Hamsa Yoga: The Elixir of Self-Realization

(Soham Sādhanā)

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PREFACE

The haṁsa yoga or soaham sādhana is crowned in the Indian scriptures as the paramount spiritual endeavor that enables natural conjunction of the individual consciousness and the Brahm. Despite being superior in terms of its culminated effects, this sādhana is easiest and free from the ascetic disciplines and difficult practices of yoga that are associated with other higher level spiritual sādhanaṁs. The treatise of Śabda Brahm – Nāda Brahm (volume 19 of “Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya Vangmaya” Series) devotes one full chapter to this important topic. The present book is compiled from the English translation of this invaluable text.

Meditation on the sounds of “soa” and “haṁ” – produced continuously by the harmonized inhalation and exhalation in each breathing cycle during a prāṇāyāma – is practised in the initial phase of the haṁsa yoga. The hakāra (sound of “ha”) is regarded as a manifestation of God Shiva in the cosmic energy currents of prāṇa and sakāra (the sound of “sa”) represents the existence of the eternal power of thy super consciousness in the spiritual impulse of prāṇa. The sūrya swara (through the solar nerve) is awakened by hakāra and the candra swara (through the lunar nerve) by sakāra. These swaras are harmonized in the higher level prāṇāyama of the haṁsa yoga. The contemplation phase of this sādhanaṁ involves total sacrifice of the ego and dissolution of the identity of the “Self” in the supreme consciousness – expression of the Brahm.

The soaham sādhanaṁ enables realization of the Nāda Yoga through Prāṇa Yoga. The science and philosophy of this sādhanaṁ is also discussed here in the special context of the ajāpā japa of the Gāyatrī Mantra and the Kuṇḍalinī Sādhanaṁ. The author has been thorough, yet lucid in discussing this esoteric field of the science of spirituality and yoga. He also provides trenchant guidance for practising this prāṇa-yoga in day-to-day life. The fundamental importance of the subject and the detailed and authentic knowledge presented in a perspicuous style make this book a precious asset in the scholarly disciplines and a milestone for all aspirants of the realization and illumination of the individual Self.

– Dr. Pranav Pandya, MD
The Philosophical Basis of Soahaṁ Sādhanā

Every student of science knows that oxygen is essential for the maintenance of life on this earth. Infact its presence is more crucial for the survival of the human body as compared to the availability of water and food. Oxygen regulates the redness (healthy content of haemoglobin) in the blood. It is the fuel of this gas, which keeps the engine of the body warm enough and energizes all components of the body-machine. Its regular and substantial supply is vital for the maintenance and activation of physical strength.

The word prāṇa refers to the sublime form of vital energy, which at the gross level is manifested in the power regulating the physico-chemical functions of the body. The extent of one’s prāṇa is reflected in his zeal, alertness, enthusiasm and talents. The physical exercises of jogging, brisk walking, deep breathing etc are performed to increase the intake of oxygen. The yoga-exercises of prāṇāyāma are performed to gain more prāṇa – the source and power of the vital force and consciousness.

A variety of prāṇāyāmas are described in the scriptures on yoga. Of which the sūryavedhana and anuloma-viloma are regarded as integral parts of the prāṇa yoga of the sādhanās of Brahma Varchas. The physical exercises energize the components of the gross body and prāṇāyāmas help increase the internal power and the eminence of personality. Prāṇāyāma is essentially an exercise to upkeep the health of the subtle body.

The gross component (oxygen in this case) of prāṇa is supplied to the body by physical exercises and the subtle component is extracted (from the omnipresent ocean of consciousness) for the subtle body by the prāṇāyāmas. Like the gross and subtle bodies, the causal body of an individual also needs some vital energy or prāṇa – this is the culmination of the force of spiritually refined prāṇa, the sublime current of cosmic, divine energy, called the māhāprāṇa. The māhāprāṇa required by the causal body of the soul, emanates from the Brahm (Cosmic Prāṇa). This eternal prāṇa is received by the practice of Hainsa Yoga. The sādhanā (spiritual exercise) of this yoga is also called the Soahaṁ Sādhanā, which, with reference to the science of Gāyatrī Upāsanā is defined as the ajapā japa of Gāyatrī.
In this sādhanā of haṁsa yoga, the devotee has to link his mind with the cosmic level of consciousness – the Supreme Consciousness. He has to awaken the inner feelings in order to realize his existence as a soul – above the level of the body and the mind. The vital energy, the prāṇa and the divine ‘magnetism’ (power of attraction) of the inner self, all are applied with focused concentration, zeal and immense śraddhā towards the conditioning of the body, mind and the innermost emotional center to reach this state. Once this state is attained, even the usual action of breathing becomes so powerful that it can attract the mahāprāṇa from the cosmic domains and send it to the deeper layers of the inner self. Along with the inhalation of oxygen by the physical body and prāṇa by the mind, a subtle absorption of the divine energy by the causal body also takes place during this process. The spiritual endeavor of this unique kind of prāṇāyāma is – the soaham sādhana.

The phase of breathing-in during a prāṇāyāma is called a pūraka and that of breathing out is called a recaka; the intermediate phases of holding the breath in and out are called the antaḥ kumbhaka and bāhya kumbhaka respectively. In haṁsa yoga, one concentrates on the sound of ‘soa...’ during the pūraka. This sound should not be heard only as that of the flow of air, rather, it should be acquired as a manifestation of the Ṣabda – the supreme cosmic sound. This subtle sound could be ‘perceived’ with the help of strong willpower, deep mental concentration and the pious emotions of śraddhā. The sound should be felt like that of the vamsī (flute) of Lord Krishna. This sound then appears to convey the divine messages and blessings. This flow of Ṣabda enters the body along with the breath and educes the inner domain of the self with the sublime current of its eternal energy.

During the antaḥ kumbhaka of the soaham prāṇāyāma the sādhaka should feel that the entire existence of his own self has been devoted to the power of ‘Soa’ – that Parabrahm. At the time of recaka, he has to concentrate on the sound of ‘Hāṁ’ and feel through the heart that with this out-flow (of air) his own aham (the ego) is being expelled forever. Then he should hold the breath out (during the bāhya kumbhaka) for few seconds and ensure himself that – “now there is no place for ego and related illusions; whatever is now inside, is only a reflection of the Brahᴍ”. This state of the living
being (jīva) is equivalent to that of – realizing the _vedānt_ principle of ‘Śivoahm- Sacchidānandoaham’….., etc.

By performing the _ajapā japa_ of _soaham_ as in the aforesaid _prānāyāma_, the individual self constantly recalls its own divine origin and this way remains in touch with _thee_. This _sādhanā_ of _soaham_ therefore offers the boon of realization of the _Brahm_. The spiritual benefits of this _sādhanā_ are enormous – it indeed effectuates the linkage of the soul with the _Parabrahm_. Because of its capability of pulling the individual self from the state of incompleteness and ignorance to the ultimate state of uniting with the _Brahm_, the _soaham_ _sādhanā_ has been recommended as the principal _yoga sādhanā_ of _Brahm Varchas_ – the _sādhanā_ aimed at the absolute evolution.

The higher level spiritual _sādhanās_ do have the potential to exalt the _sādhaka’s_ life up to the divine realms at a fast pace as compared to the ordinary _upāsanās_ practised in daily life. However, the practice of these _sādhanas_ is not totally risk-less. Some of these are so sensitive, as for instance, the experiments on nuclear fusion. A scientist knows that the latter if performed accurately would provide enormous energy but little mistake or perturbation might lead to disastrous consequences. Madam Curie had died in an accident during such a scientific experiment of high complexity.

In view of the precautions and disciplines associated with the high level _sādhanās_, the ancient experts of the Indian science of spirituality had devised the _āranyaka_ tradition. In this system the aspirants of specific advanced spiritual experiments used to learn and perform associated _sādhanās_ in the _āranyakas_ under adept supervision and guidance of the eminent experts. Although the _āranyaka_ system is not existing in the modern times, its relevance and importance in spiritual training remains unaltered.

Today there are practically no _āranyaks_ existing on the earth. Finding an authentic spiritual guide ( _gurū_ ) is also an almost impossible task in the present circumstances. Even if such a _gurū_ is available for teaching a specific _sādhanā_ of high spiritual level, the disciples would not have the devotion, zeal, motivation and above all, the time
necessary for staying away from home and practising the prescribed sādhanā under ascetic disciplines. In the present circumstances, the simple and risk-less sādhanās appear to be the best solutions. These sādhanās, because of their direct linkage with the sādhak’s intrinsic sentiments, do offer great spiritual benefits – equivalent to those of the higher level, difficult spiritual endeavors. Some such sādhanās – as described below, are so simple that with initial training of first few weeks, any aspirant could easily practise them in his house along with fulfilling all his social responsibilities.

Three types of prāṇāyāmas are described in the scriptures for the panca kośīya sādhanā of Gāyatrī. Whether it is the Sādhanā of Kundalini, Gāyatrī or the awakening of the panca kośa, the basic practices in each deal with the sādhanās of refinement and elevation of the prāṇa. The Śāvitrī Sādhanā is also similar. The knowledge of these sādhanās of mahāprāṇa is defined in the Upnishads under the name of pancāgni vidyā. Practising of prāṇāyāmas is an essential component of these sādhanās. Mostly, the following five steps are involved in these preeminent spiritual experiments. Each of these could be practised at home by anybody who has received intensive guidance and demonstrative training.

These fundamental steps are – (i) the ajapā japa of Gāyatrī that is, the soham sādhanā; (ii) khecarī mudrā; (iii) sākti cālinī mudrā; (iv)trātaka and (v) nāda yoga. Of these, the soham sādhanā is supposed to be most facile. It can be performed all the twenty-four hours of the day and is equivalent to the paramount spiritual sādhanās in terms of its super natural attainments.

In general, a prāṇāyama is based on two crucial features – (i) controlled breathing to harmonize the system in a measured way and churning of the prāṇa so inhaled and (ii) attracting the mahā prāṇa by a samkalpa – determination with strong will power and intrinsic urge. The attraction of the (mahā) prāṇa and its circulation inside the body together make one complete cycle of prāṇa yoga. Only one of the above activities would not serve the real purpose. Because, deep breathing alone would remain just a good exercise of the lungs, which can also be performed by many other exercises of the
body recommended by the physiologists such as – jogging, up and down stretching, "sūrya namaskāra" etc. On the other hand, only the determined attempts to attract the (mahā)pṛāṇa would be like a meditation. This alone will not be so effective unless coupled with the controlled breathing and churning of the (mahā)pṛāṇa in the body and the inner self.

There are about sixty-four types of methods for controlled breathing as described in the Indian śāstras on yoga sādhanās. Several other types of breathing exercises are also popular outside India. The specific breathing activities associated with the yoga sādhanās of prāṇāyāmas do offer the positive effects of physical health along with rousing mental alertness and inner strength.

The saṁkalpa part of the prāṇāyāma largely depends upon the sādhaka’s willpower and mental concentration. A variety of mantras and pictorial patterns or images for meditation are prescribed for this purpose. The japa (repeated enunciation) of these mantras and focussed imagination of the specific objects helps develop the mental engrossment necessary for the initial training of meditation. The sādhaka should feel as though he is immersed in the ocean of divine pṛāṇa and attempt to consistently suck this subtle energy through each breath.

The ‘magnetic’ power of viśvāsa and śraddhā and the potential of determination are not mere imaginations. Indeed they are conscious streams of immense power. The unlimited power of emotions and strong will has also been well recognized and experienced in the present era of scientific developments. The philosophers, psychologists and the experts of the science of spirituality know that the limitless world of the mind and the sentimental core – the mana (mind), buddhi (intellect), citta (subconscious mind) and ahamkāra (sense of self existence), works on the basis of this sublime power of the cetan (consciousness). The vital energy and hence all the functions of the (gross) body also materialize with the help of this power only. It is the basic source of liveliness, charm and glory of one’s personality.
The inner desires and experiences linked with the power of saṅkalpa induce the corresponding thought waves (in the mind) and impulses (in the brain) and give rise to the associated actions of the body and the ‘visible’ self. Thus, a collective effort of the body and the mind along with the eternal power of faith and determination becomes the cause of any good or bad deed and its consequences; the results of which might be cheering or tragic, beneficial or insidious..., depending upon the quality of the mental and emotional inspirations behind it. In essence, what all is being conducted by an individual is directly or indirectly a consequence of his saṅkalpa – intrinsic motivation and mental resolution.

The strength and level of the saṅkalpa is the principal regulator of the decline or elevation of one’s life. Every human being is free to shape his own life by using this power. Collective resolution of the people with strong willpower can trigger revolutions..., change the destiny of the entire nation....; and, if motivated by divinely pious inspirations of the soul, can effectuate creation of an ideal environment for the welfare of all living beings. It is said that the Nature, the existence, limitless expansion and activities of the universe emanate from the absolute determination of the eternal creator – God Brahmā. Divine incarnations and the cosmic changes, which are necessary for balancing the universal cycle, also take place as per thy will.

Śraddhā and viśvāsa, affirmed to be crucial for the yoga sādhanaḥ of spiritual transmutation are derived from the emotionally charged determination of the inner self. In fact, the rituals and the physical and mental activities associated with a sādhanaḥ process contribute hardly one fourth of the share in the success of the latter. The major part – the remaining three-fourth or more, depends upon the heartiest desire, sincere and strong willpower of the devotee. If the sādhaka’s determination or faith were weak or shaky, he would never achieve success in a spiritual sādhanaḥ. (In fact the same is true about the success of any plan or activity in the materialist domains too).

