

Tantric Kriya Yoga

by Alan Verdegraal

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The following articles give you a concise introduction to practice the ancient art of Tantric Kriya Yoga. These articles were originally published from previous issues of Tantra: The Magazine. The newly available Tantric Kriya Yoga Video Series gives a complete presentation of these techniques.

Reference:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20020124113539/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya.htm>

Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part One

By Alan Verdegraal

Tantra consists of methods to expand consciousness to perceive transcendental states. Certain practices referred to as "kriyas" help initiate this expansion. In literature, one will find the word kriya used in several different contexts. It is applied to yogic cleansing practices that maintain the health of the physical body as well as in reference to certain rituals, devotional attitude, and prayers. In the context of this on-going column, Tantric Kriya practices are techniques used to open up the chakras and purify the nadi system. Direct experience of these aspects of esoteric physiology is not necessary to begin the practice of Tantric Kriya Yoga.

In time, the determined practitioner will be able to perceive the sensations corresponding to these mystic structures, and eventually "see" them within. Chakras and nadis are part of the subtle body, the "light body" of a human being. Much of Tantra involves the exploration of this less-apparent domain. For the beginner, let it suffice to make the following comparison. The nadis are related to the subtle body and in their function are similar to the function of the circulatory system in the physical body. Rather than carrying life-giving blood, nadis enable the flow of life-force energy. Likewise, the chakras can be compared to the organs of the physical body, each with a specific purpose of receiving and refining the life force energy.

Tantric Kriyas are techniques that a single individual can do to accelerate his or her spiritual growth. If one has tried to quiet chatter of the mind through meditation with little success, Tantric Kriyas will provide surprising results because no effort is put into stopping the mind. On the contrary, the mental mechanism can do whatever it wants. As Kriyas begin to purify the subtle body, emotions will arise, thoughts will occur -- just let them happen. It is all part of the healing process necessary to become open to higher vibrational energies. Over time, these emotional releases will be replaced by clarity, energy experiences, and even visions. Just continue to do the practices.

There is a secret koan whose understanding leads to success in seated meditation -- "when the body is still, always keep moving." Think about it. Even when one is sitting quietly, there is much movement that is on-going. The lungs continue to breathe, the heart continues to pump, the eyes blink if they are open. Being aware of this subtle movement is a meditation in itself. A common yogic meditation technique is to observe the breath. Take a moment and observe your breath. Focus on your nose. What do you notice? As you breathe in, there is a cooling sensation in the nostrils. As you breathe out, there is a warming sensation. If one continues with this meditation, the mind will soon get bored. At first, the mind will be interested, "Hey, I do notice the cooling and warming sensation. That's neat." If you persist with the meditation, the mind will start to rebel. Other thoughts will occur, and soon you will have forgotten totally about observing the breath as the mind goes off day-dreaming. Suddenly, you may remember, and re-establish the focus on the breath and nose. Soon however, the mind will be off on its own journey, making success with this seemingly simple meditation very difficult.

In Tantric Kriya Yoga, two allies are enlisted to facilitate meditation and tap quickly into the subtle energies. The first ally is the breath. The breathing process never stops. The practitioner can control the breath, and through this control, influence the body, the emotions, and the mind. All of these are connected. When one is aroused, breathing speeds up. When one is angry, one tenses and holds the breath. When the mind is peaceful, the breathing is regular and deep. These are simple breathing responses to the state of the body, a direct cause and effect reaction. What is worth some exploration is the opposite relationship. Let the tail wag the dog. When one is angry -- breathe. By consciously altering the breath, there will be a definite effect upon the body, the emotions, and the mind. This is one of the most important observations in yoga. This is the goal of pranayama -- the science of mastering the breath. There are many techniques, but for the beginner, the rule is very simple -- breathe. It could change one's life. Without it, there is no life.

The second ally is awareness. The term kriya means "action" in Sanskrit. Even though the body is quiet, in Tantric Kriya Yoga, awareness always keeps moving. Awareness is a sensation, almost a tingling, that is localized to a specific spot or site. Look at your right hand. What do you feel there? Blow on it. Almost immediately, sensations from your hand flood into your brain. Move this "awareness" to the tip of the first finger. Feel the sensations specific to your finger tip. All other sensations are forgotten. The brain is still receiving them, but awareness allows us to narrow the rush of sensory input selectively. We can consciously choose what input we want to experience. This is the power of awareness. What is your left hand doing? Immediately you feel the sensations coming

from your left hand. What is your right foot doing? What about your left ear? Awareness can move. It can move very quickly. It can move very slowly.

These two allies, breath and awareness, can be linked together to form the powerful series of techniques called Tantric Kriyas. When linked with the breath, awareness can move life-force energy through certain channels in the body. In the beginning, we do mean the physical body, since awareness initially is physically oriented. After steady practice, one will become aware nadis and chakras, and the movement of energy in the subtle body.

Meditation: We want to learn to connect the breath and the awareness together. Go back to the very first exercise -- observing the breath. This time, as you breathe in, move your awareness along with the first wisps of air entering your body. As you begin your inhale, become aware of the air entering your nostrils, follow it around the nasal passage, passed the glottis, down the bronchial tubes, all the way into the lungs, to where it expands against the diaphragm. You can actually feel sensations all of the way. Now exhale and bring your awareness back outward with the breath, such that it reaches your nose with your last bit of air. Inhale again and move your awareness. Close your eyes, it may help you to focus a little more on your awareness. The goal in this practice is to get used to moving the awareness in conjunction with the breath. An interesting thing will happen, your mind may wander, thoughts may occur, but you can still maintain awareness of the sensations along your respiratory passage as the breath goes in and out. Another thing has happened, your breathing has become deep and regular. Let the thoughts just occur. This separation of the thought process from the breathing and awareness is a natural phenomenon. There is no need to force the mind to stop thinking. You have joined two great allies that can overcome many obstacles along the inward path to transcendence.

There is a breathing technique that is very essential to doing the Tantric Kriya practices. In yoga, it is called ujjayi breath. As you breath in, slightly contract the glottis. You will know you are doing this correctly when you feel a gentle constriction that will cause a slightly audible rasping sound, almost like a quiet snore. The constriction should not be so tight as to restrain the air forcefully. It can be very subtle and smooth. If you are having problems experiencing this sensation, contact a yoga teacher for a demonstration; it is a very common yogic technique. Once you understand how to do it, it will come easily. There is a very important physiological phenomenon that occurs when ujjayi breath is practiced. The breathing slows down and the blood pressure is lowered in the body. This naturally relaxes the body allowing one to feel comfortable in the inward state. Closing the eyes will intensify the experience. It is almost as if one is asleep, but inside thoughts continue to happen.

Practice ujjayi with the awareness of the breath filling and vacating the lungs as described above. This is the very first Tantric Kriya practice. There are many many Kriya practices. Most mystical traditions incorporate Kriya practices for reaching higher states. This column will present these practices starting with the simple ones and advancing to more complex techniques that move energy and undertake specific visualizations. Tantrikas view the body as a laboratory and Kriyas as the tools for experimentation. Regular practice will help you relax your physical body, become aware of your subtle body,

expand your consciousness, and experience drug-less states of transcendence.

There is a mythology about Kriya practices made popular through Paramahansa Yogananda's book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Over a thousand years ago, a man named Babaji obtained perfection in his practice of Kriyas. He transcended all his karmas and became a Mahasiddha, a Great Saint, an Immortal beyond the physical limitations of the body. Rather than merging with the transcendental reality, he remained on the etheric plane to help aspirants along the path of spiritual awakening. Over time, the Kriya techniques were lost or forgotten. During the nineteenth century, Mahasiddha Babaji decided it was time once again for people to practice Kriyas. He appeared to many spiritual saints, including Yogananda's Sadguru Lahiri Mahasay. Revealing the techniques, he re-established the Kriya techniques in many different lineages and traditions. It is not important what school of yoga or lineage you follow, Tantric Kriyas are in all mystic traditions. It is said that there are 108 Kriyas, 72 are practices that the individual does alone, the other 36 are practices to be done with a partner.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Two

By Alan Verdegraal

This section will present a new principle, called psychic breathing, and introduce the practice of Chakra Breathing, that will energize and begin the purification of the chakras and other specific energy points in the subtle body.

In [Part One](#)

http://web.archive.org/web/20011103212606/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_01.htm, several principles and practices have been introduced. One of these is awareness, the ability of the brain to single out specific sensory input from a particular location of the body and willfully move that awareness from point to point. The second is breathing, whose power is the key to an entire set of yogic practices called pranayamas. When joined together, awareness and breathing combine as two great allies to form the basis of many Tantric Kriya Yoga techniques. A particular pranayama was introduced called ujjayi breath, facilitated by the slight contraction of the glottis, that naturally lowers the blood pressure and slows down the cycle of the breath that assists one to easily focus inward. If you have experimented with the exercises presented, you will have found how easy it is to go into a relaxed meditative state, possibly deeper than you have gone before.

Many Kriya techniques are formed through the combination of these three activities, slow deep breathing, contraction of the glottis, and the movement of awareness. For the beginning practitioner, when we speak of awareness, we are referring to the awareness of sensations in the physical body. Over time, Kriya practices will sensitize the individual to the experience of the subtle body which includes the nadis and chakras. Specific channels

will be identified and utilized in various practices that will be presented in forthcoming lessons. In advanced techniques, when the mind has been cleared of chatter and emotional thought patterns, specific visualizations will be employed. However, we must start with the basics upon which many techniques will be built.

Certain knowledge of the subtle body is required before one can begin the practice of Tantric Kriya Yoga. This information includes the approximate location of the chakras and other key energy points. Only the most basic fundamentals will be presented here, for it is up to the serious practitioner to experience for him or herself. The key to success is regularity, not how much one spends at a particular meditative session. Fifteen minutes once a week every week is much better than one hour every now and then. Fifteen minutes every day is a good goal for the beginner, but it is OK if you only do it once a week. We will be adding at least one technique a lesson, and you will find the length of your Kriya meditations extending naturally.

It is important to note that different spiritual traditions present disparate information concerning the structure of the subtle body including the chakras and nadi system. Each tradition including Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist, mention the subtle body in ancient sacred texts, but tend to disagree on the number of chakras and their attributes. For instance the East Indian Tantric system generally states that there are 7 chakras, while the Buddhists mention only 5. In their book, *The Body of Light*, Lar Short and Thomas Mann discuss this phenomenon and present possible explanations. Their final advice is most important: Do not let this be an obstacle. After years of Kriya practice, I have identified no less than 20 energy points that have become part of my psychic being. These points made themselves known to me over time as I increased my sensitivity. One can start with any of the systems, but let your own experience be the guide by tuning into your inner being.

With this in mind, a good starting point is the East Indian Tantric system. For those who do desire a more complete explanation of this tradition, there are several excellent Western texts that discuss the chakras with related techniques and meditations. The classic is *Kundalini Yoga for the West* by Swami Sivananda Radha (Shambhala). Another is *Wheels of Life* by Anodea Judith (Llewellyn) and more recently, *Chakras* by one of my teachers, Harish Johari (Destiny Books). These three will give the reader more than adequate coverage of the chakras and their associated attributes. These attributes include sounds, senses, emotions, symbols, colors, elements, desires and obstacles. Once again, however, don't let book study circumvent your own direct experiences. What you experience is your reality; books can only present vague maps to those who seek the way to transcendence.

One of the purposes of Kriya Yoga is to open and purify the chakras, nadis, and channels. This will allow life force energy to flow easily through these centers and systems. Though chakras and nadis are not physical in nature, that is, they are not to be found in the physical body, when they become energized there are bodily sensations that occur on the physical level. These sensations include warmth, tingling, pulsing, pressure, etc. As Kriya practices take the aspirant into deeper states of consciousness, one's awareness of these sensations will begin to refine and become very localized. At first the sensations may be experienced coming from a very large area of the physical body rather than a

point. At other times, it may seem that the loci of the sensations keep moving about with each session. Just continue the focus on the places where the sensation seems the strongest and detach from any intellectual correspondence with what you may have read. With practice, you will know in time exactly where your energy points are located.

Take a moment to examine the diagram and identify various terms, such as chakras, kshetrams, and bindu, and energy points. The chakras consist of the following: Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddi, Ajna, and Sahasrara. These are the Sanskrit transliterations. Knowing the Sanskrit names is not initially important but something to master over time. In men, Muladhara is located in the perineum between the anus and genitals. In women, it is located inside the vagina. The next four chakras are located along the spine. Ajna is located at the point between the eyebrows and Sahasrara is located at the top of the head, i.e., at the fontanel of the skull. There are certain points called kshetrams that correspond to the four spinal chakras but occur at the front of the body. For instance, Manipura chakra occurs on the spine behind the navel, while the kshetram for Manipura occurs at the navel. Likewise, Anahata chakra occurs behind the heart on the spine, while the kshetram for Anahata occurs in front of the heart on the chest. Vishuddi chakra is located at the back of the neck and its kshetram is located in the throat. Sometimes the sensations at the kshetrams will feel far more pronounced than sensations at the corresponding chakra points taking in the entire abdomen, chest or throat. There is one other special point, called Bindu, which is located on the back of the skull where the hair naturally spirals outward. This is also the point where monks will shave the hair to leave a bald spot for added stimulation.

