While this is not the traditional symbol of this tattva, it nonetheless signifies it in Vishuddha. Here there is a white elephant and upon it is the bija mantra of "Ham". Here there is on the left side Sada-Shiva, a high manifestation of shiva with four arms and 5 faces. In the two lower hands he holds a noose and spear and in the two upper hands he gives the mudra of blessing and of dispelling fear. His body is blue in tiger skin. To his right is Shakini of fair complexion with heads and four arms wearing blue raiments. She carries a spear, conch, skull and gives the mudra of blessing.

By meditating on this Lotus the chita (consciousness) becomes absorbed in the Akasha and knows Brahman. The mind becomes completely stilled. His power is seen as undeniable and unlimited. The voice becomes very fair and the speech is perfectly controlled. He gains telepathy and other siddhis. The intuition becomes amazing and he gains knowledge of past, present and the future.

6. Ajna Chakra:

This chakra is located specifically in the Pineal Gland at the center of the brain. It is a radiant lotus shining white like the moon with 2 light blue petals which bear in white the sanskrit letters “Ha” and “Ksha”. Here there is the Shakti Hakini with fair complexion, 6 heads and 6 arms adorned in violet clothing. In the center of the lotus is the Linga of Shiva, or rather Shiva in his linga form (sometimes depicted as Shiva with his left side male and his right side female as a hermaphrodite). The Ajna chakra is the seat of Shiva himself in the body and is thus the seat of the higher Self in the Yogi. It is here where the Kundalini in muladhara Chakra wishes to join with her lover. When the Kundalini rises into the Ajna Chakra then the Yogi enters into Samprajnata Samadhi. The Yogi should see the Bija mantra of “AUM” in Devangari script here in the Ajna chakra and it is in fact quite fine if the Yogi only visualizes this in the Ajna chakra, as it is the form of Shiva himself.

I will tell you some little known things about the Ajna chakra. The Ajna chakra by its radiance does not act of its own, but through three of its manifestations in the head. The yogi should meditate upon these three places to stimulate and activate the Ajna chakra. First and foremost of these is the Kutashta at the center of the eye brows located at the pituitary body in the forehead. Here the Yogi should endeavor to see a shining white star in the center of a blue circle bordered by a golden ring. This is the visual manifestation of AUM. It takes a long time to see this star perfectly as the Sushumna must be clear after Nadi Sodhana has been achieved. Engaging in the practice of Yoni mudra, you must constantly try to see this star. In star you will see many things. Sages will come and speak with you, you will have visions of the Lord and see many other things. You must strive to enter into this star into the heavenly realms and be with the Gods. This causes Samadhi. The second center is in the back of the head roughly where the atlas bone is located (large bone at lower back of head that joins spine to skull) where the medulla center of the brain is. Thus this center is usually called the medulla center. It is this point in which fresh spiritual energy enters into the body and when meditated upon the Yogi enters into Pratyahara very easily. This spot is very important for the guru to bestow shaktipat (Transmission of Divine energy). The third center is called the brahmarandhra and is at the very top of the cranium. In new-born babies this area is very soft and it hardens as we age. This is the spot from which the soul leaves the body in Mahasamadhi (willed meditative death) but is also the means by which the consciousness enters into the Sahasrara chakra above the head. Of all three centers, the Kutashta is the chief center to be meditated upon. The samadhi achieved in the Ajna chakra is Samprajnata Samadhi.

7. Sahasrara Chakra:

This is the wonderful lotus of 1000 petals. Gorakshanath is more specific and attributes 16 petals to it. This chakra is not usually included with the other 6 chakras (called the Shat-chakras)

because while the other 6 are in the astral body and causal body, the Sahasrara is alone in the causal body. When the consciousness, through savikalpa samadhi, brings the consciousness into the Sahasrara Chakra he attains Asamprajnata Samadhi and Dharma Megha Samadhi. Sahasrara is Brahman himself, it is the pure primordial Shiva. The yogi who realizes this attains all Siddhis.

Part IV: Sadhana

_____ The Sadhana is spiritual practice. It is the manifestation of the Yogi's desire for God and to attain liberation. It is the only means. However, one can do Sadhana every day for years and achieve no benefit. He will sit for 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours at night and hope to make progress. What you do in between your practices is just as important as what you do during your practices. In the beginning of this article I have covered the concepts of Yama and Niyama. These have to be observed strictly. There is no such thing as a worldly-minded self-realized man. You can not sit for 2 hours of Sadhana in the morning, but then go to work all day and eat heavy foods for lunch, flirt with the office women, spread gossip and talk bad about other people, use degrading language, get mad over little things, etc...and still expect to achieve any real benefit from your practices. Some people say "I will indulge in the senses now because my Sadhana will get rid of my indulgences later." This is wrong thinking. Sadhana does not make your lower desires simply disappear with the wave of a wand. Sadhana is absolutely worthless if you are not living a lifestyle that is conducive to spiritual growth. People are sad to part with their lower desires because they have known them for so long. They are like a best friend to many people, but in reality they are murderers wearing masks. They lead you to the path of Death without you knowing it. People say that their flaws are what makes them "them". This is Avidya (ignorance) caused by Ahamkara (false ego). Once you start to experience the joy of meditation you will understand how fleeting the joy of sense-desires are.

