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PRANA

What is Pranayama and how will it help me?

First understand what *prana* is. Briefly put, it is the life-force and not breath as is often thought. It is the most subtle life-essence that pervades all animate and inanimate forms. Pranayama is the yogic practice of breath control. It is a process through which one can stop the influence of constant inflow of thoughts. Through the practice of Pranayama, an aspirant can gain control over the mind and reach a heightened state of awareness. The result depends on the goal an aspirant has set for himself.

What are the functions of the five Koshas: Annamaya kosha, Pranamaya kosha, Manomaya kosha, Vijnanmaya kosha and Anandmaya kosha?

The *koshas* or sheaths interpenetrate each other, meaning that the inner kosha is subtler than the outer. The subtlety of the kosha is measured by its pervasiveness. For example, we see that a cube of ice, which is dense, occupies less space than water so we term water as subtler than ice.

Water, when it turns into vapour spreads over a much larger space and hence, vapour is subtler than water.

Similarly, in the physical body, the Annamaya kosha is the grossest of the five sheaths.

The Pranamaya kosha – the prana we inhale – would fill a greater space when we exhale; it is subtler than the Annamaya kosha.

Our mind, the Manomaya kosha, is still more subtle because it can reach distant places where our breath cannot.

The Vijnanmaya kosha is even more subtle as it can visualise vistas which our mind cannot see and can venture forth into realms unheard of before. For this reason, the Manomaya and Vijnanmaya koshas are considered subtler. The subtlest is the Anandmaya kosha – the sheath of bliss.

The Annamaya kosha, or the physical sheath of the body, is made up of the gross form of prana and of the food we intake, and is referred to as the food body.

The Pranamaya kosha is formed by the prana we breathe in. Its function is to impart the life force (energy, agility and activity) to the senses.

When thought occurs in the Manomaya kosha, the Pranamaya kosha becomes active through the senses. The quality of prana in the human body will depend upon the intellectual tendency and purity of the mind.

In the Vijnanmaya kosha, the intellect evolves to the point where it can grasp the essence behind the words.

While the Manomaya kosha is the doubting element, the Vijñanmaya kosha is the determining factor.

The Anandmaya kosha is the sheath in which we exist during our deep sleep. It is considered blissful because, whatever be the condition in which the individual is in the waking and dream state, once he crosses the threshold of sleep, he experiences peace and bliss. There, one is oblivious of everything. At the conscious level, this nature of the self can be experienced only in short bursts of bliss during the process of meditation.

If one looks from 'within' to 'without', one can think of the Anandmaya kosha as wearing four coats: the Vijñanmaya kosha, Manomaya kosha, Pranamaya kosha, and the outermost sheath of the Annamaya kosha (the food body). This is the only sheath that can be touched and seen.

In order to experience the bliss of the Anandmaya kosha, one will have to work at or drop the grossness from the other sheaths, through conscious living or spiritual practice. For this one has to have patience.

Will the automatic movements which I experience during meditation ever stop?

Once the gross karma related to the different koshas gets cleansed through the manifestation of *kriyas* – breathing exercises, yogic postures and meditation practices – these

movements become more subtle and are experienced internally while the process of purification continues. If one has only a few impressions of a certain type, the kriyas related to them will stop in a few days. They are like thought forms – there for a moment and gone in the next. If one has repetitive impressions of a certain kind, the kriyas pertaining to them can go on even for years, until the impressions are all exhausted. This is a purification process. As the purification completes itself at different levels, the external and internal movements will disappear.

I have done a course in Pranic Healing and meditations up to a certain level. However, I have stopped all practice as I am a patient with high blood pressure. I have also started getting severe headaches plus a general feeling of restlessness, fear and depression. Medication does not help me. Can you please help?

It is good you have placed yourself under the care of a doctor. If, however, the problems have surfaced after the Pranic Healing course, then it is best you talk to your course teachers also – they would be the right people to guide you. This is for the simple reason that each system has its set techniques, which lock into each other, and if the student is regular in his or her practice then the teacher also knows where the flaw lies and is able to guide the student accordingly.

Though the destination may be the same, the route each system follows is different. Only the concerned teachers will know what the pitfalls are on the way. Also, since you are not regular in your practice it can do more harm than good. A haphazard approach can prove detrimental to mental, emotional and physical health.