It is the earnest spirit coupled with faith and śraddhā that gives him the adequate strength and support to follow the necessary disciplines and
perform the sādhana successfully. In a prāṇāyāma sādhana too, it is indeed the conscious power of the sādhaka’s samkalpa that draws the subtle energy of prāṇa along with the air (oxygen) through breathing.

Many types of prāṇāyāmas are suitable for the overall development of the individual self. Here, we shall discuss only two, which appear to be the best in terms of their simplicity and universality. Of these prāṇāyāmas the easiest is the one which is incorporated among the śaṭkarmas (six rituals) performed at the beginning of the daily upāsanās. It is essential for controlling the activity of breathing and harmonizing it with the help of mental concentration. It is so simple to perform this prāṇāyāma, that even school going children could perform it without much difficulty.

The procedure of performing the above prāṇāyāma is as follows:

The sādhaka should sit in a posture of sukhāsana keeping his spinal cord erect and maintain a calm mood; he should take a deep breath at a slow and steady pace (the normal duration of this pūraka is about four seconds). The inhaled air should be retained (antah kumbhaka) in the lungs for few seconds (about sixteen seconds, if possible without any difficulty). Then the air should be breathed out (recaka) at a slow and steady pace. After this, the breathing should be stopped (bāhya kumbhaka) for few seconds. This completes one cycle. Several such cycles (about four to five in the beginning) are completed in one sitting in the daily practice. The total duration of this practice (of prāṇāyāma) may range between five minutes (for the beginners) to thirty minutes (for the trained sādhakas).

By sincere practice and mental engrossment, the breathing is so controlled that the duration of the antah and bāhya kumbhaka and those of the pūraka and recaka be equal and the speed of inhalation would be the same as that of exhalation in each cycle. During each cycle of this prāṇāyāma the sādhaka should attempt (with his natural determination) to feel that in the pūraka phase an illuminating current of prāṇa enters along with the breath which expands and gets absorbed in the body during the antah kumbhaka. He should also feel that – because of his strong willpower and the stored prāṇas, the ‘filth’ of the kusāṃskāras (evil tendencies and weaknesses) is being repudi-
ated during a recaka and is firmly prevented from re-entering the body because of the control of the bāhya kumbhaka.

In the natural function of breathing, the lungs draw air from the atmosphere to supply energy to the body via the blood. The blood corpuscles take their food – the oxygen content from this supply and by circulation distribute the required quota of energy to the brain and other components of the body. During a prānāyāma this activity also gets systematized because of harmonized breathing. More importantly, in this process, the determined will and emotional urge of the sādhaka also attract the omnipresent power of consciousness – the prāṇa, subtly indwelling in the atmosphere.

The strength of the sādhaka’s internal will and determination is directly associated with his own consciousness and therefore accounts for the amount and level of prāṇa drawn by it. The sādhaka’s controlled saṁkalpa, attraction and absorption of the prāṇa all create collective impact during a prānāyāma. The physical, subtle as well as the causal body could benefit from the coherent currents of the supreme consciousness, if the sādhaka steadily realizes the glow and energy of the attracted cosmic prāṇa of divine quality as being absorbed by each of his three bodies.

If the sādhaka’s saṁkalpa is weak and unstable or his emotional attachment and faith in this activity is superficial then he would only gain the healthy effects of deep and controlled breathing from this prānāyāma. The conscious charge and strength of the saṁkalpa can be enhanced by sincere faith and dedicated experiments of practising it at regularly increasing pace. The sādhaka must concentrate on the feeling – that the divine energy of prāṇa is reaching him with each breath and is entering his body without any obstacles; that his body is full of this energy and is being electrified from within.

This prānāyāma, which is a part of the ṣat karmas of the daily sandhyā-vandan, is essential for every aspirant of spiritual development. Even the mental concentration would not be attained without practising the prānāyāma and the sādhaka would also find it difficult to perform the successive steps – namely, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā and dhyāna, of a (rāja)yoga sādhanā.
Among the higher level prāṇāyāmas, the Soaham Sādhanā is regarded as supreme because the saṃkalpa associated with it has the potential to evolve the individual consciousness up to the ultimate divine form and to connect the individual self with the Brahm. No other kind of prāṇāyāma involves this level of emotional sacrifice and saṃkalpa as the soaham sādhanā does. Perhaps this is the reason why it has been given a special name – the Hamsa Yoga rather than categorizing it within the nomenclature of the other prāṇāyāmas. The scriptures of spiritual sādhanās have mentioned so much about the hamsa yoga that if compiled collectively, these descriptions would appear like an independent branch of the yoga śāstras.

The sounds of – ‘so’ while breathing in, ‘a’ while retaining it, and ‘ham’ while breathing out, are not loud and clear like other audible sounds. One can hear them only by the ‘subtle ears’ (i.e. through experiencing the extrasensory vibrations) with unperturbed mental concentration. Nobody can really perceive them in the continuous breathing cycles unless one concentrates on the subtle sounds made by the flow of air in and out of the nostril during the natural process of respiration.

The sound of ‘soaham’ is an anāhata nāda. In the practice of Nāda Yoga one has to meditate upon the sublime sounds (of the āhata and anāhata category successively) inside the body, which are perceived under a state of absolute silence. In Hamsa Yoga the nose provides extra support and the two senses (the functions of nose and the ears) together with deep mental engrossment help realize the latent sound of ‘soaham’.

As described in context of the nāda yoga, varieties of subtle sounds –including those perceived during the gradual progress in the long term practice of nāda yoga – result from the vibrations created by the sat, raj and tam tendencies of the nature immanent in the five basic elements. These, like the internal sounds of the nerves and muscles in the body, are āhata nādas because they are generated by
some kinds of vibrations only. Even the silent and mānasika japas produce āhata nāda because some movement, though of subtle dimension, of the vocal cord and the components of the nervous system, is always associated with such japas too. It is only the ajapā japa that continues naturally like the eternal flow of the self-existing anāhata nāda of Oṃkāra.

The āhata nādas are expressions of the manifestations of Śabda in nature, but the anāhata nādas are the expressions of the subliminal Śabda of the Brahm – the eternal Creator, the origin of nature, the cosmic thyself. Whence the latter are of paramount importance; they are conceptualized as the ultimate expressions of Śabda.

The savants of spiritual knowledge opine that in the innermost centre of the soul, its sense of self-recognition – as a fraction of the Parabrahm – is eternally reflected and gives rise to the continuous cycles of the self-existing (ajapā) japa of Soaham (meaning ‘I am “That” – the Brahmi‘). While discussing the meaning of ‘soaham’ one should not be confused with respect to the precision of the liaisons in this Sanskrit word (according to the Sanskrit grammar: sāh (that) + aham = soaham). Because, soaham has not been a word derived from the Sanskrit grammar, rather, it is a nāda that is self-existing because of the eternal linkage of ‘so’ (that, the supreme consciousness) and ‘aham’ (the consciousness of the individual self).

Soaham represents the oneness of the soul and the Brahmi. The haṁsa yoga prāṇāyāma of the soaham sādhanā aims at awakening of this feeling of oneness in the jīva (the individual self). Without this realization an individual believes his body and mind to be his “Self” in toto. His aspirations, concerns and activities remain confined to the domain of the body and mind. His thoughts and emotions circulate within this self-conceited, limited periphery and only the things and people falling within this domain – of having some relationship with the body or the conscious mind – appear to him as his own. He does not feel any sense of responsibility or affection with others except perhaps for his near relatives and friends. Not only that, at times, he does not even hesitate in harming others in order to secure the benefits of his ‘own’ people or to preserve the things in his ‘own’ possession.
This ignorance is what is called māyā, which becomes the cause of materialistic attachments and binding of the jīva in selfish affairs. These bonds make him indulge in the unnecessary activities and sins which hinder the possibilities of his spiritual development and put him into the dark tunnel of an unending journey in the world of ignorance, weaknesses, sufferings and agony of unlimited desires.... The whole lot of spiritual sādhana aims at emancipating the individual self from this bondage of illusions and ignorance and uplifting towards the righteous path worth his dignity as a soul.

The knowledge of soahām is termed as Sadjīnāna, Tatvajīnāna or Brahmjīnāna – the divine knowledge that enlightens the inner self and awakens the soul so that it could realize its eternal origin. By the effect of soahām sādhana, the individual self begins to recognize its true identity as a reflection of the Brahm. The knowledge of soahām contains the key for liberation from ignorance and the worldly thralldom. It indeed leads to the state of realization of – ‘Tatvamasi, Śuddhosi, Buddhosi, Nirajanosi’ in terms of the attainment of absolute piety, ultimate knowledge and limitless beatitude.

The word meaning of soahām – ‘I am Brahm’ should not be interpreted as an expression of arrogance. Because, here ‘I’ does not correspond to the body or what a selfish, ignorant and a possessive person thinks himself to be.... Such misinterpretations would imply what the devil like giants, Ravana, Kansa and Hiranyakshyapu, used to impose themselves to be. These characters, because of their maddening ego, suppressive might and blind superiority complex used to regard themselves as equivalent to God and used to even impose such impressions upon others. But the history stands by the fact that such illusions of extreme atrocities finally became the cause of their disdainful destruction.

It should be remembered that in the meaning of ‘soahām’ the word ‘I’ does not refer to this body or mind which are made up of the panca tatvas (five basic elements) and the three natural tendencies of the jada and cetan components of nature. This ‘I’ truely corresponds to the soul. Thus ‘soahām’ is a divine message which re-
minds that the soul is a part of the Brahmi. The spiritual scholars of all times have described the unity of the soul with the Brahmi as that of – a wave with the ocean; light with the sun; an atom with the universe; a spark with fire... etc. The only hindrance in the realization by the soul of its originality is the smog of ignorance (māyā) when the soul exists in a body as a living being (jīva) in this world.

The assimilation of illusions, misdeeds and the associated impact of the kusānskāras of the previous birth and the thralldom of ego, avarice and attachment block the active linkage of the individual self with its divine source. That is why an individual, despite being a part of that Omniscient Almighty continues to live a dissatisfied, effete, purposeless and even sinful life. The spiritual sādhanaś aim at removing these untoward shrouds and wiping off the latent imprints of the kusānskāraś and untoward habits and refining the mind and the entire inner self of the sādhaka. It is only in a clean and serene mind and pious heart that the divine inspirations could be educed that would enlighten the soul. The soaham sādhana also results in such an illumination of the intellect and spiritual transmutation of the individual self.

The religious scriptures repeatedly convey that ‘Īswara Anśa Jīva Avināśī’ – every living being is a fraction of the Almighty, Omniscient Almighty continues to live a dissatisfied, effete, purposeless and even sinful life. The spiritual sādhanaś aim at removing these untoward shrouds and wiping off the latent imprints of the kusānskāraś and untoward habits and refining the mind and the entire inner self of the sādhaka. It is only in a clean and serene mind and pious heart that the divine inspirations could be educed that would enlighten the soul. The soaham sādhana also results in such an illumination of the intellect and spiritual transmutation of the individual self.

If one’s śraddhā is educed and enlightened by the spiritual essence of ‘soaham’ then its realization would certainly bring divine transformation in his life. In this elevated state the individual should think according to the divine inspirations, his deeds should be angelic like those of the incarnations of God. Only then the individual self would be able to unite with its origin... When the water of a gutter falls into the
holy Ganges it gets merged in the latter and becomes one with the holy water of the Ganges.... A small droplet of water when falls in a sea, it looses its identity but becomes an integral component of the sea water....., and thus becomes the sea itself. Similarly, after the realization of ‘soahan’ the soul gets immersed into the Brahm and thereby attains the latter’s omnipresent form. The successful sadhakas of this sadhanā therefore appear like perfect beings – angels, because of the divinity of their thoughts, saintly sentiments and altruist deeds that are dedicated for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. The soahan sadhanā, when used for the purpose of stimulating and arousing the Kundalinī and its practice according to the science and methodology of the sadhanā of ajap japa of Gayatri – is called the Hamsa Yoga. The experts of yoga sadhanās have written a great deal about the hamsa yoga. Some such excerpts are listed below.

Haṃsasyākṛati Vistā raṃ Bhuktimukti Phalapradamḥ |  
Sarvesu Deheśu Vyāptam Vartate Yathā Hyagñiḥ,  
Kāṣṭheśu Tīleśu Tailamiva | Tadviditvā Na Mrtyumeti |  
Agniśimau Pakṣāvonkāraḥ Śīra Ukāro Bindustrinetram  
Mukhiḥ Rudro Rudraṇi |  
Caranau Dvividham Kaṃṭhataḥ, Kuryādity- 
unmanāḥ Ajapopasamhāra Ityabhidhiyate |  
Tasmānmano Viline Manasi Gate Saṃkalpikalpe  
Dadghe Pūnya Pāpe |  
Sadāśivāḥ Śaktyātmā Sarvatrāvasthitāḥ Swayam Jyoti,  
Śuddho, Buddho, Nityo Niranjanah |  
Śāntatamaḥ Prakāś ayaṭṭa ta Vedanuvacan|m Bhavaṭṭi tyutpaniṣat|  

– Hamsopanishad

**Meaning:** The eternal form and expansion of ‘Haṃsā’ offers both – ultimate satisfaction and liberation. As the fire resides in wood, or oil in the seasamum seeds, similarly, this absolute element of the Brahm is contained in all living beings. One who knows it gets liberated from the bondages of death. Agni and Soma (the eternal sources of life and creativity) are the wings of this haṃsa. Ōṅkāra is its head, bindu (the divine glow-point) makes its eyes, Rudra (God Shiva’s...
manifestation) exists in its mouth and *Rudrāṇī* (the power of *Rudra*) in its feet. The endless dimensions of time are its arms, *agni* (as the divine source of energy) rests in its armpits and the *sagunā* (manifested) and *nirguṇa* (sublime, omnipresent) forms of the *Brahm* are its two sides.