You have to develop very strong Vairagya (non-attachment). This is the most powerful tool of the Yogi. Be in the world but not of it. Use the senses, but don't abuse them. Some people ask a yogi "if the senses are not meant to be pleasing, then why did God give them to us?". This is supposed to be a smart question. The senses do not exist to be abused. Cars were not created for the sole intention of driving 100 miles per hour and racing, they were meant to get us from point A to point B efficiently. Likewise food does not exist so that we can eat lots and become very fat, but so that we can sustain the physical body. Such is the case with the senses as well. They do not exist to be abused, but to interact efficiently in Maya while we engage in the Drama of life. Keep this in mind. You will have to learn to govern the senses under the jurisdiction of spiritual illumination. Then you will have spiritual progress. Otherwise any real progress will only be fleeting.

Now for the neophyte it is good to start with one hour a day, 30 minutes in the morning and 30 at night. When you first wake up the mind is refreshed from sleep and this is very conducive to good meditation. Do your Sadhana before eating any breakfast in the morning. If you are hungry then have a glass of milk, and if you are particularly hungry that morning you can

have something very light such as a piece of toast with some butter and honey on it. In the morning start with meditative sadhana and end with more physical Sadhana such as given in part one of this treatise entitled "Hatha Yoga". In this way the body and mind will be fresh and charged with Sattvic (pure) qualities to help guide you throughout the day. The calm and centered mind-set after Sadhana should be made to last as long as it can throughout the day. When you get back from work that night dinner should be small. In the West it has become customary to eat a large meal and then fall asleep. This is not only unhealthy for the physical body but for the mind and spirit also. Breakfast after morning Sadhana should be the largest meal of the day. In this way the metabolism will work efficiently throughout the day and you will have plenty of energy for work. Lunch should be a little smaller or the same size depending on how much physical labor you do in your job. Dinner should be very light. A small bowl of fruits or rice is good as it will digest quickly and not disturb the mind for your practices. After eating a light dinner wait an hour or two depending on how much time you have before starting your night Sadhana routine. Your night Sadhana should be the last thing you do before sleeping. Start out with the more physical Sadhana if you do any, and end with the meditative Sadhana to calm the body and mind for sleep. Start with 30 minutes each sitting for the two sittings a day. A Grihashta is a "House-holder", someone who has a family, works a job, etc. For a Grihashta 2 hours a day should be seen as the minimum for Sadhana. Start with 30 minutes each sitting to have one hour a day, and gradually increase the length of the exercises to two 60 minute sittings a day so that you can have two hours a day of steady Sadhana. If you maintain yourself well in between practices and do not let the mind be degraded, then you will achieve good success. 3 hours a day is best for a Grihashta, but most people can't do that and maintain a job and family.

For a renunciant it is different. Success will of course come much quicker because there is more time available. The Renunciant should sit a minimum of two times a day for Sadhana, but preferably four times during the Sandhya periods of the day, being midnight, sunrise, noon, and sunset. Start with 30 minutes a sitting so that you have 2 hours a day. Then gradually build up to 1 hour a sitting to have 4 hours a day. A renunciant should build up to 6-8 hours a day of practice at the height of his Sadhana after several years of gradual Sadhana. Once he can sit for long hours at a time in deep meditation then the entire Sadhana routine can take place at night for 6, 8 or 10 hours all at one time. You will not need sleep by this point. Deep meditation revitalizes the body much more than sleep, and replenishes the mind and spirit infinitely more than sleep can. If a Householder can learn to do this it will be of the most benefit. It is rare to find a householder who can progress as fast as a renunciant, but if he can learn to slowly replace sleep with Sadhana then he will make lightning progress on the path of Self-realization even as a householder! This is the method: the Householder must slowly increase the time of his night-sadhana over a long period of time. 15 minutes every few months is good. After a few years you will be able to act effectively in your Job with only 5 hours of sleep. Increase the length of time for Sadhana even more. Once you can enter into Samadhi you can spend the whole night in Samadhi and thus progress very fast in the spiritual path.

Now I will give some sample routines for both house-holders and renunciants (Sannyasas). Keep in mind that when I use that when I use the term Japa in the practice routines, you can replace that with any of the Dharana or Dhyana exercises given in this article. For most people, Japa is the best tool for meditation, so I have used Japa here.