Chakra/Kshetram Awareness Technique

Once you have familiarized yourself with all of these points so that you do not have to refer to any chart, you are ready for the first practice. Sit in a comfortable position with the back straight. This can be with crossed legs, in a half-lotus position, full lotus, or simply sitting in a chair. In all of these positions, the buttocks should firmly make contact with the ground or seat. If you are in a chair make sure that your back is not touching the back of the chair, for this will interfere with sensing the energy at the chakras.

Focus on Muladhara chakra, that is, move your awareness to that point which is the perineum in men and the inside of the vagina in women. Just notice any sensations that might occur. Always start with Muladhara chakra and always end with bringing the awareness to Muladhara chakra. We will move the awareness from point to point by proceeding up the kshetrams in the front of the body and then down the chakras along the spine. So become aware of the point for Swadhisthana kshetram. It is located in both men and women near the pubic bone. Move to Manipura kshetram at the point of the navel. Now to Anahata kshetram in front of the heart, to Vishuddhi kshetram, to Ajna chakra between the eyebrows, to Sahasrara at the top of the head, to the Bindu point in back of the head, down to Vishuddhi chakra, Anahata chakra, Manipura chakra, Swadhisthana chakra, and finally back to Muladhara. Spend enough time at each point to notice any sensations, then go on to the next point. Continue this cycle around the body a dozen or more times. We will now introduce the method of psychic breathing that when added to the above chakra/kshetram awareness technique will make an extremely powerful practice.

Psychic Breathing

Psychic Breathing is difficult to explain; it must be experienced. We are so used to the sensation of the breath going in and out of the nose and mouth, that it may be initially difficult to sense something different, especially something that violates our rational concept of breathing. Psychic breathing is when we focus our awareness at a specific point and imagine that there is an opening at that point. We imagine that the air is actually entering and exiting the body at that point. Another way of illustrating this technique is as follows. Imagine, for instance, that you have a big nose on your chest (where Anahata kshetram is located). Feel yourself breathe directly into your chest through this imaginary nose. Now exhale out of this "nose". Feel the sensations. Your awareness stays at the point on the sternum; you are not focusing awareness on your nose or mouth. Breathe in, breathe out. Feel the heart and lungs fill with energy. Try it with another point, such as your navel. Try a slow deep inhalation and exhalation keeping your awareness at your navel and imagine air moving in one direction, then out in the other direction. It will not take long before you will be "breathing" in and out of specific chakras and kshetrams.

This is called psychic breathing because you are not actually breathing air in and out of these points. However, you are psychically breathing prana in and out of these points. Prana is a term that relates to life force energy and is necessary for all life. Typically, the main way we take prana into the body is through the physical breathing mechanism. That is not the only way. Psychic breathing will also move prana in and out of the body, especially at the various energy points (chakras, kshetrams, bindu). The more this is practiced, the more prana will move, and the more sensations there will be as if you were actually breathing air in and out of a specific point directly into the body.

Chakra Breathing

Now let's combine Psychic Breathing with the Chakra/Kshetram Awareness Technique. Place your awareness at Muladhara chakra and "pull" prana directly into the body as you slowly inhale. As you exhale, psychically breathe the prana out through Muladhara. Next, move up the front of the body with each kshetram (Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, and Vishuddhi), breathing in and breathing out physically and psychically once with each point. Notice the sensations. At first it will not be a single point of which you become aware, but more like an area. For example, you may feel sensations all over your abdomen instead of just at the navel. Slowly these sensations will become more localized to the navel and its immediately surrounding area. Continue the circuit to Ajna, Sahasrara, and Bindu, then down the chakras along the spine to Muladhara. Do the circuit again and again. If you have perfected ujjayi breath, you may find that you are automatically doing this technique in conjunction with the psychic breathing. This will take you very deeply inward and your focus of awareness on each point will magnify greatly. This is the Kriya practice called Chakra Breathing.

There is one last technique or mudra that I will introduce in this section. This is the practice of Khechari Mudra or the tongue lock. With the mouth closed, roll the tongue backward so that the normally lower surface touches the upper palate. Try to bring the tongue tip as far back as possible without strain. At first it may seem awkward, but with

some practice in conjunction with ujjayi breath, it will actually seem like the most natural position for the tongue. This mudra has a very subtle effect upon both the physical and subtle body. It actually connects two important circuits that we will discuss in the next issue.

Practice Chakra Breathing every day for ten or fifteen minutes. Your perception of the chakras, kshetrams and Bindu will greatly be enhanced. As these energy points begin being purified, you will find yourself feeling many different emotions or having many different memories arise. This is a natural process. Let the memories and emotions happen. If you want to cry, let it happen. For the first two years that I did Kriya practices, I cried almost every session. This is the natural release of emotional holding and karmic patterning. This Kriya practice is very balanced for it energizes all the chakras and kshetrams. Focusing on just one chakra or kshetram for extended lengths of time is an unbalanced practice and can cause profound emotional swings. One of the objectives in Tantra is balance. Tantric Kriya Yoga when properly practiced is a very balanced set of techniques that expand the consciousness.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Three

By Alan Verdegraal

Part Three introduces the frontal and spinal channels necessary for the practice Kriya Chakra Circuit, that connects the chakras and kshetrams together in a single breath. In the [Part Two <http://web.archive.org/web/20011103213950/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm>](http://web.archive.org/web/20011103213950/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm), the location of the chakras and kshetrams were introduced as shown in the accompanying diagram. Knowing the general position of these points is necessary before proceeding with the practice of Tantric Kriya Yoga. Review these locations. There are seven chakras, four kshetrams, and a special point called Bindu.

Also in the last section, the practice of psychic breathing was explained. This is the technique of breathing prana in and out of a specific point and is best linked to the yogic breathing method called ujjayi breath where the glottis is slightly contracted [Part One <http://web.archive.org/web/20011103213950/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_01.htm>](http://web.archive.org/web/20011103213950/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_01.htm). When this is performed with each chakra and kshetram, it is called the Kriya technique of Chakra Breathing. With eyes closed, always begin focus at Mooladhara chakra. With the inhalation, imagine the air actually entering the body at Mooladhara and filling up the lungs. On the exhalation, imagine the air exiting the body at Mooladhara.

Proceed in this manner up the front of the body, energizing each kshetram, Ajna chakra, Sahasrara chakra, Bindu, and down the spinal chakras back to Mooladhara. Spend at least one full deep breath at each chakra. Always end this practice at Mooladhara. While doing this, the tongue lock called khechari mudra is maintained, that is, curl the tongue

backward as far as it will go and touch the upper palate. Chakra Breathing individually energizes the chakras and kshetrams and begins their purification process.

Continue this Kriya until proficiency has been gained in the awareness of the positioning of the chakras and kshetrams, before undertaking the Kriya described below. One will feel a warmth, tingling, pulsing, etc., at the location of the chakras and kshetrams. One may also begin to see symbols in the mind's eye as the focus turns inward. Once again, memories and emotions may arise. Let them flow; it is all part of the purification process. Let your thoughts happen, but maintain your awareness at the point where you are undertaking psychic breathing. If you need to cry, let your tears flow. If your awareness drifts, bring it back to the place of focus. Breathe! Remember, link your awareness to your breath, this is the secret for success.

At this time, we will learn about two special channels. The first starts at Mooladhara, then ascends to Swadhisthana Kshetram, Manipura Kshetram, Anahata Kshetram, Vishuddhi Kshetram, and finally to Bindu. This we will call the frontal channel. Notice that in this channel focus shifts from the throat directly to Bindu. The second channel begins at Bindu, then travels directly to Ajna Chakra (bypassing Sahasrara), then to Vishuddhi Chakra, Anahata Chakra, Manipura Chakra, Swadhisthana Chakra, and ends at Mooladhara. This will be called the spinal channel. Notice that the channel focus moves from the forehead (Ajna) directly to the back of the neck (Vishuddhi Chakra). Examine the diagram and become aware of both the locations and the direction of the channels.

The Kriya Chakra Circuit is actually a figure eight. It is the combination of the frontal and spinal channels. In this Kriya, awareness will move up the frontal channel with the inhalation, then down the spinal channel with the exhalation. Always begin with Chakra Breathing to energize and open the chakras, then proceed to Kriya Chakra Circuit. Keep the eyes closed. Apply khechari mudra (the tongue lock). Move the awareness to Mooladhara. Using ujjayi breath (contraction of the glottis), and the psychic breathing technique, inhale up the frontal channel with a slow deep breath ending at Bindu. Pause for a few seconds, then exhale down the spinal channel to Mooladhara. Pause. Continue the next round. Do this for about ten or fifteen minutes with long slow deep breaths. Remember, always to bring the energy down the spine to Mooladhara before ending the practice. Afterward, release all the practices, sit quietly, and observe.

Several activities are taking place. We are opening the channels allowing life force energy to pass from one chakra or kshetram to the next. This helps balance each of the energy centers. We are also magnetizing the circuit. This will help the energy flow easier over time. If you recall from grade school science class, the way to magnetize a piece of iron is to stroke it slowly and continuously in the same direction, not back and forth. This aligns individual molecules in a north/south orientation. With this Kriya, we are magnetizing the channels that will strengthen and expand our energy field.

Some of you may be familiar with the Taoist Kriya practice called the Microcosmic Orbit. This is similar to the Kriya Chakra Circuit but major differences exist. In the Microcosmic Orbit, the breath moves first up the spine to the top of the head rather than upward in front of the body. The Microcosmic Orbit is an advanced practice that greatly accelerates the flow of energy up the spine. In an unprepared practitioner this can lead to

a premature awakening of the Kundalini. There are many preliminary Taoist practices that must be performed to strengthen and prepare the aspirant for this energy practice.

The Kriya Chakra Circuit is a gentle way of opening the both the frontal and spinal channels. Those who know how to sharpen a knife with a file or whetstone will remember that we apply the stroke toward the knife and its edge rather than away from the knife. Slow continuous even strokes produce the sharpest edge. Likewise, the Kriya Chakra Circuit is the major technique that will hone the spinal "blade". Rather than encouraging energy to flow up the spine prematurely, we sharpen the channel over time to tame the Kundalini. There are many variations that will be introduced in the forthcoming sections. Later on, we will be undertaking Kriyas that reverse this flow once the foundation is prepared.

The figure eight is another very important subtlety that is lost in the practice of the Microcosmic Orbit by itself. Where the pathways cross, there are several additional energy centers. It is too early to begin our focus at these points as we have with the chakras and kshetrams in Chakra Breathing. In time, these centers will make themselves apparent, and additional Kriya techniques will be presented.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Four

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Four

This fourth part introduces a new Kriya that employs sound vibration to help open the spinal channel. This Kriya is called Sounding the Spinal Channel.

The first Kriya mentioned in [Part 2 \(Issue #2\)](#) http://web.archive.org/web/20011105023037/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm is called Chakra Breathing. This technique begins the purification of the chakras and kshetrams energy points. One additional aspect can now be added. Silently repeat the name of the chakra or kshetram three times while psychically breathing in and out at that location, such as, "manipura, manipura, manipura." The vibration of the name will help open the energy point.

In the [third part \(Issue #3\)](#) http://web.archive.org/web/20011105023037/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_03.htm two channels were introduced. The frontal channel (arohan) starts at muladhara chakra ascending up the front of the body to swadhisthana kshetram, manipura kshetram, anahata kshetram, vishuddhi kshetram, then directly to bindu. The spinal channel (awarohan) begins at bindu then moves forward to ajna chakra in the forehead, proceeds directly to vishuddhi chakra at the back of the neck and continues down the spine to anahata chakra, manipura chakra, swadhisthana chakra, ending at muladhara chakra. Together they form a figure eight with the crossing point in the area of the base of the

skull. Understanding these channels and the direction of flow is necessary for the practice of Kriya Chakra Circuit as well as other Kriya practices.

In the Kriya Chakra Circuit with psychic breathing and khechari mudra (tongue lock), the awareness flows up the frontal channel with inhalation and down the spinal channel with exhalation. Make the breath as slow and deep as you can. This is facilitated by ujjayi breath, that is, the slight contraction of the glottis in the throat. The pause at either the apex or root is not an actual holding of the breath. Let the two channels connect smoothly. The breath slows down as the lungs fill. Let it be like a roller coaster car as it mounts the highest hill, never stopping, slowing until it passes the crest where the acceleration reverses and speed increases. The transition between the inhalation and the exhalation is smooth and continuous.

Once facility has been obtained with the frontal & spinal circuit, another aspect can be added. As the awareness passes a chakra or kshetram, sense the energy point as it goes by. It is like a train moving through a station without stopping. You notice the station moving by, you may even notice aspects such as people waiting for the next train, name of the station, colors, etc. Expand your awareness each time you move through a chakra. Kriya Chakra Circuit can be practiced as many as 56 times.

