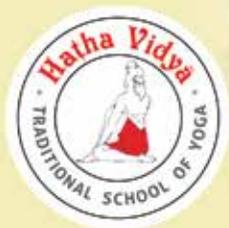


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July 2023

An exclusive e-magazine on traditional yoga





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*Dhyāna-Moolam Gurur-Murthih  
Pujā-Moolam Gurur-Padam |  
Mantra-Moolam Gurur-Ākṣyam  
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**

We once again celebrated Guru Purnima Day on 3 July this year. In this occasion it will be appropriate to give some thoughts on Guru, Guru Tatva, and Sishya (disciple or student).

At the outset the words Teacher, Acharya and Guru may apparently be understood as synonyms of the same notion. In general, all the three words are perceived as referring to those who advise us based on Sastras (scriptures) and thereby leading us to the subject through the knowledge they gained. However, the ultimate Dharma (inherent duty) of each of these roles are quite different. We can explore the essence of each of these roles based on the underlying inherent duty.

One who teaches us based on established scriptures or in other words teaching us repeated recitation of the scriptures is a teacher. Whereas an Acharya is one who lives by what is prescribed in the scriptures and passes on the knowledge from this experience to the students. A true Acharya always wishes for their students to attain heights beyond what they themselves have attained. Therefore, a Guru should also, and always be, an Acharya.

*“Jnanavan Gururuchyathe”*

*Knowledge of the internal true self within is the real form of a Guru.*

“Gu” indicates darkness and “Ru” implies transformation. Guru is the form of the true knowledge, and the one who removes the darkness and who is self illuminous.

*“Sooryavath Sarva Deepam”*

*Like a sun, Guru radiates and illuminates everything.*

For any individual to progress in spiritual path, all the three levels of guidance is necessary. The individual may be the same, however the guidance and knowledge shared will depend on the intent, nature, and purity of the seeker and seeking. The depth of the question will determine the depth of the answers. The level of reception of the student seeking knowledge will form the basis to determine in what role the guide is perceived i.e, whether as a teacher, Acharya or Guru.

Knowledge is like water, based on the form of its container it can either contract or expand to any extent. To which vessel it should be transferred is the acumen of the one who transfers the knowledge.

Guru is the human incarnation that radiates divinity. A Sadhak (seeker) who has attained the state of realization that he/she is not different from Guru, is also able to reach the understanding that there is no Guru outside or external. Here the word Guru

does not imply the human form or personality of the person rather it implies the ultimate consciousness within them realized by their intense Tapas (sustained disciplined efforts). That knowledge is the state of absolute pure consciousness; that knowledge is Gurutvam (essence of Guru).

The state of Siva Bodam (absolute consciousness) established in the Guru is what in reality should a Sadhak recognize as Guru and his body is simply a covering that holds the state of pure consciousness. Regardless, a disciple does consider Guru's inner self and his/her body as the same. Guru's essence within the person is no different from the body. An idol and the Chaitanya (energy or consciousness) established within an idol is worshiped as one. In the same way, Guru's consciousness and the human body should be viewed as the same.

When a pure substance is transferred to another container, the purity of the receiving vessel should be examined. For instance, milk is a pure substance. When milk is to be transferred to another vessel, it is important to ensure that the receiving container is clean, otherwise the milk once transferred may get spoiled. In that case the one who is receiving and the one giving will gain no benefit. Similarly, before pure knowledge is shared, the purity of the student, the ability of the student to receive the knowledge, and unique nature of the student should be understood before the Guru imparts the knowledge. For this, many methods are deployed. Only when knowledge is transferred after properly understanding the student it will get established within the student and helps in his progress and development. To receive such a knowledge Sraddha is needed. Sraddha means total attention with reverence which can be explained as follows:

*“Sastrasya guruvakyasa satyabudhya avadharana sasradha kadhidha sraddhe”*

So to be able to receive the Tatva (quintessence), the seeker should become eligible. Then what is the eligibility? Unshakable faith in Shastras and Guru's words, dispassion in worldly matters, absence of desires, and extra ordinary devotion to divine should qualify the seeker. A Sishya (disciple) should be diligent, moderate in food consumption, ability to think, perform service without expectation, ability to do critical analysis, should be brave, and should not have impoverished mind.

Ultimately, based on the Vidhya (teachings/knowledge) received from the Guru, finding out the internal guru within the self is the inherent duty of the Sishya. In this manner through an unbroken chain of Guru-Sishya lineage such knowledge is being transferred under a tradition. It is my privilege to be part of such a tradition which I consider as a true blessing.

Acharya *Bala*

# Hatha Yoga

## The Eligibility



Everyone aspires to live a pain-free life but whatsoever one tries, it is hardly the reality of life. From time-to-time mankind goes through varying troubles and sufferings endlessly. The verse we are covering in this edition of Tradition Speaks provides insights on pain and how Hatha Yoga helps the practitioner to overcome pains and sufferings. It also establishes that Hatha Yoga is the base for all the yogic pursuits.

The verse for this article is from Hatha Pradipika which reads as follows:

अशेष्ह-ताप-तप्तानां समाश्रय-मठो हठः |  
 अशेष्ह-योग-युक्तानामाधार-कमठो हठः || १० ||  
 aśeṣha-tāpa-taptānāṃ samāśraya-maṭho haṭhaḥ |  
 aśeṣha-yogha-yuktānāmādhāra-kamaṭho haṭhaḥ || 10 ||

*Hathayoga is sheltering monastery for those who are afflicted by endless suffering (and also) this hatha yoga is a sheltering object like a tortoise for those who are engaged in practicing numerous types of yoga.*

The first part of the verse highlights Hatha Yoga (or Hatha) as a shelter that protects the practitioner from suffering, and second part indicates the relevance of Hatha Yoga in any spiritual path. Thus the verse establishes for whom Hatha Yoga is prescribed.

### Three Types of Pain

The word Tapa used in this verse implies pain. There are three types of pain (tapa traya) which are Adhyatmika, Adhi Bautika, and Adhi Daivika. Adhyatmika refers to internal suffering caused from one's own body and mind. Adhi Bautika refers to pain caused from actions from one's immediate surroundings, and Adhi Daivika refers to pain brought by natural circumstances or disasters. Among all the three types of pains, people are most affected by Adhyatmika, pain from internal suffering. This comes primarily from physical ailments, unfulfilled desires, or expectations, attachments, and/or bondages.

### Hatha Yoga to protect from pain

Hatha Yoga (or Hatha) is a comprehensive system that helps human beings to completely come out of troubles and to experience life in its fullest, which is the only purpose behind yogic practices. Hatha works on one's entire system of life, not just body or mind, but also internal systems, subtle faculties, experiences, and perceptions.

It works in totality of one's life experiences and leaves no stones unturned. Haṭha Yoga is so vast that whichever way we explain how it helps practitioner to overcome pain, it may not be complete or cover all aspects. Nevertheless, let's explore the various ways and dimensions in which Haṭha Yoga works on the practitioners in coping up with one's sufferings.

Haṭha Yoga practices helps one to improves one's body health and helps prevent from diseases and ailments that causes bodily pain. Haṭha practices makes one strong not only physically but also mentally. In Gheranda Samhita, one of the traditional yogic text, Haṭha Yoga, is referred to as Ghata yoga to imply that the practices makes one stronger like baking the clay pot in fire. Haṭha works wholistically on body and mind and helps gain control over the body and mind. The practices are such that it indirectly trains the mind to develop acceptance of uncomfortable situations and pain. Haṭha develops endurance, resilience, patience, and perseverance that is needed to manage difficulties and overcome pain. The practices enable one to develop acceptance of all situations, whether favourable or unfavourable, and thereby develops indifference to sufferings.