The continuous *japa* of ‘Rama-Rama...’ sounds like ‘Mara - Mara...’. Similarly, if the sound of ‘*soaham*’ is enunciated repeatedly without a pause, it generates a cycle and echoes in the reverse order as ‘*haṁsoa... haṁsoa...’ and thus sounds like ‘*haṁsa – haṁsa...’ because of its continuity. This is why the *soaham sādhanā* is also called *haṁsa yoga sādhanā*.

_Haṁso Haṁsohamityevaṁ Punarāvarttanakrmāt | Soaham Soaham Bhavennūnamittyogavido Viduḥ ||_

–Yoga Rasāyanam

**Meaning:** The repetition of ‘*haṁsoaahāṁsoa....*’ would be heard as a ‘*japa*’ of ‘*soaham -soaham....*’. The experts of *yoga* know this fact very well.

_Abhyāsānantarāṁ Kuryād Gacchāṁstiḥ hanswapannapi | Cintanaṁ Haṁsa Mantrasya Yogasiddhikārīm Param ||_

–Yog. Rasā. | 303

**Meaning:** Even before (or after) the regular practice (of *haṁsa yoga*), the reflection of the ‘*soaham*’ sound (produced by the breaths) should be continuously felt while walking, sitting or even sleeping... This leads to ultimate success. This *soaham mantra* is also known as *haṁsoa or haṁsa*.

When the mind gets immersed in that omnipresent element of ‘*haṁsa*’ (*Brahm*), all its sins, ego, desires and related emotions, thoughts and reflections are totally waned out. And then the glow of the absolutely pious, eminent and beatitudeous eternal power of the *Brahm* illuminates the inner mind.
Soham Sadhana

Pranam Dehamadhye Tu Sthito Hamsah Sadacayut |
Hamsa Eva Param Satyaṁ, Hamsa Eva Tu Šaktikam ||
Hamsa Eva Param Vākyam, Hamsa Eva Tu Vādikam |
Hamsa Eva Paro Rudro, Hamsa Eva Parātparam ||
Sarvadevasya Madhyasto, Hamsa Eva Maheśwaraḥ |
Hamsajyotiranūpamyaṁ Devamadhye Vyavasthitam ||
– Brahm Vidyopaniṣad | 60-65

**Meaning:** The divine power resides in the form of ‘hamsa’ in every creature. Hamsa only is the ultimate truth. Hamsa alone is the absolute power. Hamsa is the supreme form of God. Hamsa is the eternally complete sentence. Hamsa is the essence of all Vedas. Hamsa is the greatest Rudra – Śiva of the trinity Gods. Hamsa is the Parabrahm.

Hamsa is immanent like the unique glow among the ‘spectrum’ of the divine powers. Each one of us should always do the japa of this hamsa mantra with mental concentration and emotional devotion focused at the sacred glow.

Nabhastham Niśkalam Dhyan Galaī Mucyate Vibandaḥdanaḥ |
Anāhatadhwaniyutaṁ Haṁsaṁ Yo Veda Ṣraddgatiṁ ||
Swapkāśācidānandaṁ Sa Haṁsa Iti Gīyate |
Nābhikande Samau Kṛatwā Praṇāpānau Samāhitāḥ ||
Mastakashāṁratāśwadāṁ Pitwā Dhyāyena Sādaram |
Haṁsavidyāṁraate Loke Nāsti Nityatwasādhanam ||
Yo Dadātī Mahavidyāṁ Hamsākhyāṁ Pārneśvarīṁ |
Hamsahamseti Yo Brūyāddhamso Brahmāhariḥ Śivaḥ |
Gurūvakhṛttu Labhyet Pratyakṣaṁ Sarvatomukhaṁ ||
– Brahma Vidyopaniṣad | 20-34

**Meaning:** One, who has realized the eternally glowing, absolutely blissful element of the hamsa that resides in the inner self with its anāhata nāda, such an ascetic person alone is given the title of “hamsa”. One who showers the nectar (of emotional sanctity and śraddhā) along with the japa of ‘hamsa’ attains supernatural powers and talents.
There is no support better than the knowledge of haṁsa. The expert who teaches and distributes this knowledge is indeed honorable and worthy of being treated respectfully. One who successfully performs the sādhanā of haṁsa realizes the powers of the trinity Gods existing in himself and attains the ultimate knowledge of the Brahīn.

Manaso Haṁsaḥ Soaham Haṁsa Iti Tanmayam Yajño Nādanusamdhānam

– Pāśupata Brahmopanishad

**Meaning:** The haṁsa is a manifestation of the Brahīn in the inner self. This is what is expressed by ‘soaham’. This haṁsa expands outside and also resides inside (the body). It is a form of God. The (soaham) yajña performed by its contemplation and realization is equivalent to the nādayoga sādhanā.

Haṁsātmamālikā Varnabrahmakālapracoditā
Paramātmā Pumāniti Brahmasampattikārini

– Pāśupata Brahmopanishad

**Meaning:** Haṁsa is a reflection of the Brahīn. One can find (link the Self with) Lord Brahmac by its sādhanā. It is the Supreme Self and the Purūṣa.

Haṁsavidyāmavijñāya Muktau Yatram Karoti Yaḥ
Sa Nabbobhakṣaṇenaiva Kśunivṛttim Kariṣyati

– Sūtra Saṁhitā

**Meaning:** One who attempts (after knowing its secret…) the haṁsa yoga, enjoys complete liberation from all ambitions and desires.

Pāśāna Chittwā Yathā Haṁso Nirviṣamkakhamutkramet
Chinnapāśastavathā Ji vah Samsārām Tarate Tadā

– Kṣrikoṇaṇiṣad

**Meaning:** As the haṁsa (swan) flies freely in the sky, similarly, the sādhaka of the haṁsa yoga becomes free from all the ties of worldly attachments.
Several ancient scholars have also analyzed the syllables ‘ha’ and ‘sa’ (of ‘hamsa’) separately. The two letters also have multiple implications and the combinations of the two (in ‘hamsa’) give appropriate directions to the sādhaka.

_Hakāro Nirgame Proktah Sakārena Praveśanam
Hakaraḥ Śivarūpena Sakāraḥ Śaktirucyate |

— Śiva Swarodaya

**Meaning:** The outflow of a breath produces ‘hakāra’ (the sound of ‘ha’) and its inflow produces ‘sakāra’ (the sound of ‘sa’) Hakāra represents a manifestation of God Śiva and Sakāra corresponds to that of Śakti (Goddess Pārvati).

_Hakārena Tu Sūryah Syātsakārenendurucyate |
Sūryacandramosaraikyām Haṭha Ityabhidhiyate ||
Haṭhena Grasyate Jādāṁ Sarvadoṣasamudbhav |
Kṣetrajaṁ Paramātmā Ca Tayoraikyāṁ Yadābhavet ||

— Yoga Śikhopaniṣad | 133-134

**Meaning:** Hakāra is related with the sūrya-swara (the swara produced by the flow of the prāṇa through the right nāḍī, connected with the right nostril). Sakāra corresponds to the candra-swara (the swara of the left nāḍī). Harmonizing the two swaras is aimed in the Haṭha Yoga. By such yogas, the sādhaka’s ignorance and inertia – which is the cause of all flaws, is eradicated so that the sādhaka could unite with the Omniscient Thee.

By the process of breathing, each jīva naturally performs the silent ‘japa’ (enunciation) of soahām although, without realizing it. The average number of such ‘unnoticed’ (latent) japas is around 21600 per day.

_Hakārena Bahiryāti Sakārena Viṣetpunāḥ |
Hamśa HamṣetYMū Mantram Ji vo Japati Sarvadā ||
Śaṭa Śatāni Twahorātre Sahastrānyekavinśatiḥ |
Etatsaṁkhyānvitaṁ Mantram Jivo Japati Sarvadā ||

— Gorakṣa Saṁhitā 1| 41 - 42
Meaning: The conscious energy of the jīva. This way it continuously utters ‘haṁsa - haṁsa...’. Thus, a jīva normally recites the (haṁsa) mantra around twenty-one thousands six hundred times during each cycle of a day and night.

By certain principles of the Sanskrit grammar, an abridged form of ‘soahman’ becomes ‘Oaṁ’ which sounds like Oaṁ (Om) in general.

Sakāram Ca Hakāraṁ Ca Lopayitwā Prayojayet |
Sandhim Ca Purvarūpākhyāṁ Tatosaupraṇavo Bhavet ||

Meaning: If the syllables associated with ‘hakāra’ and ‘sakāra’ are eliminated from the word soahm then the liaison of the remaining vowels produces the sound of Oaṁ.

The sādhanā of haṁsa yoga is of foremost importance in the spiritual practices of higher complexities. It has been regarded as an integral part of the sādhanās aimed at awakening the Kuṇḍalinī (the serpentine fire).

Vibharti Kuṇḍalīśaktirātmānaṁ Haṁsayāśritā |
− Tantra Sā ra

Meaning: The Kuṇḍalinī power rides on the haṁsa to pierce into the subtle centers of the conscious body.
In the idols and visual descriptions of the Goddess Gāyatrī, she is shown as sitting on a haṁsa (swan). This depiction implies that the power of Gāyatrī is realized through the medium and support of haṁsa (yoga).

As such the haṁsa (swan) is regarded as a clean and sacred bird which is wise in selecting proper and pure meal even from a melange of rubbish in its food. Because of these qualities, the word haṁsa is also used in the Sanskrit literature to represent discerning intellect, purity, fairness and reasoned discreetness. By these literary interpretations, the representation of haṁsa as a vehicle of Gāyatrī, indicates that – for a successful upāsanā of Gāyatrī the sūdhaka’s life should be pure, balanced and endowed with moral values, prudent.
thinking and righteous conduct. However, in the context of the sādhanās of spiritual elevation, the representation of Gāyatrī as riding on a hamsa most appropriately implies the role of hamsa yoga for the realization of the preeminent power of Gāyatrī.

The ancient Indian scriptures also mention a story in which Goddess Pārvatī once asks Lord Šiva about a yoga that could offer all kinds of siddhis (attainment of supernatural faculties and talents). Then God Šiva replies –

\[
\text{Ajapa Nāma Gāyatrī Yogināṁ Mokśadāyinyī} \\
\text{Asvāḥ Samkalpa Mātṛeṇa Sarvepāpaiḥ Pramucyate} \\
\]

**Meaning:** Ajapa (ajapā japa) of Gāyatrī bestows mokśa on the yogis. A determined commencement of this sādhanā itself can eradicate the evils in the sādhaka’s character.

Hearing the above, Goddess Pārvatī expressed her desire to know the methods of performing this unique yoga. God Šiva told her that–

\[
\text{Deho Devālayo Devi, Jī vo Devaḥ Sadāśivāḥ} \\
\text{Tyajedajānānanirmālya, Soahām Bhāvena Pūjayet} \\
\]

**Meaning:** ‘O’, Devi! (addressing to Pārvatī) – “The body of an individual is itself a temple in which the God resides in the form of the jīva. After cleaning this temple externally and internally – by removing the smog of ignorance and evil conduct, the internal God should be worshiped by the samkalpa of soahām”.

The soahām sādhanā is a Yoga Sādhanā of Gāyatrī. This can be performed continuously along with each breath throughout the life.

\[
\text{Śvānsaniśkā sakāle Hi Hakāraṁ Parikī rtyate} \\
\text{Punāḥ Praveṣa Kāle Ca Sakāraḥ Procyate Budhaiḥ} \\
\]

**Meaning:** Hakāra is pronounced when we breathe out and sakāra when breathe in. Concentration on this continuous flow of nāda is the soahām sādhanā.
The scholars of śāstras mention that the eternal sense of self-recognition of the soul in the deepest inner center of the jīva triggers the ajapā japa of ‘soahāṁ’ on its own. (This latent japa is manifested in the sound of soahāṁ, in each breath throughout the life of the jīva).

God Shiva is described (in the scriptures) to have said that – repeated cycle of hāṁsah.... (hāṁso...., hāṁso...) appears as soahāṁ.... soahāṁ in the continuous flow of Prāṇa.

_Haṁ So Haṁ sohamityevam Punar vartanāṁ Kramā _
Soham Soaham Bhavennūnamiti Yogavidoviduh ||

**Meaning:** The repeated pronunciation of ‘haṁ - saḥ’....‘haṁ - saḥ’ in a continuous manner is heard in the reverse cyclic order as ‘soahāṁ’....‘soahāṁ’ – this is what the yogis have experienced.

Dissolving the individual self in the cosmic self – sacrificing self interests for the divine welfare of others; experiencing the presence of thee in each and every reflection of one’s own being – is the great śādhanā of soahāṁ. As the śādhaka progresses in the determined practice of evacuating the ego and selfishness with the ‘haṁ’ sound of each breath and inscribing the divine virtues with its ‘so’ sound, he experiences the enlightenment of his intellect and expansion and elevation of his attitude towards life. A corresponding development of his personality takes place as a consequence. This way he attains the ideal goal of any spiritual śādhanā, which is – the refinement of personality to endow it with divine qualities. The śādhaka thereby gains all round success in the physical as well as the spiritual domains of his life as a human being.

