

Essence of Kundalini Yoga

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Abstract

Staying in the most suitable place, having found out how to penetrate sushumna and make the prana flow through the middle passage, it should be blocked in the brahmarandhra, the centre of higher consciousness.

When the way to arouse kundalini has been discovered, experiences will unfold by themselves as each of the chakra is pierced. The union of Shakti or energy and Shiva or consciousness in the higher brain centres is depicted in tantra as man and woman, Shiva and Shakti, in an interlocking embrace. The final union and samadhi takes place in sahasrara chakra. This is at the crown of the head.

Swami Sivananda describes brahmarandhra as the 'hole of Brahman' and 'dwelling house of the human soul'. It is the tenth door, also known as *dasamdvara*. In a newborn child the brahmarandhra is very pronounced. It is the soft space at the crown of the head between the parietal and occipital bones called the anterior fontanelle. AT the time of death when a yogi permanently leaves the body, the prana bursts out from the brahmarandhra. That is known as *kapala moksha*, literally meaning 'liberation from the skull'. "A (sushumna) has gone out, piercing the head. Going up through it, one attains immortality." (Kathopanishad)

However, kundalini must return back down to mooladhara chakra under the guidance of ajna, otherwise the spirit or atma will leave the body for good. When kundalini returns, the yogi once again assumes his life in the mundane world, but with an altered and elevated state of consciousness world, but with an altered and elevated state of consciousness and awareness. Nothing changes externally, the transformation has taken place internally.

Keywords: Consciousness, Sushumna, Prana, Kundalini, Brahmarandhra.

Introduction

"O Divine Mother Kundalini, the Divine Cosmic Energy that is hidden in men! Thou art Kaali, Durga, Adisakti, Rajarajeswari, Tripurasundari, Maha-Lakshmi, Maha-Sarasvati! Thou hast put on all these names and forms. Thou hast manifested as Prana, Electricity, force, magnetism, cohesion, gravitation in this universe. This whole universe rests in Thy bosom. Crores of salutations unto thee. O Mother of this world! Lead me on to open the Sushumna Nadi and take Thee along the Chakras to Sahasrara Chakra and to merge myself in Thee and Thy consort, Lord Shiva."¹

Kundalini Yoga is that Yoga which treats of Kundalini Sakti, the six centres of spiritual energy (Shat Chakras), the arousing of the sleeping Kundalini Sakti and its union with Lord Siva in Sahasrara Chakra, at the crown of the head. This is an exact science. This is also known as Laya Yoga. The six centres are pierced (Chakra Bheda) by the passing of Kundalini Sakti to the top of the head. 'Kundala' means 'coiled'. Her form is like a coiled serpent. Hence the name Kundalini.

All agree that the one aim which man has in all his acts is to secure happiness for him. The highest as well as the ultimate end of man must, therefore, be to attain eternal, infinite, unbroken, supreme happiness. This happiness can be had in one's own Self or Atman only. Therefore, search within to attain this eternal Bliss.

The thinking faculty is present only in human being. Man only can reason, reflect and exercise judgment. It is man only who can compare and contrast, who can think of pros and cons and who can draw inferences and conclusions. This is the reason why he alone is able to attain God-consciousness. That man who simply eats and drinks and who does not exercise his mental faculty in Self-realisation is only a brute. "O worldly-minded persons! Wake up from the sleep of Ajnana. Open your eyes. Stand up to acquire knowledge of Atman. Do spiritual Sadhana, awaken the Kundalini Sakti and get that 'sleepless-sleep' (Samadhi). Drown yourself in Atman."² Chitta is the mental substance. It takes various forms. These forms constitute Vrittis. It gets transformed (Parinama). These transformations or modifications are the thought-waves, whirlpools or

