

# ANANDA RAJA YOGA SCHOOL OF EUROPE



**Handbook:**

*ARYTT TEACHING 2: HOW TO TEACH THE MEDITATION*

*TECHNIQUES*

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## Chapter One: Inspiration

### How To Know a True Spiritual Teacher, Yogananda

(Matt. 10:2-8 )Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying,

*“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”*

Do not follow the way of most Gentiles nor enter into any city of the Samaritans, but rather go to the shepherdless, truth-seeking, innocent souls who constitute true Israel. And as ye go, preach, telling all that the blissful kingdom of God is within every soul, and thus within reach of everyone. Heal the spiritually sick as well as the physically sick such as lepers. Raise the spiritually dead and also raise those who should be brought back to life even though they are physically dead, after you have judged their good and bad karmas. Cast out Satan and his satellites from obsessed souls. You have received truth through your free will and by my free will, give this truth freely to those who spontaneously, without persuasion or compulsion, are willing to receive it.

#### Teach Those Who Are Ready

In the above words of Jesus we have a hint as to where churches should be built and to whom the teachings of Christ should be given. Many people think of building churches in aristocratic neighborhoods. It is all right to build churches there if the aristocrats are spiritually interested, but if they are not, it is better to build churches wherever people repent and feel they are lost sheep who have forsaken the fold of God-consciousness.

Every spiritual teacher before preaching to others must first learn to contact God and live a life of discipline under the tutelage of a great divine teacher. Any accredited disciple of a great teacher is a person who is fit to teach. In the West, one who is a teacher by virtue of his personality or book knowledge often starts his career by first desiring to build a church and a denomination of his own. This involves and entangles the teacher in financial difficulties and obliges him to collect money for his church as best he can. Money and desire for many followers have kept the churches and temples in spiritual stagnation.

#### “Second Coming of Christ”

All churches should be structures without sectarian names if possible and should open their doors to truth-seekers of all races, giving them discipline in the art of God-contact. The purpose of a shop is to sell things, but the purpose of a church is to give God-contact. And if it claims to give that, it must do so or cease to exist as a spiritual force. Every spiritual teacher who has studied under another great teacher should pass his life more in meditation than in reading books, and should transmit his spirituality to real seekers, whom he meets through the will of God and proper moral publicity, by regularly meditating with them whenever he can, in small groups, in quiet places or secluded centrally located places in a city. If all the churches get

together and follow the above method, they will bring about a real revival of Christ Consciousness in the heart of true seekers. When true seekers and worthy ministers will deeply meditate together, then in the expanded cup of their consciousness the Christ Consciousness that was in Jesus will manifest in them and thus bring about the Second Coming of Christ.

Then if the devoted disciples of a self-evolved, spiritually educated teacher build him a church, it is commendable. But the spiritual teacher must be careful not to take the responsibility of material organization, which would lead him to cater to or flatter others for gain, ultimately using up all his time and preventing him from keeping his greatest engagement with God in meditation.

### **How to Distinguish between Metaphysical Racketeers and True Teachers**

In the West many metaphysical racketeers elect themselves as great teachers by giving publicity to falsehoods about their contact with invisible masters and saints. In India the people have a very clever way of distinguishing between holy-mouthed charlatans and real divine spiritual teachers. Really intelligent truth-seekers in India as a matter of unannounced law seek those teachers who live the spiritual life and who are definitely known to have practiced self-mastery under a great living master. If the truth seekers of the West follow the above discriminating method, they will avoid being disillusioned by the antics of self-elected masters.

False prophets always have one purpose, to make money either by charging for instruction or books or by exploiting the imagination of credulous truth-seeking people by false stories of invisible saints and miraculous happenings. Asking a fee or a free-will offering for rendering spiritual service through books or lessons is justifiable if the money is used for propagating the spiritual cause and for the teacher's maintenance, as he gives all his life to the spreading of the divine work. However, asking a fee or free-will offering is condemnable if it is used to satisfy the ambition for financial gain and luxurious habits of an unscrupulous pseudo-prophet.

That is why Jesus commanded his disciples, "Do not go to the self-satisfied Gentiles or Samaritans, but rather go to those of Israel who are repenting for having strayed away from the fold of God-consciousness. And as you go, vibrate into them your God-realization and show them that the kingdom of heaven or the state of astral vibration and wisdom lies within their reach, just behind the human consciousness or the state of wakefulness, subconsciousness and superconsciousness as realized in deep meditation. As you heal the soul of material consciousness by establishing the kingdom of heaven or God-consciousness there, so also free the truth-seeking people from their bodily ailments of leprosy, death, and obsession.

### **"Heal All Sufferers from Spiritual, Mental, Moral, or Physical Diseases"**

"Heal the really repentant God-seeking people of Israel not only from physical sickness but mental, moral, and spiritual sickness. Raise the spiritually dead people into the consciousness of God and by transmitting your God-power release them from devils and obsessions of cosmic delusion and Satanic ignorance and evil disembodied souls, by your own free accord, through your uninfluenced spontaneously spiritual free will. Bring to life the good departed souls who have more good than evil karma or who have equal good and bad karma, because such acts are now sanctioned by the Heavenly Father to assure mankind that all things are possible with God's true devotees and followers of the path of goodness. The worthy souls you resurrect will do much good on earth.

"You have received the God-consciousness transmitted through my own free will and God's divine compassion into your self-disciplined meditating lives. In the way you have grasped God-consciousness, teach the same way to the people. You used your divine ardor,

reason, and free will to meditate and spiritually advance, and so you awakened the spontaneous desire in God and me to transmit our divine consciousness into you. Likewise teach people to rouse their free will and to meditate and thereby receive the God-consciousness freely available to them.”

### **Spiritual Democracy**

One should clearly realize that to charge money for spiritual lessons or religious books from a number of people and to use that money for the maintenance of the minister and the spread of the teaching is not sin on the part of the church or religious organization but is actually a much better form of spiritual democracy than making the church maintenance dependent on one enslaving proud rich man. Also, maintaining a church by free will offerings received at services and religious meetings and from the money gotten from book sales is spiritually legitimate. Charging for spirit lessons or receiving free-will offerings is only sin when collected money is used for satisfying the private ambition of an unscrupulous so-called spiritual teacher.

### **Spontaneity Needed**

It must be borne in mind also that ultimate truth is not so simple that it can be received by church members who are satisfied to listen to dogmatic or merely moral sermons. Every church member, instead of being coaxed into the church, must spontaneously go there and meditate and learn the technique of God-contact from a divine God-known saint. In India, the great masters live in quiet hermitages where they teach the truth to selected students by frequent meditation with them and by occasional interpretation of scriptural wisdom. Too much advertising, coaxing and “cateringism” have obliterated the will of the church members to seek truth freely or of their own accord and to receive it through the free will of God stimulated by the devotee’s spiritual ardor and deep meditation.

Therefore Jesus told his disciples, “Through your free will and spiritual ardor you have awakened the free will of God to give you freely God-consciousness, likewise, you must teach people how by their own free will and spiritual ardor they can awaken the free will of God to grant them Self-Realization given through your own freewill.”

Truth cannot be received just by listening to lectures but must come by the above law of spiritual ardor, spiritual labor of the devotee, and the divine compassion of God as the Lord of the all-desired and much sought-after spiritual harvest of Self-realization.

**--From *The Second Coming of Christ*, Inner Life magazine, December 1938**

## The Importance of Meditation, Swami Kriyananda

In his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie stated that the best way to be thought a fascinating conversationalist is to listen attentively, and with interest. This principle applies also, though of course not in quite the same way, to the practice of prayer.

Most people when they pray talk to God rather than with Him. They don't take the time to listen, in deep inner silence, for His answer. Prayer, however, to be most deeply meaningful, needs to be a two-way communication, a giving and receiving — like conversation. And while it would be absurd to think in terms of “fascinating” God with our part of the conversation, there are proven ways of making our prayers more effective. Listening is one of them.

How many people ever think of prayer in this way? Usually, they think of it as begging for special favors, as though prayer were a petition submitted before the awful majesty of an imperial throne. Many, no doubt, question whether the Lord will even single them out for special attention from among the multitudes appealing to Him daily. Perhaps they fear they might be judged presumptuous if they tried to interest Him beyond the actual subject of their petition. Whatever the case, most people talk a lot, like inadequate conversationalists, but seldom think of listening in return.

The difference between the one-way street of normal prayer and actually conversing with God is simply the degree of involvement — on both sides. Of course, there can be no question of trying to “fascinate” Him with our conversation. The Lord has all creation to engage His attention, besides the perfection of love and bliss in which He eternally dwells. One petty life in the great scheme of things cannot particularize His interest to the point of making Him fascinated with it! When we approach Him, however, with deep love, dedication, and trust, we appeal to that cosmic, but at the same time deeply personal, love which He feels for every one of his human children.

Prayer must come from the heart. That is what I mean by conversation. As there is a world of difference between talking at someone and talking *with* him, so there is a universe of difference between petitioning God and *including Him* in the needs we feel.

We need to *involve* Him in our lives, in our love for Him. How can we hope to do that, if we merely pray to him? That's like talking at somebody.

Leaving aside the question of fascination, conversationally, how are we most likely to involve anyone in anything that interests us? It isn't much different from listening for answers to a question. We involve them best when we include their reality in our own. To awaken concern in them for our needs, we must show an interest in their needs. To get them to participate in our lives, we must participate in their lives. To get them to show love for us, we must love them, first.

All this involvement on our part is, in its own way, a kind of listening. We need, in the same way, to listen to God. The kind of prayer that most often wins a response is one in which the person praying *converses* with God: calls to Him, while at the same time listening for His silent response in the soul.

And that is, essentially, what is meant by the practice of meditation. Meditation is the act of *listening* for, and hopefully, in time, listening to, God's whispered response in the soul.

Why not try that, next time you pray to God? Instead of merely offering up a petition for His consideration, try *involving Him* in your needs.

Meditation is more than a practice conducted at specific times of the day. It is a habit of mind, a way of life. Try sharing your thoughts and feelings with God all day long. Listen for His guidance, His approval — yes, even His silent laughter within! When you share your life with Him, your meditations also will be much deeper.

When people exclude the practice of meditation from daily prayer, it usually means they aren't really convinced there is anyone "up there," listening to them. All too easily, their prayers become a process of simply talking to themselves.

Well, one may ask, does God really listen anyway? You'll never know, if you don't give Him a chance to reply! Just as in any conversation, the degree of listening, and the response it awakens, is in direct proportion to the degree of one's own involvement in what he is saying. Why else is it that the prayers of saints have been, often, so much more effective than those of worldly people? God is no respecter of persons. His response is according to the depth of sincerity in the person praying.

In conversation, people tend to think of listening as something one does after he has said his piece. Personally, however, I've found that there is much better communication if one "listens" — that is to say, is sensitive to the other person's reactions — even during the act of speaking to him. When lecturing, also, even though I don't expect people to start up a conversation with me from the audience, I've found it helps, while lecturing, to "tune into" their needs, to respond to their unspoken reactions, to feel as though I were speaking to each one of them individually.

On the subject of lecturing, I've found it helps also to "listen" even before I begin speaking. By that I mean that I meditate and try to tune into what the people in this particular audience need to hear from me.

In the same way, Paramhansa Yogananda (author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*), who brought teachings and techniques from India to the West, used to say that prayer is most effective when it is offered *after* some contact with God has been achieved in deep meditation.

Western society generally identifies meditation with the thinking process. We are told to meditate "on" a particular subject. Vaguely, we suppose this means to think in circles around it, hoping for a deeper understanding of it. Only comparatively recently has the teaching come to the West that silence itself is the wellspring from which true understanding arises. In other words, true, and especially spiritual, understanding is not the product of thinking one's way to it, but of direct inner perception. As Yogananda wrote in his autobiography, "A truth cannot be created, but only perceived."

Meditation, in this deeper sense, begins with the practice of stilling one's thoughts and emotions.

Yogananda told the story of a man who was told, as a means of developing spiritual power, to be very careful not to think of monkeys. Of course, the next time he sat to meditate, the first thing he thought about was monkeys! The more he tried not to think of them, the more he probed his memory for every variety of monkey he'd ever read or heard about. Monkeys gradually became an obsession. At last, he returned to his teacher and cried, "Take back this teaching of yours! All it has done is give me monkey-consciousness, not God-consciousness!"

At this, the teacher laughed genially and explained, "I only wanted to help you realize how difficult it is to develop spiritual powers, without first learning to control your own mind." He then went on to explain to his student the positive aspects of meditation.



So then, the first lesson is: Don't live in "monkey consciousness"! Instead of trying not to let thoughts and emotions enter your mind, dwell on positive opposite practices that will exert a calming influence on your mind.

The breath is one such influence, when it is used rightly. Not only does the breath reflect one's mental states: It also greatly affects them.

Take the breath as a reflection of thought and feeling. When a person is agitated, his breathing automatically speeds up. When he falls asleep, his breathing rhythm changes: two counts of exhalation, to one of inhalation. When he is deeply concentrated, he tends to hold his breath. When he is calm, his breathing becomes calm also.

The reverse also is true. By breathing agitatedly, one tends to create an agitated mental or emotional state. A photographer, when taking a photo demanding sensitivity and concentration, learns to hold his breath before clicking the camera shutter.

By calm, deep breathing, similarly, the mind and emotions grow calm also, releasing us from any turmoil that may have been seething within us. This is why the advice is so often given to people who are angry or upset, "First, take a deep breath, and count to ten."

A good practice when sitting to meditate is to do a few deep breathing exercise. The yoga teachings offer a number of such exercises, some of which I explain in my book, *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*. Less sophisticated than many of these, but quite effective, is this:

Sit upright, and breathe deeply through the nostrils counting 1-12 Hold the breath 1-12. Then exhale, again to a count of 1-12 In this particular exercise, don't hold the breath out, but begin again immediately with another inhalation. Repeat this exercise six to twelve times

Your posture during meditation is important. We've all seen photographs in advertisements of people "meditating" according to the Western notion of relaxation: a person reclining comfortably on a "hazy Boy" chair, his feet up, his head tilted back on the headrest, his entire posture suggestive of a mood of abandonment. The yogis of India would smile at this passive attempt at relaxation. The fact is, while relaxation is essential to deep meditation, passivity is one of the pitfalls to true relaxation.

There are two directions the mind can take once it relaxes its grip on conscious thought processes. One is to sink toward subconsciousness. This is the direction taken when one's relaxation is passive The other direction is to rise toward superconsciousness. Deep meditation is possible only in the intensely positive state of superconsciousness, or soul-awareness.

To attain this state of consciousness, it is important to sit upright with a straight spine. Traditionally, one does so sitting on the floor with the legs crossed, preferably in one of the yoga positions such as the half or full lotus pose, or siddhasana (the "perfect pose"), but Yogananda said that it is quite all right to sit on a straight-backed chair, with the feet flat on the floor.

Sit away from the back of the chair. Place your hands palms upward at the junction of the thighs and abdomen. Hold the shoulders back to help keep the spine straight. Hold the chin parallel to the ground.

Before the deep breathing exercise, relax the body. First, inhale, tense the whole body till it vibrates; then throw the breath out, and with it all tension. Repeat this process two or three times.

After the deep breathing, concentrate on relaxing more and more deeply — not physically only, but mentally and emotionally. Feel space in the body.

Look upward, concentrating your attention at the central point between the two eyebrows, the seat of spiritual vision. Offer up all thoughts and feelings in deep concentration at this point. Call mentally to God, "Reveal Thyself! Reveal Thyself!"

Gradually, you will feel His peace stealing over you, like a weightless waterfall.

**--From an article by Swami Kriyananda: *Be Still and Know - The Importance of Meditation***

## Chapter Two: Why meditate? The benefits, Kriyananda

### From Meditation for Starters, Chapter Eight

Meditation makes you aware of a better world. It is no dream world, but a world more real than any other. Owing to your awareness of that world, you will be able to cope far more effectively with things and situations that others around you insist are the world of reality. Peace will help you to solve problems that others, living as they are, hemmed in by cares and worries, find insoluble.

Calmness will come to you as a result of daily meditation. In that calmness will come intuitive perceptions. Where, formerly, you may have felt paralyzed by the sheer enormity of life's *problems*, intuition will supply you with simple, clear *answers*.

You will find through meditation a heart quality developing that will inspire others to look at their problems, too, more constructively.

Meditation will sharpen your concentration, and develop your will power. Obstacles of many kinds will simply vanish, and you'll be able to accomplish in minutes what, formerly, might have taken you hours, days, or even weeks to do.

A highly successful businessman of my acquaintance spent his mornings meditating. He went to work only in the afternoons. His associates sometimes chided him, "With all your responsibilities, how can you afford to be so late for work?"

"Because of my responsibilities," he would reply, "I can't afford not to!" He had found that by coming to work with a clear mind he could solve problems on which others would have spent days, without ever being sure whether the answers they found were the right ones.

For intuition, the natural fruit of meditation, has one supreme advantage over the reasoning faculty: It provides inner certainty.

The rational mind can never be quite sure of anything. The best it ever does is decide on which, out of a variety of possibilities, seems the best choice. Great discoveries and accomplishments are the consequence, always, of some measure of intuition.

Learn to look at life more with a sense of its underlying unity. Don't analyze everything. Obviously, there are situations where analysis is necessary, but even then, cling to a deeper consciousness of the interrelationship of all things. For everything is a manifestation of a universal reality—even as waves, whatever shape they manifest, are manifestations of the same sea.

There is a coherency in life, an underlying purpose and meaning. *Know* that, for every problem, there *has* to be a solution. See other people, not (to quote Sartre) as "that which you are not," but as part of your own greater reality. Love them from that inward awareness which you are developing in meditation. All humanity is, in the deeper sense, your own self.

All things are subject to the Law of Oneness. Everything has its compensating opposite. The pendulum, after moving in one direction, swings back in the opposite direction. For every up there is a down; for every left, a right; for every negative, a positive. Darkness and light, cold and heat, pain and pleasure, male and female—in all Nature we see opposites balancing one another.

For every problem, similarly, there is a solution. Be solution-oriented, not problem-oriented. That is what it means to think superconsciously. Don't dwell on difficulties longer than it takes simply to define them clearly. The solutions often come from seeing opposites as pairs in a single unity.

—From *Meditation for Starters*, Chapter Eight

## From *Meditation for Starters*, Chapter One

Think how many things you do with the hope of attaining a condition of rest, once you've done them.

You think, "Let me buy that zippy red sports car, or that shiny white compact model, or that beautiful big station wagon for the whole family. I'll never rest until I get it!"

Or perhaps you think, "I'll get that new house with the shaded porch and the large master bedroom; that calm, spacious dining room so we don't have always to eat in the kitchen with the cucumbers; that sunken living room. Oh, once I have all that I'll be able to relax at last!"

Usually, our mental image of an attained ideal is like a framed painting: static and never changing. It is an end in itself, not a passageway toward further beginnings and further challenges. Even when we see our goals as means to other ends, our vision of the future carries us to a time where rest becomes truly possible at last.

Peace is the natural condition of the soul. People sometimes speak longingly of the peace of the grave—as in the term "*requiescat in pace*"—even if they imagine death as a descent into unconsciousness. The loss of consciousness itself seems to them, evidently, an attractive alternative to the ceaseless struggle of human existence. Meditation, however, poses an infinitely more attractive alternative, one that lifts the mind into a state of *superconscious* peace which, once attained, can be maintained through even the psychic upheaval of physical death.

Peace can never truly be found outside ourselves. What passes for peace is a temporary lull, merely, in the battle of life. That new car, once you've bought it, will be only a prelude to new pursuits and fresh challenges. That lovely home will turn out to be an invitation to new responsibilities, further involvements, and perhaps even stronger attachments.

What happens is that, in the process of pursuing one thing after another, forever in the hope of getting everything finally just the way you want it, you become accustomed to looking for things, for more and more ways of helping you to rest better. Someday, surely (you think), you'll be able to *enjoy* life completely. The irony is that, in the very process of pursuing rest, you gradually lose the ability to rest at all. And in the process of pursuing enjoyment, you lose the capacity really to enjoy anything.

Our very enjoyment of life begins with the simple ability to *relax*. The ability *is* simple: That is what makes it so difficult! Since our birth, our life-force has flowed outward to the five senses, and through them to this world of endless complexity. It isn't easy, now, to reverse that flow.

The more you seek rest through doing, the more restless you become. The more you seek happiness through the senses, the less happy you will be, for the simple reason that sensory enjoyment *drains* our capacity for happiness: It doesn't nourish it.

Why wait? Why wait for peace and happiness to come to you *eventually*? Will they come to you even after you retire from work? Hardly! If, having become safely ensconced in that rocking chair, you resist the tendency to keep on doing things no matter how unproductive, you'll very likely die of boredom.

Everyone, no matter how busy he is, needs to devote some time every day to practicing the art of *doing things restfully*. You'll never find peace *until you make peace a part of activity itself*. Peace should be part of the very creative process.

Hence the importance of meditation.

### Questions and Answers

**Question:** Are there other ways besides meditation to break a lifelong habit of restlessness?

**Answer:** There are many ways. They are less direct, however, because their focus is not so much on peace itself as on creating those conditions which will allow one to feel peaceful. Peace is not merely a passive state, experienced when the turmoil around us has ceased.

People imagine they'll find peace in a peaceful setting—in that cottage by the sea to which they hope to retire; in that quiet life on a yacht. What they discover, if peace means to them a mere end to anxiety, is a life of steadily deepening ennui. True peace is never passive: It is dynamic. It emanates from a high level of awareness. It can be found only within, in the Self. Outward awareness, if over-stimulated, drains you of your peace; it can never *give* you peace.

It is good to prepare the ground for higher awareness, however, by simplifying one's life outwardly, and by reducing the quantity of your personal desires. It is important to hold an *attitude* of peacefulness. Without it, meditation will prove difficult for you.

At work, concentrate on doing one thing at a time. Finish one project before proceeding to the next one. Try not to "gobble" life. Move in an aura of calmness, and you'll find it easy to attain superconscious peace in meditation.

**Question:** I find that in the welter of activity I become almost afraid of peace. Is there anything I can do to overcome this fear?

**Answer:** This is one of the classic obstacles on the spiritual path: *False notion*, in the present case fearing the very thing you may desperately need and want.

The fear you mention is quite simply the consequence of physical and mental tension. If you fight that tension, you'll only become more tense. Concentrate first, therefore, on relaxation—physical, first, then mental. Later on, I'll go more deeply into the subject of relaxation and how it can be achieved.

**Question:** You said at the end of the foregoing section that peace should be "part of the creative process." But isn't creativity very often the fruit of mental and emotional anguish, not of inner restfulness?

**Answer:** It is, yes—but also, no, it isn't. Often it takes suffering to bring human consciousness to that level of maturity which produces deep insights. At the same time, a painting, for example, or a work of music cannot rightly be called "significant," what to speak of "great," if it only poses problems, and suggests no valid solutions to those problems.

In science and technology, creativity is measured not by the "Rube Goldberg"-like complexity of an invention, but by its workability. The simpler, indeed, the better. It is not enough for an inventor to pose a problem: To be hailed for his contribution to society, he must

provide answers to that problem. Creativity of all kinds is not a labyrinthine wandering in search of a way out of difficulties: It is the glad cry, “*Eureka!* I’ve found the exit.”

Solutions are difficult to come by rationally. The reasoning mind is like a rudderless ship: It describes interesting patterns on the water, but it lacks a sure sense of direction. The rudder of inner guidance comes from superconscious levels of awareness.

**–From *Meditation for Starters*, Chapter One**

## **Chapter Three: What Is Meditation? Kriyananda**

Meditation is listening.

Meditation is going back to your own center.

Meditation is learning to relate to life, and to your environment, from who you are, not from the way other people try to define you.

The average person's life is an eccentric flywheel — I don't mean a flywheel with an offbeat personality I mean simply a flywheel that isn't centered properly

The faster the wheel turns, the more it vibrates — until, at a certain speed, it actually flies into pieces.

Most people are in danger, at least, of flying into pieces. They whirl through life, vibrating faster and faster, simply because they don't live at their own center.

It is safe to say that very few of them are centered at all.

They live at their periphery — “on edge” is the popular expression.

Most people, again, are like musical instruments in need of tuning,

In interaction with life, and with other people, they produce dissonances Meditation is the way to “fine tune” your musical instrument.

Meditation will enable you to return to the peace you're always looking for — at the center of your being.

How much or how long you meditate is up to you It depends on how deeply you come to enjoy meditation We aren't talking of a roast in the oven, which needs a certain baking time. And we aren't talking of distances — like a mile run, which one can finish faster by running faster

I do suggest that you practice meditation daily But that, too, is up to you.

The more regularly, and the more deeply, you meditate, the sooner you will find yourself ALWAYS acting from a calm center of inner peace.

### **How To Meditate?**

The first thing in meditation is to approach your practice with the right attitude.

One such attitude is Listening.

We spend our lives trying to impose our thoughts on our environment.

For a few minutes, give this process a rest

Stop trying to impose thoughts even on your own mind!

Try to get to that state of consciousness which you have even before your thoughts begin.

That isn't easy to do — but an attitude of listening will help you to reach it.

You see, meditation is not passivity. Just as you need to learn to act calmly, so you need also to be calm dynamically.

As you grow calm, you will find it easy, at first, to go drifting off in a passive state of subconsciousness — almost a sort of conscious sleep state.

There is some rest in sleep, even in daydreaming. But that kind of rest doesn't last. It has no power over the conscious state, for the simple reason that it involves a lower degree of energy. A greater energy always has power over a lower energy.

The calmness born of right meditation represents a higher degree of awareness, and therefore of energy, than that experienced in the conscious state. Positive inner calmness enables you to stay calm even during intense activity.

This, then, is the goal: to be “actively calm, and calmly active.”

As you become inwardly calm, listen intently to the silence within. Listening, here, is another word for being fully aware — not drifting, but soaring in consciousness to an ever-greater awareness.

For there is a third state of awareness, natural to all of us: not consciousness, and not subconsciousness. Many people, even without meditating, have experienced glimpses of it.

A common word for it is superconsciousness. Superconsciousness is that aspect of your own mind which is attuned to the great flow of Life.

You have it already. You need only to make it dynamic to *your* consciousness.

#### **Another key to right meditation is Receptivity**

The more deeply receptive, consciously receptive you become, the deeper and more satisfying will be your meditation. Just think how much of the time people talk — shout, even — but don't really listen!...

By receptivity — not just mental receptivity, but a receptivity of feeling — of sympathy — you will develop the power of intuition, which is the fruit of superconscious living.

So — listen; be receptive; be relaxed. Without relaxation, mental as well as physical, you won't be able to concentrate on listening; you won't ever be truly receptive.

**--From a recording of *Meditation for Beginners*, by Swami Kriyananda**

#### **§**

#### **What is meditation?**

It is not, as so many people assume it to be, a process of “thinking things over.” Rather, it is making the mind completely receptive to reality. It is stilling the thought-processes—those restless ripples that bob on the surface of the mind—so that truth, like the moon, may be clearly reflected there. It is *listening* to God, to Universal Reality, for a change, instead of doing all the talking and “computing” oneself.

This is how all the great discoveries have been made—not by human creation, but by receptivity to rays of inspiration from higher sources than those with which the conscious mind is familiar.

**--From *The Art and Science of Meditation*, Chapter 1:7, Swami Kriyananda**

#### **§**

Meditation, properly speaking, begins once the thoughts and emotions have been stilled. It is a state of intense inward awareness, a state in which one's attention is no longer engaged in cheering onward the parade that life marches past us of projects and problems, but is wholly engrossed in the superconscious experience. Meditation may be defined also, more loosely, as any practice of which the goal is superconscious awareness....



The direct way to attune ourselves to superconsciousness is by meditation. The essential attitude for correct meditation is one of *listening*. The difference between prayer and meditation is that in prayer we talk to God, whereas in meditation we listen for His answer.

In meditation, the mind must be kept *receptive*. You can't *think* your way into deep meditation. Nor, indeed, can you think your way to deep insights and inspirations. You can only receive wisdom: You cannot *concoct* it. A truth must be perceived, in that calm awareness which is superconsciousness.

Meditation, then, is not creating answers: It is perceiving, or *receiving* them. And this is the secret of creativity.

*Meditation is listening.* The mind must suspend its normal activity of analyzing, of weighing alternatives, and of generally "talking" so much that one cannot hear melodies that the superconscious is playing to it.

Meditation is a process of returning to your own center. It is learning to relate to life and to your environment from who *you* are, and not from the way other people try to define you.

The average person's life is an eccentric flywheel. I don't mean a flywheel with an offbeat personality! I mean simply a flywheel that isn't properly centered. The faster the wheel turns, the more violently it vibrates. When it reaches a certain speed, it may actually fly into pieces.

Most people, similarly, are in danger of flying apart. They whirl through life, vibrating ever more violently because they are off center within. It is safe to say that few people live even close to their center, which is who they really are! They live at their periphery. They are constantly, as the popular expression puts it, "on edge."

Again, most people are like out-of-tune musical instruments. Because they can no longer hear the basic notes in themselves, their interactions with life and with other people produce only discords.

Meditation is the way to "fine tune" your instrument. A violinist, while tuning his strings, must listen carefully to certain key notes. We, too, must listen to what life is trying to tell us—through outer circumstances and through other people, as well as through the whispers of superconsciousness.

Daily meditation will lead you to the peace you've been seeking so long. The peace of your soul awaits you at the center of your own being.

How much or how long you meditate is up to you. It depends on how deeply you've come to enjoy the practice. We aren't talking, here, of a roast in the oven which requires a certain baking time. And we aren't talking of distances—like a mile run, which can be finished sooner by running faster. I *do* suggest that you make meditation a daily practice. That, too, however, is up to you.

The more regularly and the more deeply you meditate, the sooner you will find yourself acting always from a center of inner peace.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Question:** Is meditation "listening" to anything, specifically? Or is it simply a mental attitude of receptivity, for which listening is only a metaphor?

**Answer:** I use the word literally as well as metaphorically. Metaphorically, it describes, as you suggest, an attitude of openness and receptivity. Literally, however, there are actual

sounds heard in deep meditation that emanate from the superconscious, and that help to raise the consciousness to ever higher levels.

There are also subtle lights seen in meditation, refined feelings experienced, and deep intuitions of wisdom, love, and joy. I go into these points at length in another book of mine, *Superconsciousness—A Guide to Meditation*, published by Warner Books in New York.

**Question:** In what way is meditation different from self-hypnosis?

**Answer:** Hypnosis opens the mind *downward*; it increases our susceptibility to subconscious influences. Both hypnosis and self-hypnosis can be helpful for working on those influences and changing them if they are harmful. Neither form of hypnosis, however, improves discrimination, which descends from a level of superconscious awareness.

What hypnosis does is blur the threshold between conscious and subconscious awareness. It makes the conscious mind, in turn, more susceptible to subconscious influences in general. The long-range effect of both hypnosis and self-hypnosis, therefore, is to weaken the will power. This effect is particularly insidious if one allows oneself to be repeatedly hypnotized by other persons.

Consciously directed affirmations to the subconscious, on the other hand, produce positive results, particularly when they are then offered upward to the superconscious. For self-transformation occurs, finally, when the resolution to change is charged with superconscious awareness, and thence fully absorbed into the subconscious.

**Question:** You've mentioned the need for "tuning" oneself. How does meditation bring about attunement?

**Answer:** In clarifying the mind it also clarifies our conscious directions. We live so to speak in a world of mirrors. Each of us sees reflected back to him from the world the energies and attitudes that are first projected by himself. When we are angry, we see ample support everywhere for our anger. When we are peaceful, we see positive reinforcement in everything for our peacefulness.

Much of the disharmony we experience is due simply to the fact that our desires are in conflict with one another. Singlemindedness is a rare virtue. People may want success, but fear the effort necessary to succeed. They may want popularity, but fear to put themselves out to be liked; or they may want popularity, yet have an equally strong liking for solitude. They may want love, but fear to give love lest they be hurt in return. They may desire to travel, but fear the uncertainties involved in leaving home.

"The thwarting crosscurrents," as Paramhansa Yogananda called them, of egoic desire are so complex that it is hardly surprising how few people achieve more than fleeting glimpses of inner peace.

Daily meditation gradually smooths out the tangle. It brings the separate strands of desire into alignment with one another and enables them finally to focus on a single objective at a time—as a thread, after it has been brought to a point, is easily inserted through the eye of a needle.

--From *Meditation for Starters*, Chapter Two

## Chapter Four: The Three States of Consciousness

### Introduction

The three states of consciousness and the physical and mental reactions produced by them:

- (1) Consciousness = Restlessness.
- (2) Subconsciousness = Restfulness and activity.
- (3) Semi-superconsciousness = Negative peace.
- (4) Superconsciousness: Positive peace or Bliss.

Traveling by car, as I stand on the plane of Cosmic Consciousness, I suddenly perceive coexisting in me, in infinite harmony, both the car and the scenery around it; my thoughts; my dreams; tranquility; the planets; the inner world of multicolored lights; my shimmering feelings; intuition-in short, all forms of consciousness-playing their part in the Cosmic Symphony. My soul has immersed itself in the Infinite, and I perceive my body as a small, hardly visible moth of light.

--From *Yogoda Super-Advanced Course*, Lesson 3, Swami Yogananda (1930)

### §

### The Ladder of Consciousness

- |                                       |                      |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cosmic Consciousness }             | God Consciousness    |
| 2. Semi-Christ Cosmic Consciousness } | Christ Consciousness |
| 3. Christ Consciousness }             |                      |
| 4. Semi-Super Christ Consciousness }  |                      |
| 5. Superconsciousness }               | Soul                 |
| 6. Semi-Superconsciousness }          |                      |
| 7. Subconsciousness }                 |                      |
| 8. Semi-Subconsciousness }            | Ego                  |
| 9. Consciousness }                    |                      |
| 10. Attachment to the Senses          |                      |

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 92 (1938)

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For there are three states of consciousness: not only conscious and subconscious (about which most people know at least something), but also superconscious (about which few people know anything).

The conscious mind is our normal waking state of awareness. It represents only a small part of our total consciousness. A far larger part of it lies in the subconscious.

The subconscious, popularized in modern times by Sigmund Freud, is the hidden but often dominant part of our psyche. We experience something of the subconscious during sleep. The subconscious is active also during our wakeful hours; it influences our behavior, our very attitudes toward life. The subconscious is like the vast ocean with its floor of mountains, valleys, and broad plains. Conscious awareness protrudes from this ocean like a little island. Invisible to the island dweller is the great underwater region around him: the innumerable habits, tendencies, and unformed impressions that underlie the conscious mind. They represent a dimmer, but nonetheless very real, part of our total awareness.

The superconscious, by contrast, represents a much higher degree of awareness. Indeed, it is the true source of all awareness. The conscious and subconscious minds filter that higher awareness, merely—stepping it down, so to speak, like the transformer that converts a high voltage to a lower and makes it available to our homes.

Superconsciousness may be compared to the infinite sky overhead, with its vast panoply of stars. We know that the stars are always there, shining. We can only see them, however, when the sunlight doesn't fill the sky and obscure them. The sunlight, in this analogy, represents ego-generated thoughts and feelings, which blot superconscious awareness out of our mental sky. That superconsciousness is always with us, however. It is simply not dynamic to our normal waking consciousness.

Superconsciousness is situated, as the name implies, *above* our normal state of wakefulness. From that higher level come our occasional deep insights and inspirations, when our minds are in a calm and uplifted state. Those insights may penetrate the light of ego-wakefulness like brilliant comets, which have sometimes been seen in the sky even in bright daylight.

The superconscious is the realm of true vision. It contains the ecstasy experienced during periods of intense prayer or inward upliftment, when the ego's restlessness has been temporarily stilled.

The conscious mind, dependent on the intellect, seeks reasonable solutions to its problems. The subconscious mind influences the intellect by prompting it with deep-seated feelings, habit patterns, and personal tendencies. (Our conscious decisions are never so independent as we like to believe them!) Harmful habits, though difficult to banish from the mind, can—by repeated, conscious effort—be redirected into positive channels.

**--From *Meditation for Starters*, Chapter Two, Kriyananda**

## §

## **How the Superconscious, Subconscious, and Conscious Minds Work, Yogananda**

The superconsciousness is the pure intuitive, all-seeing, ever-new Blissful consciousness of the Soul. This superconsciousness descends into the deep sleep state and becomes semi-superconsciousness marked by the state of semi-conscious Blissful-state. Then this semi-consciousness, descending into the dream state and the state of imagination, becomes the subconscious mind and is marked by disturbance mixed with Bliss. The subconsciousness, descending into the nervous system and muscles, becomes the conscious state. This conscious state is mostly mixed with worries and very little of the joyous state (mostly hopes of joy only).

After all, the one superconsciousness of the Soul, while it is located in the brain and in the point between the eyebrows, and is marked by the all-seeing power of intuitive Bliss, it is called “superconsciousness.” Then, when the superconsciousness becomes located in the lower brain and lower spinal center and viscera, it is called “subconsciousness” (state of mixed joy and disturbances). When that superconsciousness comes down into the nerves, muscles, and the senses, it is called “conscious mind.” The subconscious mind and the conscious mind, being manifestations of the superconsciousness, hence both have intuitive powers. That is why sometimes dreams perceived by the subconscious mind come true. That is why strong feelings of the conscious mind also come true.

The superconscious, subconscious, and the conscious minds, all are working together. Sometimes one is more active than the two others, keeping the two others of this trio working in the background. When one is calm and Blissful, his superconsciousness is manifest in the conscious. When one is imaginative, then his subconscious mind is manifest. When one is thinking fast, his consciousness buries beneath it all calm or imaginative traits.

### **Where Is Your Consciousness Centered?**

The subconscious mind is the memory mind. It is the mental refrigerator. It keeps experiences locked up, ready to be used again upon instant notice. Experiences from the conscious mind enter the subway of consciousness, remain locked up there only to come out again through another opening into the conscious mind.

The superconscious mind remains buried beneath the subconscious mind and conscious mind. The subconscious mind is buried beneath the conscious mind, working like a janitor during sleep, keeping the fire of the body and the circulatory functions doing their round of duties. It is continuously memorizing conscious experiences during the state of wakefulness. Therefore, the subconscious mind is always awake, working the involuntary organs during sleep and memorizing conscious experiences during the state of wakefulness.

The superconscious state, through intuition, knows everything that goes on in the subconsciousness and consciousness. It can remember all experiences forgotten by the subconsciousness and consciousness. The superconscious state can be educated in the school of meditative discipline, then it can recall experiences of past incarnations. Jesus, developed in superconsciousness, could remember the past incarnation of John the Baptist, when he was Elijah.

The conscious mind is only manifest during wakefulness. It sleeps during the advent of the subconscious mind. The subconsciousness can be trained in the superlative way, so that it can correctly memorize and recall at will all conscious experiences.

As the conscious mind becomes fossilized without school training or introspective creative thinking, so also the subconscious and superconscious minds are not at all given the

necessary training in most individuals, and thus the subconscious mind remains without creative imagination, or power of recall, and the superconscious mind loses its all-seeing power of intuition.

Here we learn that one's subconscious mind, likewise without training, develops forgetfulness and the lack of the power of recall. Memory is the recalling power by which we are saved from being children every day, and stops us from repeating our experiences every day. Through memory the identity of individual existence is maintained. For instance, a minister who lost his memory for a while, thought that he was a grocery man, changed his name, and opened up a grocery shop far away from his home town. After three months, his memory came back and he returned home again as a minister. This happened somewhere near Boston, Massachusetts.

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 48 (1936)

## §

### **The Analysis of the Mind, Yogananda**

Consciousness is felt during the waking hours and it is then that the subconscious mind works as a memory — during the conscious hours. When using our conscious mind, the ego orders the senses, and the muscular processes, and the thought processes in the body to produce certain activity, but as soon as you are using the conscious mind, right behind, the subconscious is working through memory. The conscious mind sleeps at night, but the subconscious is always awake. In the daytime, in memory; at night, attending to dreams, or feeling the peace of the deep sleep.

As soon as you do not dream, but sleep peacefully, that is called “semi-superconsciousness.” When you can consciously retain the dreamless state of consciousness, it is called “superconsciousness.” It is manifested by the Soul through its intuitive processes. Dwelling behind the conscious mind are the subconscious and superconscious minds.

The ordinary man uses mostly the conscious mind, and in dreams he works the subconscious mind passively, and in deep sleep he has a glimpse of the semi-superconscious and the superconscious states. By conscious hallucination, one can work the subconscious state, and by conscious meditation one can work the superconscious. The ego, or false consciousness of the Soul, extends up to the subconscious — at the utmost to the semi-superconscious. It cannot go beyond that. Beyond that it is the perception of the Soul.

The ego is conscious of the Soul born in connection with the body. *When the ego comes into its own consciousness, it is called the “Soul.”* The Soul when it comes into the charnel house of the senses, it becomes intoxicated with sense perceptions and takes the name of “ego,” but when it cognizes itself, it is called the “Soul.” It has many names. It is “my form,” “my Soul,” “my body,” “my name,” “my nationality.” When the Soul assumes the material limitations of the body, it is called “ego.” When it beholds itself as a reflection of the Spirit, it is called “Soul.”

## **Visions**

When I say “superconscious visions” that means when the Soul uses its intuition (intuition and superconsciousness are the same) and intuition only, (this is not knowledge, as it is not dependent upon sense perception) plus the energy that accumulates in the brain during sensory and muscular relaxation and focuses its thoughts upon certain actual experiences and then materializes them — then this is called “vision.”

Semi-vision is a mixture of consciousness — when the Soul uses a mixture of consciousness, subconsciousness and superconsciousness to produce certain half-true visions. This is called “semi-visions” because in the same vision you may also dream. You may see visions, but you are not able to use them exclusively, and you are being half directed into the subconscious or conscious state. Half is vision and half is untrue. It is a conglomerate experience of conscious, subconscious, and superconscious, and relaxed energy of the body processes, which produces semi-visions.

Under the subconscious state generally comes all the hallucinations, which are detrimental to visions and higher spiritual attainment.

## **Subconsciously-Induced Dreams**

When the ego retires from the conscious chamber into the subconscious chamber, it utilizes relaxed energy by sensory relaxation, and also utilizes certain stored-up comedy or tragedy films of experiences lodged in the subconscious mind and produced in the dream.

## **Consciously-Induced Subconscious Dreams**

Any time that you have seen a harrowing war film, or a motion picture of a ghost story, and your mind was greatly impressed, probably just as you fell asleep you saw these things with certain little changes, because those conscious stimuli became mixed with certain subconscious experiences, and then you projected them into a dream.

All films that are taken by the conscious mind through the lenses of the senses are stored in the subconscious mind and then projected into that kind of a picture or dream. The only difference between consciously and subconsciously-induced dreams is that the consciously-induced dream immediately follows the conscious experience, whereas, in the subconsciously-induced dream, the record of the experience may be stored for several years. Your energy happens to be concentrated upon certain tracts of the brain which are very sensitive, and the energy is so subtle in its effect that you begin to see things. When you become terribly wrathful, you mentally destroy — you almost see. There is a concentration of energy into the brain and the earth centers are affected. So certain experiences are filmed.

Under consciously-induced dreams comes another: This does not mean dreams that were the outcome of certain experiences before the state of sleep, but consciously-induced dreams are also possible in the following way: Before you retire in your room at night, make the light dim and begin to behold or visualize the area of the room that is lighted, with all the things in it, and begin to concentrate with your whole heart with complete relaxation, and with open eyes. Keep on visualizing the room and fall asleep visualizing that room, and you will find that you can convert this into a conscious dream. Once I was sleeping on my side and certain pictures came. I turned on the other side and immediately the pictures vanished. Then I sat up, saw visions, and slept. It was very wonderful. Pressure on certain tracts of the brain produces certain pictures.

Superconscious dreams are those in which the Soul's consciousness through its intuitive camera sees certain future visions and drops them into the subconscious mind and films them there. A great many things are true. For instance, certain experiences of past lives. Superconscious experiences are projected as semi-conscious dreams or visions. You can see a vision with either open or closed eyes, in daylight, or at night. It makes no difference. When you meditate for a long time, these things become like playthings — “having them, no other gain ever becomes greater.”

### **Important Mental States Described And Classified**

Semi-superconscious dreams or super-consciously-induced dreams generally come true. They are almost like visions, only not superconsciously-induced. The superconsciousness and Soul use the subconscious to produce a semi-dream or a semi-superconscious dream, but the difference between these superconsciously-induced dreams and real visions is as follows:

A real vision is induced consciously — consciously you start the superconscious, and then produce a vision, but a semisuperconscious dream is produced while sleeping. The Soul arouses itself and uses intuition, then drops into an experience, so that the ego, when it wakes up, may be warned or entertained.

Hysteria is very injurious. This is when your conscious mind and a certain unbalanced energy of the brain suddenly relaxes from the muscles or limbs and arouses a mental wave in the subconscious mind.

Hallucination is produced by the subconscious mind using certain relaxed energy of the body and producing a mental picture which you can see with open or closed eyes, but which has no corresponding reality.

Somnambulism is a motion of the limbs and hallucinations plus a strong muscular activity.

Unconscious trance is when you remain inert, physically unconscious, but when you stay on the borderland of semi-subconsciousness or semi-superconsciousness — when the internal experience is peace plus certain semi-superconscious and sometimes superconscious dreams. Unconsciousness means when you are unconscious outside and inside, and you can be so inwardly conscious that you are unconscious outside. The last stage is to be unconscious inside and outside at the same time. This means to be conscious of all Nature and God at the same time.

**--From *Praecepta* Lesson 74**

### **§**



## **Subconsciousness**

### **From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter Five, Kriyananda**

#### **The Need to Clarify the Subconscious**

The greatest obstacle to spiritual progress is that vast terrain of the mind which, to a great extent, conditions our understanding of life without our being aware of the conditioning process. I am referring to the subconscious mind

For it isn't only our conscious decisions that determine our outlook on life and our accomplishments. In the subconscious lie vast farmlands in need of plowing and cultivation—or, less figuratively, in need of purification and refinement, lest crosscurrents of unnoticed desires and attachments obstruct our every worthwhile undertaking

The subconscious cannot be bullied. It must be coaxed, and its energies carefully redirected. At the end of the chapter I'll suggest a method for accomplishing this end.

It is a misnomer, in discussing the subconscious, to label it (as many do) the "unconscious" There is nothing unconscious about it. Indeed, there is nothing unconscious about anything. Not even the rocks are totally unconscious. There is only that aspect of consciousness of which we are not dynamically aware, in the conscious mind. In a country, this aspect would represent that segment of society which aristocrats used snobbishly to write off as the "great unwashed." It is the unprocessed residue of thoughts, actions, and memories that are ever present, but more or less unnoticed. They greatly influence the conscious mind which doesn't often realize how ungoverned by free will its decisions really are.

Thoughts and actions, frequently repeated, form habit patterns in the subconscious mind. Habits can be positive as well as negative. Positively, they free the conscious mind to concentrate on other things.

For example, because we've developed the subconscious habit of tying our shoelaces a certain way, we can perform that act automatically, while chatting effortlessly and planning with others the program for the day. If we had to tie our shoelaces with all the care and deliberation of a child learning the job for the first time, all our concentration would have to be focused on that simple act.

Habit is an important labor-saving device of the mind. Without it, we'd be greatly limited in our freedom to accomplish anything.

