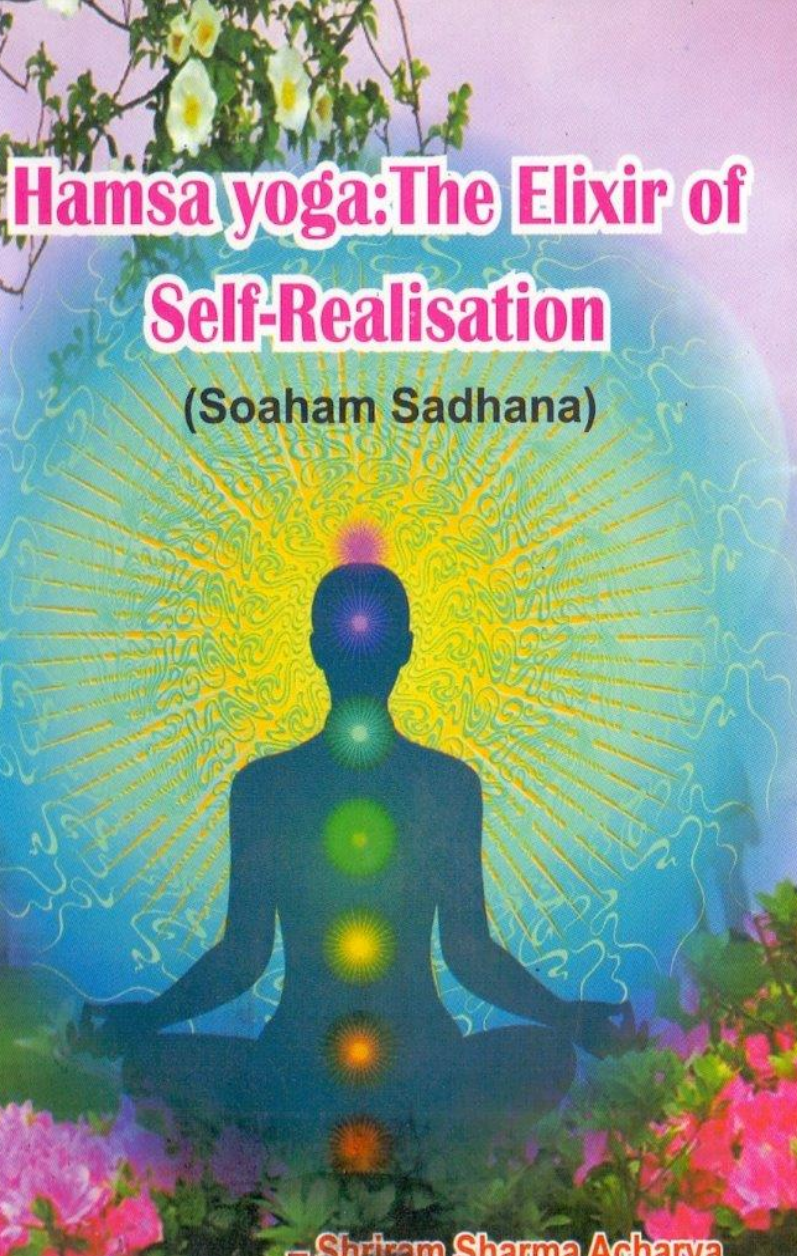


Hamsa yoga: The Elixir of Self-Realisation

(Soaham Sadhana)



— Shriram Sharma Acharya

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Preface

The *Hamsa Yoga* or *Soaham Sadhana* is crowned in the Indian scriptures as the paramount spiritual endeavour that enables natural conjunction of the individual consciousness and the *Brahm*. Despite being superior in terms of its culminated effects, this *Sadhana* is easiest and free from the ascetic disciplines and difficult practices of *Yoga* that are associated with other higher level spiritual *Sadhanas*. The treatise of *Sabda Brahm*, *Nada Brahm* (volume 19 of Pt. *Shriram Sharma Acharya*, *Vangmay* series) devotes one full chapter to this important topic. The present book is compiled from the English translation of this invaluable text.

Meditation on the sounds of 'soa' and 'ham', produced continuously by the harmonised inhalation and exhalation in each breathing cycle during a *Pranayama* is practised in the initial phase of the *Hamsa Yoga*. The *Hakar* (sound of 'ha') is regarded as a manifestation of God *Shiv* in the cosmic energy currents of *Prana* and *Sakar* (the sound of 'sa') represents the existence of the eternal power of *thy* super consciousness in the spiritual impulse of *Prana*. The *Surya Swara* (through the solar nerve) is awakened by *Hakar* and the *Chandra Swara* (through the lunar

nerve) by *Sakar*. These *Swaras* are harmonised in the higher level *Pranayama* of the *Hamsa Yoga*. The contemplation phase of this *Sadhana* involves total sacrifice of the ego and dissolution of the identity of the 'Self' in the supreme consciousness, expression of the *Brahm*.

The *Soaham Sadhana* enables realisation of the *Nada Yoga* through *Prana Yoga*. The science and philosophy of this *Sadhana* is also discussed here in the special context of the *Ajapa jap* of the *Gayatri Mantra* and the *Kundalini Sadhana*. The author has been thorough, yet lucid in discussing this esoteric field of the science of spirituality and *Yoga*. He also provides trenchant guidance for practising this *Prana Yoga* in day to day life. The fundamental importance of the subject and the detailed and authentic knowledge presented in a perspicuous style make this book a precious asset in the scholarly disciplines and a milestone for all aspirants of the realisation and illumination of the individual self.

—*Dr. Pranav Pandya, MD*

The Philosophical Basis of *Soaham Sadhana*

Every student of science knows that oxygen is essential for the maintenance of life on this earth. In fact, its presence is more crucial for the survival of the human body as compared to the availability of water and food. Oxygen regulates the redness (healthy content of haemoglobin) in the blood. It is the fuel of this gas, which keeps the engine of the body warm enough and energises all components of the body machine. Its regular and substantial supply is vital for the maintenance and activation of physical strength.

The word *Prana* refers to the sublime form of vital energy, which at the gross level is manifested in the power regulating the physico chemical functions of the body. The extent of one's *Prana* is reflected in his zeal, alertness, enthusiasm and talents. The physical exercises of jogging, brisk walking, deep breathing etc. are performed to increase the intake of oxygen. The *Yoga* exercises of *Pranayam* are performed to gain more *Prana*, the source and power of the vital force and consciousness.

A variety of *Pranayamas* are described in the scriptures on *Yoga*. Of which the *Suryavedhan* and *Anulom-Vilom* are regarded as integral parts of the *Prana Yoga* of the *Sadhanas* of *Brahm Varchas*. The physical exercises

energise the components of the gross body and *Pranayamas* help increase the internal power and the eminence of personality. *Pranayama* is essentially an exercise to upkeep the health of the subtle body.

The gross component (oxygen in this case) of *Prana* is supplied to the body by physical exercises and the subtle component is extracted (from the omnipresent ocean of consciousness) for the subtle body by the *Pranayamas*. Like the gross and subtle bodies, the causal body of an individual also needs some vital energy or *Prana*. This is the culmination of the force of spiritually refined *Prana*, the sublime current of cosmic, divine energy, called the *Mahaprana*. The *Mahaprana* required by the causal body of the soul, emanates from the *Brahm* (cosmic *Prana*). This eternal *Prana* is received by the practice of *Hamsa Yoga*. The *Sadhana* (spiritual exercise) of this *Yoga* is also called the *Soaham Sadhana*, which, with reference to the science of *Gayatri Upasana* is defined as the *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri*.

In this *Sadhana* of *Hamsa Yoga*, the devotee has to link his mind with the cosmic level of consciousness, the Supreme Consciousness. He has to awaken the inner feelings in order to realise his existence as a soul, above the level of the body and the mind. The vital energy, the *Prana* and the divine 'magnetism', power of attraction of the inner self, all are applied with

focused concentration, zeal and immense *Shraddha* towards the conditioning of the body, mind and the innermost emotional centre to reach this state. Once this state is attained, even the usual action of breathing becomes so powerful that it can attract the *Mahaprana* from the cosmic domains and send it to the deeper layers of the inner self. Along with the inhalation of oxygen by the physical body and *Prana* by the mind, a subtle absorption of the divine energy by the causal body also takes place during this process. The spiritual endeavour of this unique kind of *Pranayama* is the *Soaham Sadhana*.

The phase of breathing in during a *Pranayama* is called a *Puraka* and that of breathing out is called a *Rechaka*; the intermediate phase of holding the breath in and out are called the *Antah Kumbhaka* and *Bahya Kumbhaka* respectively. In *Hamsa Yoga*, one concentrates on the sound of 'soa.....' during the *Puraka*. This sound should not be heard only as that of the flow of air, rather, it should be acquired as a manifestation of the *Sabda*, the supreme cosmic sound. This subtle sound could be 'perceived' with the help of strong will-power, deep mental concentration and the pious emotions of *Shraddha*. The sound should be felt like that of the *Vansi* (flute) of Lord *Krishna*. This sound then appears to convey the divine messages and blessings. This flow of *Sabda* enters the body

along with the breath and educes the inner domain of the self with the sublime current of its eternal energy.

During the *Antah Kumbhaka* of the *Soaham Pranayama*, the *Sadhaka* should feel that the entire existence of his own self has been devoted to the power of 'Soa', that *Parbrahm*. At the time of *Rechaka*, he has to concentrate on the sound of *Ham* and feel through the heart that with this outflow (of air), his own *Aham* (the ego) is being expelled forever. Then, he should hold the breath out (during the *Bahya Kumbhaka*) for few seconds and ensure himself that, 'now there is no place for ego and related illusions; whatever is now inside, is only a reflection of the *Brahm*'. This state of the living being (*Jiva*) is equivalent to that of realising the *Vedant* principle of '*Sivoaham-Sacchidanandoaham*' etc.

By performing the *Ajapajap* of *Soaham* as in the aforesaid *Pranayama*, the individual self constantly recalls its own divine origin and this way remains in touch with *thee*. This *Sadhana* of *Soaham* therefore offers the boon of realisation of the *Brahm*. The spiritual benefits of this *Sadhana* are enormous. It indeed effectuates the linkage of the soul with the *Parabrahm*. Because of its capability of pulling the individual self from the state of incompleteness and ignorance to the ultimate state of uniting with the *Brahm*, the

Soaham Sadhana has been recommended as the principal *Yoga Sadhana* of *Brahm Varchas*, the *Sadhana* aimed at the absolute evolution.

The higher level spiritual *Sadhanas* do have the potential to exalt the *Sadhaka's* life upto the divine realms at a fast pace as compared to the ordinary *Upasanas*, practised in daily life. However, the practice of these *Sadhanas* is not totally riskless. Some of these are so sensitive as, for instance, the experiments on nuclear fusion. A scientist knows that the latter, if performed accurately would provide enormous energy, but little mistake or perturbation might lead to disastrous consequences. Madam Curie had died in an accident during such a scientific experiment of high complexity.

In view of the precautions and disciplines associated with the high level *Sadhanas*, the ancient experts of the Indian science of spirituality had devised the *Aranyak* tradition. In this system, the aspirants of specific advanced spiritual experiments used to learn and perform associated *Sadhanas* in the *Aranyakas* under adept supervision and guidance of the eminent experts. Although the *Aranyak* system is not existing in the modern times, its relevance and importance in spiritual training remains unaltered.

Today, there are practically no *Aranyakas* existing on the earth. Finding an authentic

spiritual guide (*Guru*) is also an almost impossible task in the present circumstances. Even if such a *Guru* is available for teaching a specific *Sadhana* of high spiritual level, the disciples would not have the devotion, zeal, motivation and above all, the time necessary for staying away from home and practising the prescribed *Sadhana* under ascetic disciplines. In the present circumstances, the simple and riskless *Sadhanas* appear to be the best solution. These *Sadhanas*, because of their direct linkage with the *Sadhak's* intrinsic sentiments, do offer great spiritual benefits, equivalent to those of the higher level, difficult spiritual endeavours. Some such *Sadhanas*, as described below, are so simple that with initial training of first few weeks, any aspirant could easily practise them in his house along with fulfilling all his social responsibilities.

Three types of *Pranayamas* are described in the scriptures for the *Pancha Koshiya Sadhana* of *Gayatri*. Whether it is the *Sadhana* of *Kundalini*, *Gayatri* or the awakening of the *Pancha Kosh*, the basic practices in each deal with the *Sadhanas* of refinement and elevation of the *Prana*. The *Savitri Sadhana* is also similar. The knowledge of these *Sadhanas* of *Mahaprana* is defined in the *Upnishads* under the name of *Panchagni Vidya*. Practising of *Pranayamas* is an essential component of these *Sadhanas*.

Mostly, the following five steps are involved in these preeminent spiritual experiments. Each of these could be practised at home by anybody, who has received intensive guidance and demonstrative training.

These fundamental steps are (i) the *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri* that is, the *Soaham Sadhana*; (ii) *Khechari Mudra*; (iii) *Shakti Chalini Mudra*; (iv) *Trataka* and (v) *Nada Yoga*. Of these, the *Soaham Sadhana* is supposed to be most facile. It can be performed in all the twenty four hours of the day and is equivalent to the paramount spiritual *Sadhanas* in term of its supernatural attainments.

In general, a *Pranayam* is based on two crucial features, (i) controlled breathing to harmonise the system in a measured way and churning of the *Prana* so inhaled and (ii) attracting the *Mahaprana* by a *Sankalpa*, determination with strong will-power and intrinsic urge. The attraction of the *Mahaprana* and its circulation inside the body together makes one complete cycle of *Prana Yoga*. Only one of the above activities would not serve the real purpose. Because, deep breathing alone would remain just a good exercise of the lungs, which can also be performed by many other exercises of the body, recommended by the physiologists, such as, jogging, up and down stretching, *Surya Namaskar* etc. On the other hand, only the

determined attempts to attract the *Mahaprana* would be like a meditation. This alone will not be so effective unless coupled with the controlled breathing and churning of the *Mahaprana* in the body and in the inner self.

There are about sixty four types of methods for controlled breathing as described in the Indian *Shastras* on *Yoga Sadhanas*. Several other types of breathing exercises are also popular outside India. The specific breathing activities associated with the *Yoga Sadhanas* of *Pranayamas* do offer the positive effects of physical health along with rousing mental alertness and inner strength.

