
SAHAJA YOGA

TURYA COURSE

SESSION ONE

Sahaja Yoga: the gentle answer

In the midst of today's hectic, non-stop timetable, people are increasingly stopping to ask themselves two fundamental questions:

1. Why can't I feel better?

- less tired and stressed
- mentally, physically and emotionally stronger
- more able to cope and enjoy life
- healthier

2. How can I evolve as a person?

- become a more spiritual and compassionate person
- understand more about my place in this Universe
- establish a relationship with God that is based on Truth not ritual and hypocrisy.

If you recognise any combination of these needs in you, then you are part of a growing community of people who are becoming uneasy with the direction and quality of their life.

Sahaja Yoga can help to answer these needs through the ancient, gentle and yet powerful process of Self Realisation and meditation.

What is Self Realisation?

In the sacrum bone at the base of the spine in every individual there exists a subtle and dormant coil of spiritual energy known as the Kundalini. This energy has been well documented through the ages, and has become a core part of many of the most authoritative Yoga and spiritual practices. In AD1290, for instance, the renowned Indian saint and mystic Jnanadeva documented in detail the existence of this energy in his seminal treatise on Yoga and the spiritual universe, Jnaneshwari.

The process of Self Realisation involves the gentle awakening of this living and conscious energy, so that it pervades the individual's subtle (i.e. spiritual) being. Once this event occurs, the person is no longer isolated from the universe around them – i.e. trapped inside their own head – but becomes a connected part of the greater cosmos. The benefits of this awakening are many, including a realisation of our sense of purpose, a feeling of completeness and the sort of self-knowledge which is commonly missing from our day to day lives and activities.

Once the Self Realisation has occurred, it is up to the individual to decide whether they wish to explore the new world that opens up to them, by continuing with a program of meditation to enhance and encourage the cleansing power of this energy on the subtle system.

Over time the practice of this meditation produces profound emotional, physical and spiritual changes which give each of us the ability to maintain a remarkable degree of control over the progress of our lives in every way. Practitioners often talk of a feeling of 'oneness with God and Nature' as the most evident manifestation of their regular meditation.

The meditation.

The meditation is a deceptively simple process and takes the form of sitting quietly to allow the Kundalini to rise from its seat at the base of the spine to the top of the head - along the central spiritual 'channel' inside all of us, the Sushumna Nadi. Again many literary works dealing with Yoga describe this subtle road map; this is knowledge which has been available for thousands of years, not merely a few centuries!

This Kundalini energy cleanses the individual's Chakras – or spiritual centres – and leaves the person in a profoundly peaceful and relaxed state. Various additional techniques of Sahaja Yoga, designed to make it easier for the practitioner to attain this state of 'thoughtless awareness', are taught as part of the classes. These include simple mantras and hand movements which encourage the cleansing activity in the spiritual centres.

The teaching

The meditation is called Sahaja Yoga, taken from the Sanskrit meaning of the words. Sahaj means 'spontaneous' or 'born with you' and yoga translates as 'union' (with the Divine or All Pervading Spirit). The phrase then translates as 'the method of Divine union through yoga which everyone is born with'.

Sahaja Yoga classes are held in 80 countries around the world and are always provided free of charge. Right from the earliest days Shri Mataji, the founder of this type of Yoga practice, made it clear that this knowledge and the process of union effected by our self realisation is the birthright of every human being and therefore cannot be charged for.

Classes are organised and run by volunteers who have been impelled by the positive changes in their own lives to pass the gift on to others. These individuals come from all walks of life and occupations – including doctors, lawyers, caretakers, taxi drivers, housewives and mothers. The single link between them all, no matter from which country or profession, is their open hearted warmth and genuine desire to help others benefit as they have done. The hire of rooms and payment for materials is also all done through the generosity of these people and their fund raising efforts.

Impact on the individual

Hundreds of thousands of people world-wide have discovered that health problems, addictions and many forms of mental and emotional imbalance disappear after they begin to practice Sahaja Yoga meditation. This process of cleansing, even if done for only 10 or 20 minutes a day, helps the individual to achieve a greater sense of overall well

being, enabling them to become more productive, confident and creative. It also restores their natural equilibrium and dynamism which helps them to become more responsible members of their family and society at large.