### **Complete removal of pain?**

Pain and its cause can be explained in many dimensions. In general pain could be explained as originating from one's non acceptances of situation which are outside their comfort zone

and/or expectations. Pain can also be attributed to one's identification. One feels agony only because of identifying themselves with their own body, mind, event or person. Pain can be prevented by detachment and can be overcome with the understanding that it is the samskaras & senses that fabricates the suffering.

Therefore, permanent relief from sufferings is possible only through understanding our own self and moving out of identification with the body and mind. In order to achieve this state, higher level of thinking and superior perception of life is needed which is very rare to achieve only by intellectual contemplation or reading of books and scriptures. It requires complete purification of body, mind and thought process.

### **Hatha Yoga for transcending from sufferings**

Haṭha Yoga has structured practices that helps one to completely come out of troubles. Hathayogic practices not only works on body but also on much more subtle faculties such as nadis, pranas, chakras and flow or energy within us that are relevant for human system to function to its true potential.

Purification of mind cannot happen without purification of body which is trained with asanas to prepare the body for further practices. Subsequently one undergoes cleansing practices and is later introduced to pranayama practices to regulate the breath, purify the nadis (pranic channels) and gain control over the pranas. Then

advanced practices of mudras and bandas are applied for awakening and activation of the subtle energy centers.

As one progresses and gets established in the practice, the result is elevated thinking wherein the practitioner always has noble thoughts and does not go after mundane or pleasure seeking activities. This eventually overcomes the bondages created by the lower centers in terms of lust, greed, desires for worldly objects, possessiveness and all other attributes which are the sources of pain. Ultimately one will be free from troubles and will carry out the activities while at the same time distancing from it. The practitioner also gets the maturity to accept unfavorable circumstances.

Haṭha Yoga does not just help overcome pain but leads one to enjoy life in its fullest. We are naturally equipped with the highest state of consciousness that does not get affected by any of the three kinds of pain. However, the samskaras and conditioning overpower one's real self. Haṭha Yoga helps to go back to our root to shine out as one's own natural existence. Haṭha helps one to use this body to go through the life experiences without getting overwhelmed or affected by such experiences.

### **Hatha as the base of all yogic practices**

The second part of the verse states that for spiritual seekers of all types of yoga, Haṭha Yoga provides

sheltering support like a tortoise. Here the use of the analogy of a tortoise is very significant. Tortoise is a symbol of patience and endurance. There are several schools of thought, wherein the tortoise is supporting the earth on its back. Using this analogy, it is said that Haṭha Yoga will provide the fundamental support for all spiritual practitioners of yoga. When we say spiritual practice, it is nothing but the process of understanding one's own self which helps one understand the reality to live this life in its full essence.

Another way to interpret this analogy is that, whenever in danger a tortoise will bring its limbs inwards wherein its entire body is protected under its strong shell. Similarly, anyone practicing yoga should be able to control the senses and move inwards beyond the senses to understand one's inner true being. Haṭha Yoga provides systematic practices that will enable the practitioner to gradually cross over the barriers of sensual life experiences to move internally to understand the reality.

There are several paths of yoga one can pursue to understand thy self or the reality such as the jnana yoga, bakthi yoga, karma yoga, hatha yoga, mantra yoga, and raja yoga. Of these multitude of paths, Haṭha Yoga can be pursued by anyone regardless of age, gender, race, physical condition, or level of understanding or maturity. Even for those who are pursuing other paths, hatha yogic practices are recommended, as it

provides a strong support to achieve spiritual progress.

Haṭha Yoga helps to resurrect human system and consciousness level to its true nature, thereby fostering superior way of living. Haṭha Yoga does not preach philosophical ideas, rather it simply provides the techniques and practices. There are many other paths that could help one to go inwards, however in the modern-day world with all the distractions, Hatha could be the only recourse. Without preparing and purifying the body, nadis and mind, it is very difficult to progress unless the practitioner is blessed with poorva samskaras (latent impressions).

It is also important to understand that only through a guru or a guide hatha yogic practices can be understood and experienced, otherwise the practice will be at peripheral level. Hatha gives tech-

niques, but it needs to be understood and applied appropriately, for that one needs a guru.

### Conclusion

Haṭha Yoga is flawless system as it is passed down from our ancient masters beginning from the Adiyogi under a continuous unbroken lineage of masters. It can never go wrong; it is meant to remove pain; and transcends one into superior way of living, a life without being troubled by troubles. One needs a guide to be able to take full advantage of what Hatha has to offer.

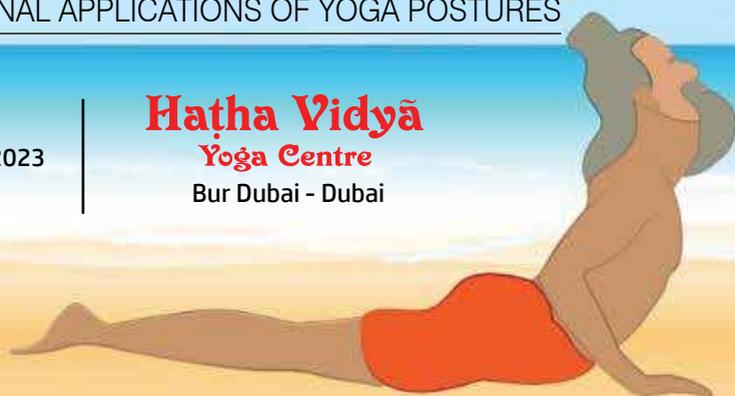
Pain and sufferings are good because it will enable seeking; seeking will help one to understand the truth; and for those seekers Hatha is the base. Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to say that pain leads to life and Haṭha Yoga with a proper guide, will show the way. t t

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Session by: Acharya *Bala*

# Bhūtaśuddhi

The Inner Purification



*“Viswam sareeramityuktam panchabhu-  
taatmakam mune”*

*“The human body composed of the  
panchabhutas (five elements) is a  
miniature version of the cosmic  
universe”*

- Tantrasaaram:

According to yoga sastra, microcosm (individual human body) is a representation of the macrocosm (universe). The ultimate goal in one’s life is to excel in their lives with utmost fulfillment. All the activities one engages in is to achieve this goal. However, if this should be achievable completely, it is necessary to have inner purity (Aantari-ka Shuddi) as much as the need for Bahya Shuddi (purity of external body). But internal purity is not something that can be attained easily as it involves purification of Antahkaranas (inner instruments or internal cognitive faculties) which are subtler and stronger compared to Bahyakaranas (external oriented sense organs).

Bahya Shuddi i.e. external cleansing is for eliminating those impurities that are generated internally from within the body. Whereas Antarika Shuddi is internal purification which removes the impurities caused by inputs from external factors i.e., the veil of ignorance caused by the sense organs.

The impurities of Antahkaranas are primarily influenced and impacted by the undesirable factors that come from external source through the sense organs. The aim of inner purification is all about refinement of the Antahkaranas which include the Manas (Mind), Bhuddi (Intellect), Ahankara (Ego) and Chitta (Self-consciousness).