Habit is also, however, an unthinking and indiscriminating servant. If we repeat a wrong action often enough, our subconscious will direct us to keep on repeating it, even without our conscious awareness of its power to influence us.

There are several ways to gain the upper hand over this domestic staff, our subconscious thoughts and habits.

One way is to make sure we give them only good commands, by performing good actions and entertaining uplifting thoughts.

Another way is to starve the subconscious of bad impulses by refusing to feed it any more bad thoughts and actions.

Still another way is to channel self-damaging impulses more wholesomely, in an opposite direction. For example, if we have an impulse toward avarice, we can acquire things as we normally feel impelled to do, but then give them away to others.

If our wrong habits are too strong to resist, we can at least resist them mentally, thereby withholding energy from them. While starving them in this way, we should give strong energy to creating or strengthening good habits

The best way to change the subconscious is from above—that is, from the level of superconsciousness. For the conscious mind is an unreliable soldier in this War of Soul-Independence. Just when you most need it, you find it has gone AWOL—“absent without leave”—and is perhaps soaking it up in some local bar. Conscious decisions are tainted by influences of which the conscious mind is not even aware. We say we are free to do what we like, but what makes us like to do what we do? It isn't that attractiveness is inherent in those things. Likes and dislikes are subjective. They rise to the conscious level from the subconscious, and keep us bound to the world's delusions whether we consciously agree or not. Merely to recognize a fault intellectually, or to recognize a rationalization as being subconsciously inspired, is no guarantee of readiness on our part to be rid of it.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness* –Chapter Five, di Swami Kriyananda

## §

### **From *Praecepta* Lesson 75 (1938), Yogananda**

#### **Intuition and Soul**

Objective sight is called “intuition,” which is the screen, and the films represent the superconscious or intuitive faculty which takes in some images from the ether and runs through them the intuitive consciousness plus relaxed energy, which produces visions. The screen is objective vision, and the power that photographs superconscious experiences is called “subjective intuition.”

Subjective sight is called “Soul.” The soul is the pure reflection of Spirit. The soul uses intuition, and the lenses in the eyes photograph certain events from the ether that are filmed. Then it uses some intuition as background, divided into the subjective and objective. You can define consciousness that way. The screen is intuition, and the power that photographs the thing on the film that is made is called “subjective intuition;” superconscious experiences are also projected on the screen of intuition.

The soul uses subjective intuition to photograph certain superconscious experiences, then it uses this subjective intuition plus those superconscious films and adds to them the relaxed energy from the body and materializes visions on the screen of objective intuition, and produces motion pictures of vision.

The superconsciously-induced dreams experienced by the subconscious mind are dreams in which the soul takes a real intuitive experience and with that intuition projects a dream. In the superconscious dreams, the soul, as the operator on the screen of intuition, projects pictures, and because the same soul does not take any film from the subconscious, it photographs events from the ether by the lenses of intuition, and projects them as superconscious dreams.

#### **The Composition Of Dreams**

Your usual habit of sleep indicates your usual state of mind. There is a way to distinguish all these different states. These are the fine things that you should know, because they are all roads to Self-Realization.

Never forget that there is the element of energy in dreams — energy combined with imagination. Without energy you cannot see. Energy materializes the thought. God's thought was materialized, combined with energy, to produce this Universe. He shows us that if we have control over energy we can create, just as He does.

Behind Nature is Cosmic Intelligence, plus energy. Energy is the missing link between matter and consciousness. Energy and consciousness are everything. Likewise, God shows us in dreamland that we can create a replica of this dream world, provided we have the consciousness and energy. It is also true that if energy could somehow be kept away from the brain, you would not have hallucinations. If you are peaceful and calm every day, you will not even have dreams. But by consciously inducing energy in the brain, you may see visions.

Dreams are made of consciousness, relaxed energy, and an idea. The idea is the film, the relaxed energy is the current, and the consciousness is the projector. For example: In the projection of a dream, the subconsciousness is the screen and the relaxed energy from the nerves gather in the brain and the film is the experience impinged in the brain cells. And who is the projector? The Ego. So, when a person is dreaming, his energy has relaxed in the brain; the medulla is the operating chamber, and the Ego takes that current and passes it and its Ego-consciousness through the experiences in the brain cells, and these are projected as subconscious dreams. In subconscious dreams, the Ego, plus relaxed energy, plus experiences located in the brain, produce images.

Nightmare dreams come under “subconsciously-induced dreams.” During a nightmare, there will be more energy used by the heart and the circulation, and the breath will be more excited. In superconsciously-induced dreams you will have a more peaceful effect in your body. Your breath, heart and entire physical and vital process, will be quiet. When you have a superconscious dream, your breath and heart will be very much more still than when you have a nightmare. Superconscious dreams do not always come true.

#### **Difference Between Hypnosis and Somnambulism**

Hypnosis and Somnambulism are the two opposites. Somnambulism is when the Ego uses certain subconscious films, not only to produce a picture, but uses also the muscles and limbs to act out the movie. It is subconscious control of the conscious processes. When you are consciously walking, you know what you are consciously willing yourself to do. In somnambulism it is controlled by the subconscious. Somnambulism is more dangerous. Certain subconscious experiences take hold of the conscious processes and the body works out that subconscious impulse and it keeps going.

Hypnosis is when someone else arouses your subconscious to control your conscious; when, by certain suggestions, you arouse the subconscious and tell it to control the conscious — and it lasts only a little while. If you are under the spell of hypnosis, you will not be able to talk, but will only think what the other person is suggesting. Hypnosis takes away mental freedom. It uses the subconscious, and if it overpowers the conscious, it will endanger the brain.

Spirit hypnosis is when a disembodied soul takes hold of your conscious and subconscious mind and uses it as it wishes. Tramp souls are always moving in the ether, and it is not safe to allow your mind to remain blank. Do not allow your mind to go blank, especially in meditation, but always keep your concentration upon some thought.

*--From Praecepta Lesson 75 (1938)*

## Normal Consciousness

From Yogoda Super-Advanced Course, Lesson 3 (1930), Yogananda

### Reversing the Searchlights of the Senses.

from Paramhansa Yogananda

#### Where Is Your Consciousness Centered? In What Slums Is Your Soul Roaming?

#### What is the ego?

The soul's subjective consciousness of the body and its other material relations is termed the ego. The soul itself, being individualized Spirit, should manifest only its kinship with the Spirit, which is unmanifested, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. Hence, as Its reflection the soul, in its true state, is individualized, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. The ego, however, being identified with the three bodies— ideational, astral, and physical —(and their normal-abnormal conditions), has put on their natures.

#### Watching the wanderings of the ego

It is extremely important for the advanced student on the path of meditation to *watch the wanderings of his ego in the realms of consciousness*—in other words the wanderings of “King Soul” in the form of matter stricken ego.

The physical, astral, and ideational planes must all be comprehended through consciousness. Therefore, we can safely say that when we are in an undeveloped state the roamings of the ego in the “Kingdom of Consciousness” interest us only during the twenty-four man-made terrestrial hours.

The human ego generally travels in the realm of sensation during the waking state, After the curtain of dreams is drawn, the ego semiconsciously roams in the chamber of dreams. It may be said to be semiconscious while dreaming, because it dimly perceives the dream pictures during their performance and can recall them after waking.

#### Human consciousness is never wholly suspended

During the dream state, the ego is semi-unconscious of the world and of sense experiences—yet it is conscious Of the dream world. It is also conscious of deep sleep while in that state. The link between consciousness and subconsciousness is unbroken; otherwise dreams could not be recalled when consciousness is fully resumed. It is impossible to be wholly unconscious; the soul's subjective consciousness, or the ego, may be asleep or resting, but this can never be termed “unconsciousness.”

During retirement to the subconscious dream chamber, consciousness casts off its garment of the gross sensations of touch, smell, taste, sight, and audition. But though divested of its physical sense instruments of perception, consciousness still retains its intuitive powers of cognition through the subconscious, and beholds the dreams resulting from memories, thoughts, and the activity of the subtle senses, the mental reflexes of the physical senses (For instance, nearly everyone can recall vivid dreams of eating ice cream, hot pie, or other foods.) However, when the ego enters the silent chamber of deep sleep or semi-superconsciousness, its experiences

consist of the unalloyed enjoyment of real peace. The human consciousness, turned within, here begins to resume its normal state of calmness, peace, and joy. The conscious state is marked by restlessness; the subconscious state, by a mixture of restfulness and activity, but Bliss reigns in the superconscious state.

The ego is peaceful in the realm of semi-superconsciousness, subtly excited or pleased in the dream state, and grossly excited or pleased while experiencing gross sensations.

### **The links of consciousness**

Ordinarily, during its stay in the chamber of sensations, while in the state of physical consciousness, the ego is linked with subconsciousness through memory and with superconsciousness through memory and inward peace—manifested or unmanifested.

Determine which “throne” of consciousness your ego occupies, which consciousness is predominant in your mind.

### **Determining and changing the predominant state of consciousness.**

During waking hours, the conscious state is predominant, the subconscious and superconscious states trailing behind. By the power of concentration, you can make the subconscious or superconscious predominant. The conscious state of restlessness can be changed into the dreamy state of subconsciousness or the supremely peaceful state of superconsciousness. In poets, the subconscious usually predominates; in business men, the conscious state, and in real Yogis and great swamis, the superconscious state. Change your centre from conscious to superconscious predominance.

The average man generally concentrates, and stays, on the plane of physical consciousness. But when he is forcibly (through drugs) or passively (through fatigue) led to the subconscious chamber of dreams and quiet sleep, or when he enters the semi-superconsciousness. Of joyous sleep, his ego generally becomes apparently unconscious or dimly conscious. The ordinary ego can support only one state at a time: the physically conscious state, or the subconscious state, or the semi-superconscious state.

In the untrained ego, sidetracked on the path of upward evolution, the conscious state always predominates. It loves to stay and dream in, and be conscious of, the realm of the senses only. It forgets that during the night it moves semiconsciously through the chamber of dreams or through deep semi-superconscious sleep toward the Spirit.

Consciousness is manifested through gross sensation; subtle astral subconsciousness is manifested through dreams, quiet negative Sleep, and through memory which never sleeps.

This subconscious mind is always awake; it works through memory while consciousness predominates, runs the motion picture, theater of dreamland, and enjoys serenity during negative sleep.

### **Business man vs. Yogi.**

Consciousness, subconsciousness, and superconsciousness are different degrees or states of Christ Consciousness—they can never be entirely independent of one another, although one state is usually stronger than the others. The ordinary man works with consciousness predominating, in the Yogi superconsciousness predominates. *Ask yourself at different times during the day which consciousness is predominant in you.*

Business men, in whom, as a rule, *the* conscious state predominates, as well as those who stay on the subconscious plane, are unbalanced and one sided, their happiness depending upon the circumstances in which they find themselves. The superconscious individual is not enslaved by conditions outside of himself: he is free and finds happiness within in spite of all circumstances.

### **The mind can control the body**

The close relation between body and mind causes a psychological state to be followed by a corresponding physiological reaction which, in turn, intensifies the psychological state. Be angry and your face will show it. Permit anger to spread through your muscles until you are tense all over, and your anger will increase. The Yogi, by adopting certain psychological states, can produce the corresponding psychological states. For instance, during sleep the eyes are closed; so by closing the eyes, the Yogi can produce instantaneous sleep at any time, anywhere. During the waking state the eyes are open—generally leveled: hence, by keeping the eyes level, the Yogi can remain consciously awake for days and weeks.

Moreover, during the superconscious state and in death, when the soul races toward the superconscious, the eyes automatically go upward: so by lifting his eyes upward and focusing his vision on the point between the eyebrows, the Yogi can switch off the motion pictures of dreams or sensations at will and launch into the sea of luminosity, where electrons and life forces and bliss reign in the “Kingdom of Spirit.”

### **Becoming king of three kingdoms.**

Meditation is the conscious method of entering the subconscious and superconscious realms. By learning to control your eye muscles and shifting the gaze at will, you can transfer your ego from the conscious world to the tranquility of the subconscious dream world or to the superconscious state of perfect joy. Think of the freedom you gain by learning to shift, at will, from the land of terrestrial horror to the land of beautiful dreams, and when even dream fairies bother you, to float in the ether of eternal serenity, or Bliss, where dreams dare not tread or disturb. You are the king of three kingdoms. Realize that. Do not remain imprisoned in, and identified with, the little island of the body.

The yogi has complete control over all forms of consciousness.

The Yogi can do just as he pleases—he can live in the realm of the senses, or fly to the land of dreams, or float in the vast ocean of eternal Bliss. He may choose superconscious serenity or subconscious dreams, or he may give predominance to semi-superconsciousness, superconsciousness, or Christ Consciousness, at will. If he prefers, he may remain half conscious and half dreaming, or half conscious and half asleep yet dreamless, or he may be semi-superconscious and half dreaming or quietly subconscious. If none of these pleases him; he may elect to enjoy, simultaneously, conscious sensations, dreams, tranquility, subconsciousness, semi-superconsciousness, superconsciousness, and immanent Christ Consciousness.

When he can do that, his ego becomes soul, and his soul breaks its bubble walls and becomes the sea of Spirit—then it attains the state of *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* or transcendental Cosmic Consciousness. In this state he perceives that his “throne” of consciousness rests in the Omnipresent Heart of consciousness, subconsciousness, dream subconsciousness, semi-superconsciousness, superconsciousness, immanent Christ Consciousness, and transcendental Cosmic Consciousness, equally and co-existently, all the time.

Then the “throne” of consciousness, instead of resting on a little speck of sensation, or a “diamond-chip” dream, or a little shining ambition, becomes fixed in the sparkling bosom of Omnipresence.

### **Technique for producing different states of consciousness**

Relax your body in a sitting position Lean against the back of a comfortable chair, Close your eyes and forget your worries, dismissing all restless thoughts; feel drowsy, become passive and mentally “careless”; in other words, “let go,” fall asleep, or at least try to doze. Repeat this several times until the minute you lower the searchlight of your vision, the eyes, closing them and switching off the optical currents, you are instantly submerged in the subconscious.

Then, whenever you are heavy with sleep, quickly tense the whole body and lift your drooping eyes, leveling them in front of you Keep looking at one object without winking, banish sleep at will. Then close your eyes, relax, and fall asleep again.

Every night, before dropping off to sleep, command your subconscious mind to wake you at a different hour. Continue making this suggestion to the subconscious mind until it obeys. Fall asleep with the thought that a matter of vital importance depends upon your getting up at your appointed hour.

After you have trained your subconscious mind to waken you at will, practice fixing your vision on the point between the eyebrows, and instantaneously go consciously in the state of deep peace, of deep intoxicating joy. The regular practice of the fourth and fifth Yogoda lessons and the higher methods will help you to attain this.

Empty your mind of thoughts. Every time thoughts return, firmly dismiss them. Then meditate on peace, be drunk with it; merge in it; consciously sleep over it.

Remember, to gain dominion over the three kingdoms, you must practice these exercises all the time. Whenever you have a period of leisure, lower and close your eyes and enter the “Kingdom of Dreams” at will. Then return at will, leveling your eyes, and enter the “Kingdom of Consciousness,” drinking in the beauties of nature. Then lift your vision up between the eyebrows and enter the superconscious “Kingdom of Bliss.”

You can attain complete freedom from worldly cares only, after you have learned to shift the searchlight of your attention and energy from the conscious to the subconscious plane, or from the conscious to the superconscious plane, either dreaming or enjoying Bliss at will. Then you can fly from the plane of sensations to the plane of dreams or to the realm of eternal peace, as you choose.

Remember, however, that as you shift your vision from the conscious to the subconscious, the life force and energy must also be switched off from the lamps of the billion-celled muscles and the visual, auditory, olfactory, tactual, and gustatory nerves.

In shifting from the conscious to the superconscious plane, your lungs must be breathless, your heart calm, your cells inactive, your circulation stilled, and you must be listening to the symphony of the Cosmic vibration of Om.

While in the superconscious state, one experiences complete *cessation* of unrest—fruition of peace—soul-expansion, unhampered by the friction attending sensations in the realm of consciousness.

If anyone claimed that he could sleep while he was running, he would be ridiculed, for healthful sleep is always accompanied by sensory and motor relaxation. Many profess to have attained Cosmic Consciousness, who have not yet learned to relax at will. The first signs of the

attainment of Cosmic Consciousness are the fixed gaze, the consciously stilled heart, and breathlessness. If one cannot demonstrate these, he has not attained Cosmic Consciousness.

### **Contacting inner entities**

After you have learned to do this at will, you may practice the following exercise, at night: Lean against the back of a chair. Close your eyes and shift your gaze from the conscious level downward to the subconscious level and fall asleep. Then invoke the souls which have passed on, and meet them there in your consciously arranged reception-parlor of dreamland.

To invoke Christ-like superconscious souls, however, you must extend a superconscious invitation. Lift your gaze and fix it between the eyebrows. Float away to the regions of Bliss. In the chamber of Infinity and Perennial Peace invoke superconscious souls; they will come to you, materializing themselves from the Cosmic Consciousness into distinct saintly forms. The saints who became one with Spirit can be recreated by the spirit. The Spirit Sea becomes the bubble of saintly life. Then, when this bubble of life knows itself as the Cosmic Sea, it merges with It. The Spirit Sea can reassume any form which It has once occupied and manifested. The Spirit is ever conscious. It has an eternal, unfailing memory.

These superconscious souls sometimes descend from the Cosmic Consciousness, taking various forms of light, as the *Devas* so that they might float about the astral spheres of million-hued mellow, spiritual lights, worshipping God in the land of super-electrons and love, and after entertaining Him with the astral “super-talkies” they return to the sphere of Cosmic Consciousness and vanish in the one Infinite Love.

High spiritual development increases one’s capacity for enjoyment. Color becomes more brilliant, sound more marvelous, feeling more intense the farther one advances along the spiritual path.

Liberate “King Soul” from his bondage to body matter, the senses, and other attachments, lift his searchlight (attention) upward, from petty things to Infinity, from worldly pleasures to Eternal Joy, from the little bodily to the Universe, from the limited human consciousness to Cosmic Consciousness.

The little searchlight of attention and the five senses ordinarily are focused on imperfect matter. When thrown back upon the Spirit they disclose the Infinite Perfect Light forever dancing on God’s fountain of Bliss, eternally emanating from omnipresence and Christ Consciousness.

*--From Yogoda Super-Advanced Course , Lesson 3 (1930), by Swami Yogananda*



## Supercoscioussness

### Introduction

#### §

The oneness of Spirit may be contacted at the subtle pause between the two opposites of vibrational duality. Superconscious awareness—inspiring, life-rejuvenating, and ever-fresh—subtly divides the barren-seeming desert of subconsciousness from the green fields of action and desire that are being cultivated in the present lifetime by the conscious mind.

On the subconscious side, stretching out into the distance, lie buried countless impressions of past actions and experiences: our unfinished deeds and myriad unfulfilled desires. Though we have forgotten most of them, they will never forget us! The karmic law of cause and effect is inexorable. Emperors reap the consequences of their actions as infallibly as the meanest of their subjects.

Between the conscious and subconscious minds, dividing but also uniting them, lies superconsciousness. To visualize this ecstatic state of awareness, think of the joy you may have felt, sometimes, in deep sleep, when your mind rose above bodily awareness. In that state you no longer felt conditioned by your subconscious habits. You were aware of yourself as a pure essence.

The superconscious state begins at a fine dividing line between sleep and wakefulness. If you can catch your mind just at that moment as you are falling asleep, or at that fleeting instant before your consciousness rises to full wakefulness, you may be able to slip gently into semi-superconscious awareness, or enter into full superconsciousness. The more often you repeat this practice, the more clearly you will understand the reality of soul-freedom.

By going daily into silence in deep meditation, you will arrive at ever more profound levels of superconsciousness. The inner bliss you'll experience at such times will give everlasting satisfaction to your soul. Once you have that inner joy, nothing on earth will ever tempt you again.

Emperors pride themselves on their worldly power, but know in their hearts that the authority they wield is bluff and bluster, mainly, for they have no control over their own lives. They rejoice that others envy them their happiness, for popular envy assuages their need for reassurance. In their heart of hearts they know they are not happy.

In superconsciousness, cosmic power and perfect bliss are the property of every soul. Thus, in divine ecstasy the soul views with pity and compassion those who are highly placed in this world, but miserable.

--From *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayaam*, Quatrain Ten, Swami Kriyananda

#### §

Once, many years ago, I was leading a meditation in a church in Long Beach. A man came in who was evidently the sort of person who feels deep and inspiring compassion for any alcoholic beverage, inasmuch as he cannot bear to see it confined ingloriously in a bottle when it might be freed to fulfill a nobler function. In short, our visitor was grandly, stuporously drunk. Naturally, no doubt, he assumed that, if we weren't as drunk as he was, we must have sought his cherished state of insensitivity by an unworthy shortcut. Staggering up to an usher, and in a conspiratorial stage whisper that filled the room, he demanded: "What's happened? Are they asleep?"

Obviously, since we weren't fidgeting about we could not be awake. In his view, the only possible alternative was that, by fair means or foul, we had sunk into a state of subconscious stupor.

It is a sad commentary on this age of supposed enlightenment that most people, teetotalers as well as alcoholics, are quite ignorant of the fact that man's alternative to a restless, and often anguished, wakefulness is not necessarily oblivion, but that real release lies in expanding one's consciousness beyond the confinements of thought. This is known as the state of .sw/w-consciousness.

So natural is this state to the fully enlightened soul that I remember my guru remarking once: "Last night I experimented to see how it felt to go into subconsciousness during sleep. It was a most unpleasant sensation. I felt that I was being hemmed in on all sides by thick walls of flesh." Not the least interesting feature of the Master's statement was the suggestion that subconscious sleep was, for him, an unusual "experiment."

What a few persons in this world have achieved, all men may aspire to. The teachings of the great masters of every age emphasize that superconsciousness is man's only true state of being, compared with which ordinary outward consciousness is only a sort of extended dream.

In meditation especially, and as much as possible all the time, try to *think superconsciously*.

But be careful, once you forsake the familiar pathways of rational thought, that you do not slip into a vague pseudo-mystical state that regards every passing impression as a revelation straight from heaven. To be superconscious does not mean to take complete leave of one's reason, but more to coordinate the rational faculty with higher levels of awareness.

Man's subconscious impressions and instinctual drives are centered in the lower brain. Here also, in the medulla oblongata, is located the center of all human bondage, the ego. (My guru told me that it is here that the sperm and ovum first unite to begin the formation of the human body.) It is in the frontal section of the brain that man's intellectual, esthetic, and spiritual awareness is centered. Man's ascent to superconsciousness corresponds, physiologically, to a re-centering of his awareness in this frontal section, and particularly in the seat of spiritual vision at the point between the eyebrows. As the consciousness of worldly men radiates outward from the medulla oblongata (observe how the egotist draws his head back, as if in affirmation of his vested interest in this particular area of his anatomy!), so the consciousness of a master is centered in, and radiates from, the Christ center, or *ajna chakrct*, between the eyebrows. In point of fact, these two centers of awareness are one: The medulla oblongata is its negative pole, the Christ center, its positive pole. But until divine awakening occurs, bringing with it a harmonious flow of energy through the medulla oblongata to the Christ center, these opposite poles are treated in yoga as separate spiritual centers.

In meditation, try to center your consciousness at the point between the eyebrows Do not strain. (Some beginning yogis meditate as if their brains were muscles that must be squeezed into the desired attitudes’) Rather, simply channel your awareness calmly, and with a feeling of joyous aspiration, to that point. What you will be doing, in fact, is focusing more and more of the brain’s energy there The greater this concentration of energy at that point, the more powerfully that portion of the brain will be stimulated and awakened, and the more profound will be your spiritual awareness. Paramhansa Yogananda, as a neophyte in his guru’s ashram, made it a deliberate practice to keep his mind centered at the Christ center throughout the day, regardless what his other activities were. He told us that in this way divine enlightenment can come very quickly. Because the word “energy” evokes images of strain and tension, however, I suggest you think, rather, of focusing your thoughts and aspirations at this spiritual point.

A major vehicle for the brain’s energy is the eyes. Look into the eyes of anyone possessing a strong, vibrant personality (many people’s eyes, alas, are spiritually dead), and feel the intensity of this energy-flow. Observe how people’s eyes can seem almost to blaze with anger, to freeze in contempt, to sparkle with laughter, to melt with kindness and love It is only when an abundance of energy flows through the eyes that they manifest these mental states so clearly, but this flow of energy does more than manifest them: It affirms them, and thereby helps to develop them.

Take care, then, that your eyes express only spiritual qualities, for it is literally true that, as you see the world, so you yourself will tend to become. The eyes, in revealing one’s mental states, suggest also the general portion of the brain in which the consciousness at those times is centered. Particularly, when the mind slips toward subconsciousness and the energy becomes centered in the lower brain, the eyes tend to look downward, when one is involved in the world, or otherwise active on the conscious level, the energy becomes centered more in the mid-brain, and the eyes tend more naturally to look straight ahead, and when one enters a state of superconsciousness, the eyes are drawn automatically to gaze upward.

These directions may be observed to some extent even in normal wakefulness. When a person withdraws mentally from reality, whether in discouragement or in fatigue, he tends to look down. If his withdrawal is for the purpose of pondering something, he may look down and slightly off to the side, as if in partial recognition of the objective world around him If he desires to relate to the world completely, he will look it “straight in the eye”. If he is inspired by something inward, he will tend to look up, if by something outward he may look diagonally upward, as if divided between outward consciousness and superconsciousness.

Much more might be written about the involuntary movements of the eyes. Restless and constantly blinking eyes, for example, indicate a restless mind; quiet, unblinking eyes, a calm mind, staring eyes, a blank (or, sometimes, a veiled) mind. Eyes that look as if pressed inward from the sides suggest mental worry, eyes relaxed at the sides, inner peace; eyes drawn slightly outward at the sides, devotion and a sense of oneness with the Beloved. Shifty eyes indicate untruthfulness—an unwillingness to face reality squarely. Sagging lower lids indicate a downward pull on the mind, whether from ill health, fatigue, dissipation, or despair. Firm and slightly raised lower lids indicate an abundance of vitality, and a radiant inner sense of well being. A tendency to look calmly off to the side indicates a more-than-usually intelligent person.

Again, the right eye represents a person’s rational nature, and left eye, his emotional and “feeling” nature. When reason is uppermost in his consciousness, he tends to think and to

express his awareness more through the right eye. When feeling is uppermost, he thinks and expresses himself more through the left eye.

I write these things not so that you may sit judgmentally over your fellow men, but that you may live more consciously through your own eyes. Remember, they are the windows of your soul. Used rightly, they can be made instruments of great blessing and inspiration to others. Just as important, they can help you to affirm and deepen those states of consciousness which you want to develop.

When you sit for meditation, look up toward the point between the eyebrows. I don't mean to cross your eyes, but only to direct their gaze upwards, focusing them at a point no closer than your thumb, when held up at arm's length from your body. You might think of your eyes as being situated only in the upper part of their sockets.

Superconsciousness is a fine line of awareness that divides consciousness from subconsciousness. The Spirit, similarly, rests forever at a point midway between all dualities. Closed eyes denote subconsciousness; open eyes, wakefulness. Thus, half-closed and half-open eyes, with the lower lids relaxed and slightly raised, and the upper lids relaxed and slightly lowered, denote the state of superconsciousness. If you can meditate in this position without becoming distracted by outward visual images, you will find it most helpful to do so. (Your eyelids may quiver at first, but you will find them becoming still as your mind grows calm.) Otherwise, practice this half-open and half-closed position for a time, and then close the eyes, keeping them focused upward. Even with the eyes closed, however, feel that their lids have simply relaxed so completely that they happen to meet.

As you meditate, focus every perception at the point between the eyebrows. (Actually, of course, the frontal point in the brain that you should stimulate by concentration is *behind the bone* ) Every sound that you hear, think of it as emanating from the Christ center, or refer it mentally to that center. Treat every other sensation, every thought in the same way. Direct all the feelings of your heart upward in aspiration to the point between the eyebrows. Gradually, as you come to feel God's blissful presence within you, you will recognize this as the doorway through which the soul communes with him. *Aunt, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*

## §

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--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 5:7, Swami Kriyananda

§

## **Eight Attributes of Superconsciousness**

### §

Superconsciousness—by which I mean that aspect of Cosmic Mind which has entered outward manifestation—contains eight attributes: Light, Sound, Love, Wisdom, Power, Bliss, Peace, and Calmness.

Peace differs from calmness in one important respect: It is soothing and restful, a deeply enjoyable state after the mind's long, arduous struggle. Calmness, on the other hand, is dynamic. It is strong sunlight, as opposed to cleansing rain.

The eight attributes rarely, if ever, appear all at once. They resemble, rather, the facets of a diamond. Each is presented at the right moment, and to the right person. Meditators usually feel themselves attracted to one attribute or another, and are therefore more likely to experience that attribute in themselves. The higher stages of meditation entail progressively deeper absorption in one attribute or another of superconsciousness, until the soul expands to become all of them.

---From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter 16, by Swami Kriyananda

### §

“There are eight aspects in which God can be experienced: as Light, Sound, Peace, Calmness, Love, Joy, Wisdom, and Power.

“To experience Him as Light during meditation brings calmness to the mind, purifying it and giving it clarity. The more deeply one contemplates the inner light, the more one perceives all things as made of that light.

“To experience God as Sound is to commune with the Holy Ghost, or *Aum*, the Cosmic Vibration. When you are immersed in *Aum*, nothing can touch you. *Aum* raises the mind above the delusions of human existence, into the pure skies of divine consciousness.

“Peace is an early meditative experience. Peace, like a weightless waterfall, cleanses the mind of all anxiety and care, bestowing heavenly relief.

“Calmness is another divine experience. This aspect of God is more dynamic and more powerful than that of Peace. Calmness gives the devotee power to overcome all the obstacles in his life. Even in human affairs, the person who can remain calm under all circumstances is invincible.

“Love is another aspect of God—not personal love, but Love infinite. Those who live in ego-consciousness think of impersonal love as cold and abstract. But divine love is all-absorbing, and infinitely comforting. It is impersonal only in the sense that it is utterly untainted by selfish desire. The unity one finds in divine love is possible only to the soul. It cannot be experienced by the ego.

“Joy is another aspect of God. Divine joy is like millions of earthly joys crushed into one. The quest for human happiness is like looking around for a candle while sitting out of doors in the sun. Divine joy surrounds us eternally, yet people look to mere things for their happiness. Mostly, all they find is relief from emotional or physical pain. But divine joy is the blazing Reality. Before it, earthly joys are but shadows.

“Wisdom is intuitive insight, not intellectual understanding. The difference between human and divine wisdom is that the human mind comes at things indirectly, from without. The scientist, for example, investigates the atom objectively. But the yogi *becomes* the atom. Divine perception is always from within. From within alone can a thing be understood in its true essence.

“Power, finally, is that aspect of God which creates and runs the universe. Imagine what power it took to bring the galaxies into existence! Masters manifest some of that power in their lives. The expression, ‘Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,’ describes only one side of Jesus’ nature. The other side was revealed in the power with which he drove the moneychangers from the temple. Just think what magnetism it took to combat single-handedly all those men, entrenched as they were in habits and desires that had been sanctioned by ancient custom!

“People are often appalled by the power they see expressed in the lives of saints. But remember, you will never find God until you are very strong in yourself. Power may exercise less appeal on your mind than other aspects of God, but it is important to realize that divine power, too, is a part of your divine nature.

“Whatever aspect of God you experience in meditation, never keep it contained in the little chalice of your consciousness, but try always to expand that experience to infinity.”

--From *The Essence of Self-realization, Chapter 16:12*

§

<b>Superconscious</b>	<b>Conscious</b>	<b>Opposite</b>
<i>Peace</i>	Relaxation, entertainment, laziness	Conflict, rivalry, nervousness
<i>Calm</i>	Indifference	Reactivity, aggressiveness, emotivity
<i>Joy</i>	Happiness, satisfaction	Suffering, pain, crises
<i>Love</i>	Infatuation, expectations attachment, possessiveness	Hatred, loneliness, judgment
<i>Wisdom</i>	Knowledge, reason, intellect	Trusting the opinions of others
<i>Power</i>	Physical/psychologica/economic Strength, manipulating others	Depression, dependence
<i>Light</i>	Colors	Darkness
<i>Sound</i>	Noise, music, voices	Not listening

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God comes to the soul in different ways – as light, or sound, or love, or peace, or intense calmness, or power, or wisdom, or divine joy. One may advance by any one of these paths or by several, but one seldom advances by all of them together until the higher stages of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) have been attained. One who sees lights may have visions of saints or angels, or of the astral world. One who hears sounds may hear astral music, or the sounds of the spinal centers. One who feels love may find tears flowing inadvertently in meditation. One who feels peace will feel as though he were drinking it in pure, life-giving draughts. One who feels calmness (the positive aspect of peace) may feel his consciousness expanding as if into a vast hall. One who feels divine power will be made intensely aware that God alone is the Doer, that man's own power is simply non-existent. One who experiences wisdom may develop deep insight into any question he asks of God, or he may know himself inwardly as the undying Self. And one who experiences divine joy will never want for anything else.

But to go deep into any of these experiences, the little ego must be forgotten. So long as one still has the consciousness that he is meditating on them, his meditation will be imperfect. The meditator, the act of meditation, and the object of meditation must become one. For this condition, the first requirement is that the mind be held steady. (A state of excitement renders deep inner experience impossible.) The next requirement is that the breath become calm – indeed, motionless. Once the breath ceases (not by holding it, but as a natural consequence of physical and mental calmness), the thoughts, too, must cease altogether. Until this state is reached, deep spiritual experiences will not be possible.

One who sees light should concentrate not so much on visions as on entering the light himself. Concentrate on the *center* of whatever light you see at the point between the eyebrows. If you see the spiritual eye (a circular blue field surrounded by a golden halo, and having a white, five-pointed star in the center), that will be better still. Concentrate on the star if you see it, or in the center of the field of blue. Gradually the gold will expand and form a tunnel. Passing into this tunnel, you will consciously enter the light of the astral world. In time, the blue light will form a tunnel. Entering that, you will enter the light of the causal world, the Christ Consciousness. When you can penetrate the star in the center, you will enter the Spirit beyond vibratory creation.

I have described elsewhere the sounds of the spinal centers. It is better to hear these sounds than to hear astral music, and better still to hear the sounds of the higher centers than those of the lower. But best of all is it to hear, and merge into, the great sound of AUM.

One who feels love should seek perfect union with the Divine Beloved. Devotion (*bhakti*) will not develop into divine love (*prem*) until it expands beyond ego-consciousness.

And so also with the other experiences of God: Always they should be offered up to Him, that they take one ever deeper into His consciousness, lest one rest satisfied on a mere ledge, and never reach the mountaintop.

Above all, never compare yourself with another, lest you fall into either discouragement or pride. Don't even dwell too much on the signs as I have described them here. I have but scratched the surface. God, who is infinite, can come to the soul in an infinity of ways – as exquisite smells, as a thousand sweet tastes crushed into one, as divine instruction, as the purest divine merriment, as the tenderest imaginable forgiveness. Each soul's relationship with the Infinite is unique. Compare yourself not with others, but only with your own self: Do you love God more now than you used to? Are you developing even-mindedness? Are you more inwardly contented and joyful – or at least happy? Are you renouncing self-will? Do you want to serve



and please only God? If your answer to these questions is *Yes*, and if you can add to your answer the wish to grow daily in these sublime virtues, know that God and Guru must be well pleased with you. Offer yourself into their arms. They will bear you surely and swiftly to the Divine Shores!

--Da *L'arte e scienza del Raja Yoga*, Capitolo 14:7, di Swami Kriyananda

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## **Inner Guidance**

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You will attain superconsciousness more quickly if you seek to attune yourself with it in your daily activities, and not only in meditation. The more you seek to be guided by intuition, which is an aspect of superconsciousness, the greater success you will meet in every undertaking. For the rational mind can only point to probable solutions. Intuition, rooted as it is in superconsciousness, will supply you with clear answers.

From a superconscious perspective, all life is a unity. From a rational perspective, life is disunity – a bewildering jigsaw puzzle, often, with many pieces that never seem to belong together.

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To live superconsciously is to maximize our abilities in every department of life. For the rational mind, with its focus on differences, is essentially problem-oriented. The superconscious, with its broader, more unitive view, is solution-oriented.

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Superconscious living means to trust one's life to the flow of a higher wisdom. Superconsciousness arranges things in ways that we might never imagine.

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What I've learned in life is that, if you place matters with complete trust in God's hands, things always work out for the best. Sometimes all you gain is the calmness to make the best of what might otherwise seem a bad situation. That does happen, for many of life's problems are "solved" by simply changing our outlook. Often, however, the change is objective also. Events turn out so amazingly well that people later refer to them as miraculous. And yet it isn't really a question of miracles. It is simply that this is how the superconscious works: It ties things together. It dissolves difficulties. It offers practical solutions, where the rational mind sees nothing but problems.

Where people see disunity, the superconscious mind sees the expression of Oneness in everything. To superconsciousness, everything is related. Not relative, merely: related. You don't have to be in superconsciousness to think superconsciously. All you have to do is train your mind to adjust your thinking to superconscious modes of perception.

Think more unitively, less analytically. Concentrate on finding the relationships between things, don't dwell at length on the differences. See others as your own greater Self. They are not alien to you. Look on them as friends, even if they appear outwardly to be strangers.

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This is a delicate point for me to clarify, and for others to get clear. For instance, it isn't a question of wanting anything, personally, but of wanting it because it is *right*. It is important to exclude ego-motivation as much as possible. It's also important that faith not become an excuse for irresponsibility. To live superconsciously means to cooperate with the superconscious flow, not to expect that flow to do everything for you.

It's a question of energy *in cooperation with* faith. You must be wholly focused on whatever you are doing, without seeing yourself as the doer.

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### **Tuning in to Higher Guidance**

Whenever you need special guidance but find none forthcoming, try following these suggestions:

- Ask for guidance from superconsciousness at the Spiritual Eye.
- Wait for a response in the heart center. Be completely impartial. Don't intrude your personal desires into this process. Pray, "Thy will, not mine, be done."
- If no guidance comes, propose several alternative solutions at the Spiritual Eye. See if one of them receives special endorsement in the heart.
- Guidance often comes only after an idea has been made concrete by setting it in motion. If, therefore, you receive no answer in meditation, act in whatever way seems reasonable to you, but continue to listen for guidance in the heart.

At a certain point, if your direction is right, you will feel the endorsement you've been seeking. But if your direction is wrong, suddenly you will *know* it is wrong. In that case, try something else, until the endorsement comes.

To refuse to act until you receive inner guidance is good only if you can keep your level of energy and expectation high. For it is high energy and high expectation that attract guidance. If you must act because you have no other way of maintaining that level of energy, then go ahead and act. Often, it is better to act, even in error, than not to act at all.

- Even if you feel inner guidance, never presume on it. That guidance may tell you, metaphorically speaking, to go north, but if you cease listening you may not hear it when, at the next corner, it tells you to turn east.
- A problem is half solved already once it is stated clearly. In seeking guidance, form a clear mental picture of what it is you need. Then hold that picture up to

superconsciousness at the point between the eyebrows. People often struggle for a long time to find the inspiration they want. No time at all is needed: only sufficient mental clarity, and energy.

Never use the claim of inner guidance as an argument for convincing others to listen to you. The flow of superconsciousness is always humble, never boastful. It doesn't cooperate with attitudes that discourage others from seeking their own inner guidance. To tell a person, "This is what my intuition tells me, so this is what we must all do," is to say, in effect, "God will speak only through me, not through anyone else." Such an attitude sooner or later gets its comeuppance. The divine law does not endorse pride.

### Superconscious Attitudes

Every quality that flowers naturally in superconsciousness should be affirmed by the conscious mind, and transferred by the conscious mind to the subconscious Divine joy, for example, is a fruit of deep meditation. A person of scientific bent might decide to test this truth with a "controlled" experiment. To prove the reality of superconscious joy, he might determine to be as grim as possible during meditation. But the way to attune yourself to divine joy is to hold a joyful attitude, even though the true experience of divine joy is—to use Paramhansa Yogananda's words in his poem "Samadhi"—"beyond imagination of expectancy."

If you're expecting someone to visit you, you won't wait for him in the basement. If you're expecting a phone call, you won't drown out the sound of the telephone by turning on the electric blender. If you keep a grim attitude during meditation, you won't be prepared for the experience of joy even if it comes to you. It won't be your grimness, so much, that prevents you from experiencing joy as your essentially anti-superconscious attitude of skepticism, your resistance to the inner flow.

Be joyful in meditation. Be peaceful. Bless all the world with your love. And, even walking down a city street, secretly send divine love and blessings to everyone you pass. You'll be surprised how many strangers will treat you as a friend.

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It is in the frontal section of the brain that man's intellectual, esthetic, and spiritual awareness is centered. Man's ascent to superconsciousness corresponds, physiologically, to a re-centering of his awareness in this frontal section, and particularly in the seat of spiritual vision at the point between the eyebrows. As the consciousness of worldly men radiates outward from the medulla oblongata (observe how the egotist draws his head back, as if in affirmation of his vested interest in this particular area of his anatomy!), so the consciousness of a master is centered in, and radiates from, the Christ center, or *ajna chakra*, between the eyebrows. In point of fact, these two centers of awareness are one: The medulla oblongata is its negative pole, the Christ center, its positive pole. But until divine awakening occurs, bringing with it a harmonious flow of energy through the medulla oblongata to the Christ center, these opposite poles are treated in yoga as separate spiritual centers.

In meditation, try to center your consciousness at the point between the eyebrows. Do not strain. (Some beginning yogis meditate as if their brains were muscles that must be squeezed into the desired attitudes!) Rather, simply channel your awareness calmly, and with a feeling of joyous aspiration, to that point. What you will be doing, in fact, is focusing more and more of the brain's energy there. The greater this concentration of energy at that point, the more powerfully that portion of the brain will be stimulated and awakened, and the more profound will be your spiritual awareness. Paramhansa Yogananda, as a neophyte in his guru's ashram, made it a deliberate practice to keep his mind centered at the Christ center throughout the day, regardless

what his other activities were. He told us that in this way divine enlightenment can come very quickly. Because the word “energy” evokes images of strain and tension, however, I suggest you think, rather, of focusing your thoughts and aspirations at this spiritual point.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, Step 5: Niyama*, by Swami Kriyananda

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**Question:** How can I be *really sure* that I’m being guided superconsciously?

**Answer:** You can’t be absolutely certain; the mind is very adept at fooling itself! You *can*, however, become increasingly satisfied with the results, as everything you do works increasingly effectively for you.

Don’t abandon reason in your attempt to be guided superconsciously. Reason is a valuable tool for understanding. It is the corrector. Though not creative in itself, it is an important part of the creative process. Reason checks your conclusions objectively and helps you to make sure they will really work. Reason looks at the ideal and sees whether, in application to prosaic reality, the ideal will work.

Nikola Tesla, for example, the great inventor, “invented” a number of marvels that had to await the discovery of new materials before they could be made practicable. His inspiration outstripped the practical knowledge of his times. Superconscious guidance will be true, but it may be true before its time in this world of prosaic realities. Sometimes, also, guidance comes mixed with human desires and expectations. Reason will help you to separate the true from that which you merely wish to be true.

--From *Meditation for Starters, Chapter Eight*

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## Breathlessness

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Without properly regulating the breath and solving its mystery by doing away with it, one cannot reach high self realization. If you can do without breath, you can control bodily life, prolong it, and rise beyond it — to Soul, while living. To do without breath is not to force or suppress it in the lungs. To watch the breath is the preliminary step in controlling it, because then the consciousness of man separates itself from the involuntary bodily function of breathing, and gradually realizes itself as distinct from it. Man's consciousness is the only thing that is real to him, and by training his consciousness by the method described in this Lesson, the student begins to realize that his life is not identified with, nor dependent upon bodily functions, and that his real nature is Spiritual and immortal.

“Man (man's body battery) shall not live (cannot be sustained) by bread alone (by solid and liquid food and oxygen only), but by every word (unit of Life Energy) that proceedeth out of (pours forth from) the Mouth of God” (the medulla oblongata in the head, through which Cosmic Energy descends into the body). — Matthew 4:4. (The Life Energy which transforms food into energy is the real sustainer of life. According to the Hindu Scriptures, the food of the future super man will be almost solely this Life Energy from the Cosmos.

When man's body, mind, and Soul batteries run down, they will be recharged through Cosmic Energy).

By breathlessness:

- (a) The Soul is released from bodily bondage and breath slavery
- (b) The supreme noise of the body is stopped
- (c) The decay of the internal organs is stopped
- (d) One realizes that the body lives by Cosmic Energy coming through the medulla,
- (e) The heart calms down and switches off energy from the five sense-telephones, thus helping concentration
- (f) One learns to live by Cosmic Consciousness and not by bread or breath alone.

----From *Praecepta*, Lesson 21 (1938), by *Paramhansa Yogananda*

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“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that falleth from the mouth of God” —Bible

“I protest, by the rejoicing which I have in Christ (i.e., Christ-Consciousness), I die daily (i.e., leave the body consciously daily)” —Bible

Breath is life. If you can do without breath you can control life prolong it and rise beyond it. To do without breath is not to force or suppress it in the lungs. It is the preliminary step in controlling it.

--From *Yogoda Course*, Lesson 4 (1925)

## §

Perfection in this technique means to pass from breathing to breathlessness. Only in breathlessness can God be fully realized Elsewhere in these lessons I have pointed out that the breath responds instantly to different mental and emotional states Even the *way* in which it flows in the nostrils indicates one's state of consciousness. The reverse also is true: As the breath flows, so flows the mind. Heavy breathing can make the mind restless Calm breathing calms the mind By concentration on the breath, too, the mind becomes calmer. This greater calmness is reflected in increasingly gentle breathing, which in turn induces still deeper concentration and calmness, a process that continues until mind and breathing both achieve perfect stillness.

There are several explanations for how it is possible to remain breathless for long periods of time without in any way damaging the body or the brain. (Indeed, the rejuvenating effects on the entire being of *superconscious* breathlessness are truly wonderful.) The fact is, once the yogi attains breathlessness in *samadhi*, the body is kept alive by the direct flow of energy from the medulla oblongata. It is possible in this state to remain breathless for days, months, even for years. The body appears lifeless, outwardly, but inwardly one is filled with the consciousness of infinite life.

In 1961 the director of the Zoological Institute in Darjeeling, India, told me of a scientific expedition he had once in the Himalayas. He and his companions came upon a yogi seated on the ground, well above the snow line, in a state of *samadhi*. The yogi must have been sitting there motionless for at least six months, for his fingernails, very long by this time, had grown into the bark of a tree beside him in such a way that the slightest movement on his part would have snapped them off.

Periods of breathlessness may come to you, while practicing *Hong-Sau*, long before you enter superconsciousness. Don't be alarmed; they can't possibly hurt you, as long as you let the breath flow *naturally*, and don't try to hold it in or out of the lungs by force. When your body needs to breathe again, it will do so. By increasingly deeper calmness, however, you will find that you need less and less fresh air to sustain your body.