The *Sankalpa* part of the *Pranayama* largely depends upon the *Sadhaka's* will-power and mental concentration. A variety of *Mantras* and pictorial patterns or images for meditation are prescribed for this purpose. The *Jap* (repeated enunciation) of these *Mantras* and focused imagination of the specific objects helps to develop the mental engrossment necessary for the initial training of meditation. The *Sadhaka* should feel as though he is immersed in the ocean of divine *Prana* and attempt to consistently suck this subtle energy through each breath.

The 'magnetic' power of *Vishvas* and *Shraddha* and the potential of determination are not mere imaginations. Indeed, they are conscious streams of immense power. The unlimited power

of emotions and strong will has also been well recognised and experienced in the present era of scientific developments. The philosophers, psychologists and the experts of the science of spirituality know that the limitless world of the mind and the sentimental core, the *Mana* (mind), *Buddhi* (intellect), *Chitta* (subconscious mind) and *Ahamkara* (sense of self existence), works on the basis of this sublime power of the *Chetan* (consciousness). The vital energy and hence, all the functions of the (gross) body also materialise with the help of this power only. It is the basic source of liveliness, charm and glory of one's personality.

The inner desires and experiences linked with the power of *Sankalpa* induce the corresponding thought waves (in the mind) and impulses (in the brain) and give rise to the associated actions of the body and the 'visible' self. Thus, a collective effort of the body and the mind, along with the eternal power of faith and determination becomes the cause of any good or bad deed and its consequences; the results of which might be cheering or tragic, beneficial or insidious, depending upon the quality of the mental and emotional inspirations behind it. In essence, what all is being conducted by an individual is directly or indirectly a consequence of his *Sankalpa*, intrinsic motivation and mental resolution.

The strength and level of the *Sankalpa* is the principal regulator of the decline or elevation of one's life. Every human being is free to shape his own life by using this power. Collective resolution of the people with strong will-power can trigger revolutions, change the destiny of the entire nation; and, if motivated by divinely pious inspirations of the soul, can effectuate creation of an ideal environment for the welfare of all living beings. It is said that the Nature, the existence, limitless expansion and activities of the Universe emanate from the absolute determination of the eternal creator, God *Brahma*. Divine incarnations and the cosmic changes, which are necessary for balancing the universal cycle, also take place as per *thy* will.

Shraddha and *Vishvas*, affirmed to be crucial for the *Yoga Sadhanas* of spiritual transmutation are derived from the emotionally charged determination of the inner self. In fact, the rituals and the physical and mental activities associated with a *Sadhana* process contribute hardly one-fourth of the share in the success of the latter. The major part, the remaining three-fourth or more, depends upon the heartiest desire, sincere and strong will-power of the devotee. If the *Sadhaka's* determination or faith were weak or shaky, he would never achieve success in a spiritual *Sadhana*. (In fact, the same

is true about the success of any plan or activity in the materialist domains too).

It is the earnest spirit, coupled with faith and *Shraddha* that gives him the adequate strength and support to follow the necessary disciplines and perform the *Sadhana* successfully. In a *Pranayama Sadhana* too, it is indeed the conscious power of the *Sadhaka's Sankalp* that draws the subtle energy of *Prana* along with the air (oxygen) through breathing.

Many type of *Pranayamas* are suitable for the overall development of the individual self. Here, we shall discuss only two, which appear to be the best in terms of their simplicity and universality. Of these, *Pranayamas*, the easiest is the one, which is incorporated among the *Shatkarmas* (six rituals) performed at the beginning of the daily *Upasanas*. It is essential for controlling the activity of breathing and harmonising it with the help of mental concentration. It is so simple to perform this *Pranayama*, that even school going children could perform it without much difficulty.

The procedure of performing the above *Pranayama* is as follows: the *Sadhaka* should sit in a posture of *Sukhasan* keeping his spinal cord erect and maintain a calm mood; he should take a deep breath at a slow and steady pace (the normal duration of this *Puraka* is about four seconds). The inhaled air should be retained

(*Antah Kumbhaka*) in the lungs for few seconds (about sixteen seconds, if possible without any difficulty). Then, the air should be breathed out (*Rechaka*) at a slow and steady pace. After this, the breathing should be stopped (*Bahya Kumbhaka*) for few seconds. This completes one cycle. Several such cycles (about four to five in the beginning) are completed in one sitting in the daily practice. The total duration of this practice (of *Pranayama*) may range between five minutes (for the beginners) to thirty minutes (for the trained *Sadhakas*).

By sincere practice and mental engrossment, the breathing is so controlled that the duration of the *Antah* and *Bahya Kumbhaka* and those of the *Puraka* and *Rechaka* be equal and the speed of inhalation would be the same as that of exhalation in each cycle. During each cycle of this *Pranayama*, the *Sadhaka* should attempt (with his natural determination) to feel that in the *Puraka* phase, an illuminating current of *Prana* enters along with the breath which expands and gets absorbed in the body during the *Antah Kumbhaka*. He should also feel that because of his strong will-power and the stored *Pranas*, the 'filth' of the *Kusanskars* (evil tendencies and weaknesses) is being repudiated during a *Rechaka* and is firmly prevented from re-entering the body because of the control of the *Bahya Kumbhaka*.

In the natural function of breathing, the lungs draw air from the atmosphere to supply energy to the body via the blood. The blood corpuscles take their food, the oxygen content from this supply and by circulation distribute the required quota of energy to the brain and other components of the body. During a *Pranayama*, this activity also gets systematised because of harmonised breathing. More importantly, in this process, the determined will and emotional urge of the *Sadhaka* will also attract the omnipresent power of consciousness, the *Prana*, subtly indwelling in the atmosphere.

The strength of the *Sadhaka's* internal will and determination is directly associated with his own consciousness and therefore, accounts for the amount and level of *Prana* drawn by it. The *Sadhaka's* controlled *Sankalp*, attraction and absorption of the *Prana* all create collective impact during a *Pranayama*. The physical, subtle as well as the causal body could benefit from the coherent currents of the supreme consciousness, if the *Sadhaka* steadily realises the glow and energy of the attracted cosmic *Prana* of divine quality as being absorbed by each of his three bodies.

If the *Sadhaka's Sankalp* is weak and unstable or his emotional attachment and faith in this activity is superficial, then he would only gain the healthy effects of deep and controlled

breathing from this *Pranayama*. The conscious charge and strength of the *Sankalpa* can be enhanced by sincere faith and dedicated experiments of practising it at regularly increasing pace. The *Sadhaka* must concentrate on the feeling, that the divine energy of *Prana* is reaching to him with each breath and is entering his body without any obstacle; that his body is full of this energy and is being electrified from within.

This *Pranayama*, which is a part of the *Shat Karmas* of the daily *Sandhya Vandan*, is essential for every aspirant of spiritual development. Even, the mental concentration would not be attained without practising the *Pranayama* and the *Sadhaka* would also find it difficult to perform the successive steps, namely, *Pratyahar*, *Dharana* and *Dhyan*, of a *Rajayoga Sadhana*.

Among the higher level *Pranayamas*, the *Soaham Sadhana* is regarded as supreme because the *Sankalp* associated with it has the potential to evolve the individual consciousness upto the ultimate divine form and to connect the individual self with the *Brahm*. No other kind of *Pranayama* involves this level of emotional sacrifice and *Sankalp* as the *Soaham Sadhana* does. Perhaps this is the reason why it has been given a special name, the *Hamsa Yoga* rather than categorising it within the nomenclature of the other *Pranayamas*. The scriptures of spiritual

Sadhanas have mentioned so much about the *Hamsa Yoga* that if compiled collectively, these descriptions would appear like an independent branch of the *Yoga Shastra*.

The sounds of 'so' while breathing in, 'a' while retaining it and 'ham' while breathing out, are not loud and clear like other audible sounds. One can hear them only by the 'subtle ears' (i.e. through experiencing the extrasensory vibrations), with unperturbed mental concentration. Nobody can really perceive them in the continuous breathing cycles, unless one concentrates on the subtle sounds, made by the flow of air in and out of the nostril, during the natural process of respiration.

The sound of 'Soaham' is an *Anahata Nada*. In the practice of *Nada Yoga*, one has to meditate upon the sublime sounds (of the *Ahata* and *Anahata* category successively) inside the body, which are perceived under a state of absolute silence. In *Hamsa Yoga*, the nose provides extra support and the two senses (the functions of nose and the ears) together with deep mental engrossment help to realise the latent sound of 'Soaham'.

As described in context of the *Nada Yoga*, varieties of subtle sounds, including those perceived during the gradual progress in the long term practice of *Nada Yoga*, result from the vibrations created by the *Sat*, *Raj* and *Tam*

tendencies of the nature immanent in the five basic elements. These, like the internal sounds of the nerves and muscles in the body, are *Ahat Nadas*, because they are generated by some kind of vibrations only. Even, the silent and *Manasik Japas* produce *Ahat Nada* because some movement, though of subtle dimension, of the vocal cord and the components of the nervous system, is always associated with such *Japas* too. It is only the *Ajapajap* that continues naturally like the eternal flow of the self existing *Anahata Nada* of *Omkar*.

The *Ahata Nadas* are expressions of the manifestations of *Sabda* in nature, but the *Anahat Nadas* are the expressions of the subliminal *Sabda* of the *Brahm*, the eternal Creator, the origin of nature, the cosmic *thyself*. Whence the latter are of paramount importance; they are conceptualised as the ultimate expression of *Sabda*.

The savants of spiritual knowledge opine that in the innermost centre of the soul, its sense of self recognition, as a fraction of the *Parbrahm*, is eternally reflected and gives rise to the continuous cycles of the self existing *Ajapa Jap* of *Soaham* (meaning, 'I am *That*, the *Brahm*') While discussing the meaning of 'Soaham' one should not be confused with respect to the precision of the liaisons in this *Sanskrit* word (according to the *Sanskrit* grammar: *Sah*

(सः) (that) + *Aham* (अहं) = *Soaham*. Because, *Soaham* (सोऽहं) has not been a word derived from the *Sanskrit* grammar, rather, it is a *Nada* that is self existing because of the eternal linkage of 'So', (the supreme consciousness) and 'aham' (the consciousness of the individual self).

Soaham represents the oneness of the soul and the *Brahm*. The *Hamsa Yoga Pranayama* of the *Soaham Sadhana* aims at awakening of this feeling of oneness in the *Jiva*, (the individual self). Without this realisation an individual believes his body and mind to be his 'self' *in toto*. His aspirations, concerns and activities remain confined to the domain of the body and mind. His thoughts and emotions circulate within this self conceited, limited periphery and only the things and people falling within this domain, of having some relationship with the body or the conscious mind, appear to him as his own. He does not feel any sense of responsibility or affection with others, except perhaps for his near relatives and friends. Not only that, at times, he does not even hesitate in harming others in order to secure the benefits of his 'own' people or to preserve the things in his 'own' possession.

This ignorance is what is called *Maya*, which becomes the cause of materialistic attachments and binding of the *Jiva* in selfish affairs. These bonds make him indulge in the unnecessary activities and sins, which hinder the possibilities

of his spiritual development and put him into the dark tunnel of an unending journey in the world of ignorance, weaknesses, sufferings and agony of unlimited desires. The whole lot of spiritual *Sadhanas*, aim at emancipating the individual self from this bondage of illusions and ignorance and uplifting towards the righteous path worth his dignity as a soul.

The knowledge of *Soaham* is termed as *Sadgyan*, *Tatvagyan* or *Brahmgyan*, the divine knowledge that enlightens the inner self and awakens the soul so that it could realise its eternal origin. By the effect of *Soaham Sadhana*, the individual self begins to recognise its true identity as a reflection of the *Brahm*. The knowledge of *Soaham* contains the key for liberation from ignorance and the worldly bondage. It indeed leads to the state of realisation of, '*Tatvamasi, Suddhosi, Buddhosi, Niranjanosi*' in terms of the attainment of absolute piety, ultimate knowledge and limitless beatitude.

The word meaning of *Soaham*, 'I am *Brahm*', should not be interpreted as an expression of arrogance. Because here 'I' does not correspond to the body or what a selfish, ignorant and a possessive person thinks himself to be. Such misinterpretations would imply what the devil like giants, *Ravan*, *Kans* and *Hiranyakashipu*, used to impose themselves to be. These characters, because of their maddening ego,

suppressive might and blind superiority complex used to regard themselves as equivalent to God and used to even impose such impressions upon others. But, the history stands by the fact that such illusions of extreme atrocities finally became the cause of their disdainful destruction.

It should be remembered that in the meaning of '*Soaham*', the word 'I' does not refer to this body or mind, which are made up of the *Pancha Tatvas* (five basic elements) and the three natural tendencies of the *Jada* and *Chetan* components of nature. This 'I' truly corresponds to the soul. Thus '*Soaham*' is a divine message which reminds that the soul is a part of the *Brahm*. The spiritual scholars of all times have described the unity of the soul with the *Brahm* as that of a wave with the ocean; light with the sun; an atom with the universe; a spark with fire....etc. The only hinderance in the realisation by the soul of its originality is the smog of ignorance (*Maya*), when the soul exists in a body as a living being (*Jiva*) in this world.

The assimilation of illusions, misdeeds and the associated impact of the *Kusanskars* of the previous birth and the thraldom of ego, avarice and attachment block the active linkage of the individual self with its divine source. That is why, an individual, despite being a part of that Omniscient Almighty continues to live a

dissatisfied, effete, purposeless and even sinful life. The spiritual *Sadhanas* aim at removing these untoward shrouds and wiping off the latent imprints of the *Kusanskars* and untoward habits and refining the mind and the entire inner self of the *Sadhaka*. It is only in a clean and serene mind and pious heart that the divine inspirations could be educed that would enlighten the soul. The *Soaham Sadhana* also results in such an illumination of the intellect and spiritual transmutation of the individual self.

The religious scriptures repeatedly convey that '*Iswara Ansh Jiva Avinasi*', every living being is a fraction of the Almighty, omnipresent *Thee*. Most of the people hear and accept it in principle, but that is not all. Acceptance of this fact or belief in it would not serve any purpose unless it is inculcated in the innermost layers of the mind and the emotional centre. Internal faith and emotional depth and sincerity only can awaken the *Shraddha* that enlightens and edifies the inner self. It is this inspiration which can control the thoughts and deeds of the individual.

