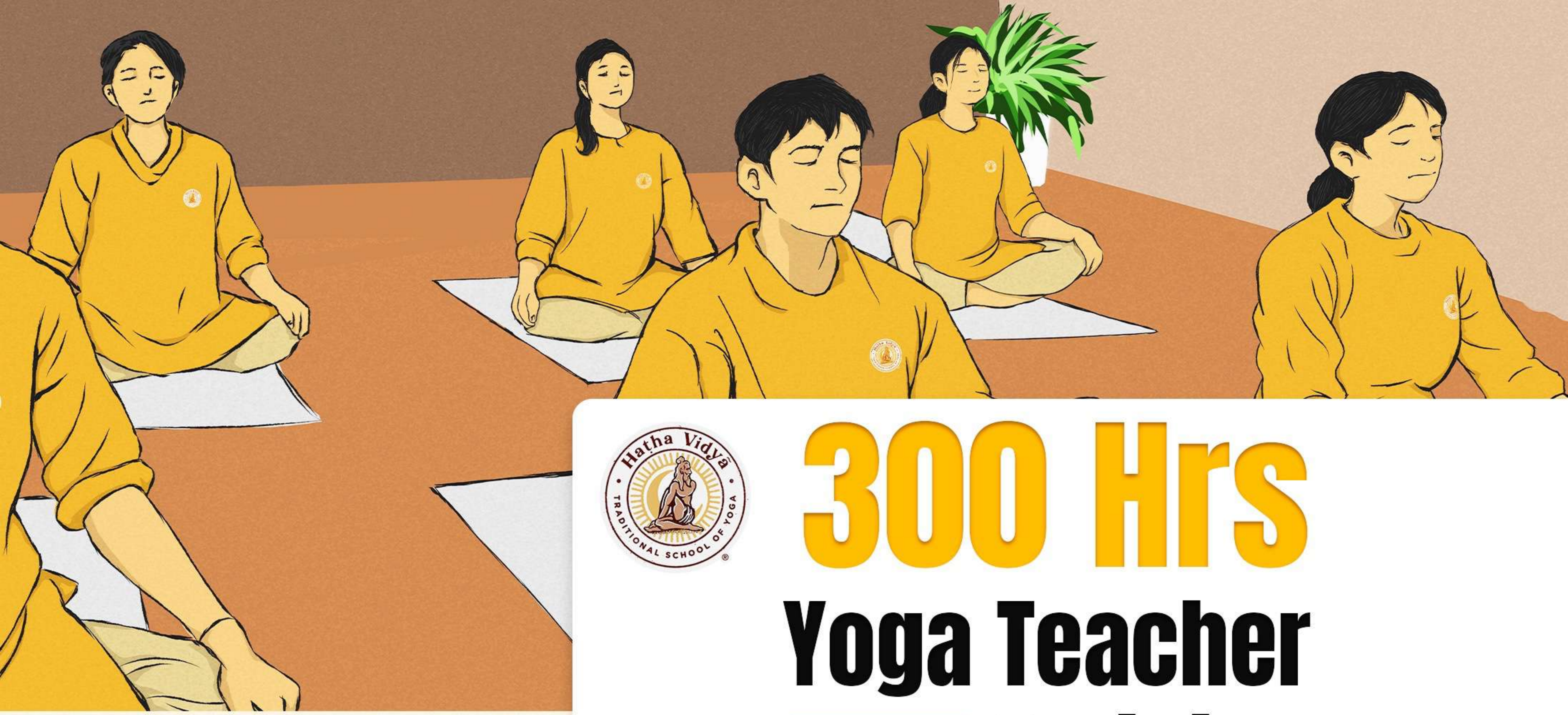


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**Dhyāna-Moolam Gurur-Murthih
Pujā-Moolam Gurur-Padam |
Mantra-Moolam Gurur-Vakyam
Moksha-Moolam Gurur-Kripa ||**

*The Root of Meditation is the Form of the Guru,
The Root of Worship is the Feet of the Guru,
The Root of Mantra is the Word of the Guru,
The Root of Liberation is the Grace of the Guru.*

From

The Editor's Desk

। śrīguruḥ sarvakāraṇabhūtā śaktiḥ ।

The auspicious master is the all causative power.

Yet again another Guru Poornima has arrived which will be celebrated on 21st July. In this occasion let's try to understand the significance and essence of this day.

Yoga sadhakas (practitioners) who aim to attain ultimate self-realization should be celebrating Guru Poornima, with the understanding of the essence as conveyed in the ancient and popular Sanskrit phrase "Mata Pitha Guru Daivam" (Mother, Father, Guru and Divinity). We get to see instances of Father's Day and Mother's Day being celebrated these days that do give an impression of a mere procedural activity with an apathetic attitude. On the contrary, they should understand the Guru Tatwa (principle) and use it as an impetus for one's sādhanā.

Any mission should have a Sankalpa (resolute intention) behind the actions, its application requires the necessary tools and techniques, and it requires a guide to provide directions. Only then, the efforts will yield desired results free from deficiencies. In light of this understanding, in yoga sādhanā, it is appropriate to rely on the wisdom of those who have traveled the path ahead of us.

One should empower their body as an eligible and effective instrument to embrace the wisdom shown by those who are already accomplished. A Guru leads one towards this path and process; and clears the questions that arises from the vacuum created from the limited learnings gathered from hearing, seeing and various other sources. A Guru is the one who is already accomplished in the path, shares the wisdom gained from the wealth of his own experience, and also uses the ways most suitable to the seeker by understanding their needs.

In these days of many self-proclaimed gurus, it should be understood that "Guru" is not a title that can be claimed by a person on their own, rather it is a state in which a person is perceived and recognized by those seeking wisdom.

Traditional scriptures explain about six levels in which one can be perceived as a guru which are Prerakan, Sookhakan, Vachakan, Darshakan, Sikshakan, and Bodhakan. Prerakan is the one who provides the knowledge about the various sādhanā approaches for self realization; Sookhakan creates interest and provides direction for the selected path for sādhanā; Vachakan explains the traditional scriptures in his own way; Darshakan reveals the truth with the help of scriptures; Sikshakan helps the sadhak to progress and advance in the sādhanā; Bodhakan provides the Jnana Deeksha (transmission of knowledge) for upliftment of the sadhaka. It is possible for someone who has accomplished in their sādhanā to have had multiple gurus at various stages and during different points of time. Some very fortunate sadhakas may receive guidance across all the levels from the same Guru.

One goes through sufferings from experiencing the limited material world through the limited senses. The one who removes the ignorance causing the limitations and sufferings, and thereby enables one to experience the limitless joy is Guru. With the contentment of being blessed with the grace of such a Guru, and with total conviction that the Guru Vakya (advise) will provide the strength and propulsion for all the thoughts and actions, I hereby place my utmost reverence and prayers.

***॥ Guruvae Sarva Lokanam
Bishaje Bhava Roginaam
Sachidananda Roopayae
Sri Guru Nathaye Namah ॥***

*The one who is the Guru for all the world
The one who removes the worldly sufferings
The embodiment of truth, knowledge, and bliss
Respectful obeisance to the divine Guru.*

~Acharya Bala

PURPOSE OF YOGA

- *Beyond the Physique*



 Vijesh Ravindran

The popularity of yoga is ever growing across the world, with an increasing number of yoga practitioners as well as institutions offering yoga teaching which is mostly based on Haṭha Yoga. While benefits of Haṭha yoga for body and mind are widely acknowledged, it is still questionable whether the real intent behind the practices is understood by all. Many practice yoga for physical benefits and mental well-being. These days we also get to see many innovative 'styles' of yoga practices such as swing yoga, water yoga, hot yoga and several others which gives the impression that yoga is merely reduced to a lifestyle activity. This is nothing but gross misuse and absolute dilution of this profound knowledge passed on by our ancient masters.

