CHAPTER - III

HATHA YOGIC PRACTICES AND THEIR APPLICATION
HATHA YOGIC PRACTICES AND THEIR APPLICATION

Purpose and Need:

It is indeed true that scientific discoveries have helped tremendously to make our life less hazardous. But science, obviously, is a way of collecting and arranging information, and mere information, however intelligently arranged, does not and can not make for an understanding of pain and suffering, which is a fundamental problem of life. Whether we succeed or fail in various spheres of life, there is one thing we do not wish to lose at any cost and that is health and happiness. The importance of good health in life can hardly be over emphasised.

The problem of pain and sufferings, however, seems to arise largely from our internal environment, that is, our peculiar ways of looking at the world. It is really a problem of understanding ourselves and our behaviour in daily life, our fear and cravings, our beliefs and ambitions, passions and emotions and in fact, what ever we do in our relationship with the surrounding people and environment. Therefore, unless we understand properly the way in which we see things and react to the various happenings in and about us, a mere collection of information regarding outer nature and trying to get mastery over it, will not take us very far. for example, that the human beings succeeds in reaching the moon or even distant bodies, in outer space, and live there or that the
future developments in the science of human physiology make it possible for men to live as long as they wish, is this knowledge, as such, going to make human life happier and more peaceful? A shruti from Ishavasyopanishad may be quoted "knowledge is even more dangerous than ignorance, for the ignorant go ultimately to darkness, whereas those who take pride in their knowledge go to greater darkness still" (Ishavasyopanishad, 09).

The problem is really not of obtaining mastery over the outer nature or the surrounding environment, but rather of obtaining mastery over oneself, over one's conflicts. For that, however, something much more profound than, what our modern scientific techniques have to offer us, is needed. Only then the present human crisis all over the world can be resolved. To bring about health and peace in the world, one must himself be healthy and peaceful first.

Significance of the Present Study:

Health and peace within and about oneself, has perhaps been the greatest mark of Yoga. It is, therefore, that Yoga can be of utmost utility to an individual whose mind torn, as it is, between conflicting desires, seeks to attain health, peace and happiness. Thus, the main aim of the present study is to study the Hatha Yogic practices with reference
to human health. The objectives of the study are:

1. To study Asanas with reference to human health.

2. To study Pranayamas with reference to human health.

3. To study Shuddhi Kriyas with reference to human health.

4. To study rules of Yogic diet with reference to human health.

5. To study Mudras and Bandhas with reference to human health.

6. To study Yamas and Niyamas with reference to human health.

7. To study Meditation with reference to human health.

8. To suggest and recommend an integrated holistic daily routine out of Hatha Yoga for healthy living in consideration of modern trends.

Significance of the Present Study:

Since the very beginning of the tradition of yoga in the past, there have been emerging newer and newer ideas and concepts and their fresh interpretations with advancement of time. As a result different paths treaded and variety of experiences gained by Indian seers and saints yore for the realization of the ultimate truth behind the mystery of the existence of universe and their own position in relation to its other aspects. Vedas are the earliest records of ancient Indian culture. These are regarded as uncreated and eternal. The sources of various approaches
to the realization of the Reality or truth are found scattered in all of
them. Later, the knowledge of these approaches seem to have been
consolidated and classified into Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads
representing Karma, Upasana and Jnana margas (Paths) respectively. It
is believed that these were followed by the emergence of vedangas and
upvedas, sruti and smarta literature. Next, the authorship of Mahabharat
including Bhagwat Gita, Puranas and Brahman sutras is credited to sage
Vyas, earlier to different systems of philosophy which flourished in
justification of their approach to self-realization simultaneously.
Thereafter, Ayurveda, Tantrism, Buddhism and Jainism opened a new
epoch in the history of Indian thought and civilization. Round about this
time, Patanjali had the credit of presenting the systematically graded
course of the discipline of yoga based on the ideas prevalent and the
experimental realization of his own. Last, but not the least important is
voluminous literature of commentaries produced by other eminent
authors interpreting the original texts.

Yoga is not merely a philosophy or highest state of being, but
also a practical discipline that makes an individual competent to achieve
the highest end of self. It is considered to be a universal discipline, that
has been adopted, to some extent by almost all the Indian religious sects
and philosophical systems as a graded course based on experimental realization of the spiritual goal.

**Meaning of the Technical Terms:**

**Hatha Yoga:**

Techniques of yoga have been practised for thousands of years, mainly for the sake of the final goal of liberation from the cycle of rebirths and the pain associated with it. These techniques were intended to influence the mind more than the body. With the Hathayogins who flourished in comparatively later times in the history of yoga (may be about the 15\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.), there was greater emphasis on the body. Their ultimate aim was also the same namely, attainment of the state of samadhi. But their means were more suited to the abilities of the common man. Goraksha Shataka of Gorakhnath (Briggs, 1973) of 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., Gheranda Samhita of 12\textsuperscript{th} century (Vasu, 1974), Hatha Yoga Pradipika of Swatmarama (Brahmanda, 1989) of 15\textsuperscript{th} century are three important texts of Hatha yoga school. Hatha yoga as a holistic system does not consists of mere kriyas, asanas, pranayamas, bandhas, mudras and meditation etc. but lays great stress on control of diet, social attitude and personal habits so as to bring about beneficial changes in the whole of the metabolic process. It is truly an integrated approach, treating man as a whole (Kuvalyananda & Vinekar, 1971).
Human Health:

To have an adequate understanding of health and fitness in right perspective, one needs to turn to fundamental philosophical concepts and the practical side of particular forms of sadhanas imbibed in Indian classical approaches. These sadhanas actually deal with the evolutionary process, which is process of the development of consciousness. The natural evolution is discernable in the form of minerals, plants, animals and man. Natural or unconscious evolution ends with man. Man is the link between matter (unconscious) and a buddhi (totally conscious personality). He has the choice either to evolve a higher level of consciousness like many of the Indian seers or to regress like those who return to unconsciousness seeking it through alcohol and drugs, through work, through sex, through sensory stimulation, etc.

Modern Views on Human Health:

Health is perceived as a multidimensional process involving the well being of the whole person in the context of the environment. The definition of health, which confines itself to physio-psycho-socio fields (dimensions), is incomplete and inadequate. Health is an integral concept, which comprehends the totality of our being. True health must include not only physical fitness but also the simultaneous psychological and spiritual well being. In a broader perspective, the physical body of
the human being is not important as emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects. Mind draws its power from the spirit, transmits it to all the body organs, and ensures their rhythmic and coordinated functions. Qualitative (spiritual) values of life like non-attachment etc do possess health enduring capacity in eliminating symptoms of mental and physical stress and strain. The 'perfect functioning' approach to health conceptualizes health:

(i) **Biological**- As a state in which every cell and every organ functions at optimum capacity and in perfect harmony with the rest of the body.

(ii) **Psychologically**- As a state in which the individual feels a sense of subjective well-being and of mastery over his environment.

(iii) **Socially**- As a state in which the individual’s capacities for participation in the social system are optimal, and

(iv) **Spiritually**- As a state in which an individual human being has an inherent urge and is conscious of qualitative values of life which makes him transcend animal instinct behaviour for the realisation of higher truths of life and existence.
The System of Yoga:

It is true that yoga is ancient. In fact, its origin is shrouded in antiquity. No one really knows when Yoga was first developed or who gave it to man. There are many historical conjectures which even suggest that the Gods themselves taught yoga to man. The fact is that yogic practices were unknown even in the Vedic times, and references to yoga are abound in the Vedas, in particular the Rig Veda, and in the Upanishads and Bhagawad Gita. That they only prove how ancient yoga is and consequently how much they evolved it, is the growth of Indian culture. Indian Rishis of ancient times, recognised the unalterable fact of life, namely that man is not a mere body, not a mere mind, but a body-mind complex in which one reacts on the other end in which one can not be seperated from each other. No modern educationist or thinker could possibly disagree with such a comprehensive view of man. Yoga even emphasizes that mind influences the body more than the body influences the mind. The knowledge of yogic practices was handed down through the ages from generation to generation, by words of mouth and by example through unbroken chain of devoted guru-chela relationship untill around 200 years before the Christian era. Over 2000 years ago, Patanjali, the founder of what is known as classical yoga or Patanjala yoga, first systematised and codified the then existing
knowledge of yoga into 194 aphorisms or sayings and gave to the world
the Yogasutras.

The yoga system of Patanjali which is also known as Raj Yoga,
is a world view, a way of life and a set of practices for regulation of
mind to achieve the highest goal of yoga i.e. Kaivalya. The celebrated
text, Yogasutra of Patanjali virtually presents a psychological system.
Gardner Murphy once remarked that the systematic development of yoga
by Patanjali "constitute one of the great psychological achievements of
all times" (Murphy & Murphy, 1968).

Patanjali has prescribed an eight-fold path for achieving the
goal of Kaivalya. Ashtanga yoga involves: yama (restraints), niyama
(discipline), asana (body attitude/postures), pranayama (breath
regulation), pratyhara (detachment of sensory activity from the external
objects), dharana (concentration), dhyana (yogic meditation) and
samadhi (spiritual absorption). Patanjali describes the first five limbs as
the external form of yoga and that they are preparatory, the last three as
internal and essential aspects. The foundations of yoga practice lie in
abhyasa (practice) and vairagya (detachment). The yamas are: ahimsa
(non-injury), satya (non-lying), asteya (non-stealing), brahamacharya
(sexual abstinence) and aparigraha (non-possession). The niyamas are:
sauch (cleanliness), santosh (contentment), tapa (asceticism), swadhyaya
(self-study) and Ishwarpranidhan (devotion to God). Asana is a body posture that is stable and comfortable. Patanjali devotes only one verse to it. The important point about asana is that it gives the body stability reducing physical effort to a minimum, which may be distraction to meditation. Pranayama is a discipline of respiration. Patanjali devotes only three verses to it. It is the arrest of the movement of inhalation and exhalation, which is practised after mastering the asana. Pratyahara, the withdrawal of senses from external objects, is the final stage of the external yoga. The core of yoga practice lies in dharana (concentration), dhyana (yogic meditation) and samadhi (absorption). Concentration involves attention to a single object or place, external or internal, like a lamp, the space between eye-brows, the tip of the nose or thought (like God or mantra). The continuous concentration is called ekagrata (on a single point). When the mind flows towards the object of concentration uninterruptedly and effortlessly, it is the stage of meditation, when it happens for a prolonged period of time, it leads to samadhi. Samadhi is a state of absorption in which the subject/object distinction is lost. The state of samadhi is believed to be characterised by the comprehension of the true nature of reality, which ultimately emancipates the individual. A variety of stages in samadhi have been described by Patanjali. In modern times, the meditative practices like transcendental meditation (T.M. of
Mahesh Yogi, 1963), Benson's technique (Benson, 1975) and Carrington's clinically standardized meditation (Carrington, 1977) among others are based on the system of Patanjali.