Householder (beginning routine):

Morning:

- Wake up
- spend 15 minutes emptying the bowels, brushing teeth, taking shower, and other morning duties.
- have a small glass of milk if hungry
- Do Japa for 10 minutes.
- Do 10 rounds of Sukha Purvaka Pranayama. Should take about 10 minutes.
- 2 minutes each Asana of Sirshasana, Sirvangasana, Matsyendrasana, Paschimottanasana, and Bhujangasana.

Day:

-Do your daily duties (work, school, etc.). Keep constant mind-set of "Aham Brahma Asmi" (I am Brahman). Practice vairagya (non-attachment) all day. Repeat the mantra that you use for Japa throughout the day when the mind starts to get caught up into Maya. Practice intense concentration.

Night:

- light dinner.
- scripture reading
- an hour or two after dinner sit for Sadhana:
- 2 minutes each of Sirshasana, Sirvangasana, Matsyendrasana, Paschimottanasana, and Bhujangasana.
- 10 rounds of Sukha Purvaka pranayama (10 minutes approx.)
- 10 minutes of Japa.
- sleep.

Renunciant (beginner):

morning:

- wake up at 4:15 am
- spend 15 minutes emptying bowels and doing morning duties
- do morning routine for householder
- go back to sleep if felt as necessary for an hour or two

Noon:

- 30 minutes of Japa

Afternoon:

- same routine as house-holder night sadhana

Midnight:

- 30 minutes of Japa

Householder (Intermediate-after 6 to 9 months):

morning:

- wake up
- morning duties for 15 minutes
- 20 minutes of Japa
- 20 rounds of Sukha Purvaka Pranayama, 3 rounds of 10 bhastrika Pranayamas, and 3 rounds of 30 Khapal Bhati pranayamas.
- 5 minutes each Asana: Sirshasana, Sirvangasana, Matsyendrasana, Paschimottanasana, and Bhujangasana

Day: Same routine as for beginner. Keep focused and remember to practice Vairagya.

Night:

-Asanas 5 minutes each

-Pranayama routine same as morning

-10 minutes trataka (keeping eyes open fixing gaze on image until tears run down face) of image of the Lord or AUM symbol.

-10 minutes meditation on image of the lord or AUM symbol, whichever you used for Trataka.

Renunciant (Intermediate-after 6 months):

morning:

-Wake up at 4:45 am.

-15 minutes doing morning duties

-Do householder morning routine

Day:

-20 sukha purvaka pranayama, 3 rounds of 10 bhasrika pranayamas and 3 rounds of 30 khapal bhati pranayamas

-10 malas of Japa

-30 minutes of meditation on image of the Lord or AUM

Night:

Householder night routine

Midnight:

-30 minutes of Japa, 30 minutes of meditation on "Amah Brahma Asmi", Aum, or doing the Hamsa breath.

Householder (advanced-about 2 years into Sadhana):

Morning:

-wake up

-15 minutes to take care of morning duties

-20 minutes of Japa or silent meditation

-40 rounds of sukha Purvaka Pranayama

-Asanas if time allows. If not, pranayama is more important at this stage.

Day: same as before

Night:

-light dinner if any at all

-study scriptures

-10 minutes each asana

-40 rounds of sukha purvaka pranayama, 5 rounds of 10 bhasrika, 5 rounds of 50 khapal bhati bhasrika.

-1 hour of meditation doing Hamsa breath, or Aum, or image of the lord, or Japa.

Renunciant (advanced-about 3 years into routine):

Sunrise:

-1 hour of meditation

-40 rounds of sukha purvaka pranayama with 3 rounds of 10 bhasrika and 5 rounds of 50 khapal bhati.

-10 minutes each Asana

Noon:

-40 rounds of sukha purvaka pranayama. No bhastrika or khapal bhati.

Sunsest:

-same as sunrise routine

Midnight:

-10 minutes each Asana

-40 rounds of Sukha Purvaka. No bhastrika or khapal bhati.