The inspiration of soahāṁ śādhanā describes the unification of the jīvātmā with the Brahmā – of the individual consciousness with the supreme omnipresent, eternal consciousness. It helps the śādhaka realize ‘soahāṁ’ (so + aham) that is ‘Thou is I’ and ‘I am (the soul is) Thou – the Almighty, Omniscient Brahm’. The śādhaka’s ideals of life, his beliefs, convictions, thoughts and emotions are edified by this realization. All living beings appear to him as his near and dear ones and his own self transmutes into angelic one by his noble deeds oriented towards the divine welfare of all.
The *soham* sādhanā liberates the devotee from the worldly concerns and sorrows by illuminating his mind and heart with the glow of self-recognition and by awakening the latent strength of his inner self. The basic causes of the decline of humane ideals, shattering of mutual trust and love and increase in crimes, exploitatations and agonies seen in the world today, lie in – the egotism, unending row of passions, ambitions and cravings, and the selfish and possessive attitude of the people in general. In view of this fact, the practice of *soham* sādhanā, because of its potential of limitless expansion of the self – by cultivating the altruist attitude and rousing the divinity of the character – indeed promises a boon of happy, progressive and peaceful life for the entire world.

In the *soham* sādhanā, as stated earlier, the *nāda* of the mantra ‘soham’ is ‘heard’ (experienced) within each breath by the ‘ears’ of the subtle body without performing any *japa*. Hence it is also defined as the *ajapā japa* of Gāyatrī – that, which arouses and liberates the *prāṇa* (in the ocean of mahāprāṇa). This is also called a sādhanā of Prāṇa Gāyatrī.

Even the self-inspired, continuous *ajapā japa* of Gāyatrī performed naturally (along with each respiration cycle) without any effort is said to provide complete protection to the *prāṇa* and offer spiritual knowledge and *siddhis* equivalent to that of the other yoga sādhanās. Then, think about the impact of this *ajapā japa* if it is performed as a sādhanā with ascetic disciplines, *sankalpa* and *śraddhā!* Indeed, this sādhanā (of soham) then becomes the highest kind of spiritual sādhanās because no branch of knowledge and science is found superior to the Gāyatrī-vidyā and no *japa* better than the *japa* of the Gāyatrī (Mantra). The *śastras* therefore sing great paens on the *soham* sādhanā.

According to the *ślokas* of Devi Bhagawata, the haṁsa yoga also incorporates the *upāsanā* of all the divine powers. For instance, consider the following Śloka –

*Haṁso Ganeśo Vidhiresvaṁ Haṁso, Haṁso Harirmayaśca Śambhu |
Haṁso Hi Ji vo Gurīdeva Haṁso, Haṁso Mamāṁmā Paramāṁm Haṁsaṁ |
Ha Kā reṇa Vahiryāti, Sakā reṇa Viṣet Punan |
Haṁsāṁmikāṁ Bhagavati Ji vo Japati Sarvadā*
Meaning: **Hamsa yoga** consists of attracting the power of the trinity Gods – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and of Lord Ganesa. The **Hamsa** is the ideal guide, **Hamsa** alone is the **jīva** as well as the **Brahm** – the soul as well as the Omnipresent Supreme expression of thee.

The **jīva** subconsciously performs the **ajapā japa** of **Gāyatrī**. The eternal energy of **Gāyatrī** enters with the **sakāra** and its reciprocating power comes out with **hakāra** during the continuous cycle of life. The following **śloka** in Sharda Tilaka states a similar implication—

**Hamsaḥ Parama Pareśani Pratyānha Japate Narah** | Mohandho Yo Na Jā nāti, Mokśa Tasya Na Vidyate  
**Ajapā Nāma Gāyatrī, Yoginām Mokśā Dāyini**  
**Tasya Vijñāna Mātreṇa Narah Pāpai Pramuccayate**  
**Anayā Sā draśi Vidyā Cā nayo Sā draśo Japaḥ**  
**Anayā Sadraśaṁ Puṇyāṁ Na Bhūtaṁ Na Bhaviṣyati**

Meaning: Every human performs a **japa** of **soaham** in each cycle of breathing. One who does not realize this is like a blind because he lives in the darkness of worldly illusions and he can never get **mokśa**. **Ajapā Gāyatrī** bestows **mokśa** on the yogis. Anybody can get rid of all the sins and evils by attaining its knowledge and realizing its power. There is no knowledge equivalent to it. No **punya** comparable with the prodigious benefits of this **sādhana** has ever existed in the past or is likely to exist any time in the future.

God – the eternal father, always wants to uplift its children – the **jīvas**. But the **jīva**, because of its ignorance, tries to shroud or malign the glow of God existing in its inner self. Thus, there always exists a ‘tug-of-war’ between the two. God is not satisfied without finding the righteous movement of the **jīva**’s life. **Thou** shall remain consistent in thy absolute fairness and firm in thy system of creating destiny as per the **jīva**’s actions at physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. God has to often punish the **jīva** to remind the latter of thy eternal disciplines.

The **jīva**, pervaded by **māyā**, thinks that by becoming a ‘devotee’ (worshiper) of God he would receive the boons to fulfill all his just or unjust desires. He bags and thus ‘insists’ (by means of prayers) that God should bless him without testing whether he deserves it or not. If both (the God and the **jīva**) remain firm in their attitude and approach,
how would they come closer? How would the devotee feel *thou* presence? How would the *jīva* meet his divine parent?

The philosophy of *soaham* *sādhana* contains a solution to the above problem. It naturally inspires the *sādhaka* to devote himself completely by sacrificing his ego and desires and dissolving his identity in the divine affection of *thee*. He should purify his mind by the sacred shower of *śraddhā* and let his mind and inner self fully under the control of the inspirations of God. He should discipline his life as per the rules of life set by the Almighty in terms of truth and honesty and compassion, love and respect for everybody. Once the *jīva* devotes himself to the Omniscient, it gets linked with the source of divinity and the latent presence of God in his own inner self begins to be felt and expressed….

Total sacrifice, even if it is from one side alone, is bound to result in unification because there no longer remains any distance between the two ends, no separation or dissociation is possible thereafter. This is indeed the secret of true love and the same principle applies to the perfection of the *sādhaka*’s devotion. When the fuel of wood is sacrificed in the fire, it no longer remains a fuel but becomes fire itself. When a drop of water falls in an ocean, the tiny existence of the former instantly acquires grand expansion. If salt is dissolved in water, or sugar in milk, the two loose their separate identities and unify with the respective solvents to become one with them.

The above kind of unity between the *jīva* and the *Brahm* is described in the *Vedanta* teachings as the ultimate goal of the journey of life – the goal of absolute existence. This is what is regarded as the state of *advaita*. In this state of the inner self, the *sādhaka* realizes his true identity as – *Śivoham, Saccidānandoham, Tatwamasi, Ayamātma Brahm* – ‘my soul is everything….; it is the absolute good; it is a reflection of the *Brahm*…….’. This realization is termed in spiritual literature as – ‘self-recognition’, ‘uniting with *thee*’ or ‘*Brahm* Nirvāṇa’, …etc.

***
Soahāṁ Śādhanā: First Step Towards Self-Realization

*Soahāṁ śādhanā* or *hamṣa yoga* is purely a spiritual type of *prāṇāyāma*. This yoga incorporates *prāṇāyāma* along with some kind of *nāda yoga* and *dhyāna yoga*.

The *prāṇāyāma* phase consists of – sitting in a stable posture of *sukhāsana* or *padmāsana*; in a physically and mentally calm condition; keeping the spinal cord in an erect position and taking deep breaths in a consistent manner. The erect position of the spinal column supports straight flow of the *prāṇa*. Like for the other *prāṇāyāmas*, breathing at a slow pace is supposed to be the best for this one too. Breathing should be so deep that the lungs would be totally filled with oxygen after inhalation. The duration of either kind of *kumbhaka* should not be more than half that of the *recaka* or *pūraka*.

While breathing in, the concentration should be focussed at the subtle sound (of ‘so’*) produced by the air-flow through the nostril. During the *antāḥ kumbhaka* it should be centered inside the body. Meditating on the flow of the ‘inhaled’ *prāṇa* through the endocrine centers like the *ṣaṭajasakras* or the *granthis* along the spinal column is extremely useful because it helps focussing the consciousness at these specific extrasensory nodal points and thus accelerating the vibrations of latent energy currents.

While breathing out, the *sādhaka* should concentrate on the subtle sound of *ham* (produced by the outflow of the air) and expel the ego, selfishness, vices and infirmities with it. In order to make this activity more effective than mere imagination, the *sādhaka* has to be very careful in his day-to-day life too. All the glamour and passions associated with ‘*ham*’ (‘I’ – the ego) and its narrow perspectives are to be left despite the intense pressures of worldly benefits and fears. When an oil-lamp is kindled, its flame assumes predominance and the oil slowly looses its own identity and transfers its existence in the form of light through the medium of the flame. Similarly, in the *soahāṁ prāṇāyāma*, the existence of *ham* (the ego) is immersed in *so* (that, the omnipresent *Brahm*) through the medium of controlled breathing and support of mental *samkalpa*.
Soham Śādhanā

Perception of the subtle sounds – of ‘So’ and ‘Haṁ’ which are ‘dissolved’ in the in and out flows of the breaths – corresponds to a practice similar to the nāda yoga. Meditation upon these sounds and the associated paramount feelings of attracting the mahāprāṇa and releasing the ego and ignorance is indeed a superior type of dhyāna yoga too.

The inherent unity between the soul and the Brahm is described in the scriptures of Vedanta as the principle of advaita. The śāstras like the Panchadashi present the details on the philosophy and implementation of this principle. The hamsa yoga is a sādhanā, a spiritual experiment for the realization of this theory.

The Gāyatrī Mantra consists of twenty-four Sanskrit letters compiled in the three vyāhritis after “ōam”. The continuous japa of this mantra by the subconscious mind is a sādhanā of the prāṇa, which results in the merging of the individual consciousness with the mahāprāṇa. This effectuates the linkage of the individual self with its Omnipresent thy origin and thus leads to the realization of the Brahm. The subtle but spontaneous japa of soaham occurring with each breath is the same type of sādhanā of prāṇa and gives equivalent spiritual benefits. Therefore, the soaham sādhanā is called the ajapā japa of Gāyatrī.

Every sādха of Gāyatrī has to perform the soaham sādhanā (hamsa yoga) before entering into the highest phase of the spiritual sādhanā of Gāyatrī. Thus ‘soaham’ is the bīja (essence) of the Gāyatrī Mantra and its sādhanā is said to be essential for the ultimate success in the sādhanā of Gāyatrī.

Among the twenty-four incarnations (avatāras) – of God Viṣṇu – as described in the purāṇas, one is the Haṁsāvatāra. The hamsa yoga may also be regarded as the upāsanā of this manifestation of the Almighty. Success of this yoga elevates the sādха up to the states of – ‘Raja Hamsa’ and ‘Parama Hamsa’, which represent the highest realm of spiritual illumination and sainthood.

As mentioned earlier, the hamsa (swan) is regarded as a symbol of sanctity, fairness and discreetness. It is described in the śāstras that
if a *haṁsa* is given a mixture of milk and water, it would suck only milk and leave back the water content. That means, it has a natural tendency to recognize and select the noblest, the supreme. When a *sādhaka* develops a prudent acumen to adopt the righteous tendency in all aspects of life, he is said to have reached the level of a ‘*haṁsa*’.

The bird *haṁsa* (swan) is spotless white. The rhetoric representations associated with it’s name imply that the lives of the *sādhakas* who attain the title of (that is, who reach the state of) ‘*haṁsa*’ should also become absolutely clean and sacred in all dimensions of life.....

The personality of such a *sādhaka* fits well in the simile given by saint Kabira: “Dūsa Kabira Jatana Se Odhī, Jyon Ki Tyon Rakha Dīnī Cunariyā” which implies – “A saintly jīva wears the ‘sheet’ of life with scrupulous care and leaves it as it is (that is, naturally pure) in the end.....”

It is said in the śāstras about the *Rāhaṁsa* (king swan) that it lives in the Mānasarovara and selects only real beads from the waters of this holy pond and leaves out the sea-animals and insects. This description symbolizes the character of the *sādhakas* who are spiritually enlightened up to the ‘Rājahamsa’ level. As such, in the world around, we might sometimes find the bird swan eating the insects and rubbish; but we should note that the descriptions in the śāstras are rhetoric, so these should be interpreted in the right perspective. The above qualities in fact imply that – an ideal ‘*haṁsa*’ would prefer to die but he would not eat anything except the pure beads. Similarly, a spiritually refined person, who has reached the status of ‘rājahamsa’ would always choose the righteous path of absolute truth and stand by the noble ideals of morality even if he has to face challenging difficulties and adversities in his life....

The ‘sound’ of *soahaṁ* is said to have originated from the combination of *prakṛati* (the eternal power of creation) and *purūṣa* (the Supreme Creator). The *purūṇas* describe that the inspiration – to become many from the lonely state of being just one, generated within the *Brahm*, gave rise to the existence of the *prakṛati* and *purūṣa*. The *prakṛati* was *jāda* and the *purūṣa* was *cetan*. Combination of the two resulted in the creation of the universe, the Nature and the
manifestation of life…. The commingling of the prakṛati and purūṣa resulted in the expression of Śabda Brahmi. The nāda produced by this cosmic impulse was reflected in the Nāda Brahmi as the eternal sublime vibrations of Omkāra.

When the unity of the prakṛati and purūṣa generated the sentient cetan components – the jīvas, then its jāda component (the prakṛati) disappeared. Only the ‘Saḥ’ – the Para Brahmi, the purūṣa, the eternal source of cetan, and the ‘Hām’ – the jīva, an expression of the Para Brahmi in thy creation, remained there after…. The ‘saḥ’ and the ‘ahām’ are recognized separately under the dvaita philosophy. The advaita theory defines their conjugation as eternal because, according to this philosophy, the jīva is nothing but a reflection of the multiple manifestations of the Para Brahmi. This absolute unity is represented in ‘soahām’ (saḥ + aham). Thus, the soahām has originated and is eternally existing along with the omnipresent nāda of Omkāra.