If one's *Shraddha* is educed and enlightened by the spiritual essence of '*Soaham*' then its realisation would certainly bring divine transformation in his life. In this elevated state, the individual should think according to the divine inspiration, his deeds should be angelic

like those of the incarnations of God. Only then the individual self would be able to unite with its origin. When the water of a gutter falls into the holy Ganges, it gets merged in the latter and becomes one with the holy water of the Ganges. A small droplet of water, when falls in a sea, it loses its identity, but becomes an integral component of the sea water and thus becomes the sea itself. Similarly, after the realisation of 'Soaham', the soul gets immersed into the *Brahm* and thereby attains the latter's omnipresent form. The successful *Sadhakas* of this *Sadhana* therefore appear like perfect beings, angels, because of the divinity of their thoughts, saintly sentiments and altruist deeds that are dedicated for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. The *Soaham Sadhana*, when used for the purpose of stimulating and arousing the *Kundalini* and its practice according to the science and methodology of the *Sadhana* of *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri* is called the *Hamsa Yoga*. The experts of *Yoga Sadhanas* have written a great deal about the *Hamsa Yoga*. Some such excerpts are listed below

Hamsasyakrati Vistaram Bhuktimukti Phalapradamh |
Sarvesu Dehesu Vyaptam Vartate Yatha Hyagnih,
Kasthesu Tilesu Tailamiva |
Tadviditwa Na Mratyumeti |
Agnisimau Paksavonkarah Sira Ukaro Bindustrinetram
Mukhm Rudro Rudrani |
Caranau Dvividham Kamthatah, Kuryadity-

unmanah Ajapopasamhara Ityabhidhiyate |
Tasmanmano Viline Manasi Gate Samkalpvikalpe
Dagdhe Punya Pape |
Sadasivah Saktyatma Sarvatravasthitah Swayam
Jyoti,
Suddho, Buddho, Nityo Niranjanah |
Santatamah Praka's ayati ta Vedanuvacanm Bhavati
tyutpanisat |

— *Hamsopanishad*

Meaning The eternal form and expansion of '*Hamsa*' offers both ultimate satisfaction and liberation. As the fire resides in wood or oil in the *Seasum* seeds, similarly, this absolute element of the *Brahm* is contained in all living beings. One who knows it gets liberated from the bondages of death. *Agni* and *Soama* (the eternal sources of life and creativity) are the wings of this *Hamsa*. *Omkar* is its head, *Bindu* (the divine glow point) make its eyes, *Rudra* (God *Shiv*'s manifestation) exist in its mouth and *Rudrani* (the power of *Rudra*) in its feet. The endless dimensions of time are its arms, *Agni* (as the divine source of energy) rests in its arm pits and the *Sagun* (manifested) and *Nirgun* (sublime, omnipresent) forms of the *Brahm* are its two sides.

The continuous *Jap* of '*Ram-Ram....*' sounds like '*Mara Mara.....*' Similarly, if the sound of '*Soaham*' is enunciated repeatedly without a pause, it generates a cycle and echoes in the reverse order as '*hamsoa....hamsoa....*' and thus sounds like '*Hamsa..... Hamsa*

because of its continuity. This is why, the *Soaham Sadhana* is also called *Hamsa Yoga Sadhana*.

Hamso Hamsohamityevam Punaravarttanakrmat |
Soaham Soaham Bhavennunamitiyogavido Viduh ||

— *Yoga Rasayanam*

Meaning The repeatition of 'hamsoamhamsoa.....' would be heard as a *Jap* of 'Soaham-Soaham....' The experts of Yoga know this fact very well.

*Abhyasanantaram Kuryad Gacchmstist hanswap-
annapi |*

Chintanam Hamsa Mantrasya Yogasiddhikarm

Param | |

—*Yog. Rasa 303*

Meaning : Even before (or after) the regular practice (of *Hamsa Yoga*), the reflection of the 'Soaham', sound (produced by the breaths) should be continuously felt while walking, sitting or even sleeping. This leads to ultimate success. This *Soaham Mantra* is also known as *Hansaa* or *Hamsa*.

When the mind gets immersed in that omnipresent element of '*Hamsa*' (*Brahm*), all its sins, ego, desires and related emotions, thoughts and reflections are totally waned out. And then, the glow of the absolutely pious, eminent and beatitudeous eternal power of the *Brahm* illuminates the inner mind.

Prannam Dehamadhye Tu Sthito Hamsah Sadaacyut |
Hamsa Eva Param Satyam, Hamsa Eva Tu Saktikam, | |
Hamsa Eva Param Vakyam, Hamsa Eva Tu Vadikam |

Hamsa Eva Paro Rudro, Hamsa Eva Paratparam ||
Sarvadevasya Madhyastho, Hamsa Eva Maheswarah |
Hamsajyotiranupamyam Devam adhye Vyavasthitam ||
—*Brahm Vidyopanishad* : 60-65

Meaning : The divine power resides in the form of 'Hamsa' in every creature. *Hamsa* only is the ultimate truth. *Hamsa* alone is the absolute power. *Hamsa* is the supreme form of God. *Hamsa* is the eternally complete sentence. *Hamsa* is the essence of all *Vedas*. *Hamsa* is the greatest *Rudra*, *Shiv* of the trinity Gods. *Hamsa* is the *Parbrahm*.

Hamsa is imminent like the unique glow among the 'spectrum' of the divine powers. Each one of us should always do the *Jap* of this *Hamsa Mantra* with mental concentration and emotional devotion focused at the sacred glow.

Nabhashtham Niskalam Dhyatwa Mucyate
Vibam dhanat |

Anahatadhwaniyutam Hamsam Yo Veda Hradgatam ||
Swaprakasacidanandam Sa Hamsa Iti Giyate |
Nabhikande Samau Kratwa Pranapanau Samahitah ||
Mastakashamrataswadam Pitwa Dhyayena Sadaram |
Hamsavidyamrate Loke Nasti Nityatwasadhanam ||
Yo Dadati Mahavidyam Hamsakhyam Parmeswarim |
Hamsahamseti Yo Bruyadhdamso Brahmaharih
Sivah |

Guruvaktrattu Labhyet Pratyaksam Sarvatomukham ||
—*Brahma Vidyopanishad* : 20-34

Meaning One, who has realised the eternally glowing, absolutely blissful element of the *Hamsa* that resides in the inner self with its

Anahata Nada, such an ascetic person alone is given the title of '*Hamsa*'. One who showers the nectar (of emotional sanctity and *Shraddha*) along with the *Jap* of '*Hamsa*' attains super natural powers and talents.

There is no support better than the knowledge of *Hamsa*. The expert, who teaches and distributes this knowledge is indeed honourable and worthy of being treated respectfully. One, who successfully performs the *Sadhana* of *Hamsa* realises the powers of the trinity Gods existing in himself and attains the ultimate knowledge of the *Brahm*.

Manaso Hamsah Soaham Hamsa Iti Tanmayam Yajno Nadanusamdhanam | —*Pashupati Brahmopanishad*

Meaning : The *Hamsa* is a manifestation of the *Brahm* in the inner self. This is what is expressed by '*Soaham*'. This *Hamsa* expands outside and also resides inside (the body). It is a form of God. The (*Soaham*) *Yajna* performed by its contemplation and realisation is equivalent to the *Nada Yoga Sadhana*.

Hamsatmamalika Varnabrahmakalapracodita |

Paramatma Pumaniti Brahmasampattikarini ||

—*Pashupati Brahmopanishad*

Meaning : *Hamsa* is a reflection of the *Brahm*. One can find (link the self with) Lord *Brahma* by its *Sadhana*. It is the Supreme Self and the *Purusha*.

Hamsavidyamavijnaya Muktau Yatram Karoti Yah |

Sa Nabhobhaksanenaiva Ksunnivrattim Karisyati ||

—*Sutra Sanhita*

Meaning : One who attempts (after knowing its secret...) the *Hamsa Yoga*, enjoys complete liberation from all ambitions and desires.

Pasana Chittwa Yatha Hamso

Nirvisankakhamutkramet |

Chinnapasastavatha Jivah Sansaram Tarate Tada ||

—*Ksrikopanishad 20*

Meaning : As the *Hamsa* (Swan) flies freely in the sky, similarly, the *Sadhaka* of the *Hamsa Yoga* becomes free from all ties of worldly attachments.

Several ancient scholars have also analysed the syllables 'ha' and 'sa' (of 'Hamsa') separately. The two letters also have multiple implications and the combinations of the two (in 'Hamsa') give appropriate directions to the *Sadhaka*.

Hakaro Nirgame Proktah Sakarena Pravesanam

Hakarah Sivarupena Sakarah Saktirucyate |

—*Shiv Swarodaya*

Meaning : The out flow of a breath produce 'Hakar' (the sound of 'ha') and its in flow produce 'Sakar' (the sound of 'sa') *Hakar* represents a manifestation of God *Shiv* and *Sakar* corresponds to that of *Sakti* (Goddess *Parvati*).

Hakarena Tu Suryah Syatsakarenendurucyate |

Suryachandramosaraikym Hatha Ityabhidhiyate ||

Hathena Grasyate Jadnam Sarvadosasamudbhav |

Ksetrajnah Paramatma Ca Tayoraikyam Yadabhavet ||

—*Yoga Sikhopanishad : 133-134*

Meaning : *Hakar* is related with the *Surya Swara* (the *Swara* produced by the flow of the

Prana through the right *Nadi*, connected with the right nostril). *Sakar* corresponds to the *Chandra Swara* (the *Swara* of the left *Nadi*). Harmonising the two *Swaras* is aimed in the *Hatha Yoga*. By such *Yogas*, the *Sadhaka's* ignorance and inertia, which is the cause of all flaws, is eradicated so that the *Sadhaka* could unite with the omniscient *Thee*.

By the process of breathing, each *Jiva* naturally performs the silent '*Jap*' (enunciation) of *Soaham* although, without realising it. The average number of such 'unnoticed' (latent) *Japas* is around 21600 per day.

Hakarena Bahiryati Sakarena Visetpunah |

Hamsa Hansetyumu Mantram Ji vo Japati Sarvada | |

Sata Satani Twahoratre Sahastranyekavinsatih |

Etatsamkhyanvitam Mantram Jivo Japati Sarvada | |

—*Goraksha Samhita* 1 | 41-42

Meaning : The conscious energy of the *Jiva* continuously utters '*Hamsa - Hamsa*' Thus, a *Jiva* normally recites the (*Hamsa*) *Mantra* around twenty-one thousand six hundred times during each cycle of a day and a night.

By certain principles of the *Sanskrit* Grammar, an abridged form of '*Soaham*' becomes '*Oham*', which sounds like *Oam* (*Om*) in general.

Sakaram Cha Hakaram Cha Lopayitwa prayojayet |

Sandhim Cha Purvarupakhyam Tatoasau Pranavo

Bhavet | |

Meaning If the syllables associated with 'Hakar' and 'Sakar' are eliminated from the word *Soaham*, then the liaison of the remaining vowels produce the sound of *Oam*.

The *Sadhana* of *Hamsa Yoga* is of foremost importance in the spiritual practice of higher complexities. It has been regarded as an integral part of the *Sadhanas* aimed at awakening the *Kundalini* (the serpentine fire).

Vibharti Kundalisaktiratmanam Hamsayasrita |

— *Tantra Sar*

Meaning : The *Kundalini* power rides on the *Hamsa* to pierce into the subtle centre of the conscious body.

In the idols and visual descriptions of the Goddess *Gayatri*, she is shown as sitting on a *Hamsa* (Swan). This depiction implies that the power of *Gayatri* is realised through the medium and support of *Hamsa (Yoga)*.

As such the *Hamsa* (Swan) is regarded as a clean and sacred bird which is wise in selecting proper and pure meal even from a heap of rubbish in its food. Because of these qualities, the word *Hamsa* is also used in the *Sanskrit* literature to represent discerning intellect, purity, fairness and reasoned discreteness. By these literary interpretations, the representation of *Hamsa* as a vehicle of *Gayatri*, indicates that, for a successful *Upasana* of *Gayatri*, the *Sadhaka's* life should be pure, balanced and endowed with

moral values, prudent thinking and righteous conduct. However, in the context of the *Sadhanas* of spiritual elevation, the representation of *Gayatri* as riding on a *Hamsa* most appropriately implies the role of *Hamsa Yoga* for the realisation of the pre-eminent power of *Gayatri*.

The ancient Indian scriptures also mention a story in which Goddess *Parvati* once asks Lord *Shiv* about a *Yoga* that could offer all kinds of *Siddhis* (attainment of supernatural faculties and talents). Then God *Shiv* replies—

*Ajapa Nama Gayatri Yoginam Moksadayini;
Asyah Sankalpa Matrena Sarvepapaih Pramucyate.*

Meaning : *Ajapa* (*Ajapa Jap*) of *Gayatri* bestows *Moksha* on the *Yogis*. A determined commencement of this *Sadhana* itself can eradicate the evils in the *Sadhak's* character.

Hearing the above, Goddess *Parvati* expressed her desire to know the methods of performing this unique *Yoga*. God *Shiv* told her that—

*Deho Devalayo Devi, Jivo Devah Sadasivah;
Tyajedajnananirmalya, Soaham Bhavena Pujayet.*

Meaning : “O, *Devi*!” (addressing to *Parvati*), “The body of an individual is itself a temple in which the God resides in the form of the *Jiva*. After cleaning this temple externally, and internally by removing the smog of ignorance and evil conduct, the internal God should be worshipped by the *Sankalp* of *Soaham*”.

The *Soaham Sadhana* is a *Yoga Sadhana* of *Gayatri*. This can be performed continuously along with each breath throughout the life.

Svansaniska Sakale Hi Hakaram Pariki Rtyate;

Punah Pravesa Kale Cha Sakarah Procyate Budhaih.

Meaning : *Hakar* is pronounced when we breathe out and *Sakar* when we breathe in. Concentration on this continuous flow of *Nada* is the *Soaham Sadhana*.

The scholars of *Shastras* mention that the eternal sense of self recognition of the soul in the deepest inner centre of the *Jiva* triggers the *Ajapa Jap* of '*Soaham*' on its own. (This latent *Jap* is manifested in the sound of *Soaham*, in each breath throughout the life of the *Jiva*).

God *Shiv* is described (in the scriptures) to have said that, repeated cycle of *Hamsah...* (*hamso...*, *hamso.....*) appears as *Soaham...* *Soaham* in the continuous flow of *Prana*.

