



Shatkriyas

ARTICLE BY SUNDERNATH (SHANDOR REMETE)

Shatkriyas – The Six Acts

The six acts (processes)

The Asanas constitute the first limb of Hatha Yoga and must be mastered before beginning the internal practices of Pranayama, Mudra, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. This mastery involves the dynamic asanas and their static counterparts, the later required for the practices of Pranayama. It is here at the crossroads between asana and pranayama that the use of the six acts should be considered.

‘...if the practitioner still suffers from conditions of flabbiness and phlegmatic breathing disorders, they should utilise the six acts of Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli and Kapalabhati.’

This recommendation suggests that though one may have gained some facility in the asanas due to inherited ability, real mastery may be incomplete as evidenced by such symptomatic disorders. There is a further suggestion that to progress from asanas to pranayama, one must first gain voluntary control over the involuntary natural processes that guarantee the sustenance and health of the body so that the necessary longevity and strength is achieved to allow the unfolding of wisdom.

Dhauti and Basti give control over the digestive tract all the way from the mouth to the rectum. Neti and Trataka are responsible for clearing the breathing passages and the vision through steadying the eyes. Kapalabhati and Nauli Kriya are the crowning processes of the six acts. Like any other art or science Hatha Yoga includes both crude and refined methods of cultivation. Those that have reached mastery of the required asanas have no need of Dhauti, Basti, Neti or Trataka – crude forms intended only for those insensitive and rough individuals who are otherwise incapable of perceiving the experiences that are the fruits of the practice of Asanas. For those who gain true mastery of the required asanas the mastery of the three bandhas is already within their grasp and with them the practices of kapalabhati (cleansing of the skull, the brain stem) and nauli kriya (the churning of the abdominal recti).

The three bandhas are Jalandhara, Uddiyana and Mulabandha. Jalandhara bandha gives control over the network of nadis (subtle channels) within the brain and the regions of the throat that control the movements of cerebrospinal fluid, blood and lymph as well as the fluids of reproduction. Jalandhara bandha is gained through mastery of Kandasana.

Mulabandha (the root tie) leads to the mastery of the excretory systems and their organs in addition to the energy that operates through the organs of reproduction. This is made possible by the mastery of Mulabandhasana. This seat is also known as Bhagasana, (the seat of the womb referring to absorption and development) and Yoni Mudra, (the seal of the womb (this references advanced practices within the refined activities of meditations).

Uddiyana bandha is responsible for the union (yoga) of the other two bandhas and its mastery is consequently more demanding. The asanas used in this mastery are Mayurasana, Hamsasana (both danda and padmasana variations), then Bhadrasana, Gorakshasana 1, 2 and 3, and Garbha Mudra 1 and 2. If one has the patience and determination to gain mastery over these asanas then one has also gained possession of the refined actions of the three bandhas in the seat of siddhasana (the seat of the adepts) termed Mahabandha.

By mastering these procedures one not only gets the benefits of practicing Kapalabhati and Nauli kriyas but also opens the way to the refined practices of the pranayamas, mudras and the further refinements of pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

By the adaptation of the kriyas and bandhas one gains unimposed control over the 10 vayus, 16 nadis (sound corridors), the 5 gross elements and the mind with an occasional glimpse of the universal expanse.

The processes described here can only be learnt from a competent guru not from text books or copying images.

Though there is mention of eight million four hundred thousand asanas, only a few are used as tools in the cultivation of the mind and the life force. Many of the showy and badly copied practices of modern day Yoga are of no use within the fields of Hatha, Shadanga or Ashtanga yogas.

This article will slowly unfold into its full bloom within the lines of the next article – The Mudra Kings and their Queen.