Haṭha yogic practices enables one to attain the highest state of awareness that will eventually lead one to understand one's own true nature. Anyone practicing yoga without this understanding is obviously overlooking the main purpose as per verse 4.79 of Haṭha Pradīpikā, one of the most widely known traditional scriptures on Haṭha Yoga authored by yogi Svātma Rama.

राज-योगमजानन्तः केवलं हठ-कर्मणिः ।
एतानभ्यासिनी मन्ये परयास-फल-वर्जितान ॥ ७९ ॥

***Rājayogamajānantah kevalam Haṭhakarmīnah ।
Etānabhyāsino manye prayāsaphalavarjitān ॥***

*Practitioners who are oblivious of the essence of Rajayoga are mere Haṭhakarmins.
All their effort and labour shall be futile and yield no fruit.*

~Haṭha Pradīpikā 4.79

We will further explore this verse in this edition of Tradition Speaks.

All the Darshanas that originated from the Indian subcontinent, discuss on only one significant idea, that is, the complete removal of sufferings by human beings. Yoga Darshana too is not different in this context. When the streams of practices based on Yoga Darshana such as Haṭha Yoga emerged and gained popularity, due to the carelessness of some who were leading it, and due to the deficiencies in the ways the practices were imparted, these systems have gradually lost the aim of the practices.

Probably, the rishis who developed these practices had the foresight that the essence of these practices could be diluted, and hence they have always reiterated the importance of understanding the purpose of the practices through the verses such as the one we are discussing herein.

Clearly, this verse highlights the importance of understanding Raja yoga as the intent behind the Haṭha yogic practices. Many verses of Haṭha Pradīpikā repeatedly emphasize that the practice of Haṭha yoga is only meant for Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga is a state of union of the mind with the supreme consciousness. The eternal and everlasting bliss is known through absorption in supreme universal consciousness by means of Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga eventually leads to Kaivalya, which is the goal of yoga.

Haṭha yoga uses the body as an instrument to attain an elevated state of awareness. The focus is on awakening of potent energy within all humans through a set of systematic practices. The Haṭha yogic practices of Asanas, Shatkriyas, Prāṇāyāma, Mudrās and Bandhas are applied to invoke the latent energy which leads one to the state of equipoise leading to raja yoga i.e. attaining total absorption with universal consciousness. In fact it is not possible to segregate Raja Yoga from Haṭha Yoga, as the state of raja yoga is the only purpose of Haṭha yogic practices. Ultimately the practitioner will attain complete liberation.

Those who practice Haṭha yoga without understanding the essence and purpose of yoga are referred to as Haṭhakarmins. The term Haṭhakarmin implies those who practice at a superficial level without understanding the ultimate intent behind the practices i.e. without knowing Raja Yoga and without the aim of Kaivalya. This is the reason why many, so called yoga practitioners flaunt bodily flexibility and strength by performing difficult yoga postures without knowing the root of such practices. Such practices will only be superficial without getting the possibility of enjoying the real happiness it could lead one to. Real bliss is understanding the consciousness within and that one is not different from the universal rhythm. All these needs to be learned in a systematic way under a proper guide who is established in such knowledge.

The Verse clearly holds that the efforts of Haṭhakarmins will be futile and yield no fruits. This means those who do not progress to higher state of experience deny themselves the possibility to enjoy the real sweetness and true happiness. Of course, at a peripheral level the practitioners may still get the physical benefits and mental wellness as well, but it is not comparable to the freedom and everlasting bliss intended from yogic practices.

The goal of yoga is Kaivalya i.e. liberation from all dualities and complete cessation of sufferings. Haṭha Yoga is only meant for Raja Yoga which eventually leads one to kaivalya, the state of liberation. However, this idea is lost now completely and in fact to a large extent considered a taboo where people try to avoid getting into such practices. On the contrary the right, and only dharma of every human being is to attain complete liberation. Anyone who practices yoga without understanding this truth is missing the whole point.

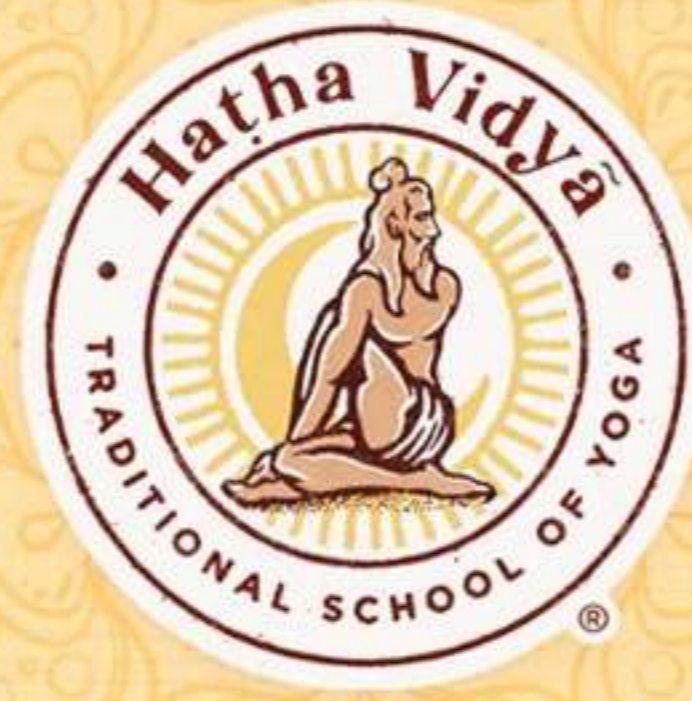
Those who learn yoga from eminent Acharyas, who can impart the teachings without diluting the essence of the practices as prescribed in the traditional texts, will attain the full intended benefits and will achieve success in their path. On the contrary, if someone attempts to learn from those who are not part of a tradition and through books, public domains and other shortcuts would only lead to time waste and adverse results. Therefore, through the verse discussed herein, Yogi Svatmarama is reminding all the practitioners that the Haṭha yogic methods should be practiced only with proper understanding of the goal and significance of the practices.



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ŚĀMBHAVĪ MUDRĀ

- *Let Śāmbhavī Shine Forth*



 Acharya Bala

Among the Mudrā practices prescribed in Haṭhayogic texts and tantra shastras (scriptures), Śāmbhavī Mudrā is known to be highly restricted and secretive practice prescribed only for those who are established in advanced sādhanā practices.

An analysis of the meaning of the word Śāmbhavī would provide some insights on the depth, potency and significance of this advanced practice. Śāmbhavī literally means the Consort of Shambhu. If we further delve into the word Shambhu, it refers to the state of bliss, signifying the one who is the embodiment of bliss. In essence, it represents the supreme consciousness, which is of the nature of “Sat-Chit-Ananda” (truth-consciousness-bliss) i.e. the all-pervading, everlasting conscious existence. Therefore, Śāmbhavī implies the Shakti (primordial energy) that underlies the ultimate consciousness. In short, the method of understanding the supreme consciousness and thereby experiencing the ultimate endless bliss is Śāmbhavī Mudrā.