Vrittis. If the Chitta thinks of a mango, the Vritti of a mango is formed in the lake of Chitta. This will subside and another Vritti will be formed when it thinks of milk. Countless Vrittis are rising and subsiding in the ocean of Chitta. These Vrittis cause restlessness of mind. Why do Vrittis arise from the Chitta? Because of Samskaras and Vasanas. If you annihilate all Vasanas, all Vrittis will subside by themselves. When a Vritti subsides it leaves a definite impression in the subconscious mind. It is known as Samskara or latent impression. The sum total of all Samskaras is known as "Karmasaya" or receptacle of works. This is called Sanchita Karma (accumulated works). When a man leaves the physical body, he carries with him his astral body of 17 Tattvas and the Karmasaya as well, to the mental plane. This Karmasaya is burnt by the high knowledge obtained through Asamprajnata Samadhi.

Aim of Study

The aim of Kundalini yoga is to attain the physical, mental and spiritual health, the methods described to achieve this goal are manifold. It is now well known, that all those who strictly follow the principles and practices of Kundalini Yoga, attain great things in their lifetime for the benefit of humanity at large.

During concentration you will have to collect carefully the dissipated rays of the mind. Vrittis will be ever-rising from the ocean of Chitta. You will have to put down the waves as they arise. If all the waves subside, the mind becomes calm and serene. Then the Yogi enjoys peace and bliss. Therefore real happiness is within. You will have to get it through control of mind and not through money, women, children, name, fame, rank or power.

Purity of mind leads to perfection in Yoga. Regulate your conduct when you deal with others. Have no feeling of jealousy towards others. Be compassionate. Do not hate sinners. Be kind to all. Develop complacency towards superiors. Success in Yoga will be rapid if you put in your maximum energy in your Yogic practice. You must have a keen longing for liberation and intense Vairagya also. You must be sincere and earnest. Intent and constant meditation is necessary for entering into Samadhi.

He who has firm faith in Srutis and Shastras, who has Sadachara (right conduct), who constantly engages himself in the service of his Guru and who is free from lust, anger, Moha, greed and vanity easily crosses this ocean of Samsara and attains Samadhi quickly. Just as fire burns a heap of dried leaves, so also the fire of Yoga burns all Karmas. The Yogi attains Kaivalya. Through Samadhi, the Yogi gets intuition. Real knowledge flashes in him within a second.

Neti, Dhauti, Basti, Nauli, Asanas, Mudras, etc., keep the body healthy and strong, and under perfect control. But they are not the be-all and end-all of Yoga. These Kriyas will help you in your practice of Dhyana. Dhyana will culminate in Samadhi, Self-realisation. He who practices Hatha Yogic Kriyas is not a Puma Yogi. He who has entered into Asamprajnata Samadhi only is a Puma Yogi. He is a Svatantra Yogi (absolutely independent)

When a man practices Yogic Kriyas, naturally various kinds of Siddhis are acquired. The

Siddhis are hindrances to Realisation. The Yogi should not at all care for these Siddhis, if he wants to advance further and get the highest realisation, the final Goal. He who runs after Siddhis will become the biggest householder and a worldly-minded man. Self-realisation only is the Goal. The sum total of knowledge of this universe is nothing when compared to the spiritual knowledge that is obtained through Self-realisation.

Nirvikalpa is the state of super consciousness. There are no Vikalpas of any sort in this condition. This is the Goal of life. All the mental activities cease now. The functions of the intellect and ten Indriyas cease entirely. The aspirant rests now in Atman. There is no distinction between subject and object. The world and the pairs of opposites vanish completely. This is a state beyond all relativity. The aspirant gets knowledge of Self, supreme peace and infinite, indescribable bliss. This is also called Yogaroodha state.

When Kundalini is taken to the Sahasrara and then it is united with Lord Siva, perfect Samadhi ensues.

Yoga Nadis

Nadis are the astral tubes made up of astral-matter that carry psychic currents. The Sanskrit term 'Nadi' comes from the root 'Wad' which means 'motion'. It is through these Nadis (Sukshma, subtle passages), that the vital force or Pranic current moves or flows. Since they are made up of subtle matter they cannot be seen by the naked physical eyes and you cannot make any test-tube experiments in the physical plane. These Yoga Nadis are not the ordinary nerves, arteries and veins that are known to the Vaidya Sastra (Anatomy and Physiology). Yoga Nadis are quite different from these.