The soahām sadhanā provides an answer to the natural quest of the ī va – “what am I?”, as – “I am Para Brahmi, I am thee, I exist in everything...”. The in-depth understanding and insightful analysis of this fact by the ṛisis had given rise to the philosophies of ‘Brahm Darśana’, ‘Atma Jñāna’, ‘Tatra Jñāna’, ‘Atra Jñāna’, ‘Vyavahāra Jñāna’, etc and hence to the gamut of the ancient scriptures of Indian Philosophy and Culture.

Without self-recognition, a human being does not really understand the origin and purpose of his life, its dignity and duties. Like a child gets attracted towards every toy and every new scene and remains engrossed in unnecessary activities, a grownup person also, throughout his life, remains involved in the aspirations and actions which are triggered by the agile mind and the passions of the other sense organs. Life of a human largely remains confined to his body, physical comforts and the affections of people associated (as relatives and friends) with it. His thoughts and emotions also emanate from and move around within the domains of – these limited aspects of life and the knowledge of the world within the peripheries of his gross perceptions and illusive imaginations in general.
If one pays little attention to what happens to a dead body one would definitely feel that there is some thing else – the prāna, without which, the body cannot survive even for a tiny part of a second. The biodegradation of the body begins soon after death. The same ‘body’, which was so dear to the people around when it was recognized as ‘so and so person’, becomes ‘untouchable’ moments after death. Unless processed chemically, buried or cremated, this body starts stinking and deteriorates fast. If left open, it would be eaten away in a short while by the germs within it or by the vultures, jackals, kites etc from the outside....

What is that which exists as the prāna, the source of consciousness, which keeps the body alive and gives it the identity of a person? Few of us really pay serious attention to this question. Most of the time we remain occupied in the activities associated with the worldly pleasures, cravings and worries and the fulfillment of the emotional, mental and sensual desires generated by materialistic attachments and ego. Those inclined towards religion and spirituality although know that they are souls and not just the physical body...., their knowledge often remains a bookish one or as an abstract concept or theory unless it is contemplated thoroughly, inscribed in the deeper domains of faith and realized in practice....

The religious and spiritual scriptures always preach that – “Know yourself”, “Do what is your real duty towards the soul”...etc. Without adept understanding of the answers and their implementation in conduct, one can not recognize the path of his own welfare and the true goal of his life. For a practical implementation of the teachings of the śāstras, one has to bear in mind and thoroughly comprehend that the soul and the body are two different entities of a living being. The relation between the two is that of – a rider and a vehicle, or a craftsman and his tools. The body is only a medium for the expression and activities of the soul.

The requirements of the body and the soul are quite different. The body needs comforts, luxuries...., and respectful attention of others. Its pleasures tend towards the self-obsessive activities. But the soul is neither affected by any material or worldly possessions and com-
forts, nor by scarcity and hardship... It is the body and the mind, attached with the desires and passions that experience the pleasures or pains. The feelings of content of the sense organs and the mind are momentary. Once the desired things or pleasures are attained, the charm of the same disappears soon; the enthusiasm ceases and the thirst for novel taste, newer achievements... begin to grow up....; and so on....; the vicious cycle continues throughout the life...., and eventually the life ends in a ‘yet to be satisfied state’.

Most people do not realize that human life is the best creation of the God and it is bestowed on a jīva with very specific purpose. Even those who are attracted towards evolution of the inner self often do it at a superficial level. Some people think reading or listening to the religious scriptures and performing some rituals of worshiping is sufficient for spiritual elevation. They should note that such actions are only symbolic and supportive and do not lead to the ‘visualization’ of the existence of the soul as different from the body and the mind.

The process of spiritual awakening and inner contentment of the soul begins only when the peity, generous attitude, compassion and altruist activities of social welfare become natural part of one’s thinking and routine cores. The door of the ecstatic beatitude of our soul opens only when our life, rather than being confined to the material attainments, comforts and sentient pleasures...., enjoys – helping others, sharing love and compassion with everybody around, and working for a noble cause of enlightening the society by the righteous knowledge and excelled expansion of moral ideals.

The science of spirituality and the yoga sādhanās cannot be understood or employed just by some physical actions or oral recitations. The incorporation of the associated principles in one’s deeds and corresponding changes in one’s intrinsic tendencies, emotions and thoughts is essential. Without the latter, the so-called spiritual and religious activities will be nothing more than engrossment of the mind and the body in a novel ‘play’ or activity....

The natural interests of the soul are rooted in compassion, generosity and altruist deeds of selfless service for the betterment of all. These
cannot be fulfilled without sacrificing the selfish interests of the body. One has to learn limit and restrain the needs and desires of the body before proceeding towards the evolution of his true “self”. One could attempt it in gradual steps so that the body could easily adopt the new life style. The training of the mind to face the ‘hardships’ of austerity and asceticity is the most difficult task. This could be achieved only if one has sincere faith, aspirations and strong will to become a better human, an ideal child of divinity... One’s convictions and samskāras as per their nature, are predominant in either supporting the spiritual conditioning of mind or, suppressing and diverting it from self-restrain and altruist way of life.

Dedicated meditation on the separate existence of the soul and the mind, the prāṇa and the body helps refining the samskāras and righteous conditioning of the mind and body for accepting the guidance of the soul. The soham sādhanā is supposed to be the best for this purpose. It can easily be performed with other kinds of upāsanās and sādhanās and essential activities of a normal routine. This special prāṇāyāma can be practised at any free time (of about 20 to 30 minutes at a stretch) during the day. However, it is most fruitful if performed at a neat and quiet place, at regular intervals of time every day, in a relaxed and fresh state of the body and the mind. The larger the duration of this practice with thorough mental concentration, the faster will be its effect.

The gross body, prānik or the subtle body and the soul, each is given due importance in this sādhanā. As stated earlier, this sādhanā is beneficial for the body, mind and the soul because the oxygen, prāṇa and the mahāprāṇa acquired with each breath in this practice is an ideal food for the gross, subtle and causal bodies respectively. The combination of these sources induces energy and courage, enlightens the intellect with the understanding of the ideals of humane life and inspires the inner self with the nectar of śraddhā and the spiritual charge of absolute truth.

The sādhanā of soham is very simple and risk-less. If the feelings of – ‘my soul is a creation of divinity..... a part of the Brahm...’,
become natural like the sound of ‘soahain’ generated with each breath, and, if the hearty inspirations for austere and altruist life become stronger, one might rest assured that his practice is no longer a ‘mere physical exercise’ or a ‘ritual’, rather, it has become a proper sādhanā and has begun the process of spiritual elevation.

The above state could be reached and the sādhaka may progress towards its siddhi if he disciplines his daily routine by self-restrain and assiduity and broadens his domain of love, compassion, cooperation and sacrifices. Once his selfishness – confined to his body, family and near and dear ones – expands up to the level of selflessness, and this transition begins to show up in his character and deeds, his soahain sādhanā may be regarded as having matured in the right direction, ensuring ultimate success.

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Soaham Sadhanā: High Realms of Prāṇa Yoga

When the air blows through small holes, its friction gives rise to specific sounds. The musical sound of a flute is also generated by the same effect. When stormy breeze flows through the bamboo-forest, it sounds like a sharp swara of a flute. When high-speed winds pass through thick field of trees, their friction with the latter also produces such sounds. The nostrils in a human body are like the holes in a narrow tube – as in a flute for instance.

The in and out flow of air through these tiny holes of the nose produces typical sounds. Deep breathing at a slow pace intensifies this sound produced by the friction of the air with the nasal walls. This sound resembles that of the word ‘so’ during inhalation and as that of ‘ham’ during exhalation. These sounds are subtle and cannot be heard loudly by the ears. Nevertheless, these specific sounds can be ‘perceived’ through harmonizing the breaths and meditating on each breath in an otherwise silent atmosphere.

As described earlier, the practice of soaham sādhanā (or haṁsa yoga) involves a prāṇayāma in which the sādhaka takes deep breathing at a slow and consistent pace and concentrates on the above mentioned sounds. The stability of meditation, strength of will power and emotional intensity of the sādhaka – in attracting the omnipresent current of divine prāṇa and throwing away the self-obsession and weaknesses – play the major role to make it a high level prāṇayāma sādhanā. As it involves the perception (realization) of the sublime and self-generated sounds, this sādhanā is equivalent to nāda yoga. The internal feelings of unification of the self with the Brahm enable a great spiritual practice – ajapā japa of Gāyatrī.

While performing this superior prāṇayāma, the sādhaka should first sit quietly and experience (not just imagine) that a glowing ocean of the divine prāṇas is spread all around him. This is the first phase of meditation. With all his willpower he should then begin the sādhanā by taking a deep breath and feeling that with the subtle sound of ‘so’, thy power of the supreme source of consciousness has infused deep inside in the form of the divine prāṇa. The sādhaka should retain the
breath for a while and feel that with the subtle sound of ‘a’ this mahāprāṇa has been absorbed by the inner centers of his body and is illuminating and energizing the whole body, mind and the heart (emotional center). Then, while breathing out, the sādhaka should again use all his willpower to expel his entire ego, anger, lust, jealously, selfishness and other vices and infirmities along with the sound of ‘ham’.... Stopping the breath for a few seconds, he should then feel that all the discarded malign assimilation have been waned out in the surroundings and will never return to him... He should repeat this cycle several times. Continuous practice with zeal trains the sādhaka in performing this sādhanā with perfection.

Initially, the sādhaka should perform this sādhanā for about 5 to 10 minutes everyday. This should be preceded by a meditation (as described above) of about 15 minutes duration and followed by a contemplation phase of about the same duration. In this last phase, the sādhaka should feel that the divine power has blessed him with thy grace and that the supreme consciousness has bestowed divine qualities and potentials on him. He should concentrate upon different components and inner cores of the body and feel that each element is illuminated by absorption of the divine energy. He should also contemplate that he has devoted himself to the God and that all his sense organs, mind and the intellect are now in the hands of that Almighty.

Each of his five organs of perceptions and the five organs of external activities will now be controlled according to the divine disciplines. The activities of vision, hearing, smelling and tasting will be processed as per the directions of the soul. The mouth will not eat or say anything that is not worth the austere discipline. The genitals will not be misused for mere carnal pleasure, instead, these organs will be involved in sexual activities only when the reproduction of the offspring becomes necessary to fulfil the need of some noble purpose. The limbs would not indulge in any activity that goes against the altruist duties of a responsible person. The thoughts and emotions would always be inspired by the grace of God...
The mind will not allow any thought, which is away from virtuous ideals; the intellect will not take any unfair, selfish, hasty, superficial or immature decision. The heart (emotional core) will not generate worldly ambitions or desires below the dignity of human being as a beloved child of thee.

The meditation and contemplation phases attached with the prāṇāyāma of soaham are most important parts of this sādhanā. The sādhaka’s śraddhā and viśwāsa should be so intense that these will not become mere mental exercises or entertaining activities; rather, these would ‘shake’ and ‘stir’ the entire personality. The positive effects of proper performance of these parts of the soaham sādhanā would certainly be reflected in the sādhaka’s behavior and actions in daily life... The sādhaka living in the same physical body would then become a divine being instead of remaining an ordinary mortal being or a social and intelligent animal.

The soaham prāṇāyāma is an excellent auto-suggestive experiment of psychology. After making an attempt to exhale all the weaknesses and sins with each breath, the sādhaka indeed feels extremely relaxed and gets peace of mind. The feeling of receiving the mahāprāṇa with a breath increases his inner strength and deepens his śraddhā and self-confidence, which in turn become the motive force for the ascetic control of his body and mind and the source for his psychological and spiritual enlightenment. The inherent principle of soaham gets inscribed in the inner self of the sādhaka as his śraddhā deepens. This successively takes his life to the levels of that of the great personalities, sages and angels...

As stated earlier, ordinary prāṇāyamas offer the benefits of increasing the vital energy and mental creativity. The higher level prāṇāyamas are associated with meditation and willpower and thus result in – enhancing the internal motive force, spiritually refining the mental and emotional status and awakening some extraordinary potentials. The soaham sādhanā is a prāṇāyama of supreme level as it also involves śraddhā and samkalpa of the sādhaka and therefore gives rise to the ‘stirring’ of the reservoir of the individual consciousness and leads to ‘merging’ the latter in the ocean of divine consciousness.
The supernatural effects of soahain are also highest among those of the other spiritual experiments of prāṇāyamas. Ten major and fifty-four minor – total sixty-four prāṇāyamas are described as the sādhānas of prāṇa yoga. Of these, the soahain is supposed to be paramount. The penetration and awakening of the šaṭ cakras becomes possible by this sādhāna.

When the (mahā)prāṇa is ‘inhaled’ through a breath during the soahain sādhāna it first reaches the ājnā cakra and gets divided into two components – one in the form of a divine emotional charge and the other as vital energy. The first one reaches the heart – the emotional core and from there flows towards the different nuclei of conscious perception inside the body. It illuminates every corner of the inner body with the eternal glow of sat (absolute truth) and removes the asat (the darkness of ignorance and falsehood). The sublime currents of prāṇa reach the backside of the brain from the ājnā cakra and enter the spinal column, which subtly contains the flow of the Brahmi Nāḍī.