**Yoga Therapy:**

Strictly speaking, therapy is not the proper field of yoga. However, Patanjali mentions “Vyadhi” meaning disease, which he considers as a hindrance to personality integration. But he never refers to the treatment of diseases simply because of his approach is holistic rather than analytical, that is, he prefers to integrate rather than occupy himself with the symptoms of disintegration. The modern trend towards systematic yoga therapy really began in 1920. Early scientific investigations were made by Swami Kuvalyananda, the disciple of Madhavadas Maharaj, and the founder of the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute. Swami ji’s discoveries and attempts to put yoga on a scientific basis were made public in 1924, when he started his Yoga Mimamsa Journal. At the Kaivalyadhama Institute, Swami Kuvalyananda started treating patients with various complaints resorting only to yogic techniques. Throughout the many years of research into yoga therapy at Kaivalyadhama, many discoveries were made about the therapeutic effects on certain ailments. Later attempts were made by many organisations and individuals, both in India and abroad. “Yoga Therapy:
Its Basic Principles and Methods" by Swami Kuvalyananda and S.L. Vinekar was published by Govt. of India in 1961. It was distributed in several countries including the socialist countries and was even translated into Polish.

**Studies on Yoga therapy:**

Throughout Yoga’s long history, there have been many misconceptions, which shrouded it in mystery until proper scientific research began in the beginning of 20th century. In India, people became aware of the need to revive old traditions and sciences which might otherwise die out and scientific research into yoga was one of the areas which generated a lot of interest. Many western scholars too realized the utility of yoga and made efforts to study its significance from scientific point of view. They made some longitudinal studies in this area and their research findings are available to us for further work in this area (Kuvalyananda, 1925,1928; Behanan, K.T., 1937; Bagchi, B.K. & Wenger, M.A. 1957; Hirai. T, 1961; deVries, H.A. 1961; Giri, C. 1966; Wallace, R.K. 1970; Joseph C and et al, 1987; Meti, B.L. and et al, 1989; Joseph, S and et al, 1993; Meti, B.L. 1995). Swami Kuvalyananda reported sub-atmospheric pressure in the various internal cavities during Uddiyana Bandha and its extension of nauli. He also took X rays to demonstrate the movements of the diaphragm during uddiyana bandha.
A pupil of his, Behanana, undertook further research leading to a doctoral thesis of Yale University in 1937. He estimated the oxygen consumption during pranayama practice and reported an increase during Ujjai, Bhastrika and Kapalbhati. He also brought different types of pranayama on to Kymographic record. The ability of yogis to voluntarily stop the beating of the heart was considered a fascinating feat, and aroused the interest of scientists in India and elsewhere. In 1936 an article by the French cardiologist, Brosse, reported studies on subjects of both Hatha and Raj yaga, the former showing the more significant results. Bagchi and Wenger (1957) studied practitioners of Rajayoga in India. They found a lower respiratory rate and raised G.S.R (Galvanic Skin Resistance) with no consistent alterations in heart rate or blood pressure during meditation. During meditation, the EEG showed an increase in alpha wave amplitude and activity, in some of the yogis there was a loss of the alpha blocking response to all external stimuli. Around 1960, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi introduced Transcendental meditation to the world. This technique is neither a religion nor a way of life. It is a natural effortless technique, which aims at improving all aspects of life. Adapted from ancient Indian technique, it gained in popularity and has spread all over the world. In 1968, R.K. Wallace undertook an investigation of physiological effects of TM, for his doctoral thesis,
entitled, "The physiological effects of TM: A proposed fourth major state of consciousness". In this as well as in later studies by him (Wallace et al, 1971) the practice of TM was found to be associated with changes in the EEG. In some of the subjects during meditation, there was an increase in alpha wave amplitude, associated with a slowing of the frequency. In some cases, there were brief periods of about 2.5 seconds during which theta waves predominated. There was also an increase in GSR, decrease in heart rate, decrease in oxygen consumption and carbon-di-oxide elimination, along with a reduction in both, rate and volume of respiration. Blood lactate levels were also reduced after meditation. This led to TM being called a "Wakeful Hypometabolic State". The changes were interpreted as a sign of a functional trophotropic state, chiefly mediated by increased parasympathetic and decreased sympathetic discharge, rather like other assimilatory processes such as sleep and digestion. During the last 3-6 decades, the Hatha yogic practices have been evaluated for their efficacy in the management of diabetes and were found useful (Udupa & Singh, 1972; Malkote, 1973; Sahay, 1986; Gore, 1988).

One may wonder how yoga can effect all these responses. The practice of asanas may send a volley of nerve impulses from muscles and joints, spine and other receptors located on the surface as well as
inside the viscera. It can influence the haemodynamic mechanism improving blood circulation to vital organs like brain, heart, lungs, liver, kidney, pancreas etc., it may also act through the neuro-endocrine axis. Scientists like Anand, B.K. (1961) strongly feel that yogic practices may modulate the cerebral cortico-limbic system of the brain and strengthen the inhibitory components of the nervous system. More documentary evidences are required to consolidate these claims and assumptions. Whatever be the mechanism involved, it is established beyond doubt that regular practice of yoga certainly has many beneficial effects on the human physiology, biochemistry and psychology.

**HATHA YOGIC PRACTICES AND THEIR APPLICATION:**

**Yama and Niyama:**

Vairagya can only dawn upon a mind, which has come to realize the futility of the process of desire and achievement. These are three techniques in yoga in terms of which the state of vairagya may be analysed. They are yama, niyama and pratyahara respectively.

Yama and Niyama may be respectively called the negative and positive aspects of behaviour. In some texts like Trishikhi-brahmanopanishad (mantra part 32-33), Darshanopanisad (I, 6 and II, 1) and Yoga Yajnyavalkya (I,50-51 and II,1-2) ten yamas and ten niyamas are
mentioned. In other texts like the Yoga sutra (II, 30-32), Vishnu Purana (VI,7,36-38) only five yamas and five niyamas have been mentioned.

As explained in the Manusmriti, about the importance of yama; it says “one must always follow the yamas without any exception, one gets ruined if he follows the niyamas alone, ignoring the yamas.” Now we are going to consider five yamas and five niyamas as mentioned in Yoga sutra.

**FIVE YAMAS**:

1. **Ahimsa (Non-violence)**: It implies an absence of the attitude to harm others in any manner. In Jainism and Christianity, it has been highly spoken. But it is very difficult to bring this into practice in everyday life. Here, more importance should be given to the attitude involved in the act and not to the fact of killing or harming others. Thus, the executioner whose work is to hang those who are sentenced to death, is never charged with murder of any one although his actual act involving, killing of a human being may not be different from the act of a murderer. But if he hangs any one without the proper orders of a competent authority his act may be treated as murder. Thus the attitude involved in the act is, in fact, very important.
The definition of ahimsa in yoga is more rigorous than the ordinary sense of the term. It means excluding from one's behaviour not only such acts as would involve killing or physically offending others, but also the acts of offending others through speech or even thinking ill about anyone. A yogi exhibits ahimsa by his very nature. He does not have to think every time that he has to refrain from himsa, because it is harmful.

2. Satya (Truthfulness): This means being truthful in thought, speech and action. One can be extremely truthful in this way, only when one has overcome greed and ambition. But most of us are greedy and ambitious. Hence, we often deceive others whenever our interests are served by deceit. One who aspires for making progress in the path of yoga, the qualities of honesty and simplicity are a must for him.

Honesty is not only necessary for a student of yoga, but it is essential for every individual in the society. A student of yoga comes to look upon the whole world as a single family, and his dealings with every human being are therefore full of love and honesty.

3. Asteya (Non-theft): “Steya” in Sanskrit means enjoying or keeping with oneself what rightly belongs to others, i.e. stealing or theft. A
student of yoga, who is a man of vairagya, is never expected to steal anything from anywhere, because he has a feeling of love for all.

One thinks of robbing others only when there is no love and when there is some selfish motive behind it. Vairagya, which puts an end to all selfish activities, greed and ambition, causes an individual to renounce the very idea of enjoying at the cost of others, such a man retires spontaneously from all activities which may deprive othen, knowingly or unknowingly, of the fulfillment of their needs. The needs of a yogi are indeed very few, and he does not have to exploit others in the slightest manner, in order to make his own life possible.

4. **Brahmacharya (Celibacy)**: This indicates a complete absence of sex desire. It is held with very high esteem in the yoga texts. In Matsya purana, it is described as the highest austerity (174,36-40). Sex urge is one of the very strong urges. It causes great uneasiness whenever it remains unfulfilled. It is perhaps a need, which is next in importance only to the vital needs, of air, water and food. Desire for sex enjoyment, equally overtakes the laymen as well as the learned. Celibacy involves not of the sex act alone, but rather a total absence of any thoughts about sex also. It may be said to indicate a complete cessation of what may be called the "sex complex".
The sex complex has been described as the sex act having eight aspects, all of which must be avoided by an aspirant of yoga. This means that abandoning merely the physical act of sex does not serve any useful purpose because having an urge to watch the member of the opposite sex, or to talk to them whenever an opportunity arises, or to go on thinking about them by engaging the mind in thoughts concerning them, is also often observed to create disturbance and tension in one's mind. But, it is a fact of experience that it is almost impossible for an average human individual to keep away sex-enjoyment for all times. In religious literature, we find many stories of great rishis who were deceived and distracted from the rigorous discipline necessary for reaching their goal, when Indra sent one or more beautiful damsels to allure them. It is said in the Manusmriti that, women can allure the ignorant as well as the highly educated, and throw them away from the path of mukti (II, 214). That is why an individual who can keep the sex urge well under control, has been praised highly in traditional texts.

It may be argued that an average individual need not abandon sex altogether. It is not a sane attitude to condemn sex as something bad or harmful. Sex has a very important place in the life of an individual and it should not be denied its proper place. But the overwhelming effect of sex on the minds of modern youth, caused by the world of
cinema and advertisement, is definitely posing a serious problem today. Proper training concerning the working of sex and proper social atmosphere in which the sex urge can be modified by some other useful and strong urge are the two things which will help a great deal in solving the tremendous problems of sex in the life of modern youth.

A 'jivanmukta' completely overcomes all passions and desires and with them the sex urge, too. He is ever free of any tensions or disturbances produced by sex. But all other students of yoga have to struggle with themselves to some extent with a view to overcome the disturbance created by the sex urge. As declared by Patanjali in yoga sutra (II, 38) it tremendously increases the mental strength of an individual, which is very useful in silencing the mind.