"The body is filled with innumerable Nadis that cannot be counted. Different authors state the number of Nadis in different ways, i.e., from 72,000 to 3,50,000. When you turn your attention to the internal structure of the body, you are struck with awe and wonder. Because the architect is the Divine Lord Himself who is assisted by skilled engineers and masons - Maya, Prakriti, Visva Karma, etc."³

"The subtle lines, Yoga Nadis, have influence in the physical body. All the subtle (Sukshma) Prana, Nadis and Chakras have gross manifestation and operation in the physical body. The gross nerves and plexuses have close relationship with the subtle ones. You should understand this point well. Since the physical centres have close relationship with the astral centres, the vibrations that are produced in the physical centres by prescribed methods, have the desired effects in the astral centres."⁴

Whenever there is an interlacing of several nerves, arteries and veins, that centre is called "Plexus." The physical material plexuses that are known to the Vaidya Sastra are: Pampiniform, Cervical, Brachial, Coccygeal, Lumbar, Sacral, Cardiac, Esophageal, Hepatic Pharyngeal, Pulmonary, Lingual, Prostatic Plexus, etc. Similarly there are plexuses or centres of vital forces in the Sukshma Nadis. They are known as Tadmas' (lotuses) or Chakras. Detailed instructions on all these centres are given elsewhere.

All the Nadis spring from the Kanda. It is in the junction where the Sushumna Nadi is connected with the Muladhara Chakra. Some say, that this Kanda is 12 inches above the anus. Out of the innumerable Nadis 14 are said to be important. They are:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Sushumna | 8. Pusha |
| 2. Ida | 9. Sankhini |
| 3. Pingala | 10. Payasvini |
| 4. Gandhari | 11. Varuni |
| 5. Hastajihva | 12. Alambusha |
| 6. Kuhu | 13. Vishvodhara |
| 7. Saraswati | 14. Yasasvini |

Again Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are the most important of the above 14 Nadis, and Sushumna is the chief. It is the highest and most sought by the Yogins. Other Nadis are subordinate to this. Detailed instructions on each Nadi and its functions and the method of awakening the Kundalini and passing it from Chakra to Chakra.

द्वाप्तिसहस्राणां नाडीनां मलशोधने ।⁵

कुतः प्रक्षालनोपायः कुंडल्यभ्यसनादृते ॥ 123 ॥

What other methods are there to cleanse the 72,000 nadis of dirt besides the practice of arousing kundalini?

Kanda

The spinal cord extending from the brain to the end of the vertebral column tapers off into a fine silken thread. Before its termination it gives off innumerable fibres, crowded into a bunch of nerves. This bunch of nerves is 'Cauda equina' in the gross body. The astral centre of 'Cauda equina' is Kanda.

Sushumna Nadi

Sushumna extends from the Muladhara Chakra (second vertebra of coccygeal region) to Brahmaraandhra. The Western anatomy admits that there is a central canal in the Spinal Cord, called Canalis Centralis and that the cord is made up of grey and white brain-matter. Spinal Cord is dropped or suspended in the hollow of the spinal column. In the same way, Sushumna is dropped within the spinal canal and has subtle sections. It is of red colour like Agni (fire).

When the breath flows through Sushumna, the mind becomes steady. "This steadiness of the mind is termed "Unmani Avastha", the highest state of Yoga."⁶ If you sit for meditation when Sushumna is operating, you will have wonderful meditation. When the Nadis are full of impurities, the breath cannot pass into the middle Nadi. So, one should practise Pranayama for the purification of Nadis.

मुहूर्तद्वयपर्यन्तं निर्भयं चालनादसौ ।⁷

ऊर्ध्वमाकृष्यते किञ्चित्सुषुम्नायां समुद्गता ॥ 117 ॥

By moving the kundalini fearlessly for an hour and a half, it is drawn into sushumna and rises up a little.