Antahkaranas occupies significant prominence and utmost importance than Bahya Shuddi mainly because of its subtle and superior nature. Inner purification requires much caution and patience than external purification. While external cleansing is unavoidable in day to day life, purification of Antahkaranas which concerns the inner self, is much more relevant and essential. This is because, only through purified Atahkaranas, one can reach and illuminate their own Atma Chaintanyam (inner light or self-consciousness). Therefore, one has to undertake regular practices for purification of Antahkaranas. The practical techniques to implement and attain the objective of inner purification, as provided in the yoga sastras and tantra practices is known Bhutashuddi also referred to as Bhuta Samharam.

In traditional Hatha Yogic texts, especially in Gheranda Samhita, reference to Samanu practices under the section for Pranayama practices actually indicates practice of Bhutashuddi. Bhutashuddi practice is the highest and advanced level of Pranayama. Therefore it requires a lot of preparations. Through undergoing step by step practices in a systematic manner and once the practitioner gets established in the practices after achieves certain level of progress, then the practice referred to as Samanu is prescribed which involves Pranayama with Mantra (repetition of prescribed sound syllables).

When Pranayama is combined with Mantras, internal purification happens. In human body, which is a manifestation of Panchabhoodhas (five elements), the tatwas (elements) of Bhoomi (or Pritvi or Earth), Apa (or Jala or Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air), and Akasa (Ether) are visualized within the body from foot till head and accordingly the body is subject to complete inner purification in the practice of Bhutashuddi. This process has various stages as per prescribed methods.

Bhutashuddi is necessary before proceeding into advanced stages of pranayama practices, particularly before getting into Kriya practices for Kundalini (inner life energy) awakening. Similarly, before getting into Tantric Kriyas (systematic tantric practices) especially the Aradhana Kramas (tantric ritualistic practices), it is essential to get established in Bhutashuddi.

According to Tantra Sastra, physical human body encompasses three spiritual Tejas (effulgence). Jiva Chaitanya (life effulgence) shines within the body as Agni Chaitanya (Effulgence of Fire) in Mooladhara, Surya Tejas (Splendor of Solar) in the heart region, and as Soma Prabhapooritham (radiance of Moon) in Sahasrara. It is further prescribed that, in Mooladhara it exists in a subtlest form, in Hridaya (heart region) as Sva Prakasagan (self -luminous), and in Sahasrara as samastakoshas (as oneness in totality).

As per established masters, merging of Jivatma (individual consciousness), within the Pramatta (cosmic consciousness) is Yoga i.e. understanding the Samashti Chaitanya (Cosmic Intelligence) within the Vyashti (Individual Body) is Yoga. Human body is divided in to 5 Mandalas (regions). From foot until knee is Pritvi mandala, from knees until Nabhi (Navel) is Jala Mandala, Nabhi to Hridaya (Heart region) is Agni Mandala, from Hridaya to Bhrumadya (middle of eyebrows) is Vayu Mandala, from Bhrumadya to Sahasrara is Akasa Mandalam. The process that includes systematic and sequential methods applied to extinguish these five mandalas is Bhuta Samharam (or Bhutashuddi). Samharam involves the process of absorbing as one, then intaking the Panchabhoodas.

The process and methods prescribed for assimilating all the Panchabhootas beginning from Earth element, as well as the subjects manifested by

these Panchabootas is known as Bhutashuddi. This involves merging of Bhoomi mandala into Jala mandala, then Jala Mandala into Agni Mandala, Agni Mandala into Vayu Mandala, Vayu Mandala into Akasa Mandala, Akasa Mandala into Ahankara, Ahankara into Mahat, and then finally Mahat into Mahaprakriti. In here Ahankara includes the three qualities of Satva, Rajas, and Tamas. Mahat also implies cosmic intelligence.

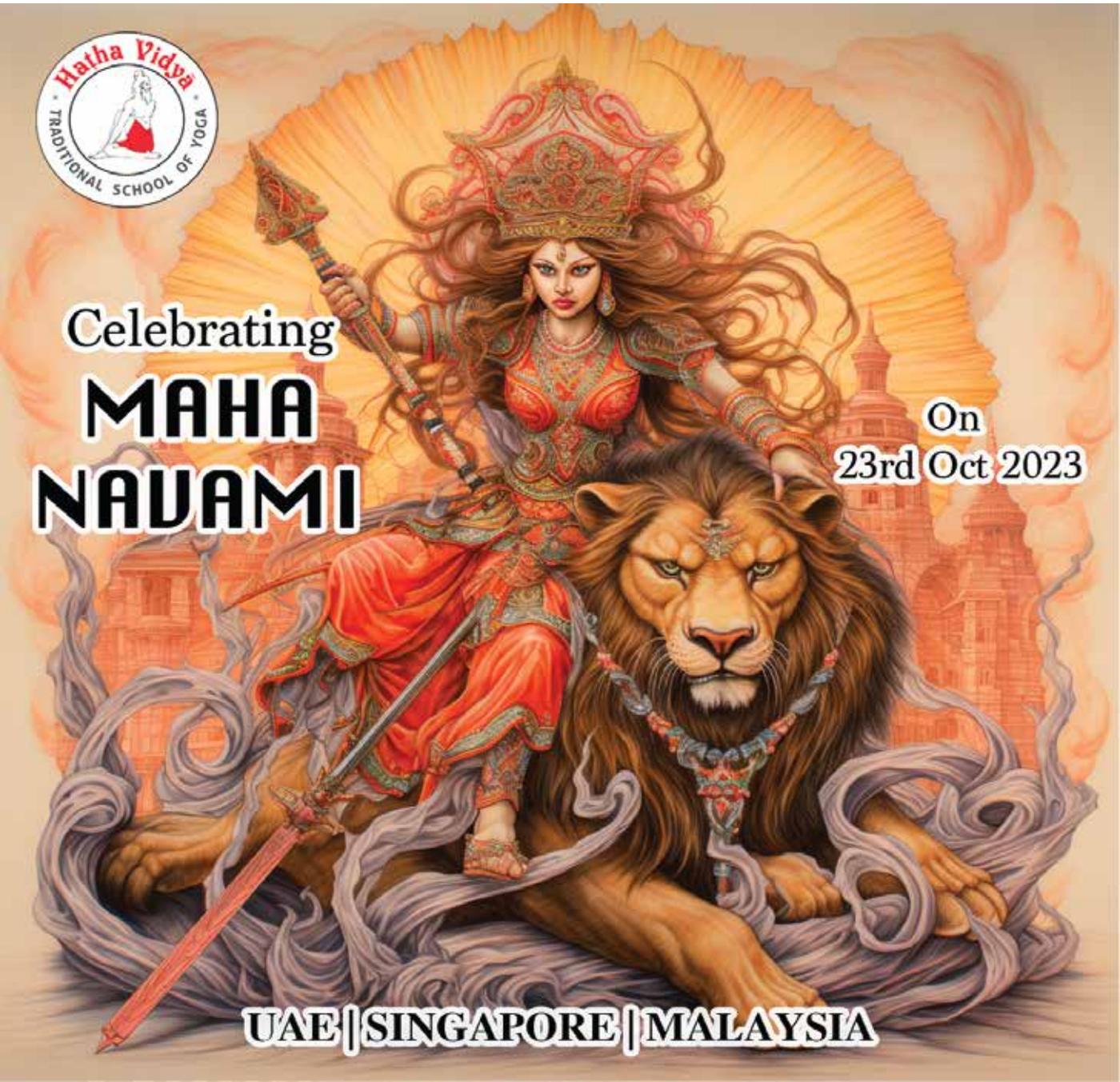
Sankhya dharshana which explains the theory of evolution also emphasizes on the Panchabhootas. That Panchabhootas are very subtle in nature. Extinguishing the journey from the gross element of Earth in the panchabhootas until the Moolaprakriti which is achieved by aggregating and merging the Panchabhootas together and then dissolving them into Prakriti is what the ultimate aim of Bhutashuddi practice.