Sounding the Spinal Channel utilizes actual sound vibration and awareness to energize this channel. We use the vibration of the cosmic mantram OM. Sit in a comfortable position with the back straight. In this Kriya the eyes are open at the start. Gently lower the chin to the chest in a relaxed manner. Exhale completely and bring your awareness to muladhara chakra. Silently repeat "Muladhara, muladhara, muladhara." With the inhalation (utilizing ujjayi breath & kechari mudra), let your awareness arise through the frontal channel. Notice the kshetrams as they each pass by. When your awareness reaches vishuddhi kshetram, slowly raise your head and eyes. Your inhalation should complete at the bindu point. Silently repeat "Bindu, bindu, bindu." Vocally begin the chant "Om". With the exhalation of the chant, the awareness descends the spinal channel back to the root chakra. Maintain the "O" through ajna to vishuddhi chakra, then close the lips and let the "m" resonate as your awareness descends through anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, to mooladhara chakra. As your awareness descends, slowly lower your head and eyes. By the time you reach mooladhara, your eyes will be closed. It is almost like being drowsy. At the root chakra, once again, silently repeat "Mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara." Open your eyes, and begin another circuit. Repeat this Kriya thirteen times, then close your eyes, release all the techniques.

The correct sounding of Om in this Kriya is a protracted long "o" as in go followed immediately by a nasal "mmmmmm" when the lips close at vishuddhi chakra. Do not use the chant AUM, where commonly each letter is separately sounded . . . A . . . U . . . M . . . One will feel the vibration descending in the spinal channel as the awareness descends. Over time, this vibration will help open the spinal channel.

Sounding the Spinal Channel incorporates a gentle head and neck movement. This movement alternately lengthens and compresses the spine creating a pumping motion that adds to the effect of the practice. Continuous rocking of the neck in this manner can cause some muscular and vertebral stress. If you feel weakness, minimize the neck

movement. One can strengthen a weak neck by interlocking the fingers of both hands, firmly placing the back of the fingers on the forehead, and slowly raising and lowering the head pressing against the hands. The natural pressure against the head creates a tension in the frontal neck muscles that will gradually make them stronger. Similarly, cup the hands behind the neck and raise the neck for the muscles in the back.

Your Kriya sadhana is beginning to take form. Spending fifteen minutes a day will have profound results. To solidify the format, let's add a few quick aspects. Begin with some physical practices that loosen the spine. The ideal exercise is the yogic asana series called Salutation to the Sun. Consult any hatha yoga book or yoga instructor for the basic series or other suitable techniques for your body shape and size. Five minutes of the Salutation will align the spine, increase circulation in the body, and open up the breathing. Then sit in a comfortable position that allows the back to be straight and the buttocks to firmly contact the floor or seat. It can be a cross-legged position or make use of a chair provided that the spine does not contact the back of the chair or is supported by a wall. Relax into the posture as much as possible. Notice any tensions. By taking a few quick deep breaths, release the air with a sigh and with it any tensions that may remain. You are now ready for Kriya practice. Start immediately with [Chakra Breathing \(Part Two\)](http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm).

http://web.archive.org/web/20011105023037/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm> Do about 10 to 15 rounds. Then proceed to the practice called [Kriya Chakra Circuit \(Part Three\)](http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_03.htm).

http://web.archive.org/web/20011105023037/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_03.htm> Again do 10 to 15 rounds, but eventually build up to forty to sixty rounds. Once familiar with the instructions from this part, continue with the Kriya practice Sounding the Spinal Channel for 10 to 15 rounds. End your sadhana by releasing all practices and sitting quietly for a few minutes. Observe any sensations, emotions, or thoughts. You will probably find that it is a moment of stillness.

With these initial Kriya practices, always begin your focus at muladhara chakra and always bring the energy back to muladhara chakra at the end of the practice. This grounds the psychic energy that is produced. If after doing the practices you experience a headache, it is due to too much energy remaining in the brain. Just relax, begin the Kriya Chakra Circuit once again, but focus more on pulling the energy down the spinal channel from bindu to muladhara chakra.

Alan Verdegraal
Publisher, TANTRA: The Magazine

Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Five

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Five

Part Five introduces the So Ham Kriya. It links the mantra So Ham with the breath and awareness. By now, many have adopted a regular Kriya sadhana (practice), doing Kriyas every day or every other day or even just once a week.

Many people do not realize the subtle impact spiritual practice has on one's daily life.

They can even begin a spiritual practice not realizing that it is spiritual. A prime example is yoga. People will attend yoga classes thinking it is for the health of the physical body. Yoga is known as the Science of Union with the Divine. Simple yoga postures can have major spiritual impact. After a period of time practicing yoga, major changes often occur in the person's life. These can actually seem to be disruptions. "Problems" appear in one's job, in one's love life, in one's family, in one's health, etc. One may even have thoughts like "God must be against me." Because these "disruptions" disturb the mental and emotional state that originally encouraged the spiritual search, the person will unconsciously stop their spiritual practices, such as, going to yoga classes. The person just "drops" yoga out until he or she can re-establish the "stability" in their life and remember that yoga is fun to do. Then the pattern repeats itself.

Understanding this phenomena is essential to continued spiritual growth. Spiritual practice purifies the being on all levels. It shakes every aspect up. In the body, purification will release toxins that will cause feelings of sickness, nausea, and other disease symptoms. As the chakras clear, both positive and negative emotions will be expressed sometimes very inappropriately. With energy practices, memories of traumas from one's childhood will surface with its sudden release of stuffed emotional charges. All of these have impact on one's daily activities, relationships, and moods. They are indeed disturbances to one's life, but not to one's spiritual growth.

Most of us live life with little consciousness of our actions. Rather than consciously taking control, situations occur that seem to control us. We think we make the decision, but then must live with the consequences for many years even though the original factors have changed. Before we are even five years old, many of our subconscious actions in adult years have already been determined. We may find ourselves in family occupations without a choice, "fall in love" with someone who seems to be ideal at the moment, bear children with the resulting responsibilities all before we reach a point of wondering if there is more to life. At the time, each situation presents its rewards. However, all these "rewards" are impermanent temporary.

At some point we begin the spiritual quest. One's life will change as one spiritually evolves. Childhood desires that are still with us will drop away. Eating patterns will shift. Our occupation may change. Even the ones with whom we share our lives will alter. There is no way of determining before hand what transformations will occur. Nor is there a way to determine how major the transitions may be. The secret is to learn to flow with change, to accept change as spiritual growth.

There is a rule that is essential to accepting change. It is one of Rudi's rules of the game. "Everything that is taken away from you is replaced by something else on a higher level." Whatever happens, no matter how painful it may seem at the time, is part of your spiritual growth. A few of us will actually relish change. We will consciously take control and, as Lar Short says, drive. For instance, there are ayurvedic and yogic practices that can accelerate the detoxification of the physical body such as Pancha Karma or Shankhaprakshalana, a practice of eliminating toxins from the alimentary track. A few will seek these techniques to help purify the body. Others will experiment with diet, including vegetarianism, macrobiotics, or juicing. Others still will embark on the inner purifications the Kriyas.

Kriya practice will accelerate life's changes quickly. Regardless of what happens, it is important to continue to do the Kriyas no matter how sporadic they become. Reinforce your Kriya discipline by practicing whenever the desire is there. If possible, set up a regular period to practice, and continue to do them, even though the world seems to be falling around you. Believe that doing Kriyas is the most important action in your life. All other activities are secondary. Spiritual growth will substantiate the impermanence of your other activities. You may lose your job, divorce your spouse, have health problems. Whatever happens, you are a spiritual being who is growing and flourishing. Kriyas are your inner secrets, your inner practices the skills that will teach you how to drive your vehicle through life. If you experience uncomfortable change, the rewards will be there farther down the path replacing that which you think you have lost. You may become more healthy, obtain a better job, or meet a wonderful partner. You will enter into right relationship with all aspects of your life. A stability in life will occur that totally supports your spiritual growth.

Paramahansa Yogananda presented a nice equation in Autobiography of a Yogi. If one practices Kriyas eight hours a day for three years, one evolves 1,000,000 years into one's spiritual future. Think about that. One million years is more than 10,000 lifetimes all in three years. Yet, who of us has eight hour days to sit in meditation? Fortunately, Kriya practice is accumulative. If you do it, you will never lose what you have gained. So let's break it down: 8 hours every day for three years; or, 4 hours every day for six years; or, 2 hours every day for 12 years; or, 1 hour every day for 24 years; or 1/2 hour every day for 48 years. Now it becomes more manageable. Any one of us can evolve a million years into our spiritual future in just a single lifetime. Even if we do nothing, we will eventually get there after 10,000 lifetimes of playing the same old games. It is up to us to choose how fast we want to evolve. Every minute of Kriya practice takes us two years ahead. Certainly, we are at a time in Earth's history when every minute we are conscious is essential. Take responsibility for your spiritual growth and drive.

So Ham Kriya

The secret with this Kriya is to achieve perfection with ujjayi breath, that was introduced in [Part One \(Issue #1\)](#). http://web.archive.org/web/20011105064918/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_01.htm Ujjayi is accomplished by a slight contraction of the glottis that restricts the air flow through the throat. Ujjayi breath will allow you to take slower and deeper breaths, even up to one minute for a single breath, without the feeling that you are running out of air. It allows you to go into deeper and deeper inward states. Physiologically, it reduces the blood pressure which naturally relaxes the body.

To review this technique, breathe easily through the nose. Now, as you breathe out slowly cut off the flow of air at the throat. This is accomplished by the contraction of the glottis. Practice stopping the exhalation in this manner for five or six times. Now slowly reduce the air flow but do not stop it. Let the throat close just a little bit so air flow is easy but you can feel the slight constriction. Now practice breathing in, while maintaining a constant constriction. Breathing both in and out with the same tension of the glottis will quickly become natural.

Ajapa Japa. In Sanskrit Japa means repetition. Ajapa means not repeated. Thus Ajapa Japa means that which is repeated and yet cannot be repeated. It is the sound which goes on continuously in the body without conscious effort. When you achieve success with ujjayi, you will hear a constant rasping sound as the air passes through the glottis. This sound is the key to the So Ham Kriya. Listen to the sound. As you inhale, hear the sound So. As you exhale, hear the sound Ham. In this meditation, called Ajapa Japa or the breath mantra, one just listens to the sound of the breath.

So Ham Kriya. With the So Ham Kriya we intensify the experience by adding awareness. Remember from [Part One](#).

http://web.archive.org/web/20011105064918/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_01.htm breath and awareness are our two allies. Sit in a comfortable position with the back straight not touching any support. Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra, the perineum point in men, inside the vagina for women. Using ujjayi breath, let your awareness ascend with the breath through frontal passage of the body. This is known as psychic breathing because the breath seems to be entering the body through mooladhara chakra rather than through the nose. As you inhale, inwardly say the sound Sooooo while listening to the breath. Inhale slowly and move the awareness from mooladhara to swadhisthana kshetram, manipura kshetram, anahata kshetram, vishuddhi kshetram, to bindu at the back of the head. Begin your exhalation inwardly saying the sound Hammmmm as you move your awareness to ajna chakra, then down the spinal channel from vishuddhi chakra, to anahata chakra, manipura chakra, swadhisthana chakra, back to mooladhara. With one continual exhalation listen to the sound of the breath as you inwardly chant the sound Ham, and feel it vibrate down the spine. Repeat this circuit. Inhale with So up the frontal channel. Exhale with Ham down the spinal channel.

You will soon fall into a deep state, almost hypnotic. Yet as you maintain your awareness through the Kriya Chakra Circuit, you will also stay conscious. Someone coming into the room at this time will think you are asleep gently snoring, yet be puzzled by the fact that you are sitting up straight.

To keep from going too deep and possibly falling asleep, do the So Ham Kriya with the eyes open. Do not focus on anything. Use the soft gaze technique by noticing what is in the peripheral vision rather than in front. This Kriya can be done forty to sixty times.

After practicing the So Ham Kriya, you may hear a soft high pitch hiss similar to the electrical sound of a TV or other appliance. Yet this sound is internal. It is the mystical sound that is made with no object vibrating. It is Ajapa Japa. When you hear it, just be with it as long as you can. Advanced practices of Ajapa Japa focus on listening for the sounds between this sound. There are many mystical sounds that are heard in the inner realm. From these, the East Indians constructed all their musical instruments, each trying to replicate as closely as possible the sounds heard by their sages.

Ajapa japa uses slightly different mantrams in different traditions. These include So Ham, So Hum, Hum Sa, Hung Sa, Ham Sa, and Hong Sau. In Tantric Kriya Yoga, we use the mantrams So Ham or So Hum, instead of its reverse variants, that may say Hum with the inhalation and Sa with the exhalation. Those of you who are familiar with the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda may have practiced the Hong Sau meditation. So Ham

belongs to the realm of the Goddess, to the realm of Cosmic Oneness. It invokes the Shakti energy that resides in mooladhara chakra. If you practice Ajapa Japa using So Ham without moving the awareness through the Kriya Chakra Circuit, you will begin to feel a vibration in your genital region as energy builds. We pull that energy upward with awareness and psychic breathing. What does Hong Sau mean? I am He. What does So Ham mean? I am She. So Ham takes you into the emotional female astral plane. Paramahansa Yogananda gave us Hong Sau because he was a celibate monk teaching to a Christian society. He also realized that war was coming and America would need to play an aggressive leadership role. Hong Sau keeps the vibration just in the head chakra. So Ham will tap the cosmic energy sleeping in the root chakra. With the So Ham Kriya we awaken the Shakti energy and circulate it through all the chakras and kshetrams creating balance. Now is the time when as many of us as possible must embrace the Shakti power with wholeness and balance to assist during the coming Earth Changes. Women in particular are embodying the Goddess energies. Men also must experience Her ecstasy. Together we can know our wholeness of being and truly become caretakers of this world.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Six

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Six

Part Six introduces many new concepts and techniques including, mudra and moola bandha, that will help perfect and intensify your Kriya practice. The three psychic gates or locks are discussed. It also introduces the next Kriya, known as Kriya of the Great Attitude. This is a very powerful Kriya that combines many important aspects of Tantric practice into a single technique.