5. Aparigraha (Non-gathering) : This means not going after accumulation of wealth and objects of enjoyment. We, usually long for increasing our belongings infinitely, because we are greedy. An aspirant of yoga has to turn his mind away from greed and has to be concerned only with the fulfilment of his primary needs. Accumulation of wealth causes distraction, it keeps ones mind tied down to the enjoyments that are imagined to go with amassing wealth. Once wealth is gathered, it needs lots of strain to keep it safe, and all this is nothing but distraction
for a student of yoga, who is truly a man of vairagya, which involoves renunciation not only of unnecessary belongings, but of the very idea of desire and attainment in any form.

FIVE NIYAMAS:

1. **Shoucha (cleanliness)**: This includes cleanliness of body and the mind. A clean mind means a mind which is free of passions like greed, envy and so on, and the impurities of mind like false beliefs and ignorance. In a general sense, all the five yamas can be included under cleanliness of mind, because each one of them implies removal of some kind of impurity from the mind.

2. **Santosh (contentment)**: 'Santosh' means satisfaction. One should be satisfied and contented with what one has. This is one of the striking qualities of a yogi who, in the absence of any idea of achievement or fulfilment of ambition, ever remains satisfied with what ever he confronts in life.

3. **Tapas (Religious austerities)**: These include various procedures like fasting and subjecting the body to severe conditions in various ways with a view to increase the power of resistance of the body. This is supposed to increase the strength of the body and mind and make them more capable of fighting adverse situations.
4. Svadhyay (Reading religious literature): This is very helpful. By reading various religious literatures one can overcome ignorance by giving an insight into various problems. It fills the mind with good and pious thoughts and makes it peaceful. It also cleans our body and mind.

5. Ishwarapra nidhana (Devotion): This means relying on the Divine will, by ascribing the effects of what ever one does to Divine providence. This attitude, if properly and faithfully developed, relieves an individual of tension, because of the habit to accept every thing as the will of god. It is a good means for those who have faith in the existence of a Supreme Being, as a creator and governor of the whole universe. They can relinquish the burden of fear and worry by developing a reliance on god’s will.

The practice and application of the above mentioned yamas and niyamas in daily life prepares a student for advance yogic practices like asanas, pranayamas, kriyas, bandhas etc., as these cleanse the mind from impurities, ill thoughts and distractions in the path of yoga.

Asana:

These are certain special pattern of postures that stabilizes the mind and body. Their aim is to establish proper rhythm in the neuromuscular tonic impulses and to improve the general tone of the
muscles. Asana, as a preventive medicine can be used for avoiding the causation of postural deformities like cervical spondylosis (by Bhujanga/Dhanura/Matsya/Ushtrasana etc.), lordosis (Hala/Pawanmukta/Paschimottanasana etc.). Asanas can be used for release of physical stress resulted from day-to-day negative emotions of behavioural pattern. This will help to avoid psychosomatic or psychological disorders like hypertension, gastric acidity, depression, neurosis etc. The regular and correct practice of asanas helps to prevent constipation, arthritis, asthma, diabetes, obesity etc.

**Vajrasana:**

Sit with legs extended. Bend the left leg and place the foot on the left side of the buttock, with toes pointing inwards. Similarly place the right foot on the right side. Draw the knees closer and place the hands on the knees. Sit erect, and close the eyes.

**Swastikasana:**

Swastik is a sign or symbol, a figure in which two lines cross each other, denoting good luck. It also means crossing of the two hands. In yoga, swastikasana is a pose, involving crossing of the feet somewhat in the fashion of the swastika symbol.
Sit cross-legged, on the seat. Holding the left foot in the hands near the ankle joint set its heel on the right side of the perineum (the soft portion between the anus and genital organ). Then set the right foot in the same fashion. It will cross the left one from above. The right heel is to be set on the left side of the perineum. Set the toes in the inner hollow of the knees. Soles of both the feet will keep touching the thighs. The genital organ has the two heels on its two sides, the legs crossing each other above the ankles. Place both the knees well on the ground and the hands on the knees. Let the arms hang loosely down the shoulders. Do not slouch or pull the shoulders back. You may cover the knees with the hands, palms down, or the hands may be taken still forward, keeping the wrists on the knees and palms facing up. In this case, arrange the fingers in the jnyana mudra position. For that bring the tip of the thumb and forefinger near each other and keeps the other three fingers stretched. Hold the back, neck, and head erect. Close the eyes. This pose is useful for pranayama as well as meditation. It is less strenuous as compared to siddhasana or padmasana. It may also be practiced with the left foot crossing the right one from above.

**Siddhasana:**

Siddha in Sanskrit means an accomplished person. Siddhi is accomplishment and siddhasana is either a pose favoured by the siddhas,
or a pose that leads to siddhi. This is the pose of the greatest significance for arousing the Goddess in man, the kundalini. Hence it is mentioned in the texts as the most important among the asana of Hathayoga. It is said that if one is interested in practicing only one single asana, this is the asana for him. The specialty of this pose is the pressure applied on the perineum, which is the place of mooladhara chakra. This, together with moolabandha (contraction of the anus) is supposed to play an important role in arousing the kundalini.

This pose differs from swastikasana in the arrangement of the heels. Here the left heel is placed below the genital organ and the right one above. The toes are thrust between the opposite thigh and calf. The right heel comes in the central line of the body, below the navel. Other things are same as for swastikasana. In the description in the texts it is said that the chin is to be set against the jugular notch below the throat, and one should look between the eyebrows. This is to be done while retaining the breath in pranayama. In meditation this may not be done. Instead, the eyes may be closed, and the neck should be held erect.

Padamasana:

Padama is a lotus. Another word for the lotus is kamala, and this pose is sometimes also called Kamalasana. The feet and hands are so arranged in this pose as to resemble the appearance of a blooming lotus,
hence the name. Some writers seem to be ignorant of this point and so they recommend the hands to be kept on the knees as in the earlier two postures. That is wrong. The hands in this pose must be placed on the heels.

Sit with the legs stretched in front. Hold the right foot with the hands and folding the right leg from the knee, bring the right foot towards the body, and place it on the left thigh with the sole turned up. Then bend the left leg in the same fashion and place the left foot on the right thigh. The heels should be as near to each other as possible. Keep both the knees on the ground. In the beginning this is found difficult. Especially the left knee remains away from the ground. Keep the hands on the heels, the left hand below the right one. Arrange the fingers to give the appearance of the petals of a lotus flower. The two feet resemble the lotus leaves. Keep the body erect. In pranayama, while holding the breath, the chin is to be lowered below the throat and the eyes are to be fixed on the tip of the nose. This is recommended in the texts. While meditating, keep the neck erect and the eyes closed. It takes a longer time for this pose to become comfortable. But once mastered, it gives the body a very steady and firm base.
Shavasana:

Lie on the back with hands extended along the body. Keep the feet 40 to 50cms apart allowing the toes to point outsides. Place both the hands on the sides at about 15 to 20cms away from the body. The fingers are in a semi-flexed condition. Keep the head in a most convenient position. Close the eyes. Breathe a little deeply allowing the abdomen to move up and down. Attend to the flow of breath at the nose.

Pavan Muktasana:

Lie supine on the ground, heels together, arms stretched above the head. Raise the right leg keeping it straight to about 45 degree from the ground. Keep the left leg firmly on the ground. Place the right leg perpendicular to the ground. Bend the right leg and press the knees over the chest by holding the legs by interlocked fingers of the hand. Take the chin above the knees. Rotate the left leg in an elliptical fashion 5 times in clockwise direction. Repeat with the left leg. This is called half pawanmuktasana. In complete position of this asana, take both legs to 45-degree position, keep the knees straight. Bring the legs perpendicular to ground. Bend the knees; press them on to the chest by the hands with interlocked fingers.
This asana helps to remove the gaseous accumulations in the stomach, increase the digestive power and remove the constipation.

**Ardha-Halasana :**

Lie supine with feet together. Raise the left leg slowly up to an angle 90 without bending in the knee and lower again. Raise the right leg up to an angle of 90 and return. Then raise both the legs slowly up to an angle of 90 and bring them down.

**Viparitkarani :**

Lie supine. Raise both legs up to 90 degree angle slowly through 30 degree and 60 degree angles. Raise the buttocks and give support with both the hands. Maintain the pose comfortably for some time. Lowering feet towards the head withdraw the support of hands at the buttocks and lower the buttocks to the ground. Lower the legs.

**Sarvangasana :**

This is further improvement of Viparitkarani. Lie on the back. Raise both the legs slowly up to 90-degree angle. Raise the legs further bringing the whole body to a vertical position supported by the brackets of the hands. Maintain the final position for a comfortable time. Remove the support of the hands and lower the legs slowly to the ground.
Matsyasana:

Sit with legs extended. Bend one knee and place the foot against the opposite thigh. Bend the other Knee similarly and place the foot on the opposite thigh. This forms a foot-lock. Taking support from the elbows, lie on the back and lower the crown of the head into the floor, making an arch of the back. Hold the big toes with the hands and maintain the position comfortably. Return to the starting position in the reverse order.

Chakrasana:

Chakra is the wheel or a circle. Chakrasana should mean a pose describing a circle. This pose is not found mentioned in the usual texts of Hatha yoga. A text called Varahopanishad has mentioned it. But, its description there is different from the popular version of the pose. There it is said that in this pose the heels are to be kept below the opposite thighs and one should sit straight. In what way that would resemble a circle is hard to say. We shall describe the pose most commonly practiced under this name.

In this method, person lies down on the back and keeps the two knees standing with the feet placed on the ground near the hips. The hands are placed near the shoulders, turning the fingers toward the feet.
The back and hips are then raised, making the arms and legs straight and assuming the same final pose as in the first method. After holding the final pose for a comfortable period of time, one should go to the normal pose in a reverse way. Chakrasana provides an excellent stretching exercise to the whole body.

**Naukasana:**

Lie on the back with hands placed on the sides. Raise the legs together at about 45-degree angle from the ground. Raise the trunk and head to approximately 45-degree angle. Stretch the hands forward and maintain the pose for as long as comfortable. Bring the hands to the sides. Lower the trunk and head to the ground. Lower the legs.

**Bhujangasana:**

Lie face down. Place hands by the sides of the chest, fingers pointing forwards. Raise the chin and look up. Raise the chest slowly. Raise the abdomen up to the umbilicus and maintain the position. Return gradually to the starting position in the reverse order.

**Ardha-Shalabhasana:**

Lie prone, chin on the ground, arms fully stretched along side the body. Raise one leg slowly without bending the knee and maintain
the position for a comfortable time. Slowly lower the leg. Raise the other leg similarly, maintain comfortable position and lower.