The breathing process, as well as the heartbeat, is regulated by the medulla oblongata. The positive pole of this medulla is the *ajna chakra*, or Christ center, located between the eyebrows. Stimulation of this medulla by deep concentration at that center can induce complete suspension of the breath and heartbeat by placing one in perfect harmony with the cosmic energy, and drawing this energy into the body in such abundance that impurities in the body are instantly neutralized.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

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Transcendence is the goal of life. Rest is the goal of action. Breathlessness is the final goal of all breathing exercises Spirit is the eternal silence out of which all sound and vibration are born. Deep yoga practice is not possible until superficial movements, including the movements of breath, have been stilled, leaving the mind free to soar in superconsciousness.

hat the breath can be stilled may be seen from the fact that man breathes in proportion to his body's need to cleanse itself of broken-down cell tissues. After running a race, or while experiencing intense emotion, one breathes more heavily The body's need for oxygen is greater

at such times. In deep sleep, on the contrary, the breath becomes slow because the body's need for it is slight.

You may already have observed in meditation that there are times when your breath ceases to flow. At such times the beginner is often afraid. There is no need for such fear. One has simply relaxed so deeply that very little carbon is being formed in his body, to be thrown out by the lungs as carbon dioxide. When the yogi becomes calm within, he can remain breathless (and more fully conscious than would be possible in a normal physical state) for long periods of time.

*Hatha yoga* teachings often stress *kumbhaka*, or the forcible retention of the air in the lungs. This is artificial breathlessness—unscientifically, and sometimes even injuriously, induced. Breathlessness should be, rather, a perfectly natural outgrowth of complete inner calmness and relaxation.

After practicing the breathing exercises, go into inner stillness. Feel the connection between your breath and the Cosmic Breath, as if your breath were but a function of the breezes of cosmic consciousness. In your breathing, as in your working, feel that you are an instrument of the Divine.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 14:3

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Breathlessness is not *kumbhaka* in the sense of *forcibly* retaining the breath. Rather, true *kumbhaka* comes when the body no longer requires air for its maintenance. The purpose of respiration is to expel carbon dioxide from the lungs, and to take in oxygen. In *47ecarboni* exercises, the breath is used to produce a state of equilibrium in the body, in which state the physical activity of breathing is no longer required to maintain it in a condition of equilibrium.

When one rises above the need to breathe, the heart pump also slows down, then stops altogether.

There is a subtle connection, through the medulla oblongata, between the breath and the heartbeat. When breathing becomes unnecessary, the heartbeat, as just indicated, slows down and then stops. Between these two phenomena—the breath and heartbeat, on the one hand—and sensory awareness, on the other, there is a close connection.

The energy in the senses, as in the whole body, relaxes and withdraws—as happens, indeed, to a lesser degree in sleep. A sleeper may be called—he may even be shaken—before he is even aware of being wanted. This diminished involvement with objective reality occurs because, during sleep, the energy is partially withdrawn from the body and from the “sense-telephones”—even as the tortoise withdraws its head and limbs into its shell.

It is only when the “sense telephones” have been “switched off” that the mind can become wholly absorbed in the inner world of meditation. The energy in the motor nerves, too, must be withdrawn, as happens naturally when the senses are stilled.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita* 2:58

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Remember, however, that as you shift your vision from the conscious to the subconscious, the life force and energy must also be switched off from the lamps of the billion-celled muscles and the visual, auditory, olfactory, tactual, and gustatory nerves.

In shifting from the conscious to the superconscious plane, your lungs must be breathless, your heart calm, your cells inactive, your circulation stilled, and you must be listening to the symphony of the Cosmic vibration of Om.

While in the superconscious state, one experiences complete *cessation of unrest—fruition of peace—soul-expansion*, unhampered by the friction attending sensations in the realm of consciousness.

If anyone claimed that he could sleep while he was running, he would be ridiculed, for healthful sleep is always accompanied by sensory and motor relaxation. Many profess to have attained Cosmic Consciousness, who have not yet learned to relax at will. The first signs of the attainment of Cosmic Consciousness are the fixed gaze, the consciously stilled heart, and breathlessness. If one cannot demonstrate these, he has not attained Cosmic Consciousness.

Why not learn the method by which you can switch off the life current from the entire body through conscious will by the steady, conscientious practice of the fourth Yogoda lesson, thus freeing the soul from the bondage of death. Besides, just as electricity does not die with the breaking of the bulb into which it flows but merely retires into the big dynamo behind it, so our real self is not destroyed but retires into the Infinite Omnipresent Self, when our life forces are switched off from the body-bulb. After thoroughly mastering the fourth lesson and attaining the breathless state, the following method will be found very helpful for reducing relaxation at will.

--From *Super Advanced Course Lesson 3*, by Swami Yogananda, 1930

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### **Excerpts from Praecepta Lessons, 1938, Yogananda**

Food is necessary if you are starved, deep breathing is necessary if you are oxygen-starved. But as over-eating is unnecessary when you have food in your system, so is over-breathing unnecessary if your blood contains less carbon due to the right habit of eating fresh fruit and little starch. If you are calm and there is less motion in the body, there will be less decay in the body and you will need to breathe very little, most of the time remaining breathless. That is why calm people breathe less, and the animal type of people, who eat starch and meat all the time, have to breathe like bellows and have to keep their Life Force and mind constantly busy with the physical functions of breathing and with the heaviness and motion of the flesh. Breathlessness and calmed internal organs free the mind, so that it can concentrate upon the Soul.

--Lesson 23

To shift your consciousness to the superconscious plane, direct your vision and eyes in between the eyebrows, and instantaneously go consciously into the state of deep peace, intoxicating joy. These states of consciousness must be genuine and accompanied by their bodily indications. As in the subconscious or sleep state your body will have all the signs of sleep, so the superconscious state will be accompanied by the consciously stilled heart, fixed gaze, and breathlessness...

Self-Realization students who practice breathlessness as given in an early Lesson need never be forced out of the body by death, but may be guided through the luminous eye into the light of God. They will find that death is but a freedom from the chain of breath on to the breathless Spirit.

--Lesson 104



Please sit upright. By watching the breath, you calm the heart, and when the heart is calm, the energy withdraws from the senses and your attention is then free and can be put on anything you desire to concentrate upon. By watching the breath, you attain breathlessness. By watching the breath, you separate yourself from the breath. Breath is the cord that ties the Soul to the body. If you know how to die daily, by releasing your energy from the body by untying the cord of breath, then you are Spirit.

Practice the technique on breathlessness given in a former lesson on Meditation, Affirm: "I know that breath is the cord which ties my Soul to the body. In breathlessness I find my Soul free to unite with Thy Omnipresence, both within and beyond my body. The storm of breath causes ripples of sensation and thoughts on the lake of my mind, and I behold a distorted image of the presence of the Spirit. Stop the storm of breath. Conjure away the ripples of restlessness and teach me to behold Thy calm mooned Presence in the unruffled lake of my consciousness."

--Lesson 114

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### **Speech Before the World Congress of Religions, Yogananda**

Yogis practice the control of Life and the breathless state, to be able to live in regions without sufficient air for the physical body, using precisely the living light, not oppressed by the body.

--Swami Yogananda's Speech Before the World Congress of Religions

§

## Self-Analysis and Significance of Dreams, Yogananda

### Dream hints

In theaters human actors play dramas on the stage, while in the movies electric shadows, emitting intelligent sounds, flicker across the silver screen.

Imagination is the mental stage on which thoughts play many dramas of varying moods. The mental dramas acted on the stage of fancy are plays, originating in the brain of the human Ego. Later, these mental dramas are either written and played materially in theaters, movies, and real life, or else played mentally on the stage of dreamland. This last kind of mental drama, or inner movie, is played on the screen of the subconscious mind.

*The conscious mind* works with the sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch during wakefulness, but sleeps at night. *The subconscious mind* works through memory during wakefulness and through dreams at night. It is awake during the day, working in the conscious mind making records for it, and it is also awake during sleep at night looking after the functions of the heart, lungs, and so forth, of the human engine, like an old janitor, as well as acting like a manager-operator of the mental dream-movies in dreamland. *Superconsciousness* works first in the subconscious mind and then in the conscious mind, without becoming entangled with them.

The conscious and subconscious minds have likes and dislikes. The superconscious mind works through all phases of consciousness without being even slightly attached to either the attachments and troubles of the conscious or the subconscious minds.

### The dream movies

Just as in making a motion picture there has to be a playwright, director, cameramen, and actors, so also, in the dream motion picture, stories of various scenes and dramas are created by the intelligence of the conscious mind, with the subconscious mind as the director and the visualizing subconscious imagination as the cameraman. The players are the thoughts, feelings, determinations, and desires.

The different dramas of comedies, tragedies, and real facts passing through the conscious mind are photographed by the intelligent subconscious mind. These inner mental films are stored away in the groove-like shelves in the convolutions of the grey matter in the brain.

During sleep, when the energy retires from the five sense-telephones and the muscles, it becomes concentrated in the head. The subconscious mind is a triple personality. Sometimes it is a cameraman, sometimes it is a director, and sometimes it is the operator of the inner movies. Like real motion pictures, the subjects of the inner films are various. Some are news reels of real happenings, and some are real or imaginary tragedies or comedies. However, sometimes the all-seeing superconscious mind photographs a true happening and drops the film in the subconscious movie house, to be played for the guidance of the erring Ego.

The subconscious mind, whenever it is too much taxed with the fears and worries of the conscious mind, takes revenge on the conscious mind during the state of sleep, by using the concentrated energy in the head during sleep to film a dream tragedy on the screen of relaxation. Notice that, just like the dark movie house, the subconscious mind is dark and therefore suitable to the showing of dream-movies.

The subconscious mind sometimes produces comedy pictures to delight and entertain the overtaxed conscious mind. In tragedy and fear dreams, the subconscious mind deplorably and

glaringly shows to the conscious mind its undesirable actions. The conscious mind gets to see the evil which it often mentally or unconsciously performs.

When you are dreaming, you are not resting, for your mental movie house is still working and showing different pictures to the Ego of subconscious feelings and thoughts.

### **Meaning of superconscious dreams and visions true and false subconscious dreams visions**

Visions are created during the wakeful state by the all-seeing, all-powerful superconsciousness. The superconsciousness uses brain energy to materialize thoughts about a true event which is to happen in the near or far future, and shows it during the wakeful state with the eyes closed. When a true vision is seen with open eyes, the Life Force is projected from the brain into the ether. In this case the persons and scenes in the brain may not be true-to-touch, though they are true-to-vision, and will be true in every sense in the future if spiritual development is carried on.

The last kind of super-vision, in which one can see and touch and talk to a Saint appearing in a vision, is created by superconsciousness impregnated with Christ Consciousness, which uses Cosmic Energy and super-Divine will with which to materialize invisible Saints, or it may be possible to invite a Saint who materializes himself. Visions can be willed by Masters into the conscious mind of their true developed disciples.

### **Superconscious dreams**

In superconscious dreams the superconsciousness photographs real future happenings and drops them into the dream-movie-house to be filmed there for the guidance of the Ego. These dreams, good or bad, always come true. The superconsciousness is specially interested in dropping messages which will awaken the Ego to return home from wallowing in the mire of sense pleasures to the home of happiness in God. Besides very occasionally giving real dreams, the superconsciousness also gives dream hints of Spiritual progress, and of the call of God.

Whenever you dream calmly about huge fires, the ocean, or vast waters, rivers, boats, angels. Scriptures. Saints, temples, churches, altars, flowers, cloudless skies, sunny lights, auroras or the moon, or of a feeling of expansion in space, then know that the time for your spiritual development is near to the working out of the effects of pre-natal or post-natal bad actions, by the power of good living in this life.

**Fire** represents the burning of past Karma; light and the ocean represent vast perceptions of Self-Realization in meditation. Water represents the results of Divine perceptions attainable by meditation.

**A river** suggests plying up the river of Life Force in the spine through Yoga practices or meditation.

**A boat** indicates that one should seek the right Guru, (human vehicle and messenger of God) whose voice, intelligence, and Spiritual perception the Divine Being uses to completely redeem the disciple in one or many incarnations. The Guru is the boat or vehicle of salvation, or the Spiritual mariner who takes the disciple across oceans of past Karma to the shores of God. A boat also represents Self Realization received through the practice of the technique of salvation received from the Guru.

**Angels** represent Divine friends and Saints in past lives who remember us and try to redeem us through silent suggestions of their presence.

**Scriptures** represent that the dreamer should follow the path of wisdom and study to attain the end-Saints represent the sages whom we specially adored in the past. Temples indicate that one should follow the teachings of the Masters.

**Churches** indicate that one should worship God deeply according to the Yogic method of real concentration, and not be absent-minded.

**Altars** represent communion with God, or marriage with an extremely Divine Soul. The real marriage and the happiest one lies in the union of negative feminine Souls of all human beings, both male and female, with the only masculine, positive Soul of God.

**Cloudless** skies represent a serene, pure path of communion with God-Spiritual development without trouble, and an abundance of clear Spiritual perceptions.

**Flowers** represent budding of the blossoms of creative wisdom in the garden of thought. By the magic wand of “just mere willingness” the Spiritual devotee will find the right thought arising at the right time.

**Sunny lights** signify Astral visions illumining vast spaces during meditation.

**Auroras** represent Cosmic Astral Light, in which one can see all the Astral planets, large and small, glittering in space, and the visitation of Cosmic Consciousness during deepest meditation.

**The moon** indicates that one should combine devotion with Astral visions perceived in meditation in order to progress in the Spiritual path.

**A feeling of expansion** in space represents the feeling of omnipresence felt during meditation.

And of the above visions are hints that the dreamer shows development in the above spiritual accomplishments in the past life, or in this life, and that it would be easy for him to try and develop along those lines with little resistance.

## **Comedy and tragedy dreams**

**Comedy dreams** are entertainment given by the subconscious mind requesting the conscious mind to relax and to be less serious about life.

**Falling in dreams**, and so forth, indicates that the dreamer should control sex thoughts. Dreams of temptations are hints that temptation is not a physical but a mental fact, and can be controlled by development of the will.

**Tragedy dreams** are hints of the subconscious mind to the conscious mind that it should desist from formulating dramas of worries and fears.

**Beating or hurting** others in dreams represents that the conscious mind should not think revengeful thoughts.

**Seeing a lady** in dreams signifies marriage. Seeing a house, a mine, an office, furniture, palaces, shops, or money, represents coming prosperity if some effort is made.

**Sadness** in a dream represents coming sickness. Flying in the light indicates spiritual development Flying in the dark indicates prosperity. Waterfalls represent the passing out of bad Karma.

Meaningless dreams are nothing but comedy dreams and should be ignored. To dream too much is bad. Clearing the bowels by means of a laxative, and a fruit dinner at night, will do away with meaningless dreams and will give birth to superconscious dreams only

### **To will dreams and visions**

Visions can be had only by going deep into meditation and then wishing to see the real state of things. It is always good to be able to dream at will before one can have a real vision

### **Art of dreaming at will**

Sit in your dimly lighted bedroom just before you feel fairly sleepy. With half-open eyes steadily and simultaneously look at a portion of the room and try to visualize and memorize every detail All the time will yourself to see all the objects of your vision in a dream and fall asleep while you are visualizing. In this way you will be able to visualize or produce a mechanical vision of anything, any person, or any place in a dream consciously produced in the subconsciousness

Dreams are not given to you They are created unconsciously by your own conscious , subconscious, or superconscious mind. Hence, by your conscious or subconscious mind during sleep, or by superconscious will, you can create any dream.

Visions are real, while dreams are only imaginary images Visions of true future happenings are very useful, for they guide and mold your life when you can produce them by Christ Consciousness or superconsciousness.

The Divine man seldom dreams any false dreams. To be able to dream at will signifies that your will can materialize thoughts, and that you are getting ready to be able to produce Guiding Visions.

**– Super Cosmic Science Course (1934): Lesson 3, By Swami Yogananda**

## Samadhi

The Ego consciousness in man tries to keep the soul attached to matter in the form of individual traits and mortal desires born out of them. The Soul, being a reflection of the Omnipresent Spirit, ought to reflect its omnipresent, all-knowing character. It is the pure, perfect reflection of the Spirit, but when it forgets its own real nature and becomes identified with the body and its attachments, it loses its consciousness of Omnipresence and becomes conscious only of the limitations of the body. This body-bound soul is called Ego. The soul in the Ego state is a prisoner of the flesh and its limitations.

The soul, through meditation, can reach the state of Samadhi and thus can do away with its Ego or matter consciousness. Reaching *Samadhi*, or Oneness with God, is the only method by which the Ego consciousness can be completely defeated.

Samadhi is the great general of the metaphysical army which leads the soldiers of devotion, vital celibacy, spiritual memory. Discriminative intelligence, extreme dispassion, negative good power, positive good power, proper bodily posture, reversed Life-Force, and withdrawn consciousness from the senses to battle the soldiers of Ego, *Bhisura*, or King Material Desire.

There are different stages in the realization of Oneness. There is the realization of Oneness of the Ego and the soul, and that of Oneness of the Soul and Spirit. There are really three kinds of Samadhi: *Jara*, or unconscious trance; *Sabikalpa*, or perception of Spirit without the Waves of Creation; and the third and highest state is that of perception of the Ocean of Spirit with the Waves of Creation.

The unconscious state is useless for the most part because it is produced by a physical control, or by the mental anesthetic of keeping the mind blank. In this state a sense-bound soul can only be kept from increasing its attachments. It can never acquire wisdom or roast the seeds of pre-natal or post-natal bad habits in this state, the mind is unconscious within and without.

It is related in the Hindu Scriptures that a wicked snake charmer went into a trance and fell into a well. The well dried up and became full of dirt and the man remained buried there for a hundred years with his body perfectly preserved in a state of suspended animation. At the end of a hundred years some people who were digging out the old well found him and revived him by the application of hot water. As soon as he regained consciousness, he began to scold and curse the people for stealing the musical instruments with which he charmed the snakes. His hundred years of unconscious trance had not roasted the seeds of bad thought habits or cured him of his wickedness.

In the *Sabikalpa Samadhi* state the attention and the Life-Force are switched off from the senses and are kept consciously identified with the ever-joyous, ever-wise Spirit. In this state, the soul is released from the Ego consciousness and becomes conscious of Spirit beyond Creation. By repetition of this state of *54ecarbo*, the soul absorbs the fire of Spirit Wisdom, which roasts out the seeds of mortal desires. In this state, the soul, as the meditator, its meditation on the Spirit, and the Spirit as the object of meditation, become one. The Wave of Soul meditating in the Ocean of Spirit becomes merged with the spirit. It does not lose its identity, but only expands into Spirit. In this state, the mind is conscious of the Spirit within only. It is not conscious of Creation without.

In the most advanced, or *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* state, the soul does not expand itself into the big Spirit, but realizes itself and Spirit as existing together. This is the highest and most enjoyable state in which the Ego consciousness, the soul consciousness, and the Ocean of Spirit

are seen all existing together. It is the state of watching the Ocean of Spirit and the Waves of Creation at the same time. In this state the individual does not see himself any longer as John Smith related to his body and his outer environment, but he sees that the Ocean of Spirit has become not only the Wave of John Smith, but also all the waves of all lives and of all things. In this state, the soul is conscious simultaneously of Spirit within and of all Creation without.

The *Swabikalpa Samadhi* and *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* states are described in the following ancient Hindu song:

“In the Swabikalpa Samadhi Yoga (union)  
You will drown (melt) yourself (Ego)  
in yourself (Spirit).  
In the Nirbikalpa Samadhi Yoga  
You will find (see) yourself (Ego)  
in yourself (in Spirit).”

The Ego consciousness tries to keep the body under its control by reminding it of the limited physical relations of country, race, nation, family, possessions, characteristics, and so forth. The soul is held to the body by the Ego conscious. Ness. In the highest Nirbikalpa Samadhi state the soul unites its Ego consciousness of race, country, family, body, possessions, and characteristics with the omnipresent, omniscient, all-blessed Spirit. The Ego reminds the Soul of its limitations, while Samadhi reminds the Soul of its omnipresence.

Before General Samadhi can defeat the body-bound Ego, it is necessary for the Soul to call out its other metaphysical soldiers to defeat the army of the senses.

--From *Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 1:8/section 2, Paramhansa Yogananda

## §

“Once the mind is interiorized,” Paramhansa Yogananda said, “and withdrawn from its identification with the world and with the body, the inner light comes into clear and steady focus. The inner sounds become all-absorbing. *Aum* fills the brain; its vibration moves down the spine, bursting open the door of the heart’s feeling, then flowing out into the body. The whole body vibrates with the sound of *Aum*.”

“Gradually, with ever-deeper meditation, the consciousness expands with that sound. Moving beyond the confines of the body, it embraces the vastness of infinite vibration. You realize your oneness with all existence as *Aum*, the Cosmic Vibration.

“This state is known as *Aum Samadhi*, or union with God as Cosmic Sound. *Aum* is that aspect of the Christian Trinity which is known as the Holy Ghost, or Word of God.

“By still deeper meditation, one perceives in the physical body, underlying the *Aum* vibration, the vibrationless calm of the Christ Consciousness, the reflection in creation of the unmoving Spirit beyond creation.

“In ancient spiritual tradition, the Christ Consciousness is spoken of as the Son. For just as, among human beings, the son is a reflection of the father, so in cosmic consciousness the

Christ—in Sanskrit called Krishna, or *Kutastha Chaitanya*—reflects in all things the consciousness of God, the Father, beyond creation.

“By ever deeper meditation, one expands his awareness of the Christ Consciousness beyond the limits of the body to perceive his oneness finally with the Christ Consciousness, which underlies the manifested universe.

“By deeper meditation still, one goes beyond creation and unites his consciousness with that of the Father, *Satchidananda*, the vast ocean of Spirit.

—From *The Essence of Self-realization*, Chapter Twenty/1

## §

### *The Eighth Stage: Samadhi*

At this point, spiritual progress becomes a matter of progressively deeper Self-remembrance. The soul, recalling its true nature, identifies itself more and more fully with that divine memory. It realizes itself, first, as only a projection of Pure Consciousness. Then, finally, it realizes itself as, in fact, Pure Consciousness.

*Samadhi* (oneness), the eighth and final stage on the meditative journey, comes when the soul, losing body-identity altogether, merges in the greater reality of which the body and everything else in creation is only a manifestation. The identity it abandons is not its physical body only, but its subtler bodies as well. Once that subtlest wall of separation is demolished, there is nothing to prevent it from merging into the Infinite. The wave, having played on the surface of the sea for many lives, merges back again into the sea—its motion dissolved at last in perfect stillness.

*Samadhi* is not a state of mind. It is cosmic consciousness, the state where the soul perceives itself as truly “center everywhere, circumference nowhere.” In that state, no ripple on the sea of consciousness remains. Thoughts and feelings are completely stilled. This emptiness is the state of *nirvana*. The soul, in that emptiness, knows only that it exists. It is stripped to its ultimate, irreducible essence: the stark realization, “I AM.”

This is not, however, the final state. It is a release: It is not final attainment. Into this emptiness then bursts a new reality: Bliss absolute; Love eternal. From knowing nothing but its self-existence, the soul discovers that it knows everything. From stripping the onion of its last peel—the last *kosha* covering the heart—the soul proceeds to discover that it *is* everything. In possessing nothing, it finds that it possesses everything. It is *Satchidananda*: ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

There are several stages of *samadhi*. To attain divine perfection, not only must the ego transcend itself in soul-consciousness: The soul must convince itself that it truly *is* free in Infinity.

Those who imagine that God seeks to impose a state of ego-lessness on the soul have little idea of how completely we must persuade Him that we long for Him alone.

At first, the ego’s addiction to a separate existence allows the soul only brief flights of ecstasy before selfhood reasserts itself. The bird, imprisoned for eons in its little cage, fears to come out even though the door of the cage stands wide open. After a time, deciding that no threat is posed by that openness, the bird hops briefly outside—two or three hops, only—fluffs



its wings, then hops hurriedly back to the reassurance of its cage again. Again it hops out, and ever and again returns, still preferring its delusive security to freedom. Then at last it begins to think, “Why, outside the cage is where I really belong!” At last, taking courage, it leaves its cage altogether, and flies out the window to embrace the freedom it had so long denied.

Different terms are used by saints of East and West to describe the final stages of liberation. Paramhansa Yogananda used the terms *sabikalpa samadhi* and *nirbikalpa samadhi*.

*Sabikalpa samadhi*, he said, describes that stage in which the soul first emerges from its ego-cage and merges in the cosmic light or sound (or into any of the other six aspects of divine consciousness). *Sabikalpa samadhi* is temporary, not permanent, oneness. The soul knows freedom in that state, but the memory of ego-bondage lingers, and pleads as if from the back of a deep cave, “Enjoy your Self for a time if you must: but please, remember me!”

Repeated sorties from the ego are required before the soul can retain its divine state of awareness even after it returns to outer consciousness. At this point it is no longer aware of the ego in human terms, but knows it as a manifestation of the infinite reality. In this state, it finally is able to retain its consciousness of inner freedom even while performing its normal human functions in this world. This, finally, is the state of *jivanmukta*, a state of eternal freedom because the soul is released from bondage to its former consciousness of “I” and “mine.” This highest *samadhi* Paramhansa Yogananda termed *nirbikalpa samadhi*. Other great teachers have named it variously—*sahaja samadhi*, for example: “effortless *samadhi*.”

*Nirbikalpa samadhi* does not yet represent final emancipation, because the soul is still not free from all past karma. Final emancipation is attained when all the old seeds of karma have been destroyed. This final state of emancipation was attained by Buddha, Jesus Christ, Krishna, and others, including several great masters of modern times. Other masters are not less in the state of their realization, but only in that they have some past karma still to work out. Many such masters, my guru told me, keep some of their old karma as a way of drawing them back to help their disciples. For in that state, he explained, it doesn’t matter when the old karma is destroyed. What hurry is there, after all, once you’ve attained cosmic consciousness? In *nirbikalpa* there is no longer any danger of slipping down the ladder, through succumbing to nostalgia for the little self. The ego no longer exists. There is only its remembered reality of many incarnations. Long-buried impressions still need persuading that they, too, were parts of a divine play—God alone dreaming the entire sequence: butcher, baker, and candlestick maker.

Only when the soul is convinced down to its last layer of consciousness that it is free, is final liberation attained.

Many people, somewhat aware of the Indian teachings, are familiar with the term *avatar*. Few people, however, even in India, understand it except superficially. *Avatar* means “divine descent into the material realm.” An *avatar* is one who, having attained final liberation, returns to this world out of compassion to help all humanity to fulfill its spiritual destiny. An *avatar*, as distinct from lesser saints and masters, has a universal mission. He (or she) also has the power to bring as many souls to freedom as come for guidance and enlightenment. His power is no longer circumscribed. Like the power of God Himself, it is infinite.

Oneness, then, is the final goal of meditation. Well before that ultimate goal, however, one reaches the point where meditation is no longer needed as a formal practice, for every moment of one’s life, every flicker of human consciousness, every atom of one’s body is permeated throughout with divine bliss.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Sixteen

§

“Once the mind is interiorized”, Paramhansa Yogananda said, “and withdraw from its identification with the world and with the body, the inner light comes into clear and steady focus. The inner sounds become all-absorbing. *Aum* fills the brain; its vibration moves down the spine, bursting open the door of the hearts feeling, then flowing out into the body. The whole body vibrates with the sound of *Aum*.”

“Gradually, with ever-deeper meditation, the consciousness expands with that sound. Moving beyond the confines of the body, it embraces the vastness of infinite vibration. You realize your oneness with all existence as *Aum*, the Cosmic Vibration.

”This state is known as *Aum Samadhi*, or union with God as Cosmic Sound. *Aum* is that aspect of the Christian Trinity which is known as the Holy Ghost, or Word of God.

“By still deeper meditation, one perceives in the physical body, underlying the *Aum* vibration, the vibrationless calm of the Christ consciousness, the reflection in creation of the unmoving Spirit beyond creation.

«Nell’antica tradizione spirituale, la Coscienza di Cristo è chiamata il Figlio. Perché, come fra gli esseri umani il figlio è un riflesso del padre, così, nella coscienza cosmica, in sanscrito chiamato Krishna, o *Kutastha Chaitanya*, riflette in tutte le cose la coscienza di Dio, il Padre, oltre la creazione.

“In ancient spiritual tradition, the Christ consciousness is spoken of as the Son. For just as, among human beings, the son is a reflection of the father, so in cosmic consciousness the Christ—in Sanskrit called Krishna, of *Kutastha Chaitanya*—reflects in all things the consciousness of God. The Father, beyond creation.

«By ever deeper meditation, one expands his awareness of the Christ consciousness beyond the limits of the body to perceive his oneness finally with the Christ consciousness which underlies the manifested universe.

“By deeper meditation still, one goes beyond creation and unites his consciousness with that of the Father, Satchidananda, the vast ocean of Spirit.

**--From *The Essence of Self-Realization*, Chapter 20/1, by Swami Kriyananda**

## ***Astral body and the chakras***

The yogi who can fix his concentration on the spiritual eye leaves his body consciously, whether in deep ecstasy or in death. Is the spiritual eye, one may ask, merely symbolic? No, it is actually beheld, and is, in fact, a reflection of the light in the medulla, through which the energy moves down the spine in three *nadis*, or subtle channels of life force, called the *sushumna*, the *vajra*, and the *chitra*. The *brahmanadi* is the “spine” of the causal body, so called because it is the primal channel through which Brahman—the divine consciousness—descended into the body. The spiritual eye, when seen clearly, is universally the same: a field of dark blue light surrounded by a golden halo, in the center of which is a five-pointed star. The golden aureole represents the astral world; the blue field inside it, the causal world and also the omnipresent Christ consciousness; the star in the center, the Spirit beyond creation.

Paramhansa Yogananda pointed out that man is made, as the Bible says, in the image of God, because that five-pointed star resembles the body of man: With parted legs, and the arms stretched out to the side, the head at the top, man has the very shape of that star. Symbolically (it should be added) a five-pointed star with the fifth point turned downward is inauspicious.

The spine is the primary channel through which the energy flows. The energy’s upward flow is blocked by certain plexuses in the spine, from which energy flows out into the nervous system, and through that system into the body, sustaining and activating the different body parts. When the yogi in deep meditation withdraws his energy from the outer body to the spine, and then up the spine to the brain, he finds that passage blocked by the outward flow of energy from those plexuses (called centers in English translations of the yoga treatises; in their Sanskrit original they are called chakras). The energy at each chakra must be withdrawn into the spine in order to continue its upward journey.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter Five (look around the 3-4 pages)

### §

Driving the chariot of spiritual endeavor between the two armies signifies the withdrawal of energy into the spine, and the awareness which comes to the meditating devotee that there are actually two forces within him, vying together to draw him in opposite directions: downward and upward. The purpose of meditation, according to yoga practice, is to raise the energy in the spine, in so doing to transfer all the lower energies into higher energies in the spine, and finally, then, to focus them at the point between the eyebrows, uniting them ultimately with the highest pole in the body at the top of the head (the *sahasrara*).

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter Five (3rd paragraph from end of chapter)

### §

The center of the body’s energy is in the spine. In deep meditation, that energy must be relaxed from the surface of the body, as we saw earlier, and withdrawn up the spine through the chakras to the brain. The normal outward flow of energy, as it works to sustain the body, must be reversed to flow upward.

It may be helpful at this point to pause briefly and consider the relation between breath and the flow of energy in the spine. First, where the spine is concerned, come the two superficial nerves known as the *ida* and *pingala*, which are located, respectively, on the left and right sides

of the spine. Fish eaters will be familiar with the two nerves that run the full length on either side of the spine of a fish. The energy flowing in these superficial nerves is connected with the reactive process of the emotions, which, in turn, is connected with the breath. The upward flow of energy in the astral spine, through what is called the *ida nadi* (nerve channel), in the astral body, is the cause of inhalation. A downward flow through the *pingala nadi* is the subtle cause of exhalation. It is this flow of energy in the astral spine that results in the physical breath. Otherwise, there would be no physical compulsion to breathe; one wouldn't know what to do about the body's need to expel carbon dioxide and bring in revivifying oxygen.

Causing the inhalation, then, is the upward energy-flow. This upward flow in the superficial spine is reminiscent of the deeper flow upward, in deep meditation, toward spiritual enlightenment. The upward flow through *ida*, therefore, accompanies any positive emotional reaction. Thus, with a positive reaction of any kind—joyful, hopeful, triumphant—to some outward stimulus, the energy flows automatically upward in the spine, causing the lungs to inhale.

When, by contrast, one's reaction is negative—pained, sorrowful, despairing—the energy automatically flows downward through *pingala*, and exhalation ensues. Thus, when, for whatever reason, one reacts with emotional delight to any stimulus—physically, emotionally, or mentally—he automatically inhales. And when, on the contrary, one reacts negatively, he exhales. That is why, when we feel emotionally pleased, we automatically inhale deeply, and when we feel disappointed, we automatically sigh.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, 2:58

## §

When the life force is withdrawn from outward body awareness during deep meditation, the yogi beholds currents of energy trickling back through the flesh, like little rills of rainwater in a forest, to the great river of energy in the spine. When all of the body's currents are in this way withdrawn, they then pass successively into, and through, the three luminous *nadis* (channels) of life force in the astral spine: the *sushumna* (which is outermost), the *vajra*, and then the *chitra*. Passing through the *chitra*, the energy and consciousness enter the innermost channel, the *brahmanadi*, which constitutes the spine of the causal body. It was through the *brahmanadi* that Brahma, the Creative aspect of AUM, in His aspect of Creator of individual beings and their three bodies, descended into outward manifestation. It is through this final channel of *brahmanadi*, therefore, that the soul must once more ascend in order to become again one with the Spirit. As the yogi withdraws his energy up through this final channel, he is able fully to offer his separate, individual consciousness into Infinity.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, 5:10

## Chart of three levels of consciousness

<b><i>Superconscious</i></b>	<b><i>Conscious</i></b>	<b><i>Subconscious</i></b>
<i>("perchè non adesso")</i> ( Solution-oriented Intuitive Unitive/integrates/harmony/ sees relatedness Focused Peaceful Long-range vision Magnetic/charismatic Creative/inventive  Centered in Self Aware of larger picture Immediate answers Unlimited energy/resources  There are no problems <i>I can</i>	<i>("ma, è difficile")</i> Problem-oriented Logical Divides/see differences/ conflicts Distracted Restless Short-sighted Self-motivated Stays within existing parameters Centered in others, opinions Focused on personal gain Time-oriented Limited by time, opinions, Emotions Tries to understand problems <i>Reasons why I can't</i>	<i>("siamo fatti così")</i> Confused/unaware Conditioned/reactive Escapes  Influenced by past Lethargic Blinded by desires Dependent Prefers status quo  In ego/desires Unaware Resists change Precedent, past  Creates problems <i>I'm afraid</i>
<b><u>Other definitions</u></b>		
Direct perception of Truth  Solution is natural part of problem, all one flow Solution is natural outcome Sees essence of problem and the appropriate solution Calm, clear, joyful Detached, impartial Bright, pure, brilliant Fluid, adaptive awareness  <i>Sattwa</i> , refined energy Sees the 'big picture' Meditates Attuned to Divine Will Creates own destiny Joyful	Input limited to senses  Analyses, sees all possible problems and solutions but can't distinguish right one. Strongly influenced by opinions. Separates, divides Doubts Influenced by subcon.  <i>Rajas</i> , action-oriented Sees the moment Studies, collects facts Attuned to logic Follows the crowd Pensive, bored	Tied to memories, impression  Avoids, denies  Masquerades as intuition Fears, nervousness Fears, worries, Blames others, blames self Obscure, cloudy, dim Influences conscious mind with preferences, prejudices <i>Tamas</i> , heavy, lethargic Personal, emotional percept Reacts habitually Attuned to ego/desires Stuck by habits Depressed, unhappy

## Chapter Five: Concentration

### Meditation and Concentration, Kriyananda

I said in the first part of this lesson that will power, to be effective, must be combined with awareness. If a person tried with great determination, but with little awareness, to jam a thread through the eye of a needle, he would only blunt the thread; he wouldn't get it through the eye. Many acts of will are performed with similar insensitivity. Some people, determined to win their discussions at any cost, end up striking their opponents and losing any chance they might have had of really winning their point. Nations frequently have gone to war, when their disagreements might have been effectively arbitrated. Labor unions, to gain temporary selfish advantages, have paralyzed their country's economy, ultimately hurting also themselves; and industries, competing ruthlessly with one another, have made enemies that later became their undoing. Awareness for lack of it, how often our very virtues pave the way to our ruin.

In the last lesson I mentioned how at one time I used to smoke. I well remember how the habit started. I was at a party, and a friend of mine "generously" showed me how to inhale cigarette smoke. The first puff made me dizzy and sick. "I'll lick this weakness," I decided, "if it's the last thing I do!" Had I been more aware, I would have realized that my real weakness lay, not in my body's revulsion at something so unnatural to it, but in my concern for the good opinion of my peers.

Awareness. What is it? How is one to develop it? A satisfactory definition might, conceivably, be found, and might delight the hearts of a few pedants, but it would hardly serve any useful purpose. For we all know what it is to be aware. It takes awareness, for one thing, to delight in pedantic definitions. But two important points may be made. First, we are more or less aware according to how much energy passes through our brains. And second, we are more or less aware according to whether our concentration is focused or diffused.

A dull person, even if focusing all his mental energies on one subject, will be less aware than a bright person simply because his level of energy is lower to begin with. But even a normally vital and aware human being may sometimes be comparatively dull-if, for example, his thoughts have been scattered by excessive worry or preoccupation.

To increase the energy flow to the brain is the chief purpose of yoga practice. For this purpose, many teachings are given, including right diet, postures, and breathing exercises. In the next lesson another aspect of this important subject will be explored, in a discussion of magnetism. But chiefly it must be said that both of the factors determining one's degree of awareness-the amount of energy flow to the brain, and the direction of that energy once it reaches the brain-depend upon one thing only, one's power of concentration. It is as necessary to concentrate one's available energy in the brain as it is to concentrate that energy, once it reaches the brain, on a single object, or state, of awareness.

Concentration is necessary also to the exercise of will power. The will may be described as a single-pointed intention of the intellect, reinforced by energy. The will, the intellect, and the power of concentration, all have their center in the *ajna chakra*, or Christ center, at the point between the eyebrows. They are, therefore, interrelated. Concentration applied to the question of what is, becomes intellect. Concentration applied to the question of what ought to be (as determined by the intellect), becomes will power. Intellect by itself is a more or less static faculty; generally it reflects one's feelings, and must therefore, on the spiritual path, be purified by devotion. When the will, instead of being focused on doing or accomplishing anything, is united inwardly to the purified intellect in a simple act of *becoming*, divine enlightenment

ensues. That is why the *Bhagavad Gita* says that during meditation, one should forsake all mental planning. So long as the will is engaged in thoughts of doing, even when the doing seems to be related to self-improvement, the mind will be directed outward from its true center for we *are already* the Divine Truth itself. We have only to realize our true selves. The very act of *becoming*, spiritually speaking, implies only a complete recognition of, and identification with, realities which the intellect alone might hold impersonally at a distance. But in fact, where the will and the intellect are directed inward toward the soul by the power of deep concentration, their functions are no longer really separable from one another.

On every level of mental activity, *it is concentration that is the key to success*. The student taking an exam, but plagued with a popular song running through his head, the businessman trying to write an important contract, but worried over an argument that he had that morning with his wife; the judge, distracted by the fact that a teenager to whose defense he is trying to listen bears a striking resemblance to his own son: All of these persons could tell us something of the disadvantages of poor concentration. But I don't suppose anyone really needs to be told that lack of concentration means inefficiency. What is *not* generally known is that a concentrated mind succeeds not only because it can solve problems with greater dispatch, but also because problems have a way of somehow vanishing before its focused energies, without even requiring to be solved. A concentrated mind often attracts opportunities for success that, to less focused (and therefore less successful) individuals, appear to come by sheer luck. A person whose mind is concentrated receives inspirations in his work grid in his thinking that, to duller minds, may often seem the proof of special divine favor. Yet such seeming "favors" are due simply to the power of concentration. Concentration it is that awakens our powers and channels them, dissolving obstacles in our path, literally attracting opportunities, insights, and inspirations. In many ways, subtle as well as obvious, concentration is the single most important key to success.

This is particularly true in yoga practice. The mind, in meditation especially, must be so perfectly still that not a ripple of thought enters it. God, the Subtle Reality, cannot be perceived except in utter silence. Much of the teaching of yoga, therefore, centers on techniques designed specially for developing concentration.

Of these techniques, my guru considered the most effective to be one which involves attentiveness to the natural process of breathing. It is a technique which is well known in India, and is becoming well known also among yoga students in the West, owing to the increasing number of writings on the subject by Indian teachers. This technique has been a favorite among Buddhists since the beginning of their era. It is mentioned in several ancient *Upanishads*. (These authoritative Indian Scriptures present the essence of the most ancient Scriptures of all, the *Vedas*: The more recent *Bhagavad Gita* presents, in its turn, the essence of the *Upanishads*.) The simplicity of this technique causes many a beginner to ignore it. Yet in its very simplicity lies much of its greatness.

Before discussing the technique itself, let us ask ourselves, What is concentration? Concentration implies, first, an ability to release one's mental and emotional energies from all other interests and involvements, and second, an ability to focus them on a single object or state of awareness. Concentration may assume various manifestations, from a dynamic outpouring of energy to perfectly quiescent perceptions. In its higher stages, concentration becomes so deep that there is no longer any question of its remaining merely a practice. The yogi becomes so completely identified with the object of his concentration that he and it, as well as the act of concentration itself, become one. In this way he can even, temporarily, become one with something external to himself, gaining thereby a far deeper understanding of it than would be

possible by aloof scientific objectivity, that pride of Western heritage which has the disadvantage of setting man apart from nature, not in harmony with it. But in concentration on our own higher realities, identification with them becomes lasting. For in this case there is no other, more personal, reality to come back to. We are those realities. We *are* the infinite light, and love, and joy, and wisdom of God. Even now, our concentration should be developed with these higher directions in mind. And even now, our concentration should be so deep that the consciousness of diligent practice is refined into an effortless process of divine becoming.

Obviously, then, the most effective technique of concentration will be one which both interiorizes the mind, and permits a gradual transition from technical practice to utter stillness. The technique of watching the breath fulfills both of these requirements-better, perhaps, than any other technique possibly could, for not only is the breath one of the most natural focal points for the attention, but, as we shall see, the more deeply one concentrates on it, the more refined it becomes, until breathing is automatically and effortlessly suspended in breathlessness. Meditator, the act of concentration, and the object of concentration become one. In the state of breathlessness, moreover, the senses themselves become automatically stilled, permitting an undisturbed continuation of the concentrated state. Once the mind is so perfectly focused, its concentrated power may be applied to any object one wishes. But because attentiveness to the breath involves the will in an act, not of doing, but of inward *becoming* (by concentration on the breath one acquires the consciousness of being air, or infinite space), the natural direction of the mind in this technique is toward superconsciousness (If the will is not involved at all, the mind tends to slip downward into subconsciousness).

Why is the breath a natural focal point for the attention? Because it is the most universal *obstacle* to deep attention. Notice how, when you want to concentrate deeply on something, you automatically restrain your breathing. A person holding a camera, and wishing to take a photograph with a slow exposure, must also hold his breath so as to minimize the movement of his arms. Instinctively we all understand, similarly, that the restless breath is an obstacle to holding the mind steady.

A devotee once complained to his guru that he was having difficulty concentrating in meditation. His distraction was a factory whistle that kept sounding near his home. "Since the whistle disturbs you," said his guru, "why not concentrate on the whistle itself?". The disciple found that by doing so his concentration became one-pointed; he became, in a sense, one with the whistle, accepting it now, since that it no longer seemed a disturbance. Thus he was able to pass easily from concentration on something outside himself to inward meditation on God.

A restless mind may be distracted by many things. In this condition, it may be necessary for one to command its attention forcefully-by yoga postures, perhaps, and loud chanting. But once the mind begins to grow still, the greatest obstacle to its becoming more so is the breath. By concentration on the breath, mental fixity is attained. Concentration on the breath, unlike other forms of concentration, leads naturally to meditation, which my guru defined as the direction of one's focused attention on God, or on one of His attributes. Concentration on the factory whistle may bring about acceptance of the whistle, but such acceptance is not in itself an inducement to meditation. The whistle remains a whistle. By concentration on the breath, on the other hand, the breath actually diminishes, its gradual refinement leads naturally to an interiorized, meditative state.

**from *The art and science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter Nine, by Swami Kriyananda**

§



## How to Develop Concentration, Kriyananda

Concentration means being able to free the mind from all objects of distraction-including one's own thoughts and emotions-and to direct it toward a single object-whether reposing it in a single state of awareness, or directing it toward a single goal

To many people, such mental control implies effort. And so it does, of course, in a sense. In another sense, however, they are mistaken. For as long as one tries to concentrate he will not be able to concentrate really effectively.

Deep concentration is possible only in a state of relaxation. Where tension exists, whether physically or mentally, there is a separate commitment of energy, like the stray strand of thread that refuses to enter the eye of the needle. If, for example, the brow is furrowed in worry, or if the jaw or the hands are clenched, these are signs that this much energy, at least, is not being directed toward one's true objective.

That is why the best way to develop high-powered concentration is to practice meditation regularly.

Many people mistakenly believe that meditation amounts to a kind of escape from reality-an avoidance of one's worldly responsibilities. Actually, meditation is easily the most effective way of enabling one not only to face life's challenges, but to overcome them.

The deep power of concentration that comes through daily meditation enables a person to resolve an issue in minutes perhaps, where, otherwise, he might have fretted over it for weeks. Even more important, where the will is concerned, the concentration that comes due to regular meditation generates with perfect naturalness the strength of will that is necessary for success in any undertaking.

As I mentioned in the last chapter, the physical seat of the will is located at the point between the eyebrows. That is why, when a person wills something strongly, he often knits his eyebrows.

In meditation one is taught to concentrate at that point, since this is also the seat of concentration in the body. The more frequently and deeply one focuses the mind at that point, the more powerful his will becomes.

Another important point in developing concentration, and therefore will power, is inner clarity: crystal clarity of reason and feeling. Meditation is a great aid in the development of such clarity.

I've defined this state of crystal clarity in others of my books Let me quote here what I've written in them:

Crystal clarity means to see oneself, and all things, as aspects of a greater reality, to seek to enter into conscious attunement with that reality; and to see all things as channels for the expression of that reality.

It means to see truth in simplicity, to seek to be guided always by the simple truth, not by opinion; and by what IS, not by one's own desires or prejudices

It means striving to see things in relation to their broadest potential

In one's association with other people, it means seeking always to include their realities in one's own.

Muddy thoughts and feelings produce chaos, both inwardly and outwardly. Inner confusion is the antithesis of concentration. Inner clarity, on the other hand, is almost the definition of concentration.

When the mind is clear, one naturally addresses issues one at a time. It is equally true to say that, by limiting oneself to doing or thinking about one thing at a time, one finds that the mind, in turn, gradually develops clarity.

Concentration, I said, involves, on the negative side, the practice of shutting out of the mind all distracting thoughts and impressions. It isn't easy not to think about a thing. Try telling yourself, for example, completely to avoid thinking about icebergs. How often, in the normal course of a day, does the thought of icebergs even occur to you? Never, probably, unless you live in arctic regions. Yet, if your mind is not practiced at concentration, the mere resolution not to think of icebergs may be sufficient to cause you to think of nothing else!