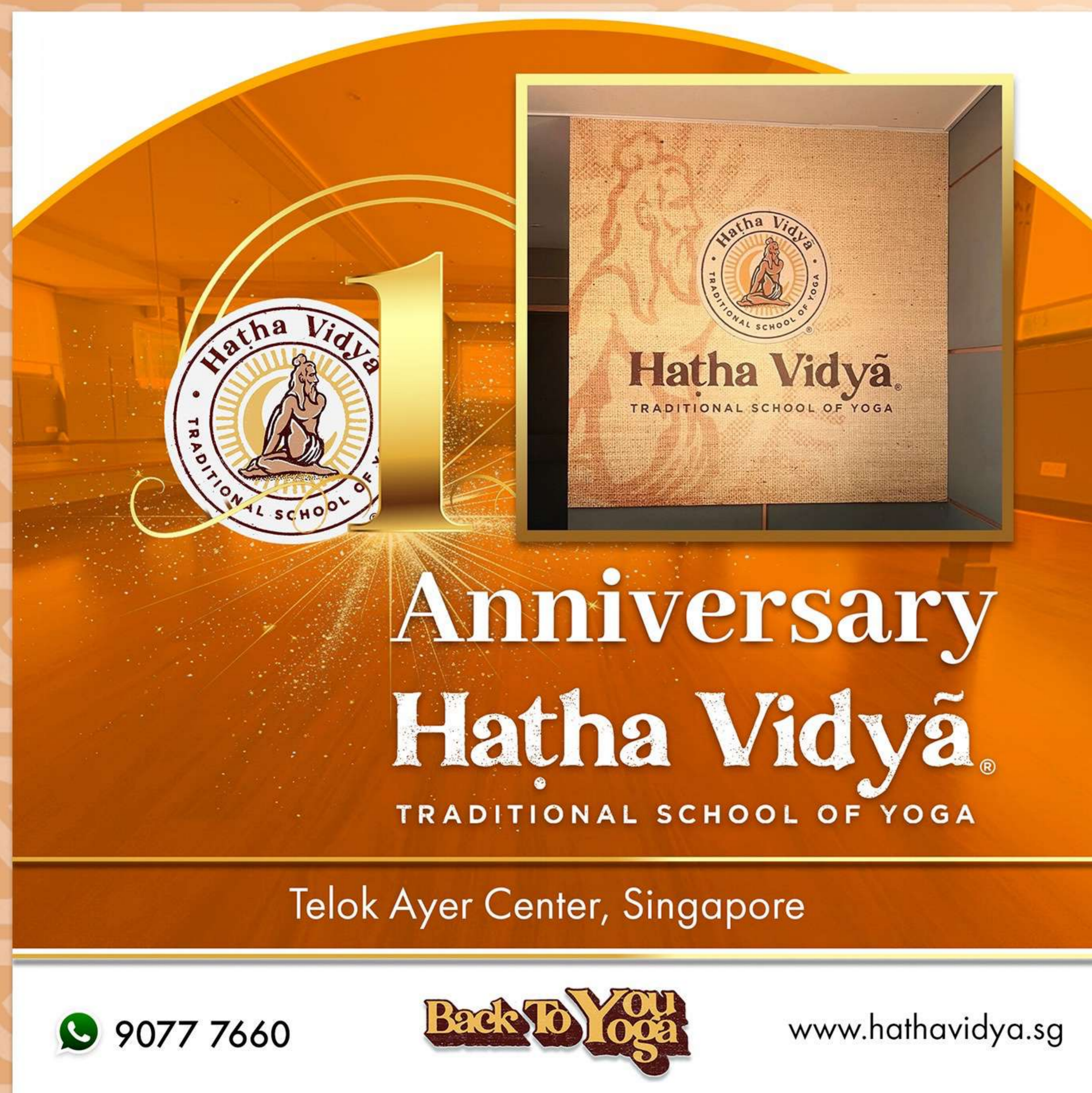
Yoga practitioners should differentiate those who impart such a profound practice and one of the most difficult methods to accomplish, without assessing the eligibility of the practitioners and promoting it by giving an impression that such a practice can be acquired using very basic and contriving methods.

Haṭha Pradīpikā has described Śāmbhavī as Sushumna or Bhramarandhra based on Sushumna. As per Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, Śāmbhavī is explained in all tantra shastras (scriptures) very discreetly and is a secret only known to Adinatha. If we pay attention to the methods of Śāmbhavī Mudrā as prescribed in Haṭha Pradīpikā, we can comprehend how much effort and practice it requires.

The principle behind the practice of Śāmbhavī Mudrā is based on the concepts of Antar Lakshya (internal focus) and Bahir Drishti (external view), which signify that one can be engaged in all external activities while at the same time being in the state of yoga. It implies that with the practice of Śāmbhavī Mudrā alone one can pass through the stages of Pratyahara, Dhāraṇā, and Dhyana, to attain the state of Samadhi. Since this encompasses all the Antar Anga (internal focused) practice methods, it can be considered as a prime method for the practice of Raja yoga.

The preparatory practices that are necessary for all other Mudrā practices such as asanas, prāṇāyāma etc are indispensable for the practice of Śāmbhavī Mudrā as well. Further, the practice of ‘bhru-madhya drishti’ (focusing on the middle of eyebrows), and practicing internalization through the Trataka Shodana Kriya are the additional preparations that are essential for Śāmbhavī Mudrā. Then, the practitioner should gain proficiency in the practice of Bhoochari Mudrā. In these methods the common technique used is the attempt to completely still the movement of eyes and activities of other sense organs. Activities of the mind and movement of eyes are strongly connected. Based on this principle, we can understand the application of this practice. In other words, by subsiding the physical movement of the eyes one can also cease the functioning of the mind.

There are few other preparatory and supporting practices - the details and sequence of which should be received directly from a guru, and hence not elaborated here. However, in order to help the inquisitive yoga aspirants to refrain from getting into the trap of wrong practices being preached, and to understand the significance and gravity of Śāmbhavī, the details explained here are shared.



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SĀṂKHYA DARSHANA

- *The Stages of Evolution*



 Devanjana Chatterji

Having looked at the Dualistic viewpoint of Sāṁkhya in detail in the last episode, let us now briefly touch upon the Sāṁkhya theory of evolution, and the roles that Purusha and Prakriti have to play in it.

THE SĀṂKHYA THEORY OF EVOLUTION

As per Sāṁkhya, evolution is the result of the interaction between Purusha and Prakriti, the two opposing realities. This must not be mistaken as a union that happens between finite objects, but rather be thought of as an efficacious, constructive and powerful influence on Prakriti, by the mere presence of Purusha.

Based on the plurality of souls' concept, the Purushas are many, whereas Prakriti is unitary. Hence the material world that comes out of it, is always the same for all Purushas and that's how the Purushas can interact with each other, through this common ground.

ROLE OF PRAKRITI IN EVOLUTION

When Purusha's reflection falls on Prakriti, a disbalance happens in the Tri-Gunas, triggering the process of manifestation. When the equilibrium in the Tri-Gunas is disturbed, Rajas being the more active of the Tri-Gunas becomes aggressive. This inturn sets Satwa and Tamas in motion. This first movement thus, releases tremendous amounts of energy within Prakriti. The continuous effusion of these 3 energies, gradually becomes increasingly condensed and evolution begins.

As mentioned earlier on, the Tri-Gunas are all interdependent and intertwined, but on their own they are worthless; just like in a lamp where the wick, the oil and the fire are all distinct entities, yet they must work together for the lamp to give light.

These Tri-Gunas are also always active, whether in 'Shristi' (Evolution) or 'Pralaya' (Dissolution). In Pralaya they are constantly reproducing themselves, whereas in Shristi they are acting on one another; each trying to dominate the other.