Dhanurasana:

Lie prone. Bend the legs in knees and hold the ankles. Slightly inhale and hold the breath. Raise the head, chest, and the thighs. Look up. Lower the chest and thighs. Let go of the ankles and stretch the legs.

Sasankasana:

Sit in Vajrasana. Catch the right hand with the left behind the back. Bend forwards from the waist; rest the forehead on the ground in front of the knees.

This vitalizes the organs in the abdomen and pelvis and tones up the nervous system especially the lumbosacral nerves. Helps in cases of seminal weakness. This can be performed more easily than yogamudra with the same benefits.

Uttanamandukasana:

Uttana means lying on the back with the face up. Manduka is a frog. Uttanamandukasana is a pose, which resembles the appearance of a frog lying on its back.

Sit with the legs stretched in front. Or sit cross-legged. Keeping the hands on the ground, raise the hips, fold the legs at the knees, and
keep the knees in front and feet by the side of the hips. Let the toes point towards each other and heels away from each other. Keep the upper portion of the feet on the ground and turn the soles up, facing the sky. The knees should be held at a comfortable distance from each other, so that the stress along the perineum is not excessive. Do not sit on the heels, but in between them. Hold the back straight. Raise the hands. Keeping the elbows touching the head on both sides, keep the hands on the opposite shoulders. On a deep exhalation contract the anus and the abdomen, suck the abdominal wall in, and hold the breath out for some time. Do not raise the hips from the ground, but pull the two sides and the shoulders up, maintaining this upward stretch while the breath is held out. After holding it for a comfortable period of time, relax the bandhas, inhale, and have three or four normal respirations. Then give up the position of the hands and legs. There is hardly any part of the body, which is not exercised by stretching in this posture. Both the limbs, upper and lower, the neck, thorax and abdomen, and the organs and glands in the two cavities are all exercised.

**Bhadrasana:**

Bhadra in Sanskrit means auspicious, prosperous, or happy. It also means the foremost. Bhadrasana may be called the foremost among the core postures, the one to be done in the beginning. Its description in
different books is different from that found in the Hathayogapradipika. But the description in the latter text agrees with the one found in many yoga upanishads. It is also given the name Gorakshasana.

Sit on the seat with the legs stretched in front. Then hold the feet with the hands just above the ankles. Turn both the feet so that they will touch each other sole to sole, the toes pointing forward and heels toward the body. The knees will go apart. Try to keep the knees on the ground. This is found difficult in the beginning. Now keeping the knees on the ground and not allowing them to be raised, bring the heels near the body. With practice they can be brought so near as to touch the perineum on the sides. The texts say only this much about the procedure. But doing two further things tremendously increases the utility of the pose. Keeping the heels near the body and the knees on the ground, exhale completely. Contract the anus and the pelvis and suck the belly in. Hold the breath out and, lowering the chin down in front, set it below the throat. Here three bandhas are applied. Hold the breath out comfortably as long as possible. Then give up the bandhas i.e. contraction of anus and abdomen, raise the chin to its normal position, and inhale. Avoid excessive strain in holding the breath out or contracting the muscles.
Muscles of legs, perineum and abdomen are stretched in Bhadrasana. The abdominal viscera are pressed. The diaphragm rises up. The lungs and the walls of the air sacks shrink. Functional efficiency of all the organs inside the abdominal and thoracic cavities is improved.

**Vakrasana:**

Sit with legs extended. Place the left foot by the side of the right knee. Place the left arm around the back. Pass the right arm over the left knee and place it on the ground if possible. Pressing with the right arm against the knee, turn to the left. Maintain the twist for a comfortable time and return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side by changing the hands and legs.

**Ardha-Matsyendrasana:**

Sit with extended legs. Set the right heel at the perineum. Place the left foot on the right side of the knee. Cross the right hand over the left leg and hold the toes. Turn the trunk to the left and taking left hand over the back, hold at the right thigh. Release the pose. Repeat the asana on the other side changing legs and hands.

**Matsyendrasana:**

Matsyendranath was a great Hathyogi of ancient times. This asana gets its name from him. It was his favourite pose. It is
recommended for a quick arousal of the kundalini. As mentioned earlier a simpler version of this pose, which almost everyone can practice without difficulty, has been introduced by some modern exponents of yoga. Perhaps it was Swami Kuvalyananda who introduced it for the first time.

Matsyendrasana is a sitting posture. The right foot is placed on the left thigh, keeping the right knee on the ground. The left knee is then made to stand, keeping the left foot on the ground, on the right side of the right knee. This is rather difficult and quite strenuous. The body is then turned to the left side, pulling the left shoulder back, turning the neck to the left side as much as possible, the right arm is placed by the side of the left lower leg. Keeping the right shoulder on the left side of the left knee, the left arm is spread over the back. This posture is supposed to influence beneficially practically every organ and function in the body. It may be held for about fifteen seconds. Then the same procedure is repeated on the other side by changing the position of the legs and hands.

Yogamudra:

This name and the technique, which is popular under that name, are not found mentioned in the traditional texts of repute.
Assume the Padamasana posture by putting the right thigh. Keep both the hands on the back, interlocking the fingers. Start exhaling slowly and bend the head and neck down in front until at last you touch the ground with the forehead. Do not raise the hips from the ground. Take the hands away from the back and pull them upward. Hold the pose for nearly a minute. Then raise the head to the original position. Repeat once again.

The abdominal viscera are pressed in this pose. Muscles of the lower back and thighs are stretched as also those of the shoulders and the neck. People with much fat on the thighs and the belly find it difficult to do this pose. But practice makes one perfect. And fat starts yielding to determined action.

**Kukkutasana:**

Kukkuta is a cock. In this asana one stands in the fashion of a cock. It is necessary to take the Padamasana posture first. So this posture is really an extension of the Padamasana posture. The hands are passed down through the space between the calf and thigh below the knee and the ground is touched with the palms. The fingers are spread, and the hips are raised from the ground keeping the lock formed by the legs as it is. The weight of the body is balanced on the two hands. After holding the final pose for a few seconds, usually about half a minute, the hips are
kept on the ground, the hands are taken out, and the legs are unlocked. But if the next posture described here is to be practiced then one may go straight from kukkanatasana to it.

Uttanakurmasana:

Kurma is the tortoise. Uttana indicates the supine position. This posture gets its name from the resemblance of it with the appearance of a tortoise lying on its back. It may be called an extension of Kukkanatasana. Passing the hands down through the hollow of the knees so that even the elbows pass through, the body is balanced on the hips, and the hands are placed on the neck. This involves a complicated arrangement of the muscles of the body, which if one can make it, gives a kind of control over the muscles. It affects practically every part of the body beneficially, by pressing the parts, promoting blood circulation and toning up muscles. Kukkanatasana has also got similar benefits. This pose may be held for fifteen to twenty seconds.

Paschimatanasana:

Sit with legs extended. Bend the trunk forward and reach for the toes with both hands. Bend the elbows and try to touch the knees with the forehead. Maintain the position comfortably.
Mayurasana:

Mayura means a Peacock. Peacock has a peculiar digestive power. The practicant assumes the position resembling to that of a peacock in this asana. Therefore, the asana is known as Mayurasana.

Bend the legs backward to come to vajrasana position. Kneel down on the floor, keeping the knees apart. Place the palms on the ground in between the knees, fingers pointing inward towards the feet, bend the elbow joints, support the body at the Nabhi and place the head down touching the ground. Stretch the feet back with the toes on the ground. Keeping elbow joints as fulcrum move forward to raise and balance the body parallel to the ground. Look forward. Forearms are slightly inclined to the front. Return to the starting position.

Beneficial for all stomach disorders. This asana tones up abdomen, strengthens the forearms, wrists and elbows. Prevents accumulation of gases. Vitalize the endocrine in the abdomen.

Sirshasana:

Shirsha means the head. The word Shirshasana is very appropriate word, because in this posture the whole body is balanced upside down on the head. It is really a headstand, and that is what Shirshasana means.
The pose is not very easy and balancing the body on the head requires some training and practice. The seat should be especially thick so that the head can be comfortably kept on it without experiencing the hardness of the floor. But pillow is not necessary. Sitting on the seat cross-legged, the knees are kept on the seat in front. Then raising the hips and bending the body forward, the top most portion of the head is placed on the seat. The fingers of the two hands are interlocked to form a wall of the two palms which is kept supporting the head from behind. This forms the apex of a triangle, the elbows forming its base. The angle between the two forearms may be adjusted comfortably. Now putting some pressure on the head, the hips are raised and the knees are brought near the chest. When the back becomes almost straight in an inverted condition, the feet are lifted from the ground with a very slight jerk. The legs are folded from the knees. The knees are kept pointing downward, and the body is balanced on the head. Then the knees are raised slowly without disturbing the balance to make the thighs straight so that the neck, back, and thighs are held inverted in one line. After this position is learned and it is possible to maintain it steady for some moments, the portion from the knees to the feet which was so far pointing downward, is made straight so that ultimately the whole body from the feet downward stands in one line on the head. There should be no bend at the
waist. The body should describe a straight line perpendicular to the ground and not a curved line. This is important. After maintaining the final pose for some time, the feet should be lowered first, then the knees and then the hips. The final pose should be maintained for about one minute for ordinary purposes and for ten to fifteen minutes for special purposes. There are persons who have been practicing this pose for nearly half an hour everyday for many years. But obviously that can not suit every one of us.

Padahastasana:

Standing erect with legs together, raise the arms parallel to ground. Raise the hand, stretch up the body from the coccyx. Making the back concave bend forward till the body comes to a horizontal position. Attempt to push the bottom of the spine forward while bending. While exhaling go down, till the palms rest on the ground and forehead touches the knees. Retain the position for about one minute without allowing the knees to bend and return to the starting position.

This asana makes the spine flexible, helps to remove back pain, strengthens the thighs, helpful in preventing constipation, and cures menstrual problems in women.
Chakrasana : (Standing)

Stand erect with feet together. Raise the right hand from the side bringing it close to the ear. Slide the left hand along the outside of left leg, allowing the right hand and the head to follow the bend. Return to the erect position and bring the right hand down. Now raise the left hand from the side and keep it close to the ear. Slide the right hand down along the right leg and allow the left hand and the head also to bend. Return to the erect position and bring the left hand down.

Trikonasana :

Stand erect with feet close together, hands along the thighs, fingers stretched out. Raise both the hands slowly till they reach the horizontal position as the right foot is moved at about a meter away from the left foot. Slowly bend to the right side in the same plane. The fingers of the right hand touch the right foot the left arm is straight up, in line with the right hand. Stretch up the left arm and see along the fingers. After maintaining return to the vertical position, first with hands horizontal and then downward to the starting position. Repeat on the left side.