-2 hours of meditation (whichever meditation you have grown fond of)

Now then, at this point it will be hard for the householder to press any more time for Sadhana into his day. Nadi Sodhana should be very close or already have been achieved in the advanced stage of training for a householder. For a renunciant it will be achieved in the intermediate stage with some help from his Guru. After some years has passed, the renunciant may replace most if not all of his hatha yoga sadhana with deep meditation. I recommend at least always keep 1 hour a day of hatha yoga in your Sadhana to stay strong, flexible and healthy. Once Nadi Sodhana is achieved it is not necessary to do so much pranayama a day. As a householder, you should expect Nadi Sodhana to take close to 2 years of regular practice, but it can happen much sooner than that if you govern yourself according to Yama and Niyama. The renunciant should strive to keep at least 40 pranayama a day in his routine after Nadi Sodhana has occurred, and the householder should strive to keep at least 20 rounds of pranayama a day as part of his Sadhana after Nadi Sodhana. This ensures that Nadi Sodhana is not undone and that the Nadis stay clean and pure. Once the householder can enter into full Dhyana after some years of practice, he can start to replace his sleep little by little with dhyana (meditation). After 5 or 6 years the Renunciant should be striving to keep 7 or 8 hours a day of deep meditation, preferably in as few sittings as possible (two sittings of four hours each in deep meditation is good). Hatha yoga is encouraged because sitting for such lengths of time can cause hip and leg damage in older age. With hatha yoga regularly done the chances of such damage are very rare as the legs and hips will stay strong and flexible getting the proper range of movement each day. Learn as many asanas as you can to keep the legs and hips in good condition. A renunciant will usually achieve Samadhi much sooner than a householder. If a householder is very sincere than with as little as 14 or 15 years of dedicated Sadhana he may achieve Samadhi. This is not long at all. Think about it: most of you are in your late teens or early twenties here at Veritas. That means that as soon as your early thirties you could be a completely liberated soul in full self-realization having many siddhis and completely absorbed in Bliss and ecstasy of God. To be thirty years old and beyond death! Many people don't even start this science until late thirties or early forties, so start now while you are still young.

Part VI: Brief exposition of other Yoga systems

Bhakti Yoga: Bhakti Yoga is the means of uniting with God's consciousness through absolute devotion and dedication of oneself to that God and his work. It is said in the scriptures that in this age of the Kali yuga, Bhakti Yoga is the best means of liberation for the masses. Now understand what this means. It does not mean that Bhakti Yoga is the quickest and most effective means of

self-realization. Kriya Yoga holds that throne. What it does mean is that very few people are suited for Raja Yoga practices such as Kriya Yoga. It is a small percentage of the world. Out of the entire population, 90 percent would reach liberation easier with Bhakti Yoga because there has to be a worshiped and a worshiper, a distinction between God's consciousness and man's consciousness. Such a person could reach self-realization, but probably not God-realization. About 10 percent of the population is probably capable of the kind of hard work and dedication needed to achieve full success with Raja Yoga. Bhakti Yogas is the main stream religious practice in Hinduism and most of the Puranic literature of the Hindus preaches bhakti yoga as the chief means of liberation for this age of humanity. Bhakti Yoga Has produced many saints, but it has the one main flaw of being able to potentially limit someone's scope of consciousness to "this is my religion, this is my God, this one religion and god of mine is the only way to salvation." Thus it can breed close-mindedness if the ego is not properly destroyed.

The chief meditative practice of bhakti yogis is Japa, which I will describe in the section about Japa Yoga. For other meditations the Bhakti Yogi should use Saguna (with form) concepts of meditation. He should do Trataka on the image of his Lord, he should meditate upon the Lord's lotus feet and the various aspects of his body. He should meditate upon the Divine Leelas (actions or past-times) of his Lord as presented in scripture. He should strive to see his Lord in all things, and thus he achieves self-realization. Following the vedic injunctions for religious ceremony and fire rituals the Bhakti yogi destroys his Karma and attains liberation. For people of an emotional nature, Bhakti Yoga is recommended. For people of an analytical nature, Raja Yoga is recommended.

Hatha Yoga: Hatha yoga is the uniting of the Sun (Ha) and the moon (tha). I have touched upon this school of yoga in great detail in the first part of this treatise entitled "Hatha Yoga". Nonetheless, I will expound a little more. Hatha yoga proper is thought to have started with the Nath Yogis as a branch of Tantra. Matsyendranath was a great Yogi who founded the school of Tantra after allegedly learning the art by overhearing a conversation between Shiva and Parvati. Once Shiva appeared to Matsyendranath and he said "I will grant you any boon". Matsyendranath asked that he be given a disciple who would be even greater than himself. Shiva said that there was no one on earth as skilled in Yoga as Matsyendranath, and thus Shiva himself had to incarnate as Gorakshanath who eventually founded the Nath tradition of Yoga. Gorakshanath is thus Adi-Nath who is Shiva, and he is known as shiva-Goraksha-Babaji, the same Babaji of whom Yogananda wrote in his "Autobiography of a Yogi", and the keeper of Kriya Yoga.