Prakriti as we know is dynamic and everchanging, and therefore this process of Evolution and Dissolution is periodical. Shristi is always followed by Pralaya, only for Prakriti to wake up again. It is important to note, that Prakriti and its evolutes i.e. the whole empirical world, is made up entirely of the Tri-Gunas. They are just three in number, but denote a manifold of discreet entities.

ROLE OF PURUSHA IN EVOLUTION

As we have understood in the earlier episodes, the whole process manifestation of the universe happens solely for the use of Purusha.

Only once Purusha gains knowledge about Prakriti and its evolutes, can it be led into knowing itself as being distinct from Prakriti and the products of Prakriti. This discriminative knowledge can then lead it to its liberation. An analogy which can best explain this, is the story of a blind and a lame man, who help each other to find their way out of the forest. As the blind can't see, the lame guides him and as the lame can't walk, the blind carries him on his shoulders, and eventually they make their way out of the forest together; coordinating and cooperating with each other all the while. Just like Purusha (the lame man who cannot act) and Prakriti (the blind man who cannot guide), coordinate in the evolution process of Prakriti for the ultimate purpose of liberation of the Purusha.

INTERCHANGEABILITY OF ROLES BETWEEN PURUSHA AND PRAKRITI

Now, there is an apparent interchangeability or rather sharing of roles, that appears to happen between Purusha and Prakriti due to this cooperation or union of sorts. The insentient evolute of Prakriti which is the intellect, appears to be intelligent and there comes a feeling of "I know" and in the case of Purusha, it seems to be the agent or the doer. However the truth is, that the intellect or 'buddhi' cannot know anything unless the Purusha has overviewed the content first, and the Purusha cannot really act in the sense of external action, but can only witness or spectate.

ATHEISTIC VIEWPOINT

This union between the two ultimate realities, is like that of thought and matter; where both are essentially different from each other, with specific roles to play, but both are equally necessary to be able to gain knowledge about anything. Thus, Sāṃkhya posits that Purusha can experience only that which the buddhi unveils to it, and thereby is dependent entirely on Prakriti for gaining knowledge.

We can see here that it is this particular thought, which leads to the understanding that there is nothing above Purusha which can influence or enlighten it. Leading to the Sāṃkhya darshana being cited as Atheistic; where Purusha is above all!

STAGES OF EVOLUTION

In order to know and better understand the whole process of evolution, right until the final liberation; it is necessary first of all to understand the different stages of evolution. And to understand the different stages of evolution, it is first required to know the various evolutes (products) of Prakriti.

As we have already seen at the very beginning, the term 'Sankhya' is because this is supposed to be a Darshana of numbers. It talks about 25 principles or fundamental

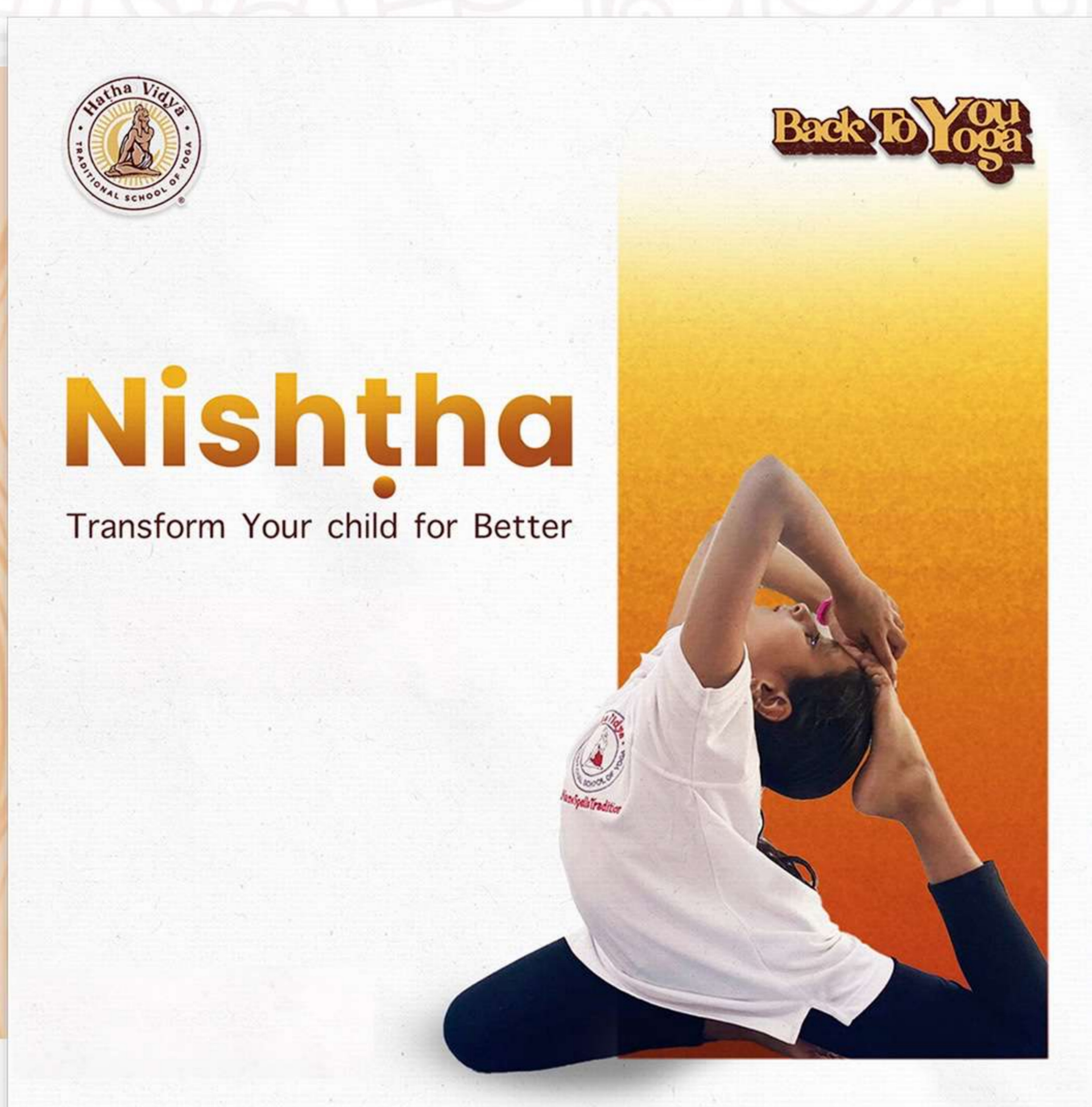
Verse 22 of Sāṃkhya Karika lists the various evolutes of Prakriti and the order of evolution..."from the Primordial Matter evolves the Great Principle, from this evolves the I principle, from that evolves the set of 16, and from the 5 of this set of 16, evolves the 5 elements."

The categories thus enumerated in the above verse, in that order, are as follows:

- Primordial Matter (Prakriti) - The Great Principle (Mahat)
- The I Principle (Ahamkara)
- The set of 16 - Mind (Manas), 5 Senses (Jnanendriyas), 5 Motor abilities (Karmendriyas) and 5 Subtle elements (Tanmatras)
- The 5 Gross Elements (Mahabhutas) and
- The last principle is PURUSHA (pure consciousness); very distinct from Prakriti and its evolutes.

Thereby making a total of 25 Principles or Tatwas.

In the next episode we will understand the various evolutes of Prakriti in detail and the entire evolution theory of Sāṃkhya in its totality.



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KARMA YOGA

- *The Way Out of Life Cycles*



 Divya

Karma Yoga or yoga of action is the practice of “Selfless service”. It refers to doing action with a proper attitude which will lead to attainment of Moksha. The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Kri’ which means to do. “Kriyate iti Karma” meaning, whatever action you do, either by thoughts (manasa), words (vaacha) or by any physical actions (karmana) which produces an effect is Karma.