Three Psychic Gates and Locks. There are three gates that prevent the flow of energy upward. These gates are not physical in nature, that is, surgeons will never find them; they are psychic gateways. These gates are locked during much of one's life. Tantric Kriya Yoga seeks to open these gates to have a free flow of energy throughout the entire psychic body. There may be events or circumstances in one's life, when these locks open and one has profound emotional and spiritual experiences. However, they will close down again. Tantric Kriya Yoga seeks to open these locks permanently. By doing this, the different aspects of personality related to the different chakras can be unified and balanced. Understanding the dynamics of these gates can provide profound understanding of our behavior in human interaction.

The first gate is above the second chakra, just above the sacrum. With this one locked, our sexual energy builds within the pelvic bowl. This is most typical in men, though women experience its closing at the regular interval just before ovulation. Most men can become sexually aroused quite easily. Sexual energy can then build to the point of needed release. This need even causes a behavior change in a man, who may seem to become more amorous and aggressive at this time. As his "horniness" increases, the pressure can build even to the point of physical pain. The reason the pressure builds is because this

first gate is locked tight. For most men, it seems the only way that the pressure can be released is through ejaculation, with or without a partner. Other men will engage in major physical activity to "burn" off this excess energy. Others may resort to methods such as "cold showers" to stem the sexual desires for release. Still others may engage their mental process as they battle not only the sexual pressure but the shame and guilt culturally imposed upon them for feeling this way. None of these methods will open up this gate.

First, it is important to understand that this build-up is a natural phenomenon without moral implications, shame or guilt. Second, the sexual energy being felt is the very life force that can be used to build our higher spiritual bodies. Third, the goal of Tantra is to make use of this raw sexual energy, even to cultivate it, as a farmer cultivates a garden, to obtain even more delectable food for spiritual consumption and growth.

Through the practice of Tantric Kriya Yoga, these locks are slowly opened. The energy channels controlled by these gates begin to flow smoothly. When the first gate is opened, the sexual energy has another doorway through which to exit. Instead of ejaculating the energy outward through the Lingam of a man, the sexual energy can rise upward to be refined by the navel and heart centers. The pressure is then relieved and the feelings of "horniness" are transformed into feelings of heart expansion, conventionally called "love." With women, in general, this first gate is more open. When women are sexually aroused, their sexual energy moves upward very quickly. They feel that expansion in their heart. The Yoni is called the "second heart" of a woman, because stimulation of the Yoni will quickly ignite the passion of her heart. This is because the sexual energy moves upward into their hearts with little impedence. Thus it is "easy" for a woman to "fall in love," while a man can stay aloof and not emotional, seeking only temporary relief of the sexual pressure in his genitals. Under different circumstances, even a man can "fall in love," that is, even a man's heart can open. When it does, he becomes more emotionally sensitive and vulnerable. Unfortunately, this is only temporary, for the first gate will surely close again and the feelings of "love" will waver, soon to be replaced by the needs of simple sexual desire and gratification. This gate is one of the major mechanism that creates the dichotomy between men and women.

These two states, the "horniness" in men and the "lovingness" in women, are no different in essential nature. Both states are an imbalance of the psychic energy system. Both people have an over-abundance of energy in a single center. "Falling in love" is an emotionally imbalanced state that occurs when sexual energy hits the locked second gate and backs-up into the heart center. "Horniness" is an emotionally imbalanced state that occurs when sexual energy cannot move passed the first gate. Tantric Kriya Yoga seeks balance. It seeks an interchange of energy through the entire psychic system opening all the chakras and pathways. Both men and women must open the second gate. This gate is located above the heart chakra. When it is locked, the energy that pools in the heart center causes a pressure similar to that in the pelvic region. When it opens, this energy can flow upward to be refined further.

The third gate is above the throat chakra. When a man "falls in love," the first gate opens leading to an expansion in his heart. The second gate can open leading to an expansion in voice. He may become poetic saying the right things that the woman wants to hear, saying words that will touch her heart even more deeply, stirring her to emotional

passion. This would surely be a sign to a woman that he is opening energetically, becoming whole. Yet, those gates will indeed close and all the romance and poetry of the moment will be lost and forgotten. The mundane realities of Life have the tendency to close us down often.

Tantric Kriya Yoga is the key to opening these locks. It takes dedication and perseverance in practice. Yet the benefits far outweigh the frustrations and aggravations of day to day emotional imbalance. Opening the gates will not cause a man to be less man or a woman to be less woman; on the contrary, it will cause both to be more human. This is the state of balance. Balance does not mean that we will eliminate negative emotions; negative emotions exist at each of the chakras and Tantra embraces all emotions as spiritual food. It does mean that we have the techniques to balance our emotional states at will, transforming one emotional state into another, for instance, refining sexual energy into self-esteem, self-esteem into compassion, compassion into eloquence, eloquence into wisdom.

Mudras. A mudra is a secret symbol that represents our dedication to spiritual development. By adopting a certain position, gesture, or attitude, we seek to invoke a special mood or emotion within our inner being. Mudras are typically accompanied by specific practices that expand our consciousness. During regular practice and meditation, a mudra provides a constant reminder of our search for inner divinity. Once a particular state has been achieved through repeated practice in which a mudra has been employed, just by doing the mudra, that state can be quickly invoked again. Just by the gesture, the entire body/mind complex is alerted that we are practicing once again. Almost like a conditioned response, the body/mind will enter that state even before we begin the practice. Does this mean that we no longer have to practice? On the contrary, this is the base from which higher practice begins.

In Tantric Kriya Yoga, mudras are also significant for connecting certain psychic pathways along which energy flows. With this definition, the classical translation of the word mudra into "seal" is clarified. Doing the mudra "seals" the energy into one's being and space by recirculating it through the psychic channels. This accelerates the practitioner's sensitivity to these currents of vital energy within the subtle body.

There are mudras performed with the hands and eyes that can be externally seen. There are those an aspirant can perform that someone watching would never know that mudras are being practiced. [Part Two](http://web.archive.org/web/20011105065419/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm) http://web.archive.org/web/20011105065419/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_02.htm has already introduced one such mudra, that known as Khechari mudra, or the Tongue Lock. This is where the tongue is rolled upward so that the bottom of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth. This mudra connects the frontal channel and the spinal channel at the position of the palate allowing subtle energy to flow. It can be practiced at anytime throughout the day, even all the time that the tongue is not being used in activities such as talking or eating.

Psychic Gesture of Knowledge. Another important mudra for Kriya work is the hand gesture known as the Psychic Gesture of Knowledge. Begin including this important hand position in the Tantric Kriyas you have learned thus far in Parts One through Five.

The index fingers of both hands are curled so that each touches the inside base of the thumb. The other fingers are spread outward and the hands are placed upon the knees or thighs with palms down while sitting in meditation postures. In Tantra, the index finger represents the air element. Since Kriya practices are also pranayama practices, that is, breathing techniques, this mudra assists by rechanneling the energy of the air element. Instead of flowing out the end of the finger and being lost, this energy stream can re-enter to flow back into the psychic body because the finger tip is curved back in.

Shambhavi Mudra. "Gazing at the eyebrow center" is a powerful mudra that is essential to the following Kriya practice. To understand how to perform this mudra, hold the index finger of one hand upright in front of your face. Focus on the tip of the finger. Now move the entire hand straight upward while maintaining your focus on the finger tip yet keeping the head still. Continue raising it until it vanishes above the eyebrows. At the point it disappears, you will be looking into the center of the dark band of your eyebrows. Keep your eyes fixed here. This is Shambhavi Mudra. Start out with your arm outstretched when setting the eye point, but after you become use to holding that eye position, you can move your hand closer and closer to your face causing the eyes to cross more and more. Eventually, the eyes will find it natural to be in such a position for practice will strengthen the muscles of the eyes. The eyelids can be open or closed. If they are open, someone watching you may only see the white part of your eyes since the irises will "disappear into your forehead." Shambhavi mudra is a practice in itself and is highly regarded in the ancient Tantric texts. Much psychic energy is emitted through the eyes. They are also known as the "doorways to one's soul" for they can reveal our inner thoughts and feelings. Shambhavi mudra keeps that energy from being lost -- keeps it within our inner circuitry. Focus in this manner will awaken the eyebrow center, ajna chakra. We will only invoke it for a few moments during each of the Kriya breaths in the practice of this part.

Moola Bandha. In the Kriya of the Great Attitude, there is one more secret aspect known as moola bandha, or the perineum lock. This technique generates much energy, since it locks the energy inside the body, that normally is lost through the genital and anal openings. The word bandha means "to hold or tighten." During moola bandha, we tighten the entire genital and anal areas. Apana is a type of prana that provides energy for the large intestines, kidneys, genitals and anus. Apana flows out of the body continuously throughout the day. Its flow intensified at the moments of excretion and ejaculation. By tightening the genital and anal regions, we can hold this energy in. Once contained, through the Kriyas you have learned, you can actually move this energy upward greatly intensifying your state and accelerating your spiritual growth.

A very subtle part of moola bandha is the set of muscles called the pubo-coccygeal muscles, or PC muscles for short. These muscles control the flow of urine. Both male and female aspirants can practice isolating the PC muscles by stopping and starting the flow of urine during urination. Beginners will probably just tighten everything at once including the anus. Eventually, one seeks to distinguish between the different sets of muscles. There is actually a specific sequence that best locks in the energy. Men: First, tighten the PC muscle in the Lingam, raise the testicles, tighten the perineum, and finally the anus, drawing everything in and up. It is like a swooping motion that starts with the

penis and arcs backward to the anus. Women: Tighten the clitoris, then the clitoral shaft, the PC muscle, the perineum in front of the vaginal entrance, the entrance itself drawing in the petals of the flower, the back of the perineum, and finally the anus. Draw up the whole pelvic floor tightening the inside walls of the vagina. There are several ways to practice moola bandha. The first method is through strong quick repetitive "pulses" -- squeeze and release, squeeze and release -- holding about one or two seconds each. Do three or four sets of twenty or thirty pulses. Then relax and observe your sensations and state. You will feel warmth in your pelvic bowl and may feel a tingling up your spine. The second way is to hold the tension as long as possible, such as during a slow inhalation, then relax completely with the exhalation. Each method has its place in different practices. In fact, both will be utilized in the following Kriya. Moola bandha will strengthen the entire genital area. It is excellent for increasing sexual endurance and stamina in men, helping to build ejaculatory control. Both men and women can even practiced moola bandha while sexually joined with a partner. You can also begin to include this practice with all the previous Kriya techniques given in these instructions squeezing moola bandha whenever your attention is at mooladhara chakra.

Stretching to Foot Pose. The Kriya of the Great Attitude utilizes a different yoga posture than the previous Kriyas. This posture is called the Stretching to Foot Pose. One leg is stretched out. The other leg is bent at the knee with the foot brought inward to the genital region. For men, the heel is brought under the scrotum to press against the perineum. For women, the heel is brought to press against the vaginal entrance and clitoral shaft. This position will intensify the pressure when moola bandha is applied. The back is straight and the hands are resting on the upper thigh of the extended leg. This is the starting position. At a precise point during the Kriya, the hands will slide down the leg to grab the big toe with both index fingers. The body will bend forward as far as possible while keeping the back arched. The secret is to not bend forward at the upper spine, but focus on bringing the belly down to the leg as much as possible. Instead of bringing the head to the knee, the head is raised upward as if looking at the ceiling. After holding for a couple moments, slowly return to the starting position by drawing the hands back up the leg to the thigh and sitting upright.. This is a very powerful yogic posture for it works directly on all three locks.