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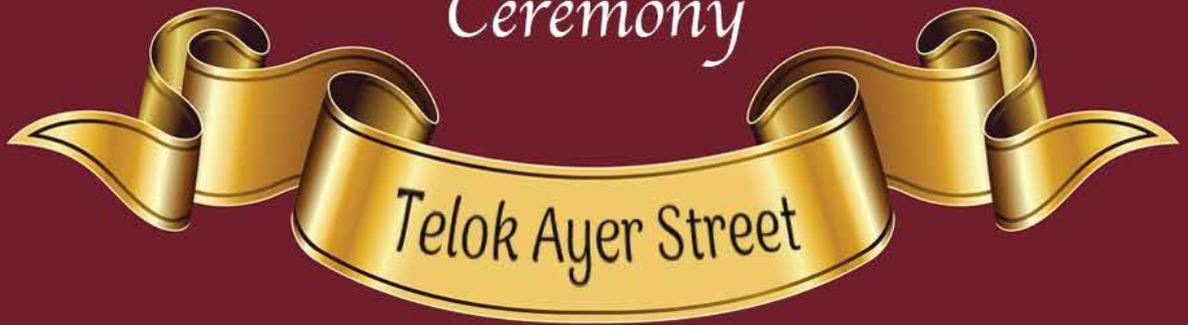


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# Raja Yoga

An Insight



One of the most used words related to the subject of yoga is Raja Yoga. The term “Raja” means “Royal” which is used as an attribute to explain the highest state of Yoga that leads to Samadhi. The authentic texts like Patanjala Yoga Sutras, Hathapradipika & Bhagavad Gita has cited about Raja Yoga and so, it can be explained from different perspectives.

Raja Yoga is one of the divisions under the Prana Samyama Yoga which consists of regulating the breath in order to control the mind. Raja Yoga or the Royal path is considered as the highest state of Hatha Yoga. Some also consider that aṣṭāṅgayoga of sage Patanjali as the method to Raja Yoga. However, in both methods the idea is to attain samadhi.

It is clearly mentioned in Hathayogapradipika, that Hathayoga without Raja yoga or Raja yoga without Hatha yoga cannot be accomplished. According to Svātmārāma, Raja Yoga means samadhi and Hatha yoga is like a ladder to attain samadhi.

The basic notion about Patanjala Yoga Sutra is that it refers only to aṣṭāṅga yoga or Raja Yoga. However, in Patanjala Yoga Sutra it is not just aṣṭāṅga

yoga that has been referred to. Based on the level of the Sadhak, and based on the receptivity of the sadhak, sage Patanjali has devised different techniques through various Sutras. For example, for a sadhak who has already achieved the control over his mind, sage Patanjali has mentioned “abhyāsa-vairāgya-ābhyāntan-nirodhaḥ”, which means that through practice and dispassion, one can attain the state of yoga. But for a medium level practitioner or Sadhak, Patanjali has advised kriya yoga. “tapaḥ svādhyāyeśvara praṇidhānāni kriyā yogaḥ”. For those practitioners, who do not fall in the above two categories, Patanjali has advised step by step progression through aṣṭāṅga yoga there by enhancing their receptivity towards the subject.

Raja Yoga involves the following eight steps which will lead to a state of mental and emotional harmony and eventually spiritual enlightenment. The first four steps which is the yama, niyama, asanas and pranayama are considered as “Bahiranga Yoga”, ie, more physical and gross level practices are involved in these.

**Yama:** moral disciplines including non-violence and truthfulness.

**Niyama:** personal disciplines including cleanliness and self-discipline.

**Asana:** Physical postures for preparing the body for meditation.

**Pranayama:** Regulating the breath which will help to focus.

Whereas, partially from Pratyahara to Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi the practices are subtler and is referred to as “Antharanga Sadhana” which leads a sadhak to attain the highest state of Yoga.

**Pratyahara:** Withdrawal of the senses, thereby turning inward.

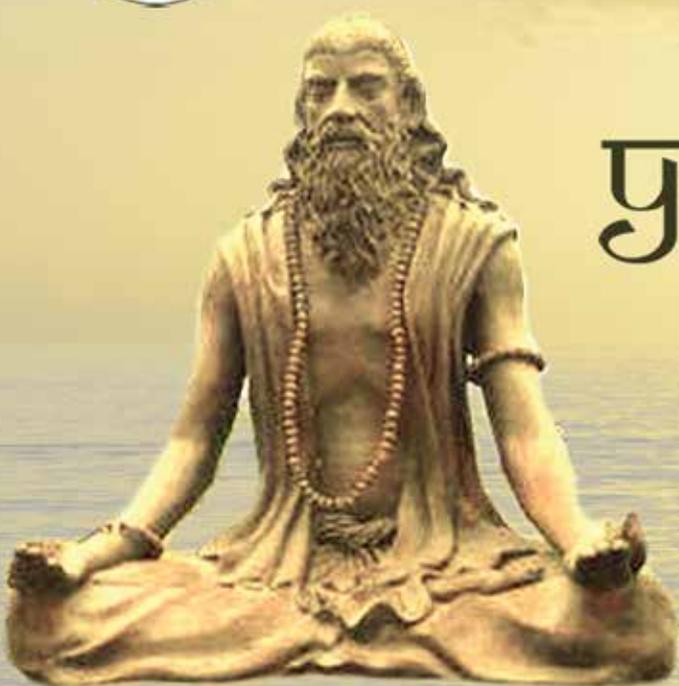
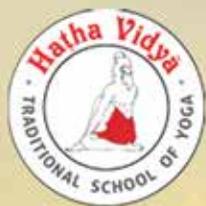
**Dharana:** Concentration by focusing

the mind on a single object or idea.

**Dhyana:** meditation which happens automatically after dharana.

**Samadhi:** State of blissful enlightenment.

The Antharanga sadhana which is otherwise also referred to as the practice of Raja yoga is one of the most important and essential practice that leads a practitioner to attain Samadhi. These three levels of subtler practices of dharana, dhyana and samadhi is Raja Yoga which is a powerful technique that helps a practitioner to attain growth spiritually and have clarity in their lives.



# Pàtañjala yoga sūtra

Psychological basis  
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Course by: Acharya *Bala*

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# Chandrayanam

Move Along the Moon



Sage Patanjali in PYS II-43 says “Kayendriyasiddhih ashuddhikshayat tapasah”, the purification of body along with sensory organs can be achieved by adopting proper Tapas (Austerity). The role of mind in the creation of health and disease has been well emphasized in ancient Indian texts. Moreover, the phases of the moon are said to influence the emotions of a person and thus can indirectly affect the health of a person. The modern world is also realizing these links and hence there is a surge of detoxification programs everywhere.

A unique rejuvenation program, Chandrayanam is an ancient Indian austerity practice observed to reduce impurities in body and mind, followed on the basis of the lunar cycle. Two lunar cycles exist full moon to full moon and new moon to new moon.