The bioelectrical currents of the idā and pingalā nāḍīs flow along the two sides of the brahmi nāḍī and, starting from the pituitary and pineal glands, they reach the mūlādhāra cakra. These currents flow back from this bottom cakra after their coherence in the suśumnā. The six extrasensory energy centers – the šaṭ cakras, are like eddy currents in the flow of the brahmi nāḍī. These crakras are said to be the sources through which the individual self can traverse beyond the limits of time and space. These contain the sublime ocean of supernatural powers.

The Kuṇḍalinī, which is affirmed in the spiritual sciences of yoga as the source of all physical and spiritual potentials, can be reached only by penetrating the šaṭ cakras. The straight flow of the prāṇa through these cakras is essential for ‘electrifying’ the latent ‘coil’ of the kuṇḍalinī. This requires immense pressure of prāṇa under adept control. The flow of the vital energy component of prāṇa generated during the soahain prāṇāyama and the saṃkalpa of the sādhaka associated with this sādhāna provide the right combination for straight traversing through the šaṭ cakras, penetrating the three granthis and eventually activating the kuṇḍalinī.
Another spiritual benefit of the soaham prāṇāyama is the perception of sublime and divine fragrances. Smelling is a tanmātrā (power of perception) associated with the basic element of air. Therefore, the practice for control and attainment of extraordinary potential of this (the gandha-) tanmātrā fall under the sādhanās of higher level prāṇāyamas. The soaham sādhanā can expand the gandha tanmātrā so much that the sādhaka may smell the infra-subtle and long distant fragrances. This power then becomes a medium to recognize and experience the divine elements by their unique fragrance. When the sādhaka is progressing well in the soaham sādhanā, he often smells some divinely soothing fragrances. This is an indication of supernatural developments.

Shrines and the place of upāsanā and sādhanā are often endowed with some incenses (like dhūpa or agarbatti) or flowers. Their aroma induces a soothing feeling in mind and helps its focused concentration. Such fragrances also support rapid development of the gandha tanmātrā during the initial stages of the prāṇāyamas. If the sādhaka meditates on the fragrance along with the exercise of deep breathing then after a little practice with determination he would be able to smell the same pleasant aroma even when he comes out and goes away from the room of upāsanā. Eventually, he would begin to smell it during his regular sādhanā even without having any external means or arrangement of creating such incense. This is an indication of the awakening of the latent potential of the gandha tanmātrā. Performing a higher level prāṇāyama like soaham at this stage boosts this development and gradually gives rise to a supernatural power of extrasensory smell.

The importance of gandha tanmātrā is well experienced in nature. Many animals and insects possess refined power of smelling. This potential is indeed an essential mode of communication, search for food, sensing an enemy’s presence and transmitting or receiving the signals for mating (to or from the opposite sex)..., etc in many birds, animals and insects. Many creatures also use this sense to know the weather conditions in advance. The trained dogs use this faculty to trace the criminals or the lost things or persons. In human beings, this
faculty normally stands much below in the order of importance as compared to the faculties of thinking, vision, speech and hearing. Once the hidden power of smelling is activated, this dominates over all other normal faculties and it can be focused by the sādhaka for sensing the supernatural signals and experiencing the unknown, which exists far beyond the grasp of human intelligence. The evoked tanmātrā of gandha enables the sādhaka to feel the presence of the divine powers and receive their messages. Success of the soaham sādhana also bestows such extrasensory potentials of the gandha tanmātrā on the sādhaka.

As the soaham sādhana also deals with the swaras (nāda) produced in breathing; so, it can give the benefits of a swara sādhana too. The states of the human body and mind are governed by the extent of the positive and negative biochemical currents, which flow through the idā and pingalā nādis with the sūrya and candra swaras. By harmonizing the breathing patterns in a prāṇāyāma, one can control his sūrya and candra swaras and hence the functioning of the body and the mind.

The higher level prāṇāyāmas like the soaham sādhana induce the power of mahāprāṇa in this activity and thus help the sādhaka know the latent condition of his inner self. This in turn help him decide–‘what should be done and when’ in order to get the best results. The otherwise unknown or latent information also becomes accessible by such a yoga sādhana of the swaras of prāṇa.

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Emotional Elevation by Soaham Japa

No upāsanā could be complete without incorporating japa, dhyāna (meditation) and bhāvanā – emotional sincerity and linkage with the divine goal of upāsanā. Literally speaking, upāsanā means – sitting near by. Sitting near an idol or picture or any other symbol of God, worshiping it with the help of flowers, sacred water, candan, akṣāta etc and uttering some prayers and mantras in front of it might be useful for conditioning the mind for an upāsanā. But, this alone does not serve the real purpose. Faith in the divine disciplines, thorough pondering over the latter and adopting them in all aspects of life…, and development of the personality so as to nurture the virtues that uplift it towards the ideals of morality, near the level of an angelic being – are essential for performing an upāsanā.

Faith in God becomes meaningful only when thy disciplines and the duties assigned by thou materialize in the devotee’s life. Gradual elevation of the devotee’s behavior, qualities, thoughts, emotions and deeds is an indication of his proximity with his ideal (the deity, whose upāsanā is being attempted by the devotee). This is indeed the criterion for judging the sincere performance of his upāsanā.

Reading religious or morally inspiring literature, visiting the shrines and tīrthas and recalling their memories – these practices give support in restraining the agility of the mind and focussing it for meditation during an upāsanā. Different methods of japa and dhyāna are taught under different religious and spiritual schools. But, the sādhanā of soaham can be regarded as a universal upāsanā. Every human being can perform it.

As mentioned earlier, this universal sādhanā involves japa (of soaham through the breaths), dhyāna (meditation on the subtle sounds of ‘so’, ‘a’ and ‘ham’) along with emotional depth (to contemplate and feel that ‘I am an expression of the Brahmin’). This is indeed an upāsanā of the limitless eternal expression of the Brahmin. No rituals, no other methodology, need be performed with this sādhanā. In this sādhanā, the devotee realizes his closest link with thee by experiencing thy presence in the inner self. There could be
no upāsanā as complete as this experience is. By sincere practice and strength of internal faith and śraddhā such a realization becomes easy and it intensifies as the soahām sādhanā progresses.

Worshiping God’s idols with the feelings like that of – “Twameva mātā ca pitā twameva, Twameva bandhuḥ casakhā twameva... – regarding thou as the mother, father, friend, the most near and dear one...”, is an ideal example of the dvaita bhāva in upāsanā. Thyself and the individual self are regarded as two and the latter devotes him self under the divine shelter of thy grace. The soahām sādhanā is an upāsanā of advaita bhāva. Here, the devotee’s self and the God are regarded as one – both being the integral reflections, manifestations, of the Brahm.

If the swaras of ‘so’ and ‘ham’ are recognized separately and the existence of the divine powers of the Brahmin and the conscious form of the individual self is experienced differently then the prāṇayāma of soahām sādhanā would correspond to a ‘dvaita upāsanā’. Moreover, if the presence of air – a jada element of nature, is also felt along with the sounds of breathing then this would be a traite bhāva. A sādhaka is free to select any ‘bhāva’ suitable to him during the initial practice and gradually reach the advait one – the state of total sacrifice and complete unification in sublimity.

The soul remains a jīvātmā only till it is asleep under the illusions of māyā. The jīvātmā recognizes itself only as the body and the mind in ordinary humans. The spiritual charge of upāsanā and sādhanā removes the mists of ignorance that shrouded it. The inner self is then purified and enlightened as an eternal reflection of divinity. The emotional power of the sādhaka used in the advaita bhāva of the soahām sādhanā awakens and elevates the state of the soul to revive its original glory and its unity with the Brahmin begins to reflect in the sādhaka’s personality.

Without the emotional depth, motivation and mental concentration, the feelings and meditations associated with the soahām sādhanā would be like ‘mere imaginations’ or ‘mental-amusement and diversion’ or ‘day dreaming’, and would not show any sign of progress.
Attracting the mahāprāṇa is not a physical or mental exercise. It can’t be attained without the warmth and the urge of the innermost sentiments. The voice of the inner emotions could be powerful enough to be ‘heard’ by (to reach) the cosmic centers of thy expression only if the sādhaka’s external and internal personalities are purified, disciplined and indeed devoted towards his śraddhā in the divine disciplines. Similar strength of the inner self and the willpower of the sādhaka are required in the later phase of the soaham prānāyāma. The sādhaka has to firmly uproot his viles, weaknesses and ego that are deeply rooted in his instincts as a jīva.

If one sincerely performs the contemplation phase of the sādhanā of soaham, the corresponding thoughts and emotions would be gradually assimilated in his memory and subconscious mind. His integrity of character and duty-bound righteous activities will support rapid conditioning to accelerate the spiritual effects. Such a person would live the life of a true karma yogī. His actions will be inspired and controlled by the divine will. In worldly terms, he may be a farmer, a gardener, a laborer, a businessman, a doctor, a scientist etc, may have a lower, medium, high or no status in the socio-economic system and live an utterly ordinary life. In either case, his spiritual refinement would excel progressively. All his deeds would be selfless and duty-bound and hence estimable like those of the great personalities, saints and sages.

King Janaka used to live a duty-bound life of an emperor and was seen busy in related worldly affairs. But, because of his selfless, enlightened attitude, fair and discerning intellect and piety of emotions, he was considered a karma yogī. His knowledge was honored as equivalent to that of a scholar of the brahmāṇīdīyā.

If the soaham sādhanā is being performed adeptly, its effects on enlightening the sādhaka’s emotions would be reflected in different facets of his life in terms of his righteous thinking, broad outlook and cooperating behavior etc. Because of its direct connection with the emotional center and the inner self, the soaham sādhanā becomes a principal sādhanā for peerless spiritual evolution.

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The *Soahaṁ Sādhanā* of Saint Kabira

The history of the *Bhakti* Age of the Indian literature highlights two major streams of development of devotional poesy and literature: (i) *nirguṇa* (*nirākāra*) – in which the God is realized as absolute, formless and omnipresent; and (ii) *saguṇa* (*sākāra*) – where the devotion is focused at a specific form (idol) of a manifestation of God. Chronologically, the period of *nirguṇa* is supposed to be earlier.

This was around 1500 A.D., when the saintly poet Kabira had propagated religious reforms under the *nirguṇa* philosophy of *bhakti* (devotion). About one century later, the saintly poets like *Sūrdāsa*, *Tulsidāsa*, *Mīrā* etc had inspired the flow of *saguṇa bhakti* in the form of *vaiṣṇava bhakti* (devotion of God Vishnu). This had so firmly established the devotion of God Ram and Krishna in the hearts of the people that even today a vast majority of the people of Indian origin is influenced by it. The *saguṇa bhakti* of Ram or Krishna is an integral part of these people’s religious life.

The propagation of the *nirguṇa* philosophy has the *Nātha* School of asceticity in the background. Parallel to its line of devotion is the *advaita* principle of Shankaracharya as taught by Swami Ramananda and, in slightly different form – having a characteristic affection of *saguṇa bhakti*, by some Sufi philosophers. Saint Kabira’s preaching are mostly inspired by the *advaita* theory of Acharya Ramanand. The importance he gave to *yoga* and divine love may be attributed to the *Nātha* and the Sufi schools respectively. The symbolic representation in his poetry is different from those of the *saguṇa bhakti*. In this context his creations appear to be similar to those used by the Sufi Saints.

According to the *advaita* principle, *Brahm* is the only truth – the absolute existence. It is because of ignorance and illusions that the visible world appears to be a truth. This lack of knowledge is described as the influence of *māyā* in the above theory. It is because of *māyā* that the *jīva* feels the bliss and the pains of life and death. Whatever distinction one feels between the soul and the Omnipresent *Brahm* is only a mist of *māyā*. The knowledge of the soul – self-
realization is a must to eradicate the influence of māyā. The absolute realization of the fact that the soul and the Brahmī are one (advaita) – liberates the jīva from the bonds of māyā.

Only the knowledge of the self – as a manifestation of the Brahmī leads to the perfect realization of the self. Attainment of this is essential for reaching the absolute state of soaham. Saint Kabira has given specific importance to this aspect of soaham with a devotional touch. He has described the realization of this state through yoga and mysticism. For instance, review his following verse –

_Aradha Uradadha Mukhi Lāgo Kāsu |
Suna Mandala Māhi Kari Paragāsu ||
Uḥān Sūraja Nāhin Čanda |
Ādi Niramjanu Kare Ananda ||
So Brahmana Pīṇḍ i So Jānu |
Mānasaroṇvari Kari Isanānu ||
Soaham So Jā Kau Hai Jāpa |
Dhākala Līpata Na Hoi Puna Arū Pāpa ||
Avarana Varana Dhāma Nahin Čāmā |
Avarana Pāīa Gurū Kā Sāya ||
Ṭārī Ne Ṭarai Āvai Na Jāi |
Suna Sahaja Mahi Rahio Samāi ||
Mana Madhe Jaun Je Koi |
Jo Bolai So Āpai Hoi ||
Joti Mantra Mani Āṣathirū Karai |
Kahi Kabira So Prāṇī Tarai ||

_Meaning:_ In that absolute void (śūnya) horizon, which is surrounded only by ākāśa, thou (the Brahmī) brilliance is kindled eternally. There is no sun or moon (or any source of light) but that source of absolute bliss is illuminated in its own glow. That śūnya is the entire cosmos and that alone is a _piṇḍa_. You should take a dip in that Mānasaroṇvara (holy pond in the Himalayas) and perform the _japa_ of soaham. The _japa_ of soaham is beyond the limits of sins or sacred virtues. The _śūnya_ of its expansion contains no colors nor blanks; neither sunlight nor shadow (or ‘no sunlight’). . . .
It cannot be traversed without the grace of a noble Gurū. There, it (the power of awakened mind) cannot evade; it (the mind) cannot even move anywhere; it just remains absorbed in the śūnya. The words of the one who knows this śūnya existing in the inner self, would, even if uttered casually, become the expressions of his inner voice. One who focuses his mind in deciphering the latent knowledge of this eternal sublime glow (of śūnya) could, according to poet Kabira, be blessed by absolute liberation from the worldly bounds.