Now the "sun" is located in the navel and is Parvati. There is a form of Kundalini here in 8 coils who is called the Madhya-shakti. When she awakens then Kundalini has fully awakened. The "moon" is a small chakra in the nath tradition that is located in the palate of the mouth where the legendary Amrita nectar is stored. The Yogi in Kechari mudra drinks this nectar and attains immortality. This moon is Shiva. So then Hatha Yoga is the uniting of Shiva and Parvati. Though Hatha Yoga is usually used as a step ladder to get to Raja Yoga, it can still lead the Yogi to Samadhi by itself. The Hatha Yogi meditates upon the chakras and the nadis in the body during the asanas and the pranayamas. When he attains Samadhi his body enters into the breathless state and performs many sacred and hidden Asanas that are known as the Asanas of Shiva. Such a Hatha Yogi may very well achieve physical immortality having flushed the entire physical body with so much prana from successive years of asana and pranayama.

Nada Yoga: Literally “sound union”. Nada yoga is a very unique system of Yoga that is best done in conjunction with other yogic practices but can still lead the practitioner to Samadhi by itself. In the Anahata Chakra there is a subtle nadi which connects the Anahata to the right ear. By this Nadi, the yogi can learn to hear various astral sounds emitting off the chakras and nadis called the “Anahata sounds”. These start out subtle with sounds like bees buzzing and crickets. The yogi lets his mind become absorbed in these sounds and induces deep meditation. The yogic scriptures all agree that “there is no Asana like Siddha, there is no bandha like mula, there is no mudra like Kechari and there is no bhava (absorption) like Nada (the mystical sounds)”. It is as very beautiful experience. After the simpler sounds like bees and crickets, then come sounds like flutes, lyres, drums, and harps. The sound of thunder finally comes and induces Samadhi. Deeper than this the sound of AUM is heard to resonate perfectly. The finer sounds require Nadi Sodhana to hear. The practice for hearing these sounds is very simple, and is called “brahmari”. The Yogi takes his thumbs and applies pressure slightly up and in front of the ear opening where the lower and upper jaw connect at. If you apply pressure and open the mouth you will feel the jaw bones connecting and opening. By pushing down here, the ear canal closes and allows the yogi to quietly hear the Anahata sounds. The other four fingers rest upon forehead. As this can become very tiring to the muscles after some time, it is good to use something to rest your arms on that are should height, such as a chair in front of you or the bed. Another great exercise for hearing the sounds is very similar and is called Yoni Mudra, the practice of which was given in the first part of this treatise.

Applying some of the principals of nada yoga to music, occasionally a musical genius can learn the secret art of Taan. In Taan, the yogi learns to play music on an instrument while in the breathless state of Samadhi and control with his mind the sound vibrations. He can pluck a string of the harp and the sound will not come from the instrument, but off of whatever object he directs his mind too. In this way he can play music inside the chakras and nadis which cause them to awaken in both himself and others. The last known master of this art was Swami Nadabrahmananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda. He spent seven years learning the Kundalini Taan, and as a result could play music and the music would be heard to actually emit off of the muladhara chakra of the student. He could awaken Kundalini like this, as a snake charmer controls a snake with music. He was tested multiple times in American universities under scientific conditions and it was affirmed that he could go entirely breathless (with every orifice clogged up in an air-tight room) for 2 and ½ hours playing music the entire time. It was also found that in a sound-tight room, after a few minutes of his presence music would actually start to emanate from the walls. Aside from this, they hooked up small microphones to his body and found that even his skin emitted music. I believe he died in the 1990's, and do not think there has been a Master of Taan since him.

Japa Yoga: Japa Yoga is exactly what it says: attaining Samadhi with the practice of Japa. Like most smaller systems of Yoga (such as Nada and Karma Yoga) it best serves as a compliment to a more substantial yoga system, but can still lead the Yogi to samadhi with just itself. It completely revolves around the sole practice of Japa. Now I know that there is some confusion as to the proper practice of Japa with people who are more used to the western spiritual traditions. In Japa though you are repeating names of God or vedic sayings, you are not vibrating the name magickally. Japa's main purpose is to train the mind to be one-pointed. Once this is done, then intense bhava (absorption) and Bhakti (devotion) are needed for it to lead you into deeper states of

consciousness. The mantra should be said quickly and well enunciated. I will describe the practice of Japa in some detail.

