



Shakti-Calana Mudra

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Shakti-Calana Mudra (Kundalini Kriya)

Shakti Chalana Mudra describes the final stage of Hatha Yoga, often referred to as Kundalini Yoga. The term may be translated as the loosening of the power latent in one's innate nature by means of a sealed path. This indicates that the process does not draw upon an external force but initiates a release of inner power through skilful means. This stage marks the entry into Raja Yoga, a profound and demanding path often described in facile terms. Raja Yoga constitutes the hidden essence and final goal of the processes of Hatha Yoga. This is Hatha Vidya, the science of inner light that is cultivated through the mastery of the sun and moon energies.

Before looking more deeply into this subject one must take stock of what has so far been accomplished on the journey in Hatha Yoga and then identify the requirements for proceeding further, both in the appropriate choice of tools and the method of utilisation. The yogin must now confront the true level of their knowledge of asana, pranayama, and mudra and decide whether they are adequately equipped to use them in the process (kriya) of subjugating and then releasing the latent life force called prana-shakti.

Asana is the still earth
Kumbhaka the black night.
When the moon king/queen rises,
The darkness shines and night flowers bloom.
Bereft of the moon, the seal mudra is hollow
The night is blind and the earth lies barren.

Sri Sahajananda the guru of the author of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Svatomarama Yogin confirms this when he states:

“Through the merging of the mind (moon) and prana (the life force) one becomes steady and the current of the moon settles in its own house. This is known as kevala kumbhaka (complete cessation of the breath or ‘aloneness’) and is also known as the sun entering the house of the moon.”

This sloka suggests that the process of shakti chalana mudra combines bhastrika and surya bhedana pranayamas with the processes of nauli kriya and khechari manthana (churning of the tongue). Woven together these awaken, engage and raise the kundalini shakti (the coiled power of life). This causes the prana-vayu (life breath) to enter the Sushumna Nadi that carries the awakened power in its upward surge.

The required tools at this stage are:

- Asana
- Mantra
- Pranayama
- Mudra-Kriya
- Khechari manthana together with Melak Mudra
- Shakti Chalani Mudra.

It is crucial that one recognises this moment as a junction of detachment. If one is to proceed further inward one must let go of the elaborate practices used in the preparatory phases. The arduous journey ahead is full of dangers and pitfalls that can render the yogin insane or end their life and the practices that worked in the early stages of cultivation, together with the mindset that accompanied them, are now completely useless.

The asanas listed in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika are for the select few who manage to reach this far and the text makes it very clear that they are for the cultivation of Kundalini-Shakti and Nadanusandana (the appearance and contemplation of the inner sound).

- Swastikasana is the best seat for mantra sadhana.
- Gomukhasana is the best seat for the mastery of the three bhandas.
- Garbhamudra 1,2 and 3 together with Kukkuttasana and its intensified version Jalandharasana are for the setting up of the Sushumna Nadi and lead into the use of Purna Matsyendrasana that is the key to arousing the kundalini shakti by making the moon (mind, semen or ovum) steady within the yogin.
- Paschimottanasana with the support of Ashwini Mudra (the horse staling gesture) helps to drive the prana vayu into the mouth of the sushumna nadi.
- Mayurasana and Hamsasanas correct the three doshas and also make the Sushumna Nadi firm and steady by purifying the pancreas which restricts the wandering of the mind.
- Siddhasana or Vajrasana (they are the same seat) are for the cultivation of mudras and are useful in prolonged meditations.
- Padmasana and its variations are best for the practises of pranayama.
- The practices of mantra, pranayama and mudra are concluded with Shakti Chalana mudra. This last practice alone takes up to one and a half hours and brings fatigue to both the limbs and the internal organs. At this point the three asanas Gorakshasana 1, Gorakshasana 2 (present day Mulabhandasana) and Kandasana are utilised to remove this fatigue and restore the balanced state of equanimity (samadhi).

The whole process and every component part of it is nothing but refined skilful activity. There is absolutely no place for any muscular tension or brutish mental imposition.

The mantra sadhana of hatha yoga is a well defined path that will support the yogin all the way through until the final goal of kevala kumbhaka is attained. Kevala Kumbhaka is the state of 'aloneness' beyond the mind's participation; the same goal is described by Gorakshanath as Amanaska Yoga – beyond the bounds of the mind. This implies that the activities required up to this point constitute Samanaska Yoga – in which the equanimous mind participates in the Sahita Kumbhakas.

The correctly utilised system of mantras is instrumental in establishing the spheres of sounds within the body-mind complex for the processes of Khechari mudra and its activities of manthana (rhythmic churning) and melaka – the gathering of the scattered energies into a single point (Bindu). The fulfilment of these final processes is only possible through Yogini Nyasa Vidhim, the science of awakening through the sense of touch. This sets the field for the A-Ka-Tha triangle within the pericarp of the guru chakra that rests under the Sahasrara, the source of the emanating Ajapa Gayatri (the unstruck sound) of Hamsa.

The term manthana (churning) also has the meaning of kindling fire by attrition and it is crucial that one realises this is a process of reduction. Everything that arises other than the love for the Divine must be cast off. Behind the activities of the Khechari mudra is a far reaching effort to penetrate deep within the layers of the body-mind to find the origins of the obstructions to the flow of one's inner light that cause us to scratch and tumble in the dark through our ignorant schemings. Failure to grasp this perspective will bring great fear and danger at the very threshold of success.

“After inhaling through the right nostril (pingala nadi), the recumbent serpent (shakti) should be taken hold of by the process of paridhana (wrapping up, restitution of a deposit) and moved daily for an hour and a half at both sunrise and sunset.

He should then contract the sun and then cause the kundalini to move. Even though fallen into the mouth of death, the yogin need not fear death”

Hatha Yoga Pradipika III.112 -116

One can see that hatha-vidya, the science of light, requires great patience, perseverance and an undivided attention. One must be prepared and proceed with great caution. As the inner layers are revealed one must not panic when confronted with unfamiliar mindsets for one that plays with fire will be burned. All these practices must be learnt with the guidance of one who has mastered both the science and the art of Hatha Yoga. They cannot be learnt from manuals or videos. I have given this brief outline of the requirements to reduce illusions among those few who possess the courage and perseverance to tread this path of Sahaja Avasta – the reclamation of the true nature of the mind.

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