I seek your guidance. I have done two levels of a course in breathing techniques and also different levels in Pranic Healing. I have been practising both, alternatively. Though the breathing techniques lead me to a feeling of stillness, I still feel loss of energy and am left with a feeling of fatigue.

The first thing that is not right with your practice is the intermingling of the two systems. You must understand that each course is designed to give direction to the latent energy in a particular sequence. If, along with one course you practise another alternatively, you are sending your mental, emotional and physical system for a toss. You are creating confusion in your energy body, which will reflect in your physical body in one form or another. You need to exercise your sense of discretion.

If a certain course in breathing techniques is not giving the right response, it means either there is a mistake in your practice or it is not suited to your system or to the kind of person you are. Please use your judgement.

I emphasise that once a path or course is chosen, one has to be loyal to it because the process becomes important and the steps must be followed with care in order to avoid creating any harm to yourself. Furthermore, you must inform the teacher if you are pursuing any other similar practice. This responsibility lies with you.

I have stopped practising healing and meditation as I am depressed and restless. I am forty-years-old and have two young children.

If you are a person of weak constitution, mentally and emotionally, this can cause great irreparable damage to your psyche.

In your case there is a tussle between the mind (ego) and the Self. The mind does not want to give up its hold on you so it keeps you involved in the game of doubt and fear.

If medical aid is not helping then you have a choice: either be fearless and surrender to the workings of the energy within you or since your guru is not alive, you can seek guidance from the teacher under whose guidance you had done the course of the breathing techniques.

The scriptures tell us that a person must first fulfil his duties as a householder and endure his destiny before he embarks on a serious course of *sadhana* – spiritual practice.

CHAKRAS

Can chakras open without awakening of the Kundalini?

Chakras and Kundalini are both aspects of the subtle body and are independent of each other. The chakras automatically open as an individual goes through life's ups and downs. It's a slow process that goes on till such time when one starts to live consciously. Once they are open the Kundalini energy flows smoothly.

However, an individual can work towards a quicker process by following any system of *Hatha yoga* and *Kriya yoga* to systematically purify, awaken and balance the chakras. Once the required balance and purification is attained, the Kundalini will have a clear pathway to move up.

How does evolution happen for the animal kingdom? Do animals also have chakras?

All life is evolving and the animal kingdom is no exception. The scriptures tell us that below Mooladhara chakra there are chakras which represent the animal

kingdom. These are: *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Talatala*, *Rasatala*, *Mahatala*, and the lowest, *Patala*. Just as the Mooladhara is the lowest chakra in the human body, Patala is the lowest chakra in the animal body. In human beings the *nadis* – etheric channels for energy that flows within the body – converge at the Ajna chakra; whereas in the animal body they converge at the Mooladhara. Chakras in humans start where the chakras of the animal kingdom end.

The animal kingdom is controlled by the laws of nature; therefore evolution for them takes place automatically.

Will I be able to feel or see the movement of chakras when I sit for meditation?

If you can induce a deep state of relaxation you may be able to feel or visualise the chakras. There is no effort of will involved in this; the state happens of its own accord. The chakras are not in the physical body and, therefore, you cannot experience them with the senses. You have to be in an altered state of consciousness to experience the functioning of the subtle body. For this to happen, the attention has to be withdrawn from without to within.

I have experienced 80% of what you describe in the articles on your website. The only thing missing is that I usually see nothing in my Ajna chakra. Why is this happening?

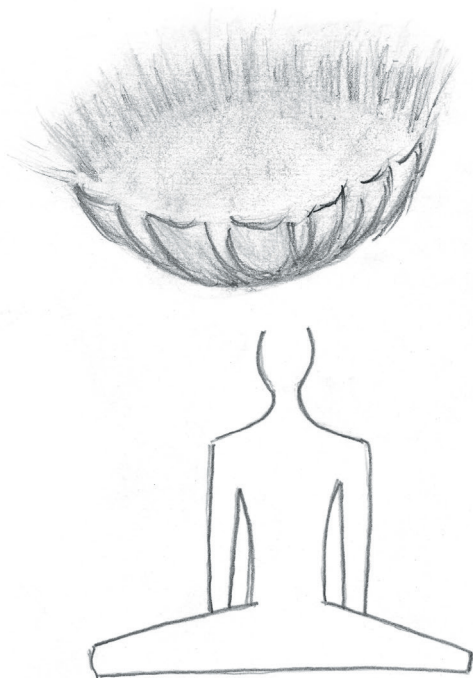
If you say that you have experienced 80% of what I have described on my website, and see almost nothing in your Ajna chakra, then how are you relating to the illustrations shown on the web page?