This asana strengthens the calf and thigh muscles, removes back pain and corrects hunchback and is useful in correcting flat foot.
Virkshasana:

Stand erect with feet together. Raise one foot and place it vertically on the opposite thigh. Fold hands on the chest and try to keep balance. Bring the raised foot down and hands on the sides. Repeat the same procedure using the other foot.

Pranayama:

These are practices to control respiratory impulses, which form one of the main channels of the flow of the autonomic nerve currents. Pranayama have important role in prevention of the diseases. The various diseases caused by disturbed homeostatic state of autonomic nervous system like obesity, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, gastric acidity etc. can be prevented by nadishodhana pranayama, bhastrika pranayama etc. The intensity of psychosomatic ailments can be prevented, by restoring the normal rhythmic breathing.

Anuloma-viloma or Nadishodhaka Pranayama:

In this, firstly puraka is done through the left nostril, to be followed by kumbhaka, and then rechaka through the right nostril. The next puraka is done through the right nostril, and after doing kumbhaka, the following rechaka is done through the left nostril. Subsequent rounds are gone through in the same fashion. While doing kumbhaka, both the
nostrils are closed. There is a particular procedure for closing one or both the nostrils. The right hand is used for this purpose. Press the thumb on the right nostril to close it, and keep the little finger and the one adjacent to it on the bridge of the nose, while the forefinger and the middle finger are kept folded against the palm. One should understand this arrangement of the fingers from an expert teacher. For closing the left nostril the little and the next finger is used. At that time, the thumb is placed on the bridge of the nose. When both the nostrils are closed as in kumbhaka, the thumb presses the right nostril and the little finger and ring finger press the left one. Nadishodhaka pranayama includes puraka and rechaka through alternate nostrils, this is said to bring about a balance between the two nadis called Ida and pingla, which are yogic terms for the left and right nostrils, receptively.

Ujjaiyi Pranayama:

Sit in a comfortable erect position. Inhale slowly with frictional sound produced by partial contraction of the glottis. Exhale slowly producing frictional sound from the glottis. Maintain a time ratio of 1:2 for inhalation and exhalation. Repeat these inhalations.
Suryabhedan Pranayama:

Surya nadi is the right nostril. It is used in this pranayama for a puraka in every round. This fact has significance in giving this variety its name. The left nostril is tried every time for rechaka. The Suryabhedana may be called one-sided Anuloma-viloma. Kumbhaka is done between the puraka and rechaka.

Bhstrika Pranayama:

As already noted this variety gets its name from bhastra, which is the bellows. The part, which resembles the bellows in action, is called kapalabhati. A puraka, kumbhaka and rechaka follow it. The puraka and rechaka may be as in anuloma-viloma or Suryabhedana. This variety, due to the thirty to forty exhalations of kalabhati in each round, makes it the most efficient among the varieties of pranayama for arousing the Kundalini.

Shitali Pranayama:

In it the puraka is done through the mouth. The two sides of the tongue are turned up to give it the form of a channel. The tip of the tongue is drawn out of the mouth and air is inhaled over this passage. Then the mouth is closed and kumbhaka is performed, followed by a
rechaka through both the nostrils. This variety is useful to combat the effects of heat in summer.

**Sitkari Pranayama:**

In this variety the sound "sit" is produced while inhaling. Puraka is done through the mouth. The sound "sit" is produced when air is sucked over the tongue, along its moist surface, with the lips slightly rounded up to allow the air to enter the mouth. After doing the puraka the mouth are shut and kumbhaka follows. Rechaka is done through both the nostrils. It is said that one can control hunger, thirst, sleep and laziness by doing Sitkari regularly.

**Bhramari Pranayama:**

Bhramara in Sanskrit means a bee. In this variety a sound like that of the bee is produced during puraka and rechaka. The vibrations of the thin edge of the soft palate produce this sound while the air comes in or goes out. This sound should be even, smooth and absorbing so that the mind can be applied to it while doing puraka and rechaka. The mouth is kept closed. Kumbhaka is done as usual after puraka. The humming sound produced during this variety is very pleasant. It fills the mind with peace and delight. The sound during puraka is louder than that produced during rechaka.
Moorcha Pranayama:

Moorcha is stupor. This variety has the specialty that in it the Jalandhara bandha is applied throughout the three stages of puraka, kumbhaka and rechaka. This gives rise to an unconscious like state of the mind, due to stimulation of the carotid sinus situated in the neck.

Plavini Pranayama:

In Sanskrit "plu" is to swim, and plavini is that which helps us to float on water. In this variety the udara (which means the thorax or also the stomach) is first filled with air and then one just lie on the surface of water, without moving the hands or feet.

It is not necessary to practice all the varieties of pranayama. Any one of them may be learned from an expert, understood properly and practiced regularly. As we have noted earlier, kumbhaka should not be started in the very beginning. Before starting it you must be able to do twenty rounds of puraka and rechaka very comfortably. It may be introduced slowly, increasing the number of kumbhakas by one per day, or two or three per week. To begin with the duration of each kumbhaka may be equal to that of puraka. Later on it may be doubled. Kumbhaka should never be practiced without guidance from an expert. Twenty rounds of kumbhaka should be enough for all practical purposes.
After doing pranayama one will have an immediate feeling of peace and tranquility. He should take advantage of this for meditation or dhyana.

Shuddhikriyas:

'Shuddhi' means purification. Kriya is an activity or performance. Thus shuddhikriya indicates a technique of purifying. In a way, it may be said that anything that comes under yoga is a shuddhikriya, because purification is the essence of everything in yoga. Thus, the postures purify the muscles and organs by removing extra fat and congestion of blood. Pranayama purifies the nerves and meditation purifies the mind by removing the kleshas i.e. the afflictions of the mind. But these are not called shuddhikriyas as such. Shuddhikriyas are special techniques for purifying internally, the different parts of the body. Traditionally, there are six such kriyas mentioned in books. So they are also called the shat-Kriyas. Shat means six. They are as follows: Neti- for cleansing the nasal passage and throat, Dhouti- for cleansing the stomach, Nauli- for cleansing the abdominal viscera, Basti- for cleansing the colon, Trataka- for cleansing the eyes and Kapalbhati- for cleansing the brain.

One thing must be borne in mind by anybody who wishes to practice any of these kriyas and that is the kriyas should first be learnt
under an able teacher, guide or a guru, so that he understands the technicalities involved in it.

**Trataka:**

It involves fixing the gaze on a small object without moving the eyelids. For practicing this, take a sitting posture like Padamasana, Swastikasana, Vajrasana, or just sit cross-legged with a straight back. Keep the hands on the knees. Keep the mouth closed and the face calm. Place a small lamp or the traditional lamp used in puja in front at a distance of four or five feet and gaze at the flame. The lamp must be placed in a place free from breeze so that the flame remains steady. Go on watching the flame without winking. The muscles of the eyes will be strained slightly. Concentrate the mind on the flame. After a while, you will be oblivious of the flame, and tears will appear and flood the eyes. Then close the eyes and hold the mind in concentration for a while. Then wipe the tears, blow the nose if required and repeat the gazing exercise once again. After practicing two rounds of trataka as described above, keep the eyes closed and move the eyeballs first in a clockwise direction and then in a reverse fashion, moving them into the four corners of a big square imagined before you. Then move the eyes diagonally, then vertically and after that horizontally. This is a very good eye exercise.
Trataka is a technique for cleansing the eyes. It is a very good way of training the usually wandering mind to be still. It is also possible to do trataka with the eyes closed. This may be practiced several times a day, say for one or two or more minutes each time. It may be done while sitting in a chair or lying in a bed or in any position wherever, it is not necessary to pay any particular attention to your surroundings. In that case, keep the mouth and eyes closed the face calm and hold the lower jaw slightly apart from the upper one. Keep the tongue touching the roof of the mouth, and its tip touching the backside of the front teeth. Forgetting everything, look straight, far with the eyes closed and do trataka.

**Nauli:**

This is described as the foremost among the kriyas. It is a rigorous type of kriya, which requires some training. It is done in a standing position. Stand up keeping a comfortable distance, say about a foot or more between the feet. Keep the hands on the thighs just above the knees. Bend the knees slightly forward. This is the starting position. Now have a deep exhalation. Draw out as much air as possible, pressing the abdominal wall back. Understand this action carefully in which the navel is pressed back. Towards the end of this action raise the chest wall without allowing the air to enter the lungs. This causes the thoracic
cavity to expend. The air coming in through the nose normally fills that. But if we close the air passage in the throat and raise the chest at the same time, then the vacuum inside the thoracic cavity is filled by pulling the diaphragm up, which in turn pulls the abdominal wall. Keep the abdominal wall relaxed and loose at this stage, so that it will appear concave like a pit. It is called Tadagi mudra to indicate the fact of its concave appearance like the bottom of a pond. It is also called Uddiyana bandha, this latter name having a mystic significance. This is the first stage, which you should master perfectly before going in to the next stage of Nauli. Nauli is an extension of Uddiyana bandha. While holding the abdominal wall relaxed in the state of the bandha in a concave shape, and holding the breath out, contract the front abdominal muscles by pulling them down at a point nearly two inches below the navel. This is a pair of muscles running vertically from the chest bone, unto a little below the navel. The art of Nauli lies in isolating the two muscles together while the rest of the abdominal wall is held back in a relaxed state as in Uddiyana bandha. This requires some observation and practice. After holding the two abdominal muscles (called the abdominal recti) in front, in the center vertically for a few moments give up the bandha and have an inhalation. Follow it with three or four normal respirations. Then repeat the whole thing again. This is called Nauli
maddyama because the abdominal recti are isolated in the middle of the belly. A further extension of this is the churning action called Nauli chalana. It involves isolation of only one rectus muscle, out of the two at one time, in the centre, moving it to the extreme side and then bringing it to the centre, in front and relaxing it, while at the same time, the other rectus muscle is isolated and taken to the other side and then brought to the centre, where it is relaxed. This makes one round. Several such rounds follow each other giving an appearance of churning the belly. The process can then be repeated in the reverse direction.

Nauli is a good exercise of the abdominal muscles. It helps to overcome the weakness of digestion, sex, function of the kidneys, and the adrenal glands.

**Kapalabhati:**

Kapala means the skull. Bhati means shines. This kriya, as the name signifies, is meant for purifying the skull. Perhaps this can be explained physiologically. But that would involve discussion of many intricate phenomena. Some people wrongly call this Bhastrika and this mistake seems to be very side spread. There is some reason for a misunderstanding in case of the name of this kriya. Because, bhastra in Sanskrit means the bellows and this kriya i.e. kapalabhati does involve movements of the belly like the bellows. But Bhastrika is the name of a
variety of pranayama described in the traditional books on yoga. So using the same word for kapalabhati also, would only mean confusing the issue unnecessarily. It is very essential for a student of yoga to understand clearly the meaning and technique of the two and the difference between them.