To develop concentration, then, it is more important to focus positively on one thing at a time than to avoid thinking of other things.

Try to become absorbed in one thought at a time. No one can do many things at once and do them effectively. Leave then, for the moment, every other issue except the one on which you've decided to focus your attention. Don't strain: Be relaxed. Be interested in what you are doing. Become absorbed in it.

When people go to the movies, they may find themselves becoming effortlessly absorbed in the story, simply because it has awakened their interest. Focus your mind like that on everything that you do.

Years ago, I and several friends were thinking of buying a building. At one point one of our group said, "I have the realtor's number." She held out to us the slip of paper on which she'd written the number. The conversation shifted temporarily to another topic. Fifteen minutes later, we finally decided to telephone the realtor.

"Let me get that number again," this friend said, taking out of her pocket once more the slip of paper.

"It's —." I told her the number.

She gazed at me in amazement "Why, you hardly glanced at that number! How could you possibly have it memorized?"

"Really," I replied, "it's very simple. I didn't have to study it. All I did was look at it with concentration when you showed it to us."

My friend, afterward, tried following this suggestion in similar situations, and found that it worked infallibly.

Whatever we do, we should train our minds to do it with one-pointed attention. That doesn't mean striding grimly through life like a Man or Woman of Destiny. All it means, quite simply, is to be interested and involved in everything we do.

Do one thing at a time, and, as you do it, give it your full attention.

--From *Money Magnetism*, by Swami Kriyananda, Chapter 11, by Swami Kriyananda

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## **The art of concentration and meditation, Yogananda**

Concentration is the power to focus the mind on any desired line of thought. Meditation is concentration used only to know God.

Every activity requires concentration, and no effective action can be performed without the help of concentration. Hence, business men, artists, students, and all spiritual individuals must know the art of focusing all the powers of attention upon a single point, in order to succeed effectively in their respective vocations. *Concentration denotes the art of withdrawing attention from objects of distraction and then placing that recalled attention upon one thing at a time.* Therefore, it is evident that the primary factor in concentration consists in withdrawing the attention from all diverting objects.

The consideration of environment is extremely important in gaining the best results in practicing concentration and meditation. There are two kinds of environment: inner and outer. Outer environment consists of the state of your physical surroundings, noisy or quiet, in which you are practicing your concentration practices. The inner environment consists of your mental state preceding meditation.

One can be restless even in a very quiet place while the body is motionless and relaxed. So remember, quiet yourself *internally* first, no matter whether you are in a quiet or a noisy place. If you are calm inside in spite of surrounding noises and disturbances then that inner mental environment is the best altar for concentration and meditation. Of course, quiet places are conducive to inner calmness. But remember, if you are determined, you can be calm in spite of all noises. Do not stop meditating because you cannot find a quiet place.

### ***Meditation is the way to God***

*The surest sign that God exists is the increasing heart-bursting joy felt in meditation.* When your mind is free from prejudice, when narrow-mindedness vanishes, when you unreservedly sympathize with everybody, when you hear the voice of God in the chorus of churches, tabernacles, temples, and mosques, when you realize that life is a battle of joys and sorrows, and at the same time a passing dream, and — above all — when you become increasingly intoxicated with the joy of meditation, and in making others happy by giving them God-peace, then you will know that God is with you always, and you are in Him.

You can never have a truly happy life inwardly and outwardly, unless you use the power of God-given concentration to reclaim your lost image of God, to control destiny, and to conquer the mysteries of life. Through the art of meditation one learns how actually to contact the Divine Bliss (which is God) by the faithful application of the science of spiritual law. The scientist uses God's law in order to find out the secrets of Nature, and the spiritual man ought to know how to use his God-given powers of concentration, meditation, and intuition to know divine law.

### **Meditation + Activity**

It must be remembered that finding God does not imply complete neglect of the various physical and spiritual battles of life. On the other hand, the climbing spiritual aspirant must learn to conquer in order to make the temple of life free from the darkness of ignorance, and the ignorance and the weakness of disease, so that God's Perfect Presence may be perceived.

As a house full of jewels cannot be seen in the dark, so the Presence of God cannot be felt while the darkness of ignorance, overpowering disease, or mental inharmony prevails.

### **When and where to meditate**

As the living room produces conversation-consciousness; the bathroom, cleaning-consciousness, the bedroom, sleeping-consciousness; and the library, reading-consciousness, so also, a little place for meditation produces the silence-consciousness. A little room with one or more windows, or a little closet with an open door, or a corner screened off, or a mountain top, or a forest in the summer, or an evenly heated room (neither too warm nor too cold) in a quiet place — any one of these is suitable for meditation. Even while riding in an automobile or pullman car, or lying down in the same bedroom with others, you can pretend to be asleep but can still practice.

Select a noiseless place In a small room — or in a corner of a room screened off — put a small table and a straight armless chair facing the East. Then place on the chair a woolen blanket covering the back, the seat, and running down under your feet. (This may be covered with a silk cloth if you wish). This insulates your body and prevents the Life Current and consciousness which are moving toward the spine, the brain, and God, from being held back in the sense centers and drawn into the earth by the earth currents.

Be sure to practice meditation in the early morning and before going to bed at night, when the changes in the body are very great. Poisons are thrown off in the morning in the active state of the body, and at midnight, when the body is relaxed, the Life Force in the brain can easily be turned off from the sense-nerves and directed toward God.

Don't drug yourself with too much sleep and thus lose your vitality. Six hours of sleep is plenty for most people. Wake up at 5:30 AM and meditate. This time is suitable because your home and the neighborhood are usually quiet. Metaphysically this time is suitable because the rays and vibrations of the dawn are vitalizing and spiritually uplifting. At night, meditate from 9 to 10 PM, or 10 to 11 PM, or 10 to 11:30 PM. When everybody is asleep and quiet, you remain awake in God.

The more sweetening you put in water, the sweeter it becomes. Likewise, the longer you meditate intensely, the greater will be your spiritual advancement. On Sundays, holidays, and do-nothing-loafing days, meditate in the morning from 6 to 9 AM and at night from 9 to 12 PM.

Remember that the longer you practice, with intensity, the nearer you will be to the joyous contact of silent God. Intensity consists in making every today's meditation deeper than yesterday's; and every tomorrow's meditation deeper than today's meditation.

### **The four related forces**

In the practice of concentration, the relation between breath and Life Force, mind, and vital fluid (sex energy) should be known even by the spiritual beginner. A balanced control of these four bodily forces brings quick spiritual results without any downfall or hindrance. Every spiritual student can attain a concentrated mind by the single separate control of any *one* of the four bodily factors. By strict celibacy alone, one can gain great mental concentration.

*The balanced way to self realization consists in practicing exercises and principles which simultaneously control and harmonize breath, Life Force, mind, and vital power.* Therefore, every spiritual aspirant should practice real breathing exercises, astral techniques controlling energy flowing in the sensory motor nerves, methods of mental meditation, and principles of calmness-producing celibacy. Students who meditate regularly without calming the restless breath or the Life Force and vital essence, often find insurmountable difficulties in the spiritual path.

If one is nervous and keeps his body in constant motion, his Life Force is restless, then his mind is restless, vitality is restless, and breath is restless. But if one controls the Life Force by spiritual exercises and the practice of calmness through meditation, then his mind, and vital power are within his control.

If the breath is restless, as in running, then the Life Force, mind and vital essence will be restless. On the other hand, if breath is made calm and rhythmic by the practice of these Lessons, the Life Force, mind, and character will be under control. Again, if the mind is restless, the Life Force (through nervousness), and life become restless. Mental calmness is usually attended by calm nerves, controlled bodily energy, and a well-regulated moral life. Similarly, loss of vitality — resulting from living too much on the physical plane — produces mental dissatisfaction, melancholia, peevishness, nervousness, lack of energy, and heavy restless breathing.

By proper breathing exercises and attaining breath calmness, one can attain great concentration. By control of the Life Force in the sensory motor nerves (*Pranayama*, as taught in the higher Original Praecepta Lessons), one can withdraw the currents from the senses and prevent the disturbing sensations from reaching the brain, thus calming the mind. By mental concentration and self-control, as in meditation, one finds the breath and the Life Force automatically calmed, and thus stability of character is attained.

The real spiritual teacher knows that the safest, quickest, and the best spiritual method for the beginner lies in learning harmonization of these four bodily factors. To approach God by any one path, by the breath way, the energy way, the mind way, or “control of Life Force way”, is a limited and one-sided method, and fraught with many grim difficulties. Some people perform breathing exercises without realizing their spiritual significance. They will grow into good athletes with plenty of lung power, but that is all. Others try to approach God by the energy way by controlling the Life Force in the body, but they forget the divine conception of the astral technique (*Pranayama*), they satisfy themselves with certain mental and astral power and forget God entirely. Some people try to know God by mental meditation, by mental imagination only. They see false visions for the most part, and live in the law of subconsciousness and frozen images of imagination.

-- From *Praecepta Lesson n.16 (1938)* by Paramhansa Yogananda

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## **Further facts on concentration, Yogananda**

### **The Delicate Art of Breath Control**

Propaganda by ignorant people has been started against all breathing exercises because our great Hindu Masters warned students not to practice violent breathing exercises with weak lungs and because they asked students to practice breathing exercises under the guidance of a competent teacher, and not after reading about them in books.

Remember, just as oranges cannot be tabooed for all people because some people with ulcerated stomachs cannot eat them, so also, proper breathing exercises should not be forsaken because some people with extremely weak or infected lungs cannot practice proper breathing exercises. Laugh at anybody who tells you that all breathing exercises are dangerous. Everybody must properly perform Nature's breathing exercises, no matter whether he has good or bad lungs. Only remember that violent breathing exercises are dangerous, for they may cause trouble even to apparently strong but inwardly weak lungs. Cast out all fear when you practice simple, but physically and spiritually extremely beneficial breathing exercises which the Praecepta Teachings recommend.

#### **When You Need to Breathe Deeply**

If you are starving for oxygen because of improper body posture, you need to breathe deeply and to breathe properly. Those people who sit with a bent spine, and walk with a caved in chest, squeeze the diaphragm and lungs and prevent them from properly opening and receiving the amount of oxygen necessary to clean all the dark blood in the lungs. When the lungs and diaphragm do not open properly, there is a lack of oxygen brought to the blood and the poisonous venous blood in the lower openings of the lungs remains unpurified and is poured back into the system in this condition. If you sit and walk with the chest out and the abdomen in, you will take in the proper quantity of oxygen, and all your dark blood will be changed into red blood, and fresh blood and vitality will be poured into your system. It is better to lie on your back on a hard bed than to sit with a crooked spine and squeezed lungs, moving back and forth in a rocking chair. Use planks on your bed and put a spring mattress on top. This insures a straight and soft bed without being dangerous to your health by bending the spine, as a too soft bed does.

Food is necessary if you are starved; deep breathing is necessary if you are oxygen-starved. But as over-eating is unnecessary when you have food in your system, so is over-breathing unnecessary if your blood contains less carbon due to the right habit of eating fresh fruit and little starch. If you are calm and mere is less motion in the body, there will be less decay in the body and you will need to breathe very little, most of the time remaining breathless. That is why calm people breathe less, and the animal type of people, who eat starch and meat all the time, have to breathe like bellows and have to keep their Life Force and mind constantly busy with the physical functions of breathing and with the heaviness and motion of the flesh. Breathlessness and calmed internal organs free the mind, so that it can concentrate upon the Soul.

### **Do Not Hold Breath Too Long**

It is extremely unwise to hold the breath in the lungs to the point of discomfort. Holding the breath forcibly in weak lungs is injurious. Weakness of the lungs must be cured before it is advisable to breathe deeply. People with weak lungs should breathe properly by keeping the body straight. Deep breathing is unnecessary for such persons until their lungs become strong. We must learn to breathe correctly by keeping the spine straight always. The suffocating pain felt when holding the breath in the lungs too long results from the constant pounding of venous blood into the lungs. When the oxygen is used up, the carbon dioxide in the lungs wants to get out and the thick dark blood, unable to be purified, keeps on accumulating and expanding the lungs, which are ready to burst.

Although you cannot kill yourself by holding the breath too long in the lungs, you can injure the lungs and heart. Therefore, you must never listen to any charlatan or ignorant teacher who tries to teach from book knowledge only. Do not follow any teacher who tells you to hold your breath in the lungs for a long time, or tells you to practice violent breathing exercises.

When the lungs are filled to capacity with dark venous blood, the blood tries to push back through the pulmonary arteries into the heart. This may result in pains in the heart or leakage of valves, or may injure the over-expanding lungs. Nature made a good provision so that no one can kill himself by holding the breath in the lungs, because when venous blood strikes back in the heart from the over-filled lungs, the heart palpitates and fitfully shoots its current back to the medulla. The medulla becomes shocked and produces unconsciousness. When unconsciousness comes, breathing automatically starts again.

### **Be Conscious of Inhalation and Exhalation**

- In doing the above do not force the breath in and out. Breathe naturally, only watch the course of the incoming and outgoing breath, mentally chanting Hong and Sau. If the breath naturally stops in the lungs or outside, wait until it flows again of itself.
- Remember that the purpose of this practice is to increase naturally the intervals when the breath does not flow. If the breath goes in of itself and does not flow out immediately, wait and enjoy the state of breathlessness. When it comes out again, say Sau. If the breath goes out and stays out, wait and enjoy that state of breathlessness, until the breath wants to flow in again.
- The breath is first thrown out so that you may know when to begin mentally chanting Hong when the breath goes in. In ordinary breathing you are not aware whether the breath is in or out.
- Do not force the breath in and out in order to chant. Let the mental chant follow the natural desire of the breath to flow in and out.
- Concentrate upon the intervals when the breath does not flow, without forcing this quiet breathless state.
- By watching the breath, you metaphysically destroy the identification of the Soul with the breath and the body. By watching the breath, you separate your Ego from it and know that your body exists only partially by breath.
- By watching the breath, what happens? When you first tense and relax the outer body and throw out the breath, you have removed motion and decay from the outward muscles, but not from the internal organs — heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on. By watching the breath, breathing becomes rhythmic and calm. Watching of the breath

calms and quiets the heart. A restless and worried mind increases heart action, and a quiet mind calms the heart action. A heaving breath also increases heart action and quiet breath calms the heart. By watching the breath calmly, both the breath and the mind become calm. A calm mind and breath slow down and quiet the motion of the heart, diaphragm, and lungs.

When the motion is simultaneously removed from the muscles by relaxation and by casting out the breath, and from the inner organs, heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on, then the Life Energy, which is used to pump 18 tons of blood through the heart in 24 hours, retires to the spine and becomes distributed in the billions of body cells. This energy electrifies the cells and prevents their decay, making them self-sustained dry batteries. In such a state the cells do not require oxygen or food chemicals to sustain life. It is in this state that the vitalized cells do not need to repair decay, because when decay is removed from outer and inner organs the venous blood does not become impure and it does not need to be sent to the heart to be pumped into the lungs to be purified by the incoming oxygen in the breath.

This condition (prevention of the creation and increase of venous blood in the system, by doing away with outer motion and inner motion by watching the breath) does away with two things:

- Necessity of living by the human breath.
- The necessity of heart action.

When man can live by “the Word of God” (Cosmic Energy) and not by bread or breath, and can control the heart, his body battery will be internally charged with Cosmic Energy, and it will not need to depend upon the outer sources of life (Food, liquid, and gases).

- This practice teaches the body cells to be bridged over with Cosmic Consciousness .
- It destroys the slavery of the body to breath.
- It stops decay in inner and outer organs
- It makes the heart action and breathing unnecessary and insures longevity in the body-house when one wants to remain there longer.
- The calming of the heart switches off the energy in the five sense-telephones of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight, for the heart is the second switchboard of the senses (The medulla is the main switch.) When the Life Force and the consciousness are withdrawn from the five sense-telephones, the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch cannot reach the brain through the nerve-telephone wires. When sensations stop registering in the brain, the conceptions and associated ideas, resulting from them, cease. It is then that the mind or the attention becomes free to contemplate any particular object, or God.

### Special Exercises

If you are starved for oxygen and have good lungs, first exhale the poisonous breath quickly, then draw fresh air through your nostrils, counting 1 to 12 slowly, hold breath, counting 1 to 12, or 1 to 25. Then slowly exhale, counting 1 to 12. Repeat the above exercise 12 times, 3 times a day in the open air, or more if you find it beneficial.

People breathe like bellows because they have waste material in their systems. The higher you go into the study and practice of Praecepta Instructions, the more slowly you will



breathe. Decay in the cells of muscles and other organs can be partially arrested by getting the body still, but activity and the throwing off of waste matter still goes on in the internal organs. If you breathe quickly, the heart beat will be very fast. When you run, you breathe quickly, and your heart beat accelerates. Breath is the cord which ties the Soul to the flesh. When you “die daily” and come back to life at will by rising above breath, as is taught in this “Hong-Sau” Technique, you can prolong life indefinitely.

Think of all the restless, searching people there are in the world! They are all seeking the way. What if to all of them could be told that *whenever they can do completely without breathing*, then, and then only, will they establish a symphony of peace, an altar of Bliss in their hearts, where Cosmic Consciousness will come without coaxing.

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**--From *Praecepta* Lesson n.21 (1938), by Paramhansa Yogananda**

## A Key to Concentration, Kriyananda

*An article written by Swami Kriyananda, under the name Robert Ford in the Self-realization magazine, September 1949*

Most people have a terrible time trying to concentrate. Like butterflies savoring flowers, they no sooner settle on one trend of thought than they flit away in search of another. A task begun with determination ends up a crumpled heap in the waste basket. Just as flies, trying to get into the open air, unwittingly beat their wings against a solid window pane, so people, trying to soar into the open air of calm concentration, find their flight impeded by a solid layer of restlessness.

Concentration means a full life, lack of it a dull one. Most people expend their hours and years in such a scatter-minded fashion that life becomes almost a set of symbols. Like skaters on a skating rink, they scratch only the surface and leave all that is underneath untouched. The obvious, the thing they first see, becomes for them the whole story. And this they usually see because it is something with which they are already familiar. Very little that is new occurs in their lives after they once become used to the world around them.

*Restlessness is basic.* Why is the average person so restless? We could blame him as an individual, but there must be some deeper fault than his own, since his state is so common. Isn't it because the very nature of this world is restlessness? Everything here is expressed in opposites, in motion and diversity, in constant change. We have heat and cold, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow forever getting jumbled up and following right on the heels of one another. We no sooner feel a moment of happiness than up comes sorrow, hastily, already panting for fear of being late.

As long as people focus their attention on the world their minds are bound to be restless; just as, if the floor were moving up, down and all around under your feet, you would find it difficult to stand still. Worldliness and restlessness go together. It is for saints and yogis, for all those who have conquered matter, to know the peace of true concentration, for only when the heart is stilled will restlessness be stilled also.

But even so, there are times in this changing world when most people can concentrate fairly well, times when they are not wholly given over to restless thoughts. Isn't it true that when a person goes to a good movie his whole mind is on the events taking place before him? And sitting by a radio his concentration is completely focused on the program of his choice. Whenever a person is completely interested in anything he finds it easy to forget everything else.

*Use enthusiasm.* Interest, or enthusiasm, is a most important key to concentration. When we are really enthusiastic over anything we find it difficult to forget about it. Our whole mind and attention are with it constantly. I think it must be enthusiasm we seek in restlessness, for when our minds are running in a hundred different directions it is in order to find something that will hold our interest. When anything succeeds in doing so we are, for that time, well concentrated. Thus it is enthusiasm which we must strive to feel in all our activities.

But enthusiasm is not conditioned by outside things. We need depend on nothing outside ourselves, for it lies within us. An example strikes me which you will be able to match many times over in your own lives. The other morning my alarm clock woke me up as usual for meditation. I felt tired and unambitious. I realized that if I did bother to get up, a bad night's sleep would swamp my desultory concentration with yawns. But then I suddenly determined to be enthusiastic. At once my sleepiness vanished, I jumped out of bed and, my cobwebs of lethargy gone, I felt wide awake and ready for concentration. We don't have to wait until something interests us. We can be interested all the time, focusing our minds with complete

enthusiasm on everything we do. Concentration without enthusiasm becomes haphazard musing. But if we cling to enthusiasm in our every activity we will find our concentration growing very strong. We will be able to turn it one-pointedly on worldly things, achieving complete success in everything we attempt. More important than that, we will be able to focus it one-pointedly on Spirit, quickly attaining the state most devotees strive so long to find.

Great men have their wonderful powers of concentration because they are so completely interested in what they do that the rest of life seems unimportant at the time. But cannot we also become great? Surely we are not doomed to dwell forever in the bog of restlessness. No. Let us leave our bad habits and learn enthusiasm. That is the road we must travel if we would redeem ourselves from littleness.

## §

*--From An article written by Swami Kriyananda, under the name Robert Ford in the Self-realization magazine, September 1949*

### **Story about Concentration “Monkey Consciousness”**

Tej Bahadur, a young business man in India, took great pains, and spent considerable of his hard-earned money in going to London to confirm his business transactions. He had, harbored within himself, an extraordinary desire and constant caution about the art of business economy. No matter how he cut down his overhead he was never satisfied and constantly thought of numerous fantastic schemes for saving money. Though he was a wealthy business man, he once brooded over the idea of going to London by working his own way as a sailor. Also, he thought of inventing oil-run, inexpensive seaplanes in order to go to London more economically.

Tej Bahadur often indulged in wild fantasies, too, and wondered why God had not made him fast-moving like the electricity, which traverses vast tracts of space during the twinkling of an eye. While, in his imagination, he was bemoaning the fact that he was not speedy like the lightning, a friend of his, who knew all about his strange plans of economy, came scurrying toward him and poured forth a volley of excited words: “Tej Bahadur, come to the banks of the river Ganges,” he said. “I have found a man who can levitate himself and walk on water, and who is willing to teach the method to a worthy student.”

Listening attentively, the wealthy Tej Bahadur was greatly impressed with this new idea and said to himself: “Thank God for sending me a levitating tutor I guess I will ask him to teach me levitation, and that will save me a lot of money which I annually spend on my European business trips.”

Thinking this, he wended his way toward the river-bank, where the Master had temporarily encamped himself. The business man requested the Master to teach him levitation, whereupon the latter agreed to do so, and started giving him a lesson.

The Master told Tej Bahadur gently, “Son, every night, dim the light in your bedroom, lock the doors, and sitting erect on a straight chair facing the East, with closed eyes mentally chant the holy word of the Cosmic Vibration, ‘Om’ for an hour, and then at the end of one month you will be able to race over the waters.”

As the business man thanked the Master for the lesson and was about to return home, inwardly wondering about the extreme simplicity of the lesson, he was called back by the Master, and was cautioned gently further, “Son, I forgot to tell you something about the

technique of levitation. While you are mentally chanting ‘Om’ and are concentrating, be sure not to think of a monkey.” “That is simple,” said the business man, “of course I won’t think of a monkey,” and after saluting the Saint, he returned home.

Evening came fast on the wings of time and found Tej Bahadur soon closing the windows, pulling down the shades, and sitting in a straight chair in his bedroom to practice the technique of levitation. No sooner had he done so, than the first thought that struck him like a thunderbolt was: “I must not think of a monkey.”

Two minutes passed and several times he warned himself inwardly: “I must not think of a monkey.” When ten minutes had passed he had thought of all the different kinds of monkeys in South America, India, Africa, Sumatra, and still other places. He was furious. He willed himself to banish the thoughts about the monkeys which, in a fast moving procession, were leaping through the window of his helpless mind. At the end of an hour he found himself thinking of nothing but monkeys. With each succeeding day he meditated faithfully, but, to his great annoyance, he found that he was only frantically trying not to think of millions of monkeys which were jumping into his mind.

After a month’s concentration upon the forbidden monkeys, the business man, beside himself with rage and helpless fury, raced back to the Master and exclaimed loudly: “Master, take back your lesson on levitation. I don’t want to learn to walk on the water, You have taught me to meditate upon monkeys, instead of how to levitate. You have developed and increased the monkey consciousness in me.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed the Saint merrily, and advised him, in a voice like the soothing dew: “Son, I tried to show you how untrained and slavish your mental state of concentration is. Unless you learn to make your mind obey you, you cannot achieve any success, not to speak of the difficult art of attaining the power of levitation. First learn to attain mental control, then use that power to achieve small things, and when you are able to do that, try that on bigger and bigger achievements, until your inner power becomes developed enough to levitate you, or to accomplish even greater spiritual miracles.”

**--From *Praecepta* Lesson 1 (1936), by Yogananda**

## Chapter Six: Preparation

### Relaxation

#### §

The best way to relax the body is first to take a few slow, deep breaths, to free the blood stream of any excessive build-up of carbon. Try this exercise:

Inhale, counting mentally to 12

Hold the breath, counting 12

Exhale, counting 12.

Repeat this process 6-12 times

Now, inhale deeply; tense the body all over till it vibrates.

Throw the breath out and relax simultaneously.

Repeat this tension and relaxation once or twice more.

It is very important, from now on, to hold the body still. You may not find it easy, at first. Accustomed as you may be to moving constantly, the moment you determine to sit still you may want to fidget. But the more you can hold your body motionless, the easier you will find it to continue doing so.

If you sit really still, you'll only find it difficult for the first five minutes or so. Presently, you'll begin to enjoy your increasing freedom from the usual human condition of being muscle-bound.

Dump the body, mentally —

and visualize yourself surrounded by space —

space all around you,

space slowly entering through the pores of your skin —

like a soft cloud — like a cloud of light —

into your whole body, bringing total relaxation

Check your body every now and then to make sure it is still relaxed. Any time you feel tense again, inhale, tense the body, throw the breath out and relax.

By consciously tensing and relaxing the entire body, you'll find that even those muscles which have grown tense without conscious awareness on your part become relaxed again.

Psychological relaxation is important, also. You can't meditate deeply — in fact, you can't really meditate at all — if you are tense psychologically. Among the main causes of psychological tension are feelings of hostility — of competitive anger and the desire to exert power in some way over other people.

Focus your attention, therefore, in the heart. Imagine light flowing outward from your heart.

For most people, the rays of energy that flow outward from their hearts are rays that create bondage — to things, to circumstances, to plans and projects for the future. Or else, they are rays sent out to do battle with other rays, to subdue or overwhelm them.

Imagine in your heart a kindly light.

Send that light outward in rays of blessing to everyone —

Mentally bless the world — all beings — everything, both animate and inanimate —

For all things, whether or not you know it, are made of life, of consciousness.

From your heart, then, bless not only all beings in your neighborhood, but all beings everywhere.

Bless the rocks — the deserts, oceans, and high mountains — the whole world.

You will feel blessed, and filled with inner peace, when you serve as a channel of peace and blessings to all.

--From the article, *Meditation for Starters*, Swami Kriyananda

## §

### **From Awake to the Superconsciousness, Chapter Six, Kriyananda**

1) Sit on a straight-backed, armless chair (you may prefer one with a padded seat), at a height convenient for placing your feet flat on the floor.

2) On the chair, extending onto the floor in front of it and up over the back of the chair, place a woolen blanket. The purpose of the blanket is to insulate your body from certain downward-pulling currents in the earth that are apart from the pull of gravity. If you'd like even better insulation, cover the blanket with a silk cloth.

3) Sit away from the back of the chair. Keep your spine straight, your elbows and shoulders back (drawing the shoulder blades slightly together), and your chin drawn slightly in, parallel to the floor.

4) Place your hands palms upward on the thighs at the junction of the abdomen.

To relax the body, bear in mind that it may hold many knots of tension of which you are not consciously aware. The way to release those lingering tensions is to increase the tension first, deliberately:

- Inhale. Tense the entire body until it gently vibrates. Then throw the breath out forcibly and relax. Practice this exercise two or three times. Then concentrate deeply on the sense of peace and freedom that permeates your body.
- Next, for even deeper relaxation, inhale slowly counting mentally to 12; hold the breath counting to 12. Exhale again, counting to 12. Practice this exercise six to twelve times.

This practice can also help us to achieve release from mental and emotional pain. The stress that accompanies such pain usually produces physical tension. By relaxing the body, as outlined above, then extending the thought of physical relaxation to the release of tension in the

mind and in the emotions, we can achieve mental and emotional tranquility with the release of tension in the body.

Whenever you feel anxious or fearful about anything, or distressed over the way someone has treated you, or upset for any reason, inhale and tense the body. Bring your emotions to a focus in the body with that act of tension. Hold the tension briefly, vibrating your emotions along with the body. Throw the breath out, and, keeping the breath exhaled as long as you can do so comfortably, enjoy the feeling of inner peace. Remain for a time without thought.

When the breath returns, or when thoughts once again bestir themselves in your mind, fill your brain with some happy memory that will provide an antidote to your emotions. Concentrate for several minutes on the happiness of that memory.

Throughout this process, look upward, and mentally offer yourself, like a kite, into the winds of inner freedom. Let them sweep you into the skies of superconsciousness.

### **Relaxation Exercise**

After practicing the relaxation exercise as described above (tensing and relaxing the body, then taking several deep, slow breaths to a rhythmic count) visualize yourself surrounded by infinite space. Vast emptiness stretches before you — below you — behind —above.

After some time, concentrate on your body. Release into vast space, like thin wisps of vapor, any lingering tension in the muscles.

Release your awareness of the body. It, too, is becoming part of the vast emptiness all around you.

Now, bring that feeling of space upwards in the body — from the feet to the calves, the thighs, the hips and buttocks, the abdomen, the hands, forearms, and upper arms, the back, the chest, the neck and throat, the tongue and lips, the facial muscles, the eyes, the brain, the very top of your head.

This body is no longer yours. You are the essence of which it is but an expression —the subtle consciousness of absolute peace that permeates all things, but that is untouched and unaffected by anything.

## §

### **Method for inducing relaxation**

First, close eyes, expel breath, switch off attention and energy from the senses. Feel and mentally watch the heart and circulation and calm it down by the command of will as you stop a watch by gently touching its spring. With calmness you can arrest the activities of the entire physical machinery. Then switch on the current in the spine and brain, disconnecting your current from the five sense telephones. Convert your brain into a divine radio, catching the Cosmic Sound and the Song of God. Or you may switch off entirely the body and brain bulbs and merge with the Omnipresent Cosmic Dynamo. You can return at will, snatching yourself from the Infinite Omnipresence and switching on life in your body-bulb, thus caging your omnipresence there. Keep switching on and switching off the life current in the body until you know you are a part of the One Light which lights all the heavenly lamps of atoms, stars and all living creatures.

Those who know how to leave the body consciously can return to it consciously. People who die by accidents or are otherwise forced out of the body cannot re-enter it at will, but bodies under suspended animation can be reawakened by physical and mental methods.

Do not leave the body by imagination; learn to do it actually by releasing consciousness (1) from the muscles, and (2) from the senses by withdrawing the life force from the five sense-telephones. After sensory relaxation is achieved the heart calms down, and the consciousness and energy lodge themselves in the spine.

Involuntary relaxation consists in the ability to calm the heart at will and raise consciousness upward through the seven centers and out of the medulla into Infinite Spirit.

**--From *Yogoda Super-Advanced Course*, Lesson 10 (1930), by Parahansa Yogananda**



## Posture

### What is the best posture for meditation?

You might consider the best posture a prone position, flat on your back!

The trouble with this position is that it makes it easy to slip passively into subconsciousness, instead of soaring in superconsciousness.

In Western religious practice, kneeling is traditional for prayer and worship. Kneeling helps to induce a spirit of humility — of self-surrender.

The problem with kneeling in meditation is that it makes it difficult to keep your body relaxed.

In meditation, you want to rise above body-consciousness, and you can't do that if you're tense.

In meditation, moreover, it's a self-defeating attitude to try to impress anyone with your humility. To try to impress God, moreover, who knows every ripple of feeling in your heart, with a mere posture of humility would be foolish.

If you can forget yourself, that will be humility enough. In fact, the best definition of humility is complete self-forgetfulness.

Another good definition is complete self-honesty. Humility isn't self-abasement. It's forgetting one's petty self in the contemplation of a greater truth.

Meditation can be a religious act, but it needn't be. The real point of meditation is to help you discover your own full potential.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church they pray and worship standing up. This practice, too, makes it difficult to relax, and thus to rise above body-consciousness.

The best meditation posture is the one recommended in the East: Meditate sitting down.

Whether you sit on the floor in traditional cross-legged or lotus position, or whether you sit on a chair, is not particularly important. There are advantages to sitting in the traditional lotus pose, or in any of several positions like it. The disadvantage, for many Westerners, to sitting in this position is that they find relaxation not only difficult, but impossible, when their legs are bent in seemingly impossible pretzel shapes. The question of rising above body-consciousness becomes moot. Instead of asking themselves, "When will my soul soar?" they wonder, desperately, "Will I ever walk again?"

In fact, there are only two rules that are essential. They are these:

The spine must be kept straight, and the body, relaxed.

A straight spine induces a positive mental attitude, and also enables the life-force in the body to flow freely toward the brain.

So — sit in a chair, if you prefer. The chair should be armless.

Your woolen blanket (as well as the silk cloth, if you have one to use) should descend over the back of the chair, over the seat, and down under your feet.

Place your hands palms upward on the thighs, at the junction of the abdomen.

Keep your elbows back, your shoulder blades drawn slightly together, your chest up — all the while emphasizing relaxation, don't be tense

Hold the chin slightly back, parallel to the ground.

Look upward, and close your eyes.

--From *Meditation for Starters*, article by Swami Kriyananda

## §

**(6:11)** *The yogi should have a firm, clean seat, neither too high nor too low. He should cover his seat first with kusha grass, then (cover that with) a deer or tiger skin, and then (place upon that) a (wool and/or silk) cloth.*

A foundation mat of interwoven kusha grass is a way provided by Nature for protecting the meditating yogi from dampness in the earth. There is no other reason, nor any special, mystic meaning for using kusha grass. Its use is only its dampness-dispelling properties. Since this grass, though it grows abundantly in India, is not available everywhere, its non-availability need be no excuse (as a few bigots have actually insisted!) for not practicing yoga in other countries!

To begin with, even sitting on a firm, flat surface in *Padmasana*, *Siddhasana*, or some other yoga *asana*, while helpful for young yogis in keeping their bodies steady and for calming their nerves, is not essential for older devotees. Many Westerners, especially, find that sitting cross-legged forces them to concentrate more on their aching knees than on the spine and in the spiritual eye! For such persons, and for those everywhere who are so completely accustomed to sitting on chairs that any other position would constitute an unnecessary penance, Paramhansa Yogananda recommended that one simply sit on a straight-backed, armless chair, with the back upright (not touching the back of the chair), and the hands placed palms upward on the legs at the junction of the abdomen. The chin should be parallel to the ground, and the shoulder blades drawn slightly together (to hold the spine straight by “corrugating” the back). The chest should be held high, not sunken: there should be no forward stoop. The stomach and abdomen should be relaxed, not held in, and should therefore protrude slightly forward.

This position of the spine and chest is what is meant in the Gita by “Arjuna’s bow,” which (as we saw) Arjuna allowed to slip. What that means is that he slumped forward. The bow didn’t literally “slip from his grasp,” as Chapter 1 of the Gita symbolically suggests. The position indeed suggests a bow, with the front of the body resembling the arch of the bow, and the spine resembling the string.

More is given on the meditative position in the next stanzas. In this stanza Krishna says to cover the mat of kusha grass with the skin of a deer or a tiger. Traditionally, these animals should have died a natural death, though if one wants such a skin he must more or less take what he can get these days. (My own Guru’s deer skin clearly displayed a bullet hole.) Animal skins are not easily come by, and serve a purpose for which other coverings—woolen blankets, or silk cloths—can be substituted. Deer skins are said to be helpful in achieving peace of mind. Tiger skins are said to generate will power, and are generally recommended only for those who practice sexual self-control, in the thought that the energy generated will conflict with that of people who don’t practice abstinence, and will therefore cause tension between the upward-pulling energy in the spine and its downward-moving tendencies.

All this is, however, quite arcane. The physical effect of these skins is negligible compared with their more mundane purpose: to insulate subtle energies in the body from other, downward-pulling earth energies.

Perfectly adequate for general purposes, and for most people (so Paramhansa Yogananda said), are the energy-insulating properties of wool and/or silk. If you sit on the floor, place a woolen blanket beneath you. If you sit on a chair, place the woolen blanket in such a way that it comes under the feet, over the seat, and over the back of the chair. You may, if you like, cover the wool with a silk cloth.

It is important that your seat be firm (not wobbly), and clean. Preferably, no one but you should ever sit there. Some of the benefits of solitude can be achieved by setting aside a room in your home for nothing but meditation. By allowing no other activity to take place in that room, you will gradually build up vibrations there that will tangibly help you to achieve inner silence. You will, indeed, feel those vibrations the moment you enter the room.

If you cannot set aside a separate room for meditation, it will be possible to create some of the same effect by screening off a portion of some other room—perhaps your bedroom.

One reason for having one's seat (suitably insulated) on the ground when you meditate is to protect your body, in case you should slip suddenly into a deep meditative state, in which case your body might fall over and injure itself. The best position for this purpose, and one which presses on certain nerves that, Yogananda used to say, will help to steady the body, is *Padmasana* (the lotus pose).

A firm seat need not mean a hard one! Hardness will not only soon become uncomfortable, but will cause the legs to go numb. Ease and relaxation are primary considerations.

—From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

## Position of the eyes

You must get used to the practicing of this Technique with your eyes gently concentrated upon the point between the eyebrows. Do not strain the eyes. However, if you are not used to holding the eyes in this position, practice some of the time with your eyes half open, but most of the time with eyes closed. You can practice with eyes closed, and in leisure hours lie down on your back, and watch the breath, mentally chanting “HONG-SAU”. The more you practice in your leisure hours, the greater will be the results. Work overtime and you will gain still better results.

--From *Præcepta* Lesson 22 (1936)

### §

A major vehicle for the brain's energy is the eyes. Look into the eyes of anyone possessing a strong, vibrant personality (many people's eyes, alas, are spiritually dead), and feel the intensity of this energy-flow. Observe how people's eyes can seem almost to blaze with anger, to freeze in contempt, to sparkle with laughter, to melt with kindness and love. It is only when an abundance of energy flows through the eyes that they manifest these mental states so clearly, but this flow of energy does more than manifest them. It affirms them, and thereby helps to develop them.

Take care, then, that your eyes express only spiritual qualities, for it is literally true that, as you see the world, so you yourself will tend to become. The eyes, in revealing one's mental states, suggest also the general portion of the brain in which the consciousness at those times is centered. Particularly, when the mind slips toward subconsciousness and the energy becomes centered in the lower brain, the eyes tend to look downward, when one is involved in the world, or otherwise active on the conscious level, the energy becomes centered more in the mid-brain, and the eyes tend more naturally to look straight ahead, and when one enters a state of superconsciousness, the eyes are drawn automatically to gaze upward.

These directions may be observed to some extent even in normal wakefulness. When a person withdraws mentally from reality, whether in discouragement or in fatigue, he tends to look down. If his withdrawal is for the purpose of pondering something, he may look down and slightly off to the side, as if in partial recognition of the objective world around him. If he desires to relate to the world completely, he will look it “straight in the eye”. If he is inspired by something inward, he will tend to look up, if by something outward he may look diagonally upward, as if divided between outward consciousness and superconsciousness.

Much more might be written about the involuntary movements of the eyes. Restless and constantly blinking eyes, for example, indicate a restless mind, quiet, unblinking eyes, a calm mind; staring eyes, a blank (or, sometimes, a veiled) mind. Eyes that look as if pressed inward from the sides suggest mental worry; eyes relaxed at the sides, inner peace, eyes drawn slightly outward at the sides, devotion and a sense of oneness with the Beloved. Shifty eyes indicate untruthfulness—an unwillingness to face reality squarely. Sagging lower lids indicate a downward pull on the mind, whether from ill health, fatigue, dissipation, or despair. Firm and slightly raised lower lids indicate an abundance of vitality, and a radiant inner sense of well being. A tendency to look calmly off to the side indicates a more-than-usually intelligent person.

Again, the right eye represents a person's rational nature, and left eye, his emotional and “feeling” nature. When reason is uppermost in his consciousness, he tends to think and to

express his awareness more through the right eye. When feeling is uppermost, he thinks and expresses himself more through the left eye.

I write these things not so that you may sit judgmentally over your fellow men, but that you may live more consciously through your own eyes. Remember, they are the windows of your soul. Used rightly, they can be made instruments of great blessing and inspiration to others. Just as important, they can help you to affirm and deepen those states of consciousness which you want to develop.

When you sit for meditation, look up toward the point between the eyebrows. I don't mean to cross your eyes, but only to direct their gaze upwards, focusing them at a point no closer than your thumb, when held up at arm's length from your body. You might think of your eyes as being situated only in the upper part of their sockets.

Superconsciousness is a fine line of awareness that divides consciousness from subconsciousness. The Spirit, similarly, rests forever at a point midway between all dualities. Closed eyes denote subconsciousness, open eyes, wakefulness. Thus, half-closed and half-open eyes, with the lower lids relaxed and slightly raised, and the upper lids relaxed and slightly lowered, denote the state of superconsciousness.

If you can meditate in this position without becoming distracted by outward visual images, you will find it most helpful to do so. Your eyelids may quiver at first, but you will find them becoming still as your mind grows calm.

Otherwise, practice this half-open and half-closed position for a time, and then close the eyes, keeping them focused upward. Even with the eyes closed, however, feel that their lids have simply relaxed so completely that they happen to meet.

As you meditate, focus every perception at the point between the eyebrows. (Actually, of course, the frontal point in the brain that you should stimulate by concentration is *behind the* bone.)

Every sound that you hear, think of it as emanating from the Christ center, or refer it mentally to that center. Treat every other sensation, every thought in the same way. Direct all the feelings of your heart upward in aspiration to the point between the eyebrows.

Gradually, as you come to feel God's blissful presence within you, you will recognize this as the doorway through which the soul communes with him.

--From *The art and science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 5:7

## §

Look up, now, toward a point midway between the eyebrows. This point is known in ancient tradition as the Spiritual Eye.

Don't cross your eyes so as literally to look at that point, but gaze at a point a little beyond. Try holding your thumb out at arm reach. Focus on it there, but don't get too specific.

The main thing is that you focus your attention at the point between the eyebrows.

Remember those signs you used to see before rural railroad crossings? "Stop, look, and listen!" That's what you should do now:

Stop worrying and planning, the world will still be there when you come out of meditation. Leave it, for this short period of time, to its own devices.

Don't only look, but gaze deeply into — behind — the darkness of closed eyes at the point between the eyebrows.

Listen — not with your ears, merely, but with your whole being. Seek to resonate with the vibrations of Infinity.

The point between the eyebrows is the seat of concentration in the body.

Have you ever noticed how, whenever you concentrate deeply, you tend to knit your eyebrows?

The point between the eyebrows is also the seat of superconsciousness, and of ecstasy.

Have you ever noticed how, when you feel happy, you tend to look upward — even to raise your eyebrows? Everything about your body reflects the inner flow of energy. If you feel depressed, your body's energy flows downward.

As a result, you tend to lower your head, and to look down. You may turn the corners of your mouth downward. Your shoulders sag. Your spine slumps. Even while standing, your weight rests heavily on your heels, even your gait seems heavy.

But whenever you feel elated, your life-force flows upward — You raise your head, and look upward. Your mouth curves upward in a smile. You sit up straight, throwing your shoulders back. When upright, you tend more to stand on the balls of your feet, and to walk with a light step.

Look upward. Feel the energy in your body soaring upward, as if freed of its earthly fetters for this brief time.

—From the article by Swami Kriyananda, "*Meditation for Starters*"

## §

Throughout the practice of this technique, look upward so as gradually to raise your consciousness. Do not, however, concentrate at the Christ center until it becomes natural for you to feel the flow of the breath at that point.

—From *The art and science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

## ***Breathing Exercises***

When you sit to meditate, begin by inhaling, counting mentally to 12; hold the breath, counting to 12; exhale, counting to 12. Gradually, *if you can do so comfortably*, increase this count to 20-20-20, but keep the count equal for all three phases of breathing. Repeat this breathing exercise six to twelve times.

Then inhale, tense the whole body; throw the breath out and relax. Repeat two or three times. Your body should now be completely relaxed, and your mind ready for meditation.

-- From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 3:7

### §

- So as to decarbonize the blood stream, and thereby to calm the body, inhale, tensing the whole body, throw the breath out and relax. Repeat two or three times
- Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply several times, making the period of inhalation, holding, and exhalation the same (Suggested counts 20-20-20, or 12-12-12.) Don't strain. Repeat six or twelve times.
- Mentally check the body to make sure it is relaxed. Periodically, check the body again during your practice of the technique.
- Begin your actual practice of the technique by first exhaling, slowly and deliberately.

-- From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

### §

I suggested earlier that you begin your meditation by tensing and relaxing the body two or three times. Let me now suggest that you bring greater will power and deeper awareness to this practice.

The best way to relax the body in meditation is consciously to withdraw the energy from it. *Pranayama* techniques in yoga books usually focus on breathing exercises. *Prana* is also, in fact, the Sanskrit word for "breath"; there exists a close connection between the breath and the energy, or life-force. Those breathing exercises are particularly useful in helping to raise the energy in the spine.

For now, try again the exercise I recommended earlier: Inhale, gradually tensing the whole body until it vibrates. Be fully aware of the energy behind that tension and vibration. Then exhale forcibly and relax, releasing the energy from the muscles. With relaxation, feel the energy withdrawing from the body. Repeat this exercise two or three times. Then take several deep, slow breaths, as I've suggested before: Inhale counting to 12, hold counting to 12, exhale counting to 12. Then, with deep relaxation, draw the energy up the spine by concentration at the point between the eyebrows.

-- From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter 10

### §

Practice the following exercise three times a day: Exhale slowly, counting from 1 to 6. Now, while the lungs are empty, mentally count from 1 to 6. Inhale slowly, counting from 1 to 6. Then hold the breath, counting from 1 to 6. Repeat eleven times.

--*Yogoda Super-Advanced Course*, Lesson 5, Swami Yogananda, 1930

## Opening the Heart

As a focus for your devotion, you may find it helpful to set up an altar in your place of meditation. Include pictures on the altar, if you like, of saints, or of images of God, or of infinite light and space. (You may even find photographs of stars and galaxies helpful, as reminders of the vastness of space.)

A helpful practice also, if it pleases you, is the burning of incense as a devotional offering. The sense of smell is closely related to the memory faculty. You may recall, for example, catching in some fleeting scent a reminder of some childhood episode that awakened a host of associated memories. Incense, when used regularly in meditation, will help to create meditative associations in your mind, and bring you more quickly, therefore, to inner calmness.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Seventeen

### §

Think of your heart now as a lily (In Eastern tradition the suggestion would be to think of it as a lotus. )

See the petals spread out in all directions — just as they lie on the surface of a pond. Think of those heart-petals as rays of light and energy: energy of desire, of attachments; of likes and dislikes.

Now, mentally turn these heart-petals, these rays of energy, upward — so that they no longer reach outward in desire or aversion to the world, but upward in love and aspiration to Infinity: — to the brain, and outward through the doorway of the Spiritual Eye. Offer yourself in stillness to this practice.