Kriya of the Great Attitude. First complete the four previous Kriya practices (Chakra Breathing, Kriya Chakra Circuit, Sounding the Spinal Channel, So Ham Kriya -- [see Parts 1-5 <http://web.archive.org/web/20011105065419/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/kriya.htm>](http://web.archive.org/web/20011105065419/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/kriya.htm)). Adopt the starting position of the Stretching to Foot Pose described above with the hands on the thigh in the Psychic Gesture of Knowledge. Apply Khechari Mudra, the tongue lock. Bring your attention to Mooladhara Chakra and mentally repeat the seed syllable sound for the chakra: "Mool, mool, mool" (pronounced like wool). As you say it, do moola bandha pulsing your genital and anal region tightly with each word. With the last squeeze, hold it tightly and begin your inhalation using ujjayi breath up the frontal channel, moving your awareness along the Kriya Chakra Circuit with your breath. Cross over at the neck to the bindu point at the back of the head. Silently repeat "Bindu, bindu, bindu." Still retaining the breath, stretch out into the forward position grabbing the big toe with the index fingers. As you reach for the foot, raise the eyes to gaze at the eyebrow center doing Shambhavi Mudra. Repeat the syllables, "shambhavi, khechari,

mool" (pronounced sham-bha-vee and kay-cha-ree) three to twelve times in sequence. As you say each, quickly move your attention to each point, that is, move your attention to the eyebrow center, then jump to where the tongue touches the palate, and finally bring your attention to the root chakra. This is like dialing a combination on a lock. Release shambhavi mudra, then moola bandha. Return to the upright position with the hands on the thighs in the Psychic Gesture of Knowledge. Bring your attention back to bindu and, with ujjayi breath, slowly exhale down the spinal channel by first going to ajna chakra, then crossing to the back of the neck, and moving down the spine to mooladhara chakra. This is one round. Repeat "mool" again and begin your next inhalation up the frontal channel. Perform four rounds with one leg extended. Switch legs and do four more rounds. Then extend both legs out together and perform four more rounds for a total of twelve Kriya circuits.

This Kriya requires the retention of the breath for a long period of time. Start with three repetitions of "shambhavi, khechari, mool." Slowly build up to more. You can hold your breath much longer than you think. There is no harm in this. In fact, a person would pass out and resume normal breathing before any physical harm could be done. The longer you can retain the breath, the more powerful the results. In addition, the breath is retained while doing a forward bend. Though contrary to most Hatha Yoga breathing patterns, this retention will increase the pressure in your body enhancing the state. This Kriya is called the Great Attitude because the Body, Speech, and Mind all invoke the desire to spiritual grow and transcend our instinctual behavior.

What is Love if it is not the experience of "falling in love?" This has baffled philosophers, psychologists, and poets for many centuries. The simple spiritual fact is that Love is not an emotion. Love is energy that flows from our Higher Self into our reality. When we are in that deep meditative state that comes from doing Kriya practice, we become connected with our Higher Self. At that time, Love is projected into our reality, shaping it to help expand our spiritual development. As an experiment, when you reach that state, bring to mind someone to whom you want to send the energy of Love. It can be your partner, children, a friend, or even a stranger. See that person as a perfect spiritual being. See that person at his or her best. See a face that is happy and smiling. When you do this, you are sending a very high quality of Love. Your relationship with that person will change very subtly. Even a second of this effort will alter your reality. Yet, it is important to do this without attachment, that is, do it with no expectation of anything in return. The Love energy that you send will seek the best way of helping that person. They will acknowledge it to you because even if their "limited self" does not consciously know they are being Loved in this way, their Higher Self does.

There is a fourth gate that is just above the crown chakra that opens automatically when we are in deep meditative states. Yet when we come out of the meditation, it typically closes. This gate separates us from our Higher Self. Tantric Kriya Yoga focuses on building a firm foundation within the body/mind complex to handle the psychic and cosmic energies that become available when this gate opens fully. The Cosmic Chakra System taught by Lar Short introduces the techniques to explore the next aspect of spiritual development, construction of our higher bodies. Tantric Kriya Yoga is essential in order to open the three lower gates to ensure balance and wholeness. Each Kriya is a

step on the path of spiritual growth. Practice and perfect them.

Alan Verdegraal
Publisher, TANTRA: The Magazine

Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Seven

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Seven

Part Seven introduces the Kriya of the Great Piercing. With it several yogic techniques are employed including the root lock, nose-tip gazing, throat lock, and stomach lift. Substantial power is added to your Kriya Practice through doing this Kriya.

This is the last part that introduces the Kriya Orbit. These next sections focuses on further development of the spinal channel. A later series works specifically with the core channel. And another series involves work with a partner -- there are many kriyas yet to come.

Several of you have asked where you can go for Kriya Initiations. Our society has impressed upon us the false belief that we need permission to proceed, that doors will remain closed unless someone in a position of higher authority confers upon us the privilege of recognition. Thus, one is not considered "wise" unless there are a few degrees behind one's name, or has worked at the right companies, or is running for political office. I do not want to discount the power of ritual, but ritual is not used today to empower, it is used in our society to limit access to knowledge and opportunities. So we think that if this is true in life, it must also be true in the pursuit of spirituality. Thus thousands flock to the spiritual "teachers" that come from the East. These give shaktipat and bliss experiences that get their followers pretty high. Yet, they rarely reveal the secrets that would enable their followers to have bliss experiences without their presence. Thus, a dependency is established . . . even an addiction. An inner circle is formed that limits access to the leader, soon followed by a co-dependency that creates a myth around the leader hiding his or her true human nature. Heaven forbids that the followers ever find out the guru is anything but "divine."

Tantric Kriya Yoga is the path of responsibility for one's own spiritual development. No one else is required. By doing practice we invite into our hearts the mystical energies that have been the seeds of all traditions and lineages. Through practice we affirm our desire to spiritually evolve. We own our own being. There is no outer place to go for Kriya initiation. There is only the inner space within you. If you are inspired, hold your own initiation ceremony, create your own ritual. No one else needs to be present. If you are practicing with your partner, arrange to initiate each other. Just open up your heart and listen to your Higher Self, and you will know what to do to.

Kriyas are self-initiating, self-empowering. No guru is necessary to "eat your karma." Kriya practice will do it for you. Your inner initiation will occur automatically through continued practice. You will know it because you will know that Kriyas are changing you. You will know that you are not the same person you were prior to beginning your

practice. It may not be apparent after just a month of practice, but as the months go by, subtle changes will occur -- you will see the "signposts."

For instance, if you have been practicing Kriyas through these instructions, you probably have had that inner experience of vanishing for a moment or so. You may also be hearing a high pitch hiss coming from over your left shoulder soon after you start your practice which may continue for awhile after your practice. You may even see flashes of bright colors and lights. These experiences are only signposts. Try not to attach significance to them. Let them go as quickly as they come. Upon seeing a sign for Chicago (600 miles), we don't get out of the car and jump around pointing at the sign saying "There, there, there!" No, we point down the road ahead of us and say "Chicago is that way!" Then we get back onto the road and continue travelling. One enjoys the scenery along the way, relishing the momentary bliss states as they pass by. There is a mantra used by the younger generations now that is especially powerful when you have had that special experience. Susana's twelve year old son, Jon, would say, "Yessssssssss!" Acknowledge to yourself that you are on the right track, release the experience, then keep moving on.

Once you realize that you can bring on your own bliss experiences through Kriya practice, a journey to see a spiritual teacher becomes an entirely new adventure. One quality of a spiritual teacher is the ability to emit shakti energy to those around him or her. This typically is known as the "two tuning forks" analogy, where, if one tuning fork is vibrating at a certain frequency, and another tuning fork is brought into proximity, it too will begin to vibrate. Herein lies the appeal of spiritual teachers. Since many spiritual aspirants do not take responsibility, or even know how, to "vibrate" themselves, they seek out these leaders who do it for them. With Kriyabans, a whole new dynamic occurs. The leader's shakti is like the wind, you are a kite, Kriya is the string. Without the string, the kite is overwhelmed by the wind and blows along the ground helplessly. With the string, the kite flies high and smooth. When in the presence of a spiritual teacher, do the Kriya Orbit. You will quickly sense the shakti wind and take off soaring straight upward. Know that however high you fly with a teacher, through your own practice, you will one day fly even higher. Sample many teachers. You will sense a different "flavor" to each of their shakti emissions. Through practice alone, you will know the flavor of your own shakti. When in the presence of another person, you will be able to "taste" their shakti. It is not just the Eastern teachers that can emit shakti. All of us have the potential. There are many Westerners that emit shakti energy. Even your partner and lover emits shakti energy in which you can fly. Take responsibility for your own growth, your own evolution, your own ecstatic experiences, and fly!

Preliminary Techniques

Yoga calls the following three practices "locks," yet they are really keys to opening the three locks discussed in the previous part. Moola Bandha, or the root lock, works directly on the first lock above the second chakra. Uddhiyana Bandha, or abdominal lock, acts upon the lock above the heart. Jalandhara Bandha, or chin lock, cracks open the lock above the neck. In the Kriya of the Great Piercing, the repetition of the names and the focus at the various points will turn the keys in the locks. For additional guidance on the root lock, chin lock, and abdominal lock, do contact a qualified yoga instructor.

Chin Lock. Known as Jalandhara Bandha in sanskrit, the chin lock can be practiced from a cross-legged position or even a standing position. In the following Kriya, we use the "Stretching to Foot Pose" introduced in the last part. The chin lock is performed by first exhaling all of the breath. The breath is held out through the entire practice until the chin lock is released. The secret trick to perfecting the chin lock is to first raise the head by the ears, thus lengthening the vertebrae of the neck. You will notice that as ears are raised a bit, the chin naturally moves downward. Next pull the chin back toward your neck a little further until it rests on the throat. Only then, bend forward at the neck, pressing the chin to the collar bone. You should feel the soft padding of the throat as the chin presses down. Finally, raise the shoulders slightly to the ears and straighten the arms. Hold the breath out during the internal practice.

Abdominal Lock. In yoga, this is known as the "stomach lift" or in sanskrit, Uddhiyana Bandha. After exhaling the breath and applying the chin lock, one sucks the abdomen inward and upward. This is accomplished by raising the diaphragm and expanding the chest slightly without inhaling. The belly is sucked inward up into the rib cage cavity. The entire abdomen becomes "caved in." A proper chin lock is very important since the abdominal lock causes a vacuum in the lungs. The top opening of the bronchial tubes are closed by completely contracting the glottis to not allow any air to enter. If the chin lock is not applied, the vacuum can cause a slight irritation of the glottis that leads to a tickling sensation and coughing. Properly applied, the chin lock supports the glottis with the soft tissue of the throat eliminating possible irritation. Hold the breath out as long as possible. First release the abdominal lock, then release the chin lock. Finally, begin a slow inhalation. To repeat, it is important to release the abdominal lock first, then the chin lock, otherwise, the vacuum will irritate the glottis as mentioned above.

Triple Lock. Maha Bandha or the Great Lock is practiced when the chin lock, stomach lift and root lock are all employed in the same practice. The specific instructions of the root lock for both men and women were introduced in the last part. Once again, simply put, the root lock consists of the tightening of the muscles of the genital and anal regions. This locks the energy in at the base. The root lock is applied after the chin lock and stomach lift have been applied, to be released simultaneously with the stomach lift.

Nosetip Gazing. Known as Nasikagra Drishti in Sanskrit, nosetip gazing is simply crossing the eyes to look at the tip of the nose. At first, the eye muscles will continue to be active as they attempt to move the focal direction around. Some minor muscular strain may be felt as one tries to still the eyes. None of this is harmful. On the contrary, it is very beneficial to the eyes. (Chinese eye exercises include looking as far left, right, up, down and to the diagonals to maintain the muscular tone around the eyes. Also, one can focus on a point very near, then quickly looking at something far away, to return quickly to something near, and so forth. These exercises will maintain the vitality in the eyes as one grows older.)

Nosetip gazing is an ancient practice that increases the power of concentration. The eyes cannot focus at an object this close, yet there will be a tendency to try to adjust the focusing. Eventually, as the eye muscles stabilize, the eyes will adjust to this peculiar exercise by "soft focusing," that is, focusing at a point not in the physical world. This is an internal focus. Though the eyes may seem to see something at their focal point, there

is actually nothing present in the physical reality. The nose will even disappear. There may even be lights and images that come up. These are coming from inside rather than from the outside. They are seen by your "inner eye." By tapping into this mystic focal point, there will be a gentle quieting of the mind. One may even begin to smell mystic scents, fragrances that are not physically present. Nosetip gazing is indeed a practice in itself.

Kriya of the Great Piercing.

First complete the five previous Kriyas (Chakra Breathing, Kriya Chakra Circuit, Sounding the Spinal Channel, So Ham Kriya, and the Kriya of the Great Attitude -- [Parts 1 - 6](#) <http://web.archive.org/web/20011105065337/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/kriya.htm>). Adopt the starting position of the Stretching to Foot Pose with the hands on the thigh. Apply Khechari Mudra, or tongue lock. Bring your attention to Mooladhara Chakra and mentally repeat the seed syllable sound "Mool, mool, mool" (pronounced like wool). Without applying the root lock, begin your inhalation using ujjayi breath (glottis contraction) up the frontal channel, crossing at the neck to the bindu point. Say "Bindu, bindu, bindu" and begin your exhalation moving your awareness to your third eye, back of the neck, then down the spine. Apply the chin lock, apply the abdominal lock, apply the root lock. Gaze at the tip of your nose. As you do these, slide your hands down your leg and grab your toes. Holding the breath out, bring your awareness to the tip of the nose and say "Nasikagra" (nah-see-kah-gra). Next, move your awareness to your solar plexus and say, "Uddhiyana" (ud-dhee-yah-na). Finally, move your attention to the root point and say "Mool." Repeat this three times. Eventually work up to as many times as possible (fifteen times) with the breath out. Now, release both the root lock and abdominal lock as you begin to come upward. Then the chin lock. Finally you can bring your attention to the root chakra and inhale moving your awareness up the frontal channel again to repeat the Kriya. The eyes can remain focused on the tip of the nose. This is much to remember, but take it in steps and you will obtain success.