Each person describes his experience in a way that best suits his perception of it. This can happen through seeing, sensing or feeling. The chakra involved in this is the Ajna chakra. So, when you say you identify with 80% of the website, then you should try to figure out whether the similarity arises through sensing or feeling. If you are sensing or feeling that it is of a yellow or blue hue, it means that at some level you are actually seeing it.

Just enjoy your experience. If you paint a black circle 3” in diameter, put it on a white background and look at it for some time without blinking, you will see a yellow circle. Therefore, whether you are seeing your Ajna chakra as black or yellow is immaterial.

Is Sahasrar a chakra or a centre?

In the physical body of an aspirant, the activity of the Sahasrar would be that of a chakra until the other chakras get developed. Since it is the 'control switch' for the other chakras, it sees to it that they are properly developed and correctly aligned for the purpose for which they have been activated in an aspirant. Once that is taken care of, then the crown centre opens and develops contact with the Cosmic Consciousness and is open to receiving direct knowledge from It.



Sahasrar centre.

If you notice, in the beginning of book *Conscious Flight into the Empryeen* the crown centre is not open. It is only after much spiritual practice and purification of the body, mind, and intellect has taken place at all levels that the Sahasrar or the crown centre opens up to become a 'centre' for receiving all knowledge (*Kundalini Awakening*, Chapter Two – 25 February 1997).

In short, purification of the chakras or purification of body, mind and intellect has to take place before Sahasrar works as a centre.

If an aspirant visualises the six chakras, does it reflect one's spiritual progress or is it mere hallucination?

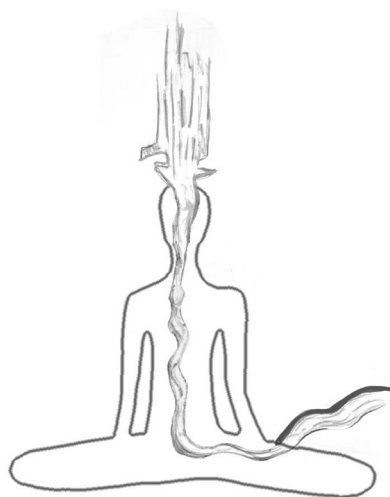
When an aspirant visualises the chakras, it means that he is seeing the process of purification going on.

The movement of Kundalini energy is quite marked during its passage through the chakras and an aspirant can experience it as electricity, air, or heat. When Manipura chakra is activated, movements of the abdomen occur. The movement of Anahata chakra makes one hear sounds. The Vishuddhi chakra can make the aspirant break out in tears or laughter. When the Ajna chakra is activated, the chitta gets one-pointedness or focus and then meditation happens.

The visualisation is not a hallucination; it is indicative of the progress an aspirant is making on the spiritual path that he is following.

KUNDALINI

What is Kundalini and what is meant by 'ascent of Kundalini'?



Ascent of Kundalini.

Kundalini energy is the dormant energy that lies at the base of your spine in an energy centre called Mooladhara chakra. It is the static support of all the ordinary functions of your body and mind through the release of the tiniest portion of its energy. If the energy of Kundalini were to flow upwards through the chakras, it would be called the 'awakening of Kundalini' and is known as the 'ascent of Kundalini'.

What happens when Kundalini awakens?

This question has been answered in detail in Volume 1. However, to put it briefly, various yogic kriyas can take place; a person may utter different sounds or mantras. He may see visions, experience fear, negativity, joy, ecstasy, depending at his level of evolution. These can take place in the initial stages of awakening.

When it is said that the 'Kundalini awakened', does it mean that unless it awakens, it stays dormant?

Kundalini is never dormant. That force that is propelling all creation, animate and inanimate, is Kundalini shakti. In the human form, when the term 'awakened' is used, it means the happening of a 'spiritual awakening' where an individual's attention turns from 'without' to 'within'.



Kundalini as the propelling force.

If I do not manifest any symptoms of awakening, how will I know whether the Kundalini within me is awakened?

Swami Rama says that knowingly or knowingly, your Kundalini has awakened if you are dynamic, if you have attained something in your life that is uncommon, unusual and exceptional.

If I do not experience the movement of energy within me, what do I need to do?