--From the article, “Meditation for Starters,” Swami Kriyananda

### §

When Paramhansa Yogananda published his book *Cosmic Chants*, he wrote in the “Prelude” to it that each of the chants contained in the book had been “spiritualized.” That is, he had sung it over and over until, in the singing, he had received a divine response. Here is a fascinating aspect of music as a vehicle for states of consciousness: Not only do certain kinds of music help to transmit the mental states of their composers; even *after* they have been composed they can be further impregnated with power. This esoteric truth becomes easily understood if we remember that many people can sense in the vibrations of a room or of a building the consciousness—whether happy, or sad, or nervous, or spiritually inclined—of the people who have lived there, and not only the consciousness of the architect. A building is not, essentially, more substantial than a song. All things exist as vibrations. All, ultimately, is consciousness. Matter is not really solid at all. The very rocks are only manifestations of subtler realities. Songs, too, can acquire vibrations according to the uses to which they are put. To sing the spiritualized chants of a master, particularly with a consciousness of attunement with him, can be a very powerful means of attracting his grace.



Attunement is, of course, the most vital factor in fitting oneself to receive any vibration. Even a radio can pick up a station only when it is tuned to its wavelength. Since our attunement is clearest with states of consciousness that we have perceived directly ourselves, Yoganandaji wrote that the greatest benefit comes from spiritualizing a chant oneself, by singing it repeatedly, more and more deeply, day after day until it lifts one into superconsciousness. Thereafter, he said, whenever one sings the same chant it will induce that state of consciousness. This is one reason why it is good to stick loyally to one spiritual path, and to one set of spiritual techniques, instead of trying many paths in the name of “broad-mindedness.” For once, by long practice, a specific practice has been “spiritualized” through some form of divine contact, it will quickly induce a divine state of awareness every time it is undertaken again. In the same way, although a variety of chants may be more interesting, and in that sense more inspiring, than sticking to one chant for a long period of time, the way really to spiritualize a chant is to sing only that one for days, weeks, or months together, taking it deeper and deeper into oneself as you have been taught to do with affirmations, until through it one achieves some definite divine contact.

-- From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 8:7

## §

### **From Awakening to Superconsciousness**

The spiritual purpose of chanting is not to develop powers, but to give one control over the mind, that he may direct it one-pointedly toward God. If chants and *mantras* can bestow power over objective nature, how much greater their effectiveness when their aim is to benefit the chanter himself. The highest purpose of chanting is to help awaken us to our own spiritual potential: to bring us closer to Self-realization.

Spiritual chanting is heartfelt prayer, deepened by the dimension of music and by the building power of repetition. Repetition is not for the purpose of getting the Lord’s attention: It is to deepen the intensity of one’s own prayer. To repeat a chant mechanically, in a singsong manner, has virtually no spiritual value.

Spiritual chanting is different from singing songs or hymns. I’ve written well over a hundred songs myself—for instruction, inspiration, and reflection. Such music serves a different purpose, however. Though it may inspire, it doesn’t lift the mind into a meditative state.

### **How to Chant**

The art of chanting correctly is, first, to practice it with full awareness of its *inner* purpose. That purpose is not to awaken sentiments or to stir up the emotions. It is to focus the heart’s feelings and raise them toward superconsciousness.

The Maharani of Cooch Behar told me she’d once asked her family priest why he intoned his chants so loudly. “Well, you see, your Highness,” he explained, “God is far away. If I don’t shout, how will He hear me?” God isn’t far away, of course. It is we who distance ourselves from Him by the “noise” in our own minds, a noise people often carry with them into their prayers and meditations.

Loud chanting does have its place. It is good at the start of meditation—not for the reason that priest gave, but to command attention from our own minds. For loud chanting creates a magnetic flow. Like a mighty river, it can dissolve the eddies of thought and feeling that

meander idly along the banks of the mind. Like a magnetic military leader, it commands attention from your thought-soldiers and fires them with zeal.

Once you've got their attention, chant more softly, more inwardly. Direct your energy upward, now, from the heart to the Spiritual Eye.

Once your conscious mind is wholly engaged in chanting, bring it down into the subconscious by whispering. While chanting in the subconscious, offer the chant there, too, up to superconsciousness at the point between the eyebrows, until you feel your entire being vibrating with the words, the melody, and the rhythm.

At last, chant only mentally, at the point between the eyebrows. Let your absorption lift you into superconsciousness. Once it does so, and once you receive a divine response, you will have spiritualized the chant. From then on, any time you sing the chant it will quickly carry you again to superconsciousness as if on a magic carpet.

To spiritualize a chant, keep it rotating in the mind—for days at a time, if necessary: not only in meditation, but as you go about your daily activities. This practice is also called *japa*. Christian mystics, too, speak of the continuous “prayer of the heart,” and of “practicing the presence of God.” All this is *japa*.

The higher aspect of chanting involves listening to the mighty sound of *AUM*, and becoming absorbed in it. You'll hear this sound first in the right ear. Gradually let it permeate the brain and the entire body, until every cell vibrates with that sound. After that, try to hear *AUM* in everything you do, in everything you perceive. This is true *japa*, when the mind no longer repeats words, merely, but is intoxicated with the bliss of the “music of the spheres.”

The Cosmic Sound is described variously in the world's scriptures. The Jews and Christians call it the *Amen*. Muslims call it the *Amin*. To the Zoroastrians it is *Ahunavar*. To Hindus and Buddhists it is *AUM*. In the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, the Cosmic Vibration is called the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God.”

The word *AUM* is an attempt to capture in human speech the sound of the Cosmic Vibration. By attuning one's consciousness to that sound (by Christians called also the Holy Ghost and the Comforter), one enters the stream of vibration that proceeded out of the Spirit, and that merges back into the Spirit at creation's end and at the end of the individual soul's cycle of outward wandering. By merging in *AUM*, liberation is attained.

Once the mind is focused by chanting, and the inner energy is awakened, take your chanting inward. Don't only “make a glad noise unto the Lord,” as the Bible puts it: *Listen* for His answer. Meditation *is* listening, as I've said. Feel yourself chanting in attunement, above all, with the Cosmic Sound. Harmonize yourself inwardly with that sound...

### **What Words to Use?**

There is not a strong tradition of chanting in the West. Most of the chanting I've heard has been Gregorian chant, which is little heard outside of monasteries, or chants transported from India. Buddhist chanting, like Gregorian chant, is a recitation of scripture and is not, therefore, an appeal of the heart to God. The Indian form of chanting usually involves repeating various names of God. Since these names are foreign to most Westerners, and don't possess the deep emotional associations they have for most Indians, they are less deeply meaningful, in themselves, than they are for people who grew up in India, or else are not always meaningful in the same way.

I suspect that for most Westerners the words have more a *mantric* influence than a sentimental appeal. The sounds uplift, but the words are less easily associated in the Western mind than in the Indian with mental images of Rama with his bow, Sita in her selfless service to Rama, Krishna with his flute, Ganesha with his elephant's head, and so on. The extreme antiquity of Hindu culture has guaranteed an abundance of symbols, most of which have lost their inner meanings even for Hindus. The lack of such visual associations with the names may, in one way, be an advantage for Westerners, since it forces them to focus more on the sounds of the names, as they allow those vibrations, which are powerful, to uplift them.

Other aspects of the Indian chants—the melodies and the rhythms—are often soul-stirring, and need no further explanation. India has developed a tradition of chanting as an expression of deep, intimate love for God. There is power in such chanting, even if you don't really relate to the words you're singing.

Paramhansa Yogananda, as a great yogi whose mission was to disseminate the yoga teachings in the West, introduced a new kind of chanting here. It is based on the repetition of meaningful phrases, rather than of the divine names. Some of the chants he wrote he translated from Bengali or Hindi songs. Others, he wrote himself. This kind of chanting is more like a repetitive prayer set to music, and is better suited for meditators, who understand the importance of combining the soul's appeal for divine grace with self-effort. For by singing God's names only, what remains in the mind is the thought "God will do it all for me." What Yogananda's method of chanting accomplishes is to awaken in the mind the thought "In these ways I will cooperate with His grace."

One of his chants goes:

"I am the bubble, make me the sea.

So do Thou, my Lord! Thou and I, never apart,

Wave of the sea dissolve in the sea,

I am the bubble, make me the sea."

Very simple, you see? And very easily memorized. When such a chant is sung repeatedly, the mind is easily lifted up into meditation.

Some of Paramhansa Yogananda's chants go further in the direction of personal affirmation, and are less similar to the traditional concept of prayer. An example of such a chant begins with these words:

"Why, O mind, wanderest thou?

Go in thine inner home!"

These chants, too, are powerful, spiritualized as they were by a great master. They are in many ways better suited for people who follow the path of meditation. I myself have sung them for as long as I've been meditating—nearly fifty years. The inspiration I derive from them is precious to me beyond words.

-- Chapter 13

## General Advice

### Best Time to Concentrate

The four times of change during the day correspond to the four seasons. Noon is summer; 6 P.M. is the rainy season, or fall; midnight is the winter; early morning is the spring. There are four changes which invade the body during these four magnetic seasons of the day. The purpose of this Technique is to realize the changeless in the four changing periods of the body, by vitalizing and magnetizing it with Life Currents and Cosmic Consciousness. These Currents arrest change and suspend the decay in the cells. Therefore, it is best to practice the changelessness-producing Technique four times a day for sure scientific results. Meditate between 5 and 6 A.M.; 11 and 12 A.M., 5 and 6 P.M.; 10 and 12 P.M.; or 11 and 12 P.M.

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 21

### §

It's important to prepare yourself properly for meditation.

If, for example, you try meditating after a hearty meal, your body's energy will be working hard to digest your food.

Just try talking philosophy, or pondering any deep subject, after eating a hearty meal. You'll miss many of the fine points of the discussion —that, or you'll get indigestion as you forcibly redirect your energy to the brain!

Before meditating, eat lightly. Better still, don't eat at all, or wait some time after eating.

The best times to meditate are:

- on awakening in the morning,
- before meals,
- late at night, just before going to bed.

Those considerations aside, there are good times to meditate in an impersonal sense, also — when subtle changes take place in the earth with the shifting positions of the sun:

at (roughly) six a.m. — twelve noon — six p.m. — and at midnight.

If none of these times suits your personal schedule, then choose other times that are suitable. But make it a point, if possible, to meditate at the same times every day. In that way, you'll develop a habit pattern. It will become easier, then, to put aside distracting thoughts as you begin your meditation.

The earth-energies I've mentioned are subtle, but very real.

Many high civilizations of the past have emphasized the importance of attunement with them. Many primitive cultures of our own day emphasize this importance, too — but is it only our own arrogance, born of our addiction to technology, that labels them primitive?

Others of the earth energies that would be good for you to take into consideration are certain subtle forces — I'm not referring to gravity — that draw on the life-force in the body, pulling it downward.

In meditation, you see, you want the life-force in your body to flow upward, toward the brain I'll go more deeply into this aspect of meditation later. Suffice it for now to say that you can help to insulate yourself against those downward-pulling energies, while you meditate

The insulation is not some "cutting-edge" electronic gadget, but a simple woolen blanket. A deer skin is even better. As a preparation for meditation, it will help you to sit on one. You may not consciously experience its benefits, but take it on faith from others whose consciousness, after years of meditation, has grown highly refined in these matters. Their ability to make this observation is as matter-of-fact as yours would be in telling a blind person that the sunlight makes it possible to tell objects apart.

A further beneficial insulation would be a silk cloth, placed over the blanket.

The *direction in which you face* while meditating will also affect your concentration.

— Mind you, neither direction nor insulation is *essential*: These are only aids. —

If convenient, then, sit facing east. If east is inconvenient, owing to the lay-out of your home, face north.

According to many ancient traditions, enlightenment comes from the east — I don't mean from the Orient, but from a direction east of wherever we happen to be.

According to some of those traditions, liberation, similarly, comes from the north. In this case, of course, our concern is liberation from bondage to the tensions resulting from too much attention to the ego and its needs.

Let's weigh those claims in the light of what we know of history, and of present times. As far as I've been able to observe, the flow of civilization does seem to be westward. Think about it.

A greater spirit of freedom, also, seems generally to reside in the northern part of every country — whereas the spirit of conservatism, or faithfulness to tradition, is more generally found in the south.

Freedom — and orthodoxy — both manifest themselves in many different ways.

The spirit of freedom is expressed in ways as diverse as a spirit of rebellion, on the one hand, and a yearning for spiritual freedom on the other.

The spirit of orthodoxy is expressed in ways as diverse as backwardness, or dogmatism and bigotry, on the one hand, and steadfastness to those human values which have been tested, and found true.

In meditation, you want both enlightenment (the energy that comes from the east) and soul-freedom (the "northern" kind of energy). Of the two, however, enlightenment must come first. Therefore, *east* is the best direction to face in meditation.

If you can set one special place aside for meditation, all the better. It may be simply a screened-off portion of your bedroom. Best, to be sure, would be a room entirely dedicated to meditative practices.

The purpose in keeping a space devoted strictly to meditation is to build up in that space an "atmosphere," or vibration, of calmness and concentration.

After several months — it may happen much sooner — you will be amazed at how calm your meditation space feels, from the moment you enter it.

—From *Meditation for Starters*, article by Swami Kriyananda

## §

Generally speaking, it is best to meditate in quiet places, and at quiet times of the day. It is also good occasionally, however, to discipline the mind. Don't pamper it. You may even like to meditate, sometimes, in noisy places, as a mental discipline. Don't sit where people will see you and wonder what you're doing. Or, if the place is public, don't sit in such a way as to call attention to yourself. In this case, you might practice looking ahead of you with open eyes.

One way of becoming virtually invisible in public is to put out the thought "I'm not here." Send no mental tendrils out to your environment. Rather, put out a vibration of non-being—somewhat along the principle of modern noise-cancellation technology, where sound waves are nullified by projecting sounds of an opposite wave pattern. Obliterate "people-consciousness" from your mind. You'll be surprised to how little an extent people notice you. Quite possibly they won't notice you at all: That is, they may see you, but they won't observe you.

Wait two or three hours, if possible, after a heavy meal before beginning meditation. If this delay is impossible, however, or inconvenient, don't worry about it. Obstacles, if unavoidable, should be welcomed: They help to strengthen the will power.

Be more conscious of living in a world composed of energy and vibrations. Remind yourself always that you are not the body: You are consciousness working, through energy, to animate the body.

Above all in meditation, be happy! If you want to experience peace, meditate peacefully. If you want to know love, offer love first, yourself. It isn't that superconscious states can be created by right attitudes. They don't appear by command performance of the conscious mind, but are the fruits, rather, of right meditation. However, you can hold yourself in readiness for those experiences by placing yourself on their "wavelength," instead of clinging with "scientific objectivity" to opposite states of consciousness.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Seventeen

## §

**(6:24)** *Relinquishing without exception every self-willed longing; restraining mentally all sensory involvement in the world;—*

**(6:25)** *patiently calming the intuitive intelligence, and absorbed in the Self, the yogi, relinquishing all other thoughts, gradually attains perfect peace.*

When one first sits to meditate, a million distractions come to dissuade him from the effort. If he meditates with half-open eyes (which is the ideal position), he may be distracted by circumambient lights or movements. In this case, it is permissible to close the eyes.

Sounds, of all sensations, are the most likely to invade one's inner "battlefield" of Kurukshetra. In that case, he may use ear plugs, or a "T"-shaped board on which to rest his elbows, lightly pressing the thumbs on the tragus of each ear. It is good in any case to find a silent place for meditation. If such is not available, then choose some place containing such a

confusion of sounds that no particular one stands out distractingly; or else a place where one continuous sound drowns out all others: a waterfall, for instance, or a flowing stream.

Smells can be used to advantage by creating one scent (an obvious suggestion is incense) that not only diminishes other odors but becomes gradually associated in the mind with devotional exercises and uplifted feelings.

Tastes are relatively easy to dismiss, but if any taste lingers in the mouth from food recently eaten it may help to sip a little pure water before sitting to meditate.

Touch, finally, can at least be made less distracting by wearing loose, comfortable clothing, sufficiently warm and sufficiently light for the occasion, so that the body neither shivers nor perspires unduly.

The patience counseled in the last stanza is necessary for calming the mind. Paramhansa Yogananda likened it to a glass of water into which dirt particles have been stirred. One cannot command the water to become clear, but if one allows the glass to sit for awhile the impurities gradually settle to the bottom, or else rise to the surface of their own accord, to be skimmed off.

The average man, whose thoughts (especially during activity) become completely integrated with his consciousness, doesn't realize how restless his mind is. When he sits to meditate, he may be aghast to find how his consciousness seethes and roils with one idea after the other, one plan after the other, one sensation, one memory, one intention after the other. Discouragement may seize him in a vice-like grip. Let him continue calmly to discipline this fractious colt, the mind! It will gradually come under control, and will behave as he directs it to.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

## §

- Sit very still throughout your practice of the technique. Any physical movement (and also any unrelated movement of thought or emotion) will further excite the breath.
- Every now and then, mentally check the body (especially the nose) to be sure it is relaxed.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

## Chapter Seven: The Breath

### The Breath, Pulse of the Universe, Kriyananda

The ocean tides that heave with the movements of the moon; the ceaseless cycles of day and night; the seasons; the birth and death of nations and of whole civilizations; the creation of stars and planets, and their final dissolution; the burst of power that brought the universe into manifestation, and the ultimate dissolution of all things into the infinite silence: All reveal a universal rhythm of nature, the ebb and flow of duality without which the creative process could not go on; without which all things would cease immediately to exist, leaving only that Final Reality: *Satchidanandam*, the eternal, changeless bliss of Spirit.

Spirit, in order to create, divided its one consciousness in two through the law of vibration. By movement in opposite directions from a state of rest, it took on an outward *appearance*. At the still center of all things rests the unmoving Spirit. All things created must, to maintain their appearance of separate reality, remain in a state of movement. A bar of iron, though outwardly inert, is composed of electrons shooting about in a microcosm so small that only the most sensitive microscope can detect it. The universe *is* vibration. As that ancient Greek, Heraclitus, put it, "*Panta rhe*": "All is flux."

The manifested universe itself might be called the respiration of Spirit: the appearance and disappearance of all things, His inhalation and exhalation. Because we think of inhalation as a *taking in* of breath, we might associate God's "inhalation" with the drawing of all things back into Himself. On a human level, however, inhalation tends instead to externalize our consciousness. By taking in the air of the world around us we acknowledge its reality, and our identity with it. A newborn baby's first inhalation marks his entry onto the world's stage. In the universal rhythms of nature, too, those associated with inhalation are those which affirm outwardness: day, as opposed to night; spring, as opposed to autumn; the rise of nations, as opposed to their decline. Exhalation is associated with withdrawal; it is, in fact, the final movement associated with death. On the stage of daily life, as well, inhalation is associated with an affirmation of outward realities; exhalation, with denial of them. When we greet life joyously, we inhale deeply. We announce regret with a sigh. As a matter of interest, yogis say that, with inhalation, energy moves upward in the spine; with exhalation, downward. Upward movement in the spine accompanies any mood of life-affirmation; downward movement, any mood of depression, of life-rejection.

To affirm life outwardly is to emphasize Spirit *manifested*: ego, not the changeless soul within. In the constant flow and ebb of nature there is repeated endlessly, in infinite variations, the underlying truth: "I, the manifested self, am He, the Unmanifested." Every "inhalation" of nature, every renewed affirmation of objective reality, becomes offered up with "exhalation" into the Spirit, the final essence of all things. The human breath, too, flows in this continuous *mantra*. In Sanskrit the words of this *mantra*, universal to all creatures, are *Aham saha*, or, reduced to mantric words of power, *Hong-Sau*: "I am He." Yogis say that on a subtle level this is the very sound made by the breath: *Hong* with inhalation; *Sau* with exhalation. To repeat *Hong-Sau* mentally, particularly in conjunction with the breath, is to affirm again and again the truth that the little human ego is one with Brahma, the infinite Spirit: "*Hong Sau! I am He! I am He!*"

Repeat this *mantra*, while watching the breath. Don't try to control it. Let it flow naturally, of its own accord. Follow it all the way in with the *mental* chant, *Hong*; then all the way out with the *mental* chant, *Sau*.



Perfection in this technique means to pass from breathing to breathlessness. Only in breathlessness can God be fully realized. Elsewhere in these lessons I have pointed out that the breath responds instantly to different mental and emotional states. Even the *way* in which it flows in the nostrils indicates one's state of consciousness. The reverse also is true: As the breath flows, so flows the mind. Heavy breathing can make the mind restless. Calm breathing calms the mind. By concentration on the breath, too, the mind becomes calmer. This greater calmness is reflected in increasingly gentle breathing, which in turn induces still deeper concentration and calmness, a process that continues until mind and breathing both achieve perfect stillness.

There are several explanations for how it is possible to remain breathless for long periods of time without in any way damaging the body or the brain. (Indeed, the rejuvenating effects on the entire being of *superconscious* breathlessness are truly wonderful.) The fact is, once the yogi attains breathlessness in *samadhi*, the body is kept alive by the direct flow of energy from the medulla oblongata. It is possible in this state to remain breathless for days, months, even for years. The body appears lifeless, outwardly, but inwardly one is filled with the consciousness of infinite life.

In 1961 the director of the Zoological Institute in Darjeeling, India, told me of a scientific expedition he had once made in the Himalayas. He and his companions came upon a yogi seated on the ground, well above the snow line, in a state of *samadhi*. The yogi must have been sitting there motionless for at least six months, for his fingernails, very long by this time, had grown into the bark of a tree beside him in such a way that the slightest movement on his part would have snapped them off.

Periods of breathlessness may come to you, while practicing *Hong-Sau*, long before you enter superconsciousness. Don't be alarmed; they can't possibly hurt you, as long as you let the breath flow *naturally*, and don't try to hold it in or out of the lungs by force. When your body needs to breathe again, it will do so. By increasingly deeper calmness, however, you will find that you need less and less fresh air to sustain your body.

The breathing process, as well as the heartbeat, is regulated by the medulla oblongata. The positive pole of the medulla is the *ajna chakra*, or Christ center, located between the eyebrows. Stimulation of the medulla by deep concentration at that center can induce complete suspension of the breath and heartbeat by placing one in perfect harmony with the cosmic energy, and drawing this energy into the body in such abundance that impurities in the body are instantly neutralized.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7, by Swami Kriyananda

## §

### **Praecepta Lesson n. 21, 1938, Yogananda**

#### **Breath and Life Force**

This Lesson teaches the approach to God especially by harmonizing breath, Life Force, and mind. It also teaches that a balanced character is helpful in knowing God and in getting the best results from the practice of Spiritual exercises

The breath is not life, but it is necessary to life because the red blood needs it and the dark blood has to be purified. Breath is the cord which ties the Soul to the physical body One

who can live without breath, as Jesus did in the tomb, can separate his Soul from breath slavery and body slavery.

The function of Life Force is to directly supply energy through the medulla and to store it up in the brain, and from there directly to give power to the heart, lungs, and diaphragm, and to every cell in *the* body. It is direct electric power in the cells which keeps them energized, working and functioning in a living way. The Life Force is the electricity of each body cell-battery, and breath, food, sunshine, and so on, are the distilled water of the cell-battery. Food and oxygen stuffed in a dead body cannot bring back life. Yet, in the state of suspended animation, the body can be kept alive indefinitely by spinal and mental energy only, without food and oxygen. Hindu saints have been buried alive beneath the ground for several months and have lived without food or oxygen, and after disinterment have regained consciousness and lived again.

The Life Force is the direct power which changes oxygen into Life Energy, but as dry batteries do not require electricity and distilled water, so by higher training the body is known to have been sustained by Life Force only (as in suspended animation).

But, because the Life Force, instead of drawing from its source in Cosmic Energy flowing through the medulla, draws energy from food, in mortal life it becomes sustained by food. Food is not the cause of the Life Force in the body, but it is one of the conditions by which life exists. In the same way, light helps in the reading of a book, and without light, reading is impossible, but the reading matter is not caused by the light. Likewise, without food *it* is hard to exist, yet food is not the cause which creates life. Through habit, the body becomes used to depending upon food and breath. The more the body lives by Life Force, the less it needs to depend on food and oxygen.

### **Breath Calmness Is Necessary For Perfect Concentration**

The function of breath is to supply oxygen in the body, and to change the venous, or dark waste blood, into vitalizing red blood. It indirectly supplies energy to the body by the explosion of oxygen into atoms of Life Force. The great Hindu Masters signify that pranayam (life-controlling exercise) does not consist in holding the breath in the lungs indefinitely, but in controlling the Life Force which controls the heart, sensory motor nerves, and all other functions of the body.

If one can stop the accumulation of venous blood by eating less carbonized food and by higher methods of calming himself, he can make the function of the heart useless, for without venous blood the heart does not have to clean the carbon in the blood nor send red blood and oxygen to tissues which do not decay. If one can prevent decay in the tissue, he can calm the heart. When the heart is completely calm, due to a lack of venous blood and due to the cessation of decay in the body, there is no venous blood to be pumped into the lungs, hence breathing is unnecessary because of the lack of venous blood in the lungs and because of the suspended state of the body tissues, which makes the absorption of oxygen unnecessary.

The ratio between breath and impure venous blood is: The greater the amount of dark blood, the greater the necessity for breath. If there is no dark blood in the body through the prevention of the waste of bodily tissues, as in suspended animation by conscious rest given to the bodily cells, then there is no necessity for breathing. For this reason the Hindu Masters taught how to control the Life Force in the heart by stopping decay in the body and producing the resultant breathless state, and not to hold the breath in the lungs indefinitely. Controlling the Life Force in the body enables one to switch off the current from the nerve sense-telephones, thus making it impossible for disturbing sensations to reach the brain and to distract the attention.

from marching toward its Maker, or toward the Divine Goal The mortal breath, which binds the Soul to the body, cannot be done away with by forcibly holding it in the lungs, but only by stopping decay in the system through developing calmness and practicing Spiritual exercises

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 21 (1938)

## §

### **The Delicate Art Of Breath Control, Yogananda**

Propaganda by ignorant people has been started against all breathing exercises because our great Hindu Masters warned students not to practice violent breathing exercises with weak lungs and because they asked students to practice breathing exercises under the guidance of a competent teacher, and not after reading about them in books.

Remember, just as oranges cannot be tabooed for all people because some people with ulcerated stomachs cannot eat them, so also, proper breathing exercises should not be forsaken because some people with extremely weak or infected lungs cannot practice proper breathing exercises. Laugh at anybody who tells you that all breathing exercises are dangerous. Everybody must properly perform Nature's breathing exercises, no matter whether he has good or bad lungs. Only remember that violent breathing exercises are dangerous, for they may cause trouble even to apparently strong but inwardly weak lungs. Cast out all fear when you practice simple, but physically and spiritually extremely beneficial breathing exercises which the *Praecepta* teachings recommend.

#### **When You Need To Breathe Deeply**

If you are starving for oxygen because of improper body posture, you need to breathe deeply and to breathe properly. Those people who sit with a bent spine, and walk with a caved in chest, squeeze the diaphragm and lungs and prevent them from properly opening and receiving the amount of oxygen necessary to clean all the dark blood in the lungs. When the lungs and diaphragm do not open properly, there is a lack of oxygen brought to the blood and the poisonous venous blood in the lower openings of the lungs remains unpurified and is poured back into the system in this condition.

If you sit and walk with the chest out and the abdomen in, you will take in the proper quantity of oxygen, and all your dark blood will be changed into red blood, and fresh blood and vitality will be poured into your system. It is better to lie on your back on a hard bed than to sit with a crooked spine and squeezed lungs, moving back and forth in a rocking chair. Use planks on your bed and put a spring mattress on top. This insures a straight and soft bed without being dangerous to your health by bending the spine, as a too soft bed does.

Food is necessary if you are starved; deep breathing is necessary if you are oxygen-starved. But as over-eating is unnecessary when you have food in your system, so is over-breathing unnecessary if your blood contains less carbon due to the right habit of eating fresh fruit and little starch. If you are calm and there is less motion in the body, there will be less decay in the body and you will need to breathe very little, most of the time remaining breathless. That is why calm people breathe less, and the animal type of people, who eat starch and meat all the time, have to breathe like bellows and have to keep their Life Force and mind constantly busy with the physical functions of breathing and with the heaviness and motion of the flesh. Breathlessness and calmed internal organs free the mind, so that it can concentrate upon the Soul

## **Do Not Hold Breath Too Long**

It is extremely unwise to hold the breath in the lungs to the point of discomfort. Holding the breath forcibly in weak lungs is injurious. Weakness of the lungs must be cured before it is advisable to breathe deeply. People with weak lungs should breathe properly by keeping the body straight. Deep breathing is unnecessary for such persons until their lungs become strong. We must learn to breathe correctly by keeping the spine straight always. The suffocating pain felt when holding the breath in the lungs too long results from the constant pouring of venous blood into the lungs. When the oxygen is used up, the carbon dioxide in the lungs wants to get out and the thick dark blood, unable to be purified, keeps on accumulating and expanding the lungs, which are ready to burst.

Although you cannot kill yourself by holding the breath too long in the lungs, you can injure the lungs and heart. Therefore, you must never listen to any charlatan or ignorant teacher who tries to teach from book knowledge only. Do not follow any teacher who tells you to hold your breath in the lungs for a long time, or tells you to practice violent breathing exercises.

When the lungs are filled to capacity with dark venous blood, the blood tries to push back through the pulmonary arteries into the heart. This may result in pains in the heart or leakage of valves, or may injure the over-expanding lungs. Nature made a good provision so that no one can kill himself by holding the breath in the lungs, because when venous blood strikes back in the heart from the over-filled lungs, the heart palpitates and fitfully shoots its current back to the medulla. The medulla becomes shocked and produces unconsciousness. When unconsciousness comes, breathing automatically starts again.

## **Be Conscious Of Inhalation And Exhalation**

- In doing the above do not force the breath in and out. Breathe naturally, only watch the course of the incoming and outgoing breath, mentally chanting Hong and Sau . If the breath naturally stops in the lungs or outside, wait until it flows again of itself.
- Remember that the purpose of this practice is to increase naturally the intervals when the breath does not flow. If the breath goes in of itself and does not flow out immediately, wait and enjoy the state of breathlessness. When it comes out again, say Sau. If the breath goes out and stays out, wait and enjoy that state of breathlessness, until the breath wants to flow in again.
- 3. The breath is first thrown out so that you may know when to begin mentally chanting Hong, when the breath goes in. In ordinary breathing you are not aware whether the breath is in or out.
- Do not force the breath in and out in order to chant. Let the mental chant follow the natural desire of the breath to flow in and out.
- Concentrate upon the intervals when the breath does not flow, without forcing this quiet breathless state.
- By watching the breath, you metaphysically destroy the identification of the Soul with the breath and the body. By watching the breath, you separate your Ego from it and know that your body exists only partially by breath.
- By watching the breath, what happens? When you first tense and relax the outer body and throw out the breath, you have removed motion and decay from the outward muscles, but not from the internal organs — heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on. By watching the

breath, breathing becomes rhythmic and calm. Watching of the breath calms and quiets the heart. A restless and worried mind increases heart action, and a quiet mind calms the heart action. A heaving breath also increases heart action and quiet breath calms the heart by watching the breath calmly, both the breath and the mind become calm. A calm mind and breath slow down and quiet the motion of the heart, diaphragm, and lungs.

When the motion is simultaneously removed (1) from the muscles by relaxation and by casting out the breath, (2) and from the inner organs, heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on, then the Life Energy, which is used to pump 18 tons of blood through the heart in 24 hours, retires to the spine and becomes distributed in the billions of body cells. This energy electrifies the cells and prevents their decay, making them self-sustained dry batteries. In such a state the cells do not require oxygen or food chemicals to sustain life. It is in this state that the vitalized cells do not need to repair decay, because when decay is removed from outer and inner organs the venous blood does not become impure and it does not need to be sent to the heart to be pumped into the lungs to be purified by the incoming oxygen in the breath.

This condition (prevention of the creation and increase of venous blood in the system, by doing away with outer motion and inner motion by watching the breath) does away with two things:—

1. Necessity of living by the human breath.
2. The necessity of heart action.

When man can live by “the Word of God” (Cosmic Energy) and not by bread or breath, and can control the heart, his body battery will be internally charged with Cosmic Energy, and it will not need to depend upon the outer sources of life (Food, liquid, and gases).

- ❖ This practice teaches the body cells to be bridged over with Cosmic Consciousness .
- ❖ It destroys the slavery of the body to breath.
- ❖ It stops decay in inner and outer organs
- ❖ It makes the heart action and breathing unnecessary and insures longevity in the body-house when one wants to remain there longer.
- ❖ The calming of the heart switches off the energy in the five sense-telephones of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight, for the heart is the second switchboard of the senses (The medulla is the main switch.)
- ❖ When the Life Force and the consciousness are withdrawn from the five sense-telephones, the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch cannot reach the brain through the nerve-telephone wires. When sensations stop registering in the brain, the conceptions and associated ideas, resulting from them, cease. It is then that the mind or the attention becomes free to contemplate any particular object, or God.

### Special Exercises

If you are starved for oxygen and have good lungs, first exhale the poisonous breath quickly, then draw fresh air through your nostrils, counting 1 to 12 slowly, hold breath, counting 1 to 12, or 1 to 25. Then slowly exhale, counting 1 to 12. Repeat the above exercise 12 times, 3 times a day in the open air, or more if you find it beneficial.

People breathe like bellows because they have waste material in their systems. The higher you go into the study and practice of Praecepta Instructions, the more slowly you will breathe. Decay in the cells of muscles and other organs can be partially arrested by getting the body still, but activity and the throwing off of waste matter still goes on in the internal organs. If you breathe quickly, the heart beat will be very fast. When you run, you breathe quickly, and your heart beat accelerates. Breath is the cord which ties the Soul to the flesh. When you “die daily” and come back to life at will by rising above breath, as is taught in this “Hong-Sau” Technique, you can prolong life indefinitely.

Think of all the restless, searching people there are in the world! They are all seeking the way. O, that only all of them could be told that whenever they can do completely without breathing, then, and then only, will they establish a symphony of peace, an altar of Bliss in their hearts, where Cosmic Consciousness will come without coaxing.

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 23 (1938)

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The breathing process, as well as the heartbeat, is regulated by the medulla oblongata. The positive pole of this medulla is the *ajna chakra*, or Christ center, located between the eyebrows. Stimulation of this medulla by deep concentration at that center can induce complete suspension of the breath and heartbeat by placing one in perfect harmony with the cosmic energy, and drawing this energy into the body in such abundance that impurities in the body are instantly neutralized.

--From *the Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

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## Chapter Eight: The Mantra Hong-So

To affirm life outwardly is to emphasize Spirit-manifested ego, not the changeless soul within. In the constant flow and ebb of nature there is repeated endlessly, in infinite variations, the underlying truth: “I, the manifested self, am He, the Unmanifested.” Every “inhalation” of nature, every renewed affirmation of objective reality, becomes offered up with “exhalation” into the Spirit, the final essence of all things. The human breath, too, flows in this continuous *mantra*. In Sanskrit the words of this *mantra*, universal to all creatures, are *Aham saha*, or, reduced to mantric words of power, *Hong-Sau*: “I am He.” Yogis say that on a subtle level this is the very sound made by the breath: *Hong* with inhalation; *Sau* with exhalation. To repeat *Hang-Sau* mentally, particularly in conjunction with the breath, is to affirm again and again the truth that the little human ego is one with Brahman, the infinite Spirit: “*Hong Saul I am He! I am He!*”

As you chant *Hong* mentally with the incoming breath, feel that you are affirming not so much the little ego—the John Smith or Mary Green who is unique among human beings—but rather the Universal Man of which *you* are one expression.

As you chant *Sau* mentally with the outgoing breath, feel that you are offering this self into the infinite Self or Spirit. Imagine your awareness expanding toward Infinity.

Then as you chant *Hong* again, visualize the little self becoming infused with the consciousness of *San*, the Spirit, which you have just affirmed. Indeed, some yogis take this concept as their *mantra*, *So-Hum* (*Hong-San* reversed becomes *So-Hum*). Practicing it instead of the one I have given. *Hong-San* But Paramhansa Yogananda explained that one can legitimately reverse the *Hong-San* mantra to *So-Hum* only after Self-realization has been attained.

The *mantra*, in Sanskrit, means “I am He”—that is to say, “I am Spirit.” To give it special power, however, it is pronounced somewhat differently from the normal Sanskrit to enhance its vibratory efficacy.

The Sanskrit words are *Aham* (I) and *Saha* (He). As a *mantra*, however, the words are pronounced “*Hong San*” (*San* to be pronounced like the English word, “saw”) “*Hong*,” like the tolling of a bell, rings outward as though dissolving the sound into the surrounding atmosphere. This reverberation merges into Spirit with the next sound, “*Sau*.” The sound “*Sau*” emphasizes the consciousness of peace. “*Hong*” vibrates with the incoming breath; “*Sau*” with the outgoing. The two sounds together bring our breathing gradually into a state of peace and equilibrium.”

--From *the Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

### What is Mantra, Swami Kriyananda

Sanskrit, born as it was during a much more spiritual age than our own, contains in its syllables sounds which the great sages of India have claimed come the closest to the natural sound-vibrations of the astral world. That is why Sanskrit has been known traditionally as Devanagari, the language of the gods. Sanskrit seed sounds, or bij-mantras, when correctly pronounced are capable of effecting great changes in the natural order, or in one’s own inner nature. Simply to listen to scriptural passages uttered in Sanskrit is to be inspired with a feeling of spiritual power and joy. For Western yoga students who want to make the effort, much,

certainly, can be gained from repeating some of the Sanskrit mantras. It is not only that Sanskrit is a deeply spiritual language in its own right. Its mantras have been spiritualized through millennia also by devotees and great yogis.

Much is made in India of the importance of chanting Sanskrit mantras with the correct pronunciation and intonations. The Westerner, certainly, is not likely ever to master this difficult art. Even in India it is rarely that one finds someone who has attained such mastery. In fact, Swami Vivekananda stated that he had once had a vision in which ancient sages appeared to him and chanted familiar Sanskrit slokas (scriptural passages) in a manner very different from that which tradition has passed down as the correct form. From this story one wonders if even the learned pandits of India today can truly master this ancient art according to the original traditions.

There are, however, two aspects to correct pronunciation: exoteric, and esoteric. A brother disciple of mine once wanted to order some split peas for the kitchen at the Self-Realization Fellowship Church in Hollywood. The purchasing agent, a German with a heavy accent, was unable to understand the request until it had been deliberately mispronounced for him. "Oh," he cried, with dawning recognition, "shplit peas! Vy you don't shpik Ehnglisch?" This is an example of exoteric pronunciation. Foreigners may say "loff," or "loaf," instead of "love." But even native Englishmen and Americans will often speak the word, "love," in such a way as to convey none of its actual meaning. It is even possible to say, "I love you," with such an intonation as to suggest, "I despise you." And it is possible also to say, "I hate you," in such a way as to convey nothing but love. The consciousness behind one's words constitutes the esoteric aspect of correct pronunciation. Where the state of consciousness, or bhav, is strong, correct exoteric pronunciation of the words is of secondary importance, though it may in fact follow automatically.

Specifically, where yoga practice is concerned, it would be well to bear in mind that different states of consciousness actually have their seat in corresponding centers, or chakras, in the spine. For example, when we love others, our feeling is centered in the heart chakra opposite the heart in the spine. A strong affirmation of will power automatically draws one's energy to a focus at the point between the eyebrows. Vision, though a faculty of the formless soul, has its physical seat in the eyes. Similarly, various mental states have their corresponding psychic seats in the body (to be more exact, in the astral body, of which the physical body is the counterpart).

If you will utter any chant or mantra with a deep inner consciousness of its purpose, and from the fullness of your own being, the words will be effective even if your outward pronunciation of them is not exact. Of course, it is better still to combine inner sincerity with outward correctness. Sincerity, however, is always more powerful than mere external forms.

And what is sincerity? It is any intention that has the support of one's whole being. As the chest is a sounding board for the voice, so one's inner consciousness is the sounding board for whatever mental or spiritual qualities vibrate in the voice. Specifically, if you will speak or sing from the higher chakras (the heart, or dorsal, center in the spine, the cervical center opposite the throat, and the Christ center between the eyebrows), you will make your voice a means both of directing spiritual power and of awakening that power in yourself.

Feel as you sing that you are drawing your voice upward from the heart, through the cervical center, and projecting it outward through the Christ center. To get this feeling, it may help you, while holding a single note, to bring your hand up from the heart and outward in a sweeping motion above and beyond the head, as if offering your tonal purity worshipfully to God. Practice this exercise repeatedly, until you can actually hear love vibrating in your voice as



the tone touches the heart center; peace and expansion entering it as it touches the cervical center; and divine power and joy entering it as it passes through the Christ center.

When I studied singing in college many years ago, my singing teacher told me, “The voice is the only instrument that one cannot see. I can’t show you how to use it correctly. I can only use it correctly myself, and ask you to listen sensitively and try intuitively to absorb my understanding.” A truly yogic singing teacher! And how much more I learned from her with this method of teaching than I would have, had her method consisted merely of the vocalizing exercises that comprise the usual singing lesson. For the same reason I might suggest, if you are interested in this aspect of chanting, that you get one of my recordings, and use it as an aid in developing your own capacity to sing and speak from the spinal centers.

What mantra should you use? Unless and until you are given diksha (initiation) into one specific mantra (mantra diksha was not my own guru’s path), the choice really is up to you. Many mantras are taught in India. Often those Sanskrit mantras which are used for japa (the constant repetition of God’s name) consist of twelve or of sixteen syllables, or of half, or of double, those numbers. Just as often, however, the single syllable, AUM, is used for this purpose. AUM is, in fact, the highest mantra, attuned as it is to the very essence of all vibrations, the Cosmic Vibration itself. To chant it, pronounce it to rhyme with “home.” In English it is usually written, Om, to keep people from pronouncing the first letter with a long a. Otherwise, it is spiritually more correct to spell AUM with three letters, each letter signifying a different phase of the Cosmic Vibration: creation, preservation, and dissolution. But in English, few vowels are pronounced purely. When we say, Om, we are in fact pronouncing two principal vowel sounds. Some of us even touch on a few secondary sounds on the way!

Try reciting one or more of the following mantras in your meditations, or before or after your practice of the yoga postures.

“Om namah Shivaya” (“Om, I bow to the Lord, Shiva”). Shiva is God in the aspect of Dissolver of the universe, and Destroyer of our attachments and delusions. Normally, a is pronounced short, like the u in “cut.” A is pronounced long, like the a in “arm.” If you want to sing this chant, here is a melody that is popular in India:

*Om Namah Shivaya* ancient Sanskrit mantra

Lively

3 Om na-mah Shi-va - ya. Om na-mah Shi-va - a - ya.

“Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai Ram, Om” (“Lord God! Victory to God! Victory, victory to God! Om”). This was the mantra of a great saint of recent times in India, Swami Ramdas. Its origins are lost in antiquity. Here is the melody that Swami Ramdas popularized:

## *Sri Ram, Jai Ram*

traditional Indian chant

Slowly

Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai - ai Ram Om, Sri  
5 Ram, oh, jai Ram, jai jai - ai Ram O - Om.

“Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya” (“Om, I bow to the Lord Vasudeva, or Krishna”). This is the principal mantra of a great Indian scripture, the Srimad Bhagavatam. I have written my own melody for it:

## *Om Namo Bhagavate*

ancient Sanskrit mantra

music by Swami Kriyananda

Slowly and freely

Om na - mo Bha - ga - va - te Va - su - de - e - va - ya! Om na -  
5 mo Bha - ga - va - te - e - Va - su - de - e - va - a - ya!

The Indian mantras that are used for chanting and japa usually consist primarily of a repetition of names of God. My guru, in introducing Indian-style chanting to the West, wrote chants that combine the principles of affirmation and prayer: As affirmations, they are prayerful and devotional; as prayers, they are affirmative – “loving demands,” as he called them. His chants are a natural preliminary to the simple repetition of God’s name, for without first engendering right attitudes in oneself, the mere practice of calling to God may easily cause one to slip into demeaning human attitudes of beggary.

Mantras and other deep spiritual teachings are usually given with an enjoiner of secrecy, not to deprive suffering humanity of their power, but rather so that the devotee receiving them may nourish them with daily practice, until they grow and bear fruit. To tell others what one is practicing in inner silence would be to dissipate spiritual power. It would be like uprooting a seed from the ground before it has had time to sprout. Secrecy is enjoined in all spiritual practices, not to encourage selfishness, but so that the devotee may first grow strong in himself. Once he has acquired inner wealth, he will be in a position to share his wealth liberally with others.

Try incorporating chants and japa into your daily spiritual practices. You will soon discover why my guruji said, “Chanting is half the battle.”

AUM, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

–From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 8, by Swami Kriyananda

## §

Sit upright in meditation. Tense and relax the body, as I taught you in earlier chapters. Relax the body deeply. Then relax your thoughts and emotions.

To begin the technique, first inhale deeply, then slowly exhale. Wait for the breath to come in of its own accord. Follow it mentally with the word *Hong*.

As the breath flows out, watch it, and mentally follow it with the word *Sau*.

Remember, this is not a breathing exercise. Don't inhale and exhale deliberately. Simply *watch* the breath. Don't watch your body breathing, watch the breath itself. Identify the breath with the *mantra Hong-Sau*.

Be particularly aware of the rest points between the breaths. Enjoy the peace, and the feeling of inward release and freedom that you feel when your body is without breath.

Practice this technique as long as you feel to. As a boy, Paramhansa Yogananda used to practice it for hours at a time, withdrawing ever more deeply into the spine until he found himself without breath altogether. He had ascended into soul-consciousness, where the physical functions were suspended and a higher reality took over that freed the soul for a time from bodily imperatives.

You may, if you like, chant *Hong-Sau* first at the medulla, dissolving ego-consciousness into inner peace. After a time, as you become more interiorized, concentrate at the Spiritual Eye between the eyebrows, feel the ego only in its relationship to soul-consciousness. Indeed, concentrating at the point between the eyebrows brings the awareness closer to the upper part of the nasal passage, where the breath enters the body. To center the awareness here makes it easier to watch the breath, and at the same time bring it into harmony with spiritual awareness.

With spiritual enlightenment, the chant *Hong-Sau* becomes transformed into the *mantra So Ham*: "I am He" becomes transformed into the realization "He is I; He is my true Self." Paramhansa Yogananda explained that an unenlightened human being performs every action from the center of ego-consciousness, in the medulla. An enlightened master, on the contrary, performs all his actions from a center of soul-consciousness, in the Spiritual Eye.

*Hong-Sau* will help you to convert ego-consciousness into the complete awareness of who and what you truly are: a manifestation of Pure Consciousness.

**--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Fifteen**

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## §

I began this discussion by mentioning how the *mantra “Hong-Sau”* can be used to dissolve the consciousness of pain. All pain originates in the thought of ego (“Why is this happening to *me*?”) By mentally chanting “*Hong-San*” at the seat of that pain, one dissolves the ego’s connection to the pain, and thereby lessens, or even dissolves, the pain itself.