*Hamso Hamso Hamityevam Punara Vartanam
Krama;*

Soaham Soaham Bhavennunamiti Yogavidoviduh.

Meaning : The repeated pronunciation of '*ham-sah*' '*ham-sah*' in a continuous manner is heard in the reverse cyclic order as '*Soaham*' '*Soaham*'. This is what the *Yogis* have experienced.

Dissolving the individual self in the cosmic self sacrificing self interests for the divine

welfare of others; experiencing the presence of *thee* in each and every reflection of one's own being, is the great *Sadhana* of *Soaham*. As the *Sadhaka* progresses in the determined practice of evacuating the ego and selfishness with the '*Ham*' sound of each breath and inscribing the divine virtues with its '*So*' sound, he experiences the enlightenment of his intellect and expansion and elevation of his attitude towards life. A corresponding development of his personality takes place as a consequence. This way he attains the ideal goal of any spiritual *Sadhana*, which is the refinement of personality to endow it with divine qualities. The *Sadhaka* thereby gains all round success in the physical as well as in the spiritual domains of his life as a human being.

The inspiration of *Soaham Sadhana* describes the unification of the *Jivatma* with the *Brahm*, of the individual consciousness with the supreme omnipresent, eternal consciousness. It helps the *Sadhaka* realise '*Soaham*' (*so* + *aham*) that is, '*Thou* is I' and 'I am (the soul is) *Thou*, the Almighty, omniscient *Brahm*.' The *Sadhaka's* ideal of life, his beliefs, convictions, thoughts and emotions are edified by this realisation. All living beings appear to him as his near and dear ones and his own self transmutes into angelic one, by his noble deeds, oriented towards the divine welfare of all.

The *Soaham Sadhana* liberates the devotee from the worldly concerns and sorrows by illuminating his mind and heart with the glow of self recognition and by awakening the latent strength of his inner self. The basic causes of the decline of humane ideals, shattering of mutual trust and love and increase in crimes, exploitations and agonies seen in the world today, lie in the egotism, unending row of passions, ambitions and cravings and the selfish and possessive attitude of the people in general. In view of this fact, the practice of *Soaham Sadhana*, because of its potential of limitless expansion of the self (by cultivating the altruist attitude and rousing the divinity of the character) indeed promises a boon of happy, progressive and peaceful life for the entire world.

In the *Soaham Sadhana*, as stated earlier, the *Nada* of the *Mantra* 'Soaham' is 'heard' (experienced) within each breath by the 'ears' of the subtle body without performing any *Jap*. Hence, it is also defined as the *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri*, that, which arouses and liberates the *Prana* (in the ocean of *Mahaprana*). This is also called a *Sadhana* of *Prana Gayatri*.

Even the self inspired, continuous *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri* performed naturally (along with each respiration cycle) without any effort is said to provide complete protection to the *Prana* and offers spiritual knowledge and *Siddhis*

equivalent to that of other *Yoga Sadhanas*. Then, think about the impact of this *Ajapa Jap* if it is performed as a *Sadhana* with ascetic disciplines, *Sankalp* and *Shradhha* ! Indeed, this *Sadhana* (of *Soaham*) then, becomes the highest kind of spiritual *Sadhanas* because no branch of knowledge and science is found superior to the *Gayatri Vidya* and no *Jap* better than the *Jap* of the *Gayatri (Mantra)*. The *Shastras* therefore sing great *Shlokas* (paeanes) on the *Soaham Sadhana*.

According to the *Shlokas* of *Devi Bhagawat*, the *Hamsa Yoga* also incorporates the *Upasana* of all the divine powers. For instance, consider the following *Shloka*—

*Hamso Ganeso Vidhirevam Hamso,
Hamso Harirmayasca Sambhu;
Hamso Hi Jivo Gurudeva Hamso,
Hamso Mamatma Paramatma Hamsah | |
Ha Ka rena Vahiryati, Saka rena Vsiset Punan;
Hamsatmikam Bhagavati Ji vo Japati Sarvada:*

Meaning *Hamsa Yoga* consists of attracting the power of the trinity Gods, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiv* and of Lord *Ganesh*. The *Hamsa* is the ideal guide, *Hamsa* alone is the *Jiva*, as well as the *Brahm*, the soul as well as the omnipresent Supreme expression of *Thee*. /

The *Jiva* subconsciously performs the *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri*. The eternal energy of *Gayatri* enters with the *Sakar* and its reciprocating

power comes out with *Hakar*, during the continuous cycle of life. The following *Shloka* in *Sharda Tilak* states a similar implication.

*Hamsah Param Paresani Pratyamha Japate, Narah;
Mohandho Yo Na Ja Nati, Moksa Tasya Na Vidyate;
Ajapa Nama Gayatri, Yoginam Moksa Dayini.*

*Tasya Vijnana Matrena Narah Papai Pramuccayate;
Anaya Sa Drasi Vidya Ca Nayo Sa Draso Japah;*

Anaya Sadrasam Punyam Na Bhutam Na Bhavisyati.

Meaning : Every human performs a *Jap* of *Soaham* in each cycle of breathing. One who does not realise this is like a blind because he lives in the darkness of worldly illusions and he can never get *Moksha*. *Ajapa Gayatri* bestows *Moksha* on the *Yogis*. Anybody can get rid of all the sins and evils by attaining its knowledge and realising its power. There is no knowledge equivalent to it. No *Punya* is comparable with the prodigious benefits of this *Sadhana* has ever existed in the past or is likely to exist any time in the future.

God, the eternal father, always wants to uplift its children, the *Jivas*. But the *Jiva*, because of its ignorance, tries to shroud or malign the glow of God, existing in its inner self. Thus, there always exists a 'tug-of-war' between the two. God is not satisfied without finding the righteous movement of the *Jiva's* life. *Thou* shall remain consistent in *thy* absolute fairness and firm in *thy* system of creating destiny as per the

Jiva's actions at physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. God has to often punish the *Jiva* to remind the latter of *thy* eternal disciplines.

The *Jiva*, pervaded by *Maya*, thinks that by becoming a 'devotee' (worshipper) of God, he would receive the boons to fulfill all his just or unjust desires. He begs and thus 'insists' (by means of prayers) that God should bless him without testing whether he deserves it or not. If both (the God and the *Jiva*) remain firm in their attitude and approach, how would they come closer? How would the devotee feel *thou* presence? How would the *Jiva* meet his divine parent?

The philosophy of *Soaham Sadhana* contains a solution to the above problem. It naturally inspires the *Sadhaka* to devote himself completely by sacrificing his ego and desires and dissolving his identity in the divine affection of *thee*. He should purify his mind by the sacred shower of *Shraddha* and keep his mind and inner self fully under the control of the inspirations of God. He should discipline his life as per the rules of life set by the Almighty in terms of truth and honesty and compassion, love and respect for everybody. Once, the *Jiva* devotes himself to the Omniscient, it gets linked with the source of divinity and the latent presence of God in his own inner self begins to be felt and expressed.

Total sacrifice, even if it is from one side alone, is bound to result in unification because

there no longer remains any distance between the two ends, no separation or dissociation is possible thereafter. This is indeed the secret of true love and the same principle applies to the perfection of the *Sadhaka's* devotion. When the fuel of wood is sacrificed in the fire, it no longer remains a fuel, but becomes fire itself. When a drop of water falls in an ocean, the tiny existence of the former instantly acquires grand expansion. If salt is dissolved in water, or sugar in milk, the two lose their separate identities and unify with the respective solvents to become one with them.

The above kind of unity between the *Jiva* and the *Brahm* is described in the *Vedanta* teachings as the ultimate goal of the journey of life, the goal of absolute existence. This is what is regarded as the state of *Advaita*. In this state of the inner self, the *Sadhaka* realises his true identity as, *Sivoham*, *Sacchidanandoham*, *Tatwamasi*, *Ayamatma Brahm*, 'my soul is everything.... it is the absolute good; it is a reflection of the *Brahm*.....'. This realisation is termed in spiritual literature as, 'self recognition', 'uniting with *thee*' or '*Brahm Nirvana*', etc.

□

***Soaham Sadhana* : First Step Towards Self Realisation**

Soaham Sadhana or *Hamsa Yoga* is purely a spiritual type of *Pranayama*. This *Yoga* incorporates *Pranayama* alongwith some kind of *Nada Yoga* and *Dhyan Yoga*.

The *Pranayama* phase consists of sitting in a stable posture of *Sukhasan* or *Padmasan*; in a physically and mentally calm condition; keeping the spinal cord in an erect position and taking deep breaths in a consistent manner. The erect position of the spinal column supports straight flow of the *Prana*. Like other *Pranayamas*, breathing at a slow pace is supposed to be the best for this one too. Breathing should be so deep that the lungs would be totally filled with oxygen after inhalation. The duration of either kind of *Kumbhaka* should not be more than half that of the *Rechaka* or *Puraka*.

While breathing in, the concentration should be focused at the subtle sound (of 'so') produced by the air flow through the nostrils. During the *Antah Kumbhaka* it should be centred inside the body. Meditating on the flow of the 'inhaled' *Prana* through the endocrine centres like the *Shatachakras* or the *Granthis* along the spinal column is extremely useful because it helps focusing the consciousness at these specific extra sensory nodal points and thus accelerating the vibrations of latent energy currents.

While breathing out, the *Sadhaka* should concentrate on the subtle sound of *Ham* (produced by the out flow of the air) and expel the ego, selfishness, vices and infirmities with it. In order to make this activity more effective than mere imagination, the *Sadhaka* has to be very careful in his day-to-day life too. All the glamour and passions associated with '*Ham*' ('I' - the ego) and its narrow perspectives are to be left despite the intense pressures of worldly benefits and fears. When an oil lamp is kindled, its flame assumes predominance and the oil slowly loses its own identity and transfers its existence in the form of light through the medium of the flame. Similarly, in the *Soaham Pranayama*, the existence of *ham* (the ego) is immersed in *so* (that, the omnipresent *Brahm*) through the medium of controlled breathing and support of mental *Sankalpa*.

Perception of the subtle sounds, of '*So*' and '*Ham*' which are 'dissolved' in the in and out flow of the breaths, correspond to a practice similar to the *Nada Yoga*. Meditation upon these sounds and the associated paramount feelings of attracting the *Mahaprana* and releasing the ego and ignorance is indeed a superior type of *Dhyan Yoga* too.

The inherent unity between the soul and the *Brahm* is described in the scriptures of *Vedanta* as the principle of *Advaita*. The *Shastras* like the *Panchadashi* present the details on the

philosophy and implementation of this principle. The *Hamsa Yoga* is a *Sadhana*, a spiritual experiment for the realisation of this theory.

The *Gayatri Mantra* consists of twenty four *Sanskrit* letters compiled in the three *Vyahrtis* after "Oam". The continuous *Jap* of this *Mantra* by the subconscious mind is a *Sadhana* of the *Prana*, which results in the merging of the individual consciousness with the *Mahaprana*. This effectuates the linkage of the individual self with its origin, Omnipresent *thy* and thus leads to the realisation of the *Brahm*. The subtle but spontaneous *Jap* of *Soaham* occurring with each breath is the same type of *Sadhana* of *Prana* and gives equivalent spiritual benefits. Therefore, the *Soaham Sadhana* is called the *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri*.

Every *Sadhaka* of *Gayatri* has to perform the *Soaham Sadhana* (*Hamsa Yoga*) before entering into the highest phase of the spiritual *Sadhana* of *Gayatri*. Thus 'Soaham is the *Beej* (essence) of the *Gayatri Mantra* and its *Sadhana* is said to be essential for the ultimate success in the *Sadhana* of *Gayatri*.

Among the twenty four incarnations (*Avatars*), of God *Vishnu* as described in the *Puranas*, one is the *Hamsavatar*. The *Hamsa Yoga* may also be regarded as the *Upasana* of this manifestation of the Almighty. Success of this *Yoga* elevates the *Sadhaka* upto the states of '*Raj Hamsa*' and '*Parama Hamsa*', which represent

the highest realm of spiritual illumination and sainthood.

As mentioned earlier, the *Hamsa* (Swan) is regarded as a symbol of sanctity, fairness and discreetness. It is described in the *Shastras* that if a *Hamsa* is given a mixture of milk and water, it would suck only milk and leave back the water content. That means, it has a natural tendency to recognise and select the noblest, the supreme. When a *Sadhaka* develops a prudent acumen to adopt the righteous tendency in all aspects of life, he is said to have reached the level of a '*Hamsa*'.

The bird *Hamsa* (*swan*) is spotless white. The rhetoric representations associated with its name imply that the lives of the *Sadhaks*, who attain the title of (that is, who reach the state of) '*Hamsa*', should also become absolutely clean and sacred in all dimensions of life. The personality of such a *Sadhaka* fits well in the simile given by saint *Kabir*: "*Daas Kabira Jatan Se Odhi, Jyon Ki Tyon Rakh Dini Chunariya*" which implies, "A saintly *Jiva* wears the 'sheet' of life with scrupulous care and leaves it as it is (that is, naturally pure) in the end".

It is said in the *Shastras* about the *Rajhamsa* (king *Swan*) that it lives in the *Mansarovar* and selects only real beads from the water of this holy pond and leaves out the sea animals and insects. This description symbolises the character of the *Sadhakas*, who are spiritually enlightened upto

the '*Rajhamsa*' level. As such, in the world around, we might sometimes find the bird *Swan* eating the insects and rubbish; but we should note that the descriptions in the *Shastras* are rhetoric, so these should be interpreted in the right perspective. The above qualities in fact imply that an ideal '*Hamsa*' would prefer to die but he would not eat anything except the pure beads. Similarly, a spiritually refined person, who has reached the status of '*Rajhamsa*', would always choose the righteous path of absolute truth and stand by the noble ideals of morality even if he has to face challenging difficulties and adversities in his life.

The 'sound' of *Soaham* is said to have originated from the combination of *Prakrati* (the eternal power of creation) and *Purusha* (the Supreme Creator). The *Puranas* describe that the inspiration to become many from the lonely state of being just one, generated within the *Brahm*, gave rise to the existence of the *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. The *Prakriti* was *Jada* and the *Purusha* was *Chetan*. Combination of the two resulted in the creation of the Universe, the Nature and the manifestation of life. The commingling of the *Prakriti* and *Purusha* resulted in the expression of *Sabda Brahm*. The *Nada* produced by this cosmic impulse was reflected in the *Nada Brahm* as the eternal sublime vibrations of *Omkar*.