Kapalabhati is an exercise in abdominal breathing. For doing it, take a sitting posture. Padamasana is especially suitable because in it, the legs are held tight so that even the rapid and vigorous respiratory movements do not disturb their arrangement. Keeping the back and neck straight, watch your normal breathing for a few moments. It will be found that the wall of the abdomen moves forward while breathing in and backward while breathing out. This movement of the abdominal wall is more pronounced when we breathe rapidly and vigorously. Watch this carefully for some time. Now keeping this in mind, start doing rapid and forceful movements of the abdominal wall, keeping the anus contracted while you do this. With a sudden contraction of the abdominal wall, there is a rapid exhalation, which should be done with some force. Then relax the abdominal wall so that it will come forward and with this passive movement, the diaphragm will go down, thereby making room for some air to enter the lungs. Thus inhalation in Kapalbhati is passive. It does not take any effort. This is exactly opposite
of what happens in normal breathing. There, the inhalations are brought about by effort for expanding the thoracic cavity and exhalations happen passively due to the elastic recoil of the lungs. But in Kapalbhati, the exhalations are done through effort, by pushing the abdominal wall in and inhalations happen passively. In the beginning, you may do one exhalation per second. Thus one round of twenty or thirty exhalations will be completed in as many seconds. As practice advances, the rate may be increased to two exhalations per second, and the number of exhalations in a round may be increased to one hundred and twenty, taking one minute for a round. Follow this round with rest, for half to one minute and then have another round, to be followed after rest, by a third round. That is enough for ordinary purposes.

Kapalbhati causes rapid lung ventilation and thus the CO$_2$ is eliminated from the body more quickly. This calms down the respiratory center, and as a result of this, we find it more easy to retain the breath i.e. to do kumbhaka, after a round of kapalabhati. This fact is made use of in the variety of pranayama called Bhastrika. How kaplabhlati makes the skull shining is not easy to explain from the physiological point of view. But it may be observed that the impact of air in each forced exhalation at the base of the brain, and the nervous action involved in
continuing incessant exhalations, are the two main factors responsible for this.

Neti:

It is of two types, one in which water is used, other involving the use of a thread for cleansing the nasal passage. The former is easier, but it can not be practiced when there is choking in the nose. A pot with a spout is used to pour water. The spout should be such as can be inserted in one nostril. A feeding cup is good enough for this purpose. Fill a feeding cup with lukewarm water with a little of salt added to it and sitting with the head slightly lowered in front, turn the face to one side, say the left, so that the spout of the feeding cup can be inserted inside the right nostril. Raise the cup slightly to pour the water inside the right nostril, bend the head still forward and adjust the flow of the water through the spout so that it comes out through the left nostril. Usually you will learn it in the very first trial. When the cup is emptied, take it away, blow the nose, and fill the cup again, now turning the face the other way, insert the spout in the left nostril, and repeat the procedure. The nose is cleansed very well. This type of neti is called Jalneti. The other one is Sutraneti.

The sutra or thread is prepared by intertwining four or six threads made of cotton. It is about eighteen inches in length, the
thickness being about 1/10 of an inch. It is made wet by applying butter or edible oil, and one end of it is inserted through one nostril, and moved in slowly till it come down the pharynx. There it is held between the forefinger and the thumb, and pulled out through the mouth. Holding the two ends of the thread in the two hands they are pulled forward and backward gently. The thread rubs against the nasal passage and cleans it. Instead of a thread, some people use a rubber catheter. It is more convenient.

Neti can be used with advantage in case of sinus trouble, common cold and chronic headache.

Dhouti:

It can also be performed in two ways, by using water or by using a strip of cloth. The former is call JAL dhouti. The latter is vastra dhouti. The simplest form of jala-dhouti is vamana dhouti. Vamana means vomiting. This may be practiced whenever it is felt necessary to take out the contents of the stomach, including acid and bile and cleanse it. For this, drink four to six glasses of water with a little salt added to it. The water should not be too cold or hot. Do this in the morning before taking breakfast. After drinking water bend the body slightly forward, open the mouth, and put the forefinger inside the mouth as deep as possible, and let the water come out in the act of vomiting. If you are
suffering from acidity; flatulence, lack of appetite, heaviness in the stomach, or headache due to accumulation of bile, then vaman-dhouti will be of use. If necessary, it may be practiced everyday for a week or so. But it should not be made a habit. Another form of jala-dhouti is called danda dhouti. In it, a danda or tube of about three feet length and about the little finger in breadth is inserted down the throat upto the stomach after drinking four to six glasses of water. When the body is bent slightly forward, the water comes out through the tube by siphon. This is better than vamana dhouti because it does not involve any violent muscular contractions like that in vomiting. But swallowing of the tube may itself pose a problem, as the throat is sensitive to touch sensations and it may not be able to swallow the tube without vomiting action. In that case vamana dhouti is to be preferred.

In Vastra dhouti, use is made of a twenty-two feet long strip of fine cloth about three inches in width. The strip is soaked in water or milk. One end of it is inserted in the mouth and passed down the guller. Then with the act of swallowing, it is passed on to the stomach. Then a few rounds of Nauli are performed, keeping the other end of the strip outside the mouth. Then the cloth is pulled out slowly. It comes out, wiping the stomach wall clean.
Dhouti, apart from cleansing the stomach is found very useful in the treatment of disorders like asthma and diabetes.

Basti:

This is a specialized kriya, which can be done only if one can do Nauli madhyama. If you can do Nauli, then proceed as follows for doing Basti. Take a tube about nine inches in length and less than half an inch in outer diameter. It may be a bamboo tube or a rubber tube. Lubricate it with oil. Sitting in a swatting position or assuming the position of Utkatasana, insert the tube up to about half inside the rectum. Take some water in a bowl and dip the outer end of the tube in it. Do Nauli madhyama and you will find that some water is sucked in through the tube. Now, put the finger tip at the lower end of the tube, so that the water does not come out again. Then do Nauli again taking the finger slightly away to allow water to go in again. Repeat this once more and take the tube out. Then do Nauli chalana in both the directions and after some time pass the water out. This cleanses the colon. It may be practiced occasionally if there is a feeling of constipation.

Bandhas and Mudras:

In these practices one tries to consciously control certain semi-voluntary and involuntary muscles in the body. These influence the
activity of the autonomic nervous system, which functions as a whole. These tones up the internal organs decongest them and stimulate their healthy functioning.

**Uddiyana Bandha:**

"Ud" "Di" in Sanskrit means to "fly up". Here it is said that for the Yogi who practices this regularly, his "Prana" moves up through the subtle centers. The significance of Uddiyana is to restrain the breath and hence is called a Bandh or Lock.

Exhale completely through the mouth expand the chest by mock inhalation movement, sucking in the relaxed abdominal muscles so that they lie flat almost in touch with the backbone. This is practiced at the end of kumbhaka before the beginning of Rechaka. This is also the first stage of the Nauli kriya. Maintain for some time and then inhale slowly.

**Jalandhara Bandha:**

This is used for restraining the breath below the level of the glottis after inhalation in Antarkumbhaka. Contract the throat, press the chin firmly against the chest at the jugular notch after inhaling. The breath is stopped at the throat. With gradual practice the pressure of air
on the glottis will be released and the whole system will be relaxed, while the breath gets stopped near the throat.

**Moola Bandha:**

Moola Bandha is a Yogic Kriya, which helps the student to take the Apana and the sex-energy upwards. The student sits on Siddhasana and takes the Apana and Sex-energy upwards by contracting the anus and practising Kumbhak or retontion of breath. By long practice the downward seminal flow is checked and semen is sublimated into ojas-shakti or spiritual energy which helps contemplation. This Bandha checks wet dreams and helps in maintaining Brahmachrya.

These three bandhas namely the Uddiyana, Jalandhara and Mula Bandha form one group called Bandha traya. These Bandhas are used exclusively as locks during kumbhaka i.e. to restrain and close the passage for the breath. Uddiyana Bandha is used in Bahya kumbhaka and Jalandhara Bandha during Antrya kumbhaka. Mula Bandha can be done during Puraka, Kumabhaka, and Rechaka and also in meditation. This Bandha prevents the building up of tension in the head.

**Meditation:**

The word "Meditation" has now a days become quite famous. People often speak of Transcendental meditation of Maharishi Mahesh
Yogi, meditation as taught by Bhagavan Rajnish and so on. Such trade names, seem to have become popular among the young and the old, and one often wonders, whether meditation must always have the mark of this or that Guru. Whether there is really any thing such as meditation, which does not have any brand name and which may be practised by the common man without bringing in any personality.

Meditation is a process of silencing the ever wandering and unsteady mind. In the beginning the mind needs to be controlled, restrained, and made silent by restraining its activity. This can be achieved by prayer, chanting mantras or bhajans, fixing the gaze on an object as in trataka or by just sitting in a meditative posture with the eyes closed. The best way to get the mind to a state of silence is to do pranayama.

We find that the mind is restless by nature. The mind is a huge storehouse of ideas, beliefs, imagination, desires, emotions, urges, likes and dislikes. These keep the mind perceptually on a run from thought to thought. The mind may be resting only in sleep. In the waking state, there are impacts from the surroundings channeled through the sense organs of sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste. There is a constant interaction with the persons and things around us, through the five sense organs. The impacts carried by the sense organs are restored in the mind.
This gives rise to experience. The experience may be pleasant or unpleasant. Each experience leaves its mark on the mind. These are called traces of past experience or samskaras. A samskara may be revived when there is new experience having a relation with it. Most of our mental activity or movement of the mind is due to such a revival of past experience of smaskaras. Our attitudes, desires, fears, feelings and beliefs are attached to the experience when they are stored in the mind and so the samskaras are very complex, having associations with other samskaras. Thus the revival of a single samskara often gives rise to a chain of thoughts. Each thought strengthens the relevant samskara. Thus, thinking goes on endlessly. The essence of meditation lies in putting an end to this perpetual activity of the mind.

But it is not easy to put an end to the continuous wandering activity of the mind. Yoga prescribes a preliminary training by way of what is called Bahiranga-yoga, which includes yama, niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara. This training is said to purify the mind of the afflictions or kleshas, or the innate nature of the mind made by ignorance, ego feeling, likes and dislikes and fear of death. Unless the mind learns the art of vairagya or detachment, it can not be steady and still. When the mind is trained to be still and detached it is called "Kshinavritti" which means a state in which the tendency of the mind to
run about is overcome. Meditation is possible only for a mind, which has become kshinavritti. Otherwise meditation becomes only a mechanical exercise. There are many people who have tried to put the mind to rest by various means such as japa, bhajan, and prayer and so on for years without any success. Meditation is actually a state of understanding and sensitivity, which cannot be achieved by any effort to concentrate the mind mechanically or by cultivation of virtue or imposition of discipline. What is more important and essential is detachment and silence. This is spoken of in yoga as the twin factors of Abhyasa and Vairagya.