Try doing this while you sit in the dentist’s chair. (I mention the dentist’s chair because it was my first example), or at any other time that you experience pain. Whether physically, mentally, or emotionally. Don’t limit your practice to those times when you want desperately to rise above pain. Do it in response to any sensation, whether light or intense, pleasant or unpleasant, simply as an exercise in interiorization of the mind.

Concentrate at the center of the sensation. Then *watch* the breath at that center. Don’t control the breath: Simply watch it. As it comes in of its own accord, follow it mentally with the chant *Hong*. Feel as you do so that the word itself is relaxing and dissolving your ego-identification with that sensation.

Then, as the breath flows out, follow it mentally with the chant *Sau*. Feel, with the utterance of this word, that you are coming ever more deeply to rest in the peace within.

The *Hong-Sau mantra* is not a specific for banishing pain. I show how it can be used for that purpose in order to clarify the point that interiorization of the mind must be practiced in daily life also, if we are to succeed in attaining interiorization in meditation.

“Hong” and “Sau” are two sacred Sanskrit chant words with vibratory connection with the incoming and outgoing breath. All sounds of the Universe have a different mental effect and

mental correspondence. The mental repetition of “Hong-Sau” has a great calming mental effect and helps the student in this exercise of watching the incoming and outgoing breath.”

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Fifteen

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**Q.** Since *Hong-Sau* is pronounced differently in different parts of India (e.g., “Hung-Sah”), and since much is made in yoga teachings of the correct pronunciation of *mantras*, is it not important to ascertain which of the different pronunciations is the most classically correct?

**A.** No. Pronounced mentally, the variations are so slight as to be virtually indistinguishable from one another, and therefore insignificant. The important thing in the practice of this technique is to deepen one’s consciousness of peace, and to associate this consciousness with the repetition of the *mantra*. In fact, it is one’s consciousness, truly, that determines the most correct pronunciation of any *mantra*.

--From *the Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

§

## Hong So - So Ham, Kriyananda

I then asked him about one of the points on which Swami Muktananda had challenged my Guru. Naturally, there will always be a few differences in techniques between one school and another. Swami Muktananda, however, had made a point of saying that Master’s version of a *mantra* was wrong. *Hong-Sau*, he said, is incorrect, it should be repeated the other way around: *So-ham*. I had suggested a way by which the difference, which seemed trivial enough, might be reconciled. “No,” Baba had said, “all the *Upanishads* say that it should be *So –Ham* not *Hong-Sau*.” So, according to him, my Guru was wrong. That did not seem so trivial a matter.

But what could I say, once he backed his claim by reference to Scriptural authority? I could feel, and did, that if my Guru had taught the *mantra* as *Hong-Sau*, his power alone would make it right for anyone who wanted to take it that way, but I couldn’t counter this other argument I don’t read Sanskrit.

So now I saw my opportunity. I asked Swami Narayan whether it was true that the *Upamshads* teach only *So-Ham*, never *Hong-Sau*. Swamiji replied: “No, on the contrary, all the *Upanishads* teach it as *Hong-Sau*. “

There followed about forty-five minutes of going through various Scriptures. One of them, the *Hong-Sau Vidya*, says, “This is the highest *mantra*.” It also calls it “the god of all *mantras*,” and says, “The world is created with it, the world is preserved with it, and the world is destroyed with it.”

“By chanting this *mantra*,” the Scripture goes on to say, “the seeker quickly attains liberation.”

Swamiji went on to say, “Nowhere is *So-Ham* referred to with nearly so much authority.”

“Why, then,” I inquired, “has it been so much insisted upon.”

“People,” he replied, “who don’t have an adequate knowledge of the *Vedas* go about creating their own misunderstandings.”

But then he added the most vital point of all: “Whatever Guru says is higher than any Scripture.” (Because it contains his power, and because it is specific for the disciple, rather than something general for all mankind.)

I had a talk also with Swami Akhandananda, who had been giving daily discourses on the Gita. He is considered one of the foremost Sanskrit scholars in India. I took this opportunity to ask him, too, about the relative merits of the two *mantras*, *Hong-Sau* and *So-Ham*. He replied:

“The *Shastras* (Scriptures) instruct one to say *Hong* with the incoming breath, and *Sau* with the outgoing breath. But both *mantras* are all right, since by repetition *Hong-Sau* becomes *So-Ham*. It is like the story of Valmiki who, by repeating ‘*Mara*’ (Satan), since he was so evil he couldn’t pronounce ‘*Rama*,’ ended up nevertheless repeating the sacred name, ‘*Rama*.’

“*Hansa (Hong-Sau)* is also a scriptural name for the Supreme Lord. It is a *bij mantra*, or seed *mantra*, and is to be found in the most ancient *Rig Veda*.

“But above all, what Guru says must be done. What Guru says is greater even than the *Shastras*.

“There was once a disciple who received a wrong (*ashudha*, or impure) *mantra* from his guru. After he had recited it for some time, an angel appeared to him and said, ‘Your *mantra* is not right. You should say it in this manner.’ The disciple very cleverly replied: ‘It was by repeating it the way my Guru taught it to me that I got your vision!’ After that, what could the angel say?

“The Scriptures tell us that even if God Himself is pleased, but guru is not pleased, that is not enough! Pleasing the guru, implicit faith in the guru-that is everything.”

--From *A Visit to the Saints of India*, Swami Kriyananda

§

## Chapter Nine: The Technique

### The Technique Hong So

#### The Highest Technique of Concentration, Yogananda

You can practice this lesson anytime, sit erect wherever you are with the spine straight, and relax. Close your eyes (or fix the gaze of your half-closed eyes in between the eyebrows). And with the greatest calmness feel your breath as naturally going in and coming out. As the breath goes in, move the index finger of your right hand toward the thumb, and mentally chant without moving your tongue, “Hong.”

As the breath goes out, move the index finger away from the thumb and mentally chant “Sau.” (The movement of the index finger is only to differentiate inhalation from exhalation). Do not in any way use mental willingness or force to let your breath in or out. While practicing, take the calm attitude that you are a silent observer of your natural breath coming in and going out, which you are generally not conscious of. With greatest reverence and attention practice this for at least 10 minutes after the fifth lesson each time. You will feel the greatest calmness in you, and by and by will realize yourself as soul, superior to and existing independently of this material body.

Always sit on a straight chair with a woolen blanket placed over it and running down under your feet. Face east and sit erect, without touching your spine to the back of the chair. This exercise you ought to practice during your leisure periods, either when you are on the bus or train or sitting anywhere doing nothing. Just watch the breath and mentally chant “Hong, Sau,” without moving the finger or closing the eyes or fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, which might attract the attention of people around you. Just keep your eyes open without winking, looking straight ahead at some particular point. Keep the spine and head always in a straight line during practice.

The purpose of the 4<sup>th</sup> lesson is conscious passivity. By it you can free the attention from sense entanglements. Breath is the cord that binds the soul to the body. Man lives in and requires the atmosphere of air just as a fish needs water. By rising above breath, man rises into the celestial realms of the angels. By watching the course of the incoming and outgoing breath, the breath naturally slows down and calms the violent action of the heart, lungs and diaphragm. The heart pumps about 12 tons of blood a day and gets no rest at night (as the other organs do). Hence the most overworked organ in the body is the heart, and this 4<sup>th</sup> lesson gives the scientific method to rest the heart, thus increasing longevity and liberating a tremendous amount of life current, which is then distributed over the body and electrifies and renews all body cells and prevents their decay. This marvelous Hong Sau exercise is the greatest contribution of India's spiritual science to the world, as it lengthens the span of man's life and shows the practical method to rise above body-consciousness and realize himself as immortal spirit. (Hong and Sau are two sacred Sanskrit chant words.) In sleep we experience sensory relaxation. In death complete relaxation involuntarily takes place, due to the stopping of the heart's action. By the Hong Sau exercise you can learn to experience the conscious death and rise above the fear and mystery of death. You can learn to leave the body voluntarily, honorably and gladly, and not be thrown out roughly, or be taken by surprise by death.

Inattention during practice of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> lessons produces sleep. Concentrated attention will bring a tingling sense of divine life to every body cell.

--From *Yogoda Course*, Lesson 4 (1925), by Swami Yogananda

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## **The Hong So concentration technique, Yogananda**

This Technique teaches you how to switch on or off the Life Current from the bulb of the body (muscles, senses, heart, spine, and so forth) at will, and how to bring about perfect relaxation. Inattention during the practice of this Technique produces sleep. Concentrated attention will bring a tingling sense of Divine Life to every body cell.

Sit erect wherever you are with the spine straight, and relax. Close your eyes (or concentrate the gaze of your half-opened eyes upon the point between the eyebrows). Then, with the *greatest calmness*, feel your breath as *naturally* going in and coming out. As the breath comes in, move the index finger of your right hand toward the palm, and *mentally* chant “hong” (as in “song”) without moving your tongue. As the breath goes out, move the index finger away from the palm and *mentally* chant “sau” (as in “saw”). The movement of the index finger is only to differentiate inhalation from exhalation. When you can mentally differentiate inhalation from exhalation, then the movement of the index finger is unnecessary. Do not in any way use mental willingness or force to let your breath in or out. While practicing, take the calm attitude that you are a silent observer of your natural breath coming in and going out, of which you are generally not conscious. You can practice this technique anywhere, any time, day or night, in your leisure time. By continued proper practice, you will feel a great calmness in you, and by and by you will realize yourself as a Soul, superior to, and existing independently of, the material body.

“Hong” and “Sau” are two sacred Sanskrit chant words with vibratory connection with the incoming and outgoing breath. All sounds of the Universe have a different mental effect and mental correspondence. The mental repetition of “Hong-Sau” has a great calming mental effect and helps the student in this exercise of watching the incoming and outgoing breath.

The more effective way to practice this technique of concentration is to sit on a straight chair with a woolen blanket placed over it and running down under your feet to insulate your body from earthly magnetic influences and disturbances. Face the East and sit erect, with out touching your spine to the back of the chair. This exercise ought to be practiced during your leisure periods, either when you are on the bus or trolley car, or when sitting anywhere doing nothing. Just watch the breath and mentally chant “Hong-Sau” without moving the finger or closing the eyes, or fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, which might attract the attention of people around you. Just keep your eyes open without winking, looking straight ahead on some particular point. Keep the spine and head always in a straight line during practice.

The purpose of this Technique is Conscious Passivity. It teaches one how to free his attention from sense entanglements. Breath is the cord that binds the Soul to the body. Man lives in and requires the atmosphere of air just as a fish needs water. When he learns to rise above breath, man ascends into the celestial realms of the angels. By watching the course of the incoming and outgoing breath, the breath naturally slows down and calms the violent action of the heart, lungs, and diaphragm. The heart pumps about 17 tons of blood a day and gets no rest at night (as the other organs do) Hence, the most overworked organ in the body is the heart, and this Lesson teaches the scientific method of how to rest the heart, thus increasing longevity and liberating a tremendous amount of Life Current, which is then distributed over the body, recharging, revitalizing, and renewing all body cells, preventing their decay. This marvelous “Hong-Sau” exercise is one of the greatest contributions of India’s Spiritual science to the world, as it teaches one how to lengthen the span of his life, and shows the practical method to rise above body-consciousness and realize one’s self as Immortal Spirit.



In sleep, we experience sensory relaxation. In death, complete relaxation involuntarily takes place, due to the stopping of the heart's action. If one can learn to control the heartbeat, he can experience the Conscious Death, leaving and re-entering the body at will, he can "die daily", like St. Paul, and like many Yogis of India, who have practiced this "Hong-Sau" exercise and have, through it, achieved mastery over the action of the heart. Such Yogis have learned to leave the body voluntarily, honorably, and gladly, and are not thrown out roughly, or taken by surprise by death, when their lease on their body-temples expires.

When the heart rests, breath becomes unnecessary. The Life Energy is then withdrawn from the heart and sensory nerves, and thus disconnects the telephones of the five senses, which ordinarily keep the Ego perpetually disturbed and the attention scattered by incessant sensory messages from the outside world. Through sensory disconnection through "Hong-Sau", sensations cease to arouse thoughts, which in turn cease to arouse the subconscious by associated thoughts. The attention thus becomes scientifically free from all distractions, and the student is ready to go on to advanced practice.

--From *Praecepta Lesson 21 (1936)*, by Yogananda

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### **Routine of concentration, Yogananda**

#### **Preparation and Posture**

1. Sit erect on edge of bed with feet on floor, or sit on a cushioned chair, or sit on a bed with your legs crossed, facing East, with spine straight, chest out, abdomen in, shoulder blades together, chin parallel to the ground, and up-turned, cup-shaped palms resting at the junction of the abdomen and thighs.

2. Then precede the actual practice of the "Hong-Sau" Technique with an awakening prayer, which coincides with your desire or purpose of concentration; as, for example, for Wisdom, Peace and Contentment, repeat the following prayer:

*"Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, Saints of all religions, the Spirit in my body temple, Supreme Master Minds of India, Supreme Master Babaji, Great Master Lahiri Mahasaya, Master Swami Sri Yukteswar Giriji, and Guru-Preceptor, I bow to you all. Lead me from ignorance to wisdom; from restlessness to peace; from desires to contentment."*

3. Inhale slowly, counting 1 to 20. Hold the breath, counting 1 to 20. Then exhale slowly, counting 1 to 20. Repeat this 6 to 12 times. Tense the whole body, clenching the fists. Relax the whole body, throwing the breath out. Repeat 6 times.

4. Then exhale quickly, and remain without breath as long as it will stay out without discomfort, and mentally wait for the breath to come in. When the breath comes in of itself, mentally say "HONG", and when the breath goes out of itself, mentally say, "SAU". Keep the eyes closed or open without winking or gazing, and gently fixed upward on the point between the eyebrows.

5. After practicing this Technique deeply for ten minutes to one-half an hour, exhale slowly and completely. Blow all the breath out of the lungs which you possibly can, and enjoy the breathless state as long as you can without discomfort. Repeat three times. Then forget the breath and pray, or sit in Silence.

### **Folow these instructions**

Long concentration must be preceded by 15 minutes' practice of Exercise I of the Technique of Rejuvenation, as given in Praeceptum No. 8.ctx\_py\_Praecepta\_20080 By faithfully practicing this Technique, along with more advanced exercises that will be taught in future Praecepta, and by longer meditations in the morning and at night, and also a three-hour meditation once a week, on any day suitable to you, you will find that you will be well advanced in the Spiritual Path.

In the morning, this Lesson should be practiced after the Rejuvenating and Recharging Exercise as taught in Praeceptum Number 8.ctx\_py\_Praecepta\_20080 You must get used to the practicing of this Technique with your eyes gently concentrated upon the point between the eyebrows. Do not strain the eyes. However, if you are not used to holding the eyes in this position, practice some of the time with your eyes half open, but most of the time with eyes closed. You can practice with eyes closed, and in leisure hours lie down on your back, and watch the breath, mentally chanting "HONG-SAU". The more you practice in your leisure hours, the greater will be the results. Work overtime and you will gain still better results.

When you consciously watch the breath, what happens? The heart, the lungs, and the diaphragm gradually calm down and their muscles ultimately, during a long deep silence, refrain from constant motion. Thus, decay is stopped throughout the system, and then no more venous blood has to be pumped by the heart into the lungs. When the heart does not pump blood, the lungs do not expand any more to receive more oxygen; then you do not breathe any more. When this happens, decay is stopped entirely. When decay is stopped, you no longer are in need of new, red blood, oxygen, nor food – but can live directly from Cosmic Energy running through the medulla, and not by the energy distilled from food only.

It is always a good plan to exhale and drive away the poisons before beginning deep breathing. By practicing the inhalation and exhalation exercises, the carbon in the venous blood is burned out and partial decay is stopped in the body. You will notice that when you throw the breath out after practicing this Technique for a long time and deeply, that you have no desire to breathe for a long time. You can remain longer in the breathless state than if you tried breathlessness immediately after restlessness.

### **The Attention Becomes Free**

Death is nothing but involuntary complete relaxation. The heart is controlled by the medulla, which is the only part of the human body which cannot be operated upon. The tiniest pin-prick in it will cause instant death. The heart, in turn, is the switch which controls all the five sense-telephones of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Sensations cannot reach the brain of their own accord, but the messages of sensations in the eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue are carried to the brain by the telephone wires of sensory nerves. When the sensations are quieted, thoughts do not arise, and when thoughts do not arise, associated memory-thoughts do not bother the brain. Thus, in practicing this Lesson, when you sit upright, relaxed in the meditation posture, the production of decay and waste is slowed up in the outer muscles and limbs.

As soon as, by the practice of this Lesson, energy is withdrawn from the sensory motor nerves, muscles, limbs, and the heart, no sensations can register on the switchboard of the brain to disturb the operator's attention and coax it to rouse thoughts. This is the time your attention is free to be concentrated upon any problem or idea, or upon God.

After scientifically freeing the attention from objects of distraction, learn to concentrate it upon any one thing or upon God. That form of concentration in which you disengage your attention from the sense-telephones and apply it upon God, is called meditation. You can concentrate upon money or upon God, but you never meditate upon money. Meditation is only upon God. What meditation is, and how to meditate upon an unknown God.

—From *Praecepta Lesson 22 (1938)*, by Yogananda

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## From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, Kriyananda

As you chant *Hong* mentally with the incoming breath, feel that you are affirming not so much the little ego—the John Smith or Mary Green who is unique among human beings—but rather the Universal Man of which *you* are one expression.

As you chant *Sau* mentally with the outgoing breath, feel that you are offering this self into the infinite Self or Spirit. Imagine your awareness expanding toward Infinity.

Then as you chant *Hong* again, visualize the little self becoming infused with the consciousness of *Sau*, the Spirit, which you have just affirmed. Indeed, some yogis take this concept as their *mantra*, *So-Hum* (*Hong-Sau* reversed becomes *So-Hum*), practicing it instead of the one I have given, *Hong-Sau*. But Paramhansa Yogananda explained that one can legitimately reverse the *Hong-Sau mantra* to *So-Hum* only after Self-realization has been attained.

When concentrating on the breath, keep your mind focused not so much on the mechanism of breathing (the movement of the navel, lungs, etc.) as on the breath itself. In this way, your mental identification will become at last with air, with space, not with a merely negative cessation of physical movement. But if at first you find that the physical mechanism of breathing intrudes itself too much on your attention, begin by mentally watching the breathing *process*, the movement of lungs, navel, and diaphragm; gradually only, as you grow calmer, shift your attention to the breath itself. At this point, feel it as it enters the nostrils. And even here you may find it natural to go through a transition from physical to more subtle awareness. Than is, as the breath becomes finer, feel it gradually higher and higher in the nasal passage.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna gives the counsel to concentrate on “*nasikagram*, the beginning of the nose.” Commentators often interpret this passage to mean “the tip of the nose”, since *agra* means “front” as well as “beginning.” But no subtle *chakra*, or nerve plexus, exists in the tip of the nose, waiting patiently to be awakened by yogic concentration. It is at the other end of the nose that yogis concentrate. Here is the seat of spiritual vision.

Normally, to make it easier to locate, this seat is spoken of as being located at the point between the eyebrows. But where the breath is considered as part of the concentrative process, it is more appropriate to think of this seat as being located at the origin of the nose. In fact, the real Christ center as situated in the frontal lobe of the brain. For in fact the real point that is stimulated by concentration is situated in the frontal lobe of the brain, and not literally at the point between the eyebrows. The breath, as it enters and leaves the nasal passage, passes very close to this point. To visualize the breath passing this point helps to stimulate the Christ center.

As you watch the breath in the nose, then, and find it becoming gradually calmer, begin to feel it at the origin of the nose. Relate that feeling to the Christ center. In this way you will find that yoga’s two principal techniques for developing concentration-attentiveness to the breath, and stimulation of the Christ center—become one.

Watch the breath as an impartial observer. You don't care whether it flows in or out, or remains stationary. Simply remain attentive to whatever it does naturally. *As your practice deepens*, however, particularly *enjoy* the pauses when the breath is not flowing, use them to become more fully identified with the thought: "I am He! I am infinite space!"

Paramhansa Yogananda said that if one wants to be a master in this life, he should practice *Hong-Sau* two hours daily, he great guru himself, as a boy, used to practice it as much as seven and a half hours at a stretch. Really, though in the beginning fifteen to thirty minutes may be enough, there is no limit to how long you may practice this technique.

Never end your meditation with techniques. These are like finger exercises on the piano, which enable one to play fluently but are no substitute for actual playing. Once your mind has become focused and quiet through the practice of *Hong-Sau*, offer yourself calmly up to God. *Hong-Sau* leads naturally to that kind of concentration in which the will, no longer engaged busily in outward planning, is united to the intellect, and uplifted in a single, pure act of becoming. Concentration directed in this way becomes ecstasy. And the twofold meaning of *Hong* and *Sau* combines ultimately in the single-because omnipresent-vibration, *Aum*.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

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### **From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Kriyananda**

Remember, this is not a breathing exercise. Don't inhale and exhale deliberately. Simply watch the breath. Don't watch your body breathing. Watch the breath itself. Identify the breath with the mantra *Hong-Sau*.

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You may, if you like, chant *Hong-Sau* first at the medulla, dissolving ego-consciousness into inner peace. After a time, as you become more interiorized, concentrate at the Spiritual Eye between the eyebrows; feel the ego only in its relationship to soul-consciousness. Indeed, concentrating at the point between the eyebrows brings the awareness closer to the upper part of the nasal passage, where the breath enters the body. To center the awareness here makes it easier to watch the breath, and at the same time bring it into harmony with spiritual awareness.

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### **From Praecepta Lessons, by Yogananda**

By watching the breath, you metaphysically destroy the identification of the Soul with the breath and the body. By watching the breath, you separate your Ego from it and know that your body exists only partially by breath.

By watching the breath, what happens? When you first tense and relax the outer body and throw out the breath, you have removed motion and decay from the outward muscles, but not from the internal organs – heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on. By watching the breath, breathing becomes rhythmic and calm. Watching of the breath calms and quiets the heart. A restless and

worried mind increases heart action, and a quiet mind calms the heart action. A heaving breath also increases heart action and quiet breath calms the heart. By watching the breath calmly, both the breath and the mind become calm. A calm mind and breath slow down and quiet the motion of the heart, diaphragm, and lungs.

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The calming of the heart switches off the energy in the five sense-telephones of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight, for the heart is the second switchboard of the senses. (The medulla is the main switch.) When the Life Force and the consciousness are withdrawn from the five sense-telephones, the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch cannot reach the brain through the nerve-telephone wires. When sensations stop registering in the brain, the conceptions and associated ideas, resulting from them, cease. It is then that the mind or the attention becomes free to contemplate any particular object, or God.

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Breath is the cord which ties the Soul to the flesh. When you “die daily” and come back to life at will by rising above breath, as is taught in this “Hong-Sau” Technique, you can prolong life indefinitely.

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### **From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, Kriyananda**

#### **Key Points**

1. Throughout the practice of this technique, look upward so as gradually to raise your consciousness. Do not, however, concentrate at the Christ center until it becomes natural for you to feel the flow of the breath at that point.
2. Sit very still throughout your practice of the technique. Any physical movement (and also any unrelated movement of thought or emotion) will further excite the breath.
3. Every now and then, mentally check the body (especially the nose) to be sure it is relaxed
4. While chanting *Hong-Sau*, be sure that you are chanting only mentally. Often, the mere thought of a word will produce an involuntary movement of the tongue or lips, or a slight tension in the jaw or throat. Be sure these parts of your body, too, are completely relaxed.

## Watching the Breath

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In meditation, concentrate at a point midway between the eyebrows. Raise your gaze upward—not crossing the eyes, but focusing them on a point somewhat beyond the forehead at about the distance of your thumb when you hold your arm extended above you. Don't be too exact in this matter, however. The important thing is that your *attention* be focused at the point between the eyebrows.

—From *Meditation for Starters*, by Kriyananda

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When concentrating on the breath, keep your mind focused not so much on the mechanism of breathing (the movement of the navel, lungs, etc.) as on the breath itself. In this way, your mental identification will become at last with air, with space, not with a merely negative cessation of physical movement. But if at first you find that the physical mechanism of breathing intrudes itself too much on your attention, begin by mentally watching the breathing *process*, the movement of lungs, navel, and diaphragm; gradually only, as you grow calmer, shift your attention to the breath itself. At this point, feel it as it enters the nostrils. And even here you may find it natural to go through a transition from physical to more subtle awareness. Then is, as the breath becomes finer, feel it gradually higher and higher in the nasal passage.

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Normally, to make it easier to locate, this seat is spoken of as being located at the point between the eyebrows. But where the breath is considered as part of the concentrative process, it is more appropriate to think of this seat as being located at the origin of the nose. In fact, the real Christ center as situated in the frontal lobe of the brain. For in fact the real point that is stimulated by concentration is situated in the frontal lobe of the brain, and not literally at the point between the eyebrows. The breath, as it enters and leaves the nasal passage, passes very close to this point. To visualize the breath passing this point helps to stimulate the Christ center.

As you watch the breath in the nose, then, and find it becoming gradually calmer, begin to feel it at the origin of the nose. Relate that feeling to the Christ center. In this way you will find that yoga's two principal techniques for developing concentration-attentiveness to the breath, and stimulation of the Christ center-become one.

Watch the breath as an impartial observer. You don't care whether it flows in or out, or remains stationary. Simply remain attentive to whatever it does naturally. *As your practice deepens*, however, particularly *enjoy* the pauses when the breath is not flowing, use them to become more fully identified with the thought: “I am He! I am infinite space!”

—From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7, by Kriyananda

## §

1. In doing the above do not force the breath in and out. Breathe naturally, only watch the course of the incoming and outgoing breath, mentally chanting Hong and Sau . If the breath naturally stops in the lungs or outside, wait until it flows again of itself.

2. Remember that the purpose of this practice is to increase naturally the intervals when the breath does not flow. If the breath goes in of itself and does not flow out immediately, wait and enjoy the state of breathlessness. When it comes out again, say Sau. If the breath goes out and stays out, wait and enjoy that state of breathlessness, until the breath wants to flow in again.

3. The breath is first thrown out so that you may know when to begin mentally chanting Hong when the breath goes in. In ordinary breathing you are not aware whether the breath is in or out.

4. Do not force the breath in and out in order to chant. Let the mental chant follow the natural desire of the breath to flow in and out.

5. Concentrate upon the intervals when the breath does not flow, without forcing this quiet breathless state.

6. By watching the breath, you metaphysically destroy the identification of the Soul with the breath and the body. By watching the breath, you separate your Ego from it and know that your body exists only partially by breath.

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 23 (1936), by Yogananda

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Q. Should one concentrate on the breath and *also* at the point between the eyebrows?

A. Not until the attention focuses itself naturally on the flow of breath at the beginning of the nose—that is, the point at which the breath enters the nasal cavity in the head. To do so otherwise would constitute a division of concentration which would be self-defeating.

Q. Sometimes I find that my breath, instead of pausing longer and longer at the rest points between inhalation and exhalation, continues its normal rhythm, but becomes shallower and shallower to the point where it virtually disappears. Is this all right?

A. Yes, it is quite all right. In any case you should let the breath follow its own course, instead of deciding for it what rhythm it ought to follow. But such extremely light breathing indicates a satisfactory state of concentration.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7, by Kriyananda

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By watching the breath, what happens? When you first tense and relax the outer body and throw out the breath, you have removed motion and decay from the outward muscles, but not from the internal organs — heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on. By watching the breath, breathing becomes rhythmic and calm. Watching of the breath calms and quiets the heart. A restless and worried mind increases heart action, and a quiet mind calms the heart action. A heaving breath also increases heart action and quiet breath calms the heart. By watching the breath calmly, both the breath and the mind become calm. A calm mind and breath slow down and quiet the motion of the heart, diaphragm, and lungs.

When the motion is simultaneously removed (1) from the muscles by relaxation and by casting out the breath; (2) and from the inner organs, heart, lungs, diaphragm, and so on, then the Life Energy, which is used to pump 18 tons of blood through the heart in 24 hours, retires to the spine and becomes distributed in the billions of body cells. This energy electrifies the cells and prevents their decay, making them self-sustained dry batteries. In such a state the cells do not require oxygen or food chemicals to sustain life. It is in this state that the vitalized cells do not need to repair decay, because when decay is removed from outer and inner organs the venous blood does not become impure and it does not need to be sent to the heart to be pumped into the lungs to be purified by the incoming oxygen in the breath.

This condition (prevention of the creation and increase of venous blood in the system, by doing away with outer motion and inner motion by watching the breath) does away with two things:—

(1)The necessity of living by the human breath; (2) The necessity of heart action.

When man can live by "the Word of God" (Cosmic Energy) and not by bread or breath, and can control the heart, his body battery will be internally charged with Cosmic Energy, and it will not need to depend upon the outer sources of life (food, liquid, and gases).

- This practice teaches the body cells to be bridged over with Cosmic Consciousness .
- It destroys the slavery of the body to breath.
- It stops decay in inner and outer organs.
- It makes the heart action and breathing unnecessary and insures longevity in the body-house when one wants to remain there longer.

The calming of the heart switches off the energy in the five sense-telephones of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight, for the heart is the second switchboard of the senses (The medulla is the main switch.) When the Life Force and the consciousness are withdrawn from the five sense-telephones, the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch cannot reach the brain through the nerve-telephone wires. When sensations stop registering in the brain, the conceptions and associated ideas, resulting from them, cease. It is then that the mind or the attention becomes free to contemplate any particular object, or God.'

Breath is the cord which ties the Soul to the flesh. When you "die daily" and come back to life at will by rising above breath, as is taught in this "Hong-Sau" Technique, you can prolong life indefinitely.

--From *Pracepta*, Lesson 23 (1936), by Yogananda

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The Master called me and two others into a separate room once, and gave us the following instructions:

“When watching the breath, I’ve previously taught not to control its flow. I wanted to tell you today, however, that that flow may be controlled to this extent: Between each breath, try, for that brief moment, to deepen the sense of release you feel from the need to breathe. Gradually, by natural degrees, those pauses will increase in length.

“You may, if you like, teach the technique this way to others.”

--From *Conversations with Yogananda*, by Swami Kriyananda



## The Pauses

### §

Watch the breath as an impartial observer. You don't care whether it flows in or out, or remains stationary. Simply remain attentive to whatever it does naturally. *As your practice deepens*, however, particularly *enjoy* the pauses when the breath is not flowing; use them to become more fully identified with the thought: "I am He! I am infinite space!"

Remember that the *purpose of this practice is to increase naturally the intervals when the breath does not flow*. If the breath goes in of itself and does not flow out immediately, wait and enjoy the state of breathlessness. When it comes out again, say Sau. If the breath goes out and stays out, wait and enjoy that state of breathlessness until the breath wants to flow in again.

Concentrate upon the intervals when the breath does not flow, without forcing this quiet breathless state.

Be particularly aware of the rest points between the breaths. Enjoy the peace, and the feeling of inward release and freedom that you feel when your body is without breath.

Particularly concentrate on, and enjoy, the pauses between the breaths. Dwell on the sense of freedom from the tyranny of constant breathing. Beyond enjoying this sense of calmness and freedom, however, do not try to prolong the breathless state by an act of will.

—From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7, by Kriyananda

### §

**Question:** You mentioned "rest points." Are there such points also in the way the body functions, comparable to those in objective Nature?"

**Answer:** There are of course, for we are inextricably a part of Nature. That is why we resonate with outer events in Nature. Between every breath, for instance, and the next there is a rest point. A rest point occurs between the exhalation and the inhalation, and again between the inhalation and the exhalation. You will find it a good practice to watch the breath during meditation. Concentrate especially on those pauses between the breaths. Enjoy them.

Be aware also of the pauses at other rest points in your life: at the end of a sequence of thoughts or of feelings, at the moment of a shift in your activities: at the moment of waking or of going to sleep. Learn to live more at these pauses. Don't drown your awareness in a vortex of constant activity.

***A good technique for changing directions in your life that you don't like***—a bad mood, for example, or a fit of jealousy, anger, or despair—is deliberately to create a pause, both physically and mentally—then use that pause to affirm the change you want. Here's how to do it:

Inhale, and tense the body; throw the breath out, and relax. Then hold the breath out for as long as you find it comfortable to do so. Keep the mind free from all thoughts for the time being. When you need to inhale again, inhale with the breath the thought of an opposite energy to the one you want to change. At the same time, fill your mind with happy and constructive thoughts; kindness and acceptance toward all. If your problem is jealousy: calm non-attachment and good humor; if it is anger: courage; and so on."

—From *Meditation for Starters* Chapter Four

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A technique for attaining this inner stillness is mentally to watch your breath. Concentrate on the stillness *at the center of* the breathing process. Don't control your breathing, but particularly enjoy the pauses between the breaths. Be aware of the eternal stillness, of the Christ consciousness at the center of this gentle movement, until the pauses, like a pendulum slowly coming to rest, are united in breathlessness. In this way, you will deepen your attunement with the Only Begotten, in which, you will discover, you live and have your eternal being!

**–From *The Promise of Immortality*, Chapter Five, Swami Kriyananda**

## After Hong So

Never end your meditation with techniques. These are like finger exercises on the piano, which enable one to play fluently but are no substitute for actual playing. Once your mind has become focused and quiet through the practice of *Hong-Sau*, offer yourself calmly up to God. *Hong-Sau* leads naturally to that kind of concentration in which the will, no longer engaged busily in outward planning, is united to the intellect, and uplifted in a single, pure act of becoming. Concentration directed in this way becomes ecstasy. And the twofold meaning of *Hong* and *Sau* combines ultimately in the single-because omnipresent-vibration, *Aum*.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7, by Kriyananda

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**Q.** What if, during one's practice of this, or of any other, technique, one is suddenly lifted into a divine state of consciousness? Assuming that it was the technique that induced this state, should one continue his practice, or abandon it to deepen one's enjoyment of this state of consciousness?

**A.** That depends on whether the technique actually *induced* the state you refer to, or only prepared you to receive it. Certain divine states, if actually caused by the practice of a technique, may be deepened by continuation of that practice. Otherwise, and generally speaking, the technique should be abandoned in order that you might deepen your enjoyment of, and identification with, the divine experience.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

## How Long Should you Meditate?

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**Q.** How long should the *Hong-Sau* technique be practiced?

**A.** As long as you *enjoy* practicing it This is one technique (unlike many other yoga practices) that cannot be overdone in the sense of putting a strain on the nervous system. Yoganandaji used, as a boy, to practice it as much as 7-1/2 hours at a time. He once told a disciple that if one wants to become a master in this life, he should practice *Hong-Sau* two hours daily No technique, however, should be practiced to the point of boredom or fatigue. Beginners, especially, may do better to practice only half an hour at a time, perhaps even less. For others, let *enjoyment* be your key, lest you slip gradually into the pernicious habit of meditating mechanically, without that keen sense of blissful anticipation which is so necessary to any real meditative progress. When your enjoyment of the technique begins to lessen, cease your practice at least for that session. When your enjoyment of meditation itself lessens, stop meditating, or take a break (you might rest in *Savasana* (The Corpse Pose) before making another effort.

**Q.** When the Master said to practice *Hong-Sau* two hours a day, did he mean at one sitting?

**A.** Yes, if possible. But if not, I am sure he would have agreed to your dividing this time into two or more shorter periods. Remember, no fixed time can guarantee success in yoga practice. Suggested times should be taken only as general guidelines.

**Q.** May one practice this technique in idle moments as well, apart from one's prescribed periods for meditation?

**A.** Indeed, yes! Anywhere, practically: sitting at your desk in the office, or in public places, or at a party when you are not involved in the conversation. Before others, however, don't be obvious about what you are doing. Sit back, and close your eyes as if you were resting them, or look straight ahead, as if reflectively.

**Q.** What proportion of one's meditation should be devoted to the practice of this technique?

**A.** It is difficult to advise in this matter, except to say that this is one of the most important techniques of yoga. The longer and more deeply you practice any technique, the sooner you will become proficient in it. It is for you to decide how long, in proportion to other techniques, you want to watch the breath. Regardless what techniques are practiced, however, *at least* the last quarter of one's meditation time should be devoted to simple meditation, without any practice of techniques. As my guru put it, intuition (which he defined as the soul's power to know God) is developed by prolonging and deepening the peaceful after-effects of one's practice of the meditation techniques.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

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How long should you meditate? The first rule is, Don't be ruled by what others do. What works well for them may not work for you. Accept that in certain ways you are unique. Here are a few general guidelines:

Intensity of effort is far more important than the time spent in meditation.

Never meditate to the point of mental fatigue, strain, or boredom. Enjoy what you do. Enjoy every aspect of your life—not an easy thing to do if one thinks about the aspects individually, but not so difficult if you concentrate on enjoying the inner Self. If you feel joy in meditation, stop meditating when the joy begins to diminish. One rule for right eating is to leave the table a little hungry. Apply this rule to meditation. In that way, you'll always look forward to your next time for meditation.

On the other hand, make an effort to meditate a little longer at least once a week. Four to six hours, even, is not exaggerated. And once a week won't kill you! Gradually you'll break the habit of thinking you can meditate only for short periods.

In longer meditations, imitate the ocean tides in their ebb and flow. Let periods of intense concentration alternate with periods of relaxed effort and peaceful receptivity. Like waves coming in to shore, high intensity will alternate with low intensity in long meditations, and there may be pauses when no waves come at all. Until you can transcend body-consciousness in superconsciousness, it is unlikely you'll be able to meditate deeply for very long. Think of your thoughts as dirt that has been stirred up in a glass. Stop stirring it, and it will gradually settle.

The greatest difficulty, in long meditations especially, is physical tension. Make an extra effort to keep your whole body relaxed, by following the relaxation methods taught in this book.

As a general guideline, I suggest you try to meditate at least half an hour twice a day—in the morning after you get up, and in the evening before going to bed. An hour and a half twice a day is better. But if you are a beginning meditator, more than one hour a day may be extreme. It is better to meditate a few minutes with deep concentration than a whole hour absentmindedly. Moreover, I don't mind bargaining with you! For although five minutes, let's say, isn't much for anyone who has developed a taste for meditation, it may be all you feel you can spend in the beginning. So be it! Think of meditation, if you like, as daily spiritual hygiene. You brush your teeth, bathe, and brush your hair every day: Why not add to that routine five minutes of meditation?

You'll come to enjoy meditating, in time. Then you'll find yourself meditating longer because you want to, and not because someone is nagging you to do so. But if you think you're too busy, here's something to think about: You can always find the time for something you enjoy doing, can't you? In time, you'll wonder how you ever lived without meditating daily. And the answer, of course, will be: You didn't. What you did, that is, wasn't really living.

Be natural in your efforts. Make haste slowly, as the saying goes. Don't force yourself to meditate when you'd very much rather be doing something else.

At the same time, don't stop meditating altogether with the excuse that you have other things to do. Remember, there's only one direction to go that makes any lasting sense: toward your own Self, in superconsciousness. No substitute will ever work for you, it's never worked for anyone. No appointment is more important than your appointment with—not death: *life*.

Be *a little* stern with yourself. Success won't come to people who never try. Only bear in mind that tension is counterproductive. In meditation, concentrate first of all on relaxation.

Remember this also: The more you meditate, the more you'll want to meditate, but the less you meditate, the less you'll enjoy doing it.

Another rule: As soon as you sit for meditation, get "down to business." Don't dawdle, as if telling yourself, "Oh, I have a whole hour, so what's the rush?"

Be regular in your hours and practices of meditation. Saying that reminds me of a typewriter I bought when I was seventeen. At the time I also bought an instruction manual that explained the touch system. For a week or two I practiced the exercises in the manual assiduously, mastering the system to the point where I finally learned to type quite rapidly. At that time, however, I was so eager to begin using the touch system that I ignored the exercises for learning the numerals "I'll learn them," I told myself, "as I go along." The result? Today, more than fifty years later, I *still* need to look at the number keys when I want to use them.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter Seventeen

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Don't push your meditative efforts. Meditate with enjoyment.

A good rule is to meditate only as long as you enjoy doing so. When the enjoyment begins to diminish, get up. An act remembered happily will be repeated enthusiastically. Never let your meditations become a chore.

On the other hand, we've all experienced times when peace, though recognized by us as the one thing we need, is the one thing we most fear. Our feelings are tense, and we imagine, wrongly, that we'll only rid ourselves of them by tensing them further — to the point of emotional desperation.

Truly, every state of mind is like a vortex; it draws all the energy it can to itself.

At such times, don't fight against your mind's rebellion. Let it fidget for a while. It will calm down, if it sees that you mean no disrespect for its restlessness.

If, then, you try to meditate despite your mind's Declaration of Independence (signed, possibly, with the heart's blood'), don't try too hard. Meditate less, just to keep the meditative habit alive.

A good rule in all your meditations, in fact, is: Don't try too hard. Relax. Enjoy. Don't "fight it out." Instead, love.

--From the article, *Meditation for Starters*, Swami Kriyananda

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Paramhansa Yogananda said that if one wants to be a master in this life, he should practice *Hong-Sau* two hours daily, he great guru himself, as a boy, used to practice it as much as seven and a half hours at a stretch. Really, though in the beginning fifteen to thirty minutes may be enough, there is no limit to how long you may practice this technique.

--From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 9:7

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Spiritual practices have been identified for centuries with ego-active concepts, such as acquiring merit, working off bad karma, and propitiating God. Holiness has been gauged by the amount of time a person spends in prayer and meditation, or by the number of beads he tells and *mantras* he utters, or by whether he has suffered—or, according to certain schools of thought, not suffered.

There is nothing wrong with the idea that you get good karma for performing actions. Nor is there anything wrong with wanting to please God. Quite the contrary. It is well also to remember, however, that good karma alone will not get you God, who is beyond all karma. God, moreover, is *always* pleased! He lives in eternal bliss. It is absurd to think of Him (or Her) as an angry Deity waiting gloatingly for the chance to vent His (or Her) displeasure on poor, perennially confused humanity.

Religious teachings, if they are true, are divine. Many religious *beliefs*, however, are little better than superstitions. In the case of judgment, it is people who judge themselves through their uneasy conscience when they offend against higher laws of their own nature. God loves them no matter what they do. His love is infinitely greater than ours for our own children. Even if our child errs, the sorrow we feel, if our love is pure, will be for them and not for ourselves. Our lament will be for the potential they've neglected for true happiness and understanding.

Soul-freedom, however, is not attained by good deeds alone. Spiritual progress is not a matter of winning brownie points. Even though tests are a part of the spiritual path—as they are of life generally—spirituality is determined by the wisdom we acquire as a result of those trials, and not by the trials themselves. The *way out* of our trials is by calm acceptance and a spirit of inner joy. We demonstrate no inner gains if we allow those trials to pull us down into ego-consciousness, with its attendant sorrows.

Keep this thought, therefore, firmly in mind: The way to advance through meditation is not grimly to force yourself to sit as many hours as possible every day. To meditate to the point of mental exhaustion is counter-productive. Don't *push* yourself beyond your own natural abilities. To meditate five minutes may sometimes be more effective than to meditate hours, if during those five minutes you meditate with full concentration and heart-felt dedication. Always try to meditate with enthusiasm—calm, never restless.

In the beginning you may not derive much actual joy from meditating, though you should at least be able to feel peace. In any case, concentrate on the positive results you anticipate from meditation, and not on the arduousness of the effort involved. Later, as you begin to experience joy within, make it a practice to meditate only as long as that joy lasts. When it begins to diminish, stop, and get up. An act that is happily remembered will be returned to with enthusiasm. Never let your meditations become a chore for you.

On the other hand, we've all experienced times when peace, though it is something we long for, seems to be the one thing we most fear. During periods of emotional tension, we may imagine that the only way to rid ourselves of that tension will be to increase it to a fever pitch until it falls away, like an over-ripe fruit, of its own weight.

Truly, every state of mind is a vortex: It sucks into itself any energy that is available to it.

When the mind resists your efforts to calm it, don't squash its rebellion. Let your thoughts strut for a while. Meanwhile, simply watch them—pleasantly, if you can, even good-humoredly,

as you might watch a fractious child. They will calm down once they find that you respect them no less for their unruliness. During periods of restlessness, when the mind is concerned with busily declaring its independence, don't discipline it too sternly. Meditate some, of course, if only to keep the meditative habit alive, but otherwise divert the mind. Don't punish yourself for your inadequacies.

A good rule in meditation generally is to *keep always relaxed*. Don't “tough’ it out” when you feel restless. Instead, work at *loving God more deeply*.

It isn't easy to formulate a single rule that will fit everybody's needs. There are many gradations of spiritual commitment. The person who longs intensely for God may want to devote every waking moment to his spiritual life. For another person, even one hour a day may seem exaggerated. The “path of moderation,” so often recommended by great masters, is always meant to signify that one shouldn't strain. Balanced progress demands ever deeper relaxation. On the other hand, a sincere seeker will always devote much time to meditation. It is only by worldly minds that “moderation” is taken to mean, “Be as restless as you like, as long as you spend a little time also in meditation.”

Whatever your own definition of moderation, try to make daily meditation a pleasure, not a chore. Start, if you like, with five minutes a day. Don't worry if others, beginners like yourself, sit for half an hour or even an hour. It is always risky to compare yourself with others. Find your own natural rhythms. First of all, get accustomed simply to sitting still for a while; it is better to meditate a little bit than not at all. A better length for beginners, however, would be fifteen minutes—enough time, in other words, to give the mind an opportunity to “simmer down” a little.

Gradually, after a few days or weeks, see if you can't double your meditation time. Then double it again. Once you begin really to enjoy meditating, you'll find it natural to sit longer.

Ideally, I'd suggest meditating twice a day, half an hour at each sitting. Don't force yourself, but try to reach the point where you realize that what you are doing is important to you. From then on, you'll be safely on your own! At that point, I would say to meditate at least an hour and a half a day—an hour, perhaps, in the morning, and half an hour in the evening. At Ananda Village, and in the branch Ananda communities, I recommend that our members try to meditate a minimum of three hours a day.

Apart from these few guidelines, the matter is up to you. What seems “moderation” to one may strike another as fanatical excess. And what seems “moderation” to that other may strike the first as a sure indication of tepidity.

Above all, be steadfast. It is better to meditate regularly for a few minutes every day than to make heroic efforts for a week, and then, one's will power exhausted, collapse into a state of spiritual paralysis.

Remember, finally, this simple rule; it was stated by Paramhansa Yogananda: “The more you meditate, the more you'll want to meditate. But the less you meditate, the less you'll want to meditate.”

## Questions and Answers

**Question:** Why is my mind so resistant? I find sometimes that my very resolution to do better is enough to inspire an in-house rebellion!



**Answer:** Habit can be a potent adversary, as I've pointed out before. The good thing is that habit can also become a powerful ally. Develop the right habits and they'll pull you safely through many a fierce storm.

It takes time, usually, to uproot bad habits—even as much time as five to eight years, in the case of deeply rooted ones. The way to uproot them is not so much by fighting them as by working all the harder at developing opposite good habits.

Restlessness, for example, is overcome by developing a taste for calmness. A tendency to talk excessively can be overcome by developing a liking for silence. Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, “You can't get rid of darkness by beating at it with a stick. Instead, turn on the light! The darkness will then vanish as though it had never been.”

**Question:** You raised the subject of opposition from outer circumstances. What can I do if family members, friends, or co-workers try to keep me from meditating?