Get a mala strand if you can, which is a strand of 108 beads usually made either from Tulsi wood (for a devotee of Vishnu) or Rudraksha seeds (for a devotee of Shiva). In the center of the strand is a large bead called the Meru, which should not be passed by the fingers. Once you come to the Meru bead, turn around and go the other direction. Traditionally the Mala is held with the thumb below the bead and the middle and ring fingers above the bead. One may use the little finger too. After the mantra is said, you use the middle and ring fingers to slide that bead over the thumb and go to the next bead. This takes some practice, but can quickly be mastered. The Mala strand is traditionally held in the right hand and at chest level or higher while sitting in meditation. For the first few rounds (one complete strand of 108 beads, thus 108 mantras) the yogi should say the mantra out loud. Once the mind quiets a little you can do the next few rounds slightly whispering the mantra, and once the mind has calmed down a lot you can resort to mental repetition of the mantra. The yogi then monitors his mind raising the mantra to a whisper if the mind starts to wander again, or to saying it out loud if the mind gets even more off track. Once calmed down again he works on bringing it back to a mental repetition. There are two types of Japa: that done with bhava and that done with Bhakti. Bhava is absorption, and means that in Bhava Japa the Yogi's mind is focused only on the mantra itself and its meaning. Thus his mind becomes absorbed in the sound of the mantra and he eventually attains Mantra Siddhi, in which he can chant the mantra for hours upon hours in complete joy listening to the Universe chant the mantra back with the force of a thousand celestial voices. The second type is Bhakti, which means devotion. In Bhakti Japa the yogi keeps his mind focused on the Deva (god) or Devi (Goddess) of that mantra and thus has visions and samadhi of that deity. Some people start with Bhava and move to bhakti, while others practice only one or the other. Both can lead to Samadhi. For the full benefits of Japa, you must repeat the mantra as many times a day as your normal body completes the ajapa (silent japa) of Soham or hamsa every day (i.e. the number of times you breathe in one day). Thus you should aim to ultimately repeat the mantra 21,600 times a day, which should take 6-8 hours of constant Japa. Then you have mantra siddhi. It is good to do at least 108 full rounds or malas of Japa a day, 36 in the morning, 36 at noon and 36 at night if you want success in japa. I will give some basic mantras, along with how many should be said in one minute on average during Japa according to the instructions of Swami Sivananda:

1. Om=140 a minute
2. Sri Rama= 120 a minute
3. Om Namah Shivaya= 80 a minute
4. Om Namo Narayana= 60 a minute
5. Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya= 40 a minute
- 6.. The Gayatri Mantra= 6 a minute
7. The Maha Mantra=8 a minute

The Gayatri Mantra is "Om Bur Bhuva Svaha Tatsaviturvaranyam Bhargo Vedasya Dhimahi Dhiya Yo Nah Prachodayat", and the Maha Mantra is "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare". As you can see, the mantras are said very fast. In reality this is not that fast, only to a beginner. With a few months of solid Japa Sadhana the repetition of the mantra becomes effortless and the above figures become considered slow. With a good Japa Sadhana, in a few years you will have a physical Darshan

(vision) of your Ishta Devata (God which you worship). Be sincere in your efforts. Japa can give many siddhis and bestow liberation. It is a good practice, especially for beginners when used as the main practice of meditation.

Jnana Yoga: Jnana Yoga (usually pronounced as “gyana”) literally means “knowledge union”.

The word “knowledge” here is identical with the greek concept of Gnosis. It is a spiritual knowledge or realization of God. In Jnana yoga this is specifically acquired by meditation on the Self and its relation to Atman. As far as I’m concerned, jnana yoga is very hard to separate from the discipline of Raja Yoga and can easily be considered either an integral part of Raja yoga or a great compliment to it. Good meditations for Jnana yoga are the Mahavakyas, or great Upanishadic utterances. They are four in number:

1. “Prajnanam Brahma”-Consciousness is Brahman
2. “Ayam Atma Brahma”-This Self is Brahman
3. “Tat Tvam Asi”-Thou art That!
4. “Aham Brahma Asmi”-I am Brahman.

By meditation on these four great sayings, the Jnana yogi destroys all his Karma, merges the Jiva (soul) with the Brahman (Supersoul), and achieves liberation in Samadhi. Contemplating any of these sayings leads to deep meditation very easily. Pick one and stick with it, then you will realize.

Kriya Yoga: Though most people know at least a little about Kriya Yoga through the famous book “autobiography of a yogi” written by Paramahansa Yogananda, I will explain it a little bit. If you have not read that book. I promise you it as a book that reads better than most novels, and will inspire anyone who reads it. Now then, Kriya Yoga literally means action union, but not in the sense that Karma Yoga (liberation through hard work) does. The reason why it is called “action” is because the technique called “Kriya” is a specific meditative technique that requires the active use of will power to move certain energy currents along key points in the body (but in a manner different than Qi Gong or Tai Chi) while in deep meditation. This one technique, called the Kriya, is the entire base of Kriya Yoga. This one technique alone leads to liberation faster than any other yogic technique hither to revealed to man. One complete “Kriya breath” is equivalent to one year of normal human spiritual evolution. The yogi is advised to build up over a year or two up to 200 kriya a day minimum according to the founder of Kriya in this age, Lahiri Mahasaya. 200 kriya takes about an hour and a half, thus in that short amount of time the Yogi accomplishes 200 years of human evolution. At that pace, in a little over 13 years the Yogi will accomplish one million years of normal human spiritual evolution.