Kriya techniques are like going to a party, opening the door and shouting "Hey you!" Then shutting the door again. All the voices at the party stop for a brief moment in total bewilderment of what just happened. Then they return to the incessant conversation, yet the party is now slightly different -- you are now different. Kriyas are accumulative. Every bit of effort, every minute of practice adds up. Even if you stop for a week, or a month, or even a year. When you start up again you will find that you have lost nothing during that sabbatical.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Eight **By Alan Verdegraal**

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Eight

Part Eight introduces the Ladder from Earth to Heaven, a Kriya that places more focus on

the spinal channel and chakras. Additionally, the aspects of developing a sadhana practice are discussed. Guidelines are given on formalizing your Kriya Sadhana including instruction on the use of a Kriya mala and how to Seal your practice at its end. Having chosen to follow these Kriya instructions, you are following the Tantric path of Self-Reliance for you have selected your own spiritual sadhana.

Sadhana

For those who want to seriously practice Kriyas, it is time to formulate a specific sadhana. Sadhana means "endeavoring to obtain a particular result." The result Kriyabans seek is accelerated spiritual evolution. Sadhana becomes a powerful method to achieve this result. There are three important aspects of sadhana: choice, commitment and aspiration. The first stage of sadhana is to choose a practice. Even the most simple sadhana will be challenging to the newcomer. Consider the sadhana of lighting a candle every nite, then immediately blowing it out. Nothing more or nothing less. Do this for ninty days. You will observe the mind coming up with every reason why you shouldn't do it and every excuse why you missed a few (or many) nights. Yet by accepting it as a sadhana, you make a choice to do it and it becomes a spiritual practice.

The second aspect of sadhana relates to regularity doing something at periodic intervals. This typically would be at the same time in the same place everyday. Yet it doesn't have to be everyday; it could be every other day or every Tuesday and Thursday, as long as it is regular. Doing practice irregularly is not sadhana. Once the schedule is selected, the challenge of sadhana has been to stick with it and not to miss the appointed time. This is the first measure of commitment. The second measure is to make a commitment for a specific period of time, that is, choose do the practice for thirty days, sixty days, ninty days, or even 108 days. Notice the level of your success, then take a break. Decide upon another practice (or the same one) and make another commitment.

Yet choice and regularity are not the only aspects of sadhana. If they were, simply dressing every day would be a sadhana. We choose what clothes to wear and we do it. Dressing could be a sadhana, yet it is just a mechanical action done every day. Thus, the final key to a successful sadhana is conscious intention. This is where the power is generated, and more still, when the intention becomes an aspiration.

When I first started my sadhana, I chose a simple action, that of the yogic practice of neti, the washing of the nostrils with water. I had been doing yoga for many years but never as a sadhana. I had even been doing Kriya practice for about a year, but never as a sadhana. I chose neti because every morning I took a shower in a typically mechanical way. Since I was immersed in streams of water, it became a convenient place and time to remember to do neti. Besides, snorting water is one good way to shock the mechanism awake. For this to be a sadhana, however -- rather than just another cleansing action like "washing behind the ears" -- intention was necessary. The one I chose, the one I still employ in all the practices of my sadhana today, is represented by the simple statement: "This is all I have to do to evolve spiritually." Other variations included: "This is the only practice I must do to spiritually grow." "This is the only act that I need to do to develop as a spiritual being." With those words not only was an intention created around the practice, but an aspiration. For one moment each day, I became consciously aware of having a

spiritual goal, of being a spiritual being.

Consider once again the candle exercise cited above. Initially, it will challenge the mind and the ego. The spiritual "you" may even win the battle, but to keep it from becoming mechanical, an intention is required. Try this variation. Light the candle. Say, "This is all I have to do for the benefit of Self, Other, and the World." Then blow out the candle. Doing no other practice than this will begin a transformation process that will alter your life. To add even more power behind it, consider this statement, "This is all I have to do to remember who I am; I remember this for the benefit of Self, Other, and the World." One immediate result of sadhana is the remembrance of "who we are" rather than "what we are" during the brief moments the sadhana takes. Repetitively remembering our inner essence nature is at the heart of all spiritual growth. One day, we will remember our spiritual essence in every moment. That is the realized state.

So start with a simple sadhana to build your confidence. Add another sadhana in addition to this one. Expand a sadhana to include many practices including yoga or other bodily movement, chanting or inner mantra, and Kriya practice.

Utilizing a Mala for Kriya

Some sadhanas utilize a tool to assist in the practice. Such a tool is the mala, a rosary of 108 beads typically used for counting mantra or prayers. A mala is not a full circle, rather it has a crease in it caused by an extra bead, known as sumeru, or bindu. Mount Sumeru is the place where all the gods and goddess abide. It is the mountain at the center of the universe, metaphorically used to denote ascent toward Enlightenment. One never crosses the sumeru bead, rather the mala is turned around and one proceeds in the opposite direction bead by bead until the sumeru bead is once again reached. This is the way a mala is used to count mantra or prayers. A Kriya mala is different from a mala typically worn or used for mantra. Counting from the sumeru bead, tie a piece of string or yarn after the thirteenth bead. Continue counting and tie another piece of string or yarn after the 49th bead from sumeru. Both pieces of string should be large enough to be noticeable to the touch as the beads are being pulled along. These mark two knots where we may stop counting for a specific practice.

In Vedanta, a mala is held in the right hand while doing mantra. Tantrikas hold the mala in their left hand for that hand symbolizes the Tantric path. (Tantrikas also offer flowers with their left hand.) Let the strand of beads drape over the middle finger so that you can grasp it to the palm with the middle, ring and little finger. The index finger is not used in the counting or moving of the beads. Keep it extended outright or curve it inward to the root of the thumb in the Psychic Gesture of Knowledge ([see Part Six](#)). http://web.archive.org/web/20011105070550/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_06.htm Hold the bead being counted between the thumb and the side of the middle finger. The mala can be advanced a single bead by releasing the thumb and pulling with the ring and little fingers very much like the motion of an inch worm. This may take some effort to get the feel down, but after a few sessions it will become automatic and fall into the background.

By using a mala, we release the mind from the task of counting and remembering how

many rounds we have done. We can lose ourselves in bliss states coming back to the surface only when we encounter the sumeru or one of the knots of yarn.

Malas can be obtained with beads made out of many different substances. The three varieties used for a Tantric Kriya Sadhana include tulsi wood, red sandalwood, and rudraksha seeds. Tulsi wood will have the greatest effect upon one's spiritual life. A tulsi mala has therapeutic qualities in addition to its spiritual essence. Tulsi is a very sensitive plant and is considered a most important herb. Tulsi strengthens the hormonal system. Similarly, rudraksha seeds are also therapeutic, giving relief from coronary and arterial problems. Additionally, rudraksha malas will not only alter the state of one's consciousness, it can alter one's destiny. There are two types of sandalwood malas, white and red. Red sandalwood is used specifically in Tantric rites and practices. Sandalwood is good for those who are looking for psychic attainments.

Keep your Kriya mala in a special place and only remove it for Kriya practice. Ideally, a small silken bag is preferred; silk helps to contain the mala's energy. Do not wear the mala you use for Kriya practice. Also do not use the Kriya mala for mantra practice. A special energy will begin to build in your Kriya mala with continued practice. Respect that energy by not exposing it to other influences, especially mundane forces, but even other spiritual energies. Avoid letting others handle it. If you do mantra, have a special mala for that practice, and a separate mala for wearing to gain therapeutic benefits.

The Ladder from Earth to Heaven Kriya

This Kriya places more focus on the spinal channel by moving energy both up and down the sushumna nadi. Sit in a cross-legged position, half-lotus, or sit upright in a chair. It is important to maintain the tongue lock during this practice in order to keep the Kriya Circuit connected even though our attention will be on the spinal channel. The breathing should be with ujjayi breath, the eyes half open or closed. Bring your attention to the root chakra. With the inhalation, apply moola bandha (root lock) and breathe up the spine from mooladhara chakra to swadhisthana chakra. Release moola bandha and pause. With the exhale move your awareness back down to mooladhara. Advance one bead. Again, apply moola bandha and inhale moving your attention from mooladhara chakra up the spine to manipura chakra. Release and pause. Exhale back down to mooladhara. Advance one bead. Apply the root lock and inhale up to anahata chakra. Release and pause. Exhale down to mooladhara. Continue this pattern, up to vishuddhi chakra, then up to bindu. Next, inhale up the spine all the way to the sarasara chakra which is at the crown of the head where the anterior fontanel is located. Release and pause, then exhale back down the spine. Finally, inhale up the spine to bindu, continue right along the top to the skull to sarasara, then down the forehead to ajna chakra between the eyebrows. Release the root lock and pause. Exhale up around the skull and back down the spine.

By this time, seven beads will have been covered. It is like ascending and descending a ladder one rung at a time. Start all over again moving from mooladhara to swadhisthana, mooladhara to manipura, mooladhara to anahata, etc. By the time you encounter the yarn at the second knot, 49 beads will have been traversed and this set will have been done seven times. Remember to always take the energy back down to mooladhara chakra. (If after this practice you develop a headache, do the Kriya Chakra Circuit and the excess

energy in your head will move back down the spine.)

Tantric Kriya Sadhana

A Kriya Sadhana is an advanced sadhana especially if you have not done sadhana before. Yet it is one of the most powerful sadhanas that, if performed, will accelerate spiritual growth incredibly. So far, these instructions have introduced seven Kriyas that I hope you have chosen to practice occasionally. Now I ask you to get serious and adopt a Tantric Kriya Sadhana. Choose a practice time that is both convenient and private (a period when you will not be disturbed). Follow the sadhana outlined in the table. Its main emphasis is on Kriya practice. It can take anywhere from 30 minutes to 45 minutes or more depending upon how slow and deep your breathing becomes. Begin with the preliminaries. Do as many Kriyas as you can in the order given. Always start from the first one. Kriyas build upon one another, the latter ones becoming more effective and powerful if preceded by the earlier ones. If you run out of time, just stop the Kriyas, and do the Sealing activities.

Preliminaries. Start your Kriya Sadhana with some yoga or stretching. This short physical effort will open the joints and balance the energy in the meridians. When you are ready, assume a seated position either on the floor or in a chair. Make sure the back is straight. Take a few minutes to center yourself, adjusting your position where needed. Then take a moment to acknowledge those who embarked upon this path before you, the spiritual saints and masters, your brother and sister Kriyabans, even your family and friends. State your intention that through your practice you will spiritually evolve. Inhale directly into your heart and feel this as your highest aspiration. Dedicate your practice to the benefit of Self, Other, and the World.

Kriya Practice. Start at the sumeru bead moving in the direction of the first knot of yarn thirteen beads away. Do Chakra Breathing through all the kshetrams and chakras. Upon returning to the the root chakra, advance one bead. Continue 13 times until you encounter the yarn. Then reverse directions by turning the mala in the hand. (You'll learn to do this with one hand.) Do Sounding the Spinal Channel until you encounter the sumeru bead. Turn the mala once again. Do the Kriya Chakra Circuit until you encounter the second knot of yarn, 49 beads away. Cross the station, and begin So Ham Kriya continuing until you reach the sumeru bead (a count of 59 beads). Put the mala down and do the Kriyas of the Great Attitude and Great Piercing. With the mala once again, start at the sumeru bead and do the Ladder from Earth to Heaven Kriya proceeding once again to the second knot of yarn. Other Kriyas will be added from this point. When the Kriya state kicks in, awareness of time and place will fluctuate. That is why the mala is important. All you need to remember is which Kriya you were doing, not how many you have done. Even this will be a challenge. Sometimes it will be like awakening from a deep sleep; other times there may be explosions of light and sound before your eyes. When you do remember, simply continue.

Sealing the Sadhana. Upon completion of your Kriya practice, take five minutes to abide. Release all techniques. Open up your eyes and ears to all the external stimuli, yet retain your inner state. Your thoughts will be very silent at this point. The inner chatter will be silenced, maybe for the first time in the day. Just be in this state as long as you can. There

is no force, there is no effort. When you are ready, inhale once deeply into your heart and feel gratitude for where you are in your evolution. Feel gratitude for all that you have learned through your life lessons. Feel gratitude for the opportunity to take command of your spiritual growth and evolution.

Now rub the palms of your hands briskly together. Feel the heat being generated. Bring your palms up and cover your face. Feel the warmth. Gently massage your face. Bring your hands down and touch your throat. Bring your hands down and touch your heart. Rub your hands together again and repeat this procedure two more times. Next brush your palms down your chest. Rub your lower back, especially near the kidneys. Circularly rub your abdomen. Brush your arms and legs, up the inside and down the outside. If you have been in a cross-legged position, straighten your legs and massage your knees.