When the unity of the *Prakriti* and *Purusha* generated the sentient *Chetan* components, then

the *Jada* component of the *Jiva* (the *Prakriti*) disappeared. Only the '*Sah*', the *Parabrahm*, the *Purusha*, the eternal source of *Chetan* and the '*Ham*', the *Jiva*, an expression of the *Parabrahm* in *thy* creation, remained thereafter. The '*Sah*' and the '*Aham*' are recognised separately under the *Dvaitya* philosophy. The *Advaitya* theory defines their conjugation as eternal because, according to this philosophy, the *Jiva* is nothing but a reflection of the multiple manifestations of the *Parabrahm*. This absolute unity is represented in '*Soaham*' (*sah* + *aham*). Thus, the *Soaham* has originated and is eternally existing along with the omnipresent *Nada* of *Omkar*.

The *Soaham Sadhana* provides an answer to the natural quest of the *jiva* - "what am I?", as "I am *Parabrahm*, I am *thee*, I exist in everything.." The in-depth understanding and insightful analysis of this fact by the *Rishis* had given rise to the philosophies of '*Brahm Darshan*', '*Atm gyan*', '*Tatra gyan (Jnan)*', '*Atra gyan Vyavahar gyan*, etc. and hence to the gamut of the ancient scriptures of Indian philosophy and culture.

Without self recognition, a human being does not really understand the origin and purpose of his life, its dignity and duties. Like a child he gets attracted towards every toy and every new scene and remains engrossed in unnecessary activities. A grown up person also,

throughout his life, remains involved in the aspirations and actions which are triggered by the agile mind and the passions of the other sense organs. Life of a human largely remains confined to his body, physical comforts and the affections of people associated (as relatives and friends) with it. His thoughts and emotions also emanate from and move around within the domains of these limited aspects of life and the knowledge of the world within the peripheries of his gross perceptions and illusive imaginations, in general.

If one pays little attention to what happens to a dead body, one would definitely feel that there is something else, the *Prana*, without which, the body cannot survive even for a tiny part of a second. The biodegradation of the body begins soon after death. The same 'body', which was so dear to the people around when it was recognised as 'so and so person,' becomes 'untouchable', moments after death. Unless processed chemically, buried or cremated, this body starts stinking and deteriorates fast. If left open, it would be eaten away in a short while by the germs within it or by the vultures, jackals, kites etc. from the outside.

What is that which exists as the *Prana*, the source of consciousness, which keeps the body alive and gives it the identity of a person? Few of us really pay serious attention to this question. Most of the time we remain occupied in the

activities, associated with the worldly pleasures, cravings and worries and the fulfilment of the emotional, mental and sensual desires generated by materialistic attachments and ego. Those inclined towards religion and spirituality although know that they are souls and not just the physical body; their knowledge often remains a bookish one or as an abstract concept or theory unless it is contemplated thoroughly, inscribed in the deeper domains of faith and realised in practice.

The religious and spiritual scriptures always preach that, 'Know yourself,' 'Do what is your real duty towards the soul', etc. Without adept understanding of the answers and their implementation in conduct, one cannot recognise the path of his own welfare and the true goal of his life. For a practical implementation of the teachings of the *Shastras*, one has to bear in mind and thoroughly comprehend that the soul and the body are two different entities of a living being. The relation between the two is that of a rider and a vehicle or a craftsman and his tools. The body is only a medium for the expression and activities of the soul.

The requirements of the body and the soul are quite different. The body needs comforts, luxuries and respectful attention of others. Its pleasures tend towards the self obsessive activities. But the soul is neither affected by any material or worldly possessions and comforts, nor

by scarcity and hardship. It is the body and the mind, attached with the desires and passions that experience the pleasures or pains. The feelings of content of the sense organs and the mind are momentary. Once the desired things or pleasures are attained, the charm of the same disappears soon; the enthusiasm ceases and the thirst for novel taste, newer achievements begin to grow up; and so on; the vicious cycle continues throughout the life and eventually the life ends in a 'yet to be satisfied state'.

Most people do not realise that human life is the best creation of the God and it is bestowed on a *Jiva* with a very specific purpose. Even those, who are attracted towards evolution of the inner self often do it at a superficial level. Some people think reading or listening to the religious scriptures and performing some rituals of worshipping is sufficient for spiritual elevation. They should note that such actions are only symbolic and supportive and do not lead to the 'visualisation' of the existence of the soul as different from the body and the mind.

The process of spiritual awakening and inner contentment of the soul begins only when the piety, generous attitude, compassion and altruist activities of social welfare become natural part of one's thinking and routine cores. The door of the ecstatic beauty of our soul opens only when our life, rather than being confined to the material attainments, comforts and sentient

pleasures, enjoys helping others, sharing love and compassion with everybody around and working for a noble cause of enlightening the society by the righteous knowledge and excelled expansion of moral ideals.

The science of spirituality and the *Yoga Sadhanas* cannot be understood or employed, just by some physical actions or oral recitations. The incorporation of the associated principles in one's deeds and corresponding changes in one's intrinsic tendencies, emotions and thoughts is essential. Without the latter, the so called spiritual and religious activities will be nothing more than engrossment of the mind and the body, in a novel 'play' or activity.

The natural interests of the soul are rooted in compassion, generosity and altruist deeds of selfless service for the betterment of all. These cannot be fulfilled without sacrificing the selfish interests of the body. One has to learn the limit and restrain the needs and desires of the body before proceeding towards the evolution of his true 'self'. One could attempt it in gradual steps so that the body could easily adopt the new lifestyle. The training of the mind to face the 'hardships' of austerity and asceticity is the most difficult task. This could be achieved only if one has sincere faith, aspirations and strong will to become a better human, an ideal child of divinity.. One's convictions and *Sanskaras* as per their nature are predominant in either supporting the

spiritual conditioning of mind or suppressing and diverting it from self restrain and altruist way of life.

Dedicated meditation on the separate existence of the soul, the mind, the *Prana* and the body helps refining the *Sanskaras* and righteous conditioning of the mind and body for accepting the guidance of the soul. The *Soaham Sadhana* is supposed to be the best for this purpose. It can easily be performed with other kinds of *Upasanas* and *Sadhanas* and essential activities of a normal routine. This special *Pranayama* can be practised at any free time (of about 20 to 30 minutes at a stretch), during the day. However, it is most fruitful if performed at a neat and quiet place, at regular interval of time, everyday, in a relaxed and fresh state of the body and the mind. The larger the duration of this practice with thorough mental concentration, the faster will be its effect.

The gross body, *Pranik* or the subtle body and the soul, each is given a due importance in this *Sadhana*. As stated earlier, this *Sadhana* is beneficial for the body, mind and the soul because the oxygen, *Prana* and the *Mahaprana* acquired with each breath in this practice is an ideal food for the gross, subtle and causal bodies respectively. The combination of these sources induces energy and courage, enlightens the intellect with the understanding of the ideals of humane life and inspires the inner self with the

nectar of *Sraddha* and the spiritual charge of absolute truth.

The *Sadhana* of *Soaham* is very simple and riskless. If the feelings of 'my soul is a creation of divinity, a part of the *Brahm*', become natural like the sound of '*Soaham*', generated with each breath, and, if the hearty inspirations for austere and altruist life become stronger, one might rest assured that his practice is no longer a 'mere physical exercise' or a 'ritual', rather, it has become a proper *Sadhana* and has begun the process of spiritual elevation.

The above state could be reached and the *Sadhaka* may progress towards its *Siddhi* if he disciplines his daily routine by self restrain and assiduity and broadens his domain of love, compassion, co-operation and sacrifices. Once his selfishness confined to his body, family and near and dear ones, expands upto the level of selflessness and this transition begins to show up in his character and deeds, his *Soaham Sadhana* may be regarded as having matured in the right direction, ensuring ultimate success.

□

Soaham Sadhana

High Realms of *Prana* Yoga

When the air blows through small holes, its friction gives rise to specific sounds. The musical sound of a flute is also generated by the same effect. When stormy breeze flows through the bamboo forest, it sounds like a sharp *Swara* of a flute. When high speed wind passes through thick field of trees, their friction with the latter also produce such sounds. The nostrils in a human body are like the holes in a narrow tube, as in a flute, for instance.

The in and out flow of air through these tiny holes of the nose produces typical sounds. Deep breathing at a slow pace intensifies this sound produced by the friction of the air with nasal walls. This sound resembles that of the word 'So' during inhalation and as that of 'Ham' during exhalation. These sounds are subtle and cannot be heard loudly by the ears. Nevertheless, these specific sounds can be 'perceived' through harmonising the breaths and meditating on each breath in an otherwise silent atmosphere.

As described earlier, the practice of *Soaham Sadhana* (or *Hamsa Yoga*) involves a *Pranayama*, in which the *Sadhak* takes deep breathing at a slow and consistent pace and concentrates on the above mentioned sounds. The stability of meditation, strength of will-power

and emotional intensity of the *Sadhak*, in attracting the omnipresent current of divine *Prana* and throwing away the self obsession and weaknesses, play the major role to make it a high level *Pranayama Sadhana*. As it involves the perception (realisation) of the sublime and self generated sounds, this *Sadhana* is equivalent to *Nada Yoga*. The internal feelings of unification of the self with the *Brahm* enable a great spiritual practice, *Ajapa Jap* of *Gayatri*.

While performing this superior *Pranayama*, the *Sadhaka* should first sit quietly and experience (not just imagine) that a glowing ocean of the divine *Prana* is spread all around him. This is the first phase of meditation. With all his will-power, he should then begin the *Sadhana* by taking a deep breath and feeling that with the subtle sound of 'So', *thy* power of the supreme source of consciousness has infused deep inside in the form of the divine *Prana*. The *Sadhaka* should retain the breath for a while and feel that with the subtle sound of 'a', this *Mahaprana* has been absorbed by the inner centres of his body and is illuminating and energising the whole body, mind and the heart (emotional centre). Then, while breathing out, the *Sadhaka* should again use all his will-power to expel his entire ego, anger, lust, jealousy, selfishness and other vices and infirmities alongwith the sound of 'Ham'..... Stopping the breath for a few

seconds, he should then feel that all the discarded malign assimilation have been waned out in the surroundings and will never return to him. He should repeat this cycle several times. Continuous practice with zeal trains the *Sadhaka* in performing this *Sadhana*, with perfection.

Initially, the *Sadhaka* should perform this *Sadhana* for about 5 to 10 minutes everyday. This should be preceded by a meditation (as described above) of about 15 minutes duration and followed by a contemplation phase of about the same duration. In this last phase, the *Sadhaka* should feel that the divine power has blessed him with *thy* grace and that the supreme consciousness has bestowed divine qualities and potentials on him. He should concentrate upon different components and inner cores of the body and feel that each element is illuminated by absorption of the divine energy. He should also contemplate that he has devoted himself to the God and that all his sense organs, mind and the intellect are now in the hands of that Almighty.

Each of his five organs of perceptions and the five organs of external activities will now be controlled according to the divine disciplines. The activities of vision, hearing, smelling and tasting will be processed as per the directions of the soul. The mouth will not eat or say anything that is not worth the austere discipline. The

genitals will not be misused for mere carnal pleasure, instead, these organs will be involved in sexual activities only when the reproduction of the offspring becomes necessary to fulfil the need of some noble purpose. The limbs would not indulge in any activity that goes against the altruist duties of a responsible person. The thoughts and emotions would always be inspired by the grace of God.

The mind will not allow any thought, which is away from virtuous ideals; the intellect will not take any unfair, selfish, hasty, superficial or immature decision. The heart (emotional core) will not generate worldly ambitions or desires below the dignity of human being as a beloved child of *thee*.

The meditation and contemplation phase attached with the *Pranayama* of *Soaham* are most important parts of this *Sadhana*. The *Sadhak's* *Shraddha* and *Vishwas* should be so intense that these will not become mere mental exercises or entertaining activities; rather, these would 'shake' and 'stir' the entire personality. The positive effects of proper performance of these parts of the *Soaham Sadhana* would certainly be reflected in the *Sadhak's* behaviour and actions in daily life. The *Sadhaka*, living in the same physical body would then become a divine being instead of remaining an ordinary mortal being or a social and intelligent animal.

The *Soaham Pranayama* is an excellent auto suggestive experiment of psychology. After making an attempt to exhale all the weaknesses and sins with each breath, the *Sadhaka* indeed feels extremely relaxed and gets the peace of mind. The feeling of receiving the *Mahaprana* with a breath increases his inner strength and deepens his *Shraddha* and self confidence, which, in turn, becomes the motive force for the ascetic control of his body and mind and the source for his psychological and spiritual enlightenment. The inherent principle of *Soaham* gets inscribed in the inner self of the *Sadhaka* as his *Shraddha* deepens. This successively takes his life to the levels of that of the great personalities, sages and angels.

As stated earlier, ordinary *Pranayamas* offer the benefits of increasing the vital energy and mental creativity. The higher level *Pranayamas* are associated with meditation and will-power and thus result in enhancing the internal motive force, spiritually refining the mental and emotional status and awakening some extraordinary potentials. The *Soaham Sadhana* is a *Pranayama* of supreme level as it also involves *Shraddha* and *Sankalp* of the *Sadhaka* and therefore, gives rise to the 'stirring' of the reservoir of the individual consciousness and leads to 'merging' the latter in the ocean of divine consciousness.

The supernatural effects of *Soaham* are also highest among those of the other spiritual experiments of *Pranayamas*. Ten major and fiftyfour minor, total sixty four *Pranayamas* are described as the *Sadhanas* of *Prana Yoga*. Of these, the *Soaham* is supposed to be paramount. The penetration and awakening of the *Shat Chakras* becomes possible by this *Sadhana*.

When the *Mahaprana* is 'inhaled' through a breath during the *Soaham Sadhana*, it first reaches the *Agya Chakra* and gets divided into two components, one in the form of a divine emotional charge and the other as vital energy. The first one reaches the heart, the emotional core and from there flows towards the different nuclei of conscious perception inside the body. It illuminates every corner of the inner body, with the eternal glow of *Sat* (absolute truth) and removes the *Asat* (the darkness of ignorance and falsehood). The sublime currents of *Prana* reach the backside of the brain from the *Agya Chakra* and enter the spinal column, which subtly contains the flow of the *Brahm Nadi*.