Ida and Pingala Nadis

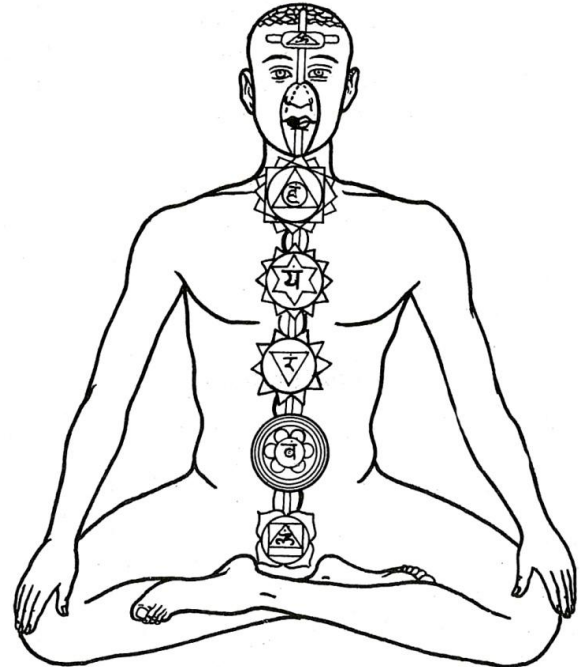
Ida and Pingala Nadis are not the gross sympathetic chains. These are the subtle Nadis that carry the Sukshma Prana. In the physical body these tentatively correspond to the right and left sympathetic chains.

Ida starts from the right testicle and Pingala from the left testicle. They meet with Sushumna Nadi at the Muladhara Chakra and make a knot there. This junction of three Nadis at the Muladhara Chakra is

known as Mukta Triveni. Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati dwell in Pingala, Ida and Sushumna Nadis respectively. This meeting place is called Brahma Granthi. Again these meet at the Anahata and Ajna Chakras. In the macrocosm also you have a Triveni at Prayag where the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati meet.

Padmas or Chakras

"Chakras are in the Linga Sarira (astral body). Linga Sarira is of 17 Tattvas, viz., 5 Jnanendriyas (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose); 5 Karmendriyas (speech, hands, legs, genitals, anus); 5 Prances (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, Samana); Manx (mind); and Buddhi (intellect). These have corresponding centres in the spinal cord and the nerve-plexuses in the gross body."⁸ Each Chakra has control and function over a particular centre in gross body. These cannot be seen by the naked eyes. Some foolish doctors search for the Chakras in the physical body. They cannot find them there. Since they cannot find any Chakra in a dead body, they lose faith in Sastras and Yogic Kriyas



When Kundalini is awakened, it passes on from Muladhara to Sahasrara through all the Chakras. At every centre to which the Yogi directs the Kundalini, he experiences a special form of Ananda (Bliss) and gains special Siddhis (psychic powers) and knowledge. He enjoys the Supreme Bliss when Kundalini is taken to Sahasrara Chakra.

Petals on Chakras

Each Chakra has a particular number of petals with a Sanskrit alphabet on each petal. The vibration that is produced at each petal is represented by the corresponding Sanskrit letter. Every letter denotes the Mantra of Devi Kundalini. The letters exist in the petals in a latent form. These can be manifested and the vibrations of the Nadis felt during concentration of "The number of petals of the lotuses varies. Muladhara, Svadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna Chakras have 4, 6, 10, 12, 16, and 2 petals respectively. All the 50 Sanskrit letters are on the 50 petals. The number of, petals in

each Chakra is determined by the number and position of the Yoga Nadis around the Chakra.”⁹ I will make it still clear. From each Chakra a particular number of Yoga Nadis crop up.