In the above paragraph saint Kabira has defined ‘soaham’ as –“ The feeling of ‘soaham’ is supposed to be realized when nothing else remains (in the domain of cognition) except the Brahmin; even self-identity echoes as ‘I am (the jīva is) the Brahmin’.... Then the jīva unites with his cosmic eternal source, the Brahmin”.

In his descriptions of the soaham japa Kabira has simplified the philosophical abstractions so that even common people could understand the principles of this sādhanā and attempt adopting them in practice. Instead of using the basis of advaita philosophy he has explained the unity between the jīva and the Brahmin in the light of mysticism as – the reflection of the cosmic soul in the individual soul. Here, the linkage between the Brahmin and the jīva is described as oneness instead of the unification (of the advaita principle) by total non-existence of the latter. This approach of mysticism expresses the sense of eternal affection contained in the meaning of ‘soaham’. The advaita theory does not imply the absolute rejoice contained in the reunion of the soul with its own eternal form. In mysticism, the soul is said to be totally immersed in the eternal bliss of this commingling after the realization of ‘soaham’.

A total sacrifice – like that of a raindrop in an ocean, of the soul is implied in the advaita theory. Whereas the mysticism of Kabira allows the soul to also enjoy the feeling that – “I am (the soul is) meeting my eternal origin”. In these rhetoric representations, the soul is described as conveying the cosmic soul that – “wherever I see your glow I find you and whenever I see this glow I also start glowing...”.
Here, the soul and the Brahmīn despite being identified as one are also expressed as two; the absolute enjoyment of the soul in uniting with the Brahmīn cannot be explained otherwise.

If the soul looses its existence (as implied in the advaita philosophy) then ‘who’ would have the beatitude after meeting with the Brahmīn – the source of ultimate bliss? This doubt (of a common mind) does not have any place, if the soaham sādhanā is described in the style of mystical representations. Here ‘soaham’ is realized as the absolute ecstatic state (of the soul) of ultimate bliss and divine peace.....

The above kind of sense of absolute love (the linkage between the individual self and the divine self) may be inculcated by the nirguna as well as saguna upāsanā. The realization and expression of such a feeling of love becomes very easy if the devotee and the God ‘exist’ in some form which can be visualized by the conscious mind. It is indeed easier in the saguna devotion because here the object of reverence is usually viewed in an ideal human like incarnation.

The songs sung in the devotion of Gods Ram and Krishna can carry the (inner self of) devotee to a higher level of beatitude, which could be compared to that described in mysticism as the commingling of the soul with its eternal origin. For instance, consider the following verse of the saintly poet Tulasidasa —

Prabhu Guna Suni Mana Haripihai, Nīra Nayanana dharihai  
Tulasidā sa Bhayo Rā ma Ko, Viśwāsa Prem Sakhi Ānanda, ||
Umagī Ura Bhari Hai  

Or, read the stanza of a song written by Meerabai –

Jinake Piyā Pradeśa Basata Hain, Likhi Likhi Bheje Pāṭī  
Mere Piyā Mo Mānhin Basata Hain, Günja Karūn Dina Rāṭī  

The above devotional songs also generate the same feelings in the hearts of the devotees as those described in mysticism as the feelings of beatified bliss – ānanada.
There is no place for thy description in the nirguna philosophy, as no form or manifestation of the Brahman is defined here. Then, what could be the basis of the divine love of the soul? In order to reflect this eternal affection in his verses of nirguna devotion, Kabira has used some mystical linkages and intimate analogies. He has described the reverence and intimacy of the jiva with the Brahman as that of a disciple with his Guru, king (master), parents, friends, spouse... etc, as can be seen in the following stanzas of his poesy —

Govinda (God) in a Guru:

Gurū Govinda To Eka Hai, Dūjā Yahu Ākāra |
Āpā Meṭi Jivāta Marai, To Pavai Karatāra ||

Hari (God) in a mother:

Hari Janaṇī Main Bālika Torā,
Kahena Auguna Bakasahu Morā |

Hari (God) in a husband:

Hari Bhorā Pi va, Bhāi Hari Morā Pīva |
Hari Binu Rahi Na Sakai Merā Jīva ||

God in a revered master:

Kabarī Prem Na Cākhiyā, Cakhi Nā Liyā Sāva |
Sūne Ghara Kā Pahuṇā, Jyūn Āyā Tyūn Jāva ||

Kabira had realized the Brahman in the form of boundless universal love. This is how he could reach the highest level of mysticism in his simple, easy to grasp poems of nirguna bhakti and could also represent in them the deep aspects of the ultimate state of soham.
The Bindu Yoga

Bindu Yoga is an important and simple sādhanā like the Hamsa Yoga and it also serves as a supplement to the latter and to many other spiritual practices because it deals with meditation upon the sacred glow of the supreme consciousness existing in the soul. In this yoga, the sādhaka first concentrates on the visible light through trātaka and by deepening his meditation gradually experiences the illumination of the inner body to visualize the manifestation of divine spark in it.

In the initial stages of this yoga the practice of trātaka is repeated. After sufficient progress in trātaka the meditation on the spot of light becomes possible even without the help of any external source of light such as a candle or a lamp.

The bindu yoga is a high level sādhanā which falls next to the soaham sādhanā in terms of the simplicity of practising in daily life. Likewise the soaham sādhanā, everybody can perform it without any risk or difficulties of strict disciplines.

In the daily practice of the bindu yoga, the sādhaka sits in a dhyāna mudrā (posture of meditation) in a calm state of the body and the mind with erect spinal cord and closed eyes. His legs are cross folded so as to make a posture of sukhāsana or padmāsana and both the hands are kept on the lap with the right palm above the left (Lord Buddha is often depicted in this posture in his idols and pictures). The sādhaka then concentrates to ‘ perceive’ a bright spot in the central portion of the forehead right above the gap between the eyebrows. Deeper core behind this center is defined to be the location of the ājñā cakra. The sādhaka should initially practise the trātaka in order to perform this meditation properly.

In the practice of a trātaka, the sādhaka keeps a lamp (of oil or ghee) or a candle in front of the eyes – at a distance of about 3 to 4ft and keeps the eyes half-open. The position of the lamp is set up to the height of the sādhaka’s chest when he is sitting in the posture as described above, so that he could look at the tip of the flame without...
bending his head. The sādhaka’s eyes gaze steadily at the bright spot without blinking for few seconds. He then closes the eyes to visualize the image of this glow at the position of the ājñā cakra.

After few seconds, he again opens the eyes slightly and looks at the flame. The above process is repeated successively at increased stretched of times – ranging from two to twenty minutes per day. Initially the light spot appears to be blurred and unstable once the eyes are closed. But, as the sādhaka’s concentration improves, it becomes as bright and stable as the flame (or the object of light) kept in front of the sādhaka.

The morning times are usually recommended for performing a trātaka because the mind and the body are both fresh during this period. The atmosphere is relatively cool during these hours of the day and thus prevents the possibility of ‘heating up’ of the head due to deep engrossment and direct and continuous vision of light.

Once the practice of trātaka is perfected, the sādhaka begins to see a bright spot inside the center of his forehead without the help of a lamp or any other source of light.... Upon reaching this state, the sādhaka should concentrate on this bright spot seen in the ājñā cakra and feel that its glow is gradually expanding and illuminating the surrounding portion of the brain.

In an electric lamp, the central filament radiates first and its glow spreads in the surrounding gas and illuminates the entire globe of the bulb and the outside too. Vision (by closed eyes) of a similar spark and expansion of this ‘mental radiance’ is striven in this second phase (after trātaka) of the bindu yoga. The duration of this phase should be kept about 5 to 10 minutes initially which may be extended gradually along with the consecutive (third) phase to about 30 minutes.

In the third and the final phase of the daily practice of bindu yoga the sādhaka meditates on the feeling that the brain is fully illuminated and that the divine luminescence is slowly pervading the entire body. No corner, no portion, inside the body is left unillumined.
The gentle effulgence of the bright spot focused in the domain of the ājñā cakra intensifies with the sādhaka’s mental engrossment and willpower. The duration of its consistent appearance and the domain of its light (aura) also increase correspondingly. The ājñā cakra is described in the yoga śāstras as the sixth sense, the third eye or the divine eye. A third eye is usually depicted at this spot on the forehead in the pictures of the human like manifestations of God Śaṃkara (Śiva) and Goddess Durgā. According to a story in the purāṇas, Lord Śiva had generated divine spark with immense effulgence by opening his third eye and had thereby ‘charred’ the prankish, erotic power of Kāmadeva into ashes.

In anatomical terms the ājñā cakra encompasses the pituitary and pineal glands. It has a subtle structure similar to that of an eye. This cakra is an eye of the subtle body. By awakening of this latent center of subtle perceptions one can visualize the otherwise invisible or hidden entities, the scenarios of the past events and those of the future happenings anywhere in the space...

With the help of the X-rays we can photograph the internal parts of the gross body and also ‘see’ the belongings inside a closed metal box,... etc. The signals emitted from (or received by) the ‘subtle eye’ are much more powerful. If this ‘eye’ is opened (or enlightened by thy luminescence) then one can use it for television without the help of any external or materialistic means. Sanjay is described in the Mahābhārata to have been endowed with this power of supernatural vision. This ‘third eye’ shows the world that can never be seen by the ordinary eyes (of the gross body).

Apart from having the potential of supernatural vision, the awakened ājñā cakra also has the latent capacity to transmit the glow of its aura as a powerful spark. This radiant force can burn (diminish) all the illusions and evil assimilation that prevent the refinement of the subtle body (thoughts and sentiments) of the sādhaka. Thus, by successful practices of bindu yoga all the kusaṇskāras and weaknesses can be destroyed completely with the help of the immense power of the spiritual effulgence emanated from the ājñā cakra.
Philosophically speaking, the awakening of the ‘third eye’ means arousing of the viveka – pure and discerning intellect and prudent foresightedness, which exists in every human brain but in a dormant state and largely remains latent and unrealized by most of the people. The activation of the hidden wisdom eliminates all ignorance and thus helps restrain and remove the blemishes of avarice, selfishness, possessive attachment, ego, jealousy and the agonies of the unlimited desires and mental complexities caused by them.

The purāṇas mention that when the world became disorderly and the misdeeds of evil mentality severely disturbed the harmony of nature then God Śiva performed his Tāndawa... When he was engrossed in this ‘temblor’ dance, he opened his third eye. The opening of this eye generated the devastating spark of the grand disaster. The complete destruction of the world was then followed by the creation of a new, orderly world of divine disciplines.

In personal and social life too it sometimes becomes essential to destroy (discard or cleanse) the irrelevant, unmindful and untoward traditions or systems. Such a revolution turns out to be successful and leads to the betterment of life if it is guided by the foresighted prudence (the power of the subtle eye). The above story of the Purāṇas implies the essence of this fact in a rhetoric style. The present ailing state of humanity can be cured by transforming the mentality and attitude of the people upside down and by destroying the root causes – of unethical thinking – viz, the passions of selfishness, avarice, lust and ego. This great revolution (vicāra krānti) could be originated and driven up to ultimate success only by the trenchant power of righteous viveka.

In the soaham sādhanā, the meditation and contemplation phase consist of a determined feeling that each component of the body is being filled and energized by the prāṇa. Similarly, in a bindu yoga, the last phase of meditation corresponds to visualizing the glow of the divine flame (jyoti) successively in the brain, heart, lungs and intestines etc, followed by the feeling that this brilliance has enlightened every constituent of the body from within. Every cell, every tendril is seen as sparkling with a reflection of this unique glow.
The Indian science of spirituality affirms four layers of the mind – *mana* (conscious mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *citta* (subconscious and unconscious mind) and *ahaṅkāra* (the sense of ‘being’ in the individual self). In the final contemplation phase of the *bindu yoga*, all these four components of the inner self are meditated upon as – fully absorbed in an ocean of *thī* light.

This feeling of illuminating the entire body and the inner self by the glow of the *jyotī* inspired in the ājñā cakra results in an effect similar to that of the sunrise. The glow of the rising sun breaks the darkness of the night and spreads brightness in all directions; soon the world leaves the drowsiness, rouses up and begins to work with a fresh charge of energy and enthusiasm in the bright morning. The *sādhanā* of *bindu yoga* enlightens and purifies the gross, subtle and the causal bodies of the *sādhaka* and results in activating each instinct, each impulse of the self by the unique spark of the divine energy.

The word ‘light’ used in the science of spirituality corresponds not only to the glow and brightness of *prāṇa* but, it also implies an aura of knowledge and intellect and the energy of the enthusiasm of creativity..... In the terminology of the physical science, the effect of light naturally generates illumination and heat. In spiritual sense, the term *tāpa* (heat) means asceticity and creative use of *prāṇa* and the term *prakāśa* (illumination) deals with in-depth knowledge, sound reasoning, prudence and foresighted intellect.

The use of ‘bright spot’ as an object of concentration in *bindu yoga* is indeed related with the aforesaid spiritual impact. As stated earlier, the physical light produced by fire of electricity is used only in the elementary training phase of *traitaka*. The use of an oil (or *ghee*) lamp or a candle is most common in this practice. If one wants to use an electric bulb in place of a lamp then a low power bulb emitting dim light would be recommended to avoid strain on the eyes. A blue colored bulb should be arranged in this case, as its light would have a calm and cooling effect on the *sādhaka*’s mind.

