

JOY: The Journal of Yoga

Fall 2004, Volume 3, Number 6

Kriya: Internal Alchemy for the Soul

[Swami Anandakapila Saraswati](#) (Dr. Jonn Mumford)
Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry; Bihar School of Yoga, Munger

Keywords: Kriya Yoga, Internal Alchemy, Laya Yoga, Tantra

Abstract: The word Kriya means movement, motion or agitation. It applies to a series of internal cleansing practices that are important in Hatha Yoga. In contrast to the physical cleansing emphasized in the kriyas of Hatha Yoga, Kriya Yoga is a powerful form of dynamic meditation, an ancient tantric science for internal transformation and psychic rather than physical cleansing.

Primary Text:

The word *Kriya* implies an active, direct approach to controlling physical and psychic energies – rousing into full manifestation that spiritual and bioenergetic force normally latent in the temple-tomb of the physical being. I use the acronym "**CREA**" to succinctly describe the results and practice of Kriya Yoga. Kriya Yoga is a system of "Creative Relaxation and Energy Actualization".

The shortest Sanskrit definition of *Kriya* is activity and therefore Kriya Yoga implies a direct and active method for piercing the veil of maya in contradistinction to many passive meditation approaches. Kriya also implies "doing, performing, effecting, action, and rite".

The Sanskrit root "Kr" means "do, act, see to, conduct (affairs): make, cause, contrive." Hence Kriya has become very popular with Westerners; the dynamic interplay of breath, posture and mental visualizations offer sufficient variety to engage our mental processes – considering we are ruined by-products of a TV culture with rampant Attention Deficit Disorder and an incessant need for instant entertainment.

"Kriya means 'movement, motion, agitation' -- one of the three characteristics of *drsyā*, (profound concentration producing a deep state of introspection) the other two being *prakāśa* (clarity, consciousness) and *sthiti* (preventing fluctuation of consciousness) – the functions of *sattva* (purity) and *tamas* (inertia) *gunas* respectively" (Yoga Kosa Vol. 1).

The methods of Kundalini Kriya Yoga are quite magical, and basically there are three traditions I know of - two of which I have been initiated in. Before we enumerate the psychic traditions of Kriya Yoga we need to make a distinction involving Kriya concepts in Hatha Yoga. When discussing Kriya as a psychic-psychological methodology for internal transformation, it is important to bear in mind that the term 'Kriya' is an integral part of Hatha Yoga. In this context, the word "Kriya" can be specifically attached to very vigorous internal cleaning procedures, which are known as the "Shat Kriyas", literally "6 actions" (also called Ghatashta Yoga).

Ghatastha carries the implication of a cooking pot, suggesting that just as cooking utensils must be scoured after use, so the human body must be strongly internally scoured.

These practices are remarkable, and I studied them intensely when I was young at the Bombay Yoga Institute. The Shat Kriyas systematically purify the body of 'mala' or toxins from top to bottom. This aspect of Hatha Yoga is an example of the breath-taking anatomical and physiological knowledge possessed by the ancient Indians, a knowledge that almost defies imagination.

The Shat Kriyas are:

1: Tratak: (to gaze) A special method of cleansing the naso-lachrymal ducts and anterior coat of the eyeballs utilizing the natural anti-biotic properties of tears triggered through special eye fixation techniques.

2: Kapalabhati (literally, skull glowing): A powerful pranayama series rinsing the upper and lower respiratory tract.

3: Vamandhuti (vomiting): A variety of stomach washes purifying the mucosal stomach lining and stimulating the liver and gall bladder.

4: Neti: (probe or thread) A prescribed series of nasal douches and probes with thread of the nasal passages primarily intended to reflexly stimulate the Central Nervous System and the Autonomic Nervous System.

5: Nauli: Voluntary isolation of the Rectus Abdominal muscles producing powerful negative suction pressures in the large intestine and bladder designed to activate the colon and small intestines and a prerequisite to the actual liquid rinse of the bowel and bladder by aspiration.

6: Basti or Vasti (bladder) douching of the bowel with water and medicated solutions by creating a semi-vacuum in the large intestine and sucking fluid through the rectum with the aid of a bamboo tube. Basti is an excellent example of the advanced level reached by Indian experimental physiology when compared to the West. It was well-known long before Boyle and his work on gas pressure ever arose in Western Science. Basti involves gaining control over the anal sphincters while performing Nauli, with the result that water may be aspirated up into the rectum and colon. This is often done inserting a tube or reed into the anus while squatting over a pot of water. The negative suction pressures can be quite profound and again this was unknown to Western physiology. A variation of the technique can be done to aspirate liquids of varying density into the bladder. (see Ecstasy Through Tantra, pp. 20-26).