I will talk a little bit about the history of this yoga. The person who brought Kriya to the people of the world publicly was Lahiri Mahasaya in the late 1800s. Lahiri Mahasaya had an amazing experience at around the age of 30 in India where he met in a cave the immortal yogi Babaji, who is an incarnation of Shiva himself as Yogadev(God of Yoga). There Babaji awakened Lahiri’s consciousness back into Samadhi and he recalled all of his past lives, including the many lives he had spent as a direct disciple of Babaji in the Himalayan mountains. Now Babaji had a small group of disciples that he kept with him from life to life. Lahiri Mahasaya said that in order to avoid being found by common folk, whenever babaji sensed someone was coming he would

hold out his staff and everyone would grab it. He would then dematerialize everybody and they would reappear in another place in the Himalayan Mountains, and this is still what Babaji and his followers are doing to this day. Lahiri Mahasaya, having been re-taught (or remembered) the technique of Kriya, he was ordered by Babaji to come back into society and teach it. Lahiri Mahasaya did as instructed, and started teaching hundreds of students the science of Kriya. He had many prominent and amazing students. Lahiri himself was attributed thousands of miracles and constant displays of his complete control over the universe and Karma. His wife became his disciple after waking up one night in bed because the room was so bright. When she sat up she saw Lahiri sitting in the middle of the room in deep meditation with light coming from his body and dozens of angels in the room worshipping him.

Now while Lahiri had many amazing disciples, the one who is generally the most important to Kriya Yogis is a man by the name of Sri Yukteswar. It was he who would eventually take on the young disciple Mukanda, who he later renamed as Yogananda. Yogananda, an amazing man in himself, was one of the first Yogis to come to America in the early 1900s, if not THE first yogi. He taught kriya yoga to masses of people and started a society which still is at large today called the "Self-Realization Fellowship". Yogananda achieved international fame with his book "autobiography of a yogi" which detailed his life and the amazing experiences he had with Sri Yukteswar. After Yogananda died, his body was responsible for the first U.S Government certified medical miracle sealed by the official U.S Mortician. It was found that even 28 days after the death of Yogananda, his body was in an incorruptible state. His flesh was still warm, his body was soft and showed no signs of loss of color, stiffness (rigomortus), and decay. Aside from this, his skin emitted a sweet nectar which made his body smell like roses. After several days of clinical test, the U.S Mortician issued an official statement saying that there were no signs of embalming or any other preservative action taken on Yogananda's body, and that his body was incorruptible by death. An amazing end for an amazing man.

Now the technique itself is only taught by disciplic succession from Guru to disciple. Though many people claim to know the original kriya and post the technique online, after months of searching I could not find one website that had the real technique. Some of them were completely wrong and some were close, but none that I have seen online are the original technique itself, and thus don't yield the same benefits. However, even the sites that say they give the real technique (and trust me they don't) still agree that you must learn the proper practice itself and the exercises that accompany it from a true Guru. Should you wish to learn the technique, it is taught by the Self-Realization fellowship, the Kriya Foundation now headed by Prajnananda, and the Hamsa-Yoga Sangh of Gurunath. Other people teach it, but these are the three groups that teach it the most accurately in my own opinion. If you are looking for easy availability the Kriya Foundation of HariHarananda (now headed by Prajnananda) is perhaps the largest of the three groups with over a hundred locations around the world in most countries.

Kundalini Yoga: Kundalini Yoga is usually considered to be the same practice as Raja Yoga, especially when practiced along side Hatha Yoga. No Yoga is possible without the Kundalini. Even those yogas which don't specifically target or focus upon the Kundalini, it is still a vital part. No Samadhi is possible without the Kundalini awakening and entering into the Brahma Nadi. This causes the consciousness to flow into the causal body and merge with the super-conscious force of Kundalini resulting in Samadhi. There are three types of Kundalini, roughly translated as lower,