**Answer:** This kind of opposition often comes in reaction to proselytizing efforts on the new meditator's part. It is better, in the beginning especially, to keep your spiritual practices to yourself, or to share them only with those whom you know to be sympathetic. As Yogananda put it, “If you pour milk on water, it will mingle with the water. But once the milk has been churned to butter, it will float naturally and not become diluted.”

No one will protest if you spend more time than most people in brushing your teeth. If you sleep longer than necessary, those closest to you may not like it, but most people will simply think it might be better if you didn't. They'd actively oppose you only if you insisted that everyone do likewise.

Keep your spiritual practices to yourself. They are no one's business but your own.

**Question:** Another thought arises with the suggestion of outside opposition. In reading the lives of saints, it seems they were often subjected to satanic influences. Do such influences really exist? And if so, ought we to be concerned about them in our spiritual life?

**Answer:** A satanic influence, so called, is anything that obstructs your efforts toward self-improvement. It could be a hostile co-worker who thrives on disharmony, and can't stand to see you peaceful. The negative influence, in other words, needn't be an imp with a tail! But one would have to be blind not to see that obstructive influences do exist in our lives.

So then, could more be involved in such opposition than the resistance of other people to your spiritual efforts? Is there a negative force that can pursue you even past the door that you close to ensure meditative privacy?

Well, there are of course your own thoughts. What door could shut them out?

But is there also something else—a malign influence, perhaps on a cosmic scale?

It wouldn't hurt to be aware that human thoughts are expressions of states of consciousness that are universal. For instance, we don't *create* love: We *manifest* it. We don't *create* inspiration: We *receive* it. The same must be said of negative thoughts and emotions. We attract the states of consciousness that come to us.

As for being concerned about such negative influences, don't invite them by your excessive anxiety. I think that much of the “satanic” influence that people experience comes in response to their own preoccupation with the subject. Be positive. *Reach upward* in your aspirations, not downward in your fears. If negative thoughts enter the mind, don't accept them. The thoughts are not yours, and don't define you as you are. They are foreigners, no matter how

many years you've housed and fed them in your mind. Tell yourself, "I am a child of God. From now on I define myself in terms of my strengths, not of my past weaknesses."

**Question:** You've discussed how long to meditate on a daily basis. How long will it take me to reach the goals of meditation—to attain superconscious awareness, for instance, or to find God?

**Answer:** The time varies with the individual, of course. If a nail is partly embedded in a board, can you say how long it will take to extract it? It depends on the length of the embedded portion, on how tightly set it is, and on the amount of force you apply to pull the nail.

How long, then, does it take to achieve the goals of meditation? It depends on the number and fixity of the bad habits that are buried in the subconscious, which work against your present meditative efforts. It depends on how fervently you apply yourself.

Finally, it depends on the grace of God. But grace is not whimsical. It is poured into that bowl which has been made clean. "Blessed are the pure in heart," Jesus said, "for they shall know God."

There is another important point to consider: Time, in the last analysis, is a delusion. If the spiritual path requires time, it is partly because of our belief, born of past conditioning, that time is a reality to be reckoned with. Yet the truth we seek lies beyond time, in eternity. If we could only banish the delusion of time from our minds, our spiritual journey might be ended even now! The path is a process of realizing—of *remembering*—that which we are already. Our soul's perfection can never be lost. We have hypnotized ourselves, merely, with the thought of limitation. We have told ourselves, falsely, that our limitations define us as we are.

--From *Meditation for Starters, Chapter 7, by Swami Kriyananda*

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## After Meditation

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Learn to live more *superconsciously*. This means to live with meditation-born awareness. Try to make the peace you experience in meditation the basis of your objective experience of life. Don't let the meditative peace slip between your fingers like grains of sand the moment you find the winds of worldly duties again buffeting you.

Don't let the insistent demands people make of you blow away your calm self-awareness.

Don't let others define you in their terms. Live by what you know of yourself, inwardly. Your abiding reality is the peace, love, and joy you have experienced in your own soul.

Meditation makes you aware of a better world. It is no dream world, but a world more real than any other. Owing to your awareness of that world, you will be able to cope far more effectively with things and situations that others around you insist are the world of reality. Peace will help you to solve problems that others, living as they are, hemmed in by cares and worries, find insoluble.

Calmness will come to you as a result of daily meditation. In that calmness will come intuitive perceptions. Where, formerly, you may have felt paralyzed by the sheer enormity of life's *problems*, intuition will supply you with simple, clear *answers*.

You will find through meditation a heart quality developing that will inspire others to look at their problems, too, more constructively.

Meditation will sharpen your concentration, and develop your will power. Obstacles of many kinds will simply vanish, and you'll be able to accomplish in minutes what, formerly, might have taken you hours, days, or even weeks to do.

A highly successful businessman of my acquaintance spent his mornings meditating. He went to work only in the afternoons. His associates sometimes chided him, "With all your responsibilities, how can you afford to be so late for work?"

"Because of my responsibilities," he would reply, "I can't afford not to!" He had found that by coming to work with a clear mind he could solve problems on which others would have spent days, without ever being sure whether the answers they found were the right ones.

For intuition, the natural fruit of meditation, has one supreme advantage over the reasoning faculty: It provides inner certainty.

The rational mind can never be quite sure of anything. The best it ever does is decide on which, out of a variety of possibilities, seems the best choice. Great discoveries and accomplishments are the consequence, always, of some measure of intuition.

Learn to look at life more with a sense of its underlying unity. Don't analyze everything. Obviously, there are situations where analysis is necessary, but even then, cling to a deeper consciousness of the interrelationship of all things. For everything is a manifestation of a universal reality – even as waves, whatever shape they manifest, are manifestations of the same sea.

There is a coherency in life, an underlying purpose and meaning. *Know* that, for every problem, there *has* to be a solution. See other people, not (to quote Sartre) as "that which you are not," but as part of your own greater reality. Love them from that inward awareness which you are developing in meditation. All humanity is, in the deeper sense, your own self.

All things are subject to the Law of Oneness. Everything has its compensating opposite. The pendulum, after moving in one direction, swings back in the opposite direction. For every up there is a down; for every left, a right; for every negative, a positive. Darkness and light, cold and heat, pain and pleasure, male and female – in all Nature we see opposites balancing one another.

For every problem, similarly, there is a solution. Be solution-oriented, not problem-oriented. That is what it means to think superconsciously. Don't dwell on difficulties longer than it takes simply to define them clearly. The solutions often come from seeing opposites as pairs in a single unity.

Be guided, above all, by inner joy. The more you let yourself be guided superconsciously, the more you will feel joy in everything you do. You will reach the point of understanding that, if that quiet, inner joy is missing, anything you contemplate doing were better left undone. And when inner joy is present, it will be your way of knowing for a certainty that what you contemplate is right and good.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Question:** How can I be *really sure* that I'm being guided superconsciously?

**Answer:** You can't be absolutely certain; the mind is very adept at fooling itself! You *can*, however, become increasingly satisfied with the results, as everything you do works increasingly effectively for you.

Don't abandon reason in your attempt to be guided superconsciously. Reason is a valuable tool for understanding. It is the corrector. Though not creative in itself, it is an important part of the creative process. Reason checks your conclusions objectively and helps you to make sure they will really work. Reason looks at the ideal and sees whether, in application to prosaic reality, the ideal will work.

Nikola Tesla, for example, the great inventor,(3) "invented" a number of marvels that had to await the discovery of new materials before they could be made practicable. His inspiration outstripped the practical knowledge of his times. Superconscious guidance will be true, but it may be true before its time in this world of prosaic realities. Sometimes, also, guidance comes mixed with human desires and expectations. Reason will help you to separate the true from that which you merely wish to be true.

**Question:** How will "solution-orientedness" in itself bring me solutions? I may *wish* for a solution, but I don't see how, if I'm not really functioning on a superconscious level in a state of deep meditation, mere wishing for answers will supply them to me.

**Answer:** What "solution-orientedness" does is open your mind to inspiration "from above" by attuning it to the way that inspiration works. "Solution-orientedness" carries no guarantee, but great inspirations always come by putting out the positive faith, first, that the answers exist, and that they are simply waiting to be found. Have faith that you have them already, and you'll be surprised how often your faith is justified.

**Question:** What is the best way to carry my meditation-born awareness into daily life?

**Answer:** By developing a consciousness of your own center in the spine. Live outward from that center, rather than inward from your periphery.

–From *Meditazione For Startes*, by Swami Kriyananda

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We develop intuition, Paramhansa Yogananda said, by prolonging the peaceful aftereffects of the meditation techniques.

After meditation, don't strip your mental gears by plunging hastily into outer activity. Try to carry the meditative peace into everything you do. To develop this habit, it may help to begin with outward activities that don't involve your mind too much. While doing them, chant inwardly to God. The walking meditation is an excellent practice for bridging the gap between meditative peace and outward busyness. If you can't devote time to walking calmly after meditation, try doing things slowly for a bit, consciously bringing peace and energy into your muscles and bodily movements.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter 17

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If time allows, practice the lessons longer than mentioned. Aside from the *inward* experiences there also comes the greatest calmness. Hold to that *calm effect* of the concentration lessons *during* and *after* the practice as long as it is possible for you. Apply the calmness in practical situations of life—in dealing with people, in studying, in business, in thinking, in controlling yourself, in getting rid of any fixed mental or physiological habit or condition that is considered unnecessary or harmful, and so forth.

Whenever situations demand, recall immediately in mind the calmness felt during and after concentration, and fall right into that mood, and meet situations from that *calm center*. Remember, while practicing concentration deep intensity of mind is necessary, but that does not mean that there should be any *strain* or *strenuousness* present. Practice it with reverence, and feel that in calmness, and in listening to the vibration, you are contacting the Great Spirit who is present within you as soul, and whose expression is vibration. Results you will positively feel. Calmness you will most certainly have. The highest intuitions come after a prolonged practice. Further, this technique puts you, by and by, in touch with the unexplored reservoir of power. Do not be impatient. Keep on. Get the lessons into your regular routine, so much a part of your day as eating and sleeping. *The most beneficial effects flow silently over the whole mental and physiological constitution.* Highest results, as in everything else, cannot be attained in one day. Practice, practice and apply. We are talking from experience. Our students all over the country write us about their contact with the Great Spirit as a result of their faithful practice. Everyone can have the same glorious experience if he perseveres in his practice.

--*Yogoda Course, Lesson 4 (1925)*, Swami Yogananda

## §

### **Learn To Go Into Ecstasy At Will**

(First in a quiet place and then in a noisy place) Inhale, exhale twelve times. With half-open eyes look up at the point between the eyebrows — expel breath, forgetting it entirely. Dissolve your body consciousness and thoughts and sleepiness, if any, at once into the superconscious, ever-increasing joy of deep inward concentration. By closing the eyes and forgetting breath you have learned to go to sleep instantaneously — dissolving body consciousness. Now by keeping eyes half open, pointed upward at the point between the

eyebrows, you must instantaneously enjoy and be intoxicated with the cocktail of the joys of many sleeps — consciously.

With half-open eyes learn to remain half-awake and half asleep, and you will learn to go into ecstasy, or the state of consciously sleeping at will.

Sleep is a negative way of knowing you are not a man or a woman, but an invisible, joyous Soul — made in the image of blissful God. When you sleep you are not unconscious but semiconscious, for when you wake up you can always tell whether you were sleeping lightly or soundly, or sleeping in a disturbed way or joyously. In sleep you are forced to know every night that you are not so many pounds of flesh and bones, but a happy Invisible Soul, sleeping in space.

By learning to sleep at will consciously with half-open eyes, you will feel a greater and greater joy or ecstasy or superconsciousness and intuitively sense your Soul.

--From *Praecepta* Lesson 26 (1938), by Yogananda

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**Q.** What if, during one's practice of this, or of any other, technique, one is suddenly lifted into a divine state of consciousness? Assuming that it was the technique that induced this state, should one continue his practice, or abandon it to deepen one's enjoyment of this state of consciousness?

**A.** That depends on whether the technique actually *induced* the state you refer to, or only prepared you to receive it. Certain divine states, if actually caused by the practice of a technique, may be deepened by continuation of that practice. Otherwise, and generally speaking, the technique should be abandoned in order that you might deepen your enjoyment of, and identification with, the divine experience.

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## Routine

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So—be specific in your practices. Don't tell yourself they'll just sort themselves out someday by some process of osmosis.

It is a good practice to meditate at the same hours every day. Routine conditions the mind. You'll find yourself *wanting* to meditate whenever those hours return. It will be much easier, then, to set all distractions aside.

Stick to your routine as best as you can. To help you in creating one, here are a few suggestions:

- Do the energization exercise in chapter 10. If you learn this entire system of exercises, practice it daily—either before or after meditation. (Paramhansa Yogananda recommended doing them before.)
- As soon as you sit to meditate, pray for depth and for guidance in your meditation. Pray also for peace for all humanity. Don't isolate your sympathies from others; embrace all in your divine love
- Chant and/or repeat affirmations, according to your personal predilection.
- Tense and relax the whole body two or three times Inhale before tensing, exhale with relaxation. This practice will help relax you mentally, as well as physically.
- Expand your consciousness by following one of the visualization exercises in this book.
- Practice *navi kriya*.
- Practice *Hong-San* for a time—not less than half an hour, if possible.
- After practicing the techniques, and for at least a quarter of your total meditation time, practice devotion, or listen to the inner sounds, or raise your energy from the heart center to the point between the eyebrows Practice again one of the visualization exercises.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, Chapter 17, by Kriyananda

### §

- Sit erect on edge of bed with feet on floor, or sit on a cushioned chair, or sit on a bed with your legs crossed, facing East, with spine straight, chest out, abdomen in, shoulder blades together, chin parallel to the ground, and up-turned, cup-shaped palms resting at the junction of the abdomen and thighs.
- Then precede the actual practice of the "Hong-Sau" Technique with an awakening prayer, which coincides with your desire or purpose of concentration, as, for example, for Wisdom, Peace and Contentment, repeat the following prayer:
- "Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, Saints of all religions, the Spirit in my body temple, Supreme Master Minds of India, Supreme Master Babaji, Great Master Lahiri Mahasaya, Master Swami Sri Yukteswar Giriji, and Guru-Preceptor, I bow to you all. Lead me from ignorance to wisdom, from restlessness to peace; from desires to contentment ."

- Inhale slowly, counting 1 to 20. Hold the breath, counting 1 to 20. Then exhale slowly, counting 1 to 20. Repeat this 6 to 12 times. Tense the whole body, clenching the fists. Relax the whole body, throwing the breath out. Repeat 6 times.
- Then exhale quickly, and remain without breath as long as it will stay out without discomfort, and mentally wait for the breath to come in. When the breath comes in of itself, mentally say "HONG", and when the breath goes out of itself, mentally say, "SAU". Keep the eyes closed or open without winking or gazing, and gently fixed upward on the point between the eyebrows.
- After practicing this Technique deeply for ten minutes to one-half an hour, exhale slowly and completely. Blow all the breath out of the lungs which you possibly can, and enjoy the breathless state as long as you can without discomfort. Repeat three times. Then forget the breath and pray, or sit in Silence.

### **Follow these Instructions**

Long concentration must be preceded by 15 minutes' practice of Exercise 1 of the Technique of Rejuvenation, as given in Praeceptum Lesson 8. By faithfully practicing this Technique, along with more advanced exercises that will be taught in future Praecepta, and by longer meditations in the morning and at night, and also a three-hour meditation once a week, on any day suitable to you, you will find that you will be well advanced in the Spiritual Path.

In the morning, this Lesson should be practiced after the Rejuvenating and Recharging Exercise as taught in Praeceptum Lesson 8. You must get used to the practicing of this Technique with your eyes gently concentrated upon the point between the eyebrows. Do not strain the eyes. However, if you are not used to holding the eyes in this position, practice some of the time with your eyes half open, but most of the time with eyes closed. You can practice with eyes closed, and in leisure hours lie down on your back, and watch the breath, mentally chanting "HONG-SAU". The more you practice in your leisure hours, the greater will be the results. Work overtime and you will gain still better results.

When you consciously watch the breath, what happens? The heart, the lungs, and the diaphragm gradually calm down and their muscles ultimately, during a long deep silence, refrain from constant motion. Thus, decay is stopped throughout the system, and then no more venous blood has to be pumped by the heart into the lungs. When the heart does not pump blood, the lungs do not expand any more to receive more oxygen, then you do not breathe any more. When this happens, decay is stopped entirely. When decay is stopped, you no longer are in need of new, red blood, oxygen, nor food — but can live directly from Cosmic Energy running through the medulla, and not by the energy distilled from food only.

It is always a good plan to exhale and drive away the poisons before beginning deep breathing. By practicing the inhalation and exhalation exercises, the carbon in the venous blood is burned out and partial decay is stopped in the body. You will notice that when you throw the breath out after practicing this Technique for a long time and deeply, that you have no desire to breathe for a longtime. You can remain longer in the breathless state than if you tried breathlessness immediately after restlessness.



### **The Attention Becomes Free**

Death is nothing but involuntary complete relaxation. The heart is controlled by the medulla, which is the only part of the human body which cannot be operated upon. The tiniest pin-prick in it will cause instant death. The heart, in turn, is the switch which controls all the five sense-telephones of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Sensations cannot reach the brain of their own accord, but the messages of sensations in the eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue are carried to the brain by the telephone wires of sensory nerves. When the sensations are quieted, thoughts do not arise, and when thoughts do not arise, associated memory-thoughts do not bother the brain. Thus, in practicing this Lesson, when you sit upright, relaxed in the meditation posture, the production of decay and waste is slowed up in the outer muscles and limbs.

As soon as, by the practice of this Lesson, energy is withdrawn from the sensory motor nerves, muscles, limbs, and the heart, no sensations can register on the switchboard of the brain to disturb the operator's attention and coax it to rouse thoughts. This is the time your attention is free to be concentrated upon any problem or idea, or upon God.

After scientifically freeing the attention from objects of distraction, learn to concentrate it upon any one thing or upon God. That form of concentration in which you disengage your attention from the sense-telephones and apply it upon God, is called meditation. You can concentrate upon money or upon God, but you never meditate upon money. Meditation is only upon God.

*--From Praecepta Lesson 21 (1938) - Concentration Routine, by Yogananda*

### §

#### **Preparation**

1. So as to decarbonize the blood stream, and thereby to calm the body, inhale, tensing the whole body, throw the breath out and relax. Repeat two or three times.
2. Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply several times, making the period of inhalation, holding, and exhalation the same (Suggested counts 20-20-20, or 12-12-12.) Don't strain. Repeat six or twelve times.
3. Mentally check the body to make sure it is relaxed. Periodically, check the body again during your practice of the technique.
4. Begin your actual practice of the technique by first exhaling, slowly and deliberately.

#### **The Basic Technique**

- When the breath flows in of its own accord, follow it mentally with the sound, *Hong*. Imagine that the breath itself is making this sound.
- When the breath flows out of its own accord, follow it mentally with, and imagine that it is itself making, the sound, *Sau* (to rhyme with "saw").
- If at any time the breathing stops naturally, accept the pause calmly, identifying yourself with it until the breath flows again *of its own accord*.

- To keep your mind on the breath (or, when you are more interiorized, to differentiate between inhalation and exhalation), it may help you to bring the forefinger towards the palm as the breath flows in, and away from the palm as the breath flows out.

### **First Phase**

1. If your breath is still restless, you may be more easily aware of the physical movement of your lungs and diaphragm than of the flow of breath in the nostrils. In this case, let the mind follow its natural inclination: Concentrate on the purely physical aspects of breathing—the movement of the rib cage, the diaphragm, or the navel.

2. Gradually, as you grow calmer, transfer your attention from the breathing process to the breath itself.

### **Second Phase**

1. As your attention begins to focus on the breath itself, watch the breath at the point where it enters the nostrils.
2. Gradually, with the progressive calmness of the breath, center your awareness of it higher and higher in the nose. To raise this center of awareness, you may find it helpful if you make a special effort inwardly to relax your nose.
3. As it becomes natural to do so, center your awareness of the breath at the point where it enters the nasal cavity. Feel it in the upper part of this passage, and visualize its movement gently fanning and awakening the Christ center in the frontal lobe of the brain.

### **Third Phase**

1. Become more and more identified with the breath, less and less with your body's need for it to flow in and out. Remember, especially as you grow very calm, that this need may be as much imaginary (the result of deeply ingrained subconscious habit) as actual. Therefore:
2. Particularly concentrate on, and enjoy, the pauses between the breaths. Dwell on the sense of freedom from the tyranny of constant breathing. Beyond enjoying this sense of calmness and freedom, however, do not try to prolong the breathless state by an act of will.
3. Direct the will, rather, toward the thought of *becoming* the air that is flowing in the nose, or of becoming boundless space at the Christ center.
4. As the pauses become prolonged, you may want to engage your attention in chanting *Aum* mentally at the Christ center.

—From *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Chapter 10:7

## §

1. What you must strive for is not to reach out towards anything that you are not, but only to realize what you *are* already, even now. Long ago the Indian sage, Patanjali, referred to this realization as *smriti* or memory. Worldly man sees all things as a becoming, as reaching out from what is to what has never been, to what might still, despite all his efforts, never be. Hence the struggle, the exhaustion that accompany his labors. But in yoga it is not so much by effort that one advances as by a gradual elimination of the sense of effort. Tensions are dissolved in

ever deeper relaxation—physical first, then emotional and mental. God need not be shouted to in the distance. He is already here, behind the press and sway of our restless thoughts. He awaits only our notice. Remember the words of Jesus: "Lo, I am with you always." Does not a sense of strain in one's search for the Divine imply a subtle doubt?

2. If you have the time, exercise a little before meditation. Unless the body has been freed of toxins and sluggishness, it will resist your meditative efforts. The exercises one performs before meditation, however, should calm, not excite, the nervous system. A few Hatha Yoga postures, such as those described in our booklet, *Yoga Postures for Self-Awareness*, or the energization exercises that Paramhansa Yogananda originated, are an excellent preparation for meditation.

3. Meditate sitting down. Any of the classic sitting positions of yoga may be recommended, but an armless, straight-backed chair will do if your legs cannot adapt themselves to a cross-legged position. (It is God, after all, not your aching knees, that should be the object of your meditation!) Yogis say that one should sit on a deer skin or on a woolen blanket, facing east or north. If you sit on a chair, let the blanket run under your feet and up over the back of the chair. The purpose of this covering is to insulate you from certain currents in the ground that tend to draw the life force downward. The direction in which you face helps to put you in harmony with certain magnetic currents that circle the earth.

If you sit in a chair, keep your feet flat on the floor. Especially important is the position of your upper body. The spine must be kept straight, the body in an attitude of alertness. If you sit on a chair, try not to lean back. Keep the body erect, the chest out, the shoulder blades drawn gently together, the chin parallel to the floor. Place your hands palms upward on the thighs at the juncture of the abdomen.

Sitting erect will induce a positive mental attitude. It will also make it easier for you to breathe properly. (The breath plays an important role in yoga practice.) Above all, an erect posture will facilitate the awakening of certain subtle energies in the spine. (A discussion of this aspect of the subject belongs properly to more advanced yoga teachings than to the present, basic instructions.)

4. Having assumed the correct posture, begin your meditation. Throw out of the mind all thought, all plans for the morrow, all attachments to the outer world. Chants, such as those in Yoganandaji's book *Cosmic Chants*, or the repetition of certain Sanskrit *mantras* (word formulae), are particularly helpful. The simple repetition of the syllable, AUM, is often recommended. Westerners may find chanting easiest to learn from a sound-recording. Several such recordings are available through Ananda Inner Life and Ananda Sangha,

The main purpose of chanting is twofold: to awaken fervor in the heart, and to concentrate the mind. Yogis claim that certain chants and mantras have power to influence the inner man, calming and centering him in himself. "Chanting," Yoganandaji often said, "is half the battle.

5. Inhale, counting mentally to 12; feel that you are filling your whole body with air. Hold the breath, counting to 12; exhale, counting to 12. If you prefer, make the count 6-6-6 or 20-20-20, according to your own lung capacity. *Never strain*. Repeat this breathing exercise six to twelve times. Then inhale, tense the whole body, throw the breath out and relax; repeat two or three times. (The practice of tensing and relaxing the whole body will help to relax even those muscles which are tensed without your conscious knowledge.)

**6.** You should now be relatively relaxed. *Hold the body still.* Mentally check it from time to time to see that no part becomes tensed again inadvertently. Remember, most of the difficulty experienced by beginners in meditation is due simply to physical tension.

**7.** Meditate on the concept of space—space surrounding your body, space inside the body. Feel that you have become weightless. Bear in mind that the soul cannot soar in the vast skies of Spirit so long as the mind is weighed down with body-consciousness.

**8.** When thoughts come, release them into the space surrounding you. Watch them drift away into nothingness. Be free of the impulse to think constantly!

**9.** If plans and projects disturb your concentration, meditate on the concept of timelessness. If you can persuade yourself that no future exists, what purpose can remain in planning for it?

**10.** Now, concentrate at the point between the eyebrows. Yoganandaji called this the Christ Consciousness Center, or Christ Center. Yogis call this the seat of concentration. Why?

Different states of consciousness are associated with different areas of the brain. Fear stimulates one area; hunger, another. When energy becomes focused in sufficient strength, in any area, appropriate physiological reactions occur. In the case of fear, there is, among other things an increase in the pulse rate and in the flow of adrenalin. In the case of hunger, digestive juices are secreted. Psychologists have recently found that even by stimulating these areas of the brain artificially, the associated physical reactions can be induced. According to the teaching of yogis, a deeply concentrated, uplifted, or ecstatic state centers one's awareness in the frontal lobe of the brain. And physiologists tell us that this area is the most advanced part of the brain. It is particularly interesting, in the light of recent psychological research, that yogis should always have taught that by concentrating on, and thus stimulating, this frontal lobe, one may enter more easily into an uplifted state of consciousness.

Nor is such concentration lacking in its physiological effects. In ecstasy, for example, the heart beat and breathing are calmed, the nervous system is made peaceful. Even by deliberate concentration at the Christ Center the heart can be slowed, the breathing calmed, the whole nervous system harmonized. While one is outwardly immobile, one's inner awareness is intense.

To concentrate at this Christ Center, look upward gently with half-open or with closed eyes. The direction of one's gaze influences the state of one's mind; an upward gaze has always been associated with an upliftment of consciousness. One's main effort, however, should be directed towards centering his *consciousness* at the point between the eyebrows. Don't strain, therefore, in looking upward. Let the gaze *follow* the inner absorption of the mind.

**11.** Meditate with joy, with devotion. Don't wait for God's joy to make you joyous. To know Him as Love, reach out to Him with love. To know Him as Joy, be joyous first yourself.

**12.** Once you are very calm and concentrated, meditate on the thought of an expanding light and joy. Watch this light extend outward from your body in all directions, encompassing your city, your country, your continent, the world, then expanding beyond this world to include the solar system, our galaxy, the entire universe. Feel that all things are contained in this infinite light and joy.

A couple of recordings that we have prepared of this and of another visualization exercise, with a background of music, may be helpful to you. Paramhansa Yogananda's book, *Metaphysical Meditations*, contains many such exercises, the fruit of his own deep realizations. Yoganandaji used to say that, although the actual techniques of yoga are of prime importance, visualization exercises such as these come close to the techniques in effectiveness. They do so

because they help to accomplish what Patanjali taught: They awaken *smriti*, the hidden memory of a state native to us, but long-forgotten.

If your worship takes a more personal turn, however, you may prefer simply to practice Bhakti Yoga (devotion), repeating constantly, with your mind centered at the point between the eyebrows, any heart-felt prayer such as "Reveal Thyself, reveal Thyself!" or, "Come, Spirit, come!" or, "I am Thine, be Thou mine!" or some Sanskrit *mantra* such as, "Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai, jai Ram, Om!" (O Lord God, victory to God! Victory, victory to God!"—that is to say, "May Thy light be victorious over darkness (in me and in others), Thy love over hatred, Thy joy over sorrow.")

**13.** How long should one meditate? Five minutes is better than none. Fifteen minutes is better still. Half an hour is bare minimum if one wants to achieve more than a fleeting touch of inner peace. But in fact, the sincere seeker should begin with half an hour in the morning, and-- if possible-- an hour at night, or with an hour in the morning and half an hour at night.

It is better to meditate deeply for a short time than absent-mindedly for hours. But the longer you can meditate *deeply*, the more rapid your spiritual progress will be.

**14.** It is best to meditate at the same time every day. Reflect on Pavlov's experiments with dogs. Pavlov rang a bell every time he placed food before the dog. In time, the association of the bell with food grew so strong in the dog's mind that the bell-ring alone, even when no food was given, sufficed to stimulate the digestive juices. Such is the power of habit! In meditation it is difficult enough to become calm, so conditioned is the human mind to restlessness. But if one can sit to meditate at the same hour every day, an association will soon be formed. Thereafter, whenever the hour of meditation approaches, one will feel a hunger for the peace he has come to associate with that time of day. It will be easier, then, to put aside for the time being the cares and distractions of daily life.

**15.** If you set one place aside strictly for meditation, you will gradually build up vibrations in that sanctuary that will help you to go deep. If it is not possible for you to set aside a whole room, then perhaps you can screen off a portion of your bedroom.

**16.** Pause occasionally during the day and recall the peace and joy that you felt that morning in meditation. Yoganandaji told me once, "Live in the Self." It may help you to imagine a halo of light and joy surrounding your body—to feel that from it you are drawing your sustenance.

--From *Yours the Universe - Practical Hints for Meditation*, By Swami Kriyananda

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## Chapter Ten: Guided Meditation

### Expansion of Light

*Sit upright.*

*Sit very still.*

*Feel that, surrounding your body,*

*Is an infinity of dark space.*

*Listen intently:*

*Listen to the whispering silence!*

*Out of silence was sound born.*

*Out of darkness the light came.*

*Of that light, suns and galaxies drew their substance.*

*Light, not form, is the truth that infuses the universe.*

*Surround your body now with a halo of blue light—*

*Soft, soothing—a luminous peace.*

*Light enters you;*

*It pierces the pores of your skin;*

*Space lies outside you no longer: It has made you its own.*

*It reaches deep into your muscles, your bones.*

*The sense of heaviness has been lifted from you.*

*You are made of pure light.*

*Like a boundless sphere, now,*

*The light has started to grow.*

*Shining freedom—claim it your own!*

*Light and joy thrill the air of the room.*

*The people, the objects nearby—*

*All these, in the peacefulness of that blue light and joy,*

*Are one with you.*

*See: Light is embracing the house in which you live.*

*It reaches out to your neighborhood—  
To your township.  
Like an expanding sail, ever outward  
The light swells.  
It embraces your country—  
Your continent—  
The world!  
The whole world is basking  
In the peaceful radiance of your joy.*

*Softly, now—  
Release your light from the boundaries of this world.  
Behold, light rays stream out  
To the limits of the solar system—  
To distant stars—  
To our galactic fringe.  
At last, countless galaxies in all space,  
Their stars, tiny like the lights of a far-off city,  
Glimmer serenely in the vastness of your being.*

*God's light and you are one!  
God's joy and you are one!  
O ray of the Infinite! You are not only this little body:  
You are more—much more.  
Boundless! Eternal!  
All the atoms of creation gather,  
Like thirsty children,  
To drink from the waters,  
To play in the fountain spray  
Of your inexhaustible peace!*

*—From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter Seventeen, by Swami Kriyananda*

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## Guided Meditation with Hong-Sau for Meditation Courses

(Guided by Shivani as an example for the second lesson, when they already know the technique)

### First phase: Relaxation of the body

Let's start with a little bit of relaxation.

Let's sit up well... I see there's a little tension, so let's bring the shoulders up to the ears and ahhhhhhh (exhale) let them fall down.

And again.

And now let's do some circles with the shoulders, first going backwards, then forwards, and then

Let's bring the shoulder blades together, open the arms and then relax your arms on your lap the chest is raised upwards.

Let's do a double inhalation through the nose,...a gentle and enjoyable contraction of the body

and ahhhh exhale.

Once more, this time involving your face too: let's breath in..., tense also the face and ahhh exhale.

One last time: double breath in... tense and exhale ahhhh and let the breath flow,... as it likes.

### Second phase: Pranayama

Let's do a bit of pranayama to get in contact with the breath... always with the chest raised up, a little bit higher, let's stretch up tall, the cervical vertebrae are straight...

And, let's do a triangular breath: always with the movement of the diaphragm, controlling it: put one hand on the diaphragm... and let's start with a count of 4: inhale (tic, tic, tic, tic), hold (tic, tic, tic, tic), and exhale (tic, tic, tic, tic). Once again, breathing in immediately (tic, tic, tic, tic), hold and exhale (tic, tic, tic, tic).

Don't move the body, the chest remains lifted upwards, breath in (tic, tic, tic, tic), try to follow with your mind the breath that goes up (we say this while we count with the fingers tic, tic, tic, tic), hold... and exhale (tic, tic, tic, tic).

Now move your hand to the ribs and let's check: inhale (tic, tic, tic, tic), feel the movement of the diaphragm, then the ribs (we say this while we are counting with the fingers, hold... and exhale (tic, tic, tic, tic), observe how the ribs move, the stomach (we say this while we are counting with the fingers) relax the hands and continue:

Inhale (tic, tic, tic, tic), let's follow with our mind the breath which rises towards the Christ Centre (we say this while we are counting with the fingers), hold... and exhale (tic, tic, tic, tic).



Once again: let's inhale (tic, tic, tic, tic), bringing your breath and your energy up (we say this while we are counting with the fingers) and I stop at the spiritual eye, concentrating at that point, and I breathe out.

One last time, I breathe in (tic, tic, tic, tic), I feel the energy going up, I bring it towards the forehead (we say this while we are counting with the fingers) I stop there...between the two eyebrows, a moment of pause, and I breathe out (tic, tic, tic, tic).

Now let's do a much freer breath, a double inhalation, the usual contraction, and then we exhale through our nose 3 times each... cleansing the blood (explaining that that is what we are doing). So: let's inhale (without counting with the fingers) slowly, strongly tense the whole body, and exhale through the mouth ah one, ahhh, two, ahhhh three and... one more time. Inhale...tense... exhale three times ah, ahhh, ahhh, don't inhale, ahhhhhhhhhh leaving it until it starts to re-enter... and then let's follow its rhythm.

### **Third phase: observing the breath**

Now breath normally... we follow its rhythm... observing its every movement... our attention is where the breath is

Observe the gentle movement... of... the diaphragm.....abdomen.....the gentle movement of the ribs...

.....the breath is very free.... it does not have a fixed rhythm.... like the waves that come up onto the beach...it also has a beautiful sound, like the waves

We start to listen to the breath... we observe through the sense of feeling, .... and also... hearing

It's beautiful to be free.....a bird that flies

Now we take our attention a bit higher up, to the nostrils....

It's here that it's easier to feel the coming in and going out of the breath....

Our attention is fixed on the nostrils... and aware of the sensations ... We are observing the flow of the air from a point inside the nostrils ....

And slowly, slowly we are becoming calm.... this passage gets longer and goes towards the forehead...try to follow the whole length.... of the waves.

### **Fourth phase: Hong-Sau**

And now the waves.... start to sing they are joyful...

The wave of inhalation sings HONGGGGGGGG..., and the wave of exhalation sings

SSSSSSOOOOCOooooooooo...s

HONGGG with the wave that comes up onto the beach....

SOOOOOOOOO when it returns.... in the sea and it melts... it goes far away.... that wave.... that

returns to the sea

Every wave... has its own music HONGGGGGGG...then SOOOOOOOOO... a beautiful music that resounds ... we listen carefully...carefully,,, carefully... we listen

It's not the mind that makes the music... it's the BREATH

Every cycle takes us deeper.... into this ocean of peace.... the music that accompanies us

Always follow the sensation of the breath... perceive it...it's cool....it's warm it goes up and down....

And when it goes up, the waves of the breath bathe the forehead.... and arrive at the point between the two eyebrows...

HONGGGGGG that resounds together with the breath... and finishes at the spiritual eye.... And SOOOOCO that starts from the spiritual eye... and brings us to the ocean.... where we are completely relaxed.....free from every tension

.... And every time that the breath comes back in... the music starts to play again.... and again the experience.....like a rebirth.....is fresh.... like a new day.....the freshness of spring.....

and with the exhalation and the music of SOOCOO - deep relaxation... we are floating in a sea....

beautiful.....with the sun shining.....warm waters.... welcoming....the body has no weight.....

the mind is not heavy.... it's filled with the music... and the movement we are caressed... gently rocking from side to side

we are aware.... of the sensations.....of the music, of the waves one wave.... goes into another, it dissolves... and then it comes back again.... like a new wave....

With every breath we are reborn, renovated

With the exhalation we leave the old behind.... we let go...

With the inhalation we take the new that sooner or later will become the old, that sooner or later will become the old and we offer even this... for a new and ever-new rebirth.

The music resounds not only in the breath.... but also in the cells... that are also like waves.... in

the Infinite Ocean....they are floating.... in the ocean of spirit

Every cell is singing HONGGGGGGG..

SOOOOCO.....

84 million cells are singing.... and the music gets louder.... Inside of us.....we are filled with music we are the music.....

Only the music exists.....

Movement.....sound....

Until it stops....

Let the waves stop moving....

### **Fifth phase: Silence**

Let's take a long and slow inhalation... through the nose.

Let's breath together, slowly let's exhale slowly three times from the mouth ahhh, ahhh, ahhhhhh, and let the breath go...the waves don't interest us anymore... Because we have already arrived...at the spiritual eye...between the two eyebrows...

the point of arrival and departure...of every cycle of the waves....

With the eyes relaxed, we raise them up gently, with the eyelids closed

we direct the gaze towards the spiritual eye

We are concentrated at that point, the window, the spiritual eye.

We are waiting, everything has stopped. There is no movement. There is very nearly no breath.....no

breath...there's no thought...our attention...is entering in

towards that window...and we enter into the world of super-consciousness...we let our consciousness

expand...there's no limit...the eyes are always turned

upwards...let's remain just one more moment for this

first visit.

### **Sixth phase: re-entry/transition**

And now we go back.....on the bridge of the breath.....

We become aware once more of the breath.....the breath which brings us.....once again.....to the material body.....

Let's take a long and slow breath.....let's breathe in together.....

and from the mouth we breathe out.....

Once again we inhale.....with a gentle contraction we become conscious of the body.....we exhale from the mouth (aahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh) three times (ahhh, ahhh,ahhhhh).....

One last time we breathe in tense a little bit more this time and we exhale.....

And we slowly start to move the hands, the feet, stretch the eyes the neck and we come back.

Length: about 30 minutes.

Then we ask if they were able to follow the breath, the mantra,.....how was it?

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## Chapter Eleven: Practice and Lesson Outlines

### Outline for Lesson at Ananda Assisi

Length: one and a half hours (18:00-19:30)



#### **FIRST PART: WHAT IS MEDITATION AND WHY MEDITATE? (30 minutes)**



- Verify who has experience with meditation already and what type
- Meditation is a natural activity
  - it is part of both the Oriental and Christian traditions
  - it is a natural need of the soul (just as eating and drinking are needs of the body).
  - the soul wants to be listened to in the silence.
- 3. We have forgotten that it's something natural, we are no longer used to the silence and to listen to the soul, delusion.  
Possible story: the first man to ever meditate reunited with God
- 4. The three levels of consciousness (if there's time...)
- 5. Super-consciousness and the 8 manifestations of God (= benefits of meditation)



#### **SECOND PART: THE PRACTICE (1 hour)**



1. The first obstacle to meditation: the restless body
  - correct posture
  - tense and relax the body (practice together)
  - the importance of relaxation, Hatha Yoga and EE
2. The second obstacle to meditation: the restless breath
  - connection between breath and mind
  - how to calm the breath (exercise of equal breathing and brief practice of awareness of breath)
  - concentration
  - practice of observing the breath until the observation is in the nose
  - comments and questions
3. The third obstacle to meditation: the restless mind
  - mantra as a further instrument for calming the mind the power of sound

- the meaning of Hong-Sau
- practice of Hong-Sau, leaving time at the end for true "meditation" (guiding them through the experience) and a brief healing prayer

  Commentary on the last phase without techniques, touching on the difference between concentration and meditation.

  Touch on the importance of chanting at the beginning and of healing prayers at the end.

  Bibliography, video and brief hints (if there is time) on practicing at home.

  Postpone questions until sadhana Sunday morning, perhaps.

## Chapter Twelve: Scientific studies on meditation

### Scientific Studies Testing the Effectiveness of Meditation

#### Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body (English Edition)

Goleman, Daniel; Davidson, Richard J.

Citazione (Chicago Style): Goleman, Daniel, and Davidson, Richard J.. *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body (English Edition)*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2017. Kindle edition.

**Definition of an “altered trait:”** An altered trait indicates that the practice of meditation transformed the brain and biology so that meditation-induced changes are seen **before** beginning to meditate.

#### Affects the Brain

Certain areas of the brain seemed to enlarge in meditators, among them: The insula, which attunes us to our internal state and powers emotional self-awareness, by enhancing attention to such internal signals. Somatomotor areas, the main cortical hubs for sensing touch and pain, perhaps another benefit of increased bodily awareness. Parts of the prefrontal cortex that operate in paying attention and in meta-awareness, abilities cultivated in almost all forms of meditation. Regions of the cingulate cortex instrumental in self-regulation, another skill practiced in meditation. The orbitofrontal cortex, also part of the circuitry for self-regulation.

And the big news about meditation for older folks comes from a study at UCLA that finds meditation **slows the usual shrinkage of our brain** as we age: at age fifty, longtime meditators’ brains are “**younger**” by **7.5 years** compared to brains of non-meditators of the same age. Bonus: for every year beyond fifty, the brains of practitioners were younger than their peers’ by one month and twenty-two days. Meditation, the researchers conclude, helps preserve the brain by slowing atrophy. While we doubt that brain atrophy actually can be reversed, we have reason to agree it can be slowed.

just a little meditation practice seemed to have increased volume in parts of the brain, based on differences found before and after trying the practice. 29 Similar results of increases in thickness and the like of appropriate brain areas come from other kinds of mental training like memorization—and neuroplasticity means this is quite possible with meditation.

#### Gamma waves

All the yogis had elevated gamma oscillations, not just during the meditation practice periods for open presence and compassion but also during the very first measurement, before any meditation was performed. This electrifying pattern was in the EEG frequency known as “high-amplitude” gamma, the strongest, most intense form. These waves lasted the full minute of the baseline measurement before they started the meditation.

And now Richie’s team saw that same unusual brain pattern in all the yogis as a standard feature of their everyday neural activity. In other words, Richie and Antoine had stumbled upon the holy grail: a neural signature showing an enduring transformation.

Ordinarily gamma waves from, say, a creative insight, last no longer than a fifth of a second—not the full minute seen in the yogis.

Anyone's EEG will show distinctive gamma waves for short moments from time to time. Ordinarily, during a waking state we exhibit a mixture of different brain waves that wax and wane at different frequencies. These brain oscillations reflect complex mental activity, like information processing, and their various frequencies correspond to broadly different functions. The location of these oscillations varies among brain regions; we can display alpha in one cortical location and gamma in another. In the yogis, gamma oscillations are a far more prominent feature of their brain activity than in other people. Our usual gamma waves are not nearly as strong as that seen by Richie's team in yogis like Mingyur. The contrast between the yogis and controls in the intensity of gamma was immense: on average the yogis had twenty-five times greater amplitude gamma oscillations during baseline compared with the control group. We can only make conjectures about what state of consciousness this reflects: yogis like Mingyur seem to experience an ongoing state of open, rich awareness during their daily lives, not just when they meditate. The yogis themselves have described it as a spaciousness and vastness in their experience, as if all their senses were wide open to the full, rich panorama of experience.

No brain lab had ever before seen gamma oscillations that persist for minutes rather than split seconds, are so strong, and are in synchrony across widespread regions of the brain.

Astonishingly, this sustained, brain-entraining gamma pattern goes on even while seasoned meditators are asleep—as was found by the Davidson group in other research with long-term vipassana meditators who have an average of about 10,000 hours lifetime practice. These gamma oscillations continuing during deep sleep are, again, something never seen before and seem to reflect a residual quality of awareness that persists day and night. 2

The adepts had a sharply heightened level of gamma waves oscillating in synchrony across their brain, independent of any particular mental act. Unheard of.

### **EMOTIONS/Depression**

With high levels of meditation practice, emotions seem to lose their power to pull us into their melodrama.

And by 2016 a meta-analysis of nine such studies with a total 1,258 patients concluded that, over a year afterward, MBCT was an effective way to lower the relapse rate in severe depression. The more severe the symptoms of depression, the larger the benefits from MBCT.

A mindfulness program designed for teens reduced overt depression and such subtle signs, even six months after it ended.

The patients also went into a brain scanner while doing a breath awareness meditation to manage their emotions as they listened to upsetting phrases like “people always judge me,” one of the common fears in the mental self-talk among those with social anxiety. The patients reported feeling less anxious than usual on hearing such emotional triggers—and at the same time, brain activity lessened in their amygdala and increased in circuitry for attention.

### **Immune system**

After a three-month meditation retreat (about 540 hours total), those practitioners who had strengthened a sense of purpose in life during that time also showed a simultaneous increase in the activity of **telomerase** in their immune cells, even five months later. This enzyme protects the length of telomeres, the caps at the ends of DNA strands that reflect how long a cell will live.

### **Neural Pathways affected by meditation**

The four main neural pathways meditation transforms are:

- 1) those for reacting to disturbing events—stress and our recovery from it
- 2) the second brain system, for compassion and empathy, turns out to be remarkably ready for an upgrade.
- 3) The third, circuitry for attention,
- 4) fourth neural system, for our very sense of self, a major target for alteration.

### **Stress factors and hormones**

The science here shows that the more we perceive such hassles in our lives, the higher our levels of stress hormones like cortisol. That's a bit ominous: cortisol, if raised chronically, has deleterious impacts like an increased risk of dying from heart disease.

Like people who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome, victims of burnout are no longer able to put a halt to their brain's stress response—and so, never have the healing balm of recovery time.

Constant stress and worry take a toll on our cells, aging them. So do continual distractions and a wandering mind, due to the toxic effects of rumination, where our mind gravitates to troubles in our relationships but never resolves them.

### **Amygdala**

A word about the amygdala, which has a privileged role as the brain's radar for threat: it receives immediate input from our senses, which it scans for safety or danger. If it perceives a threat, the amygdala circuitry triggers the brain's freeze-fight-or-flight response, a stream of hormones like cortisol and adrenaline that mobilize us for action. The amygdala also responds to anything important to pay attention to, whether we like or dislike it.

More specifically, the brain's threat radar, the amygdala, signals the HPA axis (that's the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal circuitry, if you must know) to release epinephrine, an important freeze-fight-or-flight brain chemical, along with the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn raises the body's energy expenditure to respond to the stressor.

The amygdala connects strongly to brain circuitry for both focusing our attention and for intense emotional reactions. This dual role explains why, when we are in the grip of anxiety, we are also very distracted, especially by whatever is making us anxious. As the brain's radar for threat, the amygdala rivets our attention on what it finds troubling. So when something worries or upsets us, our mind wanders over and over to that thing, even to the point of fixation.