The bio electrical currents of the *Ida* and *Pingala Nadis* flow along the two sides of the *Brahm Nadi* and, starting from the pituitary and pineal glands, they reach the *Muladhar Chakra*. These currents flow back from this bottom *Chakra* after their coherence in the *Susumna*. The six extra sensory energy centres, the *Shat*

Chakras, are like eddy currents in the flow of the *Brahm Nadi*. These *Chakras* are said to be the source through which the individual self can traverse beyond the limit of time and space. These contain the sublime ocean of supernatural powers.

The *Kundalini*, which is affirmed in the spiritual sciences of *Yoga* as the source of all physical and spiritual potentials, can be reached only by penetrating the *Shat Chakras*. The straight flow of the *Prana* through these *Chakras* is essential for 'electrifying' the latent 'coil' of the *Kundalini*. This requires immense pressure of *Prana* under adept control. The flow of the vital energy component of *Prana* generated during the *Soaham Pranayama* and the *Sankalp* of the *Sadhaka* associated with this *Sadhana* provide the right combination for straight traversing through the *Shat Chakras*, penetrating the three *Granthis* and eventually activating the *Kundalini*.

Another spiritual benefit of the *Soaham Pranayama* is the perception of sublime and divine fragrances. Smelling is a *Tanmatra* (power of perception) associated with the basic element of air. Therefore, the practice for control and attainment of extraordinary potential of this (the *Gandh*) *Tanmatra* fall under the *Sadhanas* of higher level *Pranayamas*. The *Soaham Sadhana* can expand the *Gandh Tanmatra* so much that

the *Sadhaka* may smell the infra subtle and long distant fragrances. This power then becomes a medium to recognise and experience the divine elements by their unique fragrance. When the *Sadhaka* is progressing well in the *Soaham Sadhana*, he often smells some divinely soothing fragrances. This is an indication of supernatural developments.

Shrines and the place of *Upasana* and *Sadhana* are often endowed with some incenses (like *Dhoop* or *Agarbatti*) or flowers. Their aroma induces a soothed feeling in mind and helps its focused concentration. Such fragrances also support rapid development of the *Gandh Tanmatra* during the initial stages of the *Pranayamas*. If the *Sadhaka* meditates on the fragrance along with the exercise of deep breathing, then, after a little practice, with determination, he would be able to smell the same, pleasant aroma even when he comes out and goes away from the room of *Upasana*. Eventually, he would begin to smell it during his regular *Sadhana* even without having any external means or arrangement of creating such incense. This is an indication of the awakening of the latent potential of the *Gandh Tanmatra*. Performing a higher level *Pranayama* like *Soaham* at this stage boosts this development and gradually gives rise to a supernatural power of extrasensory smell.

The importance of *Gandh Tanmatra* is well experienced in nature. Many animals and insects possess refined power of smelling. This potential is indeed an essential mode of communication, search for food, sensing an enemy's presence and transmitting or receiving the signals for mating (to or from the opposite sex), etc. in many birds, animals and insects. Many creatures also use this sense to know the weather conditions in advance. The trained dogs use this faculty to trace the criminals or the lost things or persons. In human beings, this faculty normally stands much below in the order of importance as compared to the faculties of thinking, vision, speech and hearing. Once, the hidden power of smelling is activated, this dominates over all other normal faculties and it can be focused by the *Sadhaka* for sensing the supernatural signals and experiencing the unknown, which exists far beyond the grasp of human intelligence. The evoked *Tanmatra* of *Gandh* enables the *Sadhaka* to feel the presence of the divine powers and receive their messages. Success of the *Soaham Sadhana* also bestows such extra sensory potentials of the *Gandh Tanmatra* on the *Sadhaka*.

As the *Soaham Sadhana* also deals with the *Swaras (Nada)* produced in breathing; so, it can give the benefits of a *Swara Sadhana* too. The states of the human body and mind are governed by the extent of the positive and negative

biochemical currents, which flow through the *Ida* and *Pingala Nadis* with the *Surya* and *Chandra Swaras*. By harmonising the breathing patterns in a *Pranayama*, one can control his *Surya* and *Chandra Swaras* and hence, the functioning of the body and the mind.

The higher level *Pranayamas* like the *Soaham Sadhana* induce the power of *Mahaprana* in this activity and thus, help the *Sadhaka* to know the latent condition of his inner self. This, in turn, helps him to decide, 'what should be done and when' in order to get the best results. The otherwise unknown or latent information also becomes accessible by such a *Yoga Sadhana* of the *Swaras* of *Prana*.

□

Emotional Elevation by *Soaham Jap*

No *Upasana* could be completed without incorporating *Jap*, *Dhyan* (meditation) and *Bhavana*, emotional sincerity and linkage with the divine goal of *Upasana*. Literally speaking, *Upasana* means, sitting near by. Sitting near an idol or picture or to any other symbol of God, worshipping it with the help of flowers, sacred water, *Chandan*, *Aksata* etc. and by uttering some prayers and *Mantras* in front of it, might be useful for conditioning the mind for an *Upasana*. But, this alone does not serve the real purpose. Faith, in the divine disciplines, thorough pondering over the latter and adopting them in all aspects of life and development of the personality so as to nurture the virtues that uplift it towards the ideals of morality, near to the level of an angelic being are essential for performing an *Upasana*.

Faith in God becomes meaningful only when *thy* disciplines and the duties assigned by *thou* materialise in the devotee's life. Gradual elevation of the devotee's behaviour, qualities, thoughts, emotions and deeds is an indication of his proximity with his ideal (the deity, whose *Upasana* is being attempted by the devotee). This is indeed the criterion for judging the sincere performance of his *Upasana*.

Reading religious or morally inspiring literature, visiting the shrines and *Tirthas* and recalling their memories, these practices give support in restraining the agility of the mind and focusing it for meditation during an *Upasana*. Different methods of *Jap* and *Dhyan* are taught under different religious and spiritual schools. But , the *Sadhana* of *Soaham* can be regarded as a universal *Upasana*. Every human being can perform it.

As mentioned earlier, this universal *Sadhana* involves *Jap* (of *Soaham* through the breaths), *Dhyan* (meditation on the subtle sounds of 'So' and 'Ham') along with emotional depth (to contemplate and feel that 'I am an expression of the *Brahm*'). This is indeed an *Upasana*, of the limitless eternal expression of the *Brahm*. No rituals, no other methodology, need to be performed with this *Sadhana*. In this *Sadhana*, the devotee realises his closest link with *thee* by experiencing *thy* presence in the inner self. There could be no *Upasana* as complete as this experience is. By sincere practice and strength of internal faith and *Shraddha* such a realisation becomes easy and it intensifies as the *Soaham Sadhana* progresses.

Worshipping God's idols with the feelings like that of, "*Twameva Mata Cha Pita Twameva, Twameva Bandhuh Cha Sakha Twameva*—regarding *thou* as the mother, father, brother,

friend, the most near and dear one", is an ideal example of the *Dvaita Bhava* in *Upasana*. *Thyself* and the individual self are regarded as two and the latter devotes himself under the divine shelter of *thy* grace. The *Soaham Sadhana* is an *Upasana* of *Advaita Bhava*. Here, the devotee's self and the God are regarded as one, both being the integral reflections, manifestations of the *Brahm*.

If the *Swaras* of 'So' and 'Ham' are recognised separately and the existence of the divine powers of the *Brahm* and the conscious form of the individual self is experienced differently, then the *Pranayama* of *Soaham Sadhana* would correspond to a '*Dvaita Upasana*'. Moreover, if the presence of air, a *Jada* element of nature, is also felt along with the sounds of breathing then this would be a *Traite Bhava*. A *Sadhaka* is free to select any '*Bhava*' suitable to him during the initial practice and gradually reach the *Advaita* one, the state of total sacrifice and complete unification in sublimity.

The soul remains a *Jivatma* only till it is asleep under the illusions of *Maya*. The *Jivatma* recognises itself only as the body and the mind in ordinary humans. The spiritual charge of *Upasana* and *Sadhana* remove the mists of ignorance that shroud it. The inner self is then purified and enlightened as an eternal reflection of divinity. The emotional power of the *Sadhaka*

used in the *Advaita Bhava* of the *Soaham Sadhana* awakens and elevates the state of the soul to revive its original glory and its unity with the *Brahm* begins to reflect in the *Sadhaka's* personality.

Without the emotional depth, motivation and mental concentration, the feelings and meditations associated with the *Soaham Sadhana* would be like 'mere imaginations' or 'mental amusement and diversion' or 'day dreaming' and would not show any sign of progress.

Attracting the *Mahaprana* is not a physical or mental exercise. It can't be attained without the warmth and the urge of the inner most sentiments. The voice of the inner emotions could be powerful enough to be 'heard' by (to reach) the cosmic centres of *thy* expression only if the *Sadhak's* external and internal personalities are purified, disciplined and indeed devoted towards his *Shraddha* in the divine disciplines. Similar strength of the inner self and the will-power of the *Sadhaka* are required in the later phase of the *Soaham Pranayama*. The *Sadhaka* has to firmly uproot his viles, weaknesses and ego that are deeply rooted in his instincts as a *Jiva*.

If one sincerely performs the contemplation phase of the *Sadhana* of *Soaham*, the corresponding thoughts and emotions would be gradually assimilated in his memory and in

subconscious mind. His integrity of character and duty bound righteous activities will support rapid conditioning to accelerate the spiritual effects. Such a person would live the life of a true *Karm Yogi*. His actions will be inspired and controlled by the divine will. In worldly terms, he may be a farmer, a gardener, a labourer, a businessman, a doctor, a scientist etc, may have a lower, medium, high or no status in the socio economic system and live an utterly ordinary life. In either case, his spiritual refinement would excel progressively. All his deeds would be selfless and duty bound and hence, estimable like those of the great personalities, saints and sages.

King *Janak* used to live a duty bound life of an Emperor and was seen busy in related worldly affairs. But, because of his selfless, enlightened attitude, fair and discerning intellect and piety of emotions, he was considered a *Karm Yogi*. His knowledge was honoured as equivalent to that of a scholar of the *Brahm Vidya*.

If the *Soaham Sadhana* is being performed adeptly, its effects on enlightening the *Sadhaka's* emotions would be reflected in different facets of his life in terms of his righteous thinking, broad outlook and co-operating behaviour etc. Because of its direct connection with the emotional centre and the inner self, the *Soaham Sadhana* becomes a principal *Sadhana* for peerless spiritual evolution. □

The Soaham Sadhana of Saint Kabir

The history of the *Bhakti* age of the Indian literature highlights two major streams of development of devotional poesy and literature: (i) *Nirgun* (*Nirakar*), in which the God is realised as absolute, formless and omnipresent; and (ii) *Sagun* (*Sakar*), where the devotion is focussed at a specific form (idol) of a manifestation of God. Chronologically, the period of *Nirgun* is supposed to be earlier.

This was around 1500 A.D., when the saintly poet, *Kabir* had propagated religious reforms under the *Nirgun* philosophy of *Bhakti* (devotion). About one century later, the saintly poets like *Surdas*, *Tulsidas*, *Mira* etc. had inspired the flow of *Sagun Bhakti* in the form of *Vaisnava Bhakti* (devotion of God *Vishnu*). This had so firmly established the devotion of God *Ram* and *Krishna* in the hearts of the people that even today, a vast majority of the people of Indian origin are influenced by it. The *Sagun Bhakti* of *Ram* or *Krishna* is an integral part of these people's religious life.

The propagation of the *Nirgun* philosophy has the *Nath* School of asceticity in the background. Parallel to its line of devotion is the *Advaita* principle of *Shankaracharya* as taught by *Swami Ramanand* and, in slightly different form, having a characteristic affection of *Sagun*

Bhakti, by some Sufi philosophers. Saint *Kabir*'s preachings are mostly inspired by the *Advaita* theory of *Acharya Ramanand*. The importance he gave to *Yoga* and divine love may be attributed to the *Nath* and the *Sufi* schools respectively. The symbolic representation in his poetry is different from those of the *Sagun Bhakti*. In this context, his creations appear to be similar to those used by the *Sufi* saints.

According to the *Advaita* principle, *Brahm* is the only truth, the absolute existence. It is because of ignorance and illusions that the visible world appears to be a truth. This lack of knowledge is described as the influence of *Maya*, in the above theory. It is because of *Maya* that the *Jiva* feels the bliss and the pains of life and death. Whatever distinction one feels between the soul and the omnipresent *Brahm* is only a mist of *Maya*. The knowledge of the soul, self realisation is a must to eradicate the influence of *Maya*. The absolute realisation of the fact that the soul and the *Brahm* are one (*Advaita*), liberates the *Jiva* from the bonds of *Maya*.

Only the knowledge of the self, as a manifestation of the *Brahm* leads to the perfect realisation of the self. Attainment of this is essential for reaching the absolute state of *Soaham*. Saint *Kabir* has given specific importance to this aspect of *Soaham* with a devotional touch. He has described the

realisation of this state through *Yoga* and mysticism. For instance, review his following verse—

*Aradha Uradadha Mukhi Lago Kasu;
Suna Mandala Mahi Kari Paragasu.
Uhan Suraja Nahin chanda;
Adi Niramjanu Kare Ananda.
So Brahmandi Pind i So Janu;
Manasarovari Kari Isananu.
Soaham So Ja Kau Hai Japa;
Dhakala Lipata Na Hoi Puna Aru Papa.
Avarana Varana Dhama Nahin Chhama;
Avarana Paia Guru Ka Saya.
Tari Ne Tarai Avai Na Jai;
Suna Sahaja Mahi Rahio Samai.
Mana Madhe Jaun Je Koi;
Jo Bolai So Apai Hoi.
Joti Mantra Mani Asathiru Karai;
Kahi Kabira So Prani Tarai.*

Meaning In that absolute void (*Shunya*) horizon, which is surrounded only by *Akash*, thou (the *Brahm*) brilliance is kindled eternally. There is no sun or moon (or any source of light) but that source of absolute bliss is illuminated in its own glow. That *Shunya* is the entire cosmos and that alone is a *Pinda*. You should take a dip in that *Mansarovar* (holy pond in the *Himalayas*) and perform the *Jap* of *Soaham*. The *Jap* of *Soaham* is beyond the limits of sins or sacred virtues. The *Shunya* of its expansion contains no colours nor blanks; neither sunlight nor shadow (or 'no sunlight').