This activity will awaken your body from meditation. It also seals the energy psychically. Jumping up immediately after your Kriya practice will cause the energy to leak out and the state to dissipate quickly. Try not to talk very much afterwards. Transitioning between the inner world and the external world should be gradual. However, if you have to run out to catch the bus, just stamp each foot a few times to ground yourself. The only danger that exists is in not doing the practice.

The best time to do sadhana is the very first thing in the morning, though anytime spent at sadhana is valuable. Many times I tried to create an evening sadhana and would be enthusiastic throughout the day, eagerly anticipating the evening event. However, by then, my primary energy had been zapped by the stress of my job and I had little left, if any, to devote to practice. One day I made the choice to do my Tantric Kriya Sadhana in the morning by doing a half hour of practice every day before work. This shift in priorities created a major shift in my life. By giving my best energy to my practice the first thing each day, I realized both consciously and subconsciously that spiritual growth is my number one priority. "The rest of the day can come and go as it pleases. I have completed my sadhana for the day. The day is already a major success." Then I really got hooked. I started getting up at 3:30 a.m. every morning, showered, then did Kriyas for up to 2 1/2 hours before heading off to work at 6:15.

I am indeed very grateful for the spiritual growth that has taken place in my life. I am not the same person I was twenty years ago, ten years ago, five years ago, or even one year ago. Growth is a continuous process. Along with it comes change. At first my practice was irregular, then I did sadhana everyday. Now I realize that Life is sadhana and every action throughout the day can be consciously dedicated to spiritual growth.

Alan Verdegraal
Publisher, TANTRA: The Magazine

Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Nine

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Nine

Part Nine presents the Waterfall from Heaven Kriya. It also introduces the concept of the Deputy Steward, the voice within that guides you on your spiritual path.

In Part One, I mentioned that Tantric Kriya Yoga is different from other meditation practices because it does not attempt to control the thought process. Kriyas are independent of the inner verbal thought mechanism since they make use of the sensory language of touch, not verbal communication. You may have noticed that many voices talk to you within your head. Under situations of anxiety and stress they intensify. After a period of heated argument, voices continuously justify your actions and responses. Phrases will tend to repeat over and over again. These loops can go on for hours, even days. This inner conversation can become as loud as the noise at a cocktail party.

Even the voices that focus on daily maintenance of your life simply add to the noise. All of us have heard within: "Put on your socks. First the right one. This one is inside out. Where are my pants? Pull on my pants. What time is it? Am I late yet? I must brush my teeth." This incessant conversation is totally unnecessary. One can reach a state of inner quiet where one can dress completely without a single verbal thought telling one to do so.

Consider driving for instance. Initially, we verbally remind ourselves what action to take next. Yet driving can quickly become automatic. The learning voice drops away and we can think "freely" about other matters, even while driving through rush hour traffic. Once it is mastered, we can drive without thinking about it. The other voices are free to continue; the inner conversations start up again.

If you observe your thought process, you may find that there are times when the voices are quiet. They typically diminish when one is focused on some activity. That is why television is so successful; it puts people into a trance state where they do not have to listen to their inner voices talking about their daily problems. Playing sports can keep the voices still. Listening to classical music does this. Many types of drugs also artificially create this inner quiet. Yet none of these methods actually help us to control these voices. The "inner peace" may last for a little while, but it will be shattered quickly. Just go into an empty room and sit there; the cocktail party will begin. That is why sitting meditation is such a challenge for many people.

These voices are different personalities that fight for control of your ego. The one that is dominant for a time will actually influence your outer behavior. Then, the dominant voice will be replaced by another and your behavior may change dramatically. These voices can create mental confusion when they vie for power, since they are never in harmony, each having its own selfish goals. Remember the classic cartoons of the "good" angel on one shoulder and the "bad" angel on the other shoulder, each whispering into a separate ear? Which one should you listen to? Unfortunately, one is not free to make that choice. The voice that is dominant at the moment will guide your ego for a time. Then another will take its place.

In many traditions, these voices are known collectively as the "negative ego" since most of the thoughts simply support one's anxieties, fears, habits, prejudices, and guilts - thoughts and actions we can really do without. Because we have little control over which voice is dominant, these traditions refer to people as sheep, donkeys, cows, or simply as

being asleep.

Tantric Kriya Yoga is unique because it works beneath the voices to undermine them, thus quieting the inner conversations. At first, kriya practice is new and still a learning process supported by verbal thinking. Once it becomes automatic, like driving, the other voices will return. I have mentioned that the initial years may be a period of emotional healing. Memories will flood to the surface that will stimulate your thought process and emotional being. Eventually these will drop away. As one advances, there will be moments of clarity, even of total silence. This can happen early, spontaneously. You will not know who you are or where you are. You will not even care. After a minute being in this state, the first voice that typically returns will simply say, "Breathe." Something in you will notice that your breath has been suspended, but so were your thoughts. As your practice continues, the content of the voices will change, because it is being consumed by doing kriyas. Once the past emotional content is consumed, you will start processing your "daily bread." Part of your kriya time will be focused on your life's drama - the ups and downs. Kriyas will slowly help balance your external life. You will then enter into the "flow" where life becomes magical. This will prompt you to start processing future content. This is the point where you will begin to take control of your life, manifesting whatever you need. It can be jobs, teachers, opportunities, money, and more. Quieting the voices is key.

Of all our voices, there is one special voice that we shall refer to as the Deputy Steward. Little by little one must reinforce this voice, bringing it to the surface not only while doing kriyas, but even in day-to-day activities. This voice is our guide. It keeps us on our spiritual path. It is connected to our higher self. It will remind us to do our practice. It is the voice that will remember our divinity. This is the voice that talks directly with our higher self. It is not an alien voice, it is not the voice of God. It is a dominant personality that provides for our spiritual well-being. Eventually, all voices will integrate into the Deputy Steward. One will reach a level of spiritual consciousness in all acts. Reinforce the Deputy Steward whenever you can.

Don't blame the other personalities for acts of "indiscretion." That is not the Deputy Steward talking; that is one of those other personalities that specializes in guilt and blame. The Deputy Steward is not judgmental or moralistic. It may simply say, "Now do this . . .," and point out the next step on your path. Believe that whatever you do, you are on a spiritual path. Activities that are not conducive to spiritual growth will automatically drop away. Reinforce the activities that do promote spiritual growth.

One practice I did for many years was to buy a little calendar book. I did not use it as a day-timer, planning my life; neither did I use it for journaling, writing down my experiences. I would simply list all the spiritual practices I did on a particular day. When I remembered to do my kriya practices, I would make a single entry such as "Kriya 7," meaning that I completed the first seven kriyas. If I attended a yoga class, I would write down "Yoga." If I did a mantra on the bus on the way to work, I would write "Mantra." The first year, the book looked rather empty. Yet there were a few entries. I noticed that on many days I did no spiritual practices. Other days were packed - yoga, mantra, kriya, pranayamas, meditation, karma yoga - especially if I attended a retreat. The following year I bought another calendar book.

At some point, this book became a source of inspiration. I wanted to fill it with practices. I wanted to do something every day regardless of how small it was. This was when my sadhana truly began. Now there were weeks with listings every day. There were still weeks that remained blank, but that was okay; they were not important. The other weeks were. Those were the weeks I worked on myself spiritually. Then a pivotal point came when I did not want to let a single day go without an entry during the entire year. For the next three years there were only a handful of days that were left blank.

I no longer fill out the little calendar books. I stopped after six years, when I achieved the state of right livelihood, a time when whatever one does, whether it is work, play, rest, or love, one remembers the inner divinity. This is when life becomes practice. Though having left the practice behind, these yearly calendar books were a key to helping me develop my inner Deputy Steward.

Waterfall from Heaven Kriya

Sit comfortably. Place your attention at the root chakra. Place the tongue in khechari mudra (tongue curled up so that its underside touches the surface of the upper palate). Close your eyes in a relaxed manner. Exhale fully and apply moola bandha (the root lock). Using ujjayi breath (contraction of the glottis), begin your inhalation up the spinal column going from chakra to chakra. Draw the energy with a slow single breath from the root chakra up the back to the bindu point and over the top of the head to the third eye. As the energy passes vishuddhi chakra (throat center) at the back of the neck, begin to turn your eyes upward using shambhavi mudra (see Part Six) in order to be looking up at the third eye by the time your breath reaches ajna chakra (third eye center). Hold the breath as long as you can keeping your focus on the third eye point. It is very important to keep the tongue in khechari mudra touching the upper palate. Your head may also drift backward with your forehead rising upward. Try to keep your head erect; don't let it flop back on your neck. Conscious lengthening of your neck will keep it erect. When you cannot hold the breath any longer, take a short sniff of air to relax the throat, release moola bandha, then slowly release the breath moving your attention down the frontal channel. Feel the energy wash down your front to the root chakra. It is like a waterfall coming off your forehead. As you exhale, relax the eyes and let them drift downward from the third eye point. Pause, keeping the air out, noticing any sensations. Then when you naturally feel like inhaling, apply moola bandha and begin this kriya again. Do this thirteen times.

This is an important kriya for energizing the third eye. This kriya follows the Ladder from Earth to Heaven Kriya which slowly energizes all spinal chakras. Rather than returning the energy back down the spinal channel, we let it flow down the front of the body to the root chakra like a waterfall. Afterwards, you may feel warmth and sensation behind your forehead. If this brings on an uncomfortable pressure or headache behind your forehead, just return to the basic Kriya Orbit (up the front, cross at the throat to bindu, to the third eye, cross to the back of the neck, and down the spine) for a little while, emphasizing moving the energy from the third eye down the spine to the root chakra.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Ten

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Ten

Part Ten presents Parvati's Lotus, the first of several kriya visualization practices. It also discusses the witness phenomenon and presents a model of the thinking process.

Parvati's Lotus

Parvati's lotus is my favorite kriya visualization - the forming of a lotus flower on top of the head. It follows naturally from the last kriya, the Waterfall from Heaven, which soaks the ground where the roots of the lotus plant form. All the kriyas presented in these articles are given in a precise order. Always do the previous kriyas before undertaking any new ones. They prepare one to receive the energy of more advanced kriyas. This one directly activates the crown chakra.

This is the first kriya that employs visualized imagery. Rather than focusing on the sense of attention as in the previous eight kriyas, visualize the flower and sense the energy in the image itself. Some people do have difficulty visualizing. If this is the case with you, attend to the sensations once again. For instance, sense the expansion and contraction at the crown chakra.

Sit comfortably. Place the tongue in khechari mudra (tongue curled up so that its underside touches the surface of the palate). Close your eyes in a relaxed manner. Exhale fully and apply moola bandha (the root lock). Holding the air out, visualize roots growing into the ground beneath you. They originate from the root chakra spreading downward and outward. Using ujjayi breath (contraction of the glottis to slow the flow of air), continue to hold the root lock and begin your inhalation up the spinal column. Visualize the stem of a lotus flower growing like a new-born plant up your spine. Follow this stem all the way up the spine to sahasrara chakra at the crown. Hold the breath and visualize a flower bud forming at sahasrara. Release the root lock and exhale down the spine again moving your attention back to the roots.

Repeat this sequence visualizing the roots growing downward as you hold your breath out. Then inhale while holding the root lock and watch the stem grow up the spine forming the bud again at the crown. The bud will appear clearer. Do this again. At some point while focusing on the bud in sahasrara chakra, it will open very slowly. Watch it bloom into a full lotus flower. Then it will close slowly. Continue to hold the breath while it does this. Once closed it will immediately open again. It will continue opening and closing as you hold your breath. When you have reached your capacity of retention, exhale slowly moving your attention down the stem of the flower, down your spine, to the root chakra. Ascend and descend in this manner 11 times. Remember, always return your attention to your root chakra when finished. Sit quietly for a few minutes.

When hold the breath in for extended periods of time, you will find it difficult to begin a

smooth exhalation. The secret is to take in a sniff of air before exhaling. This relaxes the throat allowing the air to flow smoothly. Even if you think you can't inhale any more air, the sniff will still relax the throat.

Witnessing

One of the major movements in Western philosophy is based upon the statement by Descartes: "I think, therefore I am." With this premise, Western spirituality took a major leap backwards. In Eastern philosophy, such a statement might be rephrased as, "I do not think _ I am." Continued pursuits in Tantric Kriya Yoga will provide evidence for this Eastern discovery. "We" are not our thoughts. Even more subtly, "we" have little to say about what we think.

I remember over twenty years ago first reading the statement: "You are not your thoughts." I could not believe it. Humorously, the pondering of this statement initiates a whole cacophony of thought processes. "Who am 'I' if 'I' am not my thoughts? Yet, isn't that a thought? Cannot 'I' think about itself? What is thinking if 'I' am not thinking? Can there be an 'I' if the 'I' is not thinking? What are thoughts? Can thoughts even contemplate their non-existence?" Simply asking these questions can begin a valuable spiritual quest or lead to utter confusion, for the answers cannot be expressed in words.