The concept of Karma is the basis of Indian darshanas and is explained elaborately in Mimamsa darshana, Pàtañjala Yoga Sūtra and the Bhagavad Gita in different contexts.

By proper action and proper attitude, we mean, those actions which is done with selflessness and with a sense of non-attachment to its results. We have the authority to act. But while performing the action, we should do it without confluence. When we cling to the result, our focus on the work will decrease and all our attention will go to the result. Moreover, actions should be done in such a way that one can equally accept both the positive and negative results. That is why it is said to do the actions without clinging to its results. So the question arises on the connection between Karma and Yoga.

Now, if we look from Pàtañjali’s point of view, yoga is explained as “Chitta Vritti Nirodha”, which means cessation of all mental modifications. This is the ultimate state of Yoga.

However, even when a person is moving along the path of Yoga, the practitioners will need to perform their duties. While doing such actions, it produces latent impressions called Samskara. Whatever we experience through our senses causes Samskara. These impressions cannot be destroyed, and its result lie in the mind as a subtle form until it gets a suitable opportunity to be manifested. When our Indriyas or senses come in contact with the internal or external stimuli, samskaras are created through manas (mind), ahankara (“I”ness) and buddhi (intellect). Such tendencies that are formed will in turn get converted into various thoughts or actions and the cycle goes on.

Perception of the worldly experience is influenced by one’s Samskaras which could be positive (pleasure) or negative (pain/sufferings) or mix of both. If one can come out of the cycle of creating samskaras (latent impressions) it will lead to state of being free from pleasure and pain or in other words complete liberation from dualities. Thus through Karma yoga one can come out of the karmic cycle and attain the highest state of yoga. Hence, it is imperative that a person understands the theory of Karma and its effect. Or else, even when the method for stopping the mental fluctuations is performed, new imprints will continue to be created through the actions. It will be in such a way where water is drained from one side and it gets filled from the other side.



The skill or the technique required to come out of this vicious cycle is what is referred as “Yoga Karmasu Kausalam” or “skill in action”. Thus, one must be vigilant while performing any action without getting attached to its result.

Therefore, it should be noted that complete cessation of the mental modifications will only be possible if all the actions are done as Karma Yoga. It is hence important for a practitioner of yoga to understand the theory of Karma Yoga to progress in his/her yogic journey.

At times selfless service is mistaken for helping or offering service to others. While this helps to dilute one’s ego, one can practice karma yoga in everyday activities such as duties to family or at work/business or service to others, however the key ingredient is to stay away from attachment to the results. The nature or type of the activity does not matter when done with the right attitude. Thus, all worldly activities when done with total awareness, utmost commitment, and without attachment to the fruits of action would lead to yoga.

It is important for aspirants of yoga to have the right understanding and knowledge about selfless service which purifies one’s mind, helps in inner growth and spiritual progress. This is the first discipline which every mumukshu (a person who wants to attain liberation) should follow.

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Happy Namam

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NAULI

- *Invigorating the Immune System*



 Dr. Geetha Balan

Shatkarma, also known as Shatkriya are a set of six yogic cleansing techniques described in the Haṭha Yoga texts, which are known to balance the constitution of an individual. These six cleansing techniques are said to promote health and well being by purifying the whole body.

Several health benefits of these procedures are indicated in the traditional texts of Yoga suggesting positive effects on various physiological and clinical domains. The main objective of Shatkriya is to balance the three humours (tridosha) in the body, mucus (kapha), bile (pitta) and wind (vata).

The cleansing techniques include Dhauti (internal cleansing), Basti (colon cleansing), Neti (nasal cleansing), Trataka (concentrated gazing), Nauli (abdominal massaging) & Kapalbhati (frontal sinus cleansing). They are practiced by the practitioner himself under the guidance of a teacher and without administration of any medicine. The shatkriyas are the lesser-known parts of the yogic discipline and have been used for thousands of years, and one of the most popular is Nauli Kriya.

Nauli Kriya is meant for those who do advanced yogic practices. It invigorates and energizes the pranic body and one of the very powerful methods used for Kuṇḍalinī awakening. It directly stimulates the Manipura chakra at the naval, which is the storehouse of vital energy and help in releasing the stagnant pranic energy to spread evenly throughout the body to rejuvenate and balance. Chakra kshetra and the triggering point of Manipura are also activated by Nauli kriya and boost the fire energy and transmute it to a different frequency level. The gut brain which is the second brain gets stimulated by Nauli and can manipulate all endocrine and nervous components, as internal organs get massaged which is beneficial in reducing stress and anxiety.

अमन्दवेगेन तुन्दं भ्रामयेदुभपार्श्वयोः ।
सर्वरोगात्रहिन्तीह देहानलवविर्धनम् ॥५१॥

*amandavegenatundambhrāmayedubhapārśvayoh/
sarvarogānnihantīhadehānalavivardhannam // 51//*

According to Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā (Chp 1.V.51), ‘Move the abdomen with very fast speed on both sides (right and left). This destroys all diseases and increases gastric fire.’ Gheraṇḍa Muni mentions Lauliki as the fourth cleansing practices, which is also mentioned in other texts as Nauli.

What is Nauli Kriya, and how to practice?

For yogis, being internally cleansed is essential for mental, physical, and spiritual focus and strength. Nauli is a preliminary cleansing exercise that involves isolating muscles in the abdominal area and sucking them inside the rib cage. Its origins lie in the Sanskrit roots nau ("boat") and li ("to cling to"), and when done correctly, the practice creates a wave motion in the abdominal area.

Method of Practice

First and foremost, always practice Nauli on an empty stomach, preferably first thing in the morning after evacuation. Do not eat or drink anything, even water, beforehand, as it will make the motion uncomfortable.

There are five steps of the Nauli Kriya. It's best to practice each one repeatedly before going on to the next for a beginner. This ensures that the full technique is done correctly.

- **Step 1 - Uddiyana Bandha:** From standing, place the hands on the thighs, bend the knees, and exhale all the air out of the lungs and pause. Relax the belly, but don't inhale. Swallow, and when the throat muscles tighten, hold. With the mouth closed and throat contracted, imagine taking a big inhale. No air will come in, but the pressure created by the diaphragm trying to draw air into the lungs will cause the abdominal contents to be hollowed out.
- **Step 2 - Agnisara Kriya:** Create a wave like motion with the abdominal muscles by engaging and releasing Uddiyana Bandha. Without inhaling or exhaling, slowly release the mock inhalation. And then again, without inhaling/exhaling, re-establish full Uddiyana Bandha.
- **Step 3 - Madhyama (Middle) Nauli:** Maintain the hollow created with Uddiyana Bandha in Step 1, and use the slight pressure of the hands against the thighs to push out the abdominal muscles. The vacuum will suck back the sides of the belly, and the rectus will protrude.
- **Stage 4 - Vama (Left) and Dakshina (Right) Nauli:** This one takes quite a bit of practice: If Step 3 is achieved, then work on isolating the left and right sides of the abdominals. From Step 3, release the weight from the right hand pushing down strongly into only the left thigh. This should make the right side of the abdomen retreat and the left side protrude (a shape known as Vama Nauli). Then, repeat on the other side: Release the left hand so that weight is only in the right (known as Dakshina Nauli).