The development of these techniques is as incredible as the discovery, in Western medicine, by the German Doctor Forsmann who dared to insert a catheter into a vein in the elbow and push it straight up into the auricle of the heart. He performed this on himself and retaining the catheter in the auricle he walked down four flights of stairs to get a primitive x-ray confirming he was successful! This was in 1925 and thus began the common diagnostic procedure now known as cardiac catheterization.

Different traditions arrange the above 6 practices in different categories and sequences: e.g. some traditions list Neti under Kapalabhati.

This is an extremely brief discussion of what is a highly evolved system utilizing physiological principles unknown in the West for hundreds of years. Ayurvedic medicine has equivalent practices administered to patients, called Panchakarma or "five cleansing actions".

Having briefly surveyed this category of Shat Kriya, we can proceed to the spiritual implications of meditation practices that belong to the tradition of Kriya Yoga.

Kriya Yoga as a Method of Dynamic Meditation

Kriya Yoga appears to have first emerged in the West through the teachings of Yogananda, as transmitted from Babaji's lineage. A number of teachers now teach the methods which can involve up to 144 techniques.

The unique Kriya techniques I teach are not related to the lineages of either Shree Babaji or Shree Yukteswar. My approach to Kriya Yoga, including OM-Kara Kriya®, derive from the rich heritage of the late Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj (Tamil Nadu, South India) and Parahamsajii Swami Satyananda Saraswati, founder of the Bihar School of Yoga (North-East India).

In the 1950's Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj initiated me into the basis for the OM-Kara Kriyas and their ultimate expansion into U3 or Universal, Ultimate, Unity states. Under personal direction these are safe and sure magical routes to an interior consciousness.

The 1970's he released another set of Kriya techniques involving very vigorous Hatha Yoga postures to pump the Ojas (psychic energy) up the spine. These are known as Oli Mudras (Shakti Mudras) and they can only be taught personally to students with a good grounding in Hatha Yoga. Swamijii described it as: "A Classical Yoga Method of conserving Vital Shakti for Spiritual Development and Yoga Family Planning."

In 1973 I studied Kriya Yoga with Parahamsaji Swami Satyananda Saraswati at his Bihar Yoga school. His techniques are marvelous and also unique. They are taught at Satyananda Ashrams around the World, and I have had the privilege of teaching them in both the USA and Australia.

In our program, we commence training in OM-Kara Kriya® in the third semester of the first year, and the student has an opportunity to build a "Jacobs Ladder" to heaven or the divine lokas. The passageway is within us and only we can open it. The door handle is on the inside!

South Indian Kriya Yoga is one of the ancient tantric sciences involving the rotation of consciousness through the magical pathways of the body to produce a profound, altered state of consciousness. The technique is totally different from North Indian Bihar Kriya and focuses on powerful psychic channels and mantra.

Kriya utilises a process of internal alchemy to cleanse and then re-open the secret (latent) tunnels between the pelvic and cranial cavities. When this connection is established Shakti or Cosmic Fire wells up in the now unblocked channels to flood the brain with spiritual distillations.

Before students begin to learn the first kriya, the course focuses upon a Sublimation and Psychic Recycling preliminary Kriya. Preliminary practices are followed by integrated South Indian and Bengali Kriya techniques belonging to Laya Yoga. Collectively these are termed OM-Kara Kriya®.

"Laya Yoga is the technique of reabsorption of wasted energies for the Cosmic Conscious experience of Samadhi." Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj.

References:

Shrii Yogendra. Yoga Personal Hygiene. Vol 1, Examiner Press Bombay, published by Yogendra Publications, for the Yoga Institute, Bombay,25, 1958

Shrii Yogendra. Yoga Personal Hygiene. Vol II, Ibid

Swami Digambarjii. Yoga Kosha Vol I, Kaivalyadhama S. M. Y. M. Samiti, Lonavla, Dist. Poona, India, 1972

Swami Digambarjii. Yoga Kosha Vol I,Part II. Ibid

Swami Anandakapila was initiated into this system by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj of Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, in the late 1950s. Dr Jonn Mumford (Swami Anandakapila Saraswati) is an International lecturer and author whose works include *Ecstasy through Tantra, A Chakra; Kundalini Workbook; Magical Tattwas - Hindu Tarot for the West;* and *Mind Magic Kit.* (Llewellyn Publications, USA).

He was initiated into the Saraswati order by Paramahansaji Swami Satyananda, Bihar School, in 1973 and began his inner journey with Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj.

For information on Dr Mumford's Consultations and Distance learning Programs visit:

<http://www.jonnmumfordconsult.com>

Or contact:

Swami Umeshanand Saraswati
Kailash Center for Personal Development, Inc.
1992 Commerce Street, #301
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598 USA
tantrapm@aol.com

Copyright © 2004 JOY: *The Journal of Yoga*