Mindfulness calms the amygdala, other researchers had volunteers who had never meditated before practice mindfulness for just twenty minutes a day over one week, and then have an fMRI scan. 10 During the scan they saw images ranging from gruesome burn victims to cute bunnies. They watched these images in their everyday state of mind, and then while practicing mindfulness. During mindful attention their amygdala response was significantly lower (compared to nonmeditators) to all the images. This sign of being less disturbed, tellingly, was greatest in the amygdala on the brain's right side (there are amygdalae in both right and left hemispheres), which often has a stronger response to whatever upsets us than the one on the left. In this second study, lessened amygdala reactivity was found only during mindful attention and not during ordinary awareness, indicating a state effect, not an altered trait. A trait change, remember, is the "before," not the "after."



When anger or anxiety is triggered, the amygdala drives prefrontal circuitry; as such disturbing emotions reach their peak, an amygdala hijack paralyzes executive function. But when we take active control of our attention—as when we meditate—we deploy this prefrontal circuitry, and the amygdala quiets.

Every aspect of attention involves the prefrontal cortex in some way.

The stronger the connectivity between the meditators' prefrontal area and amygdala, the less reactive they were. The surprise: the greatest increase in prefrontal-amygdala connection correlated with the number of hours a meditator had spent in retreat but not with home hours... One important difference about meditation on retreat is that there are teachers available who can provide guidance—like a coach. And then there is the sheer intensity of the retreat practice, where meditators typically spend up to eight hours (and sometimes much more) a day in formal practice, often for many days in a row. And many or most retreats are at least partially in silence, which may well contribute to building intensity. All of that adds up to a unique opportunity to amp up the learning curve.

These findings point to the need for a teacher, someone more advanced than you are, who can give you coaching on how to improve.

Brain scans of people who for years had faced work that demanded up to seventy hours each week revealed enlarged amygdalae and weak connections between areas in the prefrontal cortex that can quiet the amygdala in a disturbing moment. And when those stressed-out workers were asked to reduce their emotional reaction to upsetting pictures, they were unable to do so.

The seasoned practitioners' brains revealed a lowered level of reactivity in the amygdala; they were more immune to emotional hijacking. The reason: their brains had stronger operative connectivity between the prefrontal cortex, which manages reactivity, and the amygdala, which triggers such reactions. As neuroscientists know, the stronger this particular link in the brain, the less a person will be hijacked by emotional downs and ups of all sorts.

This connectivity modulates a person's level of emotional reactivity: the stronger the link, the less reactive. Indeed, that relationship is so strong that a person's reactivity level can be predicted by the connectivity. So, when these high-lifetime-hour meditators saw an image of a gruesome-looking burn victim, they had little amygdala reactivity.

The results showed that the more hours of practice, the more quickly the amygdala recovered from distress.

## **CONCENTRATION**

Attention tasks don't really go on in parallel, as "multitasking" implies; instead they demand rapid switching from one thing to the other. And following every such switch, when our attention returns to the original task, its strength has been appreciably diminished. It can take several minutes to ramp up once again to full concentration.

Just three ten-minute sessions of breath counting was enough to appreciably increase their attention skills on a battery of tests. And the biggest gains were among the heavy multitaskers, who did more poorly on those tests initially.

Mindfulness also improved working memory—the holding in mind of information so it can transfer into long-term memory. Attention is crucial for working memory; if we aren't paying attention, those digits won't register in the first place.

Just ten minutes of mindfulness overcame the damage to concentration from multitasking—at least in the short term; only eight minutes of mindfulness lessened mind-wandering for a while. About ten hours of mindfulness over a two-week period strengthened attention and working memory—and led to substantial improved scores on the graduate school entrance exam.

The brain makes up only 2 percent of the body's mass, it consumes about 20 percent of the body's metabolic energy as measured by its oxygen usage, and that rate of oxygen consumption remains more or less constant no matter what we are doing—including nothing at all. The brain, it seems, stays just as busy when we are relaxed as when we are under some mental strain.

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Because the self ruminates on what's bothering us, we feel relieved when we can turn it off. One of the great appeals of high-risk sports like rock climbing seems to be just that—the danger of the sport demands a full focus on where to put your hand or foot next. More mundane worries take backstage in the mind.

The brains of those with the most hours of meditation showed little effort in keeping their focus one-pointed, even despite compelling distractions, while those with fewer lifetime hours put in more effort.

### **PAIN/ILLNESSES**

Take debilitating pain in the elderly. One of the most feared impacts of growing old is losing independence due to troubles with mobility from pain in arthritic hips, knees, or spine. In well-designed research with elderly pain sufferers, (meditation practice) proved highly effective both in reducing how much pain people felt and how disabled they became as a result

Mindfulness practice, it seems, lessens inflammation day to day, not just during meditation itself. The benefits seem to show up even with just four weeks of mindfulness practice (around thirty hours total), as well as with loving-kindness meditation.

His lab went ahead, assaying changes in the expression of key genes before and after a day of meditation in a group of long-term vipassana practitioners (average of about 6,000 lifetime hours).<sup>14</sup> They followed a fixed eight-hour schedule of practice sessions throughout the day, and listened to tapes of some inspiring talks and guided practices by Joseph Goldstein. After the day of practice the meditators had a marked “down-regulation” of inflammatory genes—something that had never been seen before in response to a purely mental practice. Such a drop, if sustained over a lifetime, might help combat diseases with onsets marked by chronic low-grade inflammation. As we've said, these include many of the world's major health problems, ranging from cardiovascular disorders, arthritis, and diabetes to cancer.

### **Gene modification**

, Richie's group had shown that a mental exercise, meditation, could be a driver of benefits at the level of genes. Genetic science would have to change its assumptions about how the mind can help manage the body.

## **HEALTH/LONGEVITY**

There are other promising hints for meditation as a force in upgrading our epigenetics. Telomeres are the caps at the end of DNA strands that reflect how long a cell will live. The longer the telomere, the longer the life span of that cell will be. Telomerase is the enzyme that slows the age-related shortening of telomeres; the more telomerase, the better for health and longevity. A meta-analysis of four randomized controlled studies involving a total of 190 meditators found practicing mindfulness was associated with increased telomerase activity. 18 Cliff Saron's project found the same effect after three months of intensive practice of mindfulness and compassion meditation. 19 The more present to their immediate experience, and the less mind-wandering during concentration sessions, the greater the telomerase benefit. And a promising pilot study found longer telomeres in women who had an average of four years of regular practice of loving-kindness meditation.

None of the many forms of meditation studied here was originally designed to treat illness, at least as we recognize it in the West. Yet today the scientific literature is replete with studies assessing whether these ancient practices might be useful for treating just such illnesses.

MBSR and similar methods can reduce the emotional component of suffering from disease, but not cure those maladies. Yet mindfulness training—even as short as three days—produces a short-term decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines, the molecules responsible for inflammation. And the more you practice, the lower the level becomes of these pro-inflammatory cytokines. This seems to become a trait effect with extensive practice, with imaging studies finding in meditators at rest lower levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines, along with an increased connectivity between regulatory circuitry and sectors of the brain's self system, particularly the posterior cingulate cortex.

Among experienced meditation practitioners, a daylong period of intensive mindfulness practice down-regulates genes involved in inflammation. The enzyme telomerase, which slows cellular aging, increases after three months of intensive practice of mindfulness and loving-kindness. Finally, long-term meditation may lead to beneficial structural changes in the brain, though current evidence is inconclusive about whether such effects emerge with relatively short-term practice like MBSR, or only become apparent with longer-term practice. All in all, the hints of neural rewiring that undergird altered traits seem scientifically credible, though we await further studies for specifics.

## **BREATH/HEALTH**

But consider what Richie's lab found when they looked at long-term meditators (9,000 average lifetime hours of practice). 24 Comparing each to a nonmeditator of the same age and sex, the meditators were breathing an average 1.6 breaths more slowly. And this was while they were just sitting still, waiting for a cognitive test to start.

Over the course of a single day that difference in breath rate translates to more than 2,000 extra breaths for the nonmeditators—and more than 800,000 extra breaths over the course of a year. These extra breaths are physiologically taxing, and can exact a health toll as time goes on. As practice continues and breathing becomes progressively slower, the body adjusts its physiological set point for its respiratory rate accordingly. That's a good thing. While chronic rapid breathing signifies ongoing anxiety, a slower breath rate indicates reduced autonomic activity, better mood, and salutary health.

## **Neuroscientists Have Identified How Exactly a Deep Breath Changes your Mind**

By Moran Cert, November 19, 2017

Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

Breathing is traditionally thought of as an automatic process driven by the brainstem—the part of the brain controlling such life-sustaining functions as heartbeat and sleeping patterns. But new and unique research, involving recordings made directly from within the brains of humans undergoing neurosurgery, shows that breathing can also change your brain.

Simply put, changes in breathing—for example, breathing at different paces or paying careful attention to the breaths—were shown to engage different parts of the brain.

Humans' ability to control and regulate their brain is unique: e.g., controlling emotions, deciding to stay awake despite being tired, or suppressing thoughts. These abilities are not trivial, nor do humans share them with many animals. Breathing is similar: animals do not alter their breathing speed volitionally; their breathing normally only changes in response to running, resting, etc. Questions that have baffled scientists in this context are: why are humans capable of volitionally regulating their breathing, and how do we gain access to parts of our brain that are not normally under our conscious control. Additionally, is there any benefit in our ability to access and control parts of our brain that are typically inaccessible? Given that many therapies—Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, trauma therapy, or various types of spiritual exercises—involve focusing and regulating breathing, does controlling inhaling and exhaling have any profound effect on behavior?

This recent study finally answers these questions by showing that volitionally controlling our respiratory, even merely focusing on one's breathing, yield additional access and synchrony between brain areas. This understanding may lead to greater control, focus, calmness, and emotional control.

The study, conducted by my post-doctoral researcher, Dr. Jose Herrero, in collaboration with Dr. Ashesh Mehta, a renowned neurosurgeon at NorthShore University Hospital in Long Island, began by observing brain activity when patients were breathing normally. Next, the patients were given a simple task to distract them: clicking a button when circles appeared on the computer screen. This allowed Dr. Herrero to observe what was happening when people breathe naturally and do not focus on their breathing. After this, the patients were told to consciously increase the pace of breathing and to count their breaths. When breathing changed with the exercises, the brain changed as well. Essentially, the breathing manipulation activated different parts of the brain, with some overlap in the sites involved in automatic and intentional breathing.

The findings provide neural support for advice individuals have been given for millennia: during times of stress, or when heightened concentration is needed, focusing on one's breathing or doing breathing exercises can indeed change the brain. This has potential application to individuals in a variety of professions that require extreme focus and agility. Athletes, for example, have long been known to utilize breathing to improve their performance. Now, this research puts science behind that practice.

Beyond studying the ability of humans to control and regulate their neural activity volitionally, the study was also unique in that it utilized a rare method of neural research: directly looking inside the brains of awake and alert humans. Typical neuroscience studies involving humans use imaging techniques (i.e. fMRI or EEG) to *infer* the neural activity in people's brain

from outside the skull. But studies involving electrodes implanted in humans' brains are rare. The ability to look inside the humans' brains allows us to study thinking, deciding and even imagining or dreaming by directly observing the brain. The study subjects in our work were patients who had electrodes implanted in their brain as part of a clinical treatment for epilepsy. These patients were experiencing seizures that could not be controlled by medication and therefore required surgical interventions to detect the seizure focus for future resection.

Given that detection requires the patient to have a spontaneous seizure in order to identify the exact seizure onset location, which can take days, the patients are kept in the hospital with electrodes continuously monitoring their brain activity.

The research findings show that the advice to "take a deep breath" may not just be a cliché. Exercises involving volitional breathing appear to alter the connectivity between parts of the brain and allow access to internal sites that normally are inaccessible to us. Further investigation will now gradually monitor what such access to parts of our psyche that are normally hidden can reveal.

## **Dwapara Healing: Laughter, Meditation, and Attunement by Dr. Peter**

*From a talk given on August 12, 2015 at Ananda Village.*

In *Religion in the New Age*, Swami Kriyananda observes that since the world entered Dwapara Yuga in full force in 1900 AD, we have seen an increasing number of breakthroughs in the prevention and treatment of illness and disease, many based on the new understanding that energy is the underlying essence of matter. We have seen that certain parts of the body that were considered unchangeable in adults, such as the brain, can be healed, and even transformed. Many of these new healing approaches were either predicted or suggested by Paramhansa Yogananda, including the use of laughter or humor as a healing technique.

### **I. LAUGHTER**

When I was new on the spiritual path, I was very serious and, at times, even solemn or a bit gloomy. I rarely laughed or smiled. Swami Kriyananda used an interesting technique to rid me of this unfortunate tendency: he would call me at six o'clock in the morning or eleven o'clock at night and would simply tell me a joke. Not only did I find his behavior rather odd, I sometimes had to "work" at actually laughing. Looking back, I'm surprised at how long he persisted because only gradually did my sense humor begin to improve. Finally, once I was able to laugh easily and spontaneously at his jokes, Kriyananda never called simply to tell me jokes.

A few years before Kriyananda's passing, when I having a meal with him and a few others, I told him several funny stories. He laughed heartily but then gave me a thoughtful glance with the hint of a smile. He said, "Peter, you've become quite the jokester!"

### **The healing power of laughter**

Paramhansa Yogananda often said that laughing was good for one's health. In his talks and articles, he recommended that people read one funny story a day. He described laughter as "good mental food for the convalescing mind," and encouraged those in need of healing to associate with people whose laughter and joy were contagious. A laughter diet, he writes, "fills our mind with sunshine and has the potential to revitalize us after only a few months."

Swami Kriyananda, like Yogananda, saw laughter as a means of healing disease and bringing about lasting health. To illustrate how laughter can cure disease, Kriyananda cites

Norman Cousins, the well-known writer who, by deliberately laughing many hours each day for several months, was able to cure himself completely of what had been diagnosed as a terminal illness. Alone in a hotel room with a movie projector, Cousins watched a large number of humorous films every day, including Candid Camera clips and old Marx Brothers' movies, and would sometimes laugh for hours at a time.

The therapeutic benefits of laughter illustrate a point Kriyananda often emphasizes—that the future of healing lies in knowing how to introduce positive energy into the body and to work with it in a way that destroys disease and brings about lasting health. As a practicing physician, I've had many opportunities to observe the healing power of laughter. I can now say, along with Kriyananda, that “an attitude of joy is perhaps the best healer of all.”

## **II. MEDITATION**

The chronic illnesses of our age include many well-known diseases: diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, depression, anxiety disorders, and dementia. Curiously, all of these diseases, including the behavioral health disorders, have one thing in common: inflammation in the bodily organs involved. Given the high incidence of inflammation-associated diseases, the question naturally arises, what is the best way to treat an inflammatory process in the body?

### **The Dean Ornish program for heart disease**

For many years, Dean Ornish, a well-known physician, has offered a program for people with heart disease which includes not only proper diet but also hatha yoga and meditation. Often people would tell him that they liked the dietary aspects of the program, but asked if they could leave out meditation and hatha yoga. And the answer was always “no” because all of the studies documenting the success of the program included all of these components.

Since then, there have been other studies confirming that the program's beneficial anti-inflammatory effect on heart disease is the result of its comprehensive approach of attacking the disease from multiple therapeutic modes—diet, physical activity, lifestyle, and meditation. As it turns out, meditation has proven to be a very important component of the program.

### **Meditation, heart disease, and high blood pressure**

Beginning in 2008, other studies began to appear showing that meditation, by preventing inflammatory imbalances, reduced the incidence of stress-related diseases, including heart disease. Later studies, published in 2011 and 2012, showed that meditation reduced, and sometimes reversed, the inflammation caused by prolonged stress. These most recent studies confirmed that, by reducing stress, meditation had important health protective effects.

In 2012, the results of the first long-term (ten-year) study of meditation and heart disease were published. Researchers divided 200 adults with heart disease into two groups. One group was taught to meditate for twenty minutes twice a day. The other group was encouraged to spend a similar amount of time exercising and preparing healthy meals, activities usually recommended by physicians for patients with heart disease.

After nearly a decade, researchers found that individuals who had meditated for twenty minutes twice a day had reduced their risk of heart attack and stroke sixty-six percent more than those in the control group who had not meditated at all. The risk of heart attack and stroke for those who meditated twenty minutes once a day had dropped by nearly fifty percent, compared to those in the control group. Both groups of meditators also reduced their blood pressure and reported feeling better able to control their anger.

Today most people understand the importance of the kind of lifestyle changes that are now recommended routinely in medicine to improve health and reduce risk of premature death—better diet, more exercise, sufficient sleep, reduced stress. Meditation, however, is the one aspect of preventive health care that has not been adopted broadly as a therapeutic tool. Increasingly, however, it has become more common to see meditation courses offered in hospitals for patients and as part of training courses for physicians, including instruction on how to teach patients to meditate. Physicians are rapidly becoming more aware of the benefits of meditation, including its disease-prevention effects.

I believe these recent studies will encourage more physicians to recommend meditation and that meditation will soon become one of the cornerstones of good preventive healthcare, along with a good diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and reduced stress.

### **Meditation and DNA changes**

Paramhansa Yogananda said that if we meditate, our DNA, our genetic material, will change. When I first read that statement, it made absolutely no sense to my scientifically-trained mind. It seemed to me that X-rays or toxic substances could damage the DNA inside the nucleus of our cells, but I didn't see any way the DNA could be improved.

In the last decade, however, there have been a number of discoveries that confirm Yogananda's statement. We now understand that there can be what are known as "epigenetic phenomena." In essence this term means that many genes can be turned on or off depending on our behavior—on what we eat, whether we smoke, the nature of our thoughts, and on whether we meditate. We've learned that everything in our lifestyle, taken as a whole, influences our genetic material, and that meditation, in particular, is a very important factor in determining whether disease-producing genes turn off and health-producing genes turn on.

### **III. ATTUNEMENT**

If I could choose only a single piece of advice to give to the followers of Paramhansa Yogananda on how to stay healthy and well, what piece of advice would I give them? I would say attunement with the Guru is the most important thing because everything else in life will flow from that attunement. By approaching issues of health through the lens of attunement, we will be guided by the Guru not only on what will be most beneficial for our spiritual development, but also on what will make us healthy and happy. If we work on attunement, we find we are guided to do the right things to promote good health, including proper diet, exercise, and medication.

Once we make attunement our focus, we quickly realize that devotion to the Guru is essential to proper attunement. Through devotion to God and Guru, not only do we become receptive to his influence in our lives, we also magnetically attract his influence by putting ourselves on the Guru's wavelength of love. Devotion, or the opening of our hearts, is thus extremely important for our physical and mental health.

#### **The importance of praying for guidance**

Many times when I don't know what to do when I am practicing medicine, I will pray to Paramhansa Yogananda mentally and ask, "What is the right thing for me to do in this instance?" I'll always check the response I feel with my rational mind and ask, "Does that make sense?" Interestingly, I've had experiences in which I came up with a diagnosis that made absolutely no sense to me rationally in the moment but in the end turned out to be correct.

In one instance I recall, my patient had a very rare disease which was completely unfamiliar to me. In searching for the right diagnosis in my various references, an odd diagnosis

kept popping into my mind, pestering me like a fly buzzing around my head. It turned out to be the correct answer: the disease, although quite rare, was serious but treatable. That mental “fly” was pestering me because I had asked for help. I had prayed to Yogananda, “Please help me.” In situations like these, when I pray for guidance, I can usually feel in my heart when I’m on the right track.

I would like to end by quoting the words from the Ananda Purification Ceremony, created by Swami Kriyananda: “The Master says, open your heart to me and I will enter and take charge of your life.” The moment we open our hearts to the Guru and, through him, to God’s influence in our lives, he will guide us. He will guide us in right diet. He will guide us in health and exercise. He will guide us in our relationships with other people. And he will guide us to God-realization.

## **Neuroscientists have identified how exactly a deep breath changes your mind**

By Moran Cerf, November 19, 2017

Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

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Simply put, changes in breathing—for example, breathing at different paces or paying careful attention to the breaths—were shown to engage different parts of the brain.

Humans’ ability to control and regulate their brain is unique: e.g., controlling emotions, deciding to stay awake despite being tired, or suppressing thoughts. These abilities are not trivial, nor do humans share them with many animals. Breathing is similar: animals do not alter their breathing speed volitionally; their breathing normally only changes in response to running, resting, etc. Questions that have baffled scientists in this context are: why are humans capable of volitionally regulating their breathing, and how do we gain access to parts of our brain that are not normally under our conscious control. Additionally, is there any benefit in our ability to access and control parts of our brain that are typically inaccessible? Given that many therapies—Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, trauma therapy, or various types of spiritual exercises—involve focusing and regulating breathing, does controlling inhaling and exhaling have any profound effect on behavior?

This recent study finally answers these questions by showing that volitionally controlling our respiratory, even merely focusing on one’s breathing, yield additional access and synchrony between brain areas. This understanding may lead to greater control, focus, calmness, and emotional control.

The study, conducted by my post-doctoral researcher, Dr. Jose Herrero, in collaboration with Dr. Ashesh Mehta, a renowned neurosurgeon at NorthShore University Hospital in Long Island, began by observing brain activity when patients were breathing normally. Next, the patients were given a simple task to distract them: clicking a button when circles appeared on the computer screen. This allowed Dr. Herrero to observe what was happening when people breath naturally and do not focus on their breathing. After this, the patients were told to consciously



increase the pace of breathing and to count their breaths. When breathing changed with the exercises, the brain changed as well. Essentially, the breathing manipulation activated different parts of the brain, with some overlap in the sites involved in automatic and intentional breathing.

The findings provide neural support for advice individuals have been given for millennia: during times of stress, or when heightened concentration is needed, focusing on one's breathing or doing breathing exercises can indeed change the brain. This has potential application to individuals in a variety of professions that require extreme focus and agility. Athletes, for example, have long been known to utilize breathing to improve their performance. Now, this research puts science behind that practice.

Beyond studying the ability of humans to control and regulate their neural activity volitionally, the study was also unique in that it utilized a rare method of neural research: directly looking inside the brains of awake and alert humans. Typical neuroscience studies involving humans use imaging techniques (i.e. fMRI or EEG) to *infer* the neural activity in people's brain from outside the skull. But studies involving electrodes implanted in humans' brains are rare. The ability to look inside the humans' brains allows us to study thinking, deciding and even imagining or dreaming by directly observing the brain. The study subjects in our work were patients who had electrodes implanted in their brain as part of a clinical treatment for epilepsy. These patients were experiencing seizures that could not be controlled by medication and therefore required surgical interventions to detect the seizure focus for future resection.

Given that detection requires the patient to have a spontaneous seizure in order to identify the exact seizure onset location, which can take days, the patients are kept in the hospital with electrodes continuously monitoring their brain activity.

The research findings show that the advice to "take a deep breath" may not just be a cliché. Exercises involving volitional breathing appear to alter the connectivity between parts of the brain and allow access to internal sites that normally are inaccessible to us. Further investigation will now gradually monitor what such access to parts of our psyche that are normally hidden can reveal.

## Brain, Interrupted

*The New York Times* By Bob Sullivan and Hugh Thompson | *New York Times* – Tue, May 7, 2013 6:17

Technology has given us many gifts, among them dozens of new ways to grab our attention. It's hard to talk to a friend without your phone buzzing at least once. Odds are high you will check your Twitter feed or Facebook wall while reading this article. Just try to type a memo at work without having an e-mail pop up that ruins your train of thought.

But what constitutes distraction? Does the mere possibility that a phone call or e-mail will soon arrive drain your brain power? And does distraction matter — do interruptions make us dumber? Quite a bit, according to new research by Carnegie Mellon University's Human-Computer Interaction Lab.

There's a lot of debate among brain researchers about the impact of gadgets on our brains. Most discussion has focused on the deleterious effect of multitasking. Early results show what most of us know implicitly: if you do two things at once, both efforts suffer.

In fact, multitasking is a misnomer. In most situations, the person juggling e-mail, text messaging, Facebook and a meeting is really doing something called “rapid toggling between tasks,” and is engaged in constant context switching.

As economics students know, switching involves costs. But how much? When a consumer switches banks, or a company switches suppliers, it’s relatively easy to count the added expense of the hassle of change. When your brain is switching tasks, the cost is harder to quantify.

There have been a few efforts to do so: Gloria Mark of the University of California, Irvine, found that a typical office worker gets only 11 minutes between each interruption, while it takes an average of 25 minutes to return to the original task after an interruption. But there has been scant research on the quality of work done during these periods of rapid toggling.

We decided to investigate further, and asked Alessandro Acquisti, a professor of information technology, and the psychologist Eyal Peer at Carnegie Mellon to design an experiment to measure the brain power lost when someone is interrupted.

To simulate the pull of an expected cellphone call or e-mail, we had subjects sit in a lab and perform a standard cognitive skill test. In the experiment, 136 subjects were asked to read a short passage and answer questions about it. There were three groups of subjects; one merely completed the test. The other two were told they “might be contacted for further instructions” at any moment via instant message.

During an initial test, the second and third groups were interrupted twice. Then a second test was administered, but this time, only the second group was interrupted. The third group awaited an interruption that never came. Let’s call the three groups Control, Interrupted and On High Alert.

We expected the Interrupted group to make some mistakes, but the results were truly dismal, especially for those who think of themselves as multitaskers: during this first test, both interrupted groups answered correctly 20 percent less often than members of the control group.

In other words, the distraction of an interruption, combined with the brain drain of preparing for that interruption, made our test takers 20 percent dumber. That’s enough to turn a B-minus student (80 percent) into a failure (62 percent).

But in Part 2 of the experiment, the results were not as bleak. This time, part of the group was told they would be interrupted again, but they were actually left alone to focus on the questions.

Again, the Interrupted group underperformed the control group, but this time they closed the gap significantly, to a respectable 14 percent. Dr. Peer said this suggested that people who experience an interruption, and expect another, can learn to improve how they deal with it.

But among the On High Alert group, there was a twist. Those who were warned of an interruption that never came improved by a whopping 43 percent, and even outperformed the control test takers who were left alone. This unexpected, counterintuitive finding requires further research, but Dr. Peer thinks there’s a simple explanation: participants learned from their experience, and their brains adapted.

Somehow, it seems, they marshaled extra brain power to steel themselves against interruption, or perhaps the potential for interruptions served as a kind of deadline that helped them focus even better.

Clifford Nass, a Stanford sociologist who conducted some of the first tests on multitasking, has said that those who can't resist the lure of doing two things at once are "suckers for irrelevancy." There is some evidence that we're not just suckers for that new text message, or addicted to it; it's actually robbing us of brain power, too. Tweet about this at your own risk.

What the Carnegie Mellon study shows, however, is that it is possible to train yourself for distractions, even if you don't know when they'll hit.

*Bob Sullivan, a journalist at NBC News, and Hugh Thompson, a computer scientist and entrepreneur, are the authors of "The Plateau Effect: Getting From Stuck to Success."*

## **Brain Scans Reveal Why Meditation Works**

Melinda Wenner, Special to LiveScience, *Sat Jun 30, 1:35 PM ET*

If you name your emotions, you can tame them, according to new research that suggests why meditation works.

Brain scans show that putting negative emotions into words calms the brain's emotion center. That could explain meditation's purported emotional benefits, because people who meditate often label their negative emotions in an effort to "let them go."

Psychologists have long believed that people who talk about their feelings have more control over them, but they don't know why it works.

UCLA psychologist Matthew Lieberman and his colleagues hooked 30 people up to functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machines, which scan the brain to reveal which parts are active and inactive at any given moment.

They asked the subjects to look at pictures of male or female faces making emotional expressions. Below some of the photos was a choice of words describing the emotion—such as "angry" or "fearful"—or two possible names for the people in the pictures, one male name and one female name.

When presented with these choices, the subjects were asked to pick the most appropriate emotion or gender-appropriate name to fit the face they saw.

When the participants chose labels for the negative emotions, activity in the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex region—an area associated with thinking in words about emotional experiences—became more active, whereas activity in the amygdala, a brain region involved in emotional processing, was calmed.

By contrast, when the subjects picked appropriate names for the faces, the brain scans revealed none of these changes—indicating that only emotional labeling makes a difference.

"In the same way you hit the brake when you're driving when you see a yellow light, when you put feelings into words, you seem to be hitting the brakes on your emotional responses," Lieberman said of his study, which is detailed in the current issue of *Psychological Science*.

In a second experiment, 27 of the same subjects completed questionnaires to determine how "mindful" they are.

Meditation and other “mindfulness” techniques are designed to help people pay more attention to their present emotions, thoughts and sensations without reacting strongly to them. Meditators often acknowledge and name their negative emotions in order to “let them go.”

When the team compared brain scans from subjects who had more mindful dispositions to those from subjects who were less mindful, they found a stark difference—the mindful subjects experienced greater activation in the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and a greater calming effect in the amygdala after labeling their emotions.

“These findings may help explain the beneficial health effects of mindfulness meditation, and suggest, for the first time, an underlying reason why mindfulness meditation programs “Improve mood and health”, said David Creswell, a UCLA psychologist who led the second part of the study, which will be detailed in Psychosomatic Medicine

### **Excerpts from "Healing with Meditation," Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sogyal Rinpoche, Clifford Saron et Al.**

Meditation increases our well-being, attention, empathy, resilience and ability to manage emotions. And it reduces depression, anxiety and neurotic states. More specifically:

- meditation **reduces the activity of the amygdala**, an area of the brain associated with fear and anxiety; as a result, the amygdala shrinks;
- **protects the cerebral cortex from the effects of aging** and may increase the production of telomerase, an enzyme that plays a crucial role in protecting cells from premature aging and has been linked to longevity;
- **increases the ability to perform tasks** that require perceiving small visual differences and maintaining concentration for long periods of time;
- **increases the activity of certain areas of the brain** that have been linked to depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorders;
- **Lower levels of cortisol**, a stress-related hormone with negative effects on physical health, were also found in meditators who showed high levels of attention;
- meditation causes **structural changes in brain regions important for regulating emotions, empathy and self-referential dynamics**. Those who meditate assiduously show **greater involvement and empathy in the face of others' suffering**.

One of the most extraordinary examples of this spread of meditation into current applications has been the success of Mindfulness as an application method, which humbly took off in the basement of the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

#### Jon Kabat-Zinn and his MBSR program

It was 1979, and **Jon Kabat-Zinn**, a young researcher in molecular biology who also engaged in meditative practice, became convinced that basic meditation techniques could help all those people who were "falling through the cracks in the health care system." Presenting a few basic meditation methods in a simple, structured and lay way, Kabat-Zinn developed an **eight-week protocol he called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**.

He convinced some doctors to send him patients who had responded poorly to conventional treatments, and as he began to get results, the patients kept coming.

But even though his patients told him the protocol worked, his training as a molecular biologist had taught him the importance of an evidence-based approach. He therefore promoted a series of pioneering studies on the beneficial health effects of meditation, particularly in the treatment of chronic pain, stress and anxiety states.

It is not uncommon (argues Jon Kabat-Zinn), for those who participate in an MBSR project, to report changes in different areas of life that go far beyond the hopes and expectations that initially prompted them to participate in a Mindfulness-based clinical path.... **"It has changed me in virtually every way possible"; "This program has given me my life back."**

The Mindfulness method was initially designed specifically for people suffering from stress, but over the years its therapeutic use has found diverse applications. The benefits of the MBSR protocol have been shown to be almost identical to those of all other types of meditation.

If we graph the number of the number of scientific publications with the word Mindfulness in the title starting in 1980, the line stays very low until 1997 or 1998. Then it starts to rise.

Early on we published a series of reports on the effects from MBSR training in patients with chronic pain for whom medicine had nothing more to offer.

### **Psoriasis sufferers**

We also did a study on **psoriasis patients**, an uncontrolled cell proliferation of the epidermis that is exacerbated under stressful conditions. Our study began when my dermatology colleagues asked if I could teach their psoriasis patients to meditate so that they would be less tense inside the light booth to make the treatment more tolerable, thus limiting the number of dropouts.

So in collaboration with our dermatology colleagues, we conducted a study published in 1998 that showed, based on randomized trials, that the skin of those in the light cabin who listened to an audio-program of guided Mindfulness meditation while undergoing UV treatment **healed four times faster** than patients who underwent phototherapy without the guided meditation.

### **Effects of meditation on the brain**

Researchers like Erika Rosenberg and Sara Lazar belong to a new generation of scientists who have chosen to devote their careers to studying the effects of meditation on the brain and emotions.

Sara Lazar presents some of the most recent research she has conducted on the **effects of meditation on the brain**. Using an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scanner, she was able to show that meditation can cause structural changes in parts of the brain related to emotion processing, as well as a reduction in the size of the "fear center."

Recent studies, carried out in Sara Lazar's laboratory, have shown that **eight weeks of training in MBSR produces effects on gray matter density** in many brain regions responsible for attention, emotion regulation, learning and memory, increasing its thickness in areas such as the hippocampus and reducing it in the amygdala.

That meditation can generate a whole range of positive effects, both for body and mind, has been claimed for more than 2,000 years. But it is only recently that the scientific community has begun to empirically unveil all the beneficial transformations that occur during meditation, such as decreasing stress hormones and increasing biological markers of physical relaxation. In addition to the more immediate effects, meditators also report experiencing long-lasting effects.

In 2005 we conducted a study of 20 Theravada meditation practitioners.

While the meditators were in the MRI scanner, we scanned their brains during the practice of "breath awareness meditation," and then repeated the scan in a waking state but without their attention being focused on any particular task.

The research showed that during meditation some parts of the brain were visibly active, which was not the case when subjects were simply at rest, without engaging the mind in particular tasks.

The result of our analysis was that in the brains of meditators, certain parts of the gray matter were thicker than that of non-meditators. The region where this difference was most apparent was the insula, one of the paralimbic regions proposed for the integration of senses, emotions and thoughts. Our cortex reaches its maximum thickness around the age of 20-25 and then begins to thin gradually. However, in this small brain area, meditators in their 40s and 50s showed the same cortical thickness as a 20-year-old."

### **Effects of meditation on attention, empathy and emotions**

In 2007, a team of researchers initiated the Samantha Project, the most ambitious and comprehensive study of meditation ever undertaken. Using state-of-the-art technology, a series of tests was conducted on sixty meditators taking part in a three-month retreat in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Neuroscientist Clifford Saron led the rigorous analysis of the effects of meditation on attention, empathy and emotion.

First, our results showed that the daily reports provided by meditators on mood and psychological traits were consistent with **increased well-being**.

One interesting finding is that the positive changes are linked to **increased levels of telomerase**, an enzyme that plays a crucial role in protecting cells from premature aging. The meditators also demonstrated **improvements in visual perception**. It has also been seen that intensive meditation practice **increases engagement and solidarity in the face of others' suffering**.

### **Terminal cancer patients**

Kabat-Zinn also introduced meditation to terminal cancer patients.

Between 2008 and 2009, an independent research psychologist interviewed patients who had completed the twelve-week Mindfulness program at Blackrock Day Hospice. Seventy-three patients with advanced cancer completed a total of 461 courses.

Seventy-three percent of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program offered:

"If I notice that I am about to get depressed, I try to practice the exercises with my breath and notice that I become less anxious, more relaxed" Carmel, 44

"I used to be anxious all the time. Before the course I would have given my anxiety a score of 10, but now it's down to 3" Tony, 82

"It helped me come to terms with myself and accept that my body is rotting. That brings you back to the reason you are here. Once you accept that, you can still enjoy what you have left." John, 43.

"I do not know if my cancer will be cured, and in fact I think I will die, however, something has already happened within me. I have discovered that silence leads to a quality of listening that I did not think possible, and to a great goodness. It's like putting all the puzzles together and discovering the meaning. Everything seems much simpler." Michèle, psychotherapist

### **Treatment of depression**

Over the past 10 years, MBCT, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, has proven to be a powerful ally in the battle against depression. In August 2002, together with about 30 clinical practitioners, I took part in the first retreat organized by the creators of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and Jon Kabat-Zinn. Above all, it was a powerful way to remind myself how important it is for an instructor to have his or her own meditation practice. MBCT has been the subject of many scientific studies that have demonstrated its effectiveness. Recent studies confirm that **MBCT delays relapse in depression and halves the risk of relapse in patients in remission** who have already suffered from several depressive episodes.

A person once told us, "The MBCT program, made me able to live more peacefully and contribute to my well-being. It is important to always remain vigilant, day in and day out, not to miss a single moment of meditation."

The statements of the few patients who relapsed after treatment show that nonetheless MBCT changed something. One said, "I relapsed, but not as much as before. Because I'm sure I can come out of it again and I go ahead with my action plan."

We were able to determine that 40 percent of participants in our MBCT groups, still continue to practice meditation one year after the program ended; the majority report that they have changed the way they relate to thoughts, which they now see as mental events instead of facts.

### **Stress management meditation for nursing staff at Hackney Hospice in London.**

Through basic meditation techniques, the nurses were taught a new mindful presence that became a habit at work so as not to overload themselves, thus reducing the effects of stress. In this way they were able to be **more present with their patients and take better care of them**. I taught them a very simple method called "5-minute vacation." Sogyal Rinpoche had developed it, and it was a simple system that invited even the busiest people to find 5 minutes a day to be alone, sitting quietly, letting their minds be at rest, serene, while they brought their attention to just one object, such as the breath. Once this became an established habit, they could gradually try to increase the daily time devoted to the practice.

### **Meditation for prison staff**

In 1992, I proposed meditation as part of the training of correctional officers, probation officers and administrative staff at Pentonville Prison in North London, which to date houses more than 1,200 inmates. Prison work is at a high stress level. Many cases of heart problems result among prison staff. We taught them the "5-minute vacation" method, along with other techniques based on breath observation and relaxation meditation accompanied by soothing music. The project continued for almost two years. We found that if people working in the stressful conditions of a prison were taught simple meditation methods, **stress would be reduced, relaxation increased**, and with it the ability to relate to both colleagues and other

people in the workplace, including the inmates themselves. Not only did they find that they were more relaxed and had an easier time relating to others, but **they also found that they were more able to feel empathy and compassion for others.**

Currently, many studies in different fields of medicine, physiology and psychology have helped to highlight the positive effects of meditation on health:

- ➔ some practices are able to lower blood cholesterol levels;
- ➔ qigong strengthens the immune system;
- ➔ Meditation has positive effects against aging;
- ➔ Meditation can help those suffering from rheumatism;
- ➔ meditation relieves the symptoms of some digestive problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome;
- ➔ Mindfulness meditation can accelerate the healing of some dermatological diseases, such as psoriasis;
- ➔ Parkinson's patients tend to walk in very short strides. Some forms of *tai chi*, practiced by patients in the early stages of the disease, can help them take longer strides.



## Chapter Thirteen: Famous People Who Meditate

### ACTORS

**Tina Turner** survived after a hard divorce by beginning to meditate – as she still does, and in 2009 she still had a most successful world tour, in spite of her age.

**Richard Gere** not only meditates, but he took a full journey through buddhism. He states *“I remember when I was just starting to practice meditation—24 years old, trying to come to grips with my life. I was holed up in my shitty little apartment for months at a time, just doing tai chi and doing my best to do sitting practice. I had a very clear feeling that I’d always been in meditation, that I’d never left meditation. That it was a much more substantial reality than what we normally take to be reality. That was very clear to me even then, but it’s taken me this long in my life to bring it out into the world more, through more time practicing, watching my mind, trying to generate bodhicitta.”*

**Oprah Winfrey** is a major advocate of meditation, she constantly preaches about its benefits and has various programs that help people both learn and get into the habit of meditating on a regular.

**Madonna** practices meditation religiously, as she devotes herself to it on a daily basis.

**Jerry Seinfeld** has been practicing meditation for over 40 years. He also credits much of his success to the practice and believes it’s like tapping into a reserve of energy.

**Jennifer Anniston:** I also do Transcendental Meditation morning and afternoon. It’s so helpful to me, especially in this crazy industry.”

**Ellen DeGeneres** says it’s the only time that she’s able to have that “stillness.” In other words, it’s her way of staying in the moment, which contributes to her amazing ability to be her authentic self in front of thousands of people.

**David Lynch**, the world-known film maker, has revealed what tremendous creative benefits he has gained from his 32 years of meditation. He's also doing charity work for inner city school children, to let them learn meditation.

**Katy Perry** told *Rolling Stone* that she starts the day with meditation which helps her get into a positive state of mind.

**Hugh Jackman** is a huge fan of mediation. “In meditation, I can let go of everything. I’m not Hugh Jackman. I’m not a dad. I’m not a husband. I’m just dipping into that powerful source that creates everything. I take a little bath in it.”

**Halle Berry** says *“I meditate and pray all the time. The faith and respect that I have in the power of God in my life is what I’ve used to keep myself grounded, and it has allowed me to move away from the storms that were in my life. I’m still a work in progress, but I know that as long as I stay close to God I’ll be all right.”*

## MUSICIANS

**Sting** has been involved with the David Lynch Foundation, which is dedicated to teaching people meditation.

**Paul McCartney** once said *“In moments of madness, meditation has helped me find moments of serenity — and I would like to think that it would help provide young people a quiet haven in a not-so-quiet world.”*

**Ringo Starr** of the Beatles is also a regular exerciser of stilling his mind.

**Leonard Cohen** has been following Zazen (which literally means seated meditation) Buddhism for nearly three decades. He discusses his experience saying *‘it is a Zen practice to invite you to sit motionless for long hours, with an officer patrolling the meditation hall to strike you with a stick several times on each shoulder if you nod off. If you sit there long enough, you run through all the alternative ways the events in your life could have turned out. After a while, the activity of thinking, that interior chatter, begins to subside from time to time. And what rushes in, in the same way that light rushes into a room when you switch on the light, is another kind of mood that overtakes you.*

## BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

**Steve Jobs** loving meditation. *“If you just sit and observe, you will see how restless your mind is. If you try to calm it, it only makes it worse, but over time it does calm, and when it does, there’s room to hear more subtle things- that’s when your intuition starts to blossom and you start to see things more clearly and be in the present more. Your mind just slows down, and you see a tremendous expanse in the moment. You see so much more than you could see before.”*

**Arianna Huffington**, Founder of Huffington Post, Arianna offers weekly classes for AOL and Huffington Post employees. She describes her early morning yoga and meditation as two of her “joy triggers.

**Rupert Murdoch**, Founder of News Corporation

**Jeff Weiner**, the CEO of LinkedIn, is a regular meditator.

**Bill Ford**, the chairman of Ford Motors, and grandson of Henry Ford

**Marc Benioff** – Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Salesforce, “There is no medication better than meditation.”

**Rick Goings** – Chairman and CEO, Tupperware Brands

**Tony Schwartz**, the Energy Project CEO has been meditating for over 20 years. He originally started the practice to quiet his busy mind, according to his book *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America*. Schwartz says that meditating has freed him from migraines and helped him develop patience, and he also advocates mindfulness as a way to improve work performance.

**Larry Brilliant**, CEO of the Skoll Global Threats Fund and former director of **Google**, spent two years during his 20s living in a Himalayan ashram and meditating,

**Ray Dalio**, Founder & Co-CIO, Bridgewater Associates USA, Meditation has given me centeredness and creativity,” said Dalio. “It’s also given me peace and health.”

**Robert Stiller**, CEO, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc. There is a dedicated meditation room at the Vermont headquarters of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc., and CEO Robert Stiller himself is a devoted practitioner. “If you have a meditation practice, you can be much more effective in a meeting,” he told Bloomberg in 2008. “Meditation helps develop your abilities to focus better and to accomplish your tasks.”

According to **IvankaTrump.com**, Donald Trump’s daughter, Ivanka Trump meditates twice daily for twenty minutes each session.

## **ATHLETES**

Athletic greats **Joe Namath, Barry Zito and Arthur Ashe** have spoken out about the benefits of meditation as a tool for athletic success. And even entire teams have been turning to visualization and mindfulness practices.

**Italian soccer team.** The success of the team in winning the World Cup rests on many factors including superior physical conditioning, skill training, team tactics, mental preparation and even luck. However the use of the Mind Room in professional soccer reflects the broadening acceptance and application of biofeedback and neurofeedback as an integral part of the training for those who performance must be optimal during times of extreme stress.” –*Biofeedback*, Vol. 34, Issue 3, Vietta Wilsom, PhD.

**Kobe Bryant** in an interview to promote a program made by Oprah Winfrey explains how he meditates every day, saying that: *meditation helps him clear his mind for the day. Otherwise he feels like he’s chasing the day.*

**LeBron James.** At only 29 years old, basketball player LeBron James already has 4 regular season MVP trophies, 2 NBA final MVP trophies and 2 NBA Championships among dozens of other accolades to his credit. His skill set is certainly beyond recognition, but there is something else to say about LeBron’s generally calm demeanor as he plays the game of basketball -particularly over the past couple of years. It’s as if the naturally fast paced game of basketball occurs in slow motion from his perspective, making him capable of scoring, passing and rebounding with ease amongst the world’s best. LeBron’s most infamous meditation experience occurred during the 2012 NBA Playoffs when he used a timeout to individually refocus.

**Michael Jordan.** Sports psychologist and meditation teacher George Mumford worked extensively with the **Chicago Bulls** while Jordan was the team’s star player, helping them to sharpen focus through a regular meditation practice. “When we are in the moment and absorbed with the activity, we play our best.”

**Ricky Williams** of the **Miami Dolphins** meditates every day, before each game.

**Michigan basketball team** coach taught them visualization and meditation techniques that they use throughout the year.

**Misty May-Treanor & Kerri Walsh.** 3-Time **Olympic gold medalists** Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh are two of the best in the world to ever play women’s beach volleyball. The duo have dominated competitions at three consecutive summer Olympics and have utilized meditation as a tool in helping them get there. Led by sports psychologist Michael Gervais, the Olympians regularly practice meditation, yoga and visualization as a regular part of their training regiment.

The **Seattle Seahawks**, American football team, are all about the mindfulness practices of yoga and meditation sessions.

## **WORLD LEADERS**

### **Meditation In Parliament: Not A One-Time Thing**

Though this high-profile meditation session seems to be a one-time event, many of the attendees are no stranger to mindfulness. In fact, mindfulness meditation has been a fixture in Parliament for more than a year—so much so that some members joke that it’s becoming a ‘cult’.

More than 95 MPs and parliament staff meet regularly for mindfulness meditation courses taught within parliament, and from the sound of it, the effect these courses have been having are pretty substantial.

At last week’s high profile event, several politicians spoke publicly about how these meditation courses have changed their lives for the better. Lord Andrew Stone, who was assigned to meet with Egypt’s military leadership earlier this year, told the audience that mindfulness meditation helped him be compassionate towards all sides of the country’s deeply troubled political factions. “I didn’t know how to cope,” he explained, “but these practices made a massive difference.”

Tracy Crouch MP also talked about the extraordinary benefits mindfulness meditation has created in her life. In her speech, she spoke openly about her personal struggle with mental illness.

**U.S. Congress.** Every week, Congressman Tim Ryan hosts the **Quiet Time Caucus, an informal 30-minute moment of silence held in the Speaker’s Chapel.** Lawmakers can meditate, do a Christian prayer like the centering prayer, or just sit there quietly. “Members of Congress never have a moment to just be quiet, from the moment they get up in the morning when they turn on Morning Joe or whatever, to meetings and votes all day, to the moment they fall asleep, often with the TV on,” Ryan said. Quiet Time started with Ryan by himself, then a couple of colleagues trickled in, and now there are about six or seven.

### **President Bill Clinton**