Benefits:

Nauli has many health benefits, including the following:

- **Improved digestion:**

Nauli is thought to stimulate the body's digestive fire, also known as Jatharagni. By fueling this fire, the practice can be beneficial for digestion. Nauli is essentially an internalized form of an abdominal massage, which is known to stimulate and regulate digestion. Abdominal organs are taken to a higher position by the vacuum in the abdominal cavity and improve circulation of blood and fluids.

Nauli kriya is a powerful practice for internal organs in the abdominal area that requires core strength and the ability to isolate the rectus abdominis muscle. Practicing it properly and engaging these muscles regularly will strengthen and tone them. Also, re-tone the abdominal muscles after child birth as an effective post-natal therapy.

- **Healthier internal organs**

The churning effect of Nauli massages the internal organs (such as the stomach, liver, spleen, urinary bladder, pancreas, gallbladder, and large and small intestine) and helps the body eliminate toxins in the digestive tract. A study conducted on GERD (gastro esophageal reflux disease) showed that Nauli and Agnisara are helpful in treating it. It can reduce spasmodic dysmenorrhoea and relieve constipation and chronic indigestion. Pancreatic function is improved with increased insulin production, and thus help to control diabetes and boost immune system.

- **Helps in Weight loss**

This kriya increases body temperature while promoting assimilation, absorption, excretion, digestion, and appetite. Nauli is also regarded as a cure-all for weight loss or belly fat because it targets the extra fat that is present in the abdominal muscles directly.

- **Increased mental clarity**

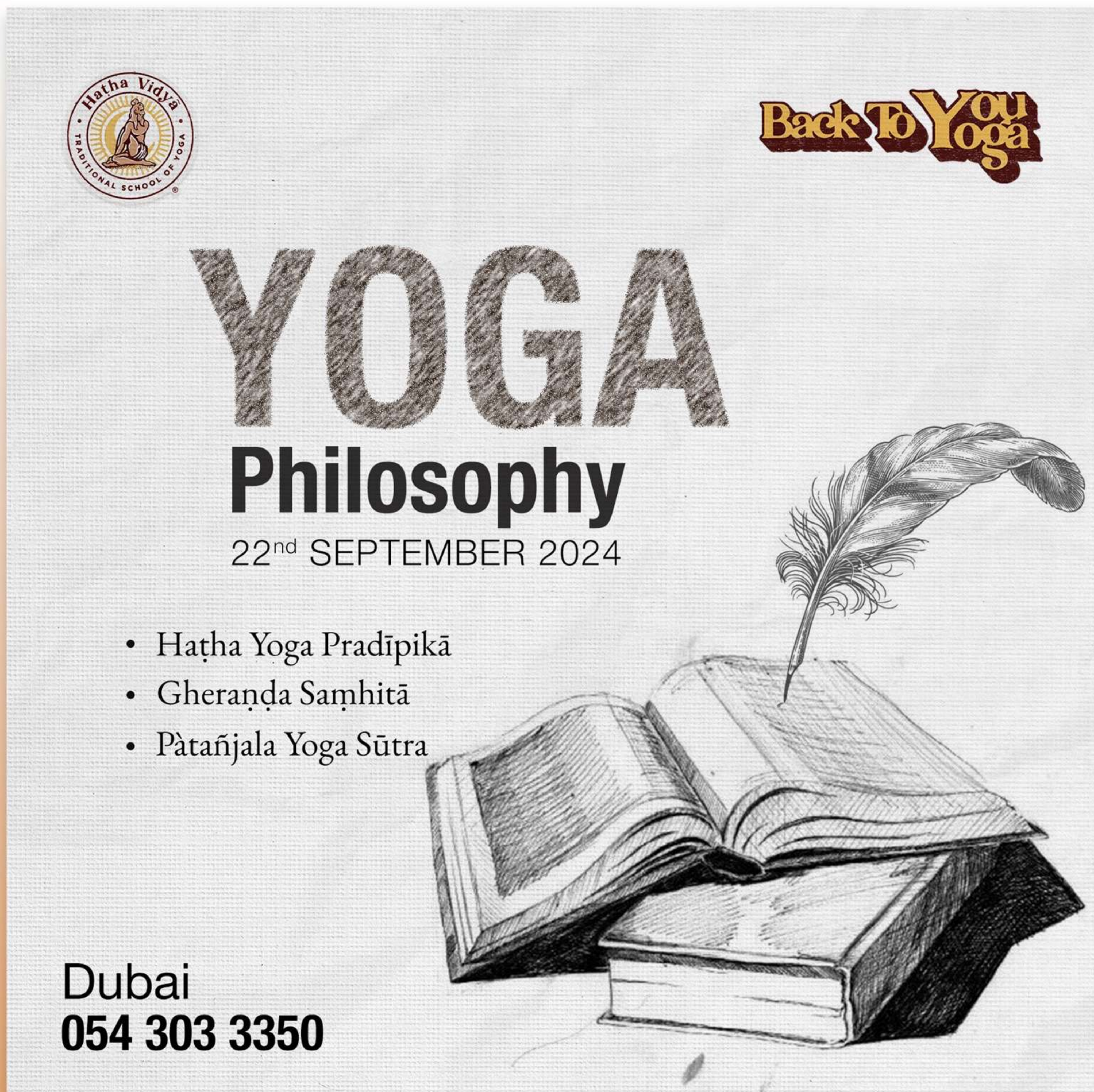
Nauli kriya enhance mental clarity and power as it harmonise the energy flow. It promote emotional balance and inner strength.

Precautions & Contraindication

Nauli may look unnatural and intimidating, but it is safe for most people. However, since it's an advanced yoga practice, it's best tried for the first time under the supervision of an experienced yoga teacher. There are also a few instances when one should not practice Nauli.

- People who have heart problems, high blood pressure, a hernia, gallstones, an acute peptic ulcer, or constipation shouldn't attempt the Nauli Kriya.
- Avoid Nauli Kriya following surgery, especially if it involves the abdomen.
- Nauli kriya should not be attempted or practiced by a pregnant lady or if planning to become pregnant.

Nauli is an advanced cleansing technique and must be practiced stage by stage, cautiously in order to avoid any counter effects of the practice. As recommended always, these practices must be done under the expert guidance of a Master.



The book cover for 'YOGA Philosophy' features a textured, light-colored background. In the top left corner is a circular logo for 'Hatha Vidya TRADITIONAL SCHOOL OF YOGA' with a central figure. In the top right corner is the 'Back To Yoga' logo in a stylized, golden font. The title 'YOGA' is written in large, bold, textured letters, with 'Philosophy' in a smaller, bold, black font below it. The date '22nd SEPTEMBER 2024' is centered below the title. A list of topics is provided: 'Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā', 'Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā', and 'Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra'. The bottom left corner displays 'Dubai' and the phone number '054 303 3350'. The bottom right corner features a detailed illustration of an open book with a quill pen resting on it.

ŚĪTALĪ KUMBHAKA

- *The Cooling Principle*



 Ulpala Das

In this fast paced modern times, where materialistic goals have become synonymous to the purpose of existence, human energies have reached a constant state of depletion. The mind of man has lost its balance in all levels of existence. There is an inability to adapt to the highly competitive and demanding lifestyle, which has given rise to a new epidemic of stress related diseases. Psychosomatic illnesses like hypertension, ulcers, digestive disorders etc. have all stemmed up periodically because the modern man has forgotten to bring a harmony in the body and mind. This is because the problem hardly lies in the body, but is generated due to underlying process of thinking and feeling.