If you are following the path of shakti or Kundalini, then self-effort is the only way. This means you could practice or join a course in breathing techniques that is designed to awaken the energy. This would require dedication and patience; when you are ready, you will feel the movement of energy.

However, if it awakens through the grace of the guru, then one's own effort becomes secondary. At that time, you only need to surrender to the awakened energy and be a witness to its workings within you. For this, you will also have to set a schedule, that is, you have to set aside a time and a quiet place for your sadhana or meditation. At that fixed time and place, your daily practice will create a certain vibration that will constantly support you in your sadhana.

In the process of self-effort, you are in the mode of

‘doing’; whereas, if the shakti awakens through its own grace then you are in the mode of ‘being’, in which case the shakti will carve its own path. You will then come under the guidance of Kundalini itself, and everything will happen automatically. You are no longer the ‘doer’, you will only be a witness to whatever is transpiring within you – be it postures, different rhythms of breath, *mudras* – performing symbolic, ritual gestures with hands and fingers, sounds, swinging clockwise or anti-clockwise, laughing, crying, etc. There is no conscious effort involved. With this process, your attention automatically shifts from ‘without’ to ‘within’. This process of witnessing is termed as ‘surrender’ wherein you are just watching and allowing Kundalini to take its own course.

When will I experience the movement of energy?

If you keep your ego aside and can move the focus from without to within yourself – you will experience the movement of this energy.

What happens once the Kundalini awakens? What does ‘be an observer’ mean?

With the awakening and the activity of Kundalini, the accumulated impressions that strengthen the ego are slowly and steadily released or wiped out. This is often experienced as kriyas. In order to observe this activity, one

needs to be in the mode of an 'observer'. This can only happen if you turn your attention inwards and become a witness to what is transpiring within you.

I am facing so many problems. Is it because Kundalini is blocked? If so, how to clear the blockages? Is my problem curable or not?

It is the blocked chakras that are not allowing the free flow of Kundalini. You can clear the blocks by being under the guidance of someone with experiential knowledge of Kundalini.

Whether your problem is cured or not, will depend on how well you follow the instructions and guidance of your teacher.

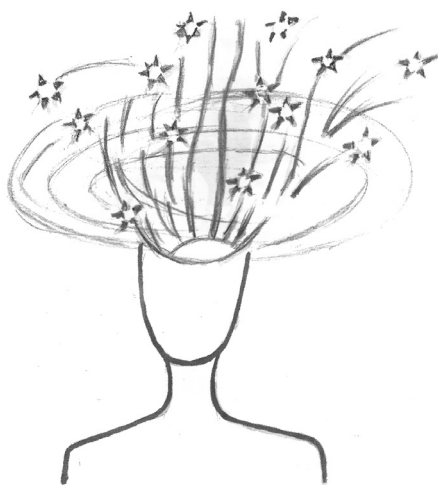
I feel a heaviness in the neck and a peculiar sensation in the brain during meditation. Is this part of the process of clearing blocked energy?

As we progress in meditation, we experience certain sensations, shifts, pokes, and nudges depending on the area in which the energy is being activated to dissolve the congealed energy. With the free flow of energy, shifts take place in the brain. Different areas of the brain begin to harmonise and function at the same frequency. This results in the release of dormant data and we move into a new field of experience, which may be visual or sensory.

I am a voracious reader and have read many spiritual books. I have also been meditating randomly without any fixed time or place and tend to go into deep meditation sometimes. Lately, I have become more regular in my practice and have also allotted a fixed time and space for the same. I notice a peculiar internal hissing sound and experience sparks flying in my head. Do I need to be concerned about this or is this the work of the Kundalini?

If you have checked yourself medically and have been cleared of any physical symptoms, then probably the experience that you are going through may be related to the awakening of Kundalini.

Reading spiritual scriptures, meditation and introspection will support you in your sadhana, but in order to



Sparks flying from the crown centre.

destroy the accumulated impressions, the shakti has to awaken. The awakening of Kundalini generates electrical impulses throughout the whole body. The physical body undergoes many changes. Generally they are positive, but if you are not cautious and are not guided properly, they can be negative also. When the shakti awakens, the cells in the body get completely charged and a process of rejuvenation begins. The cells that transform at a fast rate are the cells in the body and the brain. The hissing sound and the sparks you are experiencing are probably the process of Kundalini because with its awakening every cell is charged with high voltage of Kundalini prana.