The Chakra gives the appearance of a lotus with the Nadis as its petals. The sound produced by the vibrations of the Yoga Nadis is represented by the corresponding Sanskrit letter. The Chakras with their petals hang downwards when Kundalini is at the Muladhara Chakra. When it is awakened, they turn towards Brahmastrandha. They always face the side of Kundalini.

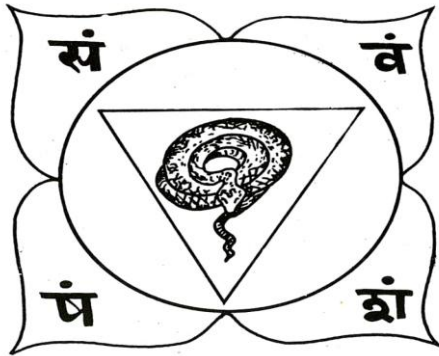


Fig-2

Relationship between Koshas and Chakras

All the five sheaths are pervaded by prana which nourishes and sustains them and maintains their appropriate relationship. The movement of consciousness from one kosha to another is also achieved with the help of prana. One must use the faculty of prana shakti to move from any one state to another. The dimension of energy is like the neutral space in the gearbox of a car. With the activation of prana, one gains access to the physical, mental, psychic and spiritual dimensions.

The pancha kosha and the chakras are interrelated in a definite pattern. Mooladhara and swadhisthana are related to annamaya kosha. Manipura relates to pranamaya kosha, anahata to manomaya kosha and vishuddhi and ajna to vijnanamaya kosha. Sahasrara relates to anandamaya kosha which is the realm of the transcendental experience of para state.

Svadhishthana Chakra

Svadhishthana Chakra is located within the Sushumna Nadi at the root of the reproductive organ. This corresponds to Bhuvan Loka. This has control over the lower abdomen, kidneys, etc., in the physical body.

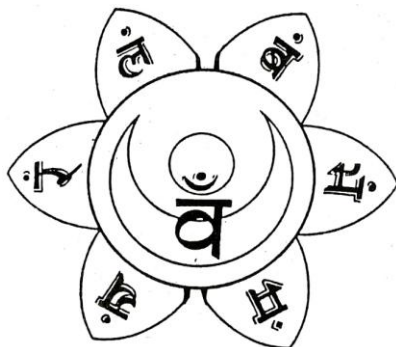


Fig - 3

Manipura Chakra

Manipura is the third Chakra from the Muladhara. It is located within the Sushumna Nadi, in the Nabhi Sthana (region of navel). This has its corresponding centre in the physical body and has control over the liver, stomach, etc. This is a very important centre. From this Chakra emanate ten Yoga Nadis which appear like the petals of a lotus. The vibrations that are produced by the Nadis are represented by the Sanskrit letters - <a .ka ra Fka na /ka ua ia Qa (Dam, Dham, Nam, Tam, Tham, Dam, Dham, Nam, Pam and Pham). The Chakra is of the colour of dark clouds. Within this there is a space triangular in form. It is the Agni Mandala (region of fire - Agni Tattva). The Bijakshara **ja** (Ram), the Bija of Agni, is here. The presiding deity is Vishnu and Goddess is Lakshmi. This Chakra corresponds to Svah or Svarga Loka and to Solar Plexus in the physical body.



Fig - 4

The Yogi who concentrates at this Chakra gets Patala Siddhi, can acquire hidden treasures and will be free from all diseases. He has no fear at all from Agni (fire). "Even if he is' thrown into the burning fire, he remains alive without fear of death." (Gheranda Samhita).

Anahata Chakra

Anahata Chakra is situated in the Sushumna Nadi (Sukshma Centre). It has control over the heart. It corresponds to the Cardiac Plexus in the physical body. This corresponds to Mahar Loka. The Chakra is of deep red colour. Within this Chakra there is a hexagonal space of smoke or deep black colour or the colour of collyrium (used for the eyes). This Chakra is the centre of Vayu Mandal (region of air, Vayu Tattva).