We shall here describe a simple technique of meditation, which any one of us can follow in every day life. Actually, in the higher or true sense, meditation has no technique or set pattern. It is a spontaneous state of silence and stillness involving no practice or willful effort. In yoga, this higher form of meditation is called Nirbija or Asamprajnyata samadhi. That state is also called Sahjavastha or Jivanmukti. It can not be taught or practised. That state is the true meaning of meditation. But there are very few extremely rare individuals who might reach that state. It is clearly beyond the reach of most of us. What we shall be describing presently is not that highest state of meditation, which is actually beyond any description and conceptualization. But, it should be emphasized, that most of us, who can not attain that purity and sensitivity of mind,
essential for the highest kind of meditation, should not be disheartened, because there is a simple way of meditation available for us which, if practiced every day, has been found to produce very good results for making our life full of health and happiness.

The simple technique of meditation is called pranadharana. It involves applying the mind to the flow of the prana or air while we breathe in and out.

**Pranadharana:**

Sit in a meditative posture like Siddhasana, Padamasana, Swastikasana or if none of these is possible then in Sukhasana, with the back straight and eyes closed. If pranayama is practised already then meditation becomes easier because the mind attains a peaceful state by pranyama. Keep the whole body relaxed. Keep the wall of the abdomen fully free of any tension, stretch or pressure. Let it move forward and backward very smoothly and effortlessly with each respiration. Keep the mouth closed, allowing a very slight gap between the upper and lower jaw. Keep the tongue touching the palate, its tip touching the backside of the upper front teeth. Let there be no movement of the lips, jaws and the tongue. Keep the facial muscles and those of the forehead fully relaxed. The eyelids and eyeballs should be steady and free of any tension and...
movement. Holding the mouth and the eyes motionless, is one of the most important requirements of meditation.

When a steady and fully relaxed posture is taken in the manner described above, start paying attention to the process of breathing in and out. Let the flow of air be uniform and smooth. Do not try to control the process. Do not hold the breath. Just be aware of the flow of air without putting in any effort to control it. It is important to keep the abdominal wall relaxed. Do not utter any word. Do not see any images. Do not visualize or immune anything. Whenever we are left to ourselves, we go on speaking to ourselves and seeing images. That is how we entertain various thoughts. It must be remembered that unless we put an end to this process of bringing in works and images, the mind will go on thinking endlessly. For this, it is essential to hold the apparatus of speech and sight completely motionless.

Thus, go on watching the process of breathing without any struggle, desire for a result, or motive. This need not be continued for long hours. About ten minute's practice at a time is good enough. It may be repeated several times during the day whenever one finds some free time. Pranadharana may be practised while sitting in a chair or even while lying down. It should become a nature of the mind, not imposed
from outside but flowering from within. Then this kind of meditation works as a great means for health and happiness in human life.

We shall now explain the meaning of three words as described in the ancient texts, all of which stand for what is meant by meditation. They are dhyana, samapatti and samadhi. The word Dyane is derived from the root dhyai, which means to think of, meditate upon, ponder over, contemplate, or simply to call the mind. Dhyana as a technique of yoga indicates an undisturbed process in which a single thought or idea arises in the mind with a continuous flow, and without intervention by any other thought or idea. It is a state of absorption of the mind, called ekagrata in Sanskrit. Usually our mind is in a state of sarvartha; that is to say it grasps all objects (sarva artha), one or many at a time. As opposed to this, ekagrata involves application of the mind to a single object, which is a state of steadiness. The word samapatti is derived from the root samapad, meaning to attain, to arrive or fall upon. Samapatti means arriving, encountering, accomplishing, completion, or conclusion of a process. It is a technical term of yoga indicating a state of oneness (tadanjanata) or unity of the mind with an object. In it, the mind arrives or falls upon an object, completely because of total absence of any distraction, and just as a crystal placed on a coloured flower shows the colour of the flower in itself and thereby it shows as if there is oneness
of colour between the two, similarly, the mind in samapatti becomes one
with the object. In other words, this is the same thing as ekagrata in the
state of dhyana. The word samadhi issues from the root samadha, which
means to put together or to unite immensely. The basic root here is dha
meaning to put or place, i.e., to take hold of. There are two grades of
samadhi. There being no effort to apply the mind to any particular idea
or object. There is a world of difference between the former and the
latter. The former is the same as samapatti, and it has been called dhyana
at many places in ancient Sanskrit texts. The latter state is described by
words like sahajawastha or unmaniawastha. The word meditation
includes all these meanings. Thus we must differentiate between two
meanings of the word meditation. In one sense, meditation is process of
thought, rather of silencing thoughts, which involves effort to overcome
the instability of the mind and its savage nature. Seeing that the savage
tendencies of the mind are the root cause of misery and sorrow, one
desires to bring them under control. One imagines a state of freedom
from the savage tendencies and visualises a gap between one's actual
state and the ideal state. This gap is sought to be filled by meditation. All
the mighty traditions of religion, philosophy, cultural and ethical
behaviour and morality that man has formulated through ages have
advocated various means for filling the gap between the actual and the
ideal. Meditation has always been the foremost among such means. Thus, in one sense meditation is looked upon as a means, as a way of discipline, control, a way to be gradually traversed in order to achieve liberation or freedom. In this sense, meditation may be called dhyana, samapatti, or samprajnyata samadhi. In another sense, meditation is not a means but an end in itself. It is not something to be sought after or achieved through effort. Rather it comes uninvited when all effort ceases completely and the desire for improvement or change for filling a gap, comes to an end. Meditation in this sense is called nirbija samadhi. It cannot be taught or learned, as there is no technique for it. To avoid confusion the two forms of meditation may respectively be called meditation with seed and seedless meditation. In the tradition of yoga, the former is described by words like dhyana, samapatti, samprjnata samadhi or sabija samadhi, while the latter form of meditation, as pointed out above, is called nirbija samadhi. Bija means the seed. In the context of samadhi it means the seed of ignorance which sprouts in the form of misery and sorrow. This seed must be destroyed for seedless meditation to come about. It is an experience of those who practise meditation. Actually it is almost impossible to make the mind steady and silent for a long time. The mind can be temporarily put to rest by giving it a mantra to recite or by concentrating it on some idea or image. But
the mind is utterly unsteady by its very nature. Just as a child may be absorbed in a toy for a while, or in some attractive game, but it can not go on playing for ever, so too, the mind can not be held up in meditation continuously even for a few minutes. Every now and then the mind runs away and it has to be brought back to meditate. This is an unending process and many of us who might have tried to make the mind steady and silent in meditation for years do have the same experience. Practice continued over many years does not seem to bring about basic change in the attitude and tendencies of the mind. This is a great hurdle in the way of meditation. For crossing this hurdle it is necessary to understand how the mind works, how it deceives itself, and why it is that the mind is always running after something, never giving up the chase.

Nadies, Chakras and Awakening of Kundalini:

Nadies:

Susumna, Ida, and Pingala are the most prominent nadies (Channels) in the Nervous system. In these, again, the susumna is the most important, being the point of harmony of the other two, and lying as it does in the middle. The Ida is on the left side and the Pingala is on the right. The Ida is of a grey colour, while the Pingala is red. The Susumna is situated within the spinal column and extends from the root of the spine to the brain. While the Ida represents the Moon and Pingala
the sun, the Susumna represents the Moon, the Sun and fire, and is composed of all the three gunas (trigunamayi). There is the vajrini nadi within the Susumna, and the citrini lies within the vajrini.

Tantric writers have constantly referred to the centers of different kinds of consciousness (Chakras). They not only distinguished between the sensory nerves and the motor nerves, but also different kinds of sensory nerves: the olfactory nerves (Gandha-Vaha nadi), the optic nerves (Rupavaha Nadi) the auditory nerves (Sabda-Vah Nadi), gustatory nerves (Nasvaha Nadi), and the tactile nerves (Sparsavaha Nadi) (Positive Science of ancient Hindus by B.N. Seal). There is also the mention of ‘Manovaha nadi’ - a channel of the communication of the Jiva (Soul) is Sahasrar chakra - Upper cerebrum with the Manas Chakra (Sensorium) at the base of the brain. Further, the svapna-vaha-nadi considered to be the branch of the Manovaha nadi serves as the channel of communication from the Jiva (Soul) to the Sensorium (Manasa Cakra).

Chakras:

The Tantras recognize six centres of the body Known as Satchakras and designated as Muladhara, Svadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddhi and Ajna. These are the dynamic centres where the spiritual energy becomes vitalised and finds special expression. All of
these centers are placed in the susumna, or rather in the inner most nervous current of the susumna, which is known as the citrini nadi and they form the ascending steps whereby the spiritual energy passes from the foot or the spine to the cerebrum. When an easy pathway is formed along the Susumna through these centers and the spiritual energy encounters no resistance in its movement upwards and downwards, then there is sat-chakra bhedana, which literally means the penetrating of the six chakras (mystical centres). The Muladhara charka is situated between the base of the sexual organ and the anus. It is regarded as the seat of the spiritual energy and hence is known as the adhara padma. These centers are metaphorically described as lotuses. The Muladhara is supposed to be a four-petalled lotus. The Svadhisthan chakra is situated at the base of the sexual organ and is a six-petalled lotus. The Manipura is situated in the region of the navel and contains ten petals. The Anahata is placed in the region of the heart and is a twelve-petalled lotus. The Vissuddhi chakra is at the lower end of the throat and has sixteen petals. The Ajna chakra is situated in the space between the two eyebrows and is a two-petalled lotus. In the cerebrum, there is the Sahasrara Padama, the thousand-petalled lotus, which is as white as the silvery full Moon, as bright as lightning, and as mild and serene as moonlight. This is the
highest centre and the goal, and here the spiritual energy manifests itself in its full glory and splendor.

Susumna- a Higher Point of Harmony:

In the ordinary normal state of the individual the Susumna is not awakened (active) or recognized as functioning and the path through these centers to the thousand petalled centre in the cerebrum (Sahasrar) is also closed. Through proper exercise (Kriya) and meditation (Bhawana), these centers begin to work and the working of susumna is clearly perceived. The Kundalini Shakti which remains latent and dormant in the Muladhar passes (as current) as flow of energy along the Susumna (path) to the Sahasrar and becomes fully awakened there (it seems as if the various cognitive centers located in the cerebrum become activated). What this susumna is, it is very difficult to explain in physiological terms. But there is not the least doubt that some physiological process within the center of nervous system, and which the Tantras have discovered to be most intimately connected with consciousness, is implied by it. And, there is hardly any doubt, that the susumna implies the harmonious working of all the parts of nervous system, and represents the working of the system as a whole rather than any particular process. Susumna seems to be higher point of harmony than what is implied by the Kumbhak or the equalization respiratory
process in Patanjala Yoga. Prana and Nada, (Breath and Sound) both are concomitants of consciousness. But harmonious sound seems to stand more adjacent to the consciousness, than harmonious breath.