Concentration on the reddish yellow glow of the rising sun is excellent for *traitaka*. Full moon may also be tried as an object for meditation in this early phase of the *bindu yoga*. Regular practice with
sincerity enables the sādhaka to perform trātaka without the help of any external source of light. The glow of the bright spot (jyoti) of light begins to appear on its own in the ājnā cakra after practising the trātaka for substantial amount of time with firm determination, devotion and mental engrossment. Initially this jyoti appears to be oscillating and shows different shades of light but gradually it becomes stable and glows with a unique color (usually silver white or like the glow of the interior of the rising sun) as this phase progresses steadily.

During the contemplation phase of the bindu yoga, the sādhaka has to control the flow of his thoughts and sentiments in a single direction, namely, that the divine glow is pervading from the ājnā cakra and eliminating the darkness of ignorance, infirmities, illusions, fears and vices. Some people often doubt that this type of contemplation may disturb the concentration that ought to be maintained during a meditation-based sādhanā like the bindu yoga. These people should note that total thoughtlessness is required only in the practice of samādhi or the laya yoga. In other spiritual sādhanās it is sufficient to control the thoughts within the domain of the focus and purpose of the sādhanā.

The holy river Ganges originates from the Himalayas and ultimately reaches its goal in the Ganga Sagara because, despite several turns, hurdles, drastic variations in its currents and disturbances due to the merging of other rivers etc, its flow does not loose its original direction. This example illustrates that it is not always the ‘sharply focussed concentration’, rather, the consistency of the direction of the flow of thoughts which is important in an effective meditation.

The amazing performances of the artists in a circus becomes possible only by their dedicated practices with deep mental concentration. These experts have significant willpower but they are not yogis. On the contrary, the saints like Meera, Chaitanya, Suradasa, Kabira, Ramakrishna Paramahansa etc, who used to be in an emotionally charged state of devotion and used to sing and even dance in bhakti, were equivalent to the yogis, although, they had not practiced any specific yogāsana or steady meditation... This is because the flow of the emotions of these saints and every activity of their life was naturally dedicated to the devotion of the Omnipresent God.
In the śādhanās like the prāṇa yoga, haṃsa yoga (soamaño) and bindu yoga, although the initial phase involves meditation, the more important and effective component is – contemplation and realization of the goal of the śādhanā. The prescribed domain for the flow of thoughts and emotions is quite wide here. The śādhaka has to think and feel within this domain instead of focusing upon a single point. This flow churns the ocean of consciousness in the inner self and purifies its hidden core.

The saguna upāsanā is performed with emotional linkage with God. It involves worshiping thou manifestations, chanting of the prayers and devotional songs. There is no need of specific mental engrossment or meditation in such modes of upāsanās. In fact, it is the śādhaka’s śraddhā and the depth of his devotional love that takes him to those high realms of spiritual attainments, which other yogis might reach via the successful practice of deep trance (samādhi).

While pondering through the heart during the (last phases of) śādhanās like soamaño and bindu yoga, the śādhakas often attain a state of yoga nidrā. Although physically it appears like a sleeping or an unconscious state, it is indeed a state of trance. It should be noted that the spiritual śādhanās, if performed in a disciplined manner and with purity of heart (sentiments), mind (thoughts) and body (deeds), would never cause the extreme effects of excitations or dullness (or sleep). The yoga nidrā is a state of immersion of the individual consciousness in the supreme, eternal consciousness. Even if it is experienced for a few seconds, it brings enormous grace of that Almighty and excels the śādhaka towards the goal of divinity.

The soamaño śādhanā and the bindu yoga are simple, riskless and easy to perform. The śādhaka’s willpower, emotional strength and piety of character ensure that – if these śādhanās are performed according to the guidelines laid above, the śādhaka would receive immense bliss during the final phases of contemplation and realization and gradually reach the ultimate state of evoking the divinity indwelling in himself.

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Glossary of Words used from the Shastrik Literature

Ākāśa: The ākāśa tatva is the most evolved and subliminal of the five basic elements (panca tatvas) that makes possible the sentient existence and experience of Nature.

Āranyaks: Places in forests where the ṛṣis used to run their schools in order to offer adept training in the laboratory of life.

Cetan: The sentient manifestation of Nature and consciousness.

Granthis: Three latent knots along the brahm nāḍī are named the Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granth.

Haṁsa: A swan also is called haṁsa in Sanskrit; this simile is used here in a rhetoric style.

Jaḍa: The material or physical manifestation of Nature.

Jīva: Manifestation of the soul as a living being is called a jīva.

Kuṇḍalini: (Also known as the serpentine power or cosmic electricity of prāṇa) symbolizes the subliminal core of absolute vital force.

Mahāprāṇa: The omnipresent, cosmic force of prāṇa.

Mokṣa: Absolute salvation of the jīva from worldly attachments and the cycles of birth and death is called mokṣa.

Nāda: The rhythmic flow of musical sound. Āhata Nāda refers to the nāda generated by vibrations in some medium. Ānāhata Nāda is the self-existent, subliminal nāda of Śabda.

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1The English letters and special symbols used here for the Sanskrit Script are in accordance with the international transliteration standards.

Naḍīs: The Brahm Nāḍī (cosmic nerve) or suṣumṇa naḍī is an extra-
sensory canal in the inner most core of the endocrine (or spinal) column. The iḍā nāḍī is supposed to be an extrasensory canal on the left of the suṣumṇā nāḍī in the lunar nerve hidden inside the endocrine (spinal) column. The pingalā nāḍī is supposed to be an extrasensory canal on the right of the suṣumṇā nāḍī in the solar nerve hidden in the endocrine (spinal) column. These are functionally connected with the pituitary and pineal glands.

Panca tatvas: The five basic elements of manifestation of Nature and Life. Namely, prathvi (solid matter on or inside the earth), jala (water and fluids), vāyū (air), Agni (fire or other sources of energy), and ākāsha (the subliminal expansion of ether).

Prakṛati: Nature.

Prāṇa: Vital spiritual energy.

Piṇḍa: Any particle or body existing in the universe is called a piṇḍa.

Puṇya: Consequence of altruist service and equivalent actions of humane dignity is called puṇya – the source of happiness, peace, divine grace and liberation.

Puruṣa: The eternal creator of existence is referred as Puruṣa in the Shastrik Literature.

Recaka, Purak, Kumbhakas: The phase of breathing-in during a prāṇāyāma is called a pūraka and that of breathing out is called a recaka; the intermediate phases of holding the breath in and out are called the antaḥ kumbhaka and bāhya kumbhaka respectively.

Saṃkalpa: Determination with strong will power and intrinsic urge.

Samskāras: Intrinsic and inherent tendencies and habits. Kusamskāra means an evil samskāra and Susamskāra means a virtuous one.

Sandhyā-vandan: The daily upāsanā and japa of the Gāyatrī Mantra performed in the morning – around the time of dawn, and in the evening – around sunset time, is referred as sandhyā-vandan.
Soham Sādhanā

Sādhanā: Spiritual endeavor of self-refinement and inner elevation.

Sādhaka: Who sincerely performs a sādhanā.

Siddhis-Riddhis: Supernatural powers and supramental talents and virtues.

Sūrya and Candra Swara: When the breath flows naturally through the right nostril then the sūryaswara (in the solar nerve) is said to be ‘on’. When it flows through the left nostril then the candra swara (in the lunar nerve) is active.

Śabda: The eternal element of cosmic sound.

Śraddhā refers to one’s intrinsic faith in divine values and associated inner emotional force.

Tīrthas: A Pilgrimage Destination.

Traite bhāva: Experiencing the existence of three – the divine consciousness, the self-consciousness and the jāda elements of Nature is termed as traite bhāva.

Upāsanā: Devout worship or devotional practice to enable the devotee recall and experience thy-presence within and around him.

Viśvāsa: Firm belief, serene confidence.
EVOLUTION OF A DIVINE MISSION:
Chronological Compendium

The divine soul of Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya descended on September 20, 1911 as the son of Pt. Roopkishor Sharma and Mata Dankunvari Devi in Anvalkheda (Dist. Agra). That his saintly heart breathed for the welfare of all living beings was clearly expressed, since his childhood, by his altruist service of the poor, weaker and down trodden ones around him. Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya bestowed the initiation of Gāyatri Mantra on him when he was 9 years old. January 18, 1926, on the auspicious day of Vasant Panchami, the sacred flame of the dipaka (lamp) flashed the subtle body of his Guru – a great yogi of the rishi age – during his Gāyatrī Sādhanā. This had sparked the unfolding of the divine origin and purpose of his life and enlightened it with the grace and guidance of his Guru. [This akhand dipaka is kindled since then and is enshrined at Shantikunj, Hardwar.]

The next 24 years of his life were devoted to ascetic endeavors of 24 Mahāpūraścaraṇas — each of 24 lacs Gāyatri Mantra Japa (the highest kind of spiritual sādhanās of Gāyatrī). He had also sincerely participated in the freedom movement of India under the noble guidance of Mahatma Gandhi during this period while continuing with his altruist services to the society and attending to the familial duties too.

The unique experiment of Vicāra Krānti — gradual refinement of thoughts, righteous transformation of attitude and sublime transmutation of human psychology up to the high realms of spirituality — was initiated by Acharya Sharma from the day he wrote the first issue of Akhand Jyoti in 1937. The subscriptions of this magazine (in Hindi and translations in English and tens of regional languages) have expanded exponentially since then....

His wife, Smt. Bhagavati Devi Sharma was also born in 1926 – the year, when the afflatus of his Guru was realized and the year, which is described by Sri Aurobindo as that of the renaissance of divine force on this earth. Ever since their marriage in 1943, this rishi couple dedicatedly pursued the noble mission for arousal of human glory and revival of divine culture.

Pt. Sriram Sharma had established the Gayatri Tapobhumi at Vrindavan Road, Mathura and performed the purṇāhuti of his
mahāpuraścarāṇas there in 1953. He had organized a grand Gāyatrī Yagya in 1958. This Gāyatrī Yagya was a unique experiment towards renascence of spirituality in human life. This also initiated propagation of the knowledge of Gāyatrī Mantra and Yagya in scientific light and laid the foundation of Yug Nirman Yojna — architecturing of a bright era of moral, cultural, intellectual and spiritual evolution. In another couple of years he had translated the entire Veda Literature in Hindi and presented the first ever, comprehensive volume on the science and philosophy of Gāyatrī Mantra and Gāyatrī Sādhana. Savants like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Acharya Vinoba Bhave had honored his contributions as historical and recognized him as Vedanīṣṭha.

The saintly lives of Acharya Sharma and his wife, the spiritual charge of their personalities and the inner power of their sacred love for all beings, had attracted all the readers of Akhand Jyoti, and all those, who had attended this yagya, to work for the noble cause of his great mission. This is how the “larger family” kind of organization — called “Gayatri Pariwar”, came into existence. This has now expanded across the globe beyond the barriers of religion, creed, caste, sex, socio-economic status or educational background.

Acharya Sharma — the rishi of this age, had projected the Yug Nirman Yojna in 1962 as determined plans of his divine mission of ushering into a bright era. The period of 1971-1990 has witnessed remarkable accomplishments of his life on multiple facets. He had climbed the arduous and mystic heights of the Himalayas several times and stayed there for specific sādhana as per the guidance of his Guru. He pioneered the resurrection of the rishi culture by simultaneous renais-sance and expansion of the reformative and constructive endeavors of all the rishis of the vedik age.

He instituted the mission’s fraternity at Shantikunj, Hardwar as an academy for moral and spiritual awakening and training and its research wing Brahm Varchas as a center for creative integration of the modern science with spirituality, in 1971 and 1979 respectively. Regular short-term and long-term interactive training programs for — personality development, spiritual refinement through Gāyatrī Sādhana and perfection in the art of living, commenced at Shantikunj in the early eighties. The 2400 Shaktipithas spread across the country
also became functional as distributed centers for social reforms and training of Pragya Yoga under the banner of the mission with this advancement.

Around the same time, Gurudev Shriram Sharma wrote the Pragya Purana as the 19th in the series of the eighteen Puranas of the Vedika Age. This was another remarkable addition to his monumental contribution of over 3000 books and volumes on the gamut of topics concerning human life. Mass education from religious platform and efforts for uplifting the status of women in India gave revolutionary boost to the reformative and constructive programs of the Yug Nirman Yojna in this period.

During 1984-1986, he endeavored the unique spiritual experiment of sukśmikaran—subtlization and sublimation of vital force and physical, mental and spiritual powers. He authored a special set of 24 books (Krāntidharmī Sāhitya) highlighting the future of the world and conveying the message of time to prepare us for the realities stored in the distant depths of the 21st Century..... On the 2nd June, 1990, he left the physical sheath of his being and magnified his sublime powers up to the higher realms of divinity in order to enlighten the subtle world of people’s thoughts and sentiments......

There after, Mata Bhagavati Devi had guided the series of Ashwamedha Yagyas, which accelerated the global expansion of the mission with great impact, in the critical juncture of the decade of change of a millennium and change of an era. She too joined Acharya Sharma in the subliminal domains of divinity after leaving the physical body on the 19th September 1994.

The light of righteous knowledge and human glory kindled by them continues to illuminate the excelling path of their great mission and promises the descent of “The Age of Truth” in the years to come.....

1 A postal stamp was released by the Govt. of India in 1992 to honor his great services to the nation.
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