Aādhi is the main cause of Vyādhi

The mental disturbances are the root cause of the physical disease

The thought processes generated during the lifetime result into a set of patterns that get accumulated and over a period of time, some of them turn into a toxic imprint on the consciousness. These imprints further on affect the regular day-to-day actions and the cycle continues until a conscious attempt is made to come out of this situation, to genuinely make an attempt to undo the old patterns. They need to be systematically removed. Most problems lie below the level of normal perception, in the subconscious and cause unhappiness, depression etc., manifesting on the outer layers of the physical body in the form of a disease.

Yogic practices helps to root out the cause of the mental conflicts and certain prāṇāyāma techniques are highly recommended in order to relax the body and the mind, relieving the physical fatigue and mental agitation. One such important practice is called Śītalī Prāṇāyāma.

Śītalī Prāṇāyāma

Śītalī is a Sanskrit word derived from the root word 'sheet' which means 'cold'. Sheetal means that which is calm and soothing.

जह्विया वायुमाकृष्य पूर्ववत्कुंभसाधनम् ।
शनकैर्घाणरंध्राभ्यां रेचयेत् पवनं सुधीः ॥ ५७ ॥

The wise inhale air through the tongue and practice kumbhaka as (described) before, and then exhale the air through the nostrils (57)

According to Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (Chp 2.v.57), drawing the air through the tongue, kumbhaka should be practiced, and then the intelligent yogi should exhale slowly the air through both the nostrils.

Technique:

- The tongue should be extended outside the mouth as far as possible and the sides rolled up so that it forms a tube.
- The breath is inhaled through this tube, so that the abdomen fills up with the air.
- Breath to be retained a few moments only along with the application of Moolabandha and should not be done for a longer time. It should be a momentary interval between the inhalation and exhalation.
- During that momentary breath retention, the tongue is pulled in, the mouth is closed and the breath is expelled out through the nose.
- The inhalation should produce a sound of rushing wind and there is a sense of coolness inside the mouth.

Importance of Kaki Mudrā

The use of Kaki Mudrā is required for properly practicing Śītalī prāṇāyāma. The word ‘kaki’ means ‘crow’. The shape of the mouth is made like that of the beak of a crow. Inhalation is done through the two lips pursed together. Both the practices have a cooling effect on the body.

Relevance of Śītalī Prāṇāyāma

Śītalī affects important brain centers associated with temperature regulations. Beginners can perform the practice of Śītalī as well. For advanced practitioners, the application of moolabandha while retaining the inhaled air gives added advantage to the practice. It functions as a complimentary practice to restore the heat in the body, particularly for the advanced practitioners who are engaged in Yoga Sādhanā Śītalī also unwinds and cools down the body and mind, inducing a state of relaxation. Practitioners of Yoga Nidra are able to use this as preparatory method before entering into the practice of Yoga Nidra. Śītalī, becomes supportive to diminish the over-active mind, making it stable & one-pointed and so is highly recommended.

At the same time the practice of Śītalī Kumbhaka, directly affects the salivary glands on the physical level and on a subtler level it influences the Saraswati Nadi, the pranic channel which is located at the base of the throat.

Benefits:

- It aids in reducing the body heat and also relaxes the mind.
- Reduces blood pressure, acidity in stomach and mental & emotional excitement.
- Gives control over hunger and thirst and excessive sweating during hot weather generating a feel of satisfaction.
- Reduces metabolic rate, and physical tiredness, maintaining a state of inner calmness for a longer period of time.
- Induces muscular relaxation, mental tranquility and functions as a pre-requisite practice for Yoga Nidra.
- Functions as an inevitable practice for people suffering from insomnia and hypertension.

Contraindications:

- Should be practiced in clean and non-polluted place, since the air is directly inhaled through the mouth.
- Practice should be avoided in cooler climates.
- Those suffering from any sort of respiratory diseases, asthma, should avoid the practice of Śītalī.
- People who are introvert in nature should practice this kumbhaka under the guidance of an eminent Master.

The practices explained under the series of Kumbhaka Padhati are supposed to be done, under the know-how and supervision of an eminent Acharya or a Guru. These practices have subtler impacts on the layers of consciousness and certain supportive practices before and after Śītalī prāṇāyāma for it to be effective.



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TĀḌĀSANA

- *Traditional Approach*



 Hetal Takkar

Maintaining good health, alleviation of diseases and long healthy life are natural wishes of all human beings. The rational human mind has been curiously searching for permanent solution to get these physical benefits. Tradition of Haṭha Yoga explored all possibilities to live a healthy long life.

The practices of Haṭha yoga do not merely deal with external or gross body of human being, but also extensively delves into inner faculties of the mind to locate the possible cause of human suffering and find the possibilities to come out from the pain and live the life with complete happiness.

हठस्य परथमाङ्गत्वादासनं पूर्वमुच्यते |
कुर्यात्तदासनं सथैर्यमारोग्यं छाङ्ग-लाघवम् || १. १७ ||

*haṭhasya prathamāṅghatvādāsanam pūrvamuchyate |
kuryāttadāsanam sthairyamāroghyam chāṅgha-lāghavam || 1.17 ||*

āsana being the foremost of the limbs of Haṭha yoga, bestows stability, health and suppleness of the body.

In present time, the practice of asanas is undertaken by large group of population across the globe. Out of many yogic practices, asana or body postures have been found to be relatively easy to practice and adopt.

Moreover, scientific research on the aspects of yoga practices on human health and wellbeing is still somewhat preliminary, but the result of these studies supports the evidence of the benefits given in the traditional Haṭha yogic texts, which have been encouraging and developed further interest into the yogic practices. Health benefits of asanas are so impressive that the entire discipline of yoga is recognized by most of the populace as asana alone.

The cornerstone of all the standing Yoga asana is Tāḍāsana. In this edition of “Insight into the Asana”, we will understand what Tāḍāsana is, the steps to perform the asana and explore the benefits and contraindications.

Tāḍāsana is a Sanskrit term made up of two words where ‘Tada’ implies ‘palm’ or ‘mountain’ and ‘āsana’ signifies “posture” or ‘seat’. It is a physical embodiment of standing strong like a palm tree or an unshakeable mountain. Hence, also called Palm

tree stance or mountain posture. However, this asana is considered as a samasthitih asana. ‘Sama’ means equal and ‘Sthitih’ means standing still. Maintain the Tāḍāsana, standstill with your weight balanced evenly across your feet.

Tāḍāsana is considered as one of the 84 traditional āsanas. The posture resembles Nachiketa- āsana. This āsana is mentioned in traditional text Navnatha 84 Siddha. Moreover, this asana is also referred to as Talasana as per some ancient Haṭha yoga texts.

Tāḍāsana is also referred in well-known ancient text Yoga Rahasya by Nathamuni which gives deep insight into the use and application of yoga.

Nothing lasting can be built on a shaky foundation. This may be why Tāḍāsana is considered to be the starting point of all standing asana which gives the foundation for many other yoga asanas. This standing posture is suitable for most yoga practitioners. When a person stands in Tāḍāsana, their spine aligns perfectly in its natural curves. This enhances the stability and the vitality of the spine.

To obtain the maximum benefits by means of physical and trance physical, yoga asanas must be performed in a proper sequential order. Following are the steps to perform Tāḍāsana.

- Stand upright, align the feet, so that the big toes and heels touch each other.
- Bring the hands together and lock the fingers.
- Inhale while lifting your arms in front, also lift your heels off the ground simultaneously.
- Rotate your wrist outwards and raise the hands above the head. Make sure the elbows are straight.
- Balance the entire body weight on your toes as long as you are comfortable.
- Now slowly, while exhaling bring the arms down and lower the heels.
- Release the fingers and return to initial position.