**Awakening of Kundalini:**

In order to attain Jivan Mukti, one has to rise up to the Sahasrar through the Sushumna nerve channel after controlling the activities of all other numerous nerve channels and centers of the body by controlling the breath. This is also called the awakening of Kundalini Shakti i.e. the force, which is the origin of diversities in creation and is also at the same time the sustained of all created things. The Kundalini is awakened, which has its seat in the Muladhara Chakra, it is to be known that the attempts for reaching the true and only path of self-realization, has not yet been achieved. The Kundalini is a tangible and living symbol of the divine force by taking recourse to which the Para-Brahma has manifested Himself in this created sphere. Without Pranyama or total control over breath, by whatever means be it effected (by either meditation or devotion), the awakening of the Kundalini is absolutely impossible. It is Pranayama which gradually leads us to the three other higher stages called Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana and really it is only in the stage of Dhyana that the Kundalini becomes viable as a burning electrified slender, straight line inside the backbone. It is this force
which inheres in every created object and sustains it. Its activities are constant but are not ordinarily perceived by the human beings. So it is said that this Kundalini lies in a dormant or sleeping state like a serpent folding itself in three and half coils, just as any ordinary serpent does while in the hole, particularly during the winter season. It is at the root of very existence and so we have it in ordinary parlance that the earth rests on the head of Basuki (the queen of serpents). Its seat is just below the Muladhara and in the dormant state it is said to keep its hood directed downwards. With the conquest of Muladhara or Prithvitattva (i.e. the influence of the objective world upon our senses), the hood is raised upwards and simultaneously a hissing sound “Soham” is heard.

**Dietetics:**

Yogic diet has to play a significant role in the practice of yoga sadhana, maintenance of health and also in the treatment of various bodily disorders. Lord Krishna, in Chapter VI of Srimad Bhawgad Gita, has clearly stated:

"Yoga is not possible for him who eats too much or for him who abstains too much from eating, it is not for him Arjun, who sleeps too much or too little".
Moreover, Yoga can remove one's misery only when diet, behaviour and sleep are properly balanced. Traditionally, the concept of yogic diet has been considered in terms of *Sattvic Diet* or *Mitahara*. It does not include only the qualitative and quantitative aspects, but includes also the conduct of a person towards his food intake, for which there is provision of yogic dietetics.

In various Hathiyogic texts, there has been mention of yogic dietetics in addition to the description of indications and contraindications of dietary articles for a yoga practitioner. Some of the important yogic dietary rules, which are known and are in use practically, have been summarised below for ready reference:

1. One should be moderate in diet in view of the concept of filling up of half of the capacity of the stomach with solid food, one fourth by water and leaving one fourth for the movement of air.

2. One should offer one's prepared food to God before its intake. In Gita (II: 23), the persons who cook food just for eating, without an idea of offering it to God, have been condemned.

3. One should take food in calm and quiet mood and not when irritated or excited. Moreover, it should be preferred in lone place
to avoid bad sight of a poor and depressive person, hungry person, patient, dog, snake and a cook etc.

4. One should not take food before or immediately after Yoga Sadhana.

5. In order to avoid the development of Rajsic or Tamsic mental attitude, one should prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food like meat, fish, eggs etc.

6. The food should not be too dry, sharp, stale, salty or sour. Moreover, it should nourish the dhatus and be pleasing and suitable.

7. One should not take physical and mental exertion to avoid delayed digestion and other gastric disorders.

8. One should be regular in time for the food intake as per pre-requisite and avoid food intake before the digestion of previous meal as it weakens gastric fire.

9. One should avoid intake of water before the meal as it weakens the gastric fire. Excessive water intake especially the cold one is also to be avoided just after the meal to avoid increase of Kapha dosha in the body.
Swara yoga, the ancient science of pranic body rhythms is not well known either in the East or in the West, but it is still practised in India and has a great importance in Yoga Sadhana. It has so many rules and regulations regarding maintenance of health, astrology, daily regimen etc., to lead a healthy and prosperous life. Here are the important Swara Yogic dietary rules, which need a deep scientific study to prove their worth in modern context of health and medicine. These are briefly described and explained with their applications:

1. The intake of meal should be co-ordinated with the free flow of breath through the right nostril. Practically, this dietary rule seems to be correct as the food intake in Lunar causes flatulence, heaviness in the abdomen, dyspepsia and in the chronic state, the tendency of vomiting. In Ayurvedic terminology, as the nature of solar nadi is hot and there is conducive atmosphere of increase of gastric fire, the food taken during the functioning state of solar nadi is easily digestible. In other words, it can also be stated that the smooth pranic flow towards the digestive organs is present in Solar nadi and not in lunar nadi.

2. A slightly hot stuff of food is to be taken to prevent diseases. The observance of this rule seems to be practically correct, as neither the excessively hot nor the cold foodstuffs are pleasing and
agreeable to mind. The slight hotness of the foodstuff aids in digestion, as it does not interfere with the internal temperature of digestive organs for proper digestion of the food.

3. In the beginning, sweet things, in the middle saline and sour items and in the end astringent and bitter things will be conducive to body. This dietary rule has also been described as Pulsaytay's statement in Ayurveda. There is an increase of Vata dosha before the intake of food due to emptiness of the stomach and the sweet food articles counteracts the increased Vata doshas. The middle intake of saline and sour articles increases Pitta dosha for aiding digestion. The lastly intake of bitter and astringent food articles helps to counteract the increased Kapha dosha resulted in the last phase of digestion of food. In scientific terms, hypothetically, it can be stated that the observance of above rule helps in creation of proper media, with respect to PH in the digestive tract for proper digestion of food. It might be helping in the proper secretion of digestive juices and hormones at a proper time. Moreover, the initial intake of sweet food articles might stimulate the pancreas for secretion of insulin to lower down the levels of glucose, fatty acids, amino acids etc. to such an extent so as to accommodate the digested content of carbohydrate, fats and proteins, without
considerable rise of their levels in blood. The lastly intake of sweet food articles might be causing delayed secretion of insulin and thereby, delayed adjustment of carbohydrates to cause the tendency for development of diabetes. Thus, a scientific study is required to verify this rule and hypothesis to have its application in finding out the causative factor and for effective management of diabetes.

4. While solar nadi is functioning, extremely hot stuffs, milk sour and pungent things if taken will cause bilious complaints. This rule is also explainable in Ayurvedic terms. The Solar Nadi is hot by nature and there is increase of Pitta dosha and bodily heat during its functioning state. Thus, the intake of food articles of extremely hot potency, milk of sheep, mare etc. of hot potency, sour and pungent things containing the Agni tatva will cause increase of more of the Pitta dosha to display bilious complaints. Moreover, the intake of milk in Lunar nadi and not in Solar nadi might have been stated because of the favorable regulatory mechanism for blood volume in Lunar nadi and not in Solar nadi. The scientific study is required to prove its worth to find out its application in persons/children having allergy with milk.
5. While lunar nadi is functioning, very hot stuffs, saline, sour and pungent dishes and greens have to be taken. This rule seems to be correct also in Ayurvedic terminology because of the fact that the nature of Lunar nadi is cold, and the sour pungent and saline food articles, constituted by Agni Mahabhuta can be easily accommodated in the body. The green foods described in Harit Varga by Rishi Charaka in Chapter XXVI (166-67) are mostly of hot potency and pungent, tasting like Green ginger, garlic, Citrus medica etc.

6. While Lunar nadi is functioning, cold food or other articles which will cause catching cold, if taken, will cause rheumatism, cold in the head etc. This is also explainable on the concept of cold nature of Lunar Nadi i.e. the bodily heat is conserved during the phase of Lunar nadi. The intake of articles of cold potency will naturally cause coldness of high intensity in the body to cause rheumatism, coldness in the head etc. The scientific study of this rule will be significant for the diagnosis and management of disease caused by cold potency articles. This rule also reveals that in case of Coryza, the free flow of solar nadi will be helping significantly for an early recovery. These rules are of great importance to an Ayurvedic physician. If the medicines are prescribed, for their intake, in
coordination with their taste and potency, with that of the rules of
dietary intake of solar/lunar nadi, the recovery from a disease will
be early and effective, and thus, a research, in this direction is
needed to prove the worth of these guidelines of Swara Yoga.

According to Swara Yoga, water intake has been prescribed
mainly in Lunar Nadi and solid food in Solar Nadi.

दायें स्वर भोजन करें, बायें पीवे नीर,
बायें करवट सोवे करें, तो सुख पावे है जीव।
बायें स्वर भोजन करें, दायें पीवे नीर,
दश दिन मूलों यों करें, होवे रोग शरीर।।

Moreover, it is being stated that the drinking of water in Solar
Nadi and intake of food in lunar nadi, if carried in violation,
will cause the body diseased within ten days. This rule also
indicates indirectly that all the above said Swar yogic dietary
rules, if violated for ten days continuously, will cause the body
diseased. Thus, the Swara Yogic dietetics is of great importance
in health and medicine.

The rule of drinking water or other liquid articles might have
been stated because of favourable regulatory mechanism for
blood volume control in solar nadi. In view of this, the rule will
be applicable in disease concerned with blood volume like high and low Blood pressure.

8. While Solar Nadi is operating, if beetles are taken largely, bileousness and urinary disorders on account of excessive blood and bile will arise. This rule is also explainable in Ayurvedic terms. The betel is dry and hot in nature and its excessive intake in Solar nadi will naturally cause increased pitta dosha for bilious complaints.

In view of the above said dietary rules and regulations of Swara yoga, it can be revealed that this dietetics can be very much useful for a common man to preserve positive health and thereby, preventing himself from causation of bodily disorders. These can also be best tools in the hands of an Ayurvedic Physician to prescribe the medicines in coordination of their taste and potency with that of nature of lunar and solar nadi.

In Yoga Sadhana, the observance of these dietary rules will surely help in maintenance of three doshas, Malas, Agni and Dhatus in their homeostatic state. This will help the Sadhak to have balanced state of body and mind for the practice of Asana, Pranayamas, Mudra and Bandhas, Meditation and higher spiritual practice. Conclusively, there is an urgent need of research and practical verification of Swara Yoga
dietetics for their application in health, medicine and for a Yoga practitioner in the light of modern scientific aspect with the help of modern scientific instruments. I hope that the research area undertaken in this subject will provide new dimensions in the health and medicine in the interest of mankind.