Who meditates on this Chakra has full control over Vayu Tattva. He gets Bhuchari Siddhi, Khechari Siddhi, Kaya Siddhi, etc., (flying in air, entering the body of another). He gets cosmic love and all other divine Sattvic qualities.

Vishuddha Chakra

Vishuddha Chakra is situated within the Sushumna Nadi at the base of the throat. Kantha-Mula Sthana. This corresponds to Janar Loka. It is the centre of Akasa Tattva (ether element). The Tattva is of pure blue colour. Above this, all other Chakras belong to Manas Tattva. The presiding deity is Sadasiva (Isvara Linga), and the Goddess is Shakini. From this centre emanate.

He who practices this Dharna will not perish even in Pralaya. He attains the highest success. He gets the full knowledge of the four Vedas by meditating on this Chakra. He becomes a Trikala Jnani (who knows the past, the present and the future).



Fig - 5

Ajna Chakra

Ajna Chakra is situated within the Sushuma Nadi and its corresponding centre in the physical body is at the space between the two eye-brows. This is known as Trikuti. The presiding deity, Paramasiva (Shambhu), is in the form of Hamsa. There is Goddess Hakini (Sakti). Pranava - (Om) is the Bijakshara for this Chakra.

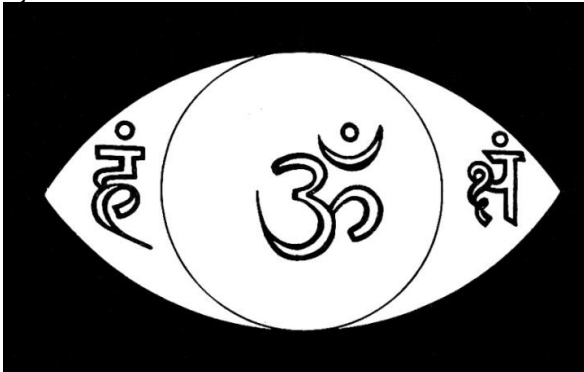


Fig - 6

He who concentrates at this centre destroys all the Karmas of the past lives. The benefits that are derived by meditation on this Chakra cannot be described in words.

The Mysterious Kundalini

*"Manastvam vyoma tvam marudasi marutsarathirasi, Tvamapastvam bhumistvayi parinatayam nahi param, Tvameva svatmanam parinamayitum visvavapusha Chidanandakaram haramahishi-bhavena bibhrushe."*¹⁰

"O Devi! Thou art the mind, the sky, the air, the fire, the water, and the earth. Nothing is outside Thee on Thy transformation. Thou hast become Siva's consecrated queen to alter Thy own blissful conscious Form in the shape of the world."

Kundalini, the serpent power or mystic fire, is the primordial energy or Sakti that lies dormant or sleeping in the Muladhara Chakra, the centre of the body. It is called the serpentine or annular power on account of serpentine form. It is an electric fiery occult

power, the great pristine force which underlies all organic and inorganic matter.

Kali and Kundalini

"The kundalini shakti of yoga is a symbol or ingredient of Kaalashakti. Kundalini is depicted as a serpent sleeping in mooladhara chakra, coiled three-and-a-half times."¹¹ It is regarded as the serpent of time. When it awakens, it uncoils and ascends through the sushumna nadi up to sahasrara, piercing all the chakras on its way. The systematic piercing of chakras implies the dissolution of one state after another. In yoga and tantra, the process of transformation, of moving from one state to another and of dissolution, is regarded as a process of the manifestation of Kali.

Yoga Sadhana - How to Awaken the Kundalini

One should become perfectly desire less and should be full of Vairagya before attempting to awaken Kundalini. It can be awakened only when a man rises above Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and other impurities. Kundalini can be awakened through rising above desires of the senses. The Yogi, who has got a pure heart and a mind free from passions and desires will be benefited by awakening Kundalini. If a man with a lot of impurities in the mind awakens the Sakti by sheer force through Asanas, Pranayamas and Mudras, he will break his legs and stumble down. He will not be able to ascend the Yogic ladder. This is the chief reason for people going out of the way or getting some bodily infirmities. There is nothing wrong in the Yoga. People must have purity first; then a thorough knowledge of the Sadhana, a proper guide, and a steady, gradual practice. When Kundalini is awakened, there are many temptations on the way, and a Sadhaka without purity will not have the strength to resist.