Though Tāḍāsana looks deceptively simple, as you follow the procedure, you realise that it is challenging to maintain the posture for long. Tāḍāsana is more about maintaining proper balance while focusing on the breath to ensure it is steady and relaxed.

Consistency and following the right steps under the guidance of expert yoga teachers, are the two prominent factors for ensuring that you attain maximum benefits.

Here are some benefits of Tāḍāsana.

- **Improves Posture:** With the advent of technology and unhealthy sitting postures at work and home gradually leads to posture misalignment, stiff muscle and sudden muscle strain or pull. The subsist practice of Tāḍāsana is helpful to realign the entire spine and bring it back to a neutral stance. Additionally, it also bolsters shoulders, back, thighs, knees and ankles.
- **Assist in Increasing Height:** Specially teenagers and children, if they practice Tāḍāsana on a regular basis, noticeable changes can be seen in their height. The elongation or stretch while doing the asana, activates hormonal glands which in turn boosts the production of growth hormone that helps in stretching all parts of the body.
- **Boost Mental Awareness :** Maintaining Tāḍāsana for a longer period of time requires one's complete focus at one point, which ultimately makes one calm, composed and alert by deepening the awareness.
- **Improves Breathing :** Deep stretch in the intercoastal muscles, helps to open the alveolar passage to improve the lung function. Deep breathing is considered crucial as it relaxes your muscles, improves blood circulation, and lowers blood pressure.
- **Assist in Managing the Sciatic Pain:** Tāḍāsana stretches the entire spine and skeletal muscles which relieves compression in the spinal cartilage. Apart from this it works on hips, thighs, calf muscles which gives the relief from the pain due to sciatic. Moreover, it strengthens the abdominal muscles and promotes the proper alignment of the spine, helps to reduce back pain which generally happens due to weak muscles.
- **Stimulates Digestion:** Tāḍāsana leads to a gentle compression of the abdomen. It can help to relive digestive discomfort and stimulate digestion.
- **Beneficial for Arthritis and Parkinson's Disease :** Stretching the entire body and standing straight in Tāḍāsana provides the strength to all the joints and muscles, like hips, knees, ankles, shoulders, wrists, fingers etc. Regular practice of this asana promotes the easy movements of these joints and improves the balance which helps to manage with the symptoms of these disease.
- **Calms the Mind:** Focusing on steady breath and alignment of the body while practicing Tāḍāsana works on autonomous nervous system which naturally leads to the sense of calmness and mental clarity to the practitioner. Gradually it helps to reduce the stress and anxiety.

Though Tāḍāsana provides set of multiple advantages, while practising this asana the following precautions and contraindications need to be considered.

Contraindications :

- Persons having ankle, knee or spinal injury should not directly practice the final stage of Tāḍāsana. Standing for some time in this final posture, can be strenuous and may further cause damage. They should strengthen these areas and then gradually initiate the asana.
- People with vertigo, migraine, low or high blood pressure should practice this asana cautiously. Such ailments may cause dizziness and this posture may bring more discomfort or pain. They can practice this posture without raising the hands instead keep the hand on waist.
- Senior citizens and pregnant women may find some difficulty to balance in this pose. But expert Yoga teachers can give them some variation in Tāḍāsana, like feet can be kept slightly apart or use of wall support will help to gain balance and maintain the posture for longer time.
- People having the knock knees, may find difficulty to perform this posture but keeping the heels apart will help the practitioner to get balance.
- Varicose veins – a condition where the veins get engorged and twisted or in acute arthritis where there is swelling and pain in the joints, people suffering from these conditions must not lift their heels while practicing Tāḍāsana.

Tāḍāsana is a simple yet effective yoga posture which provides the sense of balance, stability and enhance the awareness of the body and surroundings that extend beyond the mat into your daily life.



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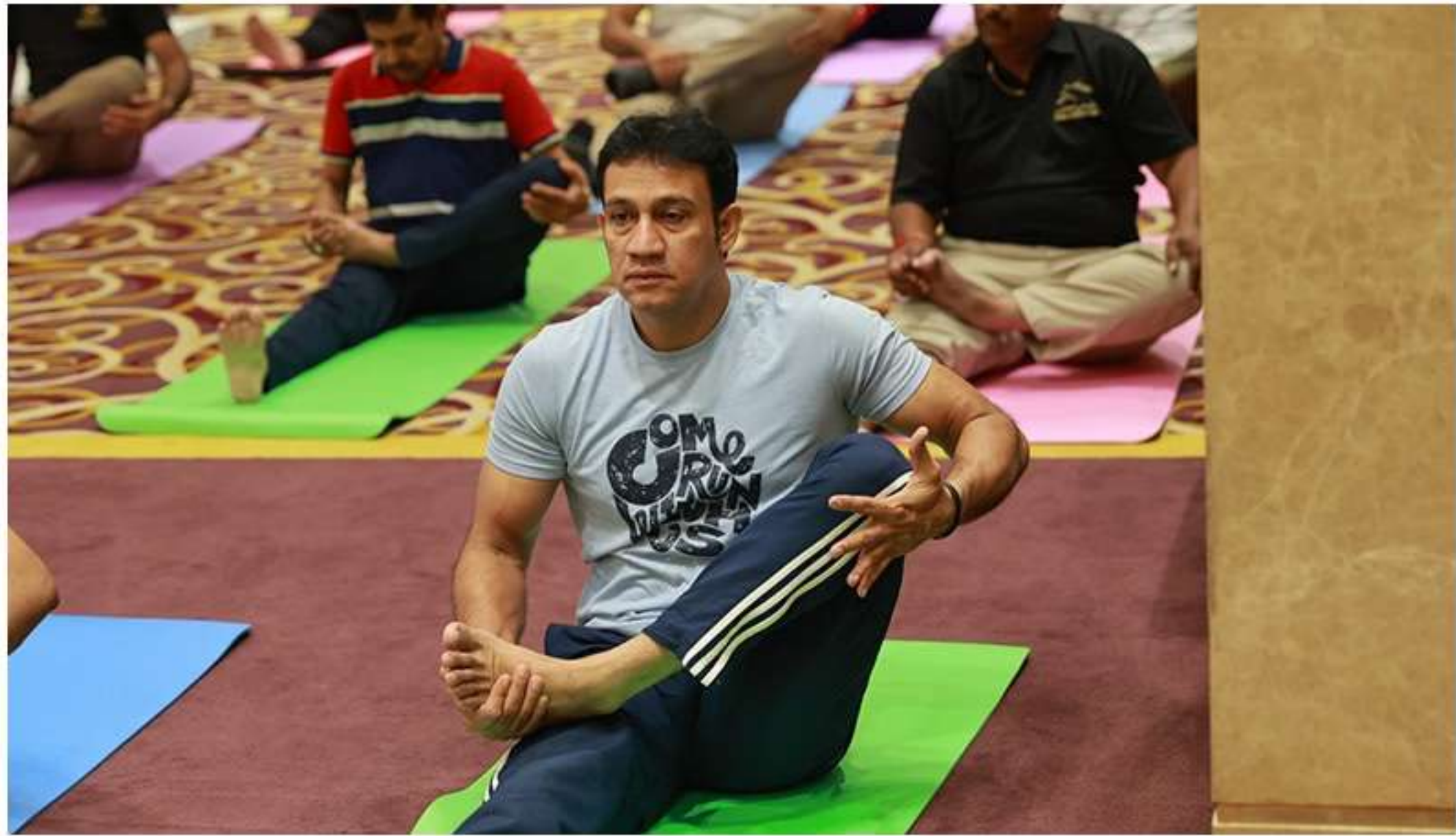
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