It cannot be traversed without the grace of a noble *Guru*. There, it (the power of awakened mind) cannot evade; it (the mind) cannot even move anywhere; it just remains absorbed in the *Shunya*. The words of the one, who knows this *Shunya* existing in the inner self, would, even if uttered casually, become the expressions of his inner voice. One who focuses his mind in deciphering the latent knowledge of this eternal sublime glow (of *Shunya*) could, according to poet *Kabir*, be blessed by absolute liberation from the worldly bounds.

In the above paragraph, saint *Kabir* has defined '*Soaham*' as, "The feeling of '*Soaham*' is supposed to be realised when nothing else remains (in the domain of cognition) except the *Brahm*; even self identity echoes as 'I am (the *Jiva* is) the *Brahm*'. Then the *Jiva* unites with his cosmic eternal source, the *Brahm*'".

In his descriptions of the *Soaham Jap*, *Kabir* has simplified the philosophical abstractions so that even common people could understand the principles of this *Sadhana* and attempt adopting them in practice. Instead of using the basis of *Advaita* philosophy he has explained the unity between the *Jiva* and the *Brahm* in the light of mysticism as the reflection of the cosmic soul in the individual soul. Here, the linkage between the *Brahm* and the *Jiva* is described as oneness instead of the unification (of the *Advaita* principle) by total non-existence of the latter. This

approach of mysticism expresses the sense of eternal affection contained in the meaning of 'Soaham'. The *Advaita* theory does not imply the absolute rejoice contained in the reunion of the soul with its own eternal form. In mysticism, the soul is said to be totally immersed in the eternal bliss of this commingling after the realisation of 'Soaham'.

A total sacrifice, like that of a rain drop in an ocean, of the soul is implied in the *Advaita* theory. Whereas the mysticism of *Kabir* allows the soul also to enjoy the feeling that, "I am (the soul is) meeting my eternal origin" In these rhetoric representations, the soul is described as conveying the cosmic soul that, 'wherever I see your glow, I find you and whenever I see this glow, I also start glowing.'

Here, the soul and the *Brahm*, despite being identified as one are also expressed as two; the absolute enjoyment of the soul in uniting with the *Brahm*, cannot be explained otherwise.

If the soul loses its existence (as implied in the *Advaita* philosophy), then 'who' would have the beatitude after meeting with the *Brahm*, the source of ultimate bliss? This doubt (of a common mind) does not have any place, if the *Soaham Sadhana* is described in the style of mystical representations. Here, 'Soaham' is realised as the absolute ecstatic state (of the soul) of ultimate bliss and divine peace.

The above kind of sense of absolute love (the linkage between the individual self and the divine self), may be inculcated by the *Nirguna* as well as *Saguna Upasana*. The realisation and expression of such a feeling of love becomes very easy if the devotee and the God 'exist' in some form, which can be visualised by the conscious mind. It is indeed easier in the *Saguna* devotion because here, the object of reverence is usually viewed in an ideal human like incarnation.

The songs sung in the devotion of Gods, *Ram* and *Krishna* can carry the (inner self of) devotee to a higher level of beatitude, which could be compared to that described in mysticism as the commingling of the soul with its eternal origin. For instance, consider the following verse of the saintly poet, *Tulsidas*—

*Prabhu Guna Suni Mana Haripihai,
Nira Nayanana Dharihai;
Tulasidasa Bhayo Rama Ko, Viswasa Prem Sakhi
Ananda.*

*Umagi Ura Bhari Hai |
Or, read the stanza of a song written by Meerabai—
Jinake Piya Paradesa Basata Hain,
Likhi Likhi Bheje Pati;
Mere Piya Mo Manhin Basata Hain,
Gunja Karun Dina Rati.*

The above devotional songs also generate the same feelings in the hearts of the devotees as those described in mysticism as the feelings of beatified bliss—*Ananda*.

There is no place for *thy* description in the *Nirguna* philosophy, as no form or manifestation of the *Brahm* is defined here. Then, what could be the basis of the divine love of the soul? In order to reflect this eternal affection in his verses of *Nirguna* devotion, *Kabir* has used some mystical linkages and intimate analogies. He has described the reverence and intimacy of the *Jiva* with the *Brahm* as that of a disciple with his *Guru*, King (master), parents, friends, spouse. etc., as can be seen in the following stanzas, of his poetry —

Govinda (God) in a Guru :

*Guru Govinda To Eka Hai, Duja Yahu Akara;
Apa Meti Jivata Marai, To Pavai Karatara.*

Hari (God) in a mother :

*Hari Janani Main Balika Tora;
Kahena Auguna Bakasahu Mora.*

Hari (God) in a husband:

*Hari Bhora Piva, Bhai Hari Mora Piva;
Hari Binu Rahi Na Sakai Mera Jiva.*

God, in a revered master:

*Kabira Prem Na Chakhiya, Chakhi Na Liya Sava;
Sune Ghara Ka Pahuna, Jyun Aya Tyun Java.*

Kabir had realised the *Brahm* in the form of boundless universal love. This is how he could reach the highest level of mysticism in his simple, easy to grasp poems of *Nirguna Bhakti* and could also represent in them, the deep aspect of the ultimate state of *Soaham*. □

The Bindu Yoga

Bindu Yoga is an important and simple *Sadhana* like the *Hamsa Yoga* and it also serves as a supplement to the latter and to many other spiritual practices because it deals with meditation upon the sacred glow of the supreme consciousness existing in the soul. In this *Yoga*, the *Sadhaka* first concentrates on the visible light through *Trataka* and by deepening his meditation gradually experiences the illumination of the inner body to visualise the manifestation of divine spark in it.

In the initial stage of this *Yoga*, the practice of *Trataka* is repeated. After sufficient progress in *Trataka*, the meditation on the spot of light becomes possible even without the help of any external source of light such as, a candle or a lamp.

The *Bindu Yoga* is a high level *Sadhana* which falls next to the *Soaham Sadhana*, in terms of the simplicity of practising in daily life. Likewise the *Soaham Sadhana*, everybody can perform it without any risk or difficulties of strict disciplines.

In the daily practice of the *Bindu Yoga*, the *Sadhaka* sits in a *Dhyan Mudra* (posture of meditation) in a calm state of the body and the mind with erect spinal cord and closed eyes. His legs are cross folded so as to make a posture of

Sukhasan or *Padmasan* and both the hands are kept on the lap with the right palm above the left (Lord *Buddha* is often depicted in this posture in his idols and pictures). The *Sadhaka* then concentrates to 'perceive' a bright spot in the central portion of the forehead right above the gap between the eye brows. Deeper core behind this centre is defined to be the location of the *Agya Chakra*. The *Sadhaka* should initially practise the *Trataka* in order to perform this meditation properly.

In the practice of a *Trataka*, the *Sadhaka* keeps a lamp (of oil or *Ghee*) or a candle in front of the eyes, at a distance of about 3 to 4 ft. and keeps the eyes half open. The position of the lamp is set up to the height of the *Sadhaka's* chest when he is sitting in the posture as described above, so that he could look at the tip of the flame without bending his head. The *Sadhaka's* eyes gaze steadily at the bright spot without blinking for few seconds. He then closes the eyes to visualise the image of this glow at the position of the *Agya Chakra*.

After few seconds, he again opens the eyes slightly and looks at the flame. The above process is repeated successively at increased stretch of times, ranging from two to twenty minutes per day. Initially, the light spot appears to be blurred and unstable once the eyes are closed. But, as the *Sadhaka's* concentration improves, it becomes

as bright and stable as the flame (or the object of light), kept in front of the *Sadhaka*.

The morning times are usually recommended for performing a *Trataka* because the mind and the body are both fresh during this period. The atmosphere is relatively cool during these hours of the day and thus, prevents the possibility of 'heating up' of the head due to deep engrossment and direct and continuous vision of light.

Once, the practice of *Trataka* is perfected, the *Sadhaka* begins to see a bright spot inside the centre of his forehead without the help of a lamp or any other source of light.....Upon reaching this state, the *Sadhaka* should concentrate on this bright spot seen in the *Agya Chakra* and feel that its glow is gradually expanding and illuminating the surrounding portion of the brain.

In an electric lamp, the central filament radiates first and its glow spreads in the surrounding gas and illuminates the entire globe of the bulb and the outside too. Vision (by closed eyes) of a similar spark and expansion of this 'mental radiance' is striven in this second phase (after *Trataka*) of the *Bindu Yoga*. The duration of this phase should be kept about 5 to 10 minutes initially which may be extended gradually along with the consecutive (third) phase to about 30 minutes.

In the third and the final phase of the daily practice of *Bindu Yoga*, the *Sadhaka* meditates on the feeling that the brain is fully illuminated and that the divine luminiscence is slowly pervading the entire body. No corner, no portion, inside the body is left unilluminated.

The gentle effulgence of the bright spot focused in the domain of the *Agya Chakra* intensifies with the *Sadhak's* mental engrossment and will-power. The duration of its consistent appearance and the domain of its light (aura) also increases correspondingly. The *Agya Chakra* is described in the *Yoga Shastras* as the sixth sense, the third eye or the divine eye. A third eye is usually depicted at this spot on the forehead in the pictures of the human like manifestations of God *Sankar (Shiv)* and Goddess *Durga*. According to a story in the *Puranas*, Lord *Shiv* had generated divine spark with immense effulgence by opening his third eye and had thereby 'charred' the prankish, erotic power of *Kamadev* into ashes.

In anatomical terms, the *Agya Chakra*, encompasses the pituitary and pineal glands. It has a subtle structure similar to that of an eye. This *Chakra* is an eye of the subtle body. By awakening this latent centre of subtle perceptions, one can visualise the otherwise invisible or hidden entities, the scenarios of the past events and those of the future happenings anywhere in the space.

With the help of the X-rays, we can photograph the internal parts of the gross body and also 'see' the belongings inside a closed metal box,' etc. The signals emitted from (or received by) the 'subtle eye' are much more powerful. If this 'eye' is opened (or enlightened by *thy* luminiscence), then one can use it for television without the help of any external or materialistic means. *Sanjay* is described in the *Mahabharat* to have been endowed with this power of supernatural vision. This 'third eye' shows the world that can never be seen by the ordinary eyes (of the gross body).

Apart from having the potential of supernatural vision, the awakened *Agya Chakra* also has the latent capacity to transmit the glow of its aura as a powerful spark. This radiant force can burn (diminish) all the illusions and evil assimilations that prevent the refinement of the subtle body (thoughts and sentiments) of the *Sadhak*. Thus, by successful practices of *Bindu Yoga*, all the *Kusanskars* and weaknesses can be destroyed completely with the help of the immense power of the spiritual effulgence emanated from the *Agya Chakra*.

Philosophically speaking, the awakening of the 'third eye' means arousing of the *Vivek*, pure and discerning intellect and prudent foresightedness, which exists in every human brain but in a dormant state and largely remains

latent and unrealised by most of the people. The activation of the hidden wisdom eliminates all ignorance and thus helps restrain and remove the blemishes of avarice, selfishness, possessive attachment, ego, jealousy and the agonies of the unlimited desires and mental complexities caused by them.

The *Puranas* mention that when the world became disorderly and the misdeeds of evil mentality severely disturbed the harmony of nature, then God *Shiv* performed his *Tandawa*.. When he was engrossed in this 'temblor' dance, he opened his third eye. The opening of this eye generated the devastating spark of the grand disaster. The complete destruction of the world was then followed by the creation of a new, orderly world of divine disciplines.

In personal and social life too, it sometimes become essential to destroy (discard or cleanse) the irrelevant, unmindful and untoward traditions or systems. Such a revolution turns out to be successful and leads to the betterment of life if it is guided by the foresighted prudence (the power of the subtle eye). The above story of the *Puranas* imply the essence of this fact in a rhetoric style. The present ailing state of humanity can be cured by transforming the mentality and attitude of the people upside down and by destroying the root causes, of unethical thinking, viz. the passions of selfishness, avarice,

lust and ego. This great revolution (*Vichar Kranti*) could be originated and driven upto ultimate success only by the trenchant power of righteous *Vivek*.

In the *Soaham Sadhana*, the meditation and contemplation phase consists of a determined feeling that each component of the body is being filled and energised by the *Prana*. Similarly, in a *Bindu Yoga*, the last phase of meditation correspond to visualising the glow of the divine flame (*Jyoti*) successively in the brain, heart, lungs and intestines etc. followed by the feeling that this brilliance has enlightened every constituent of the body from within. Every cell, every tendril is seen as sparkling with a reflection of this unique glow.

The Indian science of spirituality affirms four layers of the mind, *Man* (conscious mind), *Buddhi* (intellect), *Chitta* (subconscious and unconscious mind) and *Ahamkar* (the sense of 'being' in the individual self). In the final contemplation phase of the *Bindu Yoga*, all these four components of the inner self are meditated upon as fully absorbed in an ocean of *thy* light.

This feeling of illuminating the entire body and the inner self by the glow of the *Jyoti* inspired in the *Agya Chakra* results in an effect similar to that of the sunrise. The glow of the rising sun breaks the darkness of the night and spreads brightness in all directions; soon the world leaves

the drowsiness, rouses up and begins to work with a fresh charge of energy and enthusiasm in the bright morning. The *Sadhana* of *Bindu Yoga* enlightens and purifies the gross, subtle and the causal bodies of the *Sadhaka* and results in activating each instinct, each impulse of the self by the unique spark of the divine energy.

The word 'light', used in the science of spirituality corresponds not only to the glow and brightness of *Prana* but, it also implies an aura of knowledge and intellect and the energy of the enthusiasm of creativity. In the terminology of the physical science, the effect of light naturally generates illumination and heat. In spiritual sense, the term *Tap* (heat) means asceticity and creative use of *Prana* and the term *Prakash* (illumination) deals with in-depth knowledge, sound reasoning, prudence and foresighted intellect.

The use of 'bright spot' as an object of concentration in *Bindu Yoga* is indeed related with the aforesaid spiritual impact. As stated earlier, the physical light produced by fire of electricity is used only in the elementary training phase of *Trataka*. The use of an oil (or *Ghee*) lamp or a candle is most common in this practice. If one wants to use an electric bulb in place of a lamp, then a low power bulb emitting dim light would be recommended to avoid strain on the eyes. A blue coloured bulb, should be arranged

in this case, as its light would have a calm and cooling effect on the *Sadhak's* mind.