middle, and upper or cosmic Kundalini. In every person the Kundalini is active on the first level or else sentient life is not possible. When the Kundalini is active on the third level via its entry into the Brahma Nadi and into the Manipura chakra, then we say that Kundalini has awakened. The “lower” Kundalini is in the base of the spine. The middle Kundalini is in Manipura chakra, and the upper Kundalini is the cosmic kundalini. When the Kundalini reaches the ajna chakra then we say you are self-realized. When the Cosmic kundalini (the Shakti of the Universal Shiva) is brought down to the merge with the devotee’s own Kundalini with Shiva in the Sahasrara Chakra, then we say that the yogi is God-Realized. He becomes an Avadhoot, which is a man who becomes God, instead of a God who becomes Man (Avatar). This is called the Niruttana state of consciousness. The personal Kundalini moves at the speed of sound, the Cosmic Kundalini moves at the speed of light hundreds of times faster. There is a gap. In order for this gap to be bridged, the Sat Guru is needed. The Guru raises the vibrations of the personal kundalini in the yogi and lowers the vibrations of the cosmic Kundalini so that they can be in perfect harmony. Now while a physical Sat Guru is preferred for this, a disincarnate master or a deity can do it as well. For example, Jesus or one of the ancient Vedic Rishis or Shiva himself could cause such a state of God-consciousness, but only if the yogi was ready for it. This is very rare, and it is better to find a fully realized being who can do this.

Final Comments:

Thus I bring to an end my two part treatise on the royal science of Yoga. If you practice the exercises and meditations given in this little treatise, you will see great benefits and have immense joy and bliss in a short time. I have laid out techniques in both parts of this treatise which can over years of practice lead the Yogi to Samadhi and liberation. Still, a Guru is necessary. Do not think that you are know things about spiritual practice that was not known by the God-realized men who wrote the scriptures and yogic texts.

Many people in the West say “I don’t need a Guru”. This is because of Avidya or ignorance. All the yogic scriptures speak in harmony when they say “Guru is necessary”. Many people just don’t want to subconsciously admit that there is someone who is better than them. This is pride and ego. It will only harm you on the way to success. People say “but I want to rough it out and experience all the hardships and pitfalls for myself”. This is ego too. They want to feel “special” like they have one up on everyone else. In the end, they will just die and have to reincarnate again and again until they come to their senses, while the people who ran to a Guru will be free from the bonds of the material world and in complete bliss after a few years. Eventually the ignorant man will, after many lives, finally throw himself at the feet of the guru and admit his ignorance and ask for forgiveness. It is possible to have a god as a Guru, but it is extremely rare so don’t start your yoga training thinking “I will just assume that God will take form and be my guru”. This is ego speaking. Only very rare precious saints have a divine Ishta Devata (God which you worship) Guru. Shiva Bala Yogi’s Guru was Lord Shiva who instructed him over many years with many visions how to meditate and achieve liberation. Lahiri Mahasaya’s Guru was Shiva in the form of Babaji. Arjuna’s guru was Krishna. The Disciples of Jesus had to be given self-realization by Jesus himself before his ascension into heaven. Guru is very important. You will say “but here I am without a guru or even a direction to look for one”. If you look and

ferverently pray and do your sadhana every day, then your Guru will come. In a few years you will be with him. He may be incarnate, but he not either. You might be meditating one day and then suddenly a man materializes in your room or appears to you in a vision and starts instructing you. Do not worry about IF guru will come. It is not a possibility, it is an inevitability. You will not have to think “I wonder if this is my Guru”, you will know either immediately upon seeing him or after spending some time with him.

That being said, I would like to give a quick explanation of my own personal yogic beliefs and why some of the teachings in this article differ slightly from some of the mainstream yogic texts. As far as my views are concerned, I could be considered a Nath Yogi, a sect of Yoga started by Gorahknath around 7-8 centuries ago. When I first started studying Nath literature I quickly fell in love with their teachings, and they harmonized with my own views. The nath yogis differ from the traditional Raja yoga teachings of Patanjali and other Yogis in quite a few ways as far as theory is concerned, but as far as practice yoga is still essentially Yoga regardless of the sect. Most of the techniques are still the same. The key differences between the Nath tradition and what has now become popular yoga are four:

- 1) Use of a system of 9 chakras instead of 7
- 2) The Naths have more emphasis on the waking state of consciousness instead of that achieved in deep meditation through Samadhi. The Naths only acknowledge traditionally 4 types of samadhi, all of which are states of waking consciousness.
- 3) The Naths acknowledge 3 different Kundalinis instead of just one. I have given a quick explanation of those three and the concept of the cosmic Kundalini in the above section discussing Kundalini yoga. These three Kundalinis are called the Adhya Shakti, Madhya Shakti and Urdhva Shakti which I have translated respectively as lower, middle and upper or cosmic kundalini.
4. Instead of meditating upon concepts such as Brahman and the image of the Lord which is common in Raja Yoga, Nath yogis instead meditate upon different parts of the physical and spiritual body which consist of the 15 physical points (all of which confer siddhis) of meditation, along with 9 chakras, the main nadis, the 5 tattvas and the five “spaces” or akashas inside and outside of the body. They do the Hamsa breath as well. I have tried to refrain from including the Nath teachings too much into the article so that I would not conflict anywhere with people’s perceptions of what Yoga is.

All of that being said, I hope you have thoroughly enjoyed this treatise on yoga.