Full moon to full moon cycle represents the ‘Pipilika’ or ant. If Chandrayanam is followed during this cycle the yogis would eat 15 morsels of food on the first day which would steadily reduce in quantity till the 15th day on that day they would fast. The quantity of food would be increased slowly again from the 16th day till it reached 15 morsels on the full moon (30th day).

The cycle of new moon – new moon is represented by ‘Yavam’ or Barley. The Chandrayanam practices in this cycle start with fasting and gradually increasing the quantity of food till the 15th day when 15 morsels of food would be consumed and which the quantity would once again be reduced till the last day which would be a fast again.

The yogis undertaking this austerity practice would spend the rest of time in jappa, dhyana and meditation.

We at Hatha Vidya have drawn from this wonderful ancient practice and modified it to suit the modern times. The modern man is busy running through the day with hardly any control over the diet or lifestyle. Accordingly, the program includes asanas, pranayama and cleansing processes which are tailored to individual needs and fitted around their current lifestyle. The food recommended is also based on one’s eating practices, calorie needs and Mitahara.

The food pattern, and practices (Asanas, Pranayama, cleansing) chosen are based on the phases of the moon as well as the personality of the individual undergoing the program. As per Yoga, the moon cycles play a role in the

humans, a fact that modern science is now waking up to. The word 'Hatha' is made of two components 'ha' meaning Sun and 'tha' meaning moon. Through all our practices we try to bring about a balance in these two very important energies in our body.

The benefits of this program have been time tested and include weight loss, improvement in bio-chemical parameters, reduction in chronic aches and pains and improvement of breathing quality. Stress relief and improvement in quality of sleep are also observed if the program is followed

systematically. The program focuses on simple breathing techniques, asanas and cleansing and diet regulation with no jumping and sweating to achieve the desired result.

However, this is not a magic pill, to achieve the desired results one must follow the whole program for the duration of the lunar cycle.

**Sp Note:** People who can commit to following the practices meticulously for the month should only enroll for the program.



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# Bandhas

The Energy Locks



Bandhas is one of the most significant and secretive practices in Hatha Yoga. Compared to other limbs of Hatha Yoga such as Asanas and Pranayama, Bandhas are less in numbers. Further, as per traditional hathayogic texts, the practice of Bandhas are always prescribed along with or as part of Mudras. The practice of Bandhas is very essential for advanced practitioners of Hatha Yoga in order to achieve the highest purpose intended to be achieved. That is the reasons Bandhas are ordinarily not prescribed for beginners in Hatha Yoga.

Bandhas are energy locks used in Hatha Yoga practices to temporarily hold or lock and redirect the flow of energy in the body. There are three primary Bandhas which are Mulabandha (Root lock), Uddiyana Bandha (Abdominal lock), and Jalandhara Bandha (Throat lock).

Bandhas are relevant only to those practitioners who wishes to attain spiritual progress and these are introduced only after the practitioner has understood the appropriate application of asana practices and as well as the initial discipline of pranayama practice. In Gheranda Samhita, this is clearly

mentioned in the verse that explains about Mulabandha as follows:

“Aspirants who wish to move beyond Samsara (the materialistic world) should practice this mudra in a hidden place or secluded place. With practice, Maruth siddhi is certain. In here Maruth siddhi means pranayama siddhi is certain. Therefore it should be practiced with effort silently and without laziness.”

- Gheranda Samhita, 3rd Chapter, 8th and 9th Verse.

It is clear from the reference that, the practices should be done in solitude, in silence and with utmost enthusiasm, the practice of Bandhas are not meant for beginners.

Muscle strength, flexibility and ability for selective application of the muscle groups, attained through yoga sadhana is necessary for the practice of Bandhas. Moreover the practitioner should be able to attain the correct posture of asanas and should have the ability to maintain the asana posture for long duration. Only then the Bandhas would be applied properly to yield the desired results. This is because effective practice of Bandhas requires contraction of the desired muscles for a long time.

Only then pranic energy can be redirected to the desired area within the body.

Only through the application of Bandhas, it is predominantly possible to unite the apana and prana vayu. Therefore in order to accomplish in practice of pranayama, ability to apply the Bandhas is indispensable. Any pranayama practices without Bandhas would end up as mere breathing practice.

The pressure created by the contraction/firmness arising from the application of bandhas on the neck, abdomen and perineum region creates throbbing sensation from certain pranas in the body. This eventually moves to the brain as well. Such sensations leads the practitioner to experience a state of tranquility and inner peace.

At physical level, applying Bandhas activates muscle tissues and also stimulates organs and glands in the respective regions. For example, Mula Bandha activates and tones the pelvic floor muscles, improving their functioning. Furthermore, Bandhas stimulate the chakras by locking the energy around them leading to more efficient circulation of prana (life force) throughout the body. By regulating prana through breath control, retention and locks, advanced pranayama techniques enables expanding the life force.

It is important to note that practicing advance pranayama techniques with Bandhas should be done under proper guidance from an experienced teacher or Acharya and with right intentions.



# yogaśamṣṛuktī HERITAGE OF YOGA

Session by: Acharya *Bala*

13th August 2023

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# Nāḍī Suddhi & Anulom Vilom

## An Introduction



Prana is the vital force and in order for the vital force to flow freely through our nadis or pranic channels it is necessary that the nadis should be free of any kind of impurities. These are the impurities that are arising due to imbalance in the mental thought processes, which cause disturbances leading the mind to reach a state of anxiety, fear and uncertainty. All kinds of physical disturbances are the result of the mental instability and if this prana is in stable state, the mind also will be tranquil.

Movements of prana are guided through breath and by the means of respiration we can establish a control on our Prana. Prana is subtle in nature therefore any disturbance on this subtler layer has a direct impact on the body and the mind likewise. Our ancient masters of the lore have designed different Pranayama techniques to gain control over this subtler Prana that pervades in our body.

However in order to practice Pranayama effectively the awareness of the flow of Prana is essential and inevitable. Through practice of the method called Prana Dharana or awareness of Prana, one can identify the different Pranas functioning in the body. Observing the movement of the air brushing through the nostrils, the cooling and warm effects it generates and also under-

standing the direction of the flow one is able to establish a connection with the Prana. Once this awareness is established then the practice of Pranayama becomes successful and yields results. The movement of Prana through the pranic channels or nadis becomes free, facilitating Prana to enter the middle nadi – Susumna.

Traditional yogic texts have unanimously maintained the importance of practicing Pranayama as per the prescribed manner, under the guidance of an experienced master, since incorrect methods of practice will bring adverse effects on the body. Hatha Yogic Texts like Gheranda Samhita and Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, clearly indicate the techniques to practice Pranayama, through different methods. The practice of Nadi Shuddhi and Anulom Viloma has been explained in detail in both these texts, with a slight difference in the approach and methodology of practice

### Nadi Shuddhi & Anulom Vilom

आदौस्थानं तथाकालंमतिहारंतथापरम् ।

नाडीशुद्धित्तः पश्चात्प्राणायामंचसाधयेत्

*First of all (right) place; time and afterwards balanced diet, then purification of Nadis and after that Pranayama should be practiced.*

According to Gheranda Samhita, the chapter of Pranayama begins with explaining the prerequisites before starting the practice of Pranayama.

It states that before the practice of Pranayama one must take care of four important factors:

1. Selection of the right place.
2. Selection and awareness of the right time or season.
3. Proper understanding of a proper diet
4. Practice of Nadi Shuddhi or Nadi Shodana.