If the energy awakens on its own or accidentally, it is advisable to find a guru and be in his energy field so that the shakti can be given direction. Any question or doubt that arises should be immediately addressed.

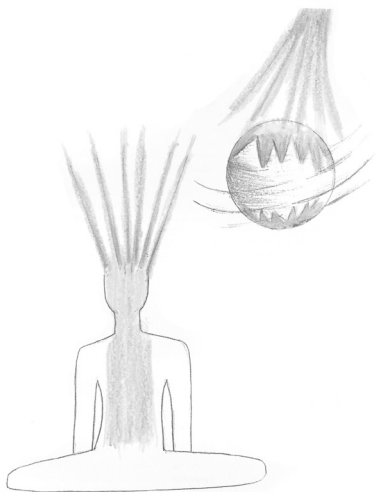
The top half of my body sometimes moves back and forth clockwise, or gets into a yogic posture I have never practiced, in meditation. Why does this happen? Is it a sign of spiritual progress?

When Kundalini rises upwards, it removes the blocks created by accumulated impressions of problems, resentments, traumas, hopes, fears, etc. These movements are related to the different chakras it passes through. They can be in the form of bouncing, shaking, emitting

of peculiar sounds, sudden laughter, dancing, yogic postures, etc. From a spiritual standpoint, this is the first rung of the ladder an aspirant steps on. It is a matter of joy, because the purification process of *samskaras* (accumulated impressions) has been initiated.

I am from Ukraine and part of a group from different cities who get together via the internet for meditation at a fixed time in the evening. As far as we know, chakras should ignite from lower chakras to higher, starting from Mooladhara. Why does ours start from Anahata, and there is no flaming in our lower chakras?

There are two aspects to Kundalini. The ascent of Kundalini and the descent of Kundalini. The course



Kundalini as Descending Energy.



Kundalini as Ascending Energy.

I follow works with the 'Descending Kundalini'. That would entail the opening of chakras from the Sahasrar (crown centre), down to Ajna chakra, to Vishuddhi chakra and Anahata chakra.

Once these chakras are activated, then the 'Ascending Energy' is activated. After the awakening happens then the ascending force and the descending force meet at the Manipura chakra. This method is safe because once the lower chakras become active, a great deal of stored data, related not only to this life but also earlier lives, is brought to the surface of the conscious mind.

Because an aspirant's Ajna, Vishuddhi and Anahata chakra would have been purified and active, he would be able to deal with the negative experiences that surfaces with equanimity.

To answer your second question: Your group probably has been together in earlier lives, partaking in a certain form of meditation or ritual. If you had crossed the lower chakras in an earlier life, then in this life, you will start from where you left off. This would mean that your group was able to resolve the issues related to the Mooladhara chakra, Swadhisthan chakra and the Manipura chakra and, therefore, now the Anahata chakra forms the base for moving to Vishuddhi chakra and on to Ajna chakra. If you follow your practice with dedication and awareness you will have wonderful results.

(For ascent of Kundalini read the answer on page 15.)

I want to awaken my Kundalini... What type of initiation is needed for that? Few people have told me that Kundalini is only awakened when you leave home and go to the Himalayas. Is it correct?

Kundalini awakening has to happen. It can sometimes happen if an individual has been in an accident, had a sudden fall, or a traumatic experience. It can get awakened in the energy field of an evolved person or a guru, if your body, mind and intellect are ready for it. This means that you have to be physically healthy and free of ill will, spite, hatred, greed, guilt, envy, jealousy, complaints and blame. Then the chances are that the guru's energy acts as a catalyst and the Kundalini gets awakened.

You do not have to give up your family responsibilities or your worldly duties. There is no need to go to the Himalayas.

When sitting for group meditation, my body from the waist upwards keeps rotating gently or vigorously. Sometimes, it even sways from left to right. What does this mean?

When sitting in group meditation, the awakened Kundalini cuts short the process of accumulated patterns of action, reaction, pain and sorrow, ill will, spite, hatred, etc. Kundalini energy converts the seeds of these tendencies

into movements and thus dissolves them, otherwise they would fructify into action and its consequences. The nature of physical movements indicates the activation of a particular chakra.

Once the purification process of an aspirant's mind is complete, these movements will stop.

It is important to understand that Kundalini energy follows its own course. Various sounds, gestures, movements and postures automatically occur according to the need of the aspirant's spiritual advancement.