Concentration on the reddish yellow glow of the rising sun is excellent for *Trataka*. Full moon may also be tried as an object for meditation in this early phase of the *Bindu Yoga*. Regular practice with sincerity enables the *Sadhaka* to perform *Trataka* without the help of any external source of light. The glow of the bright spot (*Jyoti*) of light begins to appear on its own in the *Agya Chakra* after practising the *Trataka* for substantial amount of time with firm determination, devotion and mental engrossment. Initially, this *Jyoti* appears to be oscillating and shows different shades of light but gradually, it becomes stable and glows with a unique colour (usually silver white or like the glow of the interior of the rising sun) as this phase progresses steadily.

During the contemplation phase of the *Bindu Yoga*, the *Sadhaka* has to control the flow of his thoughts and sentiments in a single direction, namely, that the divine glow is pervading from the *Agya Chakra* and eliminating the darkness of ignorance, infirmities, illusions, fears and vices. Some people often doubt that this type of contemplation may disturb the concentration that ought to be maintained during a meditation based *Sadhana* like the *Bindu Yoga*. These people should note that total thoughtlessness is

required only in the practice of *Samadhi* or the *Laya Yoga*. In other spiritual *Sadhanas*, it is sufficient to control the thoughts within the domain of the focus and purpose of the *Sadhana*.

The holy river, *Ganga* originates from the *Himalayas* and ultimately reaches to its goal in the *Ganga Sagar*, because, despite several turns, hurdles, drastic variations in its current and disturbances due to the merging of other rivers etc., its flow does not lose its original direction. This example illustrates that it is not always the 'sharply focussed concentration', rather, the consistency of the direction of the flow of thoughts which is important in an effective meditation.

The amazing performances of the artists in a circus becomes possible only by their dedicated practices with deep, mental concentration. These experts have significant will-power but they are not *Yogis*. On the contrary, the saints like *Meera*, *Chaitanya*, *Surdas*, *Kabir*, *Ramakrishna Paramhansa* etc. who used to be in an emotionally charged state of devotion and used to sing and even dance in *Bhakti*, were equivalent to the *Yogis*, although, they had not practised any specific *Yogasan* or steady meditation. This is because the flow of the emotions of these saints and every activity of their life was naturally dedicated to the devotion of the omnipresent God.

In the *Sadhanas* like the *Prana Yoga*, *Hamsa Yoga* (*Soaham*) and *Bindu Yoga*, although the initial phase involves meditation, the more important and effective component is contemplation and realisation of the goal of the *Sadhana*. The prescribed domain for the flow of thoughts and emotions is quite wide here. The *Sadhaka* has to think and feel within this domain instead of focusing upon a single point. This flow churns the ocean of consciousness in the inner self and purifies its hidden core.

The *Saguna Upasana* is performed with emotional linkage with God. It involves worshipping *thou* manifestations, chanting or the prayers and devotional songs. There is no need of specific mental engrossment or meditation in such modes of *Upasanas*. In fact, it is the *Sadhak's* *Shraddha* and the depth of his devotional love that takes him to those high realms of spiritual attainments, which other *Yogis* might reach *via* the successful practice of deep trance (*Samadhi*).

While pondering through the heart during the (last phases of) *Sadhanas* like *Soaham* and *Bindu Yoga*, the *Sadhaks* often attain a state of *Yoga Nidra*. Although physically, it appears like a sleeping or an unconscious state, it is indeed a state of trance. It should be noted that the spiritual *Sadhanas*, if performed in a disciplined manner and with purity of heart (sentiments),

mind (thoughts) and body (deeds), would never cause the extreme effects of excitations or dullness (or sleep). The *Yoga Nidra* is a state of immersion of the individual consciousness in the supreme, eternal consciousness. Even if it is experienced for a few seconds, it brings enormous grace of that Almighty and excels the *Sadhaka* towards the goal of divinity.

The *Soaham Sadhana* and the *Bindu Yoga* are simple, riskless and easy to perform. The *Sadhak's* will-power, emotional strength and piety of character ensure that, if these *Sadhanas* are performed according to the guide lines laid above, the *Sadhaka* would receive immense bliss during the final phase of contemplation and realisation and gradually reach to the ultimate state of evoking the divinity dwelling in himself.

□

Glossary of Words used from the *Shastrik Literature*¹

Akasha The *Akasha Tatva* is the most evolved and subliminal of the five basic elements (*Pancha Tatvas*) that makes possible the sentient existence and experience of nature.

Aranyaks : Places in forests where the *Rishis* used to run their schools in order to offer an adept training in the laboratory of life.

Chetan The sentient manifestation of nature and consciousness.

Granthis Three latent knots along the *Brahm Nadi* are named the *Brahm Granthi*, *Vishnu Granthi* and *Rudra Granthi*.

Hamsa A *Swan* also is called *Hamsa* in *Sanskrit*; this simile is used here in a rhetoric style.

Jada The material or physical manifestation of nature.

Jiva Manifestation of the soul as a living being is called a *Jiva*.

Kundalini (Also known as the serpentine power or cosmic electricity of *Prana*) symbolises the subliminal core of absolute vital force.

Mahaprana The omnipresent, cosmic force of *Prana*.

1. The English letters and special symbols used here for the Sanskrit Script are in accordance with the international transliteration standards.

Moksha : Absolute salvation of the *Jiva* from worldly attachments and the cycles of birth and death is called *Moksha*.

Nada The rhythmic flow of musical sound. *Ahata Nada* refers to the *Nada* generated by vibrations in some medium. *Anahata Nada* is the self existent, subliminal *Nada* of *Sabda*.

Nadis The *Brahm Nadi* (cosmic nerve) or *Susumna Nadi* is an extra- sensory canal in the innermost core of the endocrine (or spinal) column. The *Ida Nadi* is supposed to be an extra-sensory canal on the left of the *Susumna Nadi* in the lunar nerve hidden inside the endocrine (spinal) column. The *Pingala Nadi* is supposed to be an extra-sensory canal on the right of the *Susumna Nadi* in the solar nerve hidden in the endocrine (spinal) column. These are functionally connected with the *Pituitary* and *Pineal* glands.

Pancha Tatvas The five basic elements of manifestation of nature and life. Namely, *Prathvi* (solid matter on or inside the earth), *Jala* (water and fluids), *Vayu* (air), *Agni* (fire or other source of energy) and *Akasha* (the subliminal expansion of ether).

Prakriti Nature.

Prana Vital spiritual energy.

Pinda Any particle or body existing in the Universe is called a *Pinda*.

Punya Consequence of altruist service and equivalent actions of humane dignity is called

Punya, the source of happiness, peace, divine grace and liberation.

Purusha The eternal creator of existence is referred as *Purusha* in the *Shastrik* Literature.

Rechaka, Purak, Kumbhakas: The phase of breathing in during a *Pranayama* is called a *Purak* and that of breathing out is called a *Rechaka*; the intermediate phase of holding the breath in and out, are called the *Antah Kumbhaka* and *Bahya Kumbhaka* respectively.

Sankalp Determination with strong will-power and intrinsic urge.

Sanskaras Intrinsic and inherent tendencies and habits. *Kusanskara* means an evil *Sanskara* and *Susanskara* means a virtuous one.

Sandhya Vandan The daily *Upasana* and *Japa* of the *Gayatri Mantra* performed in the morning, around the time of dawn and in the evening, around sunset time, is referred as *Sandhya Vandan*.

Sadhana Spiritual endeavour of self refinement and inner elevation.

Sadhaka Who sincerely performs a *Sadhana*.

Siddhis Riddhis Supernatural powers and supramental talents and virtues.

Surya and Chandra Swara When the breath flows naturally through the right nostril then the *Suryaswara* (in the solar nerve) is said to be 'on'. When it flows through the left nostril,

then the *Chandra Swara* (in the lunar nerve) is active.

Shabda The eternal element of cosmic sound.

Shraddha refers to one's intrinsic faith in divine values and associated inner emotional force.

Tirthas A pilgrimage destination.

Traite Bhava Experiencing the existence of three, the divine consciousness, the self consciousness and the *Jada* elements of nature is termed as *Traite Bhava*.

Upasana Devout worship or devotional practice to enable the devotee recall and experience *thy* presence within and around him.

Vishvasa Firm belief, serene confidence.

□

This book is compiled (from "Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya Vangmaya", Vol 19) and translated by Dr. Rajani Joshi.

Evolution of a Divine Mission: Chronological Compendium

The divine soul of *Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya* descended on September 20, 1911, as the son of *Pt. Roopkishor Sharma* and *Mata Dankunvari Devi* in *Anvalkheda* (Dist. Agra). That his saintly heart breathed for the welfare of all living beings was clearly expressed, since his childhood, by his altruist service of the poor, weaker and down-trodden ones around him. *Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya* bestowed the initiation of *Gayatri Mantra* on him, when he was nine years old. January 18, 1926, on the auspicious day of *Vasant Panchami*, the sacred flame of the *Dipak* (lamp) flashed the subtle body of his *Guru*, a great *Yogi* of the *Rishi* age, during his *Gayatri Sadhana*. This had sparked the unfolding of the divine origin and purpose of his life and enlightened it with the grace and guidance of his *Guru*. [This *Akhand Deepak* is kindled since then and is enshrined at *Shantikunj, Haridwar*.]

The next twenty four years of his life were devoted to ascetic endeavours of 24 *Mahapurushcharans*, each of 24 *Lakh Gayatri Mantra Japa* (the highest kind of spiritual *Sadhanas* of *Gayatri*). He had also sincerely participated in the freedom movement of India, under the noble guidance of *Mahatma Gandhi*

during this period while continuing with his altruist services to the society and attending to the familial duties too.

The unique experiment of *Vichar Kranti*—gradual refinement of thoughts, righteous transformation of attitude and sublime transmutation of human psychology upto the high realms of spirituality was initiated by *Acharya Sharma* from the day he wrote the first issue of *Akhand Jyoti* in 1937. The subscriptions of this magazine (in *Hindi* and translations into English and other regional languages) have expanded exponentially since then.

His wife, *Smt. Bhagvati Devi Sharma* was also born in 1926, the year, when the afflatus of his *Guru* was realised and the year, which is described by *Sri Aurobindo* as that of the renaissance of divine force on this earth. Ever since their marriage in 1943, this *Rishi* couple dedicatedly pursued the noble mission for arousal of human glory and revival of divine culture.

Pt. Sriram Sharma had established the *Gayatri Tapobhumi* at Vrindavan Road, Mathura and performed the *Purnahuti* of his *Mahapurushcharans* there in 1953. He had organised a grand *Gayatri Yagya* in 1958. This *Gayatri Yagya* was a unique experiment towards renaissance of spirituality in human life. This also initiated propagation of the knowledge of

Gayatri Mantra and *Yagya* in scientific light and laid the foundation of *Yug Nirman Yojna*, architecturing a bright era of moral, cultural, intellectual and spiritual evolution. In another couple of years, he had translated the entire *Vedik Literature* in *Hindi* and presented the first ever, comprehensive volume on the science and philosophy of *Gayatri Mantra* and *Gayatri Sadhanas*. Savants like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Acharya Vinoba Bhave had honoured his contributions as historical and recognised him as *Vednishtha*.

The saintly lives of *Acharya Sharma* and his wife, the spiritual charge of their personalities and the inner power of their sacred love for all beings, had attracted all the readers of *Akhand Jyoti* and all those, who had attended this *Yagya*, to work for the noble cause of his great mission. This is how the 'larger family' kind of organisation, called '*Gayatri Pariwar*', came into existence. This has now expanded across the globe beyond the barriers of religion, creed, caste, sex, socio economic status or educational background.

Acharya Sharma, the *Rishi* of this age, had projected the *Yug Nirman Yojna* in 1962, as determined plans of his divine mission of ushering into a bright era. The period of 1971-1990, has witnessed remarkable accomp-

lishments of his life on multiple facets. He had climbed the arduous and mystic heights of the *Himalayas* several times and stayed there for specific *Sadhanas* as per the guidance of his *Guru*. He pioneered the resurrection of the *Rishi* culture by simultaneous renaissance and expansion of the reformatory and constructive endeavours of all the *Rishis* of the *Vedic* age.

He instituted the mission's fraternity at *Shantikunj, Haridwar* as an academy for moral and spiritual awakening and training and its research wing *Brahm Varchas*, as a centre for creative integration of the modern science with spirituality, in 1971 and 1979 respectively. Regular short term and long term interactive training programs for personality development, spiritual refinement through *Gayatri Sadhana* and perfection in the art of living, commenced at *Shantikunj* in the early eighties. The 2400 *Shaktipiths* spread across the country also became functional as distributing centres for social reforms and training of *Pragya Yoga*, under the banner of the mission with this advancement.

Around the same time, *Gurudev Shriram Sharma* wrote the *Pragya Purana* as the 19th in the series of the eighteen *Puranas* of the *Vedic* Age. This was another remarkable addition to his

monumental contribution of over 3000 books and volumes on the gamut of topics concerning human life. Mass education from religious platform and efforts for uplifting the status of women in India gave revolutionary boost to the reformative and constructive programmes of the *Yug Nirman Yojna* in this period.

During 1984-1986, he endeavoured the unique spiritual experiment of *Sukshmikaran*, subtilisation and sublimation of vital force and physical, mental and spiritual powers. He authored a special set of 24 books (*Krantidharmi Sahitya*), highlighting the future of the world and conveying the message of time to prepare us for the realities stored in the distant depths of the 21st Century.... On the 2nd June, 1990, he left the physical sheath of his being and magnified his sublime powers upto the higher realms of divinity in order to enlighten the subtle world of people's thoughts and sentiments..

Thereafter, *Mata Bhagvati Devi* had guided the series of *Ashwamedha Yagyas*, which accelerated the global expansion of the mission with a great impact, in the critical juncture of the decade of change of a millenium and change of an era. She too joined *Acharya Sharma* in the subliminal domains of divinity after leaving the physical body on the 19th September 1994.

A postal stamp was released by the Govt. of India in 1992 to honour his great service to the nation.

The light of righteous knowledge and human glory kindled by them continues to illuminate the excelling path of their great mission and promises the descent of 'The Age of Truth', in the years to come.