Elaborating them, Gheranda Samhita explains how each of these have to be followed in the prescribed manner if one wishes the Pranayama practice to be effective. Nadi Shudhi or Nadi Shodana has been considered as separate from Pranayama and Gheranda has considered Pranayama and Kumbhaka to be synonymous.

अथासनेदृधेयोगीवशीहृति-मतिशनः |

गुरूपदषिहट-मारगेणपराणायामान्समभ्यसेत ||

*After getting established in asana, having control over sense organs, taking the diet that is balanced and beneficial, the yoga practitioner should properly practice pranayama as per the method taught by the teacher.*

Hatha Yoga Pradipika, through its introductory verse on the chapter of Pranayama, takes a slightly different approach. It states that in order to attain success in the practice of Pranayama one must fulfill these requirements:

1. Practice of Asana
2. Control over senses

3. Moderate Diet

4. Importance of Guru (Teacher)

Nadi Shodana Pranayama as per Hatha Yoga Pradipika is synonymous to Anuloma Viloma and together fall under the second limb of Hatha Yoga – Kumbhaka.

Both the texts have commonality in the basic methodology of practicing Nadi Shudhi or Anulom Viloma. Air should be inhaled from one nostril (pura-ka), retaining it as per the prescribed method (kumbhaka) and exhaling from the other (rechaka). The process has to be repeated as per the instructions recommended.

Nadi Shudhi acts as a prerequisite of Anulom Vilom. When one uses breath for the purpose purifying the nadis that practice is considered as Nadi Shudhi. When the same Nadi Shudhi is combined with kumbhaka it gets transformed into Anulom Vilom.

Other than Nadi Shudhi, practice of Asanas, different Shodana Kriyas or cleansing practices also entail the purpose of nadi shudhi or purification of nadis. There are many complimentary practices that ensure proper sitting posture is attained before the practice of Pranayama. Proper position of hands, the placement of the foot, overall sitting posture with the straight spine ensures the effectiveness of the practice. Anulom vilom is only successful after getting the insight into all of the above and the practitioner is able to understand that its not

just mere breath work, but proper channeling of the prana in the prescribed ratio and rounds.

### **Progress in Pranayama**

Practice of Pranayama always recommends the progress from one stage to another. The matras or ratios are divided in the three broad stages. The time units are belonging to the puraka – kumbhaka – rechaka ratio:

- Kaniyasi or the lowest level follows the ratio of 12:48:24.
- Madhyama or the middle level is when the practitioner is able to do 16:64:32.
- Uttama or the best level is considered to be the highest level which is 20:80:40.

These stages have to be reached slowly and the practitioner is cautioned to tread through the progress gradually, as incorrect application will do more harm than good. One must observe the pattern of inhalation and exhalation and avoid over exerting. If there is a tendency to inhale immediately after exhalation and viceversa, this is one of an indication of going beyond one's physical limitations.

It is also recommended that the practice be done four times a day.

- Pratah – in the morning
- Madhyandina – in the noon
- Sayam – in the evening
- Ardha Ratra – Mid Night

This also ideally indicates the time of transition from one part of the

day to another also called the sandhya time. For eg. Pratah stands for the time of dawn or sunrise and Madhyandina is the time of transition from morning to noon and so on.

### **Benefits of Nadi Shudhi & Anulom Viloma Pranayama**

Purification of the nadis has been attributed with heightened level of accomplishments. Among many other benefits the arousal of Kundalini – consciousness can be considered one of the best, along with being able to reach a stage of Manomani - Samadhi.

Pranayama practice emphasizes the importance of retention of breath as the most import aspect of the practice. So it is to be noted that one should not be over enthusiastic while progressing in the practice. Through Pranayama, one is trying to regulate the flow of one's own Prana and so its not a child's play but a power-play. Just like a lion or an elephant is tamed or controlled, the respiration should be brought under control with caution.

  
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SYMBOLIC GESTURES  
OF YOGIC PRACTICES  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Dubai - U.A.E  
Session by:  
Acharya *Bala*

# Trikonāsana

Traditional Approach



Yoga asana or yoga postures are physical postures practiced in the discipline of yoga. These postures are designed to cultivate strength, flexibility and balance. Apart from the physical benefits each Yoga asana is bound to induce benefits on the overall mental well-being of the practitioner.

Ancient traditional Hatha yogic texts have explained the right methodology in order to practice asanas in the correct manner. However, Patanjali's definition of asana goes beyond the physical posture. It also includes the mental aspect of finding ease and tranquility while holding the pose.

Under the Sutra 2.47, it says "Prayatna Shaithilya Ananta Samapat-tibhyam"

"The posture (asana) is mastered by relaxation of effort and by the realization of the infinite."

This sutra further elaborates on the practice of asana. It suggests that asanas are mastered when the practitioner can achieve a state of effortlessness (relaxation) and a sense of unity with the infinite (the boundless aspect of consciousness). This implies that the ultimate purpose of practicing asana goes beyond the physical aspect; it is a means to attain a deeper state of yoga or union with the higher Self.

Under the series – “Insight into Asanas” we highlight the relevance of practicing asanas in a manner to achieve the maximum benefit, both on the gross as well as at the subtle levels. Our aim is to instill the traditional aspects into the practice of Yoga Asanas for the overall benefit of the practitioner. That is also the reason we emphasize that each Asana should be performed & practiced bearing in mind the FIVE essentials of asana practice – VINYASA, SWASA, DHRISTI, STITHI & VISHRANTI - systematic flow, breath coordination & awareness, focus outside & inside, maintaining steadiness & having a relaxed state of mind respectively.

## TRIKONASANA

The asana that we will discuss here is known as Trikonasana. Trikonasana is popularly known as the Triangle Pose. “Trikona” in Sanskrit means triangle and “Asana” means posture. This is a standing posture and helps strengthening different parts of the body.

Let us now understand the process of doing this asana:

1. Stand with your feet together in Tadasana.
2. Take a wide step and spread your legs four and a half feet apart.
3. Turn the left foot to the left side.

4. As you inhale lift the right arm up closer to the ears, fingers pointed up.
5. Upon exhalation, bend your body towards the left side, stretching the lateral side.
6. Maintain as comfortably as possible, inhale and come back to the original position.
7. Repeat the same way on the opposite side.

Trikonasana or the Triangle posture is a popular asana that offers a wide range of physical and mental benefits. Here are some of the key benefits of this yoga pose:

**Stretches and Strengthens Muscles:**

Trikonasana helps to stretch and tone various muscles, including the hamstrings, quadriceps, calves, hip flexors, spine, shoulders, and chest. It enhances overall body flexibility and strength.

**Improves Balance and Focus:** The pose requires concentration and balance, which helps improve focus and coordination. Regular practice can enhance your ability to stay centered and steady both on and off the mat.

**Stimulates Abdominal Organs:** The twisting motion involved in the pose stimulates the abdominal organs, aiding digestion and helping to relieve gastrointestinal discomfort.

**Alleviates Back Pain:** Trikonasana helps strengthen the muscles supporting the spine, which can alleviate back pain and improve posture.

**Reduces Stress and Anxiety:** Like many yoga poses, Trikonasana encourages relaxation and reduces stress. The

focus on breathing and mindful stretching can help calm the mind and reduce anxiety.

**Energizes the Body:** Trikonasana is considered an energizing pose. The combination of stretching and deep breathing revitalizes the body and mind.

While Trikonasana (Triangle Pose) offers numerous benefits, there are certain contraindications and precautions that individuals should consider before practicing this asana. Here are some contraindications for Trikonasana:

**Recent or Chronic Injury:** If you have any recent or chronic injuries, particularly in the legs, hips, back, or shoulders, avoid performing Trikonasana until you have fully healed. The pose involves stretching and exertion in these areas, which may exacerbate existing injuries.

**High or Low Blood Pressure:** People with high blood pressure should practice Trikonasana with caution. If you have uncontrolled hypertension, it's best to avoid this pose altogether. For those with low blood pressure, getting up from the pose too quickly may cause dizziness.

**Neck Issues:** Individuals with neck problems, such as cervical spondylosis or disc issues, should be cautious when practicing Trikonasana by avoiding excessive strain on the neck.

**Diarrhea or Headache:** If you are experiencing diarrhea or a headache, it's advisable to skip practicing Trikonasana, as it may exacerbate these conditions.

**Vertigo or Balance Issues:** People with vertigo or severe balance issues should avoid this pose, as it requires stability and steady balance to perform safely.

**Pregnancy:** Pregnant women should be cautious when practicing Trikonasana.

**Heart Conditions:** Those with heart problems or heart-related surgeries should avoid intense twisting poses like Trikonasana unless under the guidance of a qualified yoga instructor or health-care professional.

**Joint Issues:** Individuals with severe

joint issues, particularly in the hips, knees, or ankles, should approach Trikonasana with caution.

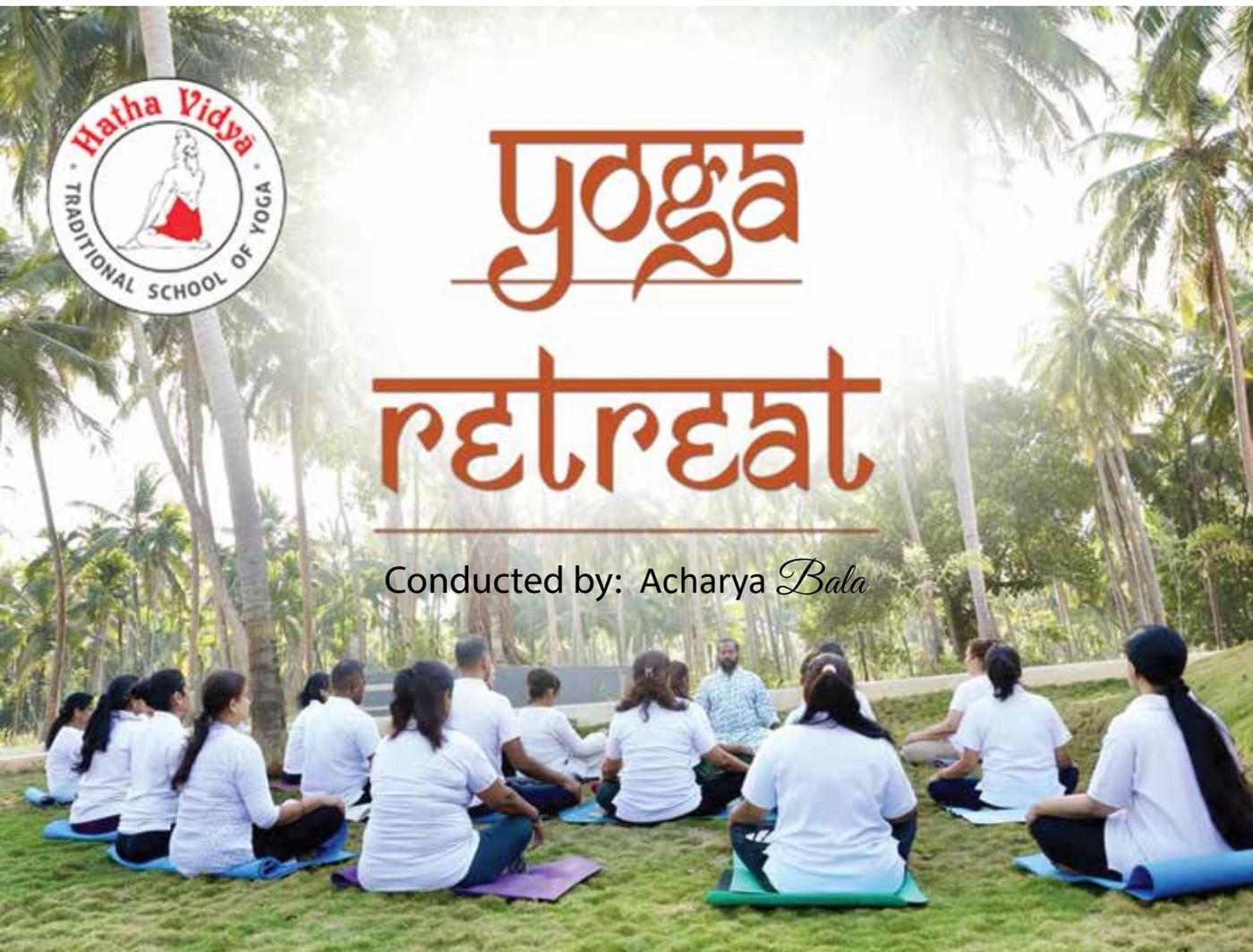
It is essential to practice Trikonasana correctly and mindfully. If pain or discomfort is experienced during the pose, one should come out of it slowly and seek the guidance of a qualified yoga teacher.

On a subtler level Trikonasana affects the manipura chakra, when the asana is held comfortably for a said amount of time, maintaining the focus over the chakra.



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# Benefits of Yoga

In Day to Day Life

I am Nandana and I am student of the Nishtha program at Hatha Vidya Traditional Yoga. In this article I will be writing about some of the benefits we have derived as kids from our yoga practice under the Nishtha program. In Nishtha program we practice asanas, pranayama, and yoga games which together helps us in many ways.

Under the Nishtha program we practice many asana postures which helps us improve our physical strength and flexibility. It has overall improved my health than what it was before I started the practice. There are many preliminary practices and asanas that helps us improve our core strength. We also practice several rounds of Surya Namaskar which helps us come out of lethargy and makes us alert.

Beginning from waking up in morning, I feel refreshed and energized

through-out the day which helps me in all our activities at the school as well as when we return home. Yet at the end of the day we get good sleep.

We practice Pranayama which helps us feel relaxed and stay focused in whatever activities we do be it studies or extra-curricular activities. The practices such as Kapalbhathi and Khumbaka we do in Anulom Vilom practice has improved my breathing abilities which helps in other activities like swimming and dancing.

Some of the yoga games we practice also helps us to improve our focus in whatever we do. Overall, my attention span has increased which is helping me pay attention to the classes at my school and also to listen better when conversing with others.

Focuses on balancing skills through certain balancing asanas such as

Ardha Badha Padamottanasana, Pincha Padhahastasana etc. Besides yoga games such as Rekha Gati also helps us improve our balancing ability and awareness which has helped me a lot. I feel all the practices together has helped improve concentration and alertness.

We also learn Sanskrit which develops our linguistic skills. With all these, overall, I feel more confident, relaxed and to take things easy.