वज्रासने स्थितो योगी चालयित्वा च कुंडलीम् ।¹²

कुर्यादनन्तरं भस्त्रां कुंडलीमाशु बोधयेत् ॥

In the position of vajrasana, the yogi should move the kundalini.

Having done bhasrika pranayama the kundalini is soon aroused.

First, moola bandha/ashwini mudra should be performed in vajrasana or siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, with kumbhaka, to locate the base of the kanda within mooladhara chakra. This grasps the tail of the sleeping kundalini and incites her to move. Then bhasrika pranayama is to be practiced to activate her.

"Kundalini can be awakened by Pranayama, Asanas and Mudras by Hatha Yogis; by concentration and training of the mind by Raja Yogis; by devotion and perfect self-surrender by Bhaktas; by analytical will by the Jnanis; by Mantras by the Tantrikas; and by the grace of the Guru (Guru Kripa) through touch, sight or mere Sankalpa. Rousing of Kundalini and its union with Siva at the Sahasrara Chakra effect the state of Samadhi and Mukti. No Samadhi is possible without awakening the Kundalini."¹³

Rousing of Kundalini and its union with Siva at the Sahasrara Chakra effect the state of Samadhi and Mukti. Before awakening the Kundalini, you must have Deha Suddhi (purity of body), Nadi Suddhi (purification of Nadis), Manas-Suddhi (purity of mind) and Buddhi Suddhi (purity of intellect). For the

purification of the body, the following six exercises are prescribed:

Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Nauli, Trataka and Kapalabhati. These are known as Shat-Karmas or the six purificatory exercises in Hatha Yoga.

Tree of Life

Spirituality is awareness of the root of the tree of life. This has been clearly stated in the 15th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita which is Purushottam Yoga, the yoga of the supreme spirit. Here it says: "Urdhvamoolamadahahshaakham"¹⁴, which means that life is like an inverted tree, with the roots above and the branches below. The roots represent the spirit. The trunk is the manifestation of the human nature, identity, personality and individuality. The branches, which are at the lower level, represent the many expressions of the gunas in human nature, in the form of knowledge, creativity, energy, feeling, attitude, positivity and negativity, which we express in our lives.

In the same chapter, it has also been said: "Asangashastrena dridhena chhitva"¹⁵, which means that, ultimately, we have to cut the trunk of the tree, so that the physical and mental experiences are isolated from the spiritual experiences. There are different astras, or divine weapons, such as the brahmaastra, agnyaastra, vayavyastra. Here, Lord Krishna has defined another form of astra to cut the trunk at the root. The instrument is anasakti, the axe of detachment. Those things we cannot leave are asakti, or attachments. When we hold the axe of detachment in our hands, we can cut this tree of life at the root. Then we are free from attachment to the physical and material life and can experience spiritual life. This is viveka and vairagya, discrimination and non-attachment.

Conclusion

Energy (Sakti) polarises itself into two forms, namely, static or potential (Kundalini) and dynamic (the working forces of the body as Prana). Behind all activity there is a static background. This static centre in the human body is the centre serpent-power in the Muladhara (root support).

When awakened, Kundalini Sakti ceases to be a static power which sustains the world-consciousness, the content of which is held only so long as She sleeps; and when once set in movement Kundalini is drawn to that other static centre in the Thousand-petalled Lotus (Sahasrara) to attain union with the Siva Consciousness or the consciousness of

ecstasy beyond the world of forms. When Kundalini sleeps man is awake to this world. When She wakes he sleeps, i.e., loses all consciousness of the world and enters the causal body. In Yoga he passes beyond to formless consciousness.

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