Impact on society

Shri Mataji has explained that this increased balance and integration within the individual leads naturally to a spontaneous reduction in the tension and dissatisfaction that drives people to drugs, crime and violence. In this way Sahaja Yoga addresses many of the root causes of our world's social problems by alleviating such imbalances at a uniquely personal level.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi was born to a Christian family of noble descent at noon on the 21st March 1923 - the Spring Equinox - at Chindwara in the centre of India. Mahatma Gandhi recognised her deep and special qualities when she stayed at his ashram as a young girl. Later she studied medicine and took an active roll in the movement for the independence of India.

In 1947 Sri Mataji married Mr. C. P. Shrivastava, who was later appointed to the post of Secretary General of the International Maritime Organisation of the United Nations, based in London. He was later knighted by the Queen for his outstanding service in international affairs. They have two married daughters, four grandchildren and recently Shri Mataji became a great grand-mother for the first time.

Through her own efforts and experiences during the early 1970's Sri Mataji evolved a system of Yoga whereby the subtle energy called Kundalini could spontaneously be awakened, and most importantly, the same process could be passed on from person to person around the world. This was the birth of Sahaja Yoga.

Sri Mataji's life is devoted to spreading the benefits of this wonderful process as widely as possible. She travels the world tirelessly teaching and promoting Spirituality, a schedule that has resulted in the growing practise of Sahaja Yoga in many countries, including Europe, North and South America, Australasia and her native India.

Rather than a teacher or guru, Sri Mataji is best likened to a mother. The compassion, patience and love that motivate all her work - done without financial reward - is evidence of the compassion that she has for those who come to her for help.

Her only desire is that, through Sahaja Yoga, this marvellous happening can be made available to all.

How to meditate

Going deeper in meditation is not something that we can force along. It is simply a matter of allocating a few minutes every day when we can sit quietly, do nothing and experience the power of pure introspection. By doing this, over time we will notice that our meditation becomes more effective and the benefits more tangible.

To start: Find a place in your home where you can sit comfortably without being disturbed, preferably somewhere that you can use regularly. It is not necessary to sit on the ground, you can use a chair or sit anywhere as long as you are comfortable. Try and ensure that you minimise the potential for distractions by e.g. turning on the answering machine before you start off. It helps to have a lighted candle in place in front of your position, alongside a small photograph of Shri Mataji or chart of the Subtle system.

If you are meditating for the first time you may find it difficult to sit still or take your Attention inside as you close your eyes, but do not worry, this will improve with practice.

Settling Down: Once you have settled down, raise your Kundalini and put yourself in bandhan as per the illustration, and with eyes closed try and take the Attention slowly to the top of the head. At this point we can use the Affirmations we used in the public meeting to help us focus our Attention inside, or we can simply say to ourselves silently 'please may I go deeper into meditation' a few times.

After a few moments we may feel tingling, cool or heat on our fingers or a slow ripple of movement along the spine as the Kundalini starts to rise from the base of the spine to the top of the head. It helps if we try and ignore these sensations to start with, since we are trying to achieve a state of thoughtlessness, where we are not dragged along with our thoughts but simply watch them float into and out of our consciousness.

Going deeper: After a few minutes we may notice that while we are sitting more peacefully, thoughts are still flowing through our minds. This is quite natural and we shouldn't think that the meditation isn't working simply because of this continued thinking. Just bring our Attention slowly back to the top of the head and try to keep it there. In fact it will take quite a bit of practice before we are likely to notice a significant slowing of the flow of thoughts, but we will experience the benefits of our meditations long before that time.

Finishing up: Once we have been sitting for 10 to 15 minutes or so, we can slowly finish the session. The meditation is completed by our raising our Kundalini again and putting on a bandhan exactly as we did when starting off.

We should really try and meditate AT LEAST once a day and preferably twice – once in the morning to set us up for the day and once in the evening to help us sleep more soundly.