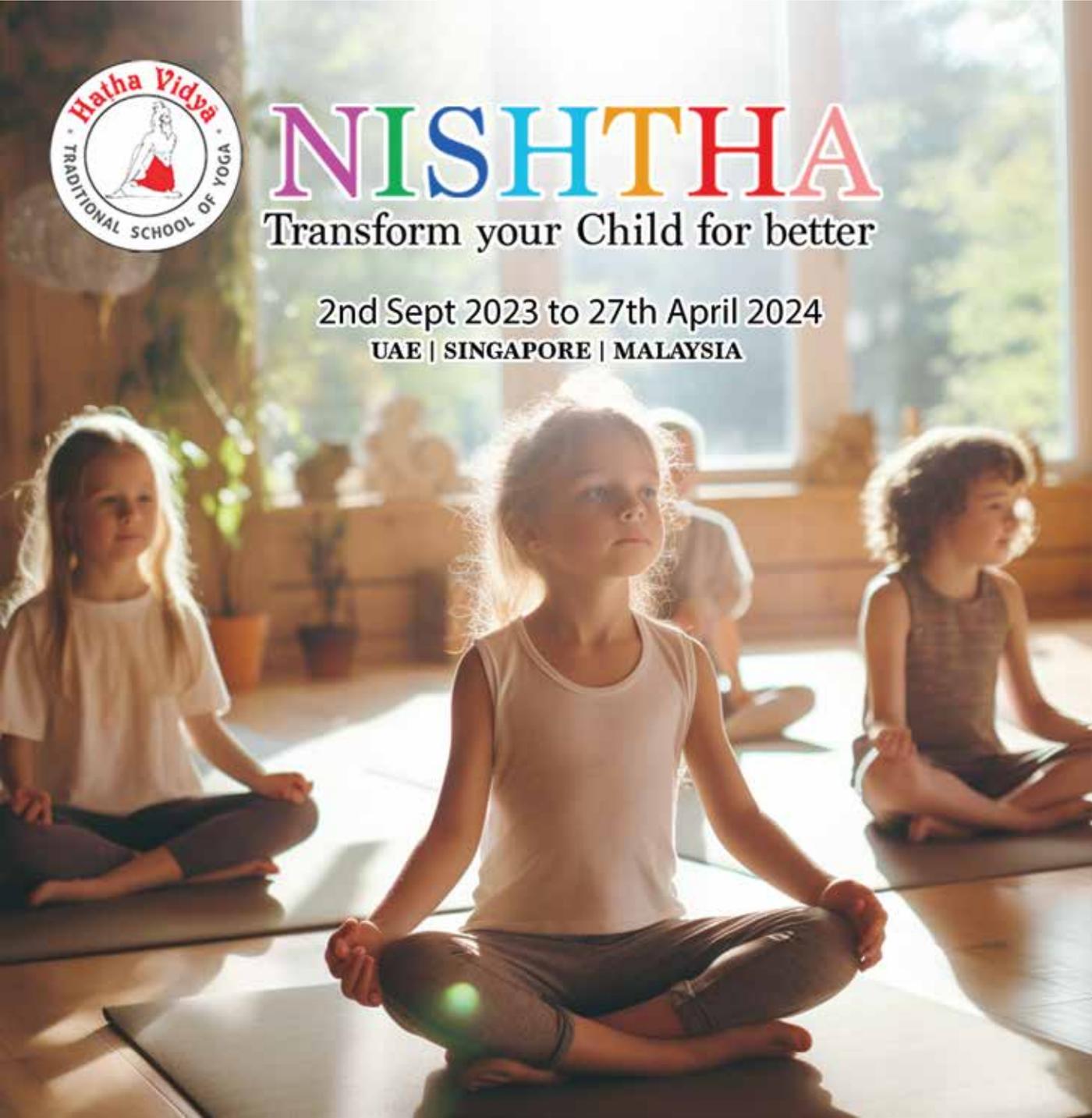


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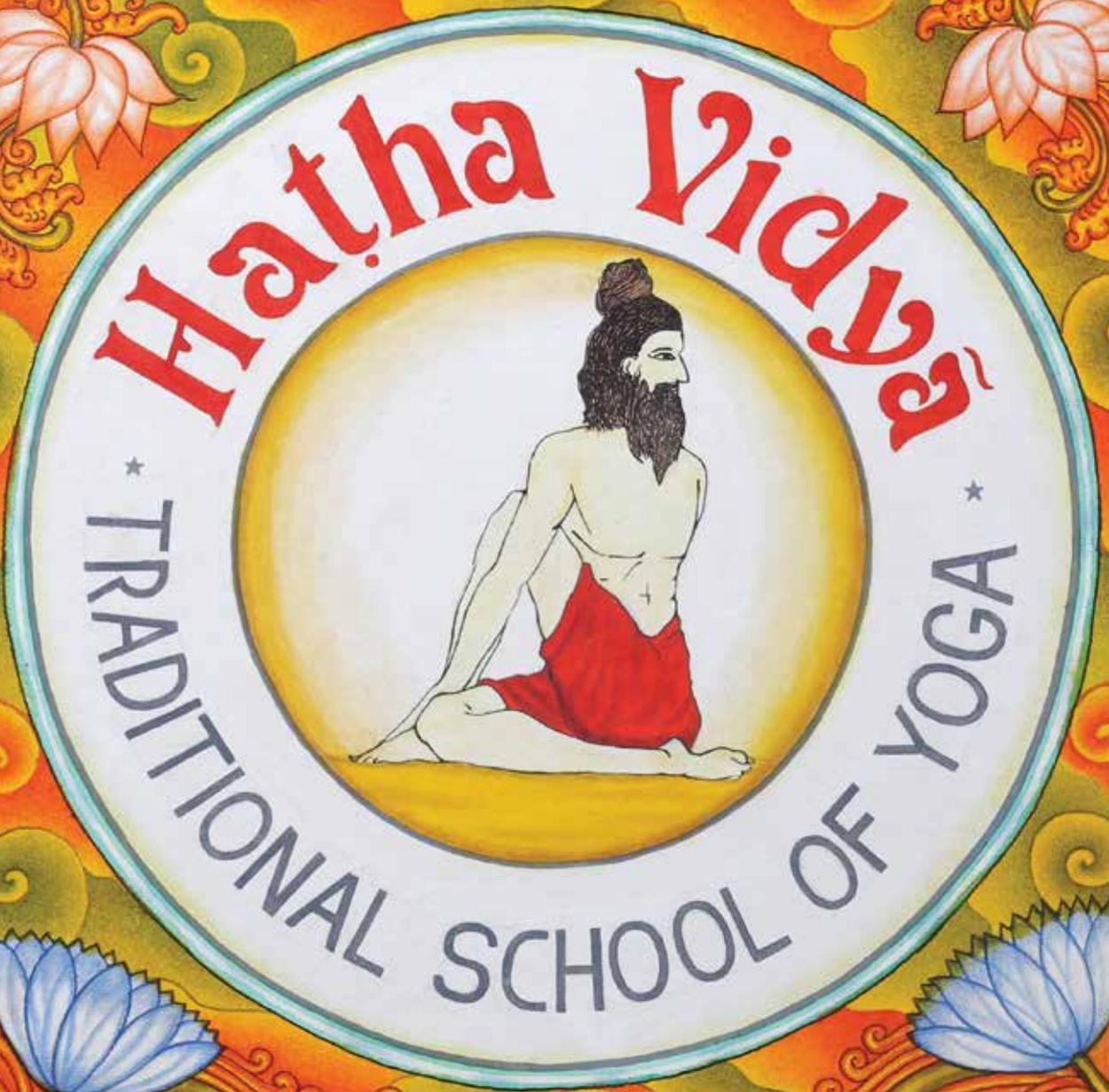


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