Some of the most valuable tools to explore these concepts are those that cultivate the witness state of consciousness from which you can observe your own thoughts. We have the ability to become aware of what we think while it is occurring. It is as if we were outside the thought process like a passenger on a train watching the scenery go by. Try this exercise. Relax yourself through three deep breaths with vocal sighs. Now think the phrase, "I am not this thought." Repeat it again and again, each time slowing the speed that you say it more and more. As you willfully slow it, see if you can notice a place within where you can observe yourself slowing this phrase down. This place may be sensed as an awareness that you are doing this. You may have the greatest sense of it during the pause between words as the phrase is said most slowly. Continue slowing it until other thoughts begin to arise during the pause between words.

Tantric Kriya Yoga develops the ability that enables us to be aware of our thoughts. During the Part One, I mentioned that kriya practice does not try to stop the thought process. Instead we focus on moving our attention with the breath through chakras and channels. Although initially we may guide ourselves through the kriya with verbal thoughts, we reach a point in which it becomes automatic, like driving a car. Yet, we can stay aware of the moving point of attention even while other thoughts take place.

Now I want to suggest that you cultivate the witness state throughout the day, becoming aware of what you think while it is happening. Watch yourself talking. Watch yourself laughing. Watch your moods change. Until we begin to witness our thoughts, we do not become aware of a thought until after it occurs. With practice we can become aware of a thought while it is occurring. When this happens, we can actually change the thought, even stop it before it completes. This can provide the catalyst for major shifts in our thinking and behavior patterns. Yet something more happens when this occurs. We experience the sensation that we are separate from our thoughts.

Thought Model

It is our culture that determines significantly the content of our thoughts. Culture determines many of our values, our beliefs, and our behavior patterns. Our thoughts about numerous subjects are automatic. That is why Gurdjieff called people "machines." It is not that we are predictable in our thoughts and actions, it is that we cannot control our thoughts and actions. Yet the ego is ready to step up and take credit. Or, more precisely, one of the many inner voices will chirp up. It can become very confusing when more than one voice is talking. The mental chatter can increase until it sounds like a cocktail party. There are loops that repeat stories and songs that play like broken records for hours, even days. If we try to stop these loops, it seems impossible. Some voices give us advice; others chastise our behavior. A voice might even sound like your mother or father. Which voice "should" we listen to? Which voice is "our" voice? The answer to both of these questions is "none." We are not the voices that speak in our head.

To explore this further, it is helpful to understand a model of our mental being. The parts of this model include the following layers: External stimuli, cognitive thoughts and reactions, pre-cognitive and non-verbal core-shifting, and intuition and creative impulses. These are like concentric circles surrounding the inner core.

External stimuli from the outer world are constantly being received by our being through our senses. Our major purpose in cognitive thinking is to be able to respond or react to these stimuli. Some require a verbal reply; other responses may be met through automatic or habitual behavior patterns. The voices that we hear are cognitive thoughts responding to external stimuli. There may even be an emotional component that charges each voice.

Core-Shifting

Behind these cognitive thoughts is a non-verbal mechanism called core-shifting. It is a psychological phenomenon that occurs before thoughts arise. It takes micro-seconds to occur. It sets the "tone" for our subsequent thoughts and actions. "We" are not this non-verbal mechanism. We are not because "we" can observe this non-verbal mechanism in process. So much takes place before a thought actually materializes. The psyche prepares itself to provide the appropriate responses to the external stimuli.

In computer terminology, before a computer can "think" a program must be initiated. Programs are getting larger and larger. Even though computers are getting faster and faster, there can still be a noticeable delay between the launching of the program and the moment it begins to execute. During this time interval, the computer can be said to be "arranging itself in order to think in the way prescribed by the program." The human brain is substantially faster than the fastest computer. In a matter of fact, all the computers currently on this planet today cannot match the capability of the human brain.

In the split second between the time we receive a stimulus and the moment a verbal thought is initiated about that stimulus, the psyche is arranging your being into a specific patterning or programming. This is what is referred to as core-shifting. The core itself does not change; a shifting occurs around the core that prepares us for the response. This is so fast that it is not noticeable. Then the thought process is launched with this

underlying "flavor."

There is a simple exercise in which we can practice observing this pre-cognitive function of core-shifting. It takes two people. One person will act as the guide and the other person will be the observer. The guide leads the experience with verbal instructions. The objective of the observer is to notice any sensations and thoughts that arise within the body and mind. This is best accomplished with the eyes closed.

The guide leads the participant through a short relaxation. This can include such statements as "Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in and let it out with an audible sigh. Again, inhale and sigh. Inhale and sigh." Pause for a short time to let the participant settle into the act of observing. About every fifteen seconds, the guide will repeat one of the following situations.

You are in a room of monkeys.
You are in a room full of crying babies.
You are in a room of children.
You are in a room with your mother.
You are in a room with your father.
You are in a room with your lover.
You are in a room of naked men.
You are in a room of naked women.
You are in a room of Black men.
You are in a room of Orientals.
You are in a room with very old women.
You are in a room with people dying.
You are in a room full of corpses.
You are in a very dark room.
You are in a room lit by thousands of candles.

Fifteen seconds is about enough time for you to notice what is occurring before you get involved with the drama or create a "story." Notice what the pre-verbal reaction is. Notice any physical sensations in the body. Are you tightening up somewhere in the body? Do you feel hollow somewhere? Do you feel heated? With some of these you will have a neutral reaction. Others you may have profound reactions. You may observe both blatant and subtle prejudices arising. The quick changing format will also allow you to notice how quickly you can change states between something pleasant and something uncomfortable.

If you can observe your reactions, you can realize that you are not the reaction - you may have never chosen that reaction. How this pre-verbal conditioning is established is constantly being researched by psychologists today. The challenge in spiritual growth is how to break the patterning if you decide to change it because you never chose it in the first place. Witnessing is like watching a movie. You begin by being involved with the characters, the plot, the drama. Then for a moment you become aware you are in a movie house watching the movie. Then you notice there is a light above your head illuminating dust particles floating in the air. You turn your head around and see that the light is coming from a window in the back wall. You notice some movement in the window and

realize there is someone up there monitoring the projector. The movie represents your thoughts, always occurring on the mind screen. The projector and light represents the pre-verbal time period that is arranging your being prior to your thoughts occurring. The projectionist is the stimulus that initiates the patterning. You are not the movie. You are not the projector. You are not the projectionist. You are not even sitting in the movie theatre. That is only a place of observation for this experiment. To stop the movie you must stop the projectionist. That is the challenge within.

Intuition

Beneath this layer of core-shifting is a region where creative impulse or intuition comes forth. This is inspiration from within, rather than originating in the outside environment. Many of us have had this "Ah-ha!" experience at some point in life, probably in school or at work. If confronted with a problem in which we cannot find an easy solution, forgetting about it for a time can be helpful. Then when doing something totally different or relaxing, a light bulb suddenly illuminates in our mind with the answer. This inspiration initiates a series of thoughts that then brings about the resolution of the problem.

Tapping into this layer of creative intuition is the goal of many professionals including artists and musicians. It is said that women are more intuitive than men. Yet all of us can cultivate this ability through relaxation techniques and meditation. The key is to free oneself from as much of the mental chatter as possible. From the silence comes forth true insight. At the center of our being is the core. It cannot be described in words. It is the mystical place inside where no thoughts occur, verbal or pre-verbal. It is not a state of mindlessness, for we can be conscious in this place. What is in our core moves our spirit. It is pure. It is Essence. New born babies have no thought structure surrounding their core. By age five this structure is built with its core-shifting features and continues to expand during the decades.

Active Intervention

Witnessing is a passive method of noticing the mind chatter. There is an active process of mental intervention. First, practice witnessing and notice core-shifting. Then one can try to intervene and stop specific thought patterns. Become aware of a thought that has been repeating itself over and over again. Typically, this may be initiated by some emotional disturbance, such as, being cut off in traffic creating repetitive expletives. The same verbal phrase may repeat over and over for a period of time after the disturbance. Simply, become aware of the thought immediately after it occurs. Then become aware of the thought while it is occurring. At this point try stopping the thought while it is occurring, i.e., do not let the thought end. This employs "will." Will is a force beyond our mechanical patterning. The thought will repeat itself again. As it does, try moving this stopping point closer and closer to the beginning of the phrase. Stop the thought during the first word. Stop the thought during the first sound. Stop the thought before the first sound. Upon reaching this point, you can discover the "vast" time period that exists before the thought occurs. This is the pre-verbal area of thinking, during which the patterning and programming is being set up to launch the thought. To succeed in eliminating the thought from our verbal chatter, we must become aware of the point

where the patterning is initiated. Once one's awareness becomes tuned into this pre-verbal interval of time, one can sense the "feeling" that the thought is about to happen, then it does. Success occurs when you have that feeling and you choose for it not to happen. When this stage is reached the patterning begins to collapse. Its automatic "load" sequence has been interrupted and you free yourself from its shackles.

Most of our thoughts and behavior patterns have been programmed into our mental being without our knowing. Much of this occurs before we are ten years of age. This includes our values, beliefs, prejudices, and fears. These are given to us by our parents, churches, schools, neighborhood friends, even television. What we believe may not be what we would choose to believe if we had choice. It may be what our parents believed, or what the minister believed, or what our childhood buddy believed. Part of spiritual growth is examining our beliefs and truly choosing what values we want. The pursuit of Tantra encourages this because many Tantric values and principles are totally different from the ones we grew up with. Yet something inside of us seeks to be free of what we did not choose for ourselves. This difference creates tension, which can lead to spiritual growth.

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Tantric Kriya Yoga: Part Eleven

By Alan Verdegraal

From Tantra: The Magazine Issue Eleven

Tantric Kriya Yoga: Shiva's Trident

Part Eleven presents the kriya known as Shiva's Trident. Its goal is to open the tenth gate, known as the Doorway of Brahma. To achieve this, we seal off the nine gates of sensory input and focus on piercing the tenth gate.

Closing the Nine Gates. The human body has nine openings or gates through which the senses perceive the outside world. These are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the anus and the genitals. During this kriya, we close the nine gates. This allows us to focus inward, away from the external sensory world. There is a tenth gate, that is known as the Doorway of Brahma, the doorway to the mystical cosmos. It is located at the bindu point where the hair naturally curls in a spiral at the back of the head. With our focus inward, one visualizes a trident with a sharp tip that pierces this point opening up the Doorway of Brahma.

Using the fingers of the hands in the gesture called Yoni Mudra, one closes the seven upper gates. With the thumbs, press the ear flap inward until the ear canals close. With the index fingers, gently hold the eyelids down without applying pressure to the eyeballs. With the middle fingers, press against the nostrils until they close. Place the ring fingers on the upper lip and the little fingers on the lower lip, holding the mouth sealed. Applying the root lock, one closes the lower two gates, the genitals and anus. Once all gates are sealed, we become a container and the sense of our energetic body increases.

Shiva's Trident

Start in a comfortable sitting position with the hands on the knees in the Psychic Gesture of Knowledge introduced in [Part Six](#). http://web.archive.org/web/20011105072218/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_06.htm (the index finger curled in and placed at the root of the thumb where the index finger meets). Keep your spine straight throughout this kriya. Bring your focus to the root chakra, mooladhara. Begin a smooth and easy inhalation using glottis breathing (ujjayi breath), moving your attention up the frontal channel from mooladhara to the neck, then crossing over as in the kriya orbit directly to the bindu point. Holding the breath in, apply Yoni Mudra with your hands closing off the seven upper gates. Using the root lock (as described in [Part Six](#). http://web.archive.org/web/20011105072218/http://www.tantramagazine.com/kriya/k_06.htm), close off the two lower gates.

As you hold your breath, visualize a copper trident with its base end in the root chakra, mooladhara, and its staff within the spinal column. The head has its three prongs extending upward from vishuddhi chakra at the back of the neck. The center prong has a very sharp point. Continue to hold your breath, while focusing on the visualization of the trident. Watch the trident move upward. Its central prong with its sharp tip will pierce the bindu point. As bindu is pierced, mentally pronounce the mantra, bindu bhedan (bin' doo bhay' don). Feel an expansion in all directions from the bindu point. This expansion may be like a powerful explosion. The trident will drop back down to vishuddhi chakra at the neck. Once again, watch it rise upward to pierce bindu. Repeat the mantra and feel the expansion outward. The trident will continue to rise and lower as long as you can comfortably hold your breath.

When you feel you need air, release the root lock. Release the fingers from the gates and lower the hands placing them in the hand mudra. Take a quick sniff of air in to release the pressure on the throat, then slowly begin an exhalation using the glottis breathing. Follow the attention down the spine to mooladhara, the root chakra. Begin again. Do ten rounds.

This kriya employs a visualization of a trident within the spine. Visualizations can help us in our meditations, yet not all people have the ability to visualize objects. They may be more tuned to the sensations of feeling. If you find difficulty visualizing the trident within your spine, tune into a sense of energy rising up your spine and bumping into the back of your skull at the bindu point. It will descend for a moment, then move it upward again with your mind to bump into the bindu point again. Continue tuning into the sensations of movement.

By opening the Doorway to Brahma, cosmic energy or grace can descend upon us. It enters through the bindu point and flows down the back of the head into the Mouth of God located where the spinal column meets the base of the skull. This is where the medula oblongata is found. We can then make use of this grace by moving it through the kriya chakra circuit and distributing